
Retrospection: The First Hundred Years of North Carolina's Libraries ~1930~

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7his third in a series of articles about North Carolina's libraries focuses on the silver anniversary year of the North Carolina Library Association and progress that libraries have made. Following tremendous changes in educational, economic, and social life after the war, librarians realized that their institutions would have to adapt to the needs of the people instead of expecting to change the public. The war effort of the American Library Association, which had provided reading materials to the military, resulted in men developing the library habit and they later looked to the library for information on rehabilitation and employment.

One of the highlights for North Carolina librarians in 1924 was the first organized biennial conference of the Southeastern Library Association at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, during which Dr. Louis R. Wilson was elected president. The topic of two general sessions was Adult Education. At the closing general session, a representative of Biltmore Industries delighted each of the 127 librarians with a suit made of homespun.



**SELA meeting at Grove Park Inn, Asheville, N.C.
October 17, 1924 ¹**

The following libraries were open in 1930:

Towns with tax supported public libraries

Albemarle
Andrews
Asheville
Black Mountain
Burlington
Charlotte
Concord
Durham
Edenton
Gastonia
Goldsboro

Greensboro
Greenville
Henderson
Hendersonville
Hickory
High Point
Lexington
Morganton
Mount Airy
Oteen
Raleigh

Rocky Mount
Salisbury
Statesville
Tarboro
Warrenton
Washington
Weldon
Wilmington
Wilson
Winston-Salem

Towns with association libraries operated under clubs or associations, some of which received appropriations from the town

Aberdeen	Lincolnton	Rowland
Beaufort	Lumberton	Rutherfordton
Brevard	Marion	Saluda
Dunn	Monroe	Sanford
Erwin	Montreat	Shelby
Fayetteville	Murphy	Smithfield
Forest City	New Bern	Southern Pines
Graham	Old Fort	Southport
Hamlet	Oxford	Tryon
Highlands	Pinebluff	Wadesboro
Hillsboro	Pinehurst	Waynesville
Kinston	Reidsville	

Universities and Colleges

Atlantic Christian College	Flora MacDonald College	North Carolina State Library
Belmont Abbey	Greensboro College	North Carolina State College
Catawba College	Guilford College	North Carolina Supreme Court
Chowan College	High Point College	Queens College
Davidson College	Lenoir-Rhyne College	Salem College
Duke University	Meredith College	University of North Carolina
Elon College	North Carolina College for Women	Wake Forest College

Colleges and Schools

Appalachian State Teachers College	Lees-McRae College	Peace Institute
Asheville Normal	Louisburg College	Saint Mary's School
Brick Junior College	Mars Hill College	Weaver College
Campbell College	Mitchell College	West Carolina Teachers College
East Carolina Teachers College	Nash County Training School	Wingate Junior College

High Schools with Full-Time Librarians

Biltmore, Biltmore	H. Fletcher, Asheville	R.J.Reynolds, Winston-Salem
Boyden, Salisbury	H. Morson, Raleigh	Roanoke Rapids
Central, Charlotte	High Point	Senior, Asheville
D. Millard, Asheville	Kinston	Senior, Greensboro
Durham	Monroe	Thomasville Orphanage
Goldsboro	New Bern	
Graham	New Hanover, Wilmington	

Towns with Negro Public Libraries

Asheville	Greensboro	Weldon
Charlotte	Henderson	Wilmington
Durham	Laurinburg	Winston-Salem

Negro School and College Libraries

Agricultural & Technical College	NC College for Negroes, Durham	State Normal School, Fayetteville
Bennett College	St. Augustine	Teachers College, Winston-Salem ²
Johnson C. Smith University	Shaw University	
Livingstone	State Normal School, Elizabeth City	

Public Libraries

Miss Marjorie Beal assumed her position as Secretary and Director of the North Carolina Library Commission in September 1930 after Mrs. Lillian B Griggs left to become librarian of Woman's College at Duke University.³ Library use had increased by 1930 because families who had less money for entertainment and travel had discovered libraries, but funding for public libraries, however, had decreased. The trend for subscription libraries to become free libraries was growing, with the prediction that all public libraries would be free by 1934, and many libraries were enlarging their facilities to meet increasing use.

The Commission reported that 2,080,791 people (62% of North Carolina's population) resided in small towns or in rural areas without public libraries. It was the Commission's responsibility to provide books for these residents through traveling libraries to schools and towns

or through interlibrary loans, which were free except for transportation charges. Since the number of new books (4,250) was only a few more than the discards (4,021), it was difficult to meet school and community requests for traveling libraries. Organizations such as the Woman's Club, the Grange, the Home Demonstration Clubs, and Parent Teacher Associations began to borrow books from the Library Commission to meet the needs of local readers, and in some locations several counties began to cooperate in providing library services. The Library Commission staff advertised libraries through WPTF radio in Raleigh and hosted a regular radio broadcast for school children through the North Carolina Radio School. Field workers visited public libraries to teach staff how to complete the technical work and to improve the libraries for community users.⁴

Statistics reported for the State Library included the following:

Fiction loaned	31,701
Non fiction loaned	12,676
Book collection on July 1, 1930	52,779

Financial Statement

	Allotment	Disbursements
Salaries	\$15,724	\$14,888
Supplies & materials	500	333
Postage, telephone, etc.	1,000	998
Travel	1,800	1,243
Printing and binding	1,000	779
Repairs	50	40
General Expense	50	50
Equipment (books)	4,500	1,477
(office)	500	128
Workmen's Compensation	75	75
Estimated receipts	300	299
Total	\$24,900	\$19,788 ⁵

In support of the initiative to improve libraries and increase the number of trained librarians, three foundations—the Carnegie Corporation, the General Education Board, and the Rosenwald Fund—held a conference on library development in the South on January 3, 1930, in New York City. Discussion at the meeting centered on the Southeastern Library Association Policy Committee's recommendations made at its December 1929 meeting in Atlanta, the first being a call for a general survey of the whole library school situation in the South made by the ALA Board of Education for Librarianship.⁶

Developments in libraries were regularly reported in the "Libraries and Librarians" column in the *North Carolina Library Bulletin*. The March 1930 issue gave the following information about public libraries:

In **Albemarle**, the Stanly County Public Library held a children's vacation reading course. Each book in **Asheville's** Pack Memorial Library was read an average of eleven times during the year. Charlotte Public Library opened branches in **Huntersville** and Davidson. The **Dunn** Public Library opened in January over the Marvin Wade Store. **Durham** Public Library circulated 125,247 books from its 22,916 volumes. In **Townsville** the first branch of Henderson County's H. Leslie Perry Memorial Library was to be housed in a general store, and the library patron-owner was to be the branch librarian. In **Greenville**, the \$50,000 Sheppard Memorial Library contract was awarded to John W. Hudson of Raleigh. The **High Point** Public Library set aside a "forgiving day" when all books that had been kept overtime could be returned without the usual fine. In **Lenoir**, the chairman of the Woman's Club Literature Committee and a representative of the committee to establish a library had secured quarters in the basement of the Bernhardt-Seagle Company. In **Lexington**, the January circulation of its 9,342 volume book collection was 22,492, even with the rule that a person could check out only one book at a time. The Union County public library and museum in **Monroe**, which was housed on the second floor of the courthouse, held a public opening reception on January 23, 1930. Woman's club members were to be volunteer librarians. In **Mount Airy**, a campaign in support of a public library for Mount Airy and Surry County provided speakers for all local churches and civic and fraternal organizations. Jessie Scott donated his valuable collection of Indian relics and colonial, Civil War, and old English firearms to the Thomas Hackney Braswell Memorial Library in **Rocky Mount**, upon his death, under the condition that it be stored in suitable locked cabinets, which would be placed in a permanent room when the library was enlarged. The **Goldsboro** High School librarian had organized a library club with 28 members who helped in the library during their free period.⁷

The September 1930 column announced the following:

The addition of a second story at the **Charlotte** public library was to double the capacity of the book stacks. The Durham Kiwanis Club turned over to the public library a well-equipped children's room. In **Greensboro**, a section in the boys' and girls' department of the public library was furnished for Boy Scouts with books on nature, Indians, biography, sport, scouting, and handicraft, etc. The **Marshall** library, which was in the Presbyterian Church vestibule, was open on Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons, after being closed for two years. The **Spray** community library, which opened June 14, 1930, reported 3,000 circulations in the first two months and 600 borrowers.⁸

In the December 1930 column the following libraries reported special activities:

The **Asheville** Civitan Club appointed a committee to consider aiding Pack Memorial Library by urging commissioners to keep appropriations up-to-date and to support a county library system in which trucks would deliver books to rural areas. The **Ayden** Woman's Club assisted the staff to keep the library open on Friday afternoons during the summer so that high school students could do their parallel reading. The **Carthage** public library was open from noon to one o'clock for those children who came to town on the school trucks. The **Charlotte** Public Library served Mecklenburg County with 98 distribution places through schools. All but one school had a library area and five towns had branch libraries. The **Dunn** library recently re-opened with a good circulation. The contract for a new public library for **Gastonia** was awarded to C.W. Spencer on September 29, 1930, for \$16,000, exclusive of plumbing and heating. The architect was Hugh E. White. The Saturday afternoon story hour at the Negro library in **Greensboro** had grown from a few children to more than sixty. In **Henderson**, library instruction for English classes included the purpose of the library; parts of a book; arrangement of the library; and use and types of reference books, which compared encyclopedias and dictionaries, *World Almanac*, *Lippincott's Pronouncing Dictionary*, atlases, *Who's Who*, and *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*. The public library in **Scotland Neck**, which was temporarily in the back of Cherry's Store after the January 1929 fire, had moved to the mayor's office. Interested citizens in **Wadesboro** organized the Anson County Library Commission to improve service and to make the library more financially sound.⁹

The Durham Public Library was a leader in another aspect of service during this time. The persistence of the librarian, who had worked with library truck service during the war, resulted in the purchase of a book truck to deliver library books to remote areas of the county. In 1923, the Kiwanis Club purchased a long, blue Ford truck with four doors on each side and library service reached schools, communities, and homes throughout Durham County.



Miss Kiwanis, the book truck contributed to the Durham Public Library by the Kiwanis Club of Durham. The truck recently went on a visit to the Burlington Public Library.¹⁰

The 1928-1930 Biennial Report of State Librarian Carrie L Broughton reveals the Library, like all other departments, received substantial budget cuts, which made it difficult to operate with their already-small appropriation. She said it was difficult to measure and record statistics for reference work, which is still the case today, because it often took hours to fill requests by mail and telephone, as well as those within the library. Interlibrary loans were increasing, with a ten-day loan period from the time of receipt. There was an increasing interest in family history, with requests for information arriving almost daily. The staff, however, was too small for them to do private family history research, but they were willing to refer users to a competent genealogist. Their family history research materials included volumes of family, state, and county histories and twenty periodical subscriptions with genealogical information. Holdings of the State Library in 1930 included:

Volumes in general library	43,730
Volumes in government	7,966
Bound newspapers	5,561
Bound magazines	5,605 ¹¹

School Libraries

During 1929-1930 school libraries added almost 150,000 volumes, at a cost of \$128,441.55, to make a total of 1,300,000 books in all schools.¹² The following report indicates a steady increase in funds spent during this time:

State Aid for School libraries and Local and County Funds Spent

Year	Total
1926-1927	\$39,548.55
1927-1928	43,394.18
1928-1929	59,844.50
1929-1930	66,565.73 ¹³

Libraries were becoming an integral part of school activities, with books being used for classroom assignments and for recreational reading. Circulation was satisfactory even though statistics had not been kept in all schools. Although school libraries did not grow as rapidly around 1930 due to the economic stress, book selection continued to be a priority and schools worked to improve libraries by hiring librarians.

University and College Libraries

College libraries were affected more than any other type during the war because of decreased enrollments that resulted in lower funding. The decade after the war was spent rebuilding their financial support.

-**Davidson** and **Elon** colleges received funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to purchase new books for collateral reading, which did not include textbooks.¹⁴

-**Duke University** added twenty-three new library staff members; the hospital library included books in French, German, Chinese, Arabic, Italian, and Italian.¹⁵

-At **East Carolina**, the 1930 planning report mandated the completion of the library building and an increase in book appropriations. President Wright was an advocate for the "status of the library and the expansion of its holdings." It had been rumored on campus that the new library would be named for J.Y. Joyner, but it was not officially named until later.¹⁶

-**Guilford College**, which had been turned down for a Carnegie grant because it needed to improve its facilities, connected the library to the central heating system during the summer of 1930. After other improvements such as the addition of a staff assistant and a new lighting system, Carnegie Corporation awarded an annual grant of two thousand dollars for four years.¹⁷

-**Lees-McRae College**, which recognized that a library was one priority for achieving accreditation, hired a librarian in late 1929. She organized a book binding class to teach students a craft and to preserve the 500 books she found in a campus reading room. She also started special North Carolina and Appalachian collections.¹⁸

-The **Lenoir-Rhyne College** library, which had been lost in a fire that destroyed the administration building in 1927, was rebuilding under the guidance of the Lenoir-Rhyne Gift Library Commission. The college had undertaken a drive to raise \$50,000 for a library building and faculty and alumni had planned a \$50,000 endowment for the library.¹⁹

-The **St. Mary's College** library, which had 4,574 volumes in 1930, began to grow steadily with gifts of private collections and funds for the purchase of books.²⁰

-The **University of North Carolina** library, which had been in its new building one year, was pleased with the advancements made possible by the new facility. The Class of 1930 and the Order of the Grail presented two drinking fountains to be placed on the second floor. Planning continued for the new Library School, which was announced at the dedication of the library building to open in September 1931. Book funds were cut \$10,000 and staff positions were lost.²¹

-The **Western Carolina** library, which was housed in the multipurpose Joyner Building from 1913-1953, was described as "painfully inadequate" in 1930: "There were old bookcases...homemade...three or four thousand books...weren't carefully selected...the library would buy a dozen...or two...or three copies of a book that was going to be used in history or English..." Library holdings in 1930 were 6,275.²²

The first quarter of the twentieth century saw the establishment of libraries in separate buildings and a growing support to expand library holdings to meet the needs of students. One of the most important improvements in the library campaign in North Carolina was the increasing number of trained librarians who began to develop libraries throughout the state. Looking ahead, the future brightened with the 1931 law that changed the method for distributing support for school libraries so that new books would be included in the county's capital outlay and schools would be allotted money for library supplies and replacements. These changes were expected to help school libraries keep their current standards. The future of public libraries and those in institutions of higher education was also bright with a steady increase in support.

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- ² *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 7 (September 1930): 295-298.
- ³ *North Carolina Library Commission Twelfth Report for the Biennium 1930/1932*, 2.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.
- ⁵ *North Carolina Library Commission Twelfth Report for the Biennium 1930/1932*, 7.
- ⁶ *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 7 (March 1930): 231
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 238-242.
- ⁸ *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 7 (September 1930): 281-283.
- ⁹ *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 8 (December 1930): 4-5.
- ¹⁰ *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 5 (June 1924): 204
- ¹¹ *Biennial Report of the State Librarian of North Carolina from July 1, 1928 to June 30, 1930*. Raleigh: State Library, 1930, 3-4.
- ¹² *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 8 (December 1930): 2.
- ¹³ *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, 1928-1929 and 1929-1930*. Part 1. Raleigh, Department of Public Instruction, 39.
- ¹⁴ *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 7 (September 1930): 279
- ¹⁵ *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 7 (September 1930): 281; 7 (March 1930): 240.
- ¹⁶ Mary Jo Bratton, *East Carolina University: The Formative Years, 1907-1982*. Greenville: ECU Alumni Association, 1986, 174, 161.
- ¹⁷ Dorothy Lloyd Gilbert. *Guilford: a Quaker College*. Greensboro, NC: Printed for Guilford College by J.J. Stone, 1937, 289-290.
- ¹⁸ Margaret Tufts Neal. *And Set Aglow a Sacred Flame: History of the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association, 1895-1942*. Banner Elk: Pudding Stone, 1983, 135
- ¹⁹ Jeff L. Norris and Ellis G. Boatman. *Fair Star: A Centennial History of Lenoir-Rhyne College*. Norfolk: Donning, 1990, 5; *North Carolina Library Bulletin*, 8 (December 1930): 5.
- ²⁰ Katherine Batts Salley, ed. *Life at Saint Mary's. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1942, 218-219.*
- ²¹ Report of the Librarian of the University of North Carolina 1929-1930, 3.
- ²² Curtis W. Wood and H. Tyler Blethen. *The Illustrated History of Western Carolina University*. Cullowhee: Western Carolina, 1989, 128, 139.

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