

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

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From the President

In July 2024, the NCLA Finance Committee completed its work reconciling the 2023 conference budget. Although the conference took place in October 2023, the task of sorting through revenues and expenses extended well beyond the end of any conference. A great deal of time and planning goes into organizing the NCLA biennial conferences with the effort being led by members of the Conference Planning Committee, which is chaired by the current vice president. The planning process for the 65th Biennial Conference was particularly challenging as this marked the first truly in-person conference held post Covid. There was a high level of uncertainty about whether people would feel comfortable attending a large in-person event, making it extremely difficult to project registration numbers. In an effort to encourage people to attend the conference, as well as a desire to

charging conference rates that were too low to cover the rising costs associated with hosting such an event. A secondary issue was that the number of exhibitors and sponsors, significant sources of revenue, was much lower than in previous conference years. While there were ultimately 765 registrants, this number was not high enough to offset the low cost of registration. Likewise, while there were 39 exhibitors and 14 sponsors, this was a fraction of such supporters obtained in previous conference years. In addition, as we all experienced, costs for goods and services were at an all-time high during the



“Over its long history, NCLA has experienced ups and downs in its financial stability...[and] is well situated to be financially sustainable in the coming years.”

give back to the members after several financially profitable conferences, a decision was made to offer historically low rates for attendance. Attendance numbers proved that this strategy was effective; however, the final budget indicated that the conference operated at a financial loss. Despite this disappointing result, the Conference Planning Committee learned a number of important lessons that they will carry with them in planning the 2025 conference.

Simply put, the primary issue that contributed to the financial deficit of the 2023 conference was

time of the 2023 conference. Although the conference resulted in a financial loss for NCLA, the positive outcomes were that the conference was well attended and feedback indicated that the attendees were highly satisfied and energized by the conference.

Going forward, the 2025 Conference Planning Committee is taking strategic steps to ensure that the event is not only successful in terms of attendee satisfaction but also in maintaining the financial viability of offering conferences in the long term. First, the Finance Committee is taking

a more active role in budget planning and monitoring expenditures. Second, efforts are being made to ensure that a sufficient number of exhibitors and sponsors are committed to the conference well in advance of the event, as this is a vital source of revenue that was not fully realized for the 2023 conference. Third, the Conference Planning Committee is considering assessment data from the 2023 conference to guide decisions about offering content and events that the attendees indicate they value. Finally, the Conference Planning Committee is carefully considering the appropriate conference rates that will balance cost with the value being offered to attendees.

Over its long history, NCLA has experienced ups and downs in its financial stability. Thanks to the diligence of the Finance Committee, those volunteering their time and expertise to serve in leadership roles in the Association, and the support of its membership, NCLA is well situated to be financially sustainable in the coming years. NCLA operates to serve its members, and will continue to evolve and be responsive to the changing needs of its membership.

Of note, the Association recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the NCLA Endowment. The Endowment was established June 21, 1999, with a donation of \$10,000. Since then, the Association and private donors have added \$141,109 to

the Endowment. The total Principal Balance is \$151,109.76. It is a remarkable fundraising accomplishment. A total of \$48,987 in grants have been made from the Endowment to the NC Library Association. As of this writing, the Fund Balance is \$224,073.16. Can you help too? [Consider contributing!](#)

NCLA is a non-profit organization and strives to be diligent in its financial stewardship. Working to balance revenues from conferences, membership dues, and the Endowment with the cost of providing events and services that serve the membership is an ongoing labor of love for those who volunteer their skills to NCLA. I invite all of you who are reading this column to consider volunteering with NCLA to contribute to the work of this Association in serving all libraries in North Carolina. I also thank you for your support in being a member of NCLA and look forward to seeing you at the 66th Biennial Conference to be held October 13-17, 2025, in Winston-Salem.



Autumn Issue Worth Celebrating

So Labor Day is past, and we have begun a new year—new school year, that is, and therefore a time of celebration. Not just as parents whose children are headed back to school, but also the appreciation we get to feel as the summer’s heat subsides and we start looking forward to crisp evenings, steaming cups of coffee, and warm conversation with friends.

It’s been a while since *North Carolina Libraries* published two issues within the same calendar year—2008, I believe. That time has passed quickly, but we would like to reinvigorate the journal this season too, in hopes that we can sustain more scholarship and news for libraries in our state. To that end, this issue is offered for the fall of 2024, and planning has already begun for the next issue in the spring of 2025. Wish us luck, and contribute a manuscript!

The present issue contains articles which provide an overview of issues facing libraries of their type—academic, community college, and special libraries—at this moment. We are taking a cue from volume 25, number 4, which provided a perspective on the 25th anniversary of the founding of *North Carolina Libraries* to examine the state of our state. Many thanks to Kathelene Smith for probing how special libraries define themselves and continue vital service in 2024. Rich Garafolo describes a pivotal moment for NC’s community college libraries as many of them implement Evergreen, a shared open source ILS that serves as the backbone for NC Cardinal. And thanks also to a team of ACRL-NC authors who provide a snapshot of some of the most important issues facing academic libraries these days: artificial intelligence, construction and renovations, and changing staffing patterns.

As in the last issue, we continue some columns and introduce a new one. *Wired to the World* and *Lagniappe* return, with the first featuring ways to



Image by liz west from Flickr.

integrate AI into research and the second showcasing a leisure reading collection focused on horror (just in time for October!). North Carolina Books return as well. Watch for an introduction to the new book reviews editor in the spring issue! The new column this issue is actually a return to a column that *North Carolina Libraries* ran in the past: *In View Of*. For this new installment, we first visit the renovated UNCW Library.

Ideas for future articles or special issues? Feel free to contact me at editor@nclaonline.org or 252-737-2728. Happy Fall, Y’all!

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We reserve the right to edit all submissions. If you are interested in writing for *North Carolina Libraries* or would like consideration for news and product information, please send brief information to the editor at the above address.

The ABLS Library of the State Library of North Carolina: Profile of Accessibility

“*The Accessible Books and Library Services...is a unique resource that caters to the needs of persons with a visual or print disability.*”

The Accessible Books and Library Services (ABLS) Library of the State Library of North Carolina (SLNC) is a unique resource that caters to the needs of persons with a visual or print disability. Strategically located in Raleigh, North Carolina, it is a convenient hub for library professionals, including those from academic, public, school, and private libraries. The ABLS stands out for its diverse range of services, a wealth of information, and robust network, all used to assist and engage its patrons. Established in 1958, ABLS provides books to people who cannot use regular print because of a visual or print disability. Material formats include braille, large print, and digital formats delivered on memory cartridges. ABLS loans digital e-readers to library patrons, who use them to play audiobooks. Since the federal and state governments fund the core services, the services are free to patrons.

As an individual with a visual disability, my connection with ABLS is not just professional but deeply personal. This organization is more than just a library; it's a beacon of empowerment and hope. ABLS equips its patrons with the necessary technology, such as braille and large print, Digital E-Readers, or Refreshable Braille E-Readers, to enhance their independence and access to information. Moreover, ABLS is committed to improving its patrons' information and technology literacy and offering valuable technology and reader advisories.

ABLS - The Basics

According to Catherine Rubin (2023), the Director and Regional Librarian, the Accessible Books and Library Services is a comprehensive library that circulates books and magazines via the US Postal Service

for individuals who cannot use regular printed materials (C. Rubin, Personal Communication, October 18, 2023). Operated by SLNC as part of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR), ABLS is also a part of the network of regional libraries used by the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS). A physical space in Raleigh houses ABLS. Patrons can access the online collection from the library's homepage, and ABLS mails physical materials throughout the state to its users.

The physical space includes a reference desk and various offices for the Director and Associate Director, Reader Advisory, Technology Support, Technology Repair workshop, Outreach Librarian, and other staff numbering twenty-four. When contacted in October 2023, the ABLS was facing the challenge of filling vacant staff positions. Subsequently, the library managed to recruit five new additions to the staff, which reduced the number of open positions to two.

The director refers to the collection storage area as the warehouse, comprising shelving for braille books, large-print books, flash drive cartridges containing books and magazines, collapsible shelving, and a book prep station. To prep digital materials for distribution to patrons, a staff member downloads digital copies of books onto specially-developed flash drives containing 6–8 books or magazines, based on genre requests by the patron, and then ships to patrons as *Free Matter for the Blind*. When the patron returns the flash drive cartridge (i.e., the digital books or other materials) to the ABLS, a staff member erases it and reloads it with new books for the following user.

In an October 2023 interview, the director addresses why the name changed from the NC Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (its original name). Rubin explained that the trend in naming is to focus on person-or-service-first names rather than disability-first names, so the library opted to stress the function of service and resources in our new name; thus, SLNC ABLs. This is also why services are provided to any individuals with a visual or print disability and not simply Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

With ABLs's rich service history of providing information literacy to North Carolinians, Friends of the NC ABLs ([About the Friends of ABLs](#)) was chartered as a North Carolina nonprofit corporation in 1990 to provide monetary and advocacy support to the Library. Donations and bequests can provide tangible support to library programs and promote projects and advocacy activities designed to engage and support persons with visual or print disabilities in information literacy. The ABLs is about literacy and life-long learning; likewise, the Friends group supports this cause wholeheartedly by enhancing state funds to purchase large-print books, descriptive DVDs, and fund library programs (e.g., summer reading and other themed programs). In addition, ABLs's passion engages the community of patrons in its equity, diversity, and inclusion values.

Staffing and Management

In 2023, ABLs underwent a complete restructuring. This brought the various parts of the library together to have better backup systems if staffing was low, which allowed for more cross-training. While the Assistant Director and Collections Management Librarian manage the other twenty-one staff members, the ABLs is a Regional Library for the National Library Service (RLNLS), and the director serves as its liaison.

The director also manages patron engagement, collection management, reader advisory, and marketing, and travels to speaking engagements to promote and advocate for the ABLs. In addition, the director currently oversees the overall management of the library and, under the new structure, supervises the assistant director, who manages the Patron Engagement branch of the library. Furthermore, the director

supervises the Collection Management Librarian, who in turn manages the Access and Discovery Services (Rubin, 2023).

The Collection

The collection is comprised of three basic materials, including braille books (2,000–3,000 books), large-print books (5,000–6,000 books), and digital audiobooks and magazines (19,000–20,000 different books). Unlike a public library, the ABLs collections reside in a secure location with restricted access. ABLs features an online catalog accessible to users, but unlike traditional libraries, ABLs does not utilize the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal classification systems. The ABLs collections are organized according to unique accession numbers. The National Library Service assigns these numbers to audio and braille titles, while ABLs assigns numbers to large-print books, descriptive DVDs, and locally produced audio or braille books.

Furthermore, ABLs has a dedicated studio where North Carolina authors and volunteers collaborate to record books, contributing significantly to the program. Patrons may discover these and other books via the ABLs Catalog. In addition, patrons have five modes of access, including the (1) new, refreshable Braille E-Readers that will be made available to the public in coming months; (2) Digital E-Reader; (3) Large-Print Books; (4) Braille Books; (5) Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD).

Services and Programs

People who desire to become patrons of ABLs fill out an online application to verify a visual or print disability; once approved, users respond online or by telephone to what kind(s) of genres most interest them. There is also a reader advisory for digital books—via telephone, chat, and podcast—and technology support to assist with technology questions, problems with digital e-readers, and refreshable braille e-readers.

The ABLs offers tactile tours for librarians, public library groups, library school students, student groups, and persons with visual or print disabilities. In a tactile tour, a group is introduced to books in braille and other aspects of the library. It is priceless for librarians and library school students to under-

stand firsthand what the library offers to this diverse community of persons with visual or print disabilities; therefore, allowing students to observe by sight and touch the technology available at the ABLS, including the new, refreshable braille e-readers. As of October (2023), ABLS's primary focus is its work with the Braille Challenge and the summer and winter reading programs.

In 2008–2009, the ABLS transitioned to digital book e-readers, a device approximately 6 inches high by 9 inches wide by 2 inches thick (see Image 1), in which the patron inserts a cartridge containing a flash drive loaded with 6 to 8 books (see Image 2). When the patron inserts a cartridge, they can listen to the audio version of each book.



Image 1 – Digital E-Reader, Image from Library of Congress



Image 2 – Photograph Taken by Author. Flash Drive Cartridge for Digital E-Reader

When the leaders of the library decided to move toward a digital format, the issue arose that such a device did not yet exist; therefore, the National Library Service (NLS) had to commission a company to invent the digital reader for ABLS, and it had to go through design development and product testing. During the product testing phase, the company provided the library with a functional prototype of the digital reader. It had to undergo rigorous evaluation to determine its suitability for use and potential for

mass production and distribution. Following the prototype's approval, the next problem arose when the devices arrived at ABLS. Library staff had to switch out the old devices for the new ones, which was quite an ordeal.

The Refreshable Braille E-Reader is another innovative device for patrons who read braille (See Image 3). This compact device, with dimensions of approximately 6 inches by 9 inches by 1 inch, features an eight-inch touchpad. The pad displays braille characters in a tactile format that can be dynamically refreshed, allowing for an interactive reading experience and allowing patrons to feel and read the information. After reading a section, the user can press a button to refresh the display and proceed to the following text segment. This technology provides a seamless reading experience for braille users.



Image 3 – Refreshable Braille E-Reader, Image from Disability Insider

Then there was the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, which had ABLS under a lockdown order, requiring the library to close; thus, it was a tumultuous time. How could staff get books to patrons and assist them through the pandemic? The lockdown mandate did not permit anyone to enter the building. In addition to the problem of the library shutdown, the library had an antiquated phone system that did not forward calls, and contacting patrons proved to be challenging. The library's patrons were isolated, and the digital reader was the only source to relieve this for homebound residences. Also, library staff were not allowed to enter the building to process books when the shutdown order first came.

The author, having personally navigated the pandemic with a visual impairment, deeply empathized with the challenges faced by the ABLS, including patrons throughout the state who chose to stay inside, only going out sporadically. This was especially true

for those homebound due to health concerns, leading to a profound sense of isolation from the broader world. During the ABLS's closure, this sense of isolation intensified among certain members of the visually impaired community, making the situation seem three times more daunting. Eventually, the ABLS reopened under strict COVID protocols, operating in limited shifts to reestablish communication with patrons. This included processing and dispatching book requests to their homes.

One rewarding aspect of the director's role at ABLS is "the opportunity to collaborate with volunteers who dedicate their time to reading and recording books by North Carolina authors in the specially designed recording studio," according to Rubin. She went on to affirm that "The sense of purpose this position affords me is profoundly fulfilling. For instance, four to six weeks back, a patron expressed their gratitude by saying, 'I do not know what I would do without this service,'" underscoring the library's impact and value (Rubin, 2023). During the interview, it was evident that the director strongly emphasized fostering a positive work envi-

ronment by actively engaging with the staff throughout the library. This approach promotes team building and contributes to a workplace where conflicts among staff members are infrequent. However, if disputes arise, Rubin addresses each with professional coaching to ensure a constructive resolution for all involved.

Discussion

The author resonates with Rubin's position, for ABLS is an institution expecting and responding to change, whether from patrons' needs or technology and advancement. In the past sixty years, ABLS has transitioned through various technological innovations: records (vinyl), cassette tape, and finally, a digital platform. Another service offered through the ABLS is the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD), an iPhone App that will read books to the patron. Patrons fill out an application to activate the BARD App, which only current patrons of ABLS receive approval to use. In addition, the library's collection and user numbers are growing. ABLS's efforts in including such a diverse community of persons with



Image 4 – Panel Discussion at the NCLA's Biennial Conference, 2023.

From left to right: SW for the Blind, Assistant Director of ABLS, Catherine Rubin (Director of ABLS), a patron with a guide dog, the staff member who assists patrons with technology and braille needs, Craig Freeman (i.e., the author), and Clint (Outreach at ABLS & student at UNCG MLIS)

a visual, physical, or print disability are laudable.

After visiting ABLS, the author received an email from Rubin inviting him to participate in a panel discussion following the interview that ABLS was hosting at the NCLA's Biennial Conference at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem (October 2023). The panel addressed the needs and concerns of persons who are visually disabled and how other libraries can assist their patrons with a visual disability, as well as improve their approach to helping and engaging individuals in the visually impaired community. For example, one way that libraries can improve their services is to have appropriate signage that is readable by persons with a visual impairment, in at least 48-point font, and, wherever suitable, include braille on the signage. Furthermore, it is essential to consistently extend the same degree of

respect and dignity to all patrons, as any perception of patronization or incompetence is unacceptable.

The other panel members were a staff member from ABLS specializing in braille and braille technology, a patron, and a Social Worker for the Blind in the Winston-Salem region. The panel was well-received by the attendees. Librarians at the event spoke of having users with visual and print disabilities; thus, the presentation was quite informative and valuable to all librarian types. In addition, this type of presentation is something that every librarian, regardless of library type, should experience (see Image 4). For more information or to schedule a tactile tour, contact ABLS.

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<http://www.nclaonline.org/>

North Carolina's Special Libraries Revisited

An Optimistic View

When *North Carolina Libraries* published its fall 1967 issue surveying the status of libraries in the state, Dr. Doralyn J. Hickey, an Assistant Professor of Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, contributed "Special Libraries: A 'Coming Force' in North Carolina."¹ She had every reason to choose this optimistic title. There had been a steady rise in special libraries since the North Carolina Library Commission first began to record them in the 1930s, and their membership had seen a substantial increase during subsequent decades. Hickey attributed this growth to the expansion of the state's industries, which needed dedicated repositories and subject specialists to serve the needs of individual businesses and further the state's social and economic goals.² The recent establishment of the North Carolina chapter of the Special Library Association in 1966 added legitimacy to these unique repositories and anchored them to its national parent organization. In this environment, it was easy for Hickey to imagine a world where special librarians across North Carolina would join together, through shared interests and better communication, to achieve "maturity and self-confidence as a profession."³ However, this positivity belied her deep frustration with ongoing challenges yet to be sufficiently addressed within the field. These included the absence of a clear definition of a "special library," problematic methods of statistical documentation, and deficient library staffing. Her concerns were prophetic, as these issues would continue to plague the field for years to come.

What's in a Name

Special libraries have suffered from a crisis of identity since they emerged from under the umbrella of public libraries in the late 19th century. Although the term "special libraries" was already being referenced

in American Library Association (ALA) publications and other professional journals as early as 1876, the name was not officially adopted until 1909 when the Special Libraries Association (SLA) was founded by John Cotton Dana.⁴ Initially, defining a "special library" appeared somewhat simple. Businesses, industries, and organizations maintained these repositories to store relevant material that trained subject specialists could assemble, synthesize, and disseminate to their specific clientele.

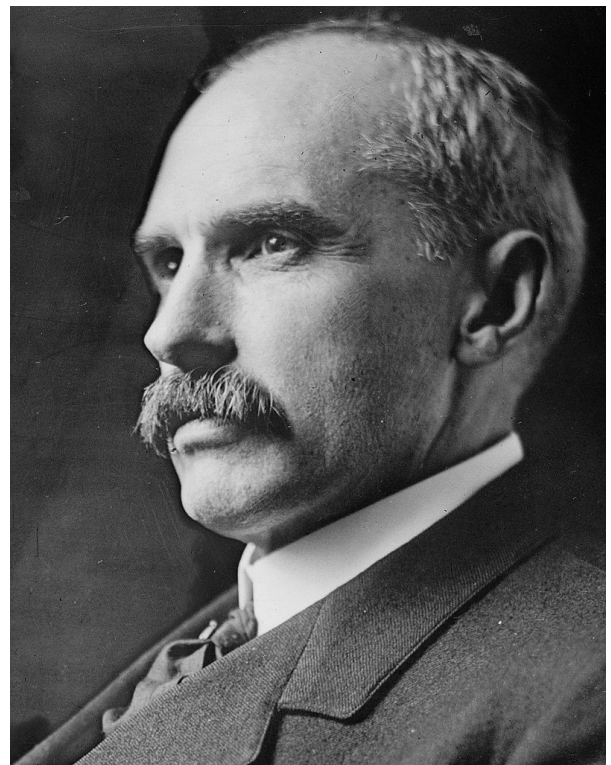


Figure 1: John Cotton Dana, George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress

Although this was theoretically straightforward, confirming which repositories fit this description was challenging. Attempts were made to identify special libraries less by what they were and more by what they were not. For example, it was generally agreed that special libraries contained books like other re-

¹ Doralyn J. Hickey, "Special Libraries: A 'Coming Force' in N. C.," *North Carolina Libraries* 25 (1967): 113–115.

² Hickey, "Special Libraries: A 'Coming Force' in N. C.," 115.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Robert V. Williams and Martha Jane K. Zachert, "Centennial Reflections on a Name," *Information Outlook* 13 (2009): 16.

positories. However, because special libraries primarily focused on material specific to their parent institution, their books and reference services were unique. It was clear that they were not academic libraries, although departmental repositories of colleges and universities were sometimes grouped with special libraries. During certain periods, some governmental libraries (such as Federal repositories) were considered special libraries, but others were not. These many contradictions prevented the development of a single working definition of special libraries.

Not surprisingly, labeling these repositories as distinctive and unique did not sit well with other librarians in the field. Many wanted the rogue “special libraries” and their subject specialists to fall in line and return to the fold. This growing resentment was evident during the Fifth Annual Special Libraries Association Convention of 1913, when Dr. W. Dawson Johnston, the Columbia University librarian, lamented that special libraries were often small and infrequently used. Worse yet, Dr. Johnston opined that many special libraries were merely “general libraries gone wrong.”⁵

However, not all SLA members agreed with Dr. Johnston’s position. Beaumont Newhall, the librarian at The Museum of Modern Art, considered special libraries as “modern” and embraced their individuality.⁶ Adopting SLA’s motto, “Putting Knowledge to Work,” as his battle cry, Newhall advocated for even more aggressive gathering and dissemination of knowledge generated by the special libraries’ parent organizations. He declared that it was the librarians’ duty “to do more than collect literacy and pictorial data, store it safely, and catalog it so that it is readily accessible to all comers. It means that we should take a militant offensive and *present* the specialized knowledge stored up in our specialized libraries.”⁷

Although there was continued discussions concerning the name and purpose of special libraries, the

field was growing and evolving at a steady rate. They had straddled the “documentation movement” of the 1950s, which advocated for the use of technology for recording source documents and even considered joining forces with the American Documentation Institute.⁸ In 1962, SLA reportedly had a membership of 5,400 librarians across fifteen divisions.⁹ While this was a positive development, the additional repositories sometimes fell outside of the established categories, creating even more difficulty in defining the field. In a futile attempt to be specific, Doralyn Hickey described some North Carolina repositories as “semi-special” if they did not correspond exactly to the currently determined grouping.¹⁰ Further illustrating this predicament, Frank McKenna, president and then executive director of SLA during the 1960s and 1970s, produced five pages of definitions of “special libraries” published between 1910 and 1976.¹¹ Even as the field was gaining momentum, the inability to agree on a simple, unifying definition limited the ability of the libraries to take advantage of these gains.

Problems only became more complex through the years. Issues about the true nature of special libraries and what made them unique still could not be resolved. Recognizing the disconnect between the historical mission and purpose of special libraries and changes in the field, SLA intermittently tried to modernize and rebrand the organization by changing its name to better reflect its evolving functions and responsibilities. The organization updated the name of its professional journal from *Special Libraries* to *Information Outlook* in 1997. At the June 2003 annual conference, a three-year plan was introduced to refocus on what specialists provided, rather than what material was held by the repositories. A proposal was made to drop the word “library” from the organization’s name and instead adopt either just the initials “SLA” or Information Professional Interna-

⁵ Guy E. Marion, “[Special Libraries Association].” *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 7 (1913): 383, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25685194>.

⁶ Beaumont Newhall, “Putting Knowledge to Work,” *Special Libraries* 29 (1938): 72.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Williams and Zachert, “Centennial Reflections on a Name,” 20.

⁹ Myra Ebert, “Introducing Special Libraries,” *North Carolina Libraries* 21 (1962): 2.

¹⁰ Hickey, “Special Libraries: A ‘Coming Force’ in N. C.,” 115.

¹¹ Williams and Zachert, “Centennial Reflections on a Name,” 20.

tional (IPI).¹² These suggestions were defeated handily. The issue was revisited in 2009 when, in response to research gathered for SLA's Alignment Project, it was recommended that the group now be called the "Association for Strategic Knowledge Professionals" (ASKPro). This idea was voted down "in record numbers" by a referendum held the same year.¹³ Even now there is an understanding that changes are needed within SLA. Currently the organization is being restructured to include enhanced outreach, renewed relationships, the expansion of programming, better communication and technology, and a financial review.¹⁴ There is no mention of a name change at present.

It's All About the Numbers: Tracking Special Libraries in North Carolina

The difficulties faced on the national stage could not help but filter down to the individual states, and soon North Carolina found itself wrestling with defining and documenting its special libraries. Early statistics kept by The North Carolina Library Commission (the Commission) tend to be skewed because there were no clear demarcations between public and special libraries.¹⁵ Initially, the Commission's annual reports kept statistics of only university and college libraries and public libraries. These were organized alphabetically by town or city and included the name of the local librarian, the number of volumes held by the repository, opening hours, etc.¹⁶ Throughout the 1930s, statistics were generated in the same format. As the number of documented public libraries grew, county libraries and, finally, "special interest libraries," were incorporated. The earliest recorded specialized libraries were those connected with the Veteran's Administration Hospital, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the state Supreme Court.

As North Carolina's economy boomed after World War II, there was an emergent demand for a diverse range of repositories to keep records of the state's de-

veloping business interests and academic expansion. The increase of special libraries in the state directly correlated with the escalating importance of tobacco, textiles, and heavy manufacturing. Soon, repositories appeared in businesses such as R.J. Reynolds and Lorillard tobacco companies, the Ecusta Paper Corporation, Chemstrand Corporation, Cone Mills, and Burlington Industries. Libraries associated with law schools, hospitals, churches, and government organizations were equally represented. More distinctive repositories also appeared, such as Fort Bragg's Psychological Warfare Division Library and the Southeastern Forestry Experiment Station Library. By the mid-1960s, the Commission reported eighty-three special libraries in the state.



Figure 2: Chemstrand Library at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 1970, Courtesy of the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

This impressive number may have prompted the State Library's decision in 1964 to create a separate annual report solely for special libraries, formally separating them from public libraries and university and college libraries. The 1964 report was the only edition that attempted to define what was considered a "special library" in North Carolina, organizing statistics under the specific headings of industrial

¹² Susan DiMattia and Lynn Blumenstein, "Uncertainty breeds determination," *Library Journal* 128 (2003): 46.

¹³ "SLA Says 'No' to ASKPro." *American Libraries* blog (2009), <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/sla-says-no-to-askpro/>

¹⁴ Seema Rampersad, "Review of the Year," *Information Outlook*, winter (2024): 3-5, <https://www.flipsnack.com/6AF9F9FF8D6/winter-2024/full-view.html>

¹⁵ *Guide to Research Materials in the North Carolina State Archives, State Agency Records* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, Archives and Records Section. (1995.): 223. The Commission was established to expand, support, advise, and supplement collections of local public libraries.

¹⁶ *North Carolina Libraries, 1932-1933*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Library Commission, 1933): 1-3.

libraries, religious libraries, medical libraries, law libraries, U.S. government libraries, and state government agency libraries. It was also the only time a “Foreword” was included. Reading almost like a disclaimer, the Foreword stated that only repositories that had participated in the Governor’s Commission on Library Resources survey or the survey of the Library Services Branch, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, Washington DC, were included.¹⁷

This caveat was essential and pointed to a more significant problem. Historically, statistics pertaining to special libraries depended on the repositories reporting their own data; therefore, those which did not produce an account or did not fit into the current definition, were not counted.¹⁸ This was clarified when the Governor’s Commission on Library Resources was finally published in 1965. Although special libraries warranted their own chapter, only those that identified themselves as such and made the effort to complete the survey appeared in the report. The Commission admitted to having incomplete data in at least some categories.¹⁹

A Leap of Faith: A SLA Chapter is Established in North Carolina

In 1966, the North Carolina chapter of the SLA was founded to great fanfare. Miss Alleen Thompson, the president of the national SLA, traveled to Durham to conduct the installation, and members of the news media were there to cover the event.²⁰ This was an important step forward, which received national attention and recognized special libraries as a growing field in the state. Previously, North Carolina’s special librarians could only join the Washington DC, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, or Georgia chapters.²¹ Joining

SLA was a leap of faith for North Carolina librarians, as an earlier attempt to sustain a special libraries section of the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA) was unsuccessful.²² Discussions at the 1955 NCLA biennial meeting resulted in a unanimous vote to disband the special libraries section in favor of a reduced committee because of a general lack of participation.²³



Figure 3: Library Dedication, The Mint Museum of Art, 1976, Courtesy of the Mint Museum Archives

Once officially associated with SLA, the North Carolina Chapter concerned itself with the field’s more compelling issues. These worries were focused mainly on the continued shortage of trained staff, the expanding use of technology, the glut of information descending on subject specialists, and the need for funds to address these issues.²⁴ However, even as special libraries faced significant challenges, the general outlook in North Carolina was positive.

An Almost Imperceptible Change

Even though the 1980 *Statistics of North Carolina Special Libraries* reflected the largest reported special

¹⁷ *Statistics of North Carolina Special Libraries, July 1, 1963-June 30, 1964*, (Raleigh: The North Carolina State Library, 1964): 1. The report divided special libraries statistics under Industrial Libraries, Religious Libraries, Medical Libraries, Law Libraries, U.S. Government Libraries, and State Government Agency Libraries.

¹⁸ Hickey, “Special Libraries: A ‘Coming Force’ in N. C.,” 113.

¹⁹ Robert B. Downs, ed., *Governor’s Commission on Library Resources, Resources of North Carolina Libraries* (Raleigh, The Commission, 1965), 167. The report divided special libraries into five categories: industrial libraries, medical libraries, law libraries, religious libraries, and those associated with the federal government.

²⁰ *Special Libraries Association, North Carolina Chapter, Twentieth Anniversary, 1966-1986*, (1986): 3.

²¹ Richard David, “The North Carolina Chapter of Special Libraries Association - A Team of Special Librarians.” *North Carolina Libraries* 24 (1966): 3-4.

²² Hickey, “Special Libraries: A ‘Coming Force’ in N. C.,” 10.

²³ Myrl Ebert, “Special Libraries Section.” *North Carolina Libraries* 14 (1956): 45.

²⁴ Richard C. David, “The North Carolina Chapter of Special Libraries Association - A Team of Special Librarians,” 3-4.

libraries membership, there was change in the air.²⁵ In this rapidly evolving and collaborative information age, the state's special librarians faced criticism for collecting resources accessible only to staff and specific clientele. In 1981, Judith Purcell, the Research/Reference Librarian at Duke Law Library, published an article in *North Carolina Libraries* in which she sought to simplify the categories of special libraries and determine the availability of access to their material.²⁶ To do so, she streamlined the repositories into three groups, significantly fewer than previously determined: government (federal, state, and local), corporate/research (funded by a profit or non-profit organization, business, or enterprise, etc.), and academic (college or university-affiliated).²⁷ After investigating the libraries that fell within these parameters, Purcell lamented that over half had some restriction or limitation of access to their material. Yet, she also acknowledged the more significant trend of providing information to a broader community by offering interlibrary loans and online services.²⁸

Despite efforts to show their value to the public, there were hints of a general demotion of the status of special libraries among their peers. In 1983, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, published *North Carolina Libraries: Their Role, Statements of Mission and Purpose*.²⁹ The report was the product of a small advisory group which consisted of representatives from university libraries, community college libraries, and public libraries, as well as the director of school media programs and the state librarian. No special librarians were included on the committee. The publication mainly focused on public libraries, school libraries/media centers, community colleges, technical college libraries, and university and four-year college libraries. Special libraries were included but positioned at the end of the report. They were characterized as relatively small, narrowly focused collections with services related to

businesses, professional or special groups, and government agencies. Although lauded for their unique range of journals and highly trained staff, the report also pointedly mentioned that the specialists were "often the primary user of the library's collection."³⁰ By 1984, special libraries were no longer individually reported, and the statistical focus shifted to public and academic libraries.

An Elephant in the Room

North Carolina's special libraries have certainly advanced since Doralyn Hickey expressed her concerns about their future in her 1967 article, yet issues of name dissatisfaction, inconsistent documentation, and inadequate staffing continue to adversely affect the field.

The troublesome label of "special libraries" and the struggle of defining many types of repositories under one name continues to exist, even though there are periodic attempts to stretch beyond the limitations of the label. This absence of a unified identity has hindered accurate documentation of North Carolina's special libraries. In the mid-1980s, interest in reporting their annual statistics waned and attention began to focus primarily on public and academic libraries. While special libraries statistics continued to appear sporadically in various forums, it seemed clear that their status in comparison with other types of libraries was in decline. This remains true, as there is currently no formal system in place for tracking special libraries in the state. The only method of retrieving information on these repositories is by an advanced search in Data Axle using "special interest libraries," with a North Carolina filter, and navigating a hierarchical tree of choices.³¹ This search reveals sixty special libraries in the state, falling into the same categories as previously described, including religious libraries, medical/health-related libraries, law libraries, etc. The accuracy of this list is questionable and

²⁵ *Statistics of North Carolina Special Libraries, July 1, 1979-June 30, 1980*, (Raleigh: The North Carolina State Library, 1964): 1. The 1980 report also included the size of the primary user group, types of material held, interlibrary loans, online searches, public access, and even salaries.

²⁶ Judith E. Purcell, "North Carolina Special Libraries- Resources and Services for the General Public." *North Carolina Libraries* (1981): 22-29.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁹ *North Carolina Libraries, Their Role, Statements of Mission and Purpose*. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of State Library. 1983). 1-13.

³⁰ *North Carolina Libraries, Their Role, Statements of Mission and Purpose*, 11.

³¹ Data Axle is a cloud-based, real-time data delivery platform, available to libraries in our state through NC LIVE.

reflects a lack of structured in-state documentation that does not benefit a field that desperately needs to be recognized.

Additionally, special libraries face an especially dire staffing threat in an environment where budget cuts are affecting all branches of the library field. Specialized repositories have been continually downsized, operating with minimal staff, sometimes only a single librarian. This is particularly true of corporate libraries, which have significantly reduced numbers. With more access to online sources, special librarians are in constant danger of being eliminated by the industries they helped build.

Generations of North Carolina special librarians have addressed all of these problems. Over the years, they have adapted to a more technologically savvy age, become more public facing, modernized services, and increased collaboration with their colleagues. Yet even though they have met these challenges head on, an elephant has entered the room. Or maybe it has always been there.

When Miss Alleen Thompson addressed the new members of the North Carolina chapter of SLA during its 1966 installation, she praised the group for their passion and excitement. This directly contrasted with other national chapters, which she described as “tired, jaded, and bored,” with “a lack of enthusiasm and vitality.”³² While lethargy may have descended on other states, the North Carolina chapter remained

active for many years, documenting its members, and participating in national events.

However, at some point, a detachment occurred between the state’s special librarians and their professional organizations, and the elephant snuck in. Whether it was indifference, growing attachments to other groups more closely connected to their areas of specialization, or simply exhaustion resulting from years of overwork and under recognition, special librarians began to fade from representation in related professional organizations. With decreasing membership, the North Carolina chapter of SLA formally merged with South Carolina’s chapter in 2017, creating a Carolinas regional group. This community successfully maintains its presence through social media and networking events. Special libraries are currently not represented by a section or committee in the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA).

So, how can special librarians address the elephant in the room? Join the SLA Carolinas regional community and claim a seat at the table in NCLA - get involved and stay involved. It is only by recapturing enthusiasm for special libraries, embracing their uniqueness, and rebuilding the connections between repositories throughout the state, that Doralyn Hickey’s hope for a mature and self-confident profession can be realized. The time is now.

³² *Special Libraries Association, North Carolina Chapter, Twentieth Anniversary, 1966-1986*, (1986): 4.



Evergreen Migration for North Carolina Community College Libraries: A Lesson in Collaboration and Perseverance

The migration of North Carolina Community College Libraries to the Evergreen integrated library system (ILS) is the culmination of planning, training, and implementation efforts of librarians throughout the state over the last four and a half years. The impetus for the Evergreen project was spurred by two failed Requests for Proposals (RFP) initiated by the North Carolina Community College System Office (System Office) in 2017 and 2018 for a new ILS for the 52 community college libraries that comprised the Community College Libraries in North Carolina Consortium (CCLINC). After the failed RFPs, the System Office signed a three-year contract renewal with the option for two additional one-year renewals with the current vendor.

Librarians within the CCLINC member libraries expressed disappointment at the prospect of being required to continue using an outdated and antiquated ILS. The consortium had been using the same system for over twenty years. Furthermore, librarians and library administrators were frustrated at the increasing lack of input and control over decisions regarding the governance of CCLINC's ILS platform due to System Office policies and procedures that had been arbitrarily and unilaterally enacted.

As a result of this frustration, conversations were started among a small group of community college librarians and library administrators in the fall of 2019 to explore what, if any, options were available to the community college libraries to obtain an ILS platform unaffiliated with the CCLINC consortium or the System Office. These conversations led this group to reach out to the State Librarian for the State Library of North Carolina, for guidance and assistance regarding the feasibility and process of creating a community college ILS organization. The State Library

had experience in creating an ILS consortium with the advent of NC Cardinal, a growing consortium of North Carolina public libraries, within a similar framework.

During meetings with the State Librarian and the NC Cardinal team, our group concluded that an open-source ILS platform would be the most cost-effective option and would provide community college libraries with a modern system that is regularly enhanced and updated by a community of users. Furthermore, the open-source model appealed to our desire for an ILS system that gave libraries significant autonomy regarding managing their individual instances of the platform. Researching the possible open-source ILS platforms, we focused on two, Koha and Evergreen, that met the functional and scalable needs of potentially migrating 58 community college libraries to the platform.

Evergreen was chosen as the preferred ILS for several reasons. First, the successful implementation of Evergreen within a consortia structure is evidenced by the success of NC Cardinal, Georgia PINES, Sage Library Systems (Oregon), and Linn Libraries of Oregon. Like CCLINC, these four library systems host an extraordinary number of libraries in one shared instance. They can seamlessly integrate updates and revisions to their systems at low to no cost. Second, the State Library and the NC Cardinal team provided invaluable guidance and assistance throughout the planning and implementation process, and we felt this crucial collaboration would continue and be more pertinent if we decided to implement the same platform they used. Third, utilizing the same ILS as NC Cardinal and partnering with MOBIUS, its hosting and support vendor for the platform, also streamlined and expedited the process of getting approval from the System Office and the North

Carolina Department of Information Technology for our instance of Evergreen. Finally, migrating to this platform would allow potential resource-sharing opportunities in the future with the public libraries by connecting with the NC Cardinal instance of Evergreen.

Our small group of librarians and library administrators formed a planning committee and applied for a 2021-2022 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant through the State Library to develop a plan to migrate our five libraries to the Evergreen platform and create a model that would be scalable to allow all 58 community college libraries to join. Using funds from the grant, the planning committee hired a consultant to facilitate user experience groups comprised of faculty, students, and library staff representing small, medium, and large-sized libraries to test the Evergreen ILS platform and provide feedback.

This consultant was also responsible for assessing the current structure and practices of CCLINC and making recommendations to the plan, based on faculty, staff, student, and librarian feedback, for how to best develop a shared ILS instance for the community college libraries that takes the existing structure and streamlines processes and policies to create a more positive and efficient shared ILS. Also, with input and recommendations from the consultant, the planning committee formally presented the community college Evergreen project at the Community College Library Administrators conference in July 2021 to introduce this project to community college library administrators and gauge interest in joining this venture.

The results from the LSTA Planning grant that ended in June 2022 include the creation of a Governance Committee to oversee the formation and governance of the North Carolina Community College Evergreen ILS Group (NCCCE) that was formed due to the interest and commitment of libraries to the project, and the creation of a Memorandum of Agreement and bylaws to provide a framework for membership to and governance of the NCCCE ILS Group. Another significant result was a commitment from 25 community college libraries to migrate to Evergreen if we were ac-

cepted for a 2023-2024 LSTA Project Grant. The Governance Committee agreed to schedule standing monthly update meetings to answer questions from and provide information related to the project to committed and interested libraries.

In July 2023, the NCCCE ILS Group was awarded a multi-year LSTA Project Grant through the State Library for 25 community college libraries to migrate to the Evergreen ILS platform. We contracted with MOBIUS Open Source Solutions as the project management team for our migration to Evergreen, providing training, hosting, and support services for our platform instance. Once the grant began, the NCCCE planning committee met weekly with MOBIUS to plan and coordinate all aspects of the migration process. Furthermore, we met bi-weekly with the NC Cardinal team until our migration date to better understand their process for migrating new libraries into their system, as well as best practices we could incorporate into our migration.

MOBIUS and NC Cardinal teams stressed to our planning committee and migrating libraries the importance of cleaning up patron and bibliographic records before migration. As part of this process, the planning committee stressed to all migrating libraries the importance of performing a patron purge of old and dormant patron accounts and formulating a plan and procedure to handle long overdue fines and materials. Furthermore, migrating libraries were encouraged to conduct an inventory of the overall collection and clean up their bibliographic records to ensure the migration crosswalk from the old to the new system went as seamlessly as possible. Finally, MOBIUS provided information and item mapping spreadsheets for the migrating libraries to complete. This ensured library information was correctly uploaded, all staff client accounts were created and active before migration, and all shelving locations from the old ILS system were correctly mapped to a corresponding location in Evergreen.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, one issue that the group experienced during the migration process was our inability to obtain our patron and bibliographic records for MOBIUS to build our database until about eleven weeks before migra-

tion. This issue had a ripple effect regarding our migration since we could not test our data in our Evergreen instance until the data was made available. Furthermore, this delay pushed back the training schedule for migrating library staff since MOBIUS encouraged us to become familiar with the platform and some functionality before any formal training took place.

Fortunately, this delay did not cause any major issues regarding our migration. We had ample time to test our patron and bibliographic data in our instance of Evergreen, which uncovered several issues we corrected before migration. Furthermore, training was not significantly impacted by the delay since the MOBIUS staff conducted these training sessions remotely, and they were recorded so staff members who could not attend the live sessions could watch the recordings at their convenience.

We migrated the first cohort of twenty-five libraries to the NCCCE instance of Evergreen in December 2023. We experienced very few issues due to the advanced planning and guidance we received from MOBIUS and the NC Cardinal team, who have successfully migrated hundreds of libraries to this platform. This successful implementation allowed us to apply for and receive the second-year extension of the LSTA Project Grant to migrate an additional twenty-five libraries to the NCCCE instance of Evergreen. The migration of these libraries will occur in December 2024. This will result in a shared integrated library system of 50 of the 58 community college libraries in North Carolina.

Learning from our initial migration, the planning committee instituted biweekly meetings with MOBIUS and the migrating libraries to ensure everyone understood their role and what must be done before the migration process. Furthermore, since we have a fixed extraction date from the vendor the libraries will be migrating from, we were able to create a firm timeline and establish deadlines for libraries to follow regarding the creation of settings and policies as well as patron and bibliographic mapping of their records, and platform training. The experience we gained migrating the first cohort to Evergreen allowed us to enhance

and streamline these procedures and processes.

During the almost five years of planning and implementing the migration of North Carolina Community College libraries to a new ILS platform, we have learned many lessons during this journey that any library or library organization exploring a similar project may want to consider. First, ensure there is a need and desire to change platforms and that personnel are committed to seeing the project through to completion. Second, extensive research on available ILS platforms, surveys, and focus groups should be conducted to assess the needs and functionality relevant stakeholders in the project deem essential.

Take the time to exhaustively research potential organizations to host the instance of the ILS platform. This partnership is critical to the success and sustainability of the organization's ILS platform. When choosing a hosting service, things to consider are how experienced and knowledgeable the organization is in the new platform and migrating libraries from their old platform, what level of support services they offer, the cost for the libraries, and the experiences of other library entities utilizing their services.

Find an organization such as the State Library that has experience migrating libraries to a new ILS platform. The numerous meetings and conversations we had with the NC Cardinal team throughout this process were invaluable and greatly assisted our efforts to create not only a viable migration plan but also a governance structure to manage our Evergreen instance moving forward. Finally, having a migration plan and schedule in place for all stakeholders to follow regarding cleaning up patron and bibliographic records, setting policies and mapping of patron and bibliographic information, testing of data in a test instance of the platform, and training on all aspects of the platform are all crucial components for a successful migration.

A Snapshot of Academic Libraries in North Carolina in 2024

Since 2020, the higher education landscape has been in a drastic state of flux. From ramping up efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion to scaling back these same efforts due to new policies and laws, from implementing health and safety measures at the start of a pandemic to again rolling the measures back, and from shifting teaching and learning into an online setting to bringing it back in-person to varying degrees, academic libraries have been in a constant state of change. In addition to the aforementioned shifts occurring, other new and significant issues are facing colleges in North Carolina. This article will examine some of them through the lens of some of our institutions. In particular, the examples will focus on the rise of AI, construction and renovation, and changing staffing patterns, before closing with a look to the future.

Addressing the Rise of AI Head-on at Appalachian State University

While machine learning and artificial intelligence have been around for decades, the release of ChatGPT by OpenAI pushed artificial intelligence (AI) and especially generative artificial intelligence into the spotlight at academic libraries everywhere. ChatGPT and an increasing number of different generative AI tools have been particularly disruptive within higher education settings as faculty question the authorship behind students' papers and determine how to integrate AI into their teaching. Academic libraries, with our emphasis on critical thinking and information literacy, can then be a perfect platform to host conversations around the impact of these new technologies.

The University Libraries at Appalachian State University decided to address this growing issue head on by hosting an AI Symposium on April 5, 2024. The symposium's theme was "Academic Frontiers of AI: Innovations & Impact." Presentations featured faculty and staff from all over campus in addition to library personnel. The keynote, "Using AI Responsibly in Research and Creativity," was presented by

Leonardo Flores, the Chair of the English Department and scholar in electronic literature and e-poetry. The symposium featured presentations, posters, and lightning talks. Topics across the sessions included ethical use of AI in the classroom, utilizing AI in interior design, how AI is transforming education, prompt engineering, and having AI assistance with syllabus creation and digital scholarship. While the symposium was a full-day event to discuss AI, members of the Technology Services team had also been hosting AI workshops throughout the academic year focused on specific tools, such as Adobe Express and Adobe Firefly, as well as exposing students to other free AI apps they can use for audio and multimedia projects.

From the release of ChatGPT through the summer of 2024, a lot of the conversations around AI have centered on research and teaching, but as our vendors, like EBSCO, look to develop their own generative AI models, its impact will continue to be far reaching in academic libraries for decades to come. AI will not just impact our information

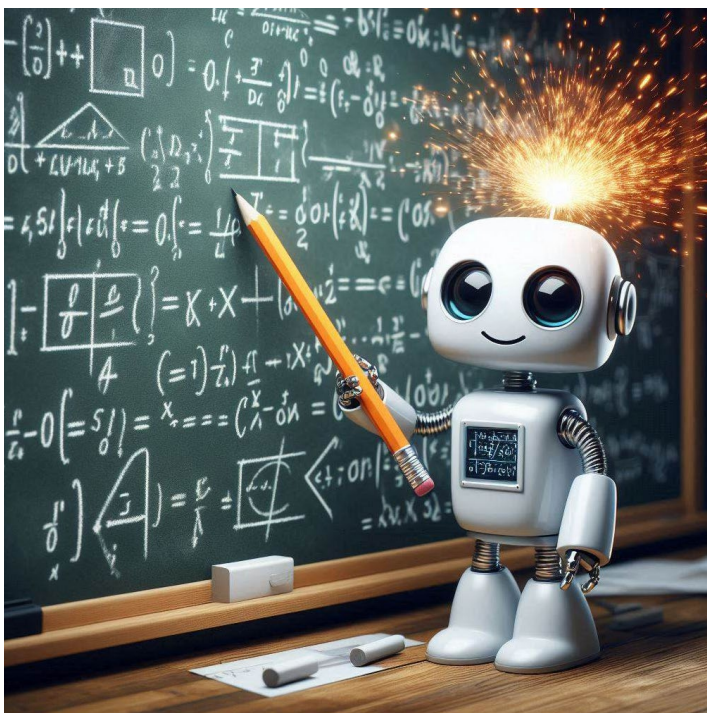


Image 1: Robot Writing on Chalkboard, generated by Microsoft Designer 31 July 2024.

systems, but how we operate in terms of cataloging, reference, collections, and perhaps in ways we cannot even imagine at this point. Regardless of any individual librarian's thoughts on AI, it is a topic that will continue to stay relevant to academic libraries all over the world.

Construction and Renovations at CPCC, UNCG, and UNCW

Aging buildings and renovations are another issue affecting many libraries across the state. On April 25, 2024, ACRL-NC offered a Lunch Bytes webinar featuring leaders from four libraries across the state to talk about new construction and renovations to their libraries: UNC Greensboro (UNCG), UNC Wilmington (UNCW), Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC), and UNC Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). They talked about their new spaces, how they determined their priorities, and some of the considerations and obstacles they encountered along the way. While UNC-CH's upcoming renovations will largely focus on a new egress and upgraded sprinkler systems for Wilson Library, CPCC, UNCW, and UNCG offer examples respectively of constructions and renovations happening across the state.



Image 2: Rendering of New West Entry for Jackson Library, UNCG

While construction projects offer exciting opportunities to enhance services and spaces, they also bring challenges as well. When CPCC's new library was being built, the library had to be temporarily relocated as the old building was torn down. This occurred at the end of 2018 with a three-year projected timeline. The temporary space was not initially designed as a library, and although it was retrofitted to work, it offered fewer study rooms for students, closed stacks

only available to library staff, and generally a less comfortable working environment. While the library was able to continue operating during this period, it was a less-than-ideal space for staff and students alike. Good signage and communication were necessary to help students and faculty navigate space. The new Hagemeyer Library is part of CPCC's Parr Center which opened in 2022. The Parr Center is meant to be the central student hub and houses other facilities such as the Student Union, the Academic Success Center, the Dove Art Gallery, and a large theater. The library itself includes a makerspace, two family study rooms, a wellness/quiet room, archives, multipurpose spaces for programs, and an outdoor terrace (Parr Center, n.d.).

In 2019, UNCW hired architects to help with their Randall Library Renovation & Expansion project. They broke ground on their new expansion in 2022 with completion expected in Fall 2024. The new building features a large programming space, a data visualization lab, enhanced technologies with a large makerspace and an enhanced multimedia studio, as well as space for exhibits, additional seating and group study rooms, a sensory space, and more. The addition will also provide a new space for the Center for Southeast North Carolina History and Archives. Part of the project also includes renovations to the current building which was closed during the summer of 2024 for construction (UNCW, n.d). For more details and images of the new space, see "[In View of Randall Library](#)," elsewhere in this issue.

In 2022, UNCG began work to renovate the Jackson Library on their campus. The renovation is meant both to expand the amount of space for students and also bring the building up to code to be fully ADA compliant. As of August 2024, UNCG is still in the design phase with construction expected to begin at the beginning of 2025. During construction, access to parts of the building will be closed and the print collection will be moved offsite (UNCG, n.d.). As with CPCC and UNCW, the construction period means less access to resources, less space for students, family, and other community members, and the disruptions of noise. Once the project is complete, the library will be able to offer more space, more seating, and never-before-offered services like a wellness area.

Changing Staff & Usage Patterns in Public Services at East Carolina University

East Carolina University's (ECU) Academic Library Services has not experienced as much impact from declining enrollments as other college and university libraries at this time, but foot traffic and usage patterns have changed considerably over the last few years. The university reached its highest enrollment of 29,131 students in 2017. Over the course of the next three years, the enrollment figures declined slightly and then the decrease accelerated during the pandemic and beyond. The enrollment for the 2023-2024 academic year totaled 26,785; a decrease of 8% from the highest enrollment numbers (East Carolina University, 2024). While budget cuts have occasionally caused the elimination of a few vacant positions across the library during the last 10-15 years, services have continued without much disruption to the library's operation. Owing to the impacts of the pandemic, changes in traffic patterns, and the continually changing demands of users, departments within the Public Services division have adjusted or are considering changes to desk staffing and other services such as library instruction and research consultations.

In the years prior to the pandemic, the library often bustled with activity as many people visited, groups of students frequently worked in the building, and services such as the number of library instruction sessions reached high levels. At the present time, gate counts show a significant decrease in the number of people visiting the library, resulting in much lower circulation rates for physical materials, except for the lending of equipment, and less need to repurpose spaces for individual and group study. Also, with the ever-growing demand for electronic access, which accelerated during the pandemic, liaison librarians and collections personnel are focusing their efforts on providing as much electronic access as possible, enabling users to access more resources at the point-of-need whether they are located on or off-campus.

With lower foot traffic and less demand for circulating physical items, library hours and the staffing of service desks are monitored closely throughout the year to trace peaks and valleys in usage. With these changes, staffing patterns have been adjusted over the last few years at all public service desks. Academic Library Services follows a 24/5 schedule

Sunday-Thursday each week while providing shorter hours on Fridays and Saturdays. Several years ago, the circulation desk was staffed overnight, but as check-outs decreased, administrators made the decision to no longer staff the desk during overnight hours. Now only security guards remain in the building at that time.

Other desks in the Public Services division face similar challenges and have adjusted their staffing accordingly as the need for different types of assistance have changed. With the continued decline in questions posed overall and the majority of questions being directional or technical in nature, different departments have explored and/or implemented changes based on new traffic patterns. Service desks in the Teaching Resources Center and the Music Library open later in the morning, owing to fewer patrons early in the day, while the staff members of the Research and Instructional Services (RIS) department want to explore the use of more graduate students at the service desk, so members of the department may focus on other duties and answering more advanced reference questions.

Changes in demand for library instruction sessions and research consultations post-pandemic have necessitated shifts in staffing patterns as well. Both the Teaching Resources Center and Music Library have many requests for both services, and those librarians spend considerable amounts of time preparing for them. However, the demand for instruction has not rebounded as much for the Research & Instructional Services department, but there has been a significant increase in requests for research consultations, many of which are now being required by the university's teaching faculty. This change in demand has forced RIS librarians to readjust their focus and put more effort into preparing for consultations instead of instruction sessions, usually with a short turnaround time. The shift has caused RIS employees to speculate if individual consultations will become the predominant instructional model in the future instead of traditional group instruction sessions. In an effort to bolster library instruction classes, outreach efforts to faculty by liaisons within RIS have increased and other class options such as shorter, more-focused sessions and librarians teaching in other classrooms on campus have been implemented.



Image 3: Research & Instructional Services: Academic Library Services, ECU

During the writing of this article, ECU library personnel learned there would be a significant cut to the student employee budget for the 2024-2025 academic year, which will likely necessitate further changes to the staffing of service desks and other tasks frequently completed by student workers. While uncertainty remains regarding the impact of declining enrollment, further loss of revenue, and the increasing presence of artificial intelligence tools, the library's employees remain hopeful about the future of ECU's Academic Library Services. They continue to be committed to ensuring that the information needs of the ECU community are met and that students have the skills they need to be successful in college and in the future workforce.

Future Considerations

At this point, the future of academic libraries in North Carolina seems to be focusing on the current technology landscape and a reimagining of library spaces and services to meet the needs of current students. The biggest challenge ahead for academic libraries and higher education at large is the upcoming enrollment cliff. Complicated by the global

pandemic which brought about declining enrollment at multiple higher education institutions across the state of North Carolina, an enrollment cliff is projected to occur around 2025 or 2026. This drop in college enrollment has been brought on by several factors including decreasing birth rates, high tuition costs, and the evolving job market (Manfuso, 2024). In November 2022, the UNC System reported a decline in enrollment; the total headcount across the system for Fall 2022 was 239,663 students – a decrease of 4,387 students, or almost 2% (Public Ed Works, 2022). The UNC System began to counteract how this enrollment cliff will impact UNC System universities by shifting their funding model to one that is weighted around meeting performance metrics as opposed to enrollment. Still academic libraries can expect the enrollment cliff to bring a larger emphasis on transfer students or back-to-school students, shifting the demographics of the populations we serve. Fewer students can also impact advocacy for positions and resources. Still, as the examples show above, academic libraries have always been open to change and places of innovation and creativity.

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In View Of ... The Renovated UNCW Library

The UNCW (formerly Randall) Library opened its new three-story, 80,000+-square-foot expansion in time for Fall 2024 classes. The planning for this expansion began in Summer 2018, and contractors broke ground in July 2022. The first floor houses a greatly expanded Maker Studio with 3-D printing and scanning and laser cutting, along with a virtual reality room, a much-expanded recording studio, a publicly-accessible digitization lab, a visualization analysis lab, an events space and an exhibit gallery, along with multiple group study rooms, new computing areas and a new TechDesk service point. The guiding principle of the library's design has been "learning on display;" to that end, windows or glass walls allow visitors to see the ongoing activities in all the public spaces.

The second floor is home to the Center for Southeast North Carolina Archives & History, which is comprised of University Archives, Special Collections, Government Information, and the University's







art collection. The new center will have approximately 1100 sq feet of high-density shelving customized for the collection and a new research room adjacent to the collections, near staff/faculty offices and processing spaces. The floor also includes two library classrooms and additional group study and student spaces.

Lastly, the third floor includes a Grand Reading Room, a modern take on a timeless library institution, as well as the “Lookout” lounge, overlooking the front of campus, and a wide variety of group and individual study spaces of all types. The entire building increases student occupancy from approximately 1650 seats to more than 2700 seats.

The Link, a two-story glass bridge between the new building and the existing Randall Hall, includes

a food market with pre-made sandwiches, salads, snacks and coffee, and seating on both floors. Two outdoor spaces flank the Link, with a patio to the north and a lawn to the south, both with available Wi-Fi.

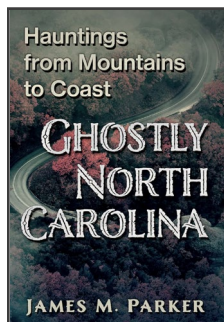
The existing Randall Hall boasts newly renovated spaces as well, including 13 new group study rooms and a greatly expanded graduate student lounge, a general lounge, a wellness space, and a sensory-friendly lounge for neurodivergent students. Library departmental offices have also been reconfigured for greater effectiveness and accessibility.

The grand opening celebration took place September 25, 2024. We invite all our library colleagues to visit!



North Carolina Books

Compiled by Laura Mangum



Ghostly North Carolina: Hauntings from Mountains to Coast

James M. Parker
Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2024.
182 pp. \$19.99.
ISBN 978-1-4766-9477-1.

For those interested in delving into a spooky, quick read, this may be the book. Author James M. Parker describes his own work aptly from the beginning: “Consider this book a written tour; a blood-curdling adventure through North Carolina’s haunted reality...a tour introducing you to some of the state’s locals who seem to have never left... even after death” (p. 1). This compilation of ghost stories and experiences is enthralling, particularly because most accounts have been collected rather recently. Each short chapter begins with a stated location in North Carolina, and covers one particular story, sometimes including multiple experiences. A majority of the stories included take place in the author’s home county, Johnston County, but there are also narratives included that span the entirety of the state. There are stories from the mountainous, western part of the state in Buncombe County and Ashe County, for example, and ghostly encounters from the coastal regions in New Hanover County.

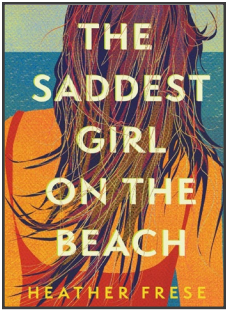
The author’s stated qualifications include a degree in psychology, a certification in historical studies, and growing up with parents who were television horror hosts. He writes as though he is attempting to be conversational, but for some readers this writing style may come off as pretentious rather than accessible. There are some excessive descriptions, a surplus of adjectives, and multiple run-on sentences. However, for readers who can

look past the grammatical choices, it is an enjoyable book (albeit not a scholarly one). The author has publicized that their book will be featured in a future episode of “My Haunted Hometown,” available through *Discovery Plus*, and is set to premiere in early 2025.

History buffs will appreciate the context provided with each story, as well as the black and white photographs interspersed throughout. The images, which were mainly captured by the author, paint an eerie scene for each haunted locale, bringing them to life so to speak. The author’s respect and care shown in sharing vulnerable moments is evident, and their goal of bringing to light some lesser-known supernatural encounters in North Carolina is successful. An index at the end of the book makes it easy to find specific stories, locations, and themes mentioned. The author claims that all of these accounts are authentic and have been verified several times, but it is ultimately up to the reader to determine what they accept as true.

These tales include a wide variety of haunted experiences, ranging from inexplicable feelings of evil or terror, to actual sightings of ghostly apparitions. Several stories include objects moving across a room with no scientific explanation, feeling a tapping sensation when seemingly alone, or hearing phantom voices. Some accounts are more descriptive and compelling than others. A few of the settings take place in buildings that were constructed over old cemeteries or at known sites of battles or otherwise violent deaths. Whether readers believe these claims or not, if nothing else, this collection will appeal to those curious about the paranormal and local North Carolina history.

Amy Cooley
East Carolina University



The Saddest Girl On The Beach

Heather Frese
Durham, NC: Blair, 2024. 274 pp. \$26.95.
ISBN 978-1-9588-8818-6.

Read in NC LIVE's
HomeGrown Collection

Heather Frese is a versatile freelance writer known for her short fiction, essays, and poetry, alongside her two notable novels. Her latest work, *The Saddest Girl on the Beach*, serves as a companion piece to her acclaimed debut novel, *The Baddest Girl on the Planet*. Frese draws profound inspiration from the coastal landscapes and rich history of North Carolina's Outer Banks, a region she cherishes deeply. Currently residing in Raleigh, North Carolina, she continues to write, edit, and teach.

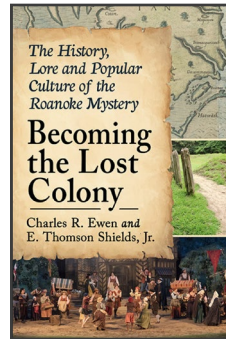
In *The Saddest Girl on the Beach*, Heather Frese transcends the conventional "beach read" by crafting a poignant story that explores deep emotional landscapes and the challenges of finding one's place in the world. Frese delves into the intricate and multifaceted nature of grief, the search for belonging, and the profound journey of self-discovery during early adulthood. The protagonist, Charlotte, is coping with the recent loss of her father to cancer. Following his wish for her to attend college, she struggles to adjust and ultimately withdraws from her first semester just weeks before its conclusion. Seeking solace and a sense of direction, Charlotte travels to the Outer Banks of North Carolina to plan the scattering of her father's ashes and reconnect with the comforting presence of her best friend's family on Hatteras Island. During her stay, Charlotte confronts significant life changes, including her best friend Evie's pregnancy and the emergence of a love triangle with long-time friends.

Frese's vivid imagery immerses the reader in the wonders of the ocean and the picturesque Outer Banks. The ocean's currents and oceanographic facts are skillfully employed as metaphors for grief—both constant and ever-changing—reflecting Charlotte's fluctuating emotions and evolving relationships. As Charlotte navigates her grief and

seeks self-discovery, Evie also undergoes personal growth, facing her own challenges while providing unwavering support to Charlotte. Together, their intertwined journeys highlight themes of resilience, change, and finding one's place in the world that many readers will identify with.

This novel is a compelling read for anyone who has faced loss and is searching for their path forward. *The Saddest Girl on the Beach* would be a valuable addition to libraries with a robust adult fiction collection, as well as those looking to feature titles centered on the state of North Carolina.

Erin B. Gray
East Carolina University



Becoming the Lost Colony: The History, Lore and Popular Culture of the Mystery

Charles R. Ewen and E. Thomas Shields
Jefferson NC: McFarland and Company,
Inc., 2024.
210 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4766-9496-2.

In 1587, a group of English colonists landed in coastal North Carolina (then known as Virginia) with plans to establish a permanent settlement. When ships came back to resupply the settlement in 1590 none of the settlers was found. The story of the Lost Colony has always been an important part of North Carolina legend either through historic interest, the intrigue of a mystery, or a sense of local pride; and many works throughout the years have attempted to solve, or at the very least, find clues to this mystery.

Much of the literature on the colony is built upon assumptions made in previous works, and when myths and stories are repeated so often, they can become institutionalized as "truths." The authors of *Becoming the Lost Colony: The History, Lore and Popular Culture of the Mystery*, East Carolina University Anthropology Professor Charlie Ewen, and East Carolina University English Professor Emeritus Tom Shields, take a step back and sepa-

rate what is objectively known about the history surrounding the 1587 attempted English settlement of Virginia, and what has been assumed.

In their introduction, the authors make clear straight away that they do not put forth any theory as to what happened to the colonists. To do so would add to the many subjected “truths” on the subject, when the purpose of this work is to separate those from the objective truth that is currently known. The authors present their work in two parts, each with three chapters that cover works through time that progressively step further away from what is actually known of the 1587 colonists.

Ewen and Shields present Part I: *What We Know*, in terms of primary and secondary knowledge of the attempted settlement, where primary knowledge consists of the writings of eye-witness sources and secondary knowledge is based on rumor and hearsay gathered from supposed eye-witness sources. Chapter 1, *The Background History*, focuses on the few works written by individuals who were on the various voyages to Roanoke from 1584 to 1590, including those of John White, who led the settlers, returned to England to gather more supplies, and returned to find the settlers were no longer where he left them.

The second chapter, *First Retellings*, addresses various tales of the fate of the colonists based on stories gathered from subsequent voyages to Virginia, including searches for the colonists sent from the new settlement in Jamestown. The third chapter, *The Archaeology of the Lost Colony*, covers attempts to discover material remains linked to the 1587 settlers, starting with the earliest colonial site visits on Roanoke Island to extensive archaeological investigations on Roanoke and surrounding areas. No investigation has yet to reveal a definitive link to the missing settlers.

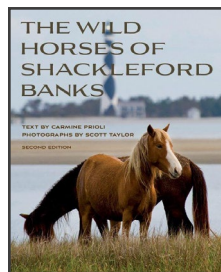
In the three chapters that make up Part II: *What We Think We Know*, Ewen and Shields describe the multitude of hypotheses others have as to the fate of the Roanoke colony and the assumptions used to support them. The chapter *From Histories to Stories* describes the numerous retellings that have reframed the 1587 settlers into the Lost Colony. The fifth chapter, *The Prevailing Hypotheses*, describes the many beliefs throughout the last four

centuries on the fate of the colonists. Most are variations on the hypothesis that they died through illness, starvation or attack, or they were assimilated into Native American culture, either peacefully or through enslavement. The sixth chapter, *Fringe Theories*, covers the more outlandish claims and outright hoaxes that are often supported with pseudoscience.

The authors bookend the two parts with a conclusion titled, *What We Don't Know and How We Don't Know It*, where they describe the various takes on the Lost Colony through current media. These are typically television episodes or movies that either depict a non-fiction story but for entertainment purposes, like mystery documentaries, or in fiction that often links the 1587 settlers to the supernatural.

As the authors have shown, many of the prevailing theories of the fate of the Roanoke colony are predicated on assumptions that have been repeated so many times they have become institutionalized as truths. This book is recommended to any academic, novice researcher, or local history enthusiast interested in the Lost Colony as a reference that disaggregates what is known and what is assumed on the subject, and would be well suited to both academic and public libraries.

Jamie Brinkley
East Carolina University



The Wild Horses of Shackleford Banks

Carmine Prioli
Second Edition. Durham, NC: Blair, 2023.
120 pp. \$22.95. ISBN 978-1-958888-25-4.

Horses have roamed wild on North Carolina's Outer Banks for hundreds of years, and it is a thrill to watch their family groups in the surf, dunes, and maritime forests. Carmine Prioli first published *The Wild Horses of Shackleford Banks* in 2007 to tell the history and story of the wild horses that are often visible from the passenger ferry to

the Cape Lookout Lighthouse. The lands of Cape Lookout National Seashore, as well as the horses and foals, are incredibly beautiful and all are captured in the many photographs by Scott Taylor which are included in this book.

The first edition introduces Shackleford Banks, where vibrant villages once existed and where livestock grazed until 1985. Frequent hurricanes have shaped the landscape. We learn the roles of the National Park Service (NPS) and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses (FSH), who have co-managed the wild horses since the signing of the Shackleford Banks Wild Horses Protection Act in 1998. Dr. Sue Stuska, wildlife (horse) biologist for Cape Lookout National Seashore, is an interesting character who has interacted with the horses for many years.

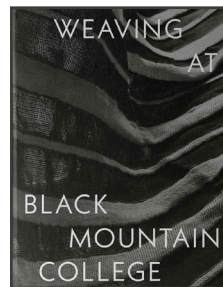
The origin of these wild horses is hotly debated, and a considerable portion of the book is devoted to various theories. Genetic studies have been done to try to confirm whether wrecks of Spanish ships introduced the horses to the Outer Banks. Prioli maintains that there is no single breed that provided the main source for the wild horses. The people of nearby Harkers Island have a long history with the horses, and they frequently adopted Banker ponies during yearly roundups on the island. There is an appendix of adopted horses in the back of the book, as well as extensive notes and sources to support Prioli's research.

The second edition, published in 2023, is changed only with the addition of a 4-page preface, intended by Prioli to bring readers and visitors up to date on management, visiting, and preserving the Shackleford herd. This reviewer felt the 16 intervening years deserved a much lengthier presentation. Changes in management are described (roundups are no longer happening; darting mares for birth control is the extent of population control; genetic studies keep an eye on herd inbreeding) and visitor behavior and safety are emphasized. Only a short paragraph mentions the threat of climate change to the herd. Rising sea levels and frequent flooding, major threats to all the NC Outer Banks, are not mentioned. Contributions to the Foundation for Shackleford Horses are encouraged.

Prioli is retired faculty in English literature and folklore at NCSU and has written two other books about the North Carolina coast. Scott Taylor's photography is included in several books about the coast.

Due to many beautiful horse photographs, this book is visually appealing to readers of all ages, but written content is appropriate for middle school, high school, and general adult readers. The cover is attractive for a new-books display in a school or public library. Content is not scholarly enough for university libraries.

Dianne Ford
Elon University, Retired



Weaving at Black Mountain College: Anni Albers, Trude Guermonprez, and Their Students

Michael Beggs, Julie J. Thomson with additional texts by Brenda Danilowitz, Jennifer Nieling, Erica Warren
Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 2023. 215 p.
\$40.00 ISBN: 978-0300273564.

Much has been written about Black Mountain College (BMC), the relatively short-lived (1933-1957) but influential experimental liberal arts school located in Black Mountain, NC. Frequently the focus has been on notable faculty such as Josef Albers, the former Bauhaus instructor whose classes were core teachings at BMC in the 1930's and 40's, the American writer Charles Olson, who led the school in 1950's, or the numerous well-known artists and writers who taught there or attended, with less attention paid to the textile programs at the school. Beggs and Thomson postulate that previous scholarship has treated weaving at the college more typically as craft lessons when in fact the program was "Black Mountain's most sophisticated and successful design program, and had widespread influence both on the College itself and in the fields of design and weaving in mid-century America" (p. 13). With extensive research into school records, first person accounts from students, and histories of the faculty before, during, and

after their tenures, they make a strong case for the importance and lasting impact of the Weaving Program at Black Mountain College.

Weaving at BMC is covered from the school's start up in 1933 through its closing in 1957. The work of faculty and students is showcased along with contemporary artists influenced by the program. Anni Albers, who previously taught at the Bauhaus and was married to Josef Albers, created and led the weaving program from its inception in 1934 through 1949 when the Albers left BMC. The book discusses her design philosophy, which focused on purpose and functionality, and teaching methods, including the use of handlooms to fully understand the weaving process and through off-loom experiments with less traditional fibers and materials.

Further, the text documents the contributions of other weaving faculty at Black Mountain College, including Trude Guermonprez, who taught from 1947-49, a transitional period before Anni Albers left in 1949, with a focus on textile graphics, with examples of her work, and a previously unpublished lecture. The authors provide detailed accounts of the other weaving instructors and the progress of the weaving program in the final years of the college from 1950-1957; describe the careers of the faculty after they left BMC; and include interviews with four contemporary textile artists on the influence of the BMC weaving program and faculty on their work.

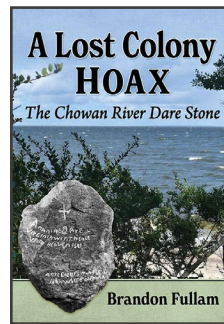
This volume was published in conjunction with an exhibit of the same name held at the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, September 2023 – January 2024. It is illustrated throughout with examples of weaving/textiles from faculty and students, and includes examples of related but non-textile student assignments and projects, and archival photographs from BMC or of faculty and students. The text describes in detail the activities and at times complicated chronology of the faculty, documented with primary source materials culled from first person accounts and surviving records from the NC Western Regional Archives and the BMC Museum.

Weaving at Black Mountain College succeeds in illuminating the importance and influence of the Weaving Program within the curriculum at BMC,

and, after often being relegated to second tier by gender bias and the status of craft within the arts, it brings both the work and design philosophy of Anni Albers, Trude Guermonprez, and the other weavers of BMC to a deservedly wider prominence. It would be an excellent addition to academic libraries, particularly those with an interest in fiber arts, mid-century design and craft, women artists, the history of arts education, and the history of education in North Carolina.

Chip Larkin

North Carolina Wesleyan University



***A Lost Colony Hoax,
The Chowan River Dare Stone***

Brandon Fullam

Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc.,
Publishers, 2021. 183 pp. \$25.

ISBN 978-1-4766-8643-1.

Brandon Fullam has written two other books related to the Lost Colony, *Manteo and the Algonquians of the Roanoke Voyages*, and *The Lost Colony of Roanoke: New Perspectives*. *A Lost Colony Hoax* provides an exploration of the disappearance of the Roanoke Colony, one of early America's historical mysteries. Founded in 1587 on Roanoke Island, the colony was the first attempt at a permanent English settlement. By 1590, when a ship arrived from England, the settlers had vanished without any trace, leaving only the word Croatoan carved into a post as a clue. This book digs deep into this mystery, presenting an account of what might have happened to the lost colonists.

The Chowan River Dare Stone is an enigmatic piece of art that was discovered in 1937 along the Chowan River in North Carolina. It is claimed to be a marker left by the Lost Colony of Roanoke, but its authenticity has been heavily debated. Some scholars and historians are convinced that the stone is a true historical object, while others think it is a complex hoax. The inscriptions that tell a story about the colony's end have raised the question of

their authenticity and the historical implications. Regardless of the controversy, the stone is indeed a fascinating part of the history of America, and it is the only physical evidence that could be associated with one of the early English attempts to establish a permanent settlement in the New World.

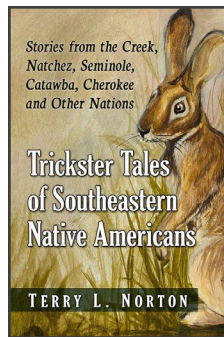
The author's strength lies in his explanation of the Roanoke mystery. He examines a range of theories with great detail. This book goes beyond the usual questions of starvation or conflict with the Native Americans by exploring less known possibilities, such as the potential for a hoax or disinformation. His research is based on a wide collection of historical documents, archaeological evidence, and previous scholarly work, making his opinions informative.

An interesting point is the author's ability to explain his findings clearly. His narrative is accessible, making the book suitable for both scholars and general readers with an interest in American history. The book is structured to address each theory and supporting evidence, providing a balanced view of the possible explanations for the colony's disappearance.

The in-depth nature of the reading might be a bit much for those who are not already familiar with the historical account. Additionally, the absence of a conclusion may be frustrating for those seeking a definite answer. The author's approach means that the mystery remains unresolved.

This book surely contributes to the story of the Roanoke Colony. The author's exploration of theories prompts a discussion and will encourage readers to understand and interact with the story of the Lost Colony, possibly in a way they haven't before. The book's thorough research makes it a resource for anyone interested in early American history. The author's research provides a view of the possible explanations for the disappearance of the Roanoke colonists, making it best for specialized or research collections and those interested in The Lost Colony and early American history.

Matt Clark
East Carolina University



Trickster Tales of Southeastern Native Americans: Stories from the Creek, Natchez, Seminole, Catawba, Cherokee and Other Nations

Terry L. Norton
Jefferson, NC. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. 2024. 192 pp.
ISBN: 9781476691305.

Read in NC LIVE's HomeGrown Collection

Have you ever wondered why partridges whistle or why opossums hang from their tails? Terry L. Norton, author of *Cherokee Myths and Legends: Thirty Tales Retold* (2014), answers these questions in his latest book, *Trickster tales of Southeastern Native Americans: Stories from the Creek, Natchez, Seminole, Catawba, Cherokee and Other Nations*. This volume is an exciting collection of brief, traditional Native American tales featuring predominately animal characters with anthropomorphic traits who cause trouble and get into misadventures. The stories about pranksters and troublemakers help familiarize readers with southeastern Native American lore and explanations of the natural world, including animal traits and behaviors.

As explained by the author in the preface, these trickster tales were not rewritten to reflect contemporary morals and values. Rather, these retellings remain close to their traditional iterations, allowing the reader to take an authentic look at stories from several indigenous groups from the southeastern United States. The 73 stories featured in this volume are organized by indigenous group, and the author provides a helpful Introduction to the Trickster at the beginning of the volume. The introduction orients readers with helpful charts that breakdown trickster traits and categories, characters, actions, and origins.

The brief tales feature lively dialogue, song snippets, and characters with human-like flaws and motivations. The morally questionable Rabbit in "Rabbit Escapes from the Box," the arrogant Possum in "Why Possum's Tail Has No Hair," and the gullible deer in "Why Deer Has Blunt Teeth" remind us of our own

shortcomings and potential to fall into traps. Meanwhile, many other characters plot revenge, seek glory, or steal for a good meal, connecting human behaviors (and misbehaviors) across cultures and through time.

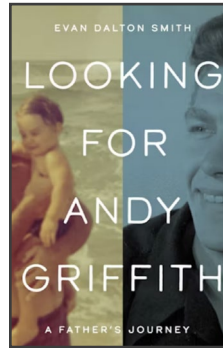
Appendices include Story Adaptations and Authentication of Sources, Sovereignty and Appropriation, Social Climate and Swanton's Use of Latin, Historical Sketches of Southeastern Native Groups and Commentary on Selected Variants. These appendices add to the authority of the text by giving story origins, adaptation methods, and historical context. The bibliography details resources for further research, and an index is included to help the reader reference specific topics in the text.

Trickster Tales of Southeastern Native Americans is recommended for public and academic libraries as a well-researched resource for patrons interested in a wealth of traditional stories of various tribes from our region. While the stories are engaging and easily

digestible enough for casual readers, they are also sufficiently informational and authoritative to support university-level research.

Laura Bright

East Carolina University Joyner Library



***Looking for Andy Griffith:
A Father's Journey***

Evan Dalton Smith
Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2024. 208 pp.
\$26.04. 978-1-4696-7898-6.

Is it possible for an actor and a popular weekly television show to have an impact on an author's

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own life? Throughout the book, *Looking for Andy Griffith: A Father's Journey*, author Evan Dalton Smith takes readers on a comprehensive examination into the life and career of actor Andy Griffith (1926-2012) and his most recognized television accomplishment, *The Andy Griffith Show*. In the first part of the book, numerous bits of information are shared about Andy Griffith to gain some understanding about his career and influence. For instance, the author mentions several facts about the actor's life, including his birth in Mount Airy, NC, role as Sir Walter Raleigh in the outdoor drama, *The Lost Colony* (1947), the actor's popular recording called "What It Was, Was Football" (1953), and Andy Griffith's portrayal of Sheriff Andy Taylor in *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968). Ultimately, *The Andy Griffith Show* was shown in numerous households across America to provide insight into ordinary town life.

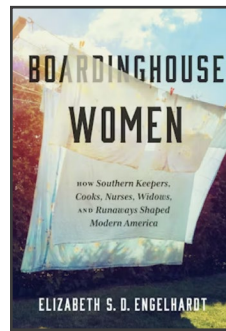
While taking readers on a journey to understand the career of Andy Griffith, the author also details his own upbringing which included relocating several times from North Carolina to New York and Massachusetts, losing his father at an early age, being separated from his two children, and struggling to make ends meet as a freelance writer. In the end, Evan Dalton Smith had always admired Andy Griffith and his portrayal of a father trying to raise a boy in *The Andy Griffith Show*. To withstand his own setbacks in his personal life, the author would watch old episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show* and was able to discuss his research that correlated his own personal life with Andy Griffith's. Like Andy Griffith, the author would relocate from North Carolina to other states, but would always feel "called back" to the Tar Heel State. In this book, the author includes a selected bibliography as well as an entire section of illustrations detailing both the career of Andy Griffith and the author's personal life.

Looking for Andy Griffith: A Father's Journey is the author's only work of nonfiction. Smith's smaller essays have appeared in such publications as the *LA Times*, *LA Review of Books*, *Paris Review*, *New Yorker*, *Slate*, and elsewhere. In 2001 and 2015, he received the MacDowell Fellowship in Literature. In 2024, the author was recognized

as Outstanding Southeastern Author (for Non-Fiction) by the Southeastern Library Association.

This book is intended to offer a glimpse into the impact of both Andy Griffith and *The Andy Griffith Show* on the author's life. Because of its specific scope, *Looking for Andy Griffith: A Father's Journey* would be suitable for inclusion in any academic or local public library with a focus on North Carolina cultural history.

David W. Young
University of North Carolina at Pembroke



***Boardinghouse Women:
How Southern Keepers, Cooks,
Nurses, Widows, and Runaways
Shaped Modern America***

Elizabeth S.D. Engelhardt
Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina
Press, 2023. 298 pp. \$27.95.
ISBN 9781469676395.

Once ubiquitous, the boardinghouse has disappeared from the American landscape. In the 19th and early 20th centuries these lodging establishments provided housing, meals, and other services to a broad range of individuals. In *Boardinghouse Women*, Elizabeth Engelhardt argues that much of what is remembered about these spaces is centered on urban cities like New York and San Francisco, which "have long lived in America's imagination as places of adventure, vice, and the enforcement of social class..." (p. 7). Comparatively less is known about boardinghouses in the American South and the pivotal roles played by the women who managed, worked in, and lived in them. Engelhardt meticulously examines the experiences of women in Southern boardinghouses, illuminating the myriad ways in which these establishments fulfilled economic and social functions and contributed to shaping American culture through innovation.

Operating a boardinghouse provided women with a means to earn income and assert independence within a society constrained by strict gender

norms. Elite white widows such as Mary Randolph in Virginia and Alice Lee Larkin in Wilmington discreetly supported their families by converting their homes into boardinghouses. Women from diverse racial and economic backgrounds also operated boardinghouses. In the 1850s, Malinda Russell, a free Black woman, ran one in Cold Springs, Tennessee, catering to travelers seeking health and leisure. Russell gained recognition through her *Domestic Cookbook*, likely the first cookbook published by an African American woman. African American women's contributions are often overlooked due to erasure, which Engelhardt addresses by highlighting some of their stories.

Julia Wolfe's profitable Asheville boardinghouse, Old Kentucky Home, served as the inspiration for its fictional counterpart "Dixieland" in her son Thomas Wolfe's novel *Look Homeward, Angel*. Wolfe and other keepers were trailblazers whose "entrepreneurial innovations changed their own lives as well as those of people around them" (p. 45). Mary Randolph and Malinda Russell used their boardinghouses to refine Southern cooking, establishing it as a recognized culinary tradition. Mary Hamilton and Della McCullers in the Mississippi Delta and Durham, respectively, pioneered flexible meal options for working people, contributing to the development of the modern lunch. Others used their establishments for political activity, such as Mary Surratt, whose Washington, DC

boarding house functioned as a meeting place for President Lincoln's assassins.

Boardinghouses served as gathering places for a diverse array of people, often providing crucial support to single women and vulnerable individuals from Black, poor, non-Christian, and LGBT communities. Segregation likely prolonged the existence of boardinghouses in the South compared to other regions.

Elizabeth Engelhardt holds the position of Kenan Eminent Professor of Southern Studies in the Department of American Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is a scholar specializing in Southern and Appalachian food and culture, with numerous publications on these subjects. Engelhardt's personal connection to the topic of this book includes her grandmother's brief tenure operating a small boardinghouse in Brevard.

This scholarly and engaging work contributes significantly to research in women's history, gender studies, African American studies, Southern foodways, and the American South. It is suitable for inclusion in both public and academic libraries.

Linda Jacobson

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

More North Carolina Literature

Looking for more works by North Carolinians or set in our state? You can always search [goodreads](#), [LibraryThing](#), or the catalog of your local library. Don't forget to browse your favorite bookstore! UNCG Libraries has also created a [Literary Map of North Carolina](#) to help identify authors from your county.

If your interest in North Carolina is more general, the North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill frequently updates their blog with new acquisitions to the collection and other posts related to the history, literature, and culture of our state. Connect to the [NC Miscellany](#) here.

From the Editor's Desk, Volume 25, No. 4, Fall 1967

In the Fall 1967 issue, Volume 25, Number 4, editor Alva W. Stewart briefly described the evolution of the *North Carolina Libraries* journal during its first quarter century. One way Stewart highlighted this was to include articles about the growth and development of various kinds of libraries within our state, including public, academic, school, special, and community college libraries. This present issue hearkens back to the spirit of this introspection by including articles about contemporary issues facing academic libraries, the evolution of special libraries, an in-depth look at a special public library, and a crucial opportunity for collaboration that community college libraries are taking advantage of. With all our editors along the way, it is also my hope that our journal will “serve the cause of books and libraries throughout our state.”

* Note: the original article put the journal title in all upper case, and that usage has been maintained here.

Twenty-five years ago a new journal was born. This issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES commemorates the silver anniversary of that birth. Consequently, it is a special one because it marks a milestone—a quarter century of service to Tar Heel librarians, trustees, and friends of libraries.

In recognition of this signal occasion, this issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES contains articles describing the growth and development of public, academic, school, and special libraries in North Carolina during the past 25 years. A former N.C.L.A. president describes the evolution of our profession's state association during these 2 1/2 decades, and an ex-dean of the UNC School of Library Science delineates the most significant issues in library education since 1942. A separate article describing the influence of our state's most eminent librarian—Dr. Louis Round Wilson—now in his tenth decade of life, on the development of libraries since the early years of this century, also appears in this issue. Other articles relate to modifications in bindery facilities and services since 1942, the growth of community college libraries in our state, and changes which have occurred in content and format of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

since its inception. The final article depicts action taken by the 1967 session of the North Carolina General Assembly with respect to libraries.

The official journal of N.C.L.A. has evolved from a six-page bi-monthly newsletter in 1942 to the 24-40 page quarterly which is lean on news but fat on substantive articles in 1967. Although an issue without a half-tone photograph would appear strange today, the first nine volumes of this periodical were entirely devoid of half-tones. The initial appearance of half-tone photographs came in the February, 1952 issue, which contained two such illustrations. Almost every issue since that date has contained one or more photographs.

The first index to our journal covered the first ten volumes (February, 1942-June, 1952); it was edited by Vivian Moose of the Woman's College Library in Greensboro. Another index, also compiled by Miss Moose, covered Volumes 11-13 (September, 1952- June, 1955). Since 1959, a biennial index has been compiled; it has appeared in the Summer issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES every other year. The most recent index appeared in the Summer, 1967 issue.

Editors of our journal have included librarians who have been active members of the North Caro-

lina Library Association for many years. Among the editors have been the following, with period of editorship shown following each name: Charles M. Adams (1960-64); William S. Powell (1958-60), Elaine von Oesen (1953-57), Hallie S. Bacelli (1951-53), Charles R. Brockmann (1949-51) and Wendell W. Smiley (1947-49).

Writing in the first issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES (February, 1942), N.C.L.A. president Guy R. Lyle (now director of libraries at Emory University), stated that two major functions of this journal should be "to serve as the official

medium of communication between the Association and its membership" and "to provide an outlet for the publication of significant articles dealing with professional problems." Twenty-five years later, these are still the central purposes of this publication.

It is my hope that during the next quarter century NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES will serve the cause of books and libraries throughout our state as effectively and forcefully as it has served this cause during the past 25 years.



North Carolina
Library Association

Submission Requirements for *North Carolina Libraries*

Electronic articles can be submitted online at: <http://www.ncl.ecu.edu>

- » To submit you must login; if needed you can register using the link in the header.
- » APA or *Chicago Manual of Style*, most recent edition.
- » We have a rolling deadline; articles are peer reviewed when received.
- » Publication of accepted articles may be in upcoming or future issues.
- » For additional information, contact the editor at: editor@nclaonline.org



J. Denice Lewis, Wake Forest University

Navigating the AI Revolution: A Personal Journey in Research and Instruction

I remember using electronic databases on dummy terminals when I studied Electrical Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology in the early 1990's. The amount of time I spent locating relevant resources, reading them, synthesizing the information, and writing the standard five paragraph essay or a technical report numbered in the hours and days. Fast forward roughly thirty years and artificial intelligence (AI) tools proliferate at each step of the scientific method. Current AI tools can identify the gaps in a particular field, suggest research questions in a particular field based off the full text of existing articles, write a search string for multiple academic databases or a systematic review, list relevant resources given a research question or single article, analyze data, and review the references for a paper to identify citations with errata.

My journey in using AI tools in research and instruction began in the fall of 2021 with a personal research session (PRS) with a Physics graduate student. He relayed that his Physics advisor told him

to find all scientific papers citing “On Continued Gravitational Collapse” and he discovered that Web of Science did not contain the original article. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Web of Science was the premier database for the Physics department to conduct forward and backwards citation research. Without knowing why the information was needed or how it would be used, I compiled a table of citation counts from search tools which included bibliometrics before meeting with the student e.g., Semantic Scholar (<https://www.semanticscholar.org/>), Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>), lens.org, Dimensions.ai (<http://app.dimensions.ai/>), and scite.ai (<https://scite.ai/home>). After I reviewed the selections with the student, he chose scite.ai.

Scite.ai, a.k.a. scite, mines the full text of articles, pre-prints, and other resources and pinpoints where citations occur in the document. Scite then evaluates and labels the citations as supporting (“We agree.”), contrasting (“We disagree or find issues with X.”), or mentioning (“X did Y”) referred to as smart citations.

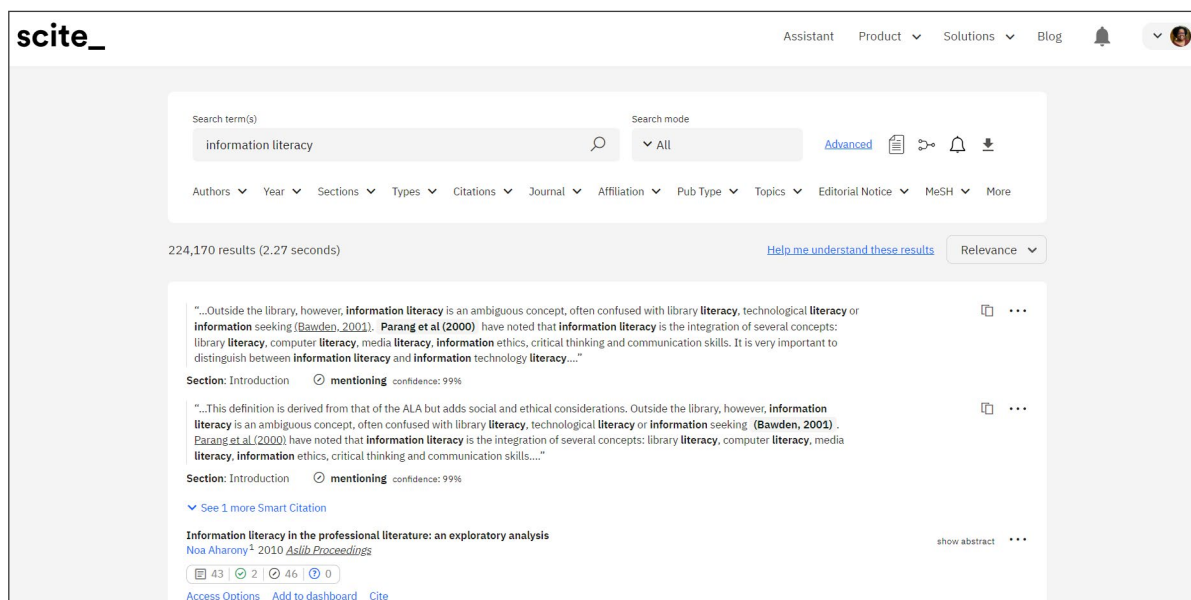


Figure 1: Screenshot of a search within Scite.ai

In doing so, Scite changed citation analysis from quantitative to qualitative in that the user can search for a phrase or use Boolean search string and retrieve a list of papers with roughly two to three sentences where the key terms occur within a citation and where the citation occurs within the document. It is a quick way to get a sense of what authors are saying about a particular topic or get an overview of specific terminology and how it is used in a field.

For instance, if I were to search for “information literacy” within Scite, the screen would show a mix of papers and smart citations (see Figure 1).

My preference is to change the search mode from All to either Citation Statements or Papers. Searching the citation statements, the snippets relay what authors are saying about a search term or phrase and where the comments occur within the article. Beyond finding relevant resources and reviewing the scholarly communication around a particular topic, scite added the scite Assistant in April 2023 which incorporates a GPT 4.0 API with the full-text articles Scite ingested. With scite Assistant, a user can type a question, phrase, or term and it searches the full text of articles within scite to garner a response which includes inline citations with the list of articles on the

right-hand side of the screen.

In Figure 2, I typed “achievement motivation in STEM or engineering” to get a sense of the research conducted on the topic as well as an overview. I can modify the settings within scite Assistant to specify the reference year range, publication type, response length, number of publications to consult, identify specific journals to search if desired, and the particular citation style to use for the inline citations. In addition, I can export the references consulted as a CSV, BibTex, or RIS file. This is the proverbial tip of the iceberg in how researchers can use scite. Custom dashboards can be used as a saved search to find additional resources. The reference check reviews the citations in an uploaded article to find references with errata or articles that were retracted by the publisher.

Beyond scite, I have utilized other AI tools in research to understand technical terminology, build background knowledge, source materials for esoteric topics, analyze data, and verify sources. In the classroom, both in one-shot sessions and credit-bearing courses, I’ve introduced different AI tools to help students learn new topics and develop innovative research strategies. Outside the classroom, I’ve collabo-

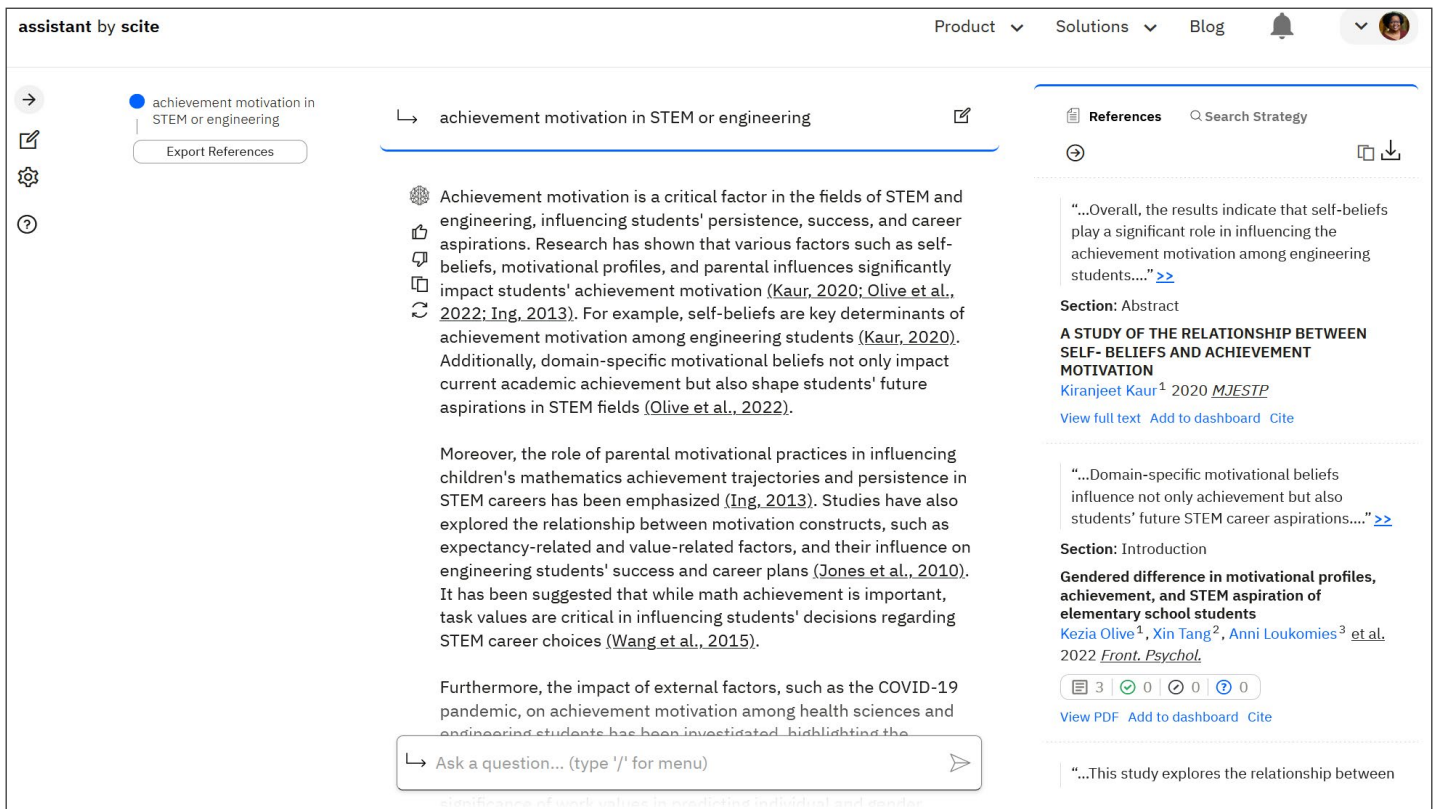


Figure 2: Screenshot of using scite Assistant

rated with graduate students, researchers, faculty, and other librarians to refine their research methodologies and processes using diverse AI tools. In doing so, I found elicit.org, a.k.a. Elicit, in Spring 2022.

The premise at that time for Elicit involved asking a research question and Elicit finding eight articles that addressed or answered the research question provided. Originally, Elicit compiled the results in a table with the article title, takeaway from the abstract, population characteristics, and other columns included. Elicit's "Find papers" function provided a quick way to find relevant articles for a given research question or topic (see Figure 4).

In the past two years, elicit.org transformed from a free tool to elicit.com which has a limited free option, a plus paid subscription for independent researchers, and pro paid subscription targeted for individuals conducting systematic reviews.

Both the look and feel (graphical user interface) and functionality changed and continues to be updated over time with Elicit. A summary of the top four (free) or eight papers (paid subscription) appears now before the table of results. Additionally, the user can add additional columns to the table to extract additional information and even create custom columns. Beyond the "Find papers" function, a user can extract data from PDFs or list concepts that appear across papers. However, extracting data

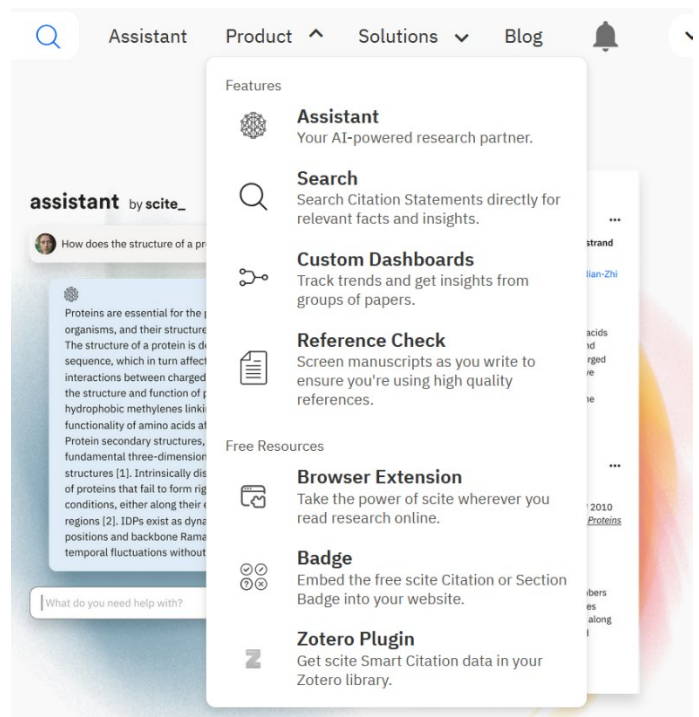


Figure 3: Screenshot of additional capabilities within scite

from PDFs requires uploading PDF files of articles. Currently, publishers and journals are still deciding policies around AI for authors, editors, reviewers, and users. Certain publishers and journals forbid uploading articles into any AI system in their renewal contracts. As a result, I recommend only using open access articles when extracting data from PDFs (see Figure 5).

The screenshot shows the Elicit interface with a search query: "Does the American population favor the privatization of the United States". The results are displayed in a table with columns for Paper title, Takeaway from abstract, and Population characteristics. The table includes five rows of search results, each with a star icon, author name, and citation count.

Paper title	Takeaway from abstract	Population characteristics
The Privatization of Space Exploration: Business, Technology, Law and Policy L. D. Solomon 2008 10 Citations	Private sector firms are making innovations in space travel, tourism, and shuttles and threatening to change the space landscape.	space entrepreneurs and private sector firms
Explaining public support for space exploration funding in America: A multivariate analysis François Nadeau 2013 18 Citations	Spending preferences on space exploration are associated with knowledge and opinions about science.	white, male Babyboomers
Opinion polls and the U.S. civil space program Sylvia K. Kraemer 1993 9 Citations	The majority of those who support the space program can distinguish between the bread and circuses of space travel.	-
The complex fabric of public opinion on space Stephanie A. Roy, Elaine Gresham, Carissa Christensen 2000 12 Citations	Funding questions are increasingly popular in space-related opinion polls.	American public
Opinion polls and the US civil space program S. D. Fries 1992 3 Citations	The American public is unaware of NASA's mission and the benefits it brings to society.	attentive public, the interested public, and the non attentive public

Figure 4: Screenshot of elicit.org taken on September 9, 2022

The screenshot shows the Elicit interface with a search query: "does the american population favor the privatization of the united states". The results are summarized in a table with columns for 'Paper', 'Abstract summary', and 'Manage Columns'. The 'Paper' column lists five articles with their authors and citation counts. The 'Abstract summary' column provides a brief overview of each paper's focus. The 'Manage Columns' column offers options to search or create a column and lists various data points like 'Summary', 'Main findings', and 'Methodology'.

Paper	Abstract summary	Manage Columns
<input type="checkbox"/> Mapping Patterns of Support for Privatization in the Mass Public: The Case of Michigan Lyke Thompson +1 2000 · 79 citations · DOI	The paper examines public attitudes towards privatization of government services in the state of Michigan, but does not directly address the American population's overall favor for privatization of the United States.	Search or create a column Describe what kind of data you want to extract <input type="text" value="e.g. Limitations, Survival time"/> ADD COLUMNS <input type="checkbox"/> Summary <input type="checkbox"/> Main findings <input type="checkbox"/> Methodology <input type="checkbox"/> Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Outcome measured <input type="checkbox"/> Limitations <input type="button" value="Show more"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> The Two Faces of Privatization D. Morgan +1 1988 · 94 citations · DOI	The paper discusses the debate around privatization of government programs and services, but does not address the American population's views on privatizing the United States.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Privatization in the United States Florencio López de Silanes +2 1995 · 345 citations · DOI	The paper examines factors that influence privatization of local government services in the United States, but does not address the broader question of public opinion on privatization.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Privatization in the United States: Theory and Practice J. Henig 1989 · 86 citations · DOI	The paper discusses the emergence and growth of privatization as a policy agenda in the United States, but does not address the American population's views on privatization.	
<input type="checkbox"/> The Limits of Privatization P. Starr 1987 · 100 citations · DOI	The paper challenges the claims made by privatization advocates and the economic reasons for their proposals in the economic world they propose.	

Figure 5: Screen capture of finding papers in Elicit taken on August 1, 2024

The screenshot shows the Inciteful interface with a search bar containing the text "a study of the relationship between self". Below the search bar, a list of search results is displayed, including titles like "Prognostic Value of Plasma von Willebrand Factor and Soluble P-Selectin as Indices of Endothelial Dysfunction" and "The Impact of trial stage, developer involvement and international transferability of...". The interface also features a section titled "Tools to help you accelerate your research" and a "Literature Connector" tool that allows users to select two papers and see how they are connected by literature.

Figure 6: Screen capture of typing an article title in Inciteful

Beyond scite and Elicit, if I am researching an esoteric topic and find myself with only a handful of articles, I turn to inciteful.xyz, a.k.a. Inciteful. There are three primary reasons to use Inciteful. One, Inciteful has not changed from when I first started using it in 2022 till now. Two, using the Paper Discovery tool within Inciteful, I can find additional resources with a single article title or by typing in key terms to select a single article. Last but not least, no account is needed to use Inciteful. In this example, I decided to use a paper from an earlier screen capture, “A study of the relationship between self-beliefs and achievement motivation.” As I start to type the title, Inciteful uses predictive text to try to resolve the text with a potential article title as shown in Figure 6.

After the user selects a title, Inciteful shows the metadata associated with the article with the number of citations, the works cited by the article, if the article is open access, papers in the graph, and citations in the graph. With the Paper Filters section, if the similar papers shown don't align with the expected topic, I can enter additional keywords to increase the

relevance. In this case, I wanted more articles associated with achievement motivation and entered that as a keyword. In a single web page (<https://inciteful.xyz/p/W2269756629?keywords=achievement%20motivation>), Inciteful lists similar papers that cite the same papers as the original article, most important papers by Inciteful's PageRank, review papers, recent papers by the top 100 authors, the most important recent papers, top authors, upcoming authors, institutions, top journals, and similar journals. With this singular tool, I can help undergraduates target possible graduate schools that cover their research area, help graduate students find journals to publish their research, identify possible collaborators for faculty and researchers, as well as find additional resources for research. The possibilities are endless with Inciteful.

For writing literature reviews, I recommend using Research Rabbit (<https://researchrabbitapp.com/>). I introduced Research Rabbit along with scite, Elicit, and Inciteful to my older sister Mona Lisa Dickson as she was completing her Ed.D. at Clemson in

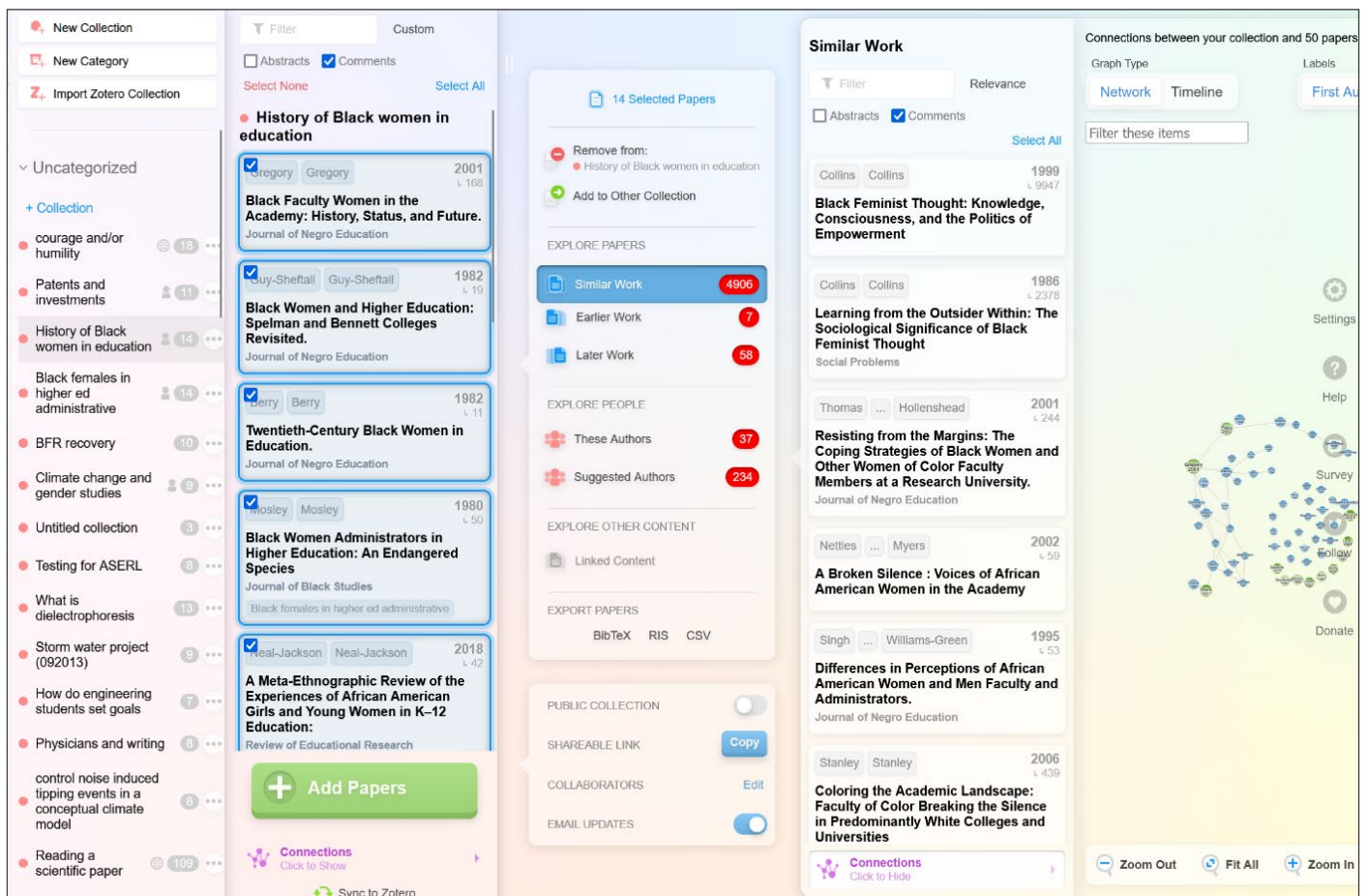


Figure 7: Screen capture of Research Rabbit



Figure 8: Example of using Adobe Firefly to create an image

Spring of 2022. Her cry of “I could have used these in my class this past fall! Why didn’t you tell me about this?” was met by my response of “Research Rabbit wasn’t released from beta till Fall of 2021.” No matter the topic or field, I can create a collection in Research Rabbit from a search string or a list of terms, as well as import papers from Zotero or upload a BibTex or RIS file. From that collection of seed papers, Research Rabbit generates a list of similar works, earlier works, and later works as well as pulls a list of the authors from the seed papers and lists suggested authors. If a user clicks on Similar Work, the resulting articles appear with a network of the articles and their connections to the right. If an article is selected, a new block will appear on the right with the author(s), article title, link to the PDF if available, year published, the number of citations, and the abstract. I find myself traveling down the proverbial rabbit hole diving deep into different arenas. I can select additional articles to add to the collection or even another collection and Research Rabbit will fine tune the lists based on the updated collection.

With the advent of ChatGPT in November 2022 and increased awareness of generative AI, numerous other AI tools entered the research space. Essentially, there are six different generative AI tools that I use now depending on the type of information that I need, the currency/timeline of the content, and functionality e.g., Groq (<https://groq.com/>), Le Chat Mistral (<https://chat.mistral.ai/chat>), Claude (<https://claude.ai/new>), Perplexity (<https://www.perplexity.ai/>), ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>), and Gemini (<https://gemini.google.com/>).

To be frank, I don’t use generative AI tools to find resources. As most STEM research exists behind paywalls, using a large language model (LLM) may not suffice, as the training data may not be current. Using a generative AI tool which web crawls for information or uses retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) provides a different perspective but may pull from unreliable sources. Nevertheless, I’ve found that generative AI tools that pull from a more scholarly corpus of information may present more relevant results, for instance scite pulling from the full text of articles or changing the focus in Perplexity to Academic, but not the validated lists of results similar to scite’s search, Elicit, Inciteful, Research Rabbit, and even other tools like LitMaps (<https://www.litmaps.com/>), Connected Papers (<https://www.connected-papers.com/>), and Open Knowledge Maps (<https://openknowledgemaps.org/>).

From a research perspective, I mainly use generative AI tools to get an overview of a technical topic, define technical terminology, create a complex search string, or outline a topic. Outside of research over into the instruction and personal realm, I’ve used generative AI to create a baseline syllabus, generate learning objectives, create a lesson plan, create a rubric for an assignment, plan a trip, check grammar and spelling, analyze data, quickly summarize a fictional novel, as well as identify fiction books to read based on an author, theme, or character type.

For generative AI in terms of images, I have found a home using Adobe Firefly (<https://www.adobe.com/products/firefly.html>). I created the image for the title slide for my last conference presentation “Improve your research workflow with AI tools” with

the prompt “black female improving your research workflow with ai tools.”

In the past two--almost three--years, various AI tools have crossed my path and I have experimented with many and maintain a list of cool tools to play when time permits. If you are getting started with AI, my advice would be to find your proverbial lane. Are you a liaison librarian doing one-shots and need inspiration to create engaging activities? Are you teaching students, faculty, and staff on how to use different tools to improve their research workflow? Are you at the reference desk needing to find quick resources for students without having to think about “Which database would be best for this topic?” Are you in a public library and need to find a science fiction book with a female lead character based in Spain? During a demo with public librarians, I used Groq (generative AI LLM) to find a list of books that

met that criteria and Perplexity (generative AI that web crawls) to create a table with a link to the Good Read’s reviews and scores for the books. Are you updating the social media at your library and need to find different tools to create images or brief descriptions of your programming? Whatever your role, identify the AI tools that best fit your needs and set aside the time to learn them. Different websites list AI tools by area, type, and/or function and Git Hub contains a list of AI directories at <https://github.com/best-of-ai/ai-directories>. If you reflect back to your first day working in a library and think about where you are today, there are so many different databases, software, apps, and tools that you learned over your entire career. What will it take to learn and add one or more AI tools to your repertoire?

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Building and Assessing a Leisure Horror Collection in an Academic Library

Leisure collections in academic libraries may be difficult to justify as budgets stay flat or shrink and resource costs increase. To be sure, materials supporting curricular or research needs are of paramount importance in academic libraries. However, leisure collections have a place, too, particularly as universities look for opportunities to increase community and connectedness among students who are reporting high rates of loneliness, anxiety, and depression.¹

Research suggests a correlation between leisure reading, reduced stress, and increased empathy, which can in turn potentially contribute to improved academic success and provide tools for connection with others. Levine et al. conducted a longitudinal survey examining the benefits of recreational reading on the mental health of 231 students at a large Canadian university. They state, “Recreational reading was associated with decreased anxiety and depressive symptoms over the school year, when controlling for baseline anxiety and depressive symptoms.”² These results are further supported by Brookbank, who studied the leisure reading habits of undergraduates at 10 universities across the United States and United Kingdom. When asked why they read recreationally, 28 responses from 98 interviewees pertained to relaxation and mental

health, with alleviation of anxiety, depression, and stress addressed specifically.³ Thirty-six responses also noted self-improvement as a motivating factor for reading recreationally, and included in this category were perceived social benefits such as improving interactions with others and broadening perspectives.⁴ Dewan expands on the idea of leisure reading as an empathy-building mindfulness activity, positing that, through their engagement with literary characters, students can redirect thoughts from self to others, experience new ways of thinking, and gain awareness of challenges faced by others.⁵

Certainly, recreational reading is not the panacea for all stressors college students face. However, within those factors a student can control and in combination with other self-care activities, recreational reading has the potential to have a positive effect on students’ relationship with themselves and others, and on their college experience. To support students’ recreational reading habits so that they may realize the benefits of reading for pleasure, academic libraries with leisure collections can strategically develop collections that appeal to students. This article will discuss the leisure collection at Western Carolina University’s Hunter Library and will focus on my efforts to build and assess a horror subcollection. Al-

¹ American College Health Association, *American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment III: Undergraduate Student Reference Group Data Report, Fall 2023* (Silver Spring, MD: American College Health Association, 2024), https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA-IIIb_FALL_2023_UNDERGRADUATE_REFERENCE_GROUP_DATA_REPORT.pdf.

² S. L. Levine et al., “For the Love of Reading: Recreational Reading Reduces Psychological Distress in College Students and Autonomous Motivation Is the Key,” *Journal of American College Health* 70, no. 1 (January 2022): 161, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2020.1728280>.

³ Elizabeth Brookbank, “‘It Makes You Feel like More of a Person’: The Leisure Reading Habits of University Students in the US and UK and How Academic Libraries Can Support Them,” *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 30, no. 3 (July 2023): 68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2023.2261918>.

⁴ Brookbank, “‘It Makes You Feel like More of a Person’: The Leisure Reading Habits of University Students in the US and UK and How Academic Libraries Can Support Them,” 68.

⁵ Pauline Dewan, “Leisure Reading as a Mindfulness Activity: The Implications for Academic Reference Librarians,” *Reference Librarian* 64, no. 1 (January 2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2022.2156968>.

though my assessment is specific to a small number of horror titles, the techniques can be adapted to any genre and can serve as a starting point for creating a demonstrably diverse and well-used leisure collection.

Hunter Library's Leisure Collection

While Hunter Library has long supported recreational reading, our leisure collection was formally established in 2002 as a means to combat aliteracy and to bring students into the building.⁶ The original leisure collection featured several genres with one member of the library faculty or staff responsible for selecting in each area. Hallyburton et al. write:

The collection included horror, mystery, romance, science fiction and fantasy, non-fiction, and westerns. Collectors included professional librarians and paraprofessionals, a departure from the library's traditional model in which only professional librarians collected materials. Each paraprofessional selector had special interest in their area of selection; for instance, the horror collector is a noted editor within the genre.⁷

The collection has evolved over the last two decades and continues to be popular with students and university employees. Currently, the collection includes approximately 1,600 fiction and non-fiction books (figure 1). Hunter Library has expanded its support for the recreational habits of our students, faculty, and staff with growing e-book and audiobook collections, a feature film DVD/Blu-ray collection, subscriptions to documentary and feature film streaming services, and a newly-established board game collection, although these materials are not formally part of the leisure collection.

Fiction is divided into five subcollections: science fiction and fantasy, romance, graphic novels, mystery and thriller, and general fiction. While the leisure subcollections have changed over the years, the collection model has remained the same. Two individuals share responsibility for leisure non-fiction, and each of the five subcollections within leisure fiction has a dedicated selector. Selectors include library faculty and staff.



Figure 1: Photograph of the leisure general fiction section of Hunter Library's leisure collection.

I became the selector for leisure general fiction in the 2018-2019 academic year. General fiction was a new subcollection in leisure fiction at that time; though genre fiction was well represented in the leisure collection, we did not have a subcollection for fiction outside those genres. In 2018, horror was its own subcollection in leisure, but due to its relatively small size, we decided to include it in general fiction. As a lifelong horror lover, I was excited to purchase for this area.

Breaking Down and Rebuilding Horror

When I assumed selection responsibilities for leisure general fiction, the horror subcollection already had been physically relocated into the new leisure general fiction area. Both to get my bearings as a new leisure selector and to establish a path forward for this new subcollection, my first order of business was to examine the existing titles that had been moved into leisure general fiction. I reviewed past purchases, looked at circulation statistics, and evaluated the condition of the materials. Because this was a newly established area within leisure fiction and because the horror collection that was absorbed into it was small, I weeded conservatively. Of 147 total horror titles, I withdrew 19 due to age, condition, and poor circulation history, and I transferred four to the general collection.

With a limited budget of approximately \$500 per year, I balanced the purchase of horror titles with the purchase of general fiction titles, prioritizing to the

⁶ Ann W. Hallyburton, Heidi E. Buchanan, and Timothy V. Carstens, "Serving the Whole Person: Popular Materials in Academic Libraries," *Collection Building* 30, no. 2 (January 1, 2011): 109–10, <https://doi.org/10.1108/01604951111127498>.

⁷ Hallyburton, Buchanan, and Carstens, "Serving the Whole Person: Popular Materials in Academic Libraries," 110.

extent possible diverse purchases. From 2018-2023, I purchased 116 titles for leisure general fiction. Of these, 55 (approximately 47%) of the titles I purchased are classified as horror and 61 (approximately 53%) are classified more broadly as general fiction (figure 2). These numbers exclude 2020-2021 when leisure funds were suspended due to COVID-19 and worries about possible budget reversions.

Assessing Leisure Horror

After five years of selecting for leisure general fiction, I conducted a detailed analysis of circulation data,

particularly for the horror purchases. My reasons were threefold. I wanted to see if there were trends in circulation patterns, identify potential collection priority areas, and determine if a case could be made for re-establishing a horror subcollection. As a selector with a small annual budget, it has been difficult to balance the purchase of both horror and general fiction titles. Invariably, I have foregone the purchase of desirable titles in each area due to limited funds – a challenge I am sure is shared by my selector colleagues but is exacerbated by the dual collection priorities in leisure general fiction. Moreover, these

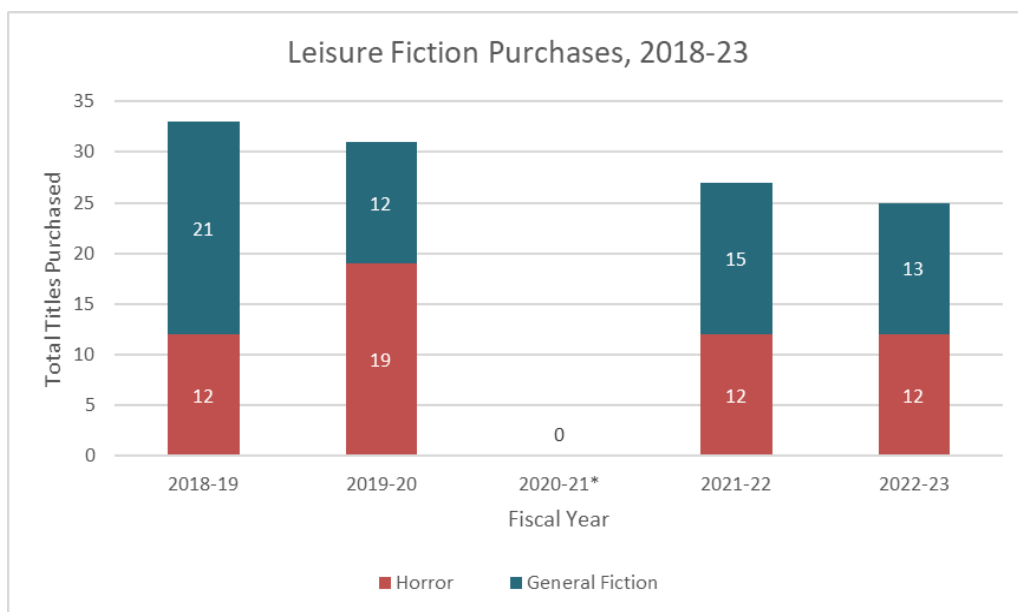


Figure 2: Leisure fiction purchases, 2018-23. Note: Leisure purchases were suspended in 2020-21.

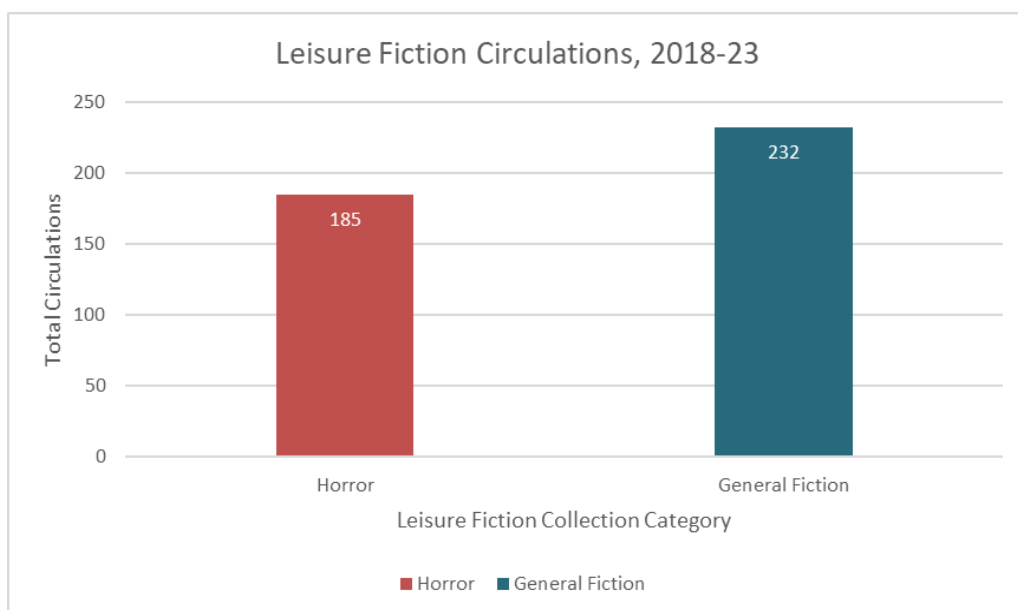


Figure 3: Leisure fiction circulations, 2018-23.

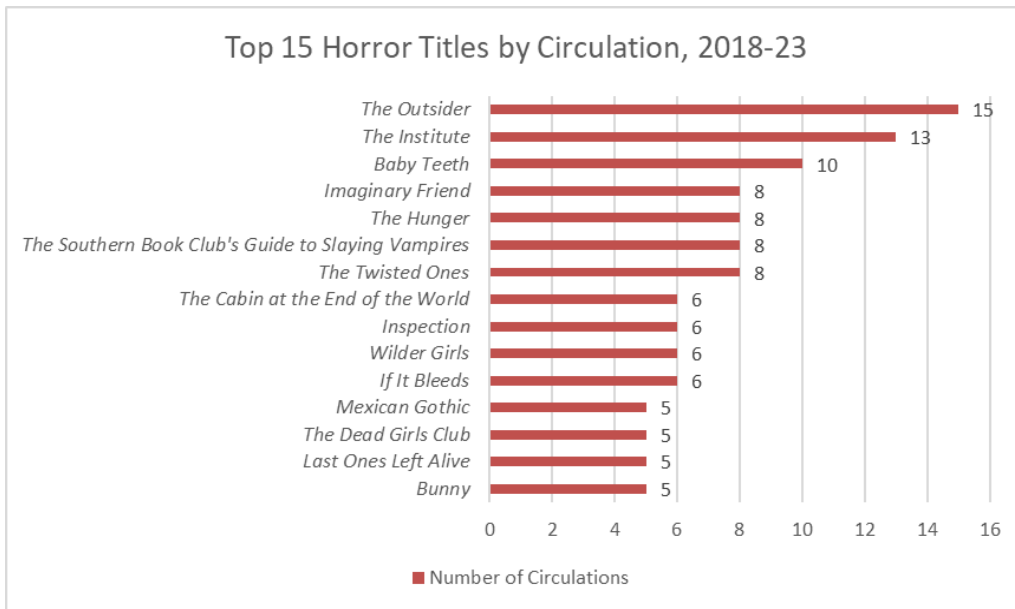


Figure 4: Top 15 horror titles by circulation, 2018-23.

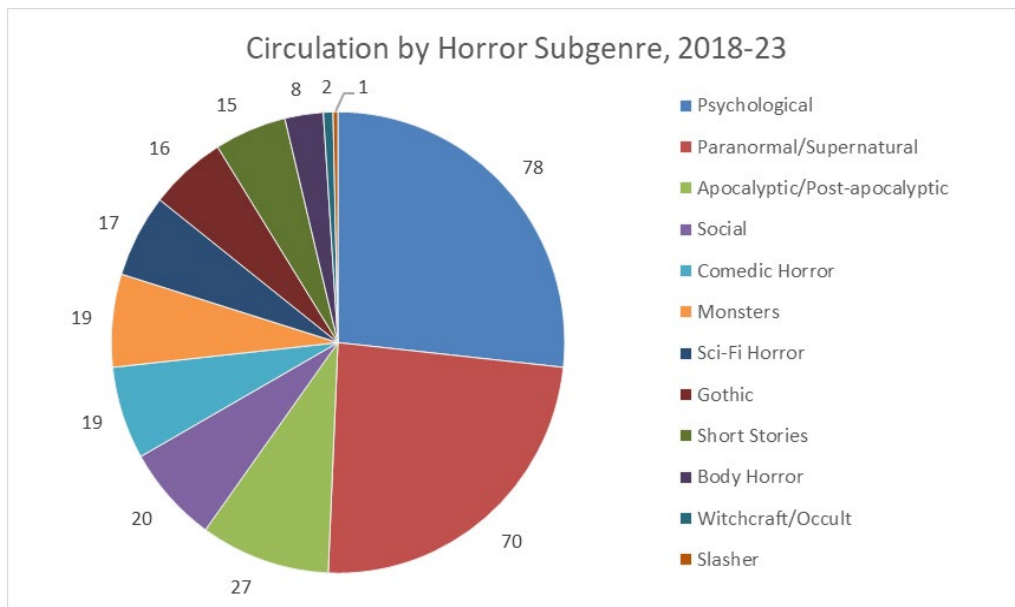


Figure 5: Circulation by horror subgenre, 2018-23.

dual collection priorities have resulted in a dichotomous subcollection with a rather disjointed feel.

Using circulation data from August 2018 through September 2023 for leisure general fiction purchases I made from the 2018-19 academic year through the 2022-23 academic year, I conducted an analysis of circulation trends of horror titles. I looked at several variables in my analysis, including total circulations, top 15 titles by circulation numbers, circulation by horror subgenre, circulation by diverse author/character, and circulation by media adaptation.

Total circulation (figure 3) numbers for horror were promising. Of the 417 circulations 2018-23 purchases received, horror purchases received 185 (approximately 44%) of those. The top 15 highest circulating titles from the 2018-23 purchases (figure 4) revealed a pleasing mix of high-profile authors (e.g., Stephen King and Paul Tremblay) sharing space with perhaps less well-known but talented authors whose books have received critical praise (e.g., Mona Awad, Silvia Moreno-Garcia, and Alma Katsu).

When looking at circulation by horror subgenres (figure 5), things became murkier. I developed a list of common horror subgenres from my own reading experience and in consultation with sources such as NoveList Plus, Book Riot, and Edmonton Public Library’s “Exploring the Diverse Subgenres of Horror Literature,” among others. I categorized each horror purchase into a genre or genres (very few fell neatly into a single subgenre), and for each checkout a title received, I counted circulation for the correspond-

ing genre(s). For example, I coded Kira Jane Buxton’s *Hollow Kingdom* as Apocalyptic/Post-apocalyptic, Monsters, and Comedic Horror, and a checkout of *Hollow Kingdom* was counted as a circulation in each of those three subgenres.

is valuable information for a selector. As representation in those smaller subgenres grows, an analysis of this nature may prove more fruitful. I also reviewed circulation trends by author and character diversity (figure 6) since diversity is a priority in my collection development for the area. For the purposes of this analysis, I included race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation of both author and major characters. Examples include Silvia Moreno-Garcia’s *Mexican Gothic*, Ste-

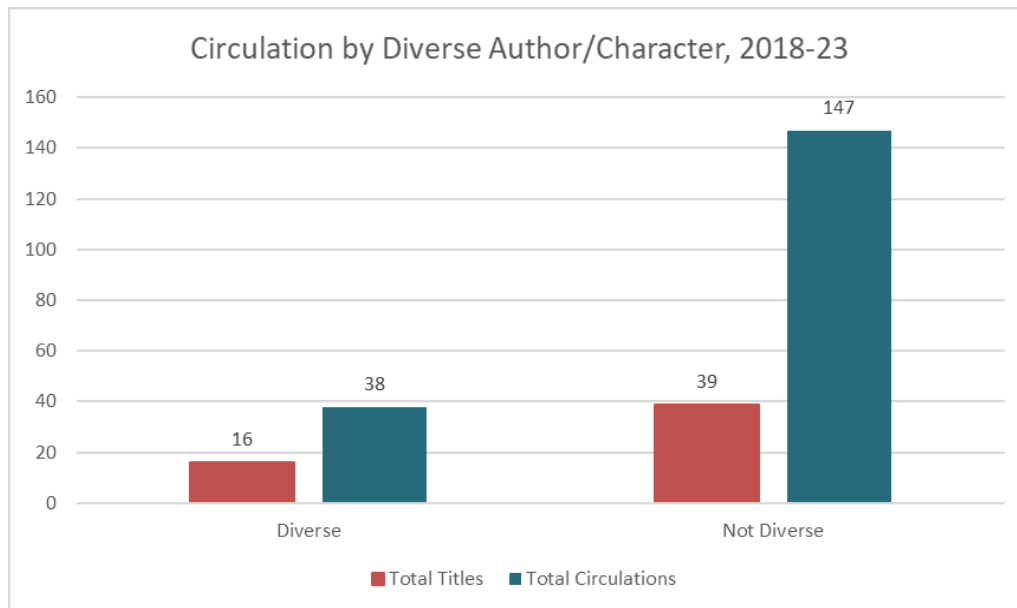


Figure 6: Circulation by diverse author/character, 2018-23.

phen Graham Jones’s *My Heart Is a Chainsaw*, and Gretchen Felker-Martin’s *Manhunt*.

Horror novels written by diverse authors and/or featuring diverse characters represented 16 of 55 (approximately 29%) of horror purchases and 38 of 185 (approximately 21%) of horror circulations. The circulation statistics are compelling. Hunter Library is committed to offering a collection that is representative and reflective of our university population, and purchasing diverse titles will remain a priority for me.

I was also curious whether a media adaptation affected a title’s circulation (figure 7). I looked at circulation data for titles that had an existing movie, television, or podcast adaptation. I excluded titles for which there was a forthcoming adaptation as the state of the adaptation (for example, in development versus in post-production) can play a role in the amount of attention a title receives. The sample size

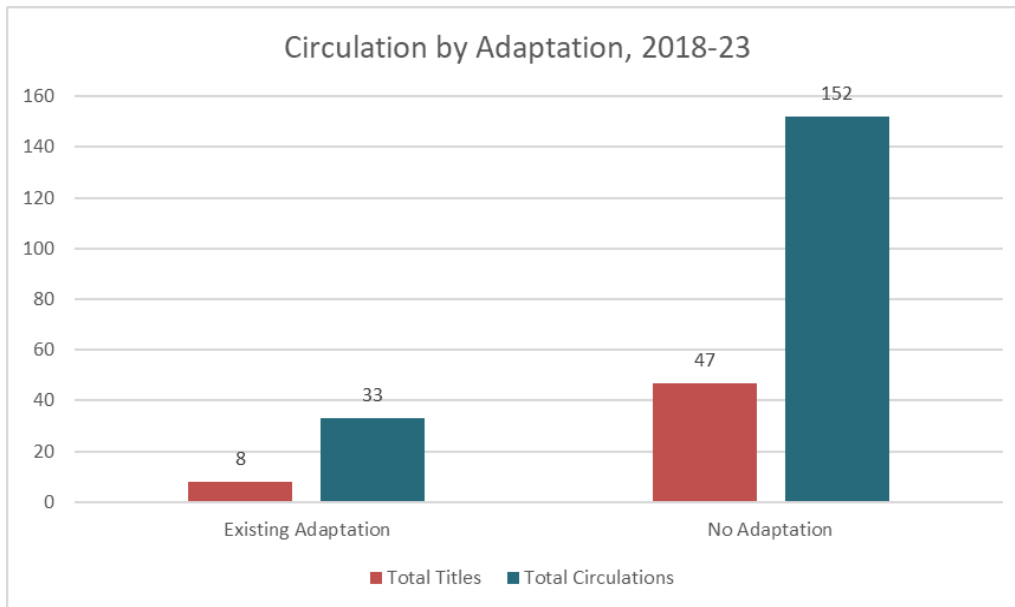


Figure 7: Circulation by media adaptation, 2018-23.

here was small, with only eight (approximately 15%) purchased horror titles having an existing adaptation. These titles received 33 (approximately 18%) total circulations.

Future Directions

Through this collection assessment, I have distilled several ideas to promote awareness and use of horror, general fiction, and the entire leisure collection. The first, and an impetus for this assessment, is a reconfiguration of the leisure collection to include a discrete horror section again. Overall, the horror circulation numbers are promising and indicate patron interest in the genre. While current physical space constraints make it difficult to create new leisure subcollections, the numbers support re-establishing a discrete horror subcollection in leisure fiction once space becomes available. There may be a need for additional subcollections as well (e.g., historical fiction) to meet our patrons' reading preferences if and when the space dedicated to our leisure collection grows.

The second idea – though not novel – is to actively solicit requests from patrons. The circulation by subgenres analysis revealed areas where the collection can be improved. Increased representation in these subgenres is a priority and will allow better assessment of circulation trends in the future. To grow these areas, soliciting requests from patrons will create a collection by and for those who use it. Colleagues in the library have had success using whiteboards to

solicit information from students about services and resources, and I hope to follow their example and do something similar for leisure general fiction, and especially those underrepresented horror subgenres.

Finally, building on Hunter Library's successful non-curricular programming (that has included game nights and drag queen story hours) and burgeoning involvement with recognized student organizations, I would like to explore creating a horror book club. As with the other non-curricular programming efforts, this book club would foster community among our band of horror readers and strengthen the Hunter Library's growing reputation as a community hub on campus.

Conclusion

While leisure collections in academic libraries may not carry the same weight as collections supporting student and faculty research and teaching needs, they can be vitally important to the campus population. Collection and circulation analyses such as those undertaken for the horror titles in Hunter Library's leisure general fiction subcollection can be adapted to any genre. These analyses can reveal trends in readership, identify areas that need attention, and offer ideas for marketing and promotion, all of which can contribute to a collection that is widely used and can demonstrate the value of leisure collections to stakeholders.

Note

This article expands on the author's poster presentation, entitled *Something Wicked This Way Comes: Building, Assessing, and Marketing a Leisure Horror Collection*, delivered at the 65th Biennial North Carolina Library Association Conference in October 2023, and the author's contributions to the April 2024 NC LIVE Spring Marketing Series panel *Page Turners: Promoting Leisure Reading in Academic Libraries*.

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