

cause to, and we should, claim Chesnutt as a Southern writer — not to limit him, but to understand him even better.

1. This article is a considerably abbreviated and slightly adapted version of a paper entitled "Charles W. Chesnutt As Southern Author," read first at the Southeastern American Studies Association meeting held at the meeting of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association in Charlotte, Nov. 12, 1966, subsequently printed in the Spring, 1967 issue of *The Mississippi Quarterly*, and then read in slightly adapted form, but in full length, before the luncheon of Beta Phi Mu Fraternity Oct. 26, 1967, at the conference of the North Carolina Library Association in Charlotte.

2. My primary source of biographical material concerning Chesnutt has been the fine biography of him written by his daughter, Helen M. Chesnutt: *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1952).

3. Quoted in Helen Chesnutt, p. 43.

4. Helen Chesnutt, pp. 19-20.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

6. Helen Chesnutt, p. 92.

7. Helen Chesnutt, p. 138.

PRESERVING THE PAST FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

by

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I feel that it is a singular privilege to be invited to talk to you today. Not only have I been told that this is a most stimulating group, but I believe this group has the potential to be highly influential in the development of our state's human resources. We are often told of the importance of school and home to the future citizens of North Carolina. I think our librarians should certainly be included along with these two influences.

Some of you are interested in library administration, some in the field of reference material, others in book selection. The importance of all three fields in developing good libraries is so interrelated that I hope I can make at least a few comments encompassing the role of each.

In doing our North Carolina books, my husband and I owe a great debt to those of you who are in reference work. Your help on innumerable occasions has led me to the discovery of North Carolina folklore sources such as the Frank C. Brown collection, the WPA Writers' Project material, and many other resources. However, I do not plan to enumerate a list of folklore sources with which you are far more familiar than I. I can only say that your enthusiasm and help in tracking down background material has been invaluable to me on countless occasions and that without your help my own books could not have been written.

I am sure that your guidance has also successfully led thousands of other library users down trails of intellectual exploration. While the facts you are daily engaged in finding for these people may never reach publication, there is no way of estimating the personal help and enrichment you are in a position to give.

Those of you who plan a career in administration, I think, have a real challenge before you. It is not only the challenge of finding personnel who share your desire that the library serve the general public as well as writers and researchers, but in order to operate

with as small a staff as some of our libraries have, you have decisions to make on how to arrange library material so that the person coming to your library will be better able to find what they are seeking without assistance.

For example, in doing reading on retardation, I have often wished that there might be several clearly marked shelves devoted to this subject as I know how many parents and relatives of these children are interested in this field. Sometimes these books are so scattered that the average person experiences real difficulty in finding them. Without doubt there is much overlapping in the material some of these books cover and a variety of classification possibilities. However, as my husband keeps saying to me in our work, "Don't give me problems, give me solutions". I think it is all too easy to run our libraries for the librarian just as we have heard that our hospitals are run for the doctors and nurses rather than the patients. Undoubtedly, running a truly successful library will require an administrative staff which is both flexible and imaginative.

ACQUISITION OF VISUAL AIDS

I think the need for this flexibility is particularly necessary in the area of library acquisitions. A relatively unexplored acquisition area for most libraries is the field of photo files and negatives. Although we are living in a period in which visual education is given ever increasing importance, most of our libraries are going to wake up twenty years from now to the fact that they have no photographic record of their area as it looked in years past. Historic homes and public buildings are torn down and replaced, presidents and vice-presidents as well as other history-making people pay visits to our communities, but all too frequently no systematic effort is made to keep a photographic record. How valuable it would have been, for example, if Brady had been here in Charlotte to photograph the last meeting of the Confederate Cabinet or take pictures of some of the figures of the day as they gathered on the street to talk following the news of Lincoln's assassination and the negatives had been preserved.

My husband is extremely grateful, now, that he had the privilege of covering President Kennedy's campaign tour through Charlotte and that these negatives are in our files. Actually, these negatives should be carefully preserved for future generations in a collection at one of our libraries.

For a library wishing to begin a collection like this, the finest source of photographic material is generally the local newspaper which, instead of periodically discarding their negative and print files, could contribute these files to the library. Naturally, this material would have to be screened carefully by a library staff member with the ability to make decisions on the basis of future historic significance as to what pictures and negatives should be kept. This would require a person with a broad knowledge of our times. Klan meetings, for example, will some day become a thing of the past. One library we know of is busily engaged in collecting all of the Klan literature and pictures they can find.

The importance to me of this visual record has probably been brought home even more by my husband's work as a magazine photographer and book illustrator. For example, on an assignment for LOOK, he did a picture story on the training of the first VISTA Volunteers. This first VISTA group was trained right here in North Carolina, but I know of no library which has a visual record of it.

Although my own background before my marriage had been primarily with word books, our venture into books which were a combination of both words and pictures

has sold me on what a rich experience for the reader this blend of words and pictures can become. National publishers such as American Heritage, McGraw-Hill, and Time-Life Books are utilizing this concept more and more. My own knowledge of the development of our state was certainly enhanced considerably by my husband's book *The Face of North Carolina*. Somehow the blend of pictures and text left me with a more complete idea of how our state developed and its growth than any history text alone.

Naturally, picture books should be purchased by a library with somewhat the same criteria as word books. It is my opinion that too much art for art's sake has resulted in an abundance of high priced picture books which many bookstores are forced to mark down for their sales. A picture book or a book which is a blend of words and pictures has no less responsibility to communicate than any word book, and on the whole, should be selected on this basis.

This is not to discourage the selection of beautiful books, but I am thoroughly aware that most libraries have a limited budget which they wish to spend as wisely as possible. Happily, picture books are no longer as expensive to produce as they once were, thus making them more readily available to all of us.

In summation, I might say that I think every good librarian must look outside the doors of his own library at the methods of communication and teaching as the multi-media approach makes its impact on our society.

In closing, I think every librarian should be concerned about two things: the past and the future. The present is passing and everything that is today is a result of what was said and planned and done by men yesterday. Everything that will be in the future must be planned today.

When a hundred years from now a child at the John F. Kennedy Library actually sees and hears President Kennedy say "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," he will, in the library of the future, have in a sense met the man — seen his face and heard his voice, not just read words.

Would that today we could show our young readers the real Jefferson or Lincoln. But this is not our task. I think a hundred years from now historians will look back upon this time as one of great change, an exciting time in American history when many forces were at work in our democracy to shape the future. We do not know what that future will be, but as librarians let us gather up today the history about us—the pictures, the words, the voices — both the good and the bad of our time — so that future generations will never say that we did not preserve for them what we were capable of saving.

I think this is the great task before all of us. In the midst of a complex and confusing society *you are the people* who must pick up the pieces of history and save them.

The lock on the door of the legislature, the parliament, or the assembly hall by order of the King, the Commissar, or the Führer—has historically been followed or preceded by a lock on the door of the printer's, the publisher's, or the bookseller's. —John F. Kennedy.

"The demands of this new world are first of all demands that we think, and learn. We face them ill prepared." —Robert M. Hutchins.