

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

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NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, 1904-1943¹

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The North Carolina Library Association today celebrates the 39th anniversary of its organization and first annual meeting in Charlotte, November 11 and 12, 1904. The movement to organize the Association was led by Mrs. Annie Smith Ross, the librarian of the Carnegie Library in Charlotte. She corresponded with other librarians in the State concerning the desirability of forming an association, was one of the six persons who met in Greensboro May 14, 1904, to organize the Association, and was elected its first president. The other five members of the group which perfected the organization were Dr. Charles D. McIver, President, and Miss Annie F. Petty, Librarian, State Normal and Industrial College; J. P. Breedlove, Librarian of Trinity College; R. D. Douglas, Editor of the *Greensboro News*; and Louis R. Wilson, Librarian of the University of North Carolina. Dr. McIver and Mr. J. A. Bivins, then principal of the Charlotte High School, were elected vice-presidents, Mr. Wilson, secretary-treasurer, and Mr. Breedlove, Mr. Douglas, and Miss Petty members of the executive committee. Of the 32 charter members of the Association, 21 were from Charlotte.

The program of the first meeting in Charlotte gave clear indication of the spirit and intention of the Association. Miss Anne Wallace and Mr. A. H. Hopkins, librarians of the then newly organized Carnegie libraries of Atlanta and Louisville, described the procedures followed in establishing and organizing free library service in the two most progressive library centers in the South at that time. Dr. Eben Alexander, of the University of N. C., President McIver, President J. C. Kilgo, of Trinity College, and Mr. D. A. Tompkins, of the *Charlotte Observer*, discussed as educators and laymen the role of libraries in a democracy. The first resolution passed by the Association commended Superintendent of Public Instruction J. Y. Joyner for his aggressive

¹ Address at the Biennial Meeting, Charlotte, October 21, 1943.

East Carolina Teachers
College Library
Greenville, N. Car.

program of school library development in North Carolina and urged the provisions of library service for all citizens of the State.

In 1906 the Association enlarged the scope of its activities. It authorized Mrs. Ross, Mr. W. F. Randolph, Secretary of the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Wilson its representatives at the meeting of the American Library Association at Narragansett Pier, R. I., to invite that Association to hold its annual meeting in 1907 in Asheville, and appointed a committee to draft a bill providing for the establishment and support of the North Carolina Library Commission. The invitation for the meeting at Asheville was gladly accepted and a bill for the establishment of the Commission was drafted and introduced in the legislature of 1907, but was not enacted until 1909. The meeting of the A. L. A. in Asheville brought 500 librarians from all parts of the nation to the State and was attended by a large delegation of librarians and laymen from North Carolina. The State press featured the meeting as of unusual educational significance to the Southeast and aided in acquainting North Carolina and the region with the necessity of providing library service for schools, colleges, and the public in general.

The passage of the bill assured the establishment of the North Carolina Library Commission which immediately began the publication of the *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, the operation of traveling libraries, the provision of materials for women's clubs and school debating societies, the assistance of existing libraries in the extension and improvement of their service, the promotion of library service for all the citizenry, and the training of librarians through summer schools and local institutes.

The program of the Commission grew and was matched with appropriations which increased from \$1500 to \$27,500 in 1925. The Association also expanded its

program. The North Carolina High School Debating Union and the Extension Division of the University were organized in 1912-13. Members of the Association attended the organization meeting of the Southeastern Library Association at Signal Mountain in 1920, and Asheville was host to the third meeting of that organization in 1924. In 1922 the *University of North Carolina News Letter* ran a notable series of articles under the general title, "Does North Carolina Read?" In the same year the Extension Division issued a handbook, *The High School Library*, and the library of the North Carolina College for Women began the publication of *Library Notes*.

In 1926 members of the Association began agitation for the improvement of high school libraries which resulted in the adoption of standards for such libraries by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and helped in the organization of the Department of School Libraries of the North Carolina Educational Association. The Association also brought about in 1927 at Charlotte under the stimulation of Professor Frank P. Graham, of the University, the organization of the Citizens' Library Movement, the first citizens' group of this character to be established in the nation.

In the later 1920's the Association witnessed several notable developments. The Department of Library Science of the North Carolina College for Women began the formal training of librarians in 1929-30. County library service to all the population was begun in Davidson and Mecklenburg counties in 1929 in cooperation with the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Library buildings were completed at Duke University and at the University of North Carolina which through their size and the nature and the extent of their collections represented graphically the importance of libraries to a state in the attainment of its educational and industrial development. The dedication of the new building of the University Octo-

ber, 1929, was accompanied by meetings of the Southeastern Library Association and the Southern Conference on Education both of which featured library service in the Southeast. In 1931 the School of Library Science at the University was opened and since that date has graduated 405 librarians.

The early 1930's brought libraries reduced budgets and increased readers. They also brought into existence WPA public library service which, at its peak, employed hundreds of workers, spent \$1,008,775 in the peak year, co-operated with the Library Commission in providing library service for thousands of readers who had been without it, and gave impetus to the movement for state aid which resulted in an annual appropriation of \$100,000 authorized by the legislature in 1941 and increased to \$125,000 in 1943.

Members of the Association also participated in the advancement of school library development. They urged the appointment of a school library supervisor in the State Department of Education (the position was established through the assistance of the General Education Board in 1930) and advocated state support for school libraries. Such expenditures during 1941-42 amounted to \$320,286 of which \$277,725 was spent on elementary and secondary schools for whites, \$42,961 for Negroes. The total number of books in these libraries was 2,413,259 and the number of school librarians having had some formal library training was 690 whereas only two of the librarians who were charter members of the Association had had such

training when the Association was organized in 1904.

Today we review a thirty-nine year period. In 1904 college libraries in the State contained 132,000 volumes; today they contain approximately 2,000,000 volumes. The staff of the Trinity College Library in 1904 numbered one full-time member, in 1942 the staff of Duke University Library numbered 67. In 1904 all the public libraries in the State contained approximately 50,000 volumes. In 1942-43, 80 county, 25 city or town, and 21 Negro public or branch libraries possessed 1,156,657 volumes, operated 40 bookmobiles in 48 counties, spent through local funds and state aid a total of \$611,666.05 for library service to 3,142,540 North Carolinians to whom they loaned 8,958,696 books.

In this record library service to Negroes has not been so general or so extensive as that to whites. It has been provided by city, branch, public and county libraries and through Negro colleges. The North Carolina Library Association for Negroes was organized in 1934 and the Library School of the North Carolina College for Negroes was opened in 1941-42.

This is the foundation which the Association has helped lay for the education and illumination of the people of North Carolina. Today the Association can review this record with pride and with the hope that the state, county, and city governments may enable it to play an increasingly significant part in solving the problems with which the war and the coming peace confront those who serve the interests of democracy.