

THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE LIBRARY

a brief review of its history*

By M. SANGSTER PARROTT

The following quotation, taken from a speech by R. D. W. Connor in 1906, remains unverified even though several of our professional librarians tried to identify its author with no success:

"The roots of the Present lie deep in the Past, and the Past is not dead to him who would understand how the Present came to be what it is."



M. Sangster Parrott

I would first like to review with you a little of the past, so that we might all understand how the present came to be what it is. The first reference to the State Library is found in the code of 1819 when the responsibility of collecting "all the books and documents received, and intended for the use of the legislature" was given to the Secretary of State.¹ The books were to be "neatly lettered and numbered" and placed in a book case in the Secretary's

office.² As the collection grew and service was extended to other agencies, the need arose for a state librarian. This position was created by the General Assembly of 1840-41 when an annual appropriation of \$500 was made "for the increase of the Public Library of this State," and a librarian was appointed "to take charge of the books, with a salary not exceeding seventy-five dollars a year. . . ."³

The library continued as the Public Library of the State, serving the legislature, state agencies, and the people of the State until February 1886 when the Board of Trustees adopted a set of ten rules restricting the use of the books to "members of the Legislature during its session, the officers of the Executive Departments of the State, Justices of the Supreme Court, Attorney General and Commissioner of Agriculture, and no other persons should be permitted to take books from the Library. . . ."⁴

In 1909 public interest and concern that library resources in all

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fields of knowledge should be made available to all citizens led to the passage of legislation creating the North Carolina Library Commission. The objectives of this commission were to:

"... give assistance, advice, and counsel to all libraries in the state, to all communities which may propose to establish libraries, and to all persons interested, as to the selection of books, cataloguing, maintenance and other details of library management as may be practicable. The commission may aid in organizing new libraries or in improving those already organized, and may establish and maintain traveling or other libraries. . . ."⁵

Since the State Library functioned only as a reference library for genealogists, historical researchers, and state agency personnel, the Library Commission became the agency which supplemented library service within the state through the traveling libraries, later inter-library loan programs, and administration of the state aid funds to the public libraries.

The present organization of the North Carolina State Library is the result of a study made in 1954 by the Commission on Reorganization of State Government. The Commission report stated: "After studying the purposes and resources of these two agencies, we are convinced that more effective library service can be made available to the people of North Carolina if a single library agency is established to take over the functions now performed by the Library Commission and the State

Library."⁶ This proposal for reorganization was approved by the General Assembly of 1955, and most important among its provisions were:

"The Library is to acquire books, periodicals, newspapers, maps, films and audiovisual materials for use of the people of the state, taking into account the availability of book collections of public, college, and university libraries throughout the state, and, subject to proper regulations, is to circulate these materials freely to public libraries and to all citizens of the state. . . ." and "the Library is also authorized to accept and administer funds from the Federal Government and other agencies for providing and equalizing public library service in North Carolina, taking into consideration the same factors as those mentioned above. . . ."⁷

Given this broad legal base under which to operate, and with the advent of federal aid following the passage of the Library Services Act in 1956, the State Library was able to enhance, upgrade, and better promote the development of library service to all citizens of the state. With the merging of two book collections and slight increases in the state budget for the purchase of library materials, the library was able to provide better reference services and interlibrary loan programs; thus fulfilling its responsibility of supplementing the book collections in all existing public libraries.

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This is not to say that we feel the first ten years of service provided by the newly organized State Library was adequate. A review of the biennial reports since 1954 reveals the two main problems which have of necessity curtailed the functions of the library: finances and facilities.

First, there is the ever present problem of financing. It is interesting to note that during the first ten years of existence, the State Library's book budget increased only \$23,000. State appropriations in 1956-57 were \$11,000 and in 1966-67 \$34,000. Some relief has come over the past four years. In 1967-68 our appropriations for book purchasing increased to \$44,000 and now in 1969-70 our allotment is \$84,000.⁸ This increase is providing us with the funds to catch up with our purchasing and thus eliminate some of the inter-library loan referrals.

Second, physical facilities for the State Library, the Library Commission, and the "new" State Library have always been meager and inadequate.

I cannot resist reading from State Librarian Sherwood Haywood's report of 1881:

"In my last report I had occasion to call your attention to the crowded condition of the Library and the necessity for more room. It is needless to repeat it, suffice it to say the room has been entirely too small for the purposes intended for

at least twelve years past, according to the reports of my predecessors; and with our annual additions the difficulty increases. . . .

If there was room to place properly the many valuable books now hidden away in closets and scattered through the various offices in the building, we would have a Library that would be a credit to the State and the pride of every true North Carolinian."⁹

Further perusal of biennial reports reveals that this has been the story repeated most often. For during its entire history the library has been housed in several of the original state buildings around Capitol Square with other agencies, and even more recently in a bowling alley "over and behind" a furniture store and beauty shop. Presently, as you are aware, we are visiting with the State Department of Archives and History in the new building on East Jones Street.

Allow me to insert at this point that we have, within the past four years, contributed our share to the problem of pollution by scattering the dust from approximately 180,000 books, 300,000 plus documents, and some 3,000 newspapers around Capitol Square, up Downtown Boulevard, and down East Jones Street. However, we now have the pollution well under control with all the dusty volumes stored in humidity controlled book stacks without windows.

This brings us to the present. Since our move into the Archives-Library Building, we have extended the Reference Services Division to include our documents collection (the organizational chart appended shows our present division of services). For the first time in the history of the library, this valuable resource is more accessible for loan and use in the building. Our collection of newspapers on microfilm has grown and regulations have been changed to make this collection available to you through our inter-library loan service.

Perhaps the most exciting service which has developed within the State Library during the past two years is IN-WATS. Today any program which is new, unique, or innovative receives a great deal of publicity. Articles are written, news releases appear, and everyone hears about it. Not much can be added to the previous publicity about IN-WATS since the article in *POPULAR GOVERNMENT* by Mr. Philip Ogilvie and the one authored by Bruce Shuman which appeared several months ago in *LIBRARY JOURNAL*. However, since these two articles appeared, more public libraries have been given access to the magic number; and within the past year all (44 in number) four-year colleges and universities, plus 15 special libraries, have been added to the directory, thus increasing the resources upon which we can draw.

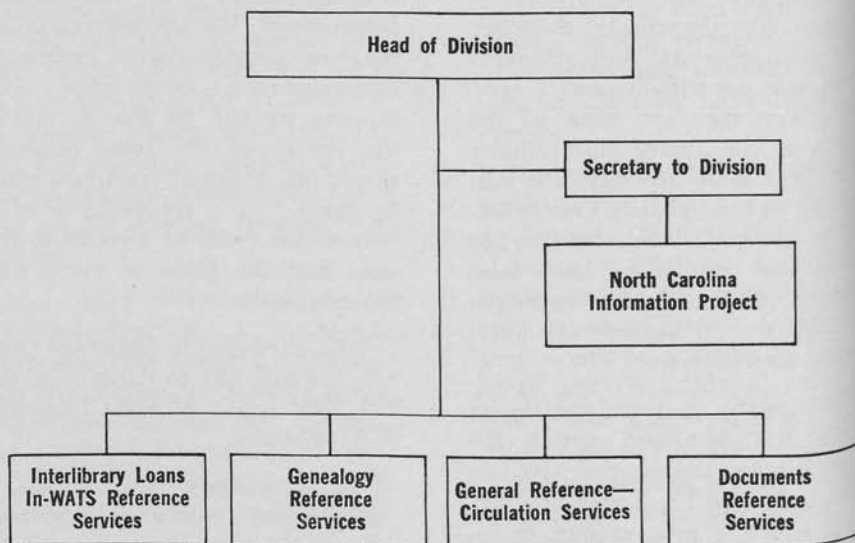
Any success the State Library has or will enjoy will not be measured by its less than adequate facilities

nor its less than adequate financial resources, but by the cooperation shown by the libraries with which it deals, and of course, the Federal Government. We are just beginning to show progress—given continued encouragement, cooperation, and support, we will be able to realize the dream of the state librarian nearly one hundred years ago when he said: “. . . we [will] have a library that [will] be a credit to the state and the pride of every true North Carolinian.”¹⁰

With apologies to historians present, I would like to paraphrase the late 1889 report of State Librarian J. C. Birdsong:

“In submitting this report, [ladies and] gentlemen, it gives [us] pleasure to say that the popularity of the Library is steadily increasing. The number of visitors during the past . . . years has far exceeded that of any period during the history of the State Library . . . The State, in this alone, is doing a great work, which the future alone will reveal the value of. Thanking you, [ladies and gentlemen,] for the hearty cooperation [we] have constantly received from you in [our] efforts to build up and make the State Library not only a place where the visitor can enjoy himself, but one of practical value to every citizen of the grand old state, [we] have the honor to be, your obedient servants.”¹¹

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR REFERENCE-DOCUMENTS SERVICES DIVISION



REFERENCES

¹*Laws of the State of North Carolina 1819*, II (Potter) p. 1234.

²*Ibid.*

³*Laws of the State of North Carolina Session 1840-41*, p. 77.

⁴*Report of State Librarian*, Dec. 31, 1886, pp. 2-4.

⁵*Public Laws of State of North Carolina*, 1909, Chap. 873, S.3.

⁶*Reports of the 1953-1955 Commission on Reorganization of State Government*, pp. 83-84.

⁷*Session Laws of the State of North Carolina*, 1955, Chap. 505, S.3.

⁸*Biennial Reports of North Carolina State Library*, 1956-1968

⁹*Report of the State Librarian*, 1881, p. 1, 3.

¹⁰*Ibid.* p. 3.

¹¹*Biennial Report of the Librarian of the North Carolina State Library 1889-90*, pp. 15-16.

DAVE CONFERENCE

(Continued)

In addition to these major presentations four small group presentations ran concurrently and continuously for several hours during one day of the conference, providing everyone in attendance with an opportunity to attend each. These consisted of: *Camp Lejeune High*

School Visual Literacy Project conducted by Conrad Sloan and Francisco Blanco, *Social Studies Project* conducted by Jessie VunCannon, *Salisbury Media Program* conducted by Mrs. Betsy Detty and Herbert C. Rhodes, and *Early Childhood Education* conducted by Jim Jenkins.