

(1) Separate pieces of legislation authorizing the governing bodies of Bladen, Henderson, Robeson, and Rowan Counties and the City of Lumberton to appropriate funds and levy taxes for the support and maintenance of public libraries. (2) A measure authorizing the voters of Siler City to decide if they want ABC stores, 10 per cent of the profits of which would go for library or recreational purposes. (3) A bill giving the Hamlet Public Library 4 percent of ABC store profits there.

Onslow County attorneys will have access to an improved law library under another local bill enacted into law. The measure directs that one dollar be added to the costs of court in the Jacksonville Municipal Court and that the additional revenue be used to supplement the Onslow County Law Library fund.

No library bill of statewide significance met defeat at the hands of the 1967 General Assembly. However, the controversial statewide local-option 1 per cent sales tax measure, rejected by the House Finance Committee, was of great interest to several library-concerned lawmakers and many of their constituents. Inasmuch as local library support generally must come from sources other than ad valorem taxes, except where voters approve a special levy, the increased local revenue from the extra 1 percent sales tax might have proven to be a source of increased support for libraries in some counties.

LOUIS R. WILSON: DEAN OF AMERICAN LIBRARIANS

by

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Writing on Carlyle for his senior essay, that spring of 1899 in Chapel Hill, Louis Round Wilson became infected with Carlyle's enthusiasm by way of the other's dictum: "The true University of these days is a Collection of Books." Today the nonagenarian but surprisingly busy Dr. Wilson finds all around him the validation of his early idea: education in partnership with libraries. To prove its worth, he rises from his desk in Room 333 of the library that bears his name and points a finger down the hall at the Honors Program reading room, where, as in hundreds of American educational institutions, students are moving ahead through independent reading.

Education as the way out for a materially impoverished state had already been fastened upon by such Tar Heel natives as Alderman and McIver in the early years of the 20th Century and their vision greatly inspired the young Wilson. True, he preferred being *the* University librarian (he began in 1901) to being just another professor of German, but he also had a shrewd idea of the absolute centrality of libraries. "It didn't take me long," he says, "to learn that the library was at the center, an educational institution of its own. It followed that it ought to be developed along educational lines."

Despite the University's being blessed, even then, with a faculty of ability and personality, the library was left to drift with no policy. There was no continuing head, and there had been four different graduate students in charge during the thirty months prior to Wilson's appointment. Wilson changed all that. In those days the spark for librarianship came from the public library movement, an era during which Carnegie was donating buildings, when library schools were being organized, when a few states were setting up library commissions. Young Wilson lost no time: he helped in the formation of the North Carolina Library Association in 1904, acting as its first secretary.

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and in 1909 helped organize the North Carolina Library Commission and was its first chairman.

An irrepressible gadfly, Dr. Wilson showed his fellow Tar Heels in 1921 that the public library of the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts, contained 105,000 volumes, which was more than the University of North Carolina of which Wilson was librarian. Too, the law library of that Massachusetts county contained more volumes than that of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Other Wilsonian fact-finding in the 1920's served to energize the state's leadership. He found, for example, that the reading comprehension of Tar Heel high school seniors was far inferior to the national average; that in North Carolina white schools only two-thirds of the students were earning promotion, and in the Negro schools only half; that a program of library summer reading often increased a student's reading comprehension a full year.

During the decade 1932-42, when he was at the University of Chicago as dean of the nation's first graduate library school, Dr. Wilson's stature was widely recognized through his products—the scores of librarians holding the M.A. and the Ph.D. whom he had guided. His election as president of the American Library Association (1936) was foreshadowed a decade earlier when he had envisaged, as a consultant for the University of Chicago, a graduate library school that would treat librarianship as a profession in the same way that schools of medicine and law treated their disciplines. Dr. Wilson's teaching emphases have always dwelt on (1) distribution of materials, and (2) administration ("not on financial support," he says, "which is always poor"). These two principles are borne out in his major books, the first in *The Geography of Reading* (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938), and the second in *The University Library . . .* (with Maurice F. Tauber, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1945).

When he retired to Chapel Hill in 1942, Dr. Wilson really hit his stride in the place where he had organized and been first director of the Extension Division and of the University Press, had cooperated in the development of the Southern Historical Collection, had supported the construction of two library buildings on campus, had secured numerous endowments, had established the School of Library Science and served as its first dean. Just as a starter he took in hand the editorship of the series of publications marking the University's Sesquicentennial, a task complicated by wartime restrictions on everything from budgets to paper, and he has been going strong ever since.

To be sure, the two hills between his Rosemary Street home and the L. R. Wilson Library make him resort to a taxi these days, but Dr. Wilson still gets an hour's exercise daily, either as a green-thumb gardener or as a neighborhood walker. He is in his

office from 8:45 A.M. to 12:45 P.M., rests after lunch, exercises before supper, and relaxes after supper with Walter Cronkite's newscast and then with the newspaper. The news thus disposed of, Dr. Wilson works until bedtime on all sorts of articles he continues to write. His subjects include family history, University consolidation, and the North Carolina Research Triangle, among others. He still wears out relays of secretaries, but not at the same old breathless pace. One of these days, he avows—this prodigy who was born on December 27, 1876—he must re-read Cicero on old age, whom he claims to have forgotten.

If so, Dr. Wilson will find anew that the great Roman esteemed "an old man in whom there is something of the young." Following that Ciceronian maxim, Dr. Wilson "in body will possibly be an old man, but he will never be an old man in mind."