

The Bull's Head Bookshop was established in 1927 by Howard Mumford Jones, and located in his office. It grew quickly and after a brief stint in the YMCA, was moved to Wilson Library in 1935. The Bull's Head remained in the library until it was relocated to the Josephus Daniels Building in 1968. The author of the article below, Jessica Valentine, was a librarian who served as the full-time manager of the bookshop. The University selected Barnes & Noble to run the Bull's Head Bookshop in 2016, and it is now generally known as UNC Student Stores.

JESSICA VALENTINE • UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY

The Bull's Head Bookshop

Rental collections are not unusual in libraries, but book shops are. The Extension Division of the University of North Carolina Library has been operating the Bull's Head Bookshop for about ten years where the latest books are offered to the public both for sale and for rent. It is self-supporting. Its collection is carefully selected to serve the needs of the college community and to supplement the main library's resources, particularly in the fields of recent fiction, biography, drama and poetry.

The Bull's Head Bookshop is situated in one end of the Extension Library. It is bright with new books in jackets, well lighted, comfortably furnished with easy chairs and simple display tables and shelves, and lined with full stacks conveniently arranged according to subject matter. A magazine table offers a stimulating selection of current non-technical periodicals, literary, artistic and timely. It is a cheerful little place and an inviting one. All the books are for sale, both new and used, and practically all are for rent, the only exceptions being gift editions and out-of-print titles. Even the children's books are for rent, although a much larger proportion of the juveniles is retained for sale purposes. Small chairs are provided for our young browsers. The inventory comprises about 3,000 books. About one-fifth of these are in our active rental file.

The clientele is drawn from the students, the faculty and the townspeople, and stock is selected

with the hope of supplying a tactful blend of the intellectual and the frivolous. We have no room at present for sets or rare books or deluxe fine bindings. But all the current titles of fiction and non-fiction are available in almost adequate quantities. Text books are taboo; but many a student has been led into the bypaths of his subject by browsing about the Bull's Head. Some are no doubt temporarily led astray from pure research by an entertaining selection of canteen books and anthologies of wit and humor. Detective stories have their place in such a shop. In fact they have a section all to themselves. The turnover of this stock is particularly lively, only the latest titles being kept available.

Books are ordered through the facilities of the University Library Order Department. New titles are on display and ready for rental on publication day or very close to it. A jaded patron can usually find something fresh or unusual to carry away. The rental customer who moans, "Do you have a good book?" nearly always gets a good book and often a better book than he or she had dreamed of.

We try to respect the specialties of our patrons, providing the best available popular art and music books. Drama students and collectors find a good assortment of anthologies and latest published plays and reference works. Poetry lovers are not disappointed when they are looking for new poetry or reprints of the classics, and they can always borrow

or buy a copy of *The Prophet* or a New Directions pamphlet.

Domestic interests are served with an ample stock of cook books, both standard and Epicurean, and with the best of the current books on house plans and interior decorating. Child guidance and psychology books are here too, as well as recent sociological literature. The staff is aided in selection of these specialties by members of the faculty, who are themselves customers and devotees of the shop. The Bull's Head Bookshop is literary headquarters for the Chapel Hill Garden Club whose members use our books extensively and meet here annually for a tea and a talk on the year's best horticultural books, most of which are on display.

The collection of books on current affairs is kept strictly alive, out-of-date titles being sold off as bargains. We try to supply Bibles, dictionaries and atlases within rather narrow limits. But of course the shop is glad to handle special orders and to search for hard-to-get and out-of-print titles.

A pleasant activity of the Bull's Head Bookshop is the series of monthly teas, to which everyone is invited to take a cup of tea and to listen to a talk by a local or visiting literary light. When feasible, autographing is cheerfully carried on at these teas. Interested audiences attend enthusiastically and respond to the stimulus of good tea, good talk and good books.



Bull's Head Bookshop in its Wilson Library location, 1951

Our efforts to serve the needs and pleasure of the University community, without departing from University library standards of literary excellence have resulted in steadily increasing sales and rental activity. The Bull's Head Bookshop is a modest but ambitious example of the unusual service offered by a bookshop in a library.

References

- English and Comparative Literature 225 Anniversary Timeline: 1927 - Howard Mumford Jones (1892-1980) establishes the Bull's Head Bookstore. (n.d.). English and Comparative Literature 225 Anniversary Timeline. Retrieved January 7, 2026, from <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/english-and-comparative-literature-225-anniversary-timeline/1927---howard-mumford-jones-1892-1980-establishes-the-bulls-head-bookstore>
- Littleton, I. T. (1958). *The Bull's Head Bookshop: A Unique Library Bookstore*. *College & Research Libraries*, 19(6): 471-473. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl_19_06_471
- Valentine, J. (1945). *The Bull's Head Bookshop*. *North Carolina Libraries*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.3776/ncl.v4i4.4684>
- Image of the Bull's Head Bookshop in its Wilson Library location, 1951, from 1927 - Howard Mumford Jones (1892-1980) Establishes The Bull's Head Bookstore.