

MATURATION OF A PERIODICAL: 1942-67

by
JANE C. BAHNSEN¹

The first issues of *North Carolina Libraries*, boldly instituted in the face of wartime shortages and dislocations, were little more than news bulletins: five or six pages in which appeared the North Carolina Library Association's announcements of offices and committee activities, a few concise accounts of librarians' activities, and perhaps a major article on a current topic of wide interest; for example, the Victory Book Campaign, or state aid to libraries in North Carolina. In a small and limited way, *North Carolina Libraries* had begun its development along the lines prescribed in its first issue by Guy R. Lyle, President of N.C.L.A. at the time: "To serve as the official medium of communication between the North Carolina Library Association and its membership . . . to stimulate group solidarity among librarians . . . to serve as a clearing house for library news . . . and for vital and timely public relation suggestions . . . to interpret data now being assembled annually by state library agencies and to make the data available to librarians and others . . . to provide an outlet for the publication of significant articles dealing with professional problems."

In the Spring of 1942 there were 337 members in the North Carolina Library Association. A quarter of a century has seen the membership increase to more than 1,500, and the association's journal has grown proportionately in size and scope. A brief review of *North Carolina Libraries* through these years will suggest how well it has fulfilled its original objectives.

During its first nine years the usual size of an issue was eight pages. No pattern of subject matter or features appeared, although book reviews and a number of selective bibliographies were offered, including a series of North Carolina bibliographies designed to aid librarians in organizing well-rounded local collections. Space remained for only a few articles, but both the North Carolina and the Southeastern Library Association conferences were concisely reported, and a succession of surveys by the North Carolina Library Commission was published. Two directories of North Carolina librarians were published during that period, with asterisks preceding the names of association members. (It is perhaps indicative of the association's later growth in prestige among librarians that only about one-third of the names in the first list were so marked.)

With the first issue of Volume X (October, 1951), the Joseph Ruzicka Bookbinding Company of Greensboro assumed the technical responsibilities of publisher, and *North Carolina Libraries* took on a sleeker look, with illustrations and a distinctive layout. The editorial pattern began to take form with book reviews and "The President's Corner" appearing regularly. Special issues were biennially devoted to a membership directory, committee reports, and convention proceedings. An index to the first ten volumes was compiled.

Subtle variations in editorial practices and policies can perhaps be attributed to the frequent turnover in editorial staff. During one period, a number of addresses delivered at various library meetings were printed—addresses by Robert B. Downs, David C. Mearns, Louis R. Wilson, and Susan G. Akers, for example. More recently, speeches by Louis Shores, Richard McKenna, Gerald W. Johnson, and others have been included. At times there seems to be a greater emphasis on the technical trends of librarianship, or, again, on bibliographical aspects.

¹Mrs. Bahnson is assistant librarian, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC at Chapel Hill.

From the first, however, the editors of *North Carolina Libraries* have been successful in placing fairly equal emphasis on all facets of librarianship. Since 1956, reporters (currently called the Editorial Advisory Board) for these fields have served on each staff, representing either the kinds of libraries or the major functions of librarians. Specialists have sometimes been asked to serve as guest editors. In recent years special issues have been assigned to a variety of subject areas: school, public, or special libraries; archives and manuscripts; newspapers; bookselling and publishing. Certain milestones have been observed: the 50th anniversary of the North Carolina Library Association in 1954 with a special issue featuring articles on the history of the association, the development of college, public, and school libraries in the state, and the career of the Citizens' Library Movement; and the Carolina Charter Tercentenary in 1963, with a bibliography of 17th century North Carolina history and a discussion of the books and libraries of North Carolina colonists. National Library Week has been observed annually with special articles.

Little of current significance to North Carolina librarians has been overlooked. Governmental concern with libraries has been treated fully since the forties, when state aid was a campaign issue, and more recently, when federal assistance has become an important factor in library development. Since 1958 an annotated list of new books of North Carolina interest has been included in each issue. The opening of a new library building is invariably noted with an illustrated article. Significant biographical facts are recorded.

North Carolina Libraries has served in many ways through the past twenty-five years: as the voice of the North Carolina Library Association, as the news medium for library activities throughout the state, and as a source of information on a wide array of subjects unlimited by state boundaries.

AN ASSOCIATION COMES OF AGE

by

CARLTON P. WEST¹

Librarians arrived in Charlotte in 1943 with special excitement and anticipation of better times. The General Assembly of 1941 had voted aid for public libraries; the first regional library system in North Carolina had just begun operation in Beaufort, Hyde, and Martin Counties; and *North Carolina Libraries* had recently been born with the issue of February, 1942.

The history of the North Carolina Library Association during this period is indeed a story of deepening interests and substantial accomplishments. Space limitations preclude a detailed account, even a description of all the "bare bones"; the author confines himself to larger developments making N. C. L. A. not only different but more effective in 1967 than in 1943.

Of the 1,727 people estimated in 1943 to be associated with North Carolina libraries, only 337 were members of the association, and about half of these had not paid their dues—a report which strikes familiar, although possibly fainter, chords in our own 1967 times. No marked change occurred during the decade, but expansion was to come.

¹Mr. West is librarian, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University, and a former N.C.L.A. president.