

NORTH CAROLINIANA—PROPOSAL FOR A SURVEY

The Executive Committee of the College and Universities Section of NCLA, at a meeting last March 24, explored the questions of the conservation and availability of North Caroliniana. Since all North Carolina libraries and librarians have in common an interest in North Caroliniana and local imprints, it was decided that a committee should be appointed to survey activities in the State directed toward the preservation and making available of material which has local and historical significance.

There already exist major collections of North Caroliniana—at the University of North Carolina, at Duke University, at the State Library and at the Department of Archives and History. Mary L. Thornton's monumental bibliography, *Official Publications of the Colony and State of North Carolina, 1749-1939*, has demonstrated that our official publications have survived and that their locations have been ascertained. Miss Thornton is currently compiling a companion work, a bibliography of the non-official North Caroliniana in the North Carolina Collection of the University. Manuscripts and archives, the unpublished historical source material, are impressive in extent and are conscientiously preserved in the Southern Historical Collection, the Duke University Library manuscripts collections, and the Department of Archives and History. Thanks to the initiative of NCLA, the State's scattered newspaper material may soon be rescued from threatened disintegration or oblivion by the Committee on the Conservation of Newspaper Resources which is vigorously at work and now making a survey of all newspapers formerly or presently published in North Carolina. The Joint Committee (with the North Carolina English Teachers Association) on North Carolina Literature and Bibliography is in the midst of compiling an annotated bibliography of North Carolina fiction which will give the location of copies. The *North Carolina Index*, a guide to North Carolina periodical literature, was last issued in 1949; but Leola M. Ross and Paul Ballance are planning to revive this useful tool, indexing at least 60 leading periodicals published in the State from 1950 to 1955. The North Carolina Collection in Chapel Hill maintains a mounted clipping file, the value of which is proved by its heavy use; and indexing projects of importance have been completed or are in process in the Collection. The State is now being indexed and the State Library is indexing the Raleigh *News and Observer*. Unfortunately, the *News and Observer* indexing, begun in 1926, is now three years behind. Libraries throughout the State are, of course, cataloging North Caroliniana; and some are, perhaps, engaged in other more specialized indexing. A suggestion as to the extent of North Carolina historical publication can be had by a glance at the highly selective but extremely useful *Guide to the Study and Reading of North Carolina History*, by Hugh T. Lefler (1955).

With such an impressive array of talent already in the field, and with such splendid and coordinated institutional depositories in existence, it will surely be asked why the College and Universities Section of NCLA should also busy itself in the matter. There are at least three good reasons, perhaps more.

1. With so much going on, with so much admirable enthusiasm for the State's history, can anyone be certain that he knows what everyone else is doing? Or even what everyone else has already done? It would be highly profitable to provide a clearing house for information about these myriad activities. How better can this be provided than through the library system of the State, which does have a state-wide organization in NCLA, and a group within the organization (the College and Universities Section) whose members have a common concern in North Carolina historical research? It is most unlikely that even the most localized and amateur historian, genealogist, folk-

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lorist or writer will undertake a North Carolina subject without reference to some library located in the State. We librarians are above all persons in a favorable position to discover in detail what is going on among collectors, writers and investigators.

2. A corollary to the first reason advanced is the second—avoidance of duplicated effort. With so much obviously still to be done, how foolish to risk the possibility of having the same work conducted independently in more than one place! Perhaps this is a groundless fear; but it would seem worth the effort to ascertain that in our collecting and in our related services we are not being wasteful of precious time and space. This does not intend to imply that complete centralization or division of labor is possible, or even desirable. "The more the better" is a safer principle than the rigid rules of parsimony and regimentation. Conscious duplication is good; what we must worry about is unconscious duplication.

3. The nearer we approach perfection, the more compelling is the impulse to attain it. The very fact that North Carolina's major research libraries, and the Department of Archives and History, are doing such a comprehensive and exhaustive job points up the need for making a special effort to render them the added assistance which may locate the single, hitherto unrecorded copy of a pamphlet, a map, a short-lived obscure periodical run, or a broadside. The Executive Committee of the College and Universities Section wondered, in particular, if a concerted effort might not bring to light a record of deceased or current periodicals of which there are no records or no known extant copies. Such an effort, we know, will have the blessing of the major depositories because they above all other know the value of finding the missing issue or elusive piece. They, too, the larger they become, are the more quick to acknowledge that it is even more important to know the location of a rare or unique item than it is to acquire it themselves.

To these ends, the College and Universities Section will soon be addressing a questionnaire to all librarians of the State in an attempt to ascertain: (1) what cataloging, indexing, clipping, listing, etc., of North Caroliniana has been done or is being done, on however a modest scale, in our libraries; (2) what materials (manuscripts, typescripts, books, pamphlets, poster, maps, reports, printed or mimeographed periodicals, etc.) pertinent to, or published in, North Carolina are housed in our libraries which by even the slightest chance may not be contained in the collections at Chapel Hill, Durham or Raleigh; and (3) what special steps are being taken locally to preserve—by binding, laminating, microfilming, special shelving, etc.—materials of a fragile or rare character. It is perhaps too soon to hope for complete bibliographical control of North Caroliniana; it is not too soon, however, to take stock of our activities. Further exploration or a program of action may be indicated as a result of this preliminary survey. Less likely but still a possibility, we may discover an entirely satisfactory state of affairs. In either case, the College and Universities Section hopes to report to NCLA as a whole on this matter at the next (1957) biennial conference, and to build a special program on it, with historians, writers, archivists and librarians participating.

—ANDREW H. HORN, *Chairman*
College and Universities Section