
Retrospection: The First Hundred Years of North Carolina's Libraries ~1905~

by Elizabeth H. Smith

7he North Carolina Library Association's centennial year is an appropriate time to begin looking back at North Carolina's libraries. Al Jones did an outstanding job of covering people and events in the *North Carolina Library Association Centennial Handbook, 1904-2004*. This first in a series of articles will highlight events and statistics about North Carolina's libraries in 1905, which were collected from various publications in Joyner Library's Verona Joyner Langford North Carolina Collection. The *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina* and the *Biennial Report of the State Librarian* provided information about school and public libraries. Information about college and private libraries was taken from the *First Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission* and from books about the institutions of higher education.

School libraries expanded rapidly during the early years of the twentieth century, following the passage of the Rural School Library Law in 1901 and the law establishing supplementary libraries in 1903. The Scales Library Act of 1897, however, became inoperative because it was not brought forward with the Revisal of 1905, which meant there was no North Carolina law authorizing towns to establish and support public libraries through taxation. During this time only subscription and association libraries could be established, and they were dependent on the generosity of an organizing committee and the unpredictable public. College and university libraries were a room in a multipurpose building or a set of shelves in a reading room or housed in an office.

The North Carolina Library Association, which had been organized in 1904, actively supported library interests throughout the state and was instrumental in securing the passage of the Library Commission Act in 1909, which put the support of public libraries on the same plane with public schools and municipal institutions. Library Commission Secretary Minnie W. Leatherman and Chairman Louis Round Wilson reported about the newly-organized North Carolina Library Association:

Every one actively engaged in library work in North Carolina and every one interested in the educational advancement of the state, is urged to become a member. If the membership of the Association is large, if its meetings are well attended, if the problems of library work are carefully studied by it, the Association will be able to wield a powerful influence and to aid the Commission in effecting needed reforms and improvements.¹

The Association would be wise to promote these suggestions in this centennial year by recruiting new members, encouraging larger attendance at biennial conferences, and working for additional library support and development throughout North Carolina.

The *First Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission* listed the following organized libraries in 1905:

[*F=Free; Fb=Free to Blind; Fr=Free for Reference; Fs=Free to Students; S=Subscription]

Place	Name of Library	Established	Type*
Public			
Asheville	Asheville Library	1879	S
Charlotte	Carnegie Library	1901	F
Gastonia	Gastonia Library	1904	S
Greensboro	Public Library	1902	F
Ledger	Good-Will Free Library	1886	F
Montreat	Cora A. Stone Memorial Library	1905	S, Fs
Mooresville	Mooresville Library	1897	F
Raleigh	Olivia Raney Library	1901	F
Wadesboro	Wadesboro Public Lib	1905	S
Winston-Salem	Carnegie Public Library	1905	F

College and School

Belmont	Belmont Abby	1885	Fr
Boone	Appalachian Training School	1903	F
Chapel Hill	University of North Carolina	1795	S
Charlotte	Biddle University	1867	F
Charlotte	Elizabeth College	1897	Fs
Concord	Scotia Seminary	1880	F
Conover	Concordia College	1881	Fs
Davidson	Union Library, Davidson College	1837	S
Durham	Trinity College	1887	F
Elizabeth City	State Colored Normal School	1891	Fs
Elon College	Elon College	1890	Fs
Enfield	Brick Industrial School	1895	F
Franklinton	Albion Academy	1878	F
Greensboro	NC State Normal & Industrial College	1892	Fs
Mount Pleasant	North Carolina College	1859	F
Murfreesboro	Chowan College Library	1848	S
Raleigh	Meredith College	1899	Fs
Raleigh	St. Mary's School	1842	F
Raleigh, West	NC College of Agriculture & Mechanical Arts	1889	Fs
Red Springs	Southern Presbyterian College	1897	Fs
Winston-Salem	Salem Academy	1802	F

Institution

Raleigh	Laura Bridgeman Library	1884	Fb
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Society

Franklin	Franklin Public Library Club	1901	S; Fr
Saluda	Saluda Library	1894	S; Fr ²

The **Asheville Public Library**, which was given in 1899 by Mr. George Pack, was the only subscription library in the state with its own building.³

Public Libraries

Public libraries were still new in 1905, just eight years after the first free public library supported by public funds opened in 1897 in Durham. The Good-Will Free Library in Ledger, however, has been described as the first free library in North Carolina and the third county library in the United States. Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Charles Hallet Wing moved to Ledger in Mitchell County and opened a free 15,000-volume lending library in 1886.⁴ Elaine Von Oesen's "Public Library Service in North Carolina and the W.P.A.," which is the first history of public library development in North Carolina during the first half of the twentieth century, includes all of the important influences on public library development during that time.

State Librarian Miles O. Sherrill reported in the *Biennial Report of the State Librarian for the Two Fiscal Years Ending Nov. 30, 1906*:

—Prof. D.H. Hill (Agricultural and Mechanical College) and Prof. E.P. Moses (Superintendent of the Raleigh Graded Schools) were to assist Sherrill in securing all books, booklets, and pamphlets written by North Carolinians.⁵

—“The Library has been reclassified according to the Dewey Decimal Classification, and has been cataloged by the card system, which is used now in all libraries of any size. The cards are placed in a cabinet of drawers in alphabetical order. The cabinet faces the door of the main library room, where all can see it. Every book in the main library is now represented in the catalogue by one or more cards giving the author, title, subject, place and date of publication, number and size of volumes, and also the exact locality of the work upon the shelves.”⁶

—“The books are divided under the following general heads, viz: Reference-books, Fiction, Collective Biography, Biography, Philosophy, Religion, Sociology, Philology, Natural Science, Useful Arts, Fine Arts, Literature, Description, Travel, and History.”⁷

—Due to the hard work of Acting Janitor Mr. Edward Forest Lewis, the State Library is in better condition than ever before and he should receive better pay.⁸

—The position of Archivist or Historian, to be appointed or elected, was recommended to take charge and organize all bills, petitions, and letters, which have been cumulating in the Capitol for more than one hundred years. The records were to be arranged, labeled, and stored so that they would be accessible.⁹

—The need for a new fire-proof building to replace the one that housed the State and Supreme Court libraries was pointed out due to the importance of many materials that could not be replaced in the event of fire.¹⁰

—Some of the State Library's magazines were donated and most of them were bound; newspapers, many of which were donated by the editors, were bound in book form.¹¹

—The State Library greatly needed more room, with books being held on the floor in the east wing and hundreds more in the basement of the Agricultural Building.¹²

—State Library statistics for 1905-1906 include the following:

Books received from all sources during the last two years	2,723
Total volumes in the Library	39,513
Total bound newspapers in the Library	2,003 ¹³

School Libraries

Expansion was the keyword for school libraries in 1905 with the rapid establishment of schools in rural areas and the need to provide reading materials for children. Increasing numbers (libraries, children, and funds) tell the history of this movement.

Reports from Superintendent of Public Instruction J.Y. Joyner for the scholastic years 1904-1906 include the following:

Rural libraries established during this two-year period	399
Total rural libraries on December 1, 1906	1,305
Cost to establish all rural libraries in less than five years	\$42,000
Total volumes held	117,900
Children served	114,575 ¹⁴

Annual state support to rural libraries during 1905 was \$7,500. Expenditures for library buildings increased during this time, as shown in the overall amounts below:

	Rural	City	North Carolina
1904-1905	\$ 8,391.35	\$1,798.37	\$10,189.72
1905-1906	\$11,176.16	\$2,544.52	\$13,720.68 ¹⁵

The report includes a table of library expenditures by county. Donations to 23 rural libraries during this time totaled \$822.50.¹⁶

College and University Libraries

The early history of college and university libraries can be found in histories prepared from research of institutional records and in statistical reports compiled from information submitted by the libraries. Library Web sites are an additional source of historical information.

Several of the Colleges and Schools listed in the *First Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission* no longer exist under those names:

Biddle University, Charlotte, became Johnson C. Smith University in 1923.¹⁷

Elizabeth College, Charlotte, a small Lutheran college for women from 1897 until 1915, when it moved to Salem, VA.¹⁸

Scotia Seminary, Concord, merged with Barber Memorial College of Anniston, AL, in 1930 and was renamed Barber-Scotia College.¹⁹

Concordia College, Conover, was discontinued in 1933.²⁰

Albion Academy, Franklinton, was a co-educational school for African-Americans founded in 1866 by the PCUSA Board of Missions for Freedmen.²¹

Southern Presbyterian College, Red Springs, became Flora MacDonald College in 1903.²²

Books about individual colleges and schools provided brief information about their libraries around 1905.

—For nearly fifty years the **Davidson College** library had been in a room with no heat or lights.²³

—James B. Duke's first donation to Trinity College (later **Duke University**) was a library building (dedicated February 23, 1903) plus \$10,000 for books. Duke President Kilgo said about the library: "It is the one department...that measures the future development of the College."²⁴

—**Guilford College** librarian Julia White was assembling a small Quakeriana collection, which was not lost in the King Hall fire of 1908 because she “had stored many of the oldest and rarest of the Friends’ books in the North Carolina Yearly Meeting vault.”²⁵

—The cornerstone was laid for a new building at **Mars Hill College** in the spring of 1905, which would include a library room, an auditorium, recitation rooms, music rooms, and the business office. Two years later plans were underway for a library and classroom building.²⁶

—The **Meredith College** library, called the General Library and Reading Room, was in a small room on the second floor of the beautiful Main Building located at the corner of Blount and Edenton streets, which is pictured in Rebecca Murray’s book.²⁷

—By 1905 the **North Carolina State University** library had moved from the Main Building to the new Pullen Hall. Professor librarian D.H. Hill, who taught English and bookkeeping, was library committee chair and sole selector of books, which were mainly humanities and history at this technical and agricultural college.²⁸

—The **Queens College** library was in the room that later housed the business office, which was an improvement over the previous one that had a few books in a room next to President Bridges’s office.²⁹

—Charges at **St. Mary’s College** were raised to \$225 plus \$25 for laundry, library, and laboratory fees.³⁰

—Smith Hall, which housed **UNC’s** library, was deemed unsatisfactory in 1905, and President Venable secured a \$50,000 (later increased to \$55,000) donation from Andrew Carnegie with the standard stipulation that UNC raise a matching endowment.³¹ For years Smith Hall served as a library and ballroom until President Battle agreed that dancing in the library was improper and trustees approved a gymnasium that could be used as a ballroom.³²

—The **Wake Forest** library was kept open two hours each in the morning and in the afternoon by students who received college fees in return for working two hours a day “to preserve order and keep a record of all books and periodicals given out on loan.”³³

—**Woman’s College (UNC-G)** received Andrew Carnegie funds in 1905 for a library building, which was damaged in a 1932 fire.³⁴

North Carolina’s libraries, which often shared quarters with offices, churches, and retail establishments in 1905, grew rapidly in the early twentieth century with support from library legislation, including the establishment of the North Carolina Library Commission and the organization of the North Carolina Library Association. The appointment of trained librarians was one of the major factors in library development during the next ten years when some libraries moved to separate buildings, and there was growing support to expand library holdings and improve services to meet the needs of students. The next article in the series will review that decade of rapid development for North Carolina’s libraries.

References

¹North Carolina Library Commission, *First Biennial Report, 1909-1910* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1910), 20-21.

²*Ibid.*, 25-27.

³*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴William S. Powell, *The North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968), 277, 539.

⁵*Biennial Report of the State Librarian for the Two Fiscal Years Ending Nov. 30, 1906* (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell, 1906), 5.

⁶Ibid., 6.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 9.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 10-11.

¹²Ibid., 11-12.

¹³Ibid., 36

¹⁴*Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, 1904-1905 and 1905-1906* (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell, 1907), 9, 370.

¹⁵Ibid., 104, 110, 211.

¹⁶Ibid., 212-18, 193.

¹⁷“Down Through the Years: The Heritage of Johnson C. Smith University.” <<http://archives.jcsu.edu/echo/>>

¹⁸“The New South Neighborhoods: Elizabeth.” <<http://www.cmbpf.org/essays/elizabeth.html>>

¹⁹“Scotia Seminary, A Source of 19th Century Learning.” <http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/1297/Scotia_Seminary_a_source_of_19th_century_learning>

²⁰“History of Concordia College.” <<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nccconov/concord1.htm>>

²¹“The American Presbyterian/Reformed Historical Sites Registry.” <http://history.pcusa.org/pres_hist/hist_sites_synod.html>

²²“Flora Macdonald Academy History.” <<http://www.floramacdonald.org/history/history.html>>

²³Cornelia Rebekah Shaw, *Davidson College; Intimate Facts* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), 219.

²⁴Earl W. Porter, *Trinity and Duke, 1892-1924: Foundations of Duke University* (Durham: Duke UP, 1964), 91.

²⁵Dorothy Lloyd Gilbert, *Guilford: a Quaker College* (Greensboro, NC: Printed for Guilford College by J. J. Stone, 1937), 288-89.

²⁶John Angus McLeod, *From These Stones: Mars Hill College, 1856-1968* (Mars Hill: Mars Hill College, 1968), 210, 212.

²⁷Rebecca Murray, “*This Essential Part*”: *The First 1,000 Books of the Library of Baptist Female University* (Raleigh, Friends of the Carlyle Campbell Library, 1991), 2; Mary Lynch Johnson, *A History of Meredith College* (Raleigh, Meredith College, 1956), 121.

²⁸Alice Elizabeth Reagan, *North Carolina State University: a Narrative History* (Ann Arbor, MI.: Edwards Brothers, 1987), 45; “History of NCSU Libraries’ Directors.” <<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/administration/aboutdirectors.html>>

²⁹Mildred Morse McEwen, *Queens College Yesterday and Today* (Charlotte: Queens College Alumnae Association, 1980), 87.

³⁰Martha Stoops, *The Heritage: The Education of Women at St. Mary’s College, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1842-1982* (Raleigh: St. Mary’s College, 1984), 163.

³¹Edward G. Holley, *The Library, Philanthropy, Publications, & UNC’s Emergence as a Major American University* (Chapel Hill: Hanes Foundation, 1998), 9.

³²William S. Powell, *The First State University: a Pictorial History of the University of North Carolina*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1992), 108.

³³George Washington Paschal, *History of Wake Forest College* (Wake Forest: Wake Forest College, 1943), 145.

³⁴Virginia Terrell Lathrop, *Educate a Woman: Fifty Years of Life at the Woman’s College of the University of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1942), 40.

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