

# The State of North Carolina's Libraries

Mary Boone at the Ogilvie Lecture, October 8, 2009, Greenville

## Introduction

It is a great honor for me to be here today, addressing issues of librarianship in honor of Philip S. Ogilvie. Phil Ogilvie was the State Librarian of North Carolina from December 1, 1965 to January 24, 1976. Although I did not know him myself, those who spoke about him following his untimely death while still in office described him as a national leader and a man of great learning, high standards and great compassion.<sup>1</sup> His legacy is one that all of us who follow in his footsteps must aspire to achieve.

In these, some of the most difficult days that many of us have experienced in our careers in libraries, it can be hard to think about great aspirations when we are cutting our staffs, our hours, our services, and most significantly our collections. What I would like to offer to you today is a glimmer of hope, or at least a point of view, that I hope you will find encouraging.

## Compensation

In his famous essay on *Compensation*, Ralph Waldo Emerson describes balance, or polarity, as an essential law that is met “in every part of nature; in darkness and light; in heat and cold; in the ebb and flow of waters; in male and female....”<sup>2</sup> and so on.

He goes on to say, “The same dualism underlies the nature and condition of man.... Every sweet hath its sour; every evil its good.... For everything you have missed, you have gained something else; for everything you gain, you lose something.”<sup>3</sup>

I would like to talk a little bit today about this gain and loss.

## The State of North Carolina

I would like to start by talking about the environment in which we are working – our state of North Carolina. One of the joys for me in becoming State Librarian was the opportunity I had to come back to North Carolina and to get to know my home state again after an absence of twenty years. What I have learned about North Carolina in recent years has fascinated me.

North Carolina's demographics are stunning. “Between 1970 and 2005, North Carolina's population increased 70 percent, 60 percent faster than the national population grew over the same period.”<sup>4</sup> We are now the 10<sup>th</sup> most populous state in the nation, having surpassed New Jersey in 2006, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>5</sup> North Carolina experienced the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest population gain in the country between 2007-2008, after Texas and California, and is now the 4<sup>th</sup> fastest growing state in the nation.<sup>6</sup> And let's not forget our numerous retirees: North Carolina is the 3<sup>rd</sup> state in the nation, after Arizona and Florida, for attracting people over the age of 60 who move from one state to another. Atlas Van Lines does an annual report, based on their own company's moves, on migration patterns of inbound and outbound movement across the U.S. and Canada. North Carolina is the only state in the nation that has had more people moving in than moving out *every year* for the past ten years. You won't be surprised, then, to learn that North Carolina is projected by the Census Bureau to be the 7<sup>th</sup> most populous state in the nation by the year 2030, with a population of 12.2 million. That's 3 million more than the 9.2 million who live in North Carolina today.

## The Knowledge Economy

In addition to this inexorable growth, our state is also undergoing a redefining economic transformation. I like the way Jonathan Cox, a business writer for Raleigh's *News & Observer*, expresses it:

North Carolina is not what it used to be. You can see it in Durham, where technology workers pace the floors of an old tobacco warehouse. You can feel it in Kannapolis, where optimism fights gloom as laboratories replace factories. You can hear it in Wilmington, where engineers discuss the future of nuclear power. The state is evolving from a furniture workshop to a scientific workbench, from a land of farmers to a land of bankers.<sup>7</sup>

Peter Drucker first defined the knowledge economy as far back as 1993 in his book the *Post-Capitalist Society*, noting that the basic economic resources, that is the means of production, are no longer capital, natural resources, nor labor. The basic economic resource is and will be knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

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Rather than a knowledge economy, Richard Florida called it “a Creative Economy” in his bestseller *The Rise of the Creative Class*. He sees “creativity – the creation of useful new forms out of ...knowledge – as the key driver. In [his] formulation, ‘knowledge’ and ‘information’ are the tools and materials of creativity. ‘Innovation’ [in whatever form it takes] is the product.”<sup>9</sup>

In his book *North Carolina in the Connected Age*, N.C. State University economist Michael Walden describes the evolution of our state's economy from the 20<sup>th</sup> century's Big Three of furniture, textiles and tobacco to the 21<sup>st</sup> century's Big Five of technology, pharmaceuticals, banking, food processing, and vehicle parts.<sup>10</sup> “A generation ago, we were a state dependent on low-wage manufacturing. Over 500,000 jobs were in textiles, furniture and tobacco...but the salaries weren't high, and our state's per capita income was only 80 percent of the national average.”<sup>11</sup> Today the Big Three account for only one-tenth of our economic output. The relatively new Big Five are over twice that share of state output, creating a new North Carolina in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

These changes are reflected almost daily in the business pages of North Carolina's newspapers:

- The North Carolina Research Campus has been established on the former site of the Cannon Mills manufacturing plant in Kannapolis, a public-private partnership

with our state's universities, whose vision is to advance biotechnology and to become the world's epicenter of nutrition and disease research.

- Quintiles Transnational, a drug research organization which helps the world's largest pharmaceutical companies by managing clinical trials, recently opened their new 10-story building in the Research Triangle Park and added 3,000 jobs last year.
- Bayer CropScience announced that it will open a new research and development center in Morrisville, creating 128 new jobs.
- DRS Technical Services, an aviation company, said that it will expand in Elizabeth City, creating 100 new jobs in the next five years.
- German auto parts supplier Continental will expand a plant in Henderson County and plans to add 338 new jobs in the next five years.
- Google has established a \$600 million data center in a former furniture manufacturing plant in Caldwell County and will create 210 jobs over several years.
- Apple will build a new data center in one of North Carolina's economically distressed western counties and will create at least 50 new full-time jobs.

Professor Walden says that "North Carolina is now part of the international economy, where money, ideas, products, and even labor – through immigration and offshoring – move more easily across geographic and political boundaries. Economic opportunities have multiplied, the potential gains from success have never been higher, but those who are not prepared or who have been unlucky have quickly fallen behind."<sup>12</sup>

So, having discussed the gains, we must turn our attention to the losses. North Carolina has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs in the Big Three of furniture, textiles and tobacco in the past 20 years. This has been exacerbated by the worst economic downturn since the Depression, taking North Carolina's unemployment rate over the summer as high as 11.1 percent, and at one point earlier in the year, as the fourth highest in the country. While these numbers are gradually decreasing, not everyone is benefiting equally. Caldwell County, for example, in spite of the new

arrival of Google, has an unemployment rate of 15.4 percent, and the AP Economic Stress Index, which looks at a combination of unemployment, bankruptcy and foreclosure, has ranked Rutherford County as the 13th most economically stressed county in the United States amongst counties with more than 25,000 residents.

The reality, according to the Institute for Southern Studies, is that "while North Carolina has gained jobs elsewhere...the relentless assault on the state's manufacturing base points to a deepening divide between 'the two North Carolinas' – the parts of the state that are moving economically forward, and those that are falling desperately behind."<sup>13</sup>

How do we overcome this dichotomy, this reality of "two North Carolinas"? Michael Walden states that there is a clear connection between economic growth and education that "is likely to continue and perhaps even strengthen. The spread of technology in the workplace will require workers not only to use those tools but also to analyze and interpret the results."<sup>14</sup>



In their book *The Race between Education and Technology*, Harvard professors Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz concur. They emphasize an ongoing and relentless race between technology and education in which, as technology changes, demands for skills change. "Those who can make the adjustments as well as those who gain the new skills are rewarded. Others are left behind."<sup>15</sup>

### North Carolina's Libraries

In this environment, I believe that the value of North Carolina's libraries and the services we provide have never been more important to the people and the communities we serve. Whether we are serving those who are moving forward in the new knowledge economy with electronic information services or those who

are falling behind with basic computer classes and the acquisition of new skills, we have a serious role to play. But how do we do this, when we ourselves are experiencing some of the most drastic cuts to our resources in decades? Let's look around at the libraries in our state for a moment. You will see a fascinating array of gains and losses.

The UNC system libraries across our state have, like all of us, suffered cuts in staffing and collections. Here in Greenville at East Carolina University, cuts had been projected as high as 17.9%, which would greatly affect the operating budget, acquisitions, student employment, and permanent staffing. Fortunately, some of these funds have been restored, but the cuts are still severe, restorations notwithstanding. But at the same time that all of this is happening, the Joyner Library here at ECU has initiated a new LSTA-funded project called "Ensuring Democracy Through Digital Access," in conjunction with UNC-Chapel Hill and the State Library, to digitize and provide online access to approximately 2,300 volumes of historic state publications providing a historical view of the

development of our state in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is a monumental undertaking, and we at the State Library are very proud to be a partner.

I also want to mention that, in spite of the terrible cuts elsewhere in the state budget this

year, capital funding was awarded to move ahead with N.C. State University's James B. Hunt Library. This library is described as "the intellectual and social heart of the rapidly growing population of N.C. State's Centennial Campus, embodying the essence of the campus as a community built around knowledge...N.C. State seeks nothing less than to create the best learning and collaborative space in the country."<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, our community colleges are developing new curricula to support 21<sup>st</sup> century industries like aviation, biotechnology, and computer science. Last year, Google sent representatives from the Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute to their headquarters in Mountain View,

California, to learn not only the skill sets that will be required at their new high tech server farm in Lenoir, but also the workplace skills needed to work in the technology industry's team-based environment.

In May, the Research Campus in Kannapolis announced the groundbreaking for a Rowan-Cabarrus Community College building on their campus to create the Associate in Applied Science degree for jobs in biotechnology research and development.

But now, just when it is needed the most to train and retrain workers for our new economy, the community college system has suffered dramatic cuts, and their learning resource centers are struggling to acquire the materials needed to support these new curricula. The average cut in "instructional resources allotments" for the 58 community college learning resource centers across the state is 25%, but one is as high as 41% and others are 37%, 35%, 33%. This is devastating to library collections. And, while public libraries across North Carolina are struggling with cuts in their budgets and reductions in staff and hours, the American Library Association reports that nationally, public library use is at an all time high.<sup>17</sup>

In North Carolina we have 77 public library systems, of which 53 are single-county systems. The other 47 counties are members of 14 multi-county regional libraries. We also have 10 municipal libraries. These are the libraries that meet the eligibility requirement for state aid to libraries, the funding for which I am happy to report our state legislature held steady this year, which seems like a gain because of the great losses our libraries are suffering at the local level.

During periods of economic downturn, public library use always increases – the local public library becomes a free source of reading and entertainment for the family; in this crisis, I've heard stories of some public libraries having to take reservations for story hour!

But now even more importantly public libraries have become job search and business development centers as never before. In today's marketplace, the majority of employers now require that applications be submitted online, with an email address for correspondence. That seems natural to those of us in this room – we work on computers all day every day:

that's our bread and butter. But imagine what it would be like for a person like sixty-year-old Annie, who walked into the Rowan County Public Library one day, with some hesitation, after having lost her job at Hanes Mills after 33 years. Annie had never touched a computer in her life; she didn't know how to use the mouse much less how to find employment online. But with the help of well-trained library staff and with the computer training programs that go on in public libraries all across our state, Annie and those like her are finding the assistance they need to get a new job. Book budgets, library staff, and library hours are being cut, but peoples' lives, and livelihoods, are being saved at our public libraries every day.

“...you can, sometimes, even do better with less...”

### State Library of North Carolina

Winston Churchill said that “a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, [while] an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

At the State Library of North Carolina, we are optimists. We believe that in times of economic crisis you cannot in truth do *more* with less, but

- you can do *less* with less, and do it very well, if you clearly define your core mission and focus on providing those essential programs and services effectively;
- you can do *different* with less, using this economic crisis as an opportunity to retool, repurpose, and re-imagine the way you do business; and
- you can, sometimes, even do *better* with less, by using a crisis as an opportunity to redefine and update your mission, to create innovative programs using new technologies, and to enhance your customer service and outreach to new audiences.

We at the State Library are also looking for new ways to carry out programs in these trying times. In the current budget year, we lost seven

state-funded positions, and we have suffered a 30% reduction in our program budget. Nonetheless, following our philosophy of “less, different and better,” we are working on a variety of new and innovative programs.

- Our Government & Heritage Library is transforming the *North Carolina Encyclopedia*, the most often viewed page on the Department of Cultural Resources website, and is creating really interesting monthly pages of topical interest. This is Family History Month, a specialty of ours, and the web page is fabulous.
- Our Digital Information Management Program (DIMP) staff have created NC MOSAIC, an extremely important digital repository of government-related information held by local, county and state agencies, and public and private universities throughout North Carolina.
- Our *Accessing State Government Information Initiative* (ASGII), has recently completed a project to digitize hundreds of census profiles compiled by the State Data Center in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Because pre-1980 censuses exist only on paper, the U.S. Census Bureau was very excited to hear about the groundbreaking project.
- Our Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH), working in conjunction with the National Library Service, has initiated a major transition from analog to digital formats for the Talking Books program, with new equipment and digitally recorded books being disbursed to their 12,000 clients across North Carolina over the next two years.
- LBPH has greatly reduced our in-house Braille holdings, and the cost of housing them, but they have arranged with the Perkins Library for the Blind in Massachusetts to borrow any books our Braille readers need that we may no longer own. Same service, less cost. This is a good example of “different.”

Through our federal LSTA program, our Library Development Section is initiating major new projects like:

- a project to create a statewide shared public library catalog for North Carolina. Just in the beginning stages, we recently held the first Shared Catalog Working Group meeting in Raleigh, and we are very



pleased at the level of interest that this project has generated across the state.

- a needs assessment for public libraries in North Carolina that we hope will form a foundation for documenting unmet needs that we can take to the legislature as a compelling case for additional state funding to libraries.
- a North Carolina WebJunction site that will bring an enhanced web presence for the State Library and all our programs, but in particular will provide expanded training opportunities to library staff across North Carolina.

Through a special grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), WebJunction is partnering with our State Library of North Carolina to launch a new initiative to gather and share best practices for providing library-based employment services to the unemployed, taking the Job Search Program we initiated last March to the national level. We have become well known across the country for our efforts in supporting libraries as they serve job seekers. Our Secretary of Cultural Resources, Linda Carlisle, whom some of you heard speak here yesterday, was in Washington earlier this week attending a national meeting on this subject at IMLS headquarters.

We have initiated a joint project with the library at UNC-Chapel Hill called the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, which

takes the NC ECHO concept to a new level by providing digitization and hosting services for cultural heritage materials held by North Carolina's libraries, archives, historical societies and other institutions.

And, finally, we have submitted a Letter of Interest to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in hopes of partnering with them to apply for federal stimulus funds that may benefit some of our North Carolina libraries. While the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) has proved to be a disappointment to libraries, with its rules not supporting the kinds of broadband projects we would like to apply for, we are hopeful that our libraries can, in some way, take advantage of this unique opportunity for funding.

In our strategic plan we define our mission as being the *catalyst* for exceptional library services in North Carolina.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, we do not spend all of our federal dollars centrally, for statewide projects. We are one of only a few states that disseminate the majority of the state's federal LSTA funds to libraries. We focus on projects that enhance technology, expand access to North Carolina's unique resources, and that reach out to underserved audiences across our state. Sixty percent of our state's LSTA funding goes directly to libraries in North Carolina.

In June of this year, we awarded 179 grants valued at almost \$3.3 million to public libraries, UNC system libraries, independent college and university libraries, community college learning resource centers, and school media centers all across North Carolina. In visiting libraries that have been awarded grants, I see the difference that these funds can make: expanding technology, developing collections, and digitizing North Carolina's most precious resources – making things possible that would not otherwise be possible; making what are already good libraries into great libraries.

By exploring our LSTA website<sup>19</sup> you can easily learn about the possibilities of federally funded grants from the State Library for the coming year. For those project grants that require a Letter of Intent, the deadline is November 17, 2009. All grant proposals are due February 18, 2010. We will disburse millions of dollars to North Carolina libraries next July. If Winston Churchill is right and there is an opportunity in every difficulty, I challenge you to find that opportunity for your library in these difficult times.

As Phil Ogilvie would undoubtedly have told you, we at the State Library are here to help you to find those opportunities, in any way that we can.

Thank you.

Mary Boone, State Librarian

## References

<sup>1</sup> Cecil Beach, "A Tribute to Philip S. Ogilvie," State Library of Florida, January 28, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Compensation," Essays, 1<sup>st</sup> Series ([http://www.rwe.org/works/essays-1st\\_series\\_03\\_Compensation.htm](http://www.rwe.org/works/essays-1st_series_03_Compensation.htm))

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Michael L. Walden, *North Carolina in the Connected Age: challenges and opportunities in a globalizing economy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) 83.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/007910.html>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/013049.html>

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan B. Cox, "Rewired and Refocused: state's top companies adapt to changing times," *News & Observer*, June 4, 2006. (<http://www.newsobserver.com/290/story/446905.html>)

<sup>8</sup> Peter Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: Harper Business, 1993) 8.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 44.

<sup>10</sup> Walden, xiv-xv

<sup>11</sup> Michael L. Walden, "Yet Again, N.C.'s Economy will Adapt," *News & Observer*, Point of view, July 9, 2009

(<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/columns/v-print/story/1600209.html>)

<sup>12</sup> Walden, *North Carolina in the Connected Age*, 203

<sup>13</sup> Chris Kromm, "North Carolina's Manufacturing Job Losses Won't Stop," The Institute of Southern Studies website, March 7, 2008; <http://www.southernstudies.org/2008/03/north-carolinas-manufacturing-job.html>

<sup>14</sup> Walden, 205

<sup>15</sup> Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, *The Race between Education and Technology* (Cambridge: Balknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) 352.

<sup>16</sup> "Creating a Heart for the Centennial Campus," <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/huntlibrary>

<sup>17</sup> American Library Association, "New Poll Show Library Card Registration Reaches Historic High,"

<http://www.ala.org/ala/newspresscenter/news/pressreleases2008/September2008/ORSharris.cfm>

<sup>18</sup> [http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/about/StrategicPlan\\_0608.pdf](http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/about/StrategicPlan_0608.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/lsta/lsta.htm>