

RECORDING NORTH CAROLINA AUTHORS' VOICES FOR POSTERITY

Until the last century, only a few major, or else very wealthy, authors left to posterity any visual representation of physical being. Portraits and busts, untrustworthy as many of them are, have been our only reminders that for over two thousand years great thoughts were brought to utterance by minds housed in ordinary human bodies. Nineteenth-century photography gave posterity a better break, and the literary biographer of the future, unless restrained by his publisher's budget, may trace from diaped innocence to mellowed maturity the development of genius visible.

Our present century has made the permanent preservation of sound as commonplace as photography. Thus a second aspect of literary personality, genius audible, may be added to the cultural heritage which we transmit. (And we, of course, are selfish enough to wish that it might be made retroactive, to include Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and company!)

Though recordings of major contemporary poets reading their own poems are now available to schools, no systematic "collection" of authors' voices appears to have been undertaken. The Joint Committee of the North Carolina Library Association and the North Carolina English Teachers Association, after completing its Handbook assignment, decided last summer to sponsor an experimental program to explore the possibilities of starting such a "collection" in North Carolina. Four authors, Mebane Holloman Burgwyn, John Harden, James Larkin Pearson, and Manley Wade Wellman, were invited to appear on a program of the North Carolina English Institute on July 31 and read from their works. The readings were recorded on tape for later transcription to any medium deemed feasible for permanent recording. Two of the same authors, reading the same selections, were recorded in the studio of the Communication Center at Chapel Hill, so that comparative evaluations of quality under different conditions might be made. The other two authors will make similar studio recordings in the near future.

The Joint Committee plans to meet in October or November to hear the recordings and to make recommendations. It will invite representatives of the State Literary and Historical Society, the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters, the University Communication Center, and other interested agencies to attend the meeting and assist in drafting the recommendations.

The project, if carried out, will involve considerable expense and may require several years to catch up with the "backlog" of about ninety living authors whose voices are still to be recorded. A beneficial by-product, and perhaps a partial offset to expenditures, might well be the sale of records of a few selected authors to schools, libraries, and the general public.

—EARL H. HARTSELL,
Associate Professor of English
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill

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Editors of *North Carolina Libraries* have been pleased with requests from out-of-State libraries for "exchange" copies of *NCL*. More recent requests include: Missouri Library Association, "*Show-Me Libraries*"; Lars Frykholm, Librarian, Kungl. Lantbrukshögskolans Bibliotek, Uppsala, Sweden; and from Dorothy Cole, Editor of *Library Literature*, a request to add *NCL* to the list of periodicals regularly indexed.

The Executive Board, with Section Chairmen and Chairmen of the various Committees of the North Carolina Library Association, will meet on October 18th, in Durham, at the Woman's College Library of Duke University, at 10:00 a.m.