

# Opinion Survey: North Carolina Libraries

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Since early in 1971 the future of *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* has gone from worse, to bad, to better. At the spring Board meeting in Greenville, it was voted to subsidize the journal for a recommended period, and a new editor, editorial board, and business manager were chosen. Of all the problems facing the main publication of the association, the worst seems to be patronage.

At the North Carolina Library Association convention a questionnaire was distributed to over four hundred members with the request that they complete and return it to the editor of *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES*. The questionnaire was aimed primarily at gathering as accurate a reading on the membership's opinion as possible. With the publication in serious trouble already the support of the membership is vital.

The results of the questionnaire are in, and there seems to be a great divergence of concerned opinion on what the membership wants, deems necessary and would hope to find between the familiar covers of *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES*. The single most disheartening fact is that only a hundred members bothered to respond at all. Should we judge that only a fourth of the membership cared if the journal

goes under? I think not. Too often we sit by passively and let others do the work, but when they can no longer carry on, and withdraw, we come running forward shouting, "Why didn't someone tell me?" We are telling you.

When asked to rate the regular features of the journal the "Report from the President" received 48 votes from those who felt this part of the publication was essential. There were only 9 who gave it a low priority, and 4 of them felt it was completely unnecessary. Fifty-one felt that "library round-up" was desirable, and 42 gave it a low rating. Great divergence of opinion was also shown when 25 of the members rated the section on "A.L.A. News" high, while 32 gave it a medium rating and 27 a low rating. Seven members felt it was completely unnecessary. Many had no opinion on several of the categories. The membership was evenly divided when rating the section devoted to minutes of the Association. Fifty-nine felt that the publication should include a membership directory, 20 felt coolly about it, and 11 gave it a low priority. Forty-three felt that an index was necessary, 24 gave it a low rating and 17 felt it was low priority or unnecessary. Six had no opinion. Feature articles and "New North Carolina Books" received strong endorsement.

Professional book reviews were almost a draw, 55 saying they wanted them with 44 opposing. Twenty-five members felt there was a need for trade book reviews, while 44 opposed this idea. There was wide difference of opinion when asked what new sections might be considered for future issues. The comments ranged from "student reactions" to "North Carolina library schools." Many asked for news of libraries from the university level to the school level. There was a suggestion that an "idea exchange" might be beneficial. One member asked that each issue be devoted to one timely subject, while another was more interested in what positions were available in the profession.

The opinions on which topics association members might like to see in future issues were equally varied. They ranged from "library automation" and "service to disadvantaged" to "unions and staff associations" and "articles on North Carolina authors." Other suggestions were "fiction about drugs, national figures, how librarians get into the library field, federal funding, library management, censorship, information on historical collections, and A-V selection."

The question on how many times *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* should be published was one that most everyone had an opinion on. Seventy said quarterly, 18 said three times a year, 16 said twice a year and 2 felt it unwise to publish it at all. Eighty-five of the membership responding said they read the journal regularly, 7 read it seldom and one member said he never read it at all! One wonders how this person could fill out the questionnaire!

Of those responding, 47 said they were members of ALA and 58 stated they held membership in SELA. Ten said that they were college librarians, 9 university librarians, 8 junior college librarians, 25 school librarians, and 27 public librarians. Library experience was almost evenly divided with about 22 members each in four of the categories, 1-5 years experience, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years. Six members had over 20 years of experience. Of

the number responding to the questionnaire, 35 hold AB or BS degrees, 55 have master's, and 9 have doctorates.

Whatever conclusions can be drawn are not sweeping. There was a great divergence of opinion, but it also seems that there was a great concern for *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES*. The greater number of members responding had advanced degrees, and most worked in college or public libraries; yet the comments from school librarians showed concern for better ways to improve their abilities as members of the profession.

Innovation is clearly being called for; but since only one-fourth of the membership who were given the opportunity chose to respond, one must arrive at one of two conclusions. The first of these might be that only 25 per cent of the entire Association's membership really cares about the journal, and of this 25 per cent the opinions about the journal's contents cover a broad spectrum in which the positive opinions of what the journal contains outweigh the negative ones. The second conclusion is that the manner and time in which the questionnaire was distributed were probably not ideal ones for soliciting a response which would reflect accurately the feelings of the membership at large. I personally hope that the journal will continue, that it will flourish and that out of the hard times upon which it has fallen it will soar like the phoenix.

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