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LARA LUCK • PRESIDENT, NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

From the President

"Advocacy isn't something extra we do on top of our work; it is our work."

Greetings from what is currently a very cold and snowy, central part of our wonderful state. I am Lara Luck, the Collection Development Supervisor at the Forsyth County Public Library, and I am honored to be the North Carolina Library Association's president for the 2025-2027 biennium. I have worked in libraries for almost 30 years now and have been a member of NCLA for 25 of those years. In that time there has been a great deal of change in our profession. However, I think we can all agree that the changes and challenges we are undergoing now have us at a crossroads, and the actions we take now may affect our profession for decades to come.

In recent years, North Carolina libraries have been subjected to growing legislative scrutiny. Bills that threaten the professional integrity of librarians, including potential criminal penalties for distributing "harmful" materials and mandates for community review committees, are creating an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship. These legislative measures jeopardize the free flow of information, a core principle of our democracy. Libraries are more than just places for books; they are spaces for open dialogue, diverse perspectives, and inclusive education. We must stand against the unnerving effects of censorship and protect access to all ideas.

Libraries are also facing severe financial challenges, from the attempts to cut federal funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to local budget crises that impact staffing and hours of operation. The breakdown of regional library systems and closing of libraries isolates North Carolina communities from the resources and local information they come to rely on.

North Carolina libraries are often the lifeline for vulnerable populations, including those experiencing homelessness, low-income families, and non-English speakers. Libraries provide access to critical services like free internet, job application assistance, and community health programs. However, these populations continually face obstacles like transportation barriers and the lack of support to manage mental health, exacerbating what we know as the digital divide.

Librarians across North Carolina are facing personal challenges as well. The toll of understaffing, burnout, and the hostile political environment is undeniable. Our librarians and library staff are dedicated to serving their communities, but we are increasingly doing so with fewer resources and under immense pressure. In addition to our traditional roles, many librarians are stepping into social service positions, responding to crises, and managing rising security concerns. The mental and emotional strain this creates is leading to an alarming rate of burnout across our profession.

We need to find ways to encourage lawmakers, community leaders, and citizens of North Carolina to recognize the critical role libraries play in our society and take action to support them. The North Carolina Library Association stands united in the fight to:

- **Defend intellectual freedom**: Libraries must remain safe spaces for exploring diverse ideas without fear of censorship. We must oppose legislative measures that put librarians at risk of criminal liability and create a climate of fear in our schools and libraries.

- **Ensure adequate funding**: Libraries need sustained investment to continue serving our communities effectively. Federal, state, and local governments need to be convinced to prioritize funding for our libraries, ensuring that libraries have the resources to continue our critical work.
- **Support library staff**: Library workers must be treated as the professionals we are. This includes fair wages, adequate staffing, and comprehensive training to handle the evolving needs of our communities, from mental health crises to technology access. Libraries cannot function without the dedication and expertise of our staff.
- **Advocate for vulnerable communities**: Libraries are a crucial safety net for those in need. We must continue to find innovative ways to serve all members of our communities, regardless of their socioeconomic status.
- **Work for greater inclusivity**: Libraries must continue to serve as inclusive spaces where everyone - regardless of their background, identity, or beliefs - can find support, education, and resources. We must bridge gaps in language access, digital literacy, and cultural sensitivity to ensure that no one is left behind.

I invite all North Carolinians to stand with libraries. Here's how you can support our efforts:

- **Advocate for libraries**: Contact your state and local representatives to express your support for libraries and oppose harmful legislative measures that threaten intellectual freedom and access to resources.
- **Volunteer and support your library**: Libraries depend on community involvement. Whether through volunteering your time or supporting fundraising efforts, your local library needs your help now more than ever.
- **Join NCLA**: Become a member of the North Carolina Library Association to stay informed and participate in advocacy efforts to protect and strengthen libraries across the state.

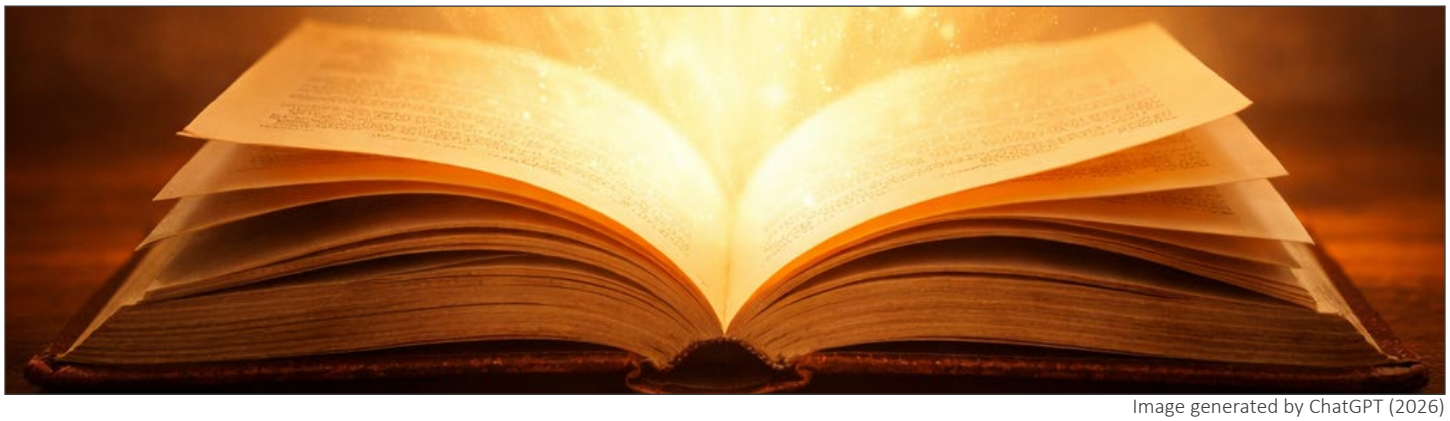
Advocacy isn't something extra we do on top of our work; it is our work. Every time we help someone navigate information, protect their privacy, learn a new skill, or feel welcome in our space, we are demonstrating our value. Advocacy is just making that value visible to the people who make decisions.

Many of us didn't come into librarianship to lobby or persuade. We came to serve. But service alone isn't enough if others don't understand what libraries actually do, or what's at risk when support erodes. If we don't tell our story, someone else will. Quiet advocacy happens in everyday moments: when you explain the impact of a program to a community partner; when you share a patron success story with a library stakeholder; when you correct a misconception about libraries being "quiet places with books."

Those are the moments that can make the most difference. As library workers, you are trusted messengers. People believe you. They listen to you. And that trust is one of our strongest advocacy tools.

Libraries are an investment in the future, an investment in education, community, and the values that bind us together. Now is the time to protect them. Together, we can ensure that libraries remain beacons of hope, learning, and freedom for generations to come.

Thank you for the work you do, and for being advocates whether you realize it or not.



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WM. JOSEPH THOMAS • EDITOR

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From the Editor: Librarians, Privacy, and the Freedom to Read

This spring issue contains some wonderful articles and columns, plus a dozen reviews of some fascinating books. Many thanks to editorial board members who have volunteered to become column editors. First up, we have Denelle Eads' Wired to the World column "Matching New Technology to Real User Needs," along with Joanie Chavis describing the journey that led her to library leadership in her column, In Step with Library Leaders. There is one article I would like to recommend especially, in conjunction with encouragement for librarians to consider how they may implement the values it presents.

In "Library Privacy Heroes," Allison Sills traces a brief history of how libraries have protected patron privacy through the 20th and into the 21st century. Starting with the touchstones 1st and 4th Amendments of the US Constitution and the American Library Association's emphasis on this core value, Sills calls out role models like Flora Ludington, Judith Krug, and the Connecticut Four for their bravery. She closes by mentioning some resources that could help librarians, including ALA's Privacy Guidelines for Vendors, Library Privacy Checklist for Public Computers and Networks, and Library Privacy Toolkit.

In addition to these resources, let me also point out Read Free NC, which connects librarians to a variety of ethical statements, North Carolina State Laws, and Toolkits. Read Free NC also tracks privacy-related bills in the NC General Assembly and offers confidential peer support for librarians who are navigating book challenges.

And now the challenge for each of us: what is your library doing to minimize its tracking of patron reading? Consider not only what circulation records are kept and who has access to them, but also what electronic resources usage is captured and associated with individuals. If you currently retain patron circulation history, can you stop collecting it? When you set up new electronic resources, are your proxy settings designed not to pass along the individual's name, email address, or other identifying characteristics? It's up to us to do our part in helping protect our patrons' right to privacy to help preserve their right to choose what they read.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor and mailed to:
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or by email to editor@nclaonline.org.

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.

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RODRIGO CASTRO • TAMMY BAGGETT • KATE BUDRIES • JENNY DALE • CARLOS GROOMS

The Whole Self Dichotomy in Libraries: A Panel Discussion with WILR, LAMS, REMCo, and the DEI Committee

ABSTRACT

The concept of bringing one's whole self to work draws a range of reactions and sparks difficult conversations; but the operational definition is neither widely understood, nor consistently applied. When workplaces attempt to move this idea from the conceptual to the concrete, there is a great deal to address regarding identity, equity, culture, workplace environments and interpersonal relationships, policy and procedure, employee safety, work/life balance, the role of leadership, and the differences between philosophy and practice. To explore this topic further, a panel discussion was planned and executed by members of the North Carolina Library Association's Women in Libraries Roundtable, the Leadership and Management Section, the Roundtable for Ethnic and Minority Concerns, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Areas of focus for this discussion included research and definitions related to the "whole self" conversation, historical perspectives, the role of leadership, and operationalization.

KEYWORDS: *bringing one's whole self to work, work environment, workplace culture, leadership*

The concept of bringing one's whole self to work draws a range of reactions and conversations; but the operational definition is neither widely understood nor consistently applied. When workplaces attempt to move this idea from the conceptual to the concrete, there is a great deal to address regarding identity, equity, culture, workplace environments and interpersonal relationships, policy and procedure, employee safety, work/life balance, the role of leadership, and the differences between philosophy and practice. To explore this topic further, a panel discussion was planned and executed by members of the North Carolina Library Association's Women in Libraries Roundtable, the Leadership and Management Section, the Roundtable for Ethnic and Minority Concerns, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. This discussion was held virtually on December 11, 2024.

In approaching this discussion, panelists sought to share their experiences and what they had learned within their organizations, and to create a space for the audience to interact with panelists and share their own experiences. When attending sessions regarding workplace dynamics, panelists noted that attendees were often most invested in practical applications. Staff in the field were eager to learn how to transform takeaways into best practices, build functional procedures that would serve their organizations, and create sustainable systems that could benefit a range of employees. In designing this session, the goal was to focus on "how" rather than "should," and not to dictate courses of action, but instead to highlight practices and procedures that had worked well, and engage audiences in a dialogue about potential applications and ideas in various settings.

Literature Review

The concept of bringing one's whole self to work has existed for quite some time. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact genesis of the phrase, but a Harvard Business Review collection entitled *Harvard Business Review on bringing your whole self to work*, published in late 2007, collected articles on the topic dating back to the 1990s. A study conducted in 2009 analyzed results from a large-scale survey of American businesses and concluded that workers who equally prioritized their work and non-work identities had "(1) greater overall satisfaction, (2) higher work-life balance satisfaction, and (3) less emotional exhaustion" (Bourne et al., 2009, p. 389). The study also outlined how managers and organizations could benefit from this approach, recommending that "[c]ompanies should illustrate the 'bridge' between employees' work and non-work roles, whether that entails supporting caregiving responsibilities, encouraging volunteer efforts, offering time away from

work, supporting health and wellness, or any other dual-centric program" (Bourne et al., 2009, p. 396).

In 2018, management consultant and author Mike Robbins published a book entitled *Bring your whole self to work*, reigniting widespread discussion around the concept of bringing one's authentic self to work. Robbins (2018) conceptualizes the "whole self" as rooted in authenticity and vulnerability, framing it through five core principles: being authentic, utilizing the power of appreciation, focusing on emotional intelligence, embracing a growth mindset, and creating a championship team.

The idea of bringing one's whole identity to the workplace regained prominence alongside the significant workplace transformations prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As remote work became mandatory, employees were compelled to integrate elements of their personal identities into their professional lives. And later, as organizations began transitioning back to in-person work, many embraced the idea of employees bringing aspects of their personal identities into the onsite environment as a way to ease the adjustment. In "13 Effective Ways to Bring Your 'Whole Self' to Work" (Expert Panel, 2022), a group of business, career, and professional coaches outlined strategies for displaying authenticity and vulnerability within in-person work environments. These strategies ranged from aligning personal values with organizational values, to observing established workplace norms and etiquette, to cultivating awareness of one's own potential blind spots, among others.

Since bringing one's whole self to work demands authenticity and vulnerability, many employees—especially those from marginalized groups—experience this expectation as a risk not worth taking (Cain et al., 2023; Eigenheer, 2023; Harkema, 2023). In 2023, a study published by Deloitte and the Meltzer Center explored ways in which employees, particularly those from stigmatized backgrounds, downplay elements of their identities to assimilate into the workplace mainstream. According to the report, 60% of the respondents reported having hidden aspects of their identities at work in the previous 12 months. These aspects included age, caregiver status, disability, education level, mental health status, military or veteran status, race or ethnicity, and religious affiliation, among others. The reasons respondents cited for engaging in this behavior varied, yet the motivations most frequently mentioned centered upon perceived judgments and expectations from others in the workplace (Stephane et al., 2023).

Literature suggests that employees' willingness to bring their authentic selves to work depends largely on organizations' ability to foster an environment of psychological safety. Leadership scholar Amy C. Edmondson defines psychological safety as "a climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves" (Edmondson, 2018). Similarly, Charles Duhigg defines psychological safety as a set of conditions that allow individuals to express themselves without fear of recrimination and retribution (Duhigg, 2016). Both authors outline the benefits of employees feeling empowered to take interpersonal risks such as speaking up, admitting mistakes, and requesting help, training, or support.

Historical Overview

An examination of what is considered acceptable in the workplace, particularly regarding cultural identities, is essential to understanding the concept of bringing one's whole self to work. The American workforce has a long and complex history shaped by migration, colonization, and labor exploitation. From the inception of the thirteen colonies, immigrants arrived seeking new opportunities and religious freedom, fully aware that labor would be essential to their aspirations. Simultaneously, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade forcefully relocated millions of Africans from various kingdoms, countries, and tribes for the direct purpose of labor exploitation. Indigenous Native Americans also endured a geographical, economic, and spiritual upheaval as colonization imposed indentured servitude and plantation slavery, drastically altering their way of life. These historical processes created a labor system that defined who would benefit from work and who would be exploited by it.

As the American workforce evolved, so did the social identities associated with labor. Over time, one's work became a reflection of status and social capital. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 reshaped the workplace by enabling greater inclusion of African Americans, immigrants, and women. The Equal Employment

Opportunity Act of 1972 further expanded these protections, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (American Library Association, 1973). These legislative changes required employers to consider diverse backgrounds during hiring processes, slowly shifting the labor force toward greater inclusion.

To fully explore what it means to bring one's whole self to work, it is necessary to reflect on how nonwhite individuals have historically been perceived in educational and professional settings. What does it mean to be culturally accepted in spaces that have long excluded or marginalized certain groups? For many individuals from stigmatized backgrounds, entering the workplace often meant suppressing aspects of their identity to conform to dominant norms. This is a phenomenon known as code-switching. It involves modifying behavior, vernacular, or presentation to appear more acceptable or "palatable" in predominantly white or Eurocentric work environments (Cain et al., 2023). Historically, members of underrepresented groups have had to rely on code-switching to secure employment, avoid conflict, and survive workplace hostility. This practice is deeply entwined with broader discussions about authenticity and the challenges of fully expressing one's identity in professional settings.

Cultural Representation in the Workplace

In 1974, Dr. E. J. Josey, in collaboration with the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), investigated the racial demographics of librarianship in the United States (Josey, 1975). The study concluded that Black professionals were grossly underrepresented in all types of libraries. Josey disaggregated data from a BCALA survey intended to investigate minority representation in the field and found that Black librarians were even more underrepresented than initially reported (Josey, 1975).

Research indicates that when minorities work in predominantly white environments, they often experience pressure to present versions of themselves that are perceived as more agreeable, professional, or nonthreatening (Cain et al., 2023). In extreme cases, these pressures result in the suppression of cultural expressions or the adoption of behaviors intended to counter harmful stereotypes. A parallel appears in Percival Everett's novel *James*, in which enslaved characters deliberately conceal their intelligence, performing ignorance as a strategy for survival under antebellum slavery. Everett's novel, however, is not the first work of fiction to explore the topic of code-switching. The concept can be traced back to African American Literature of the 19th Century, demonstrating that "Black intellectuals have been conceiving of language as a tool to carve out agency under slavery —regardless of status as free or enslaved, educated or illiterate—for over a hundred years, and likely longer" (Reagan, 2025). In contemporary workplaces, code-switching can function in a similar way, forcing individuals to leave essential aspects of themselves, particularly their cultural identity, outside the work setting.

Given the complexity of America's labor history, fostering inclusive work environments in which employees feel safe bringing their authentic selves to work requires intentionality, sustained reflection, and structural change. Creating spaces where employees feel seen, heard, and valued depends on leadership that actively dismantles and confronts harmful stereotypes and outdated practices.

Education and professional development grounded in the history of libraries—and the broader American labor system—are essential to this effort. As political and institutional forces increasingly challenge historical truths, information professionals must cultivate supportive environments not only for the communities they serve but also for their colleagues. Library leaders, in particular, bear responsibility for proactively reshaping workplace cultures and challenging persistent misconceptions, including the harmful notion that minority professionals cannot thrive in spaces of learning, authority, and leadership.

Operationalization

In order to operationalize the idea of bringing one's whole self to work in ways that are equitable, knowing that employees' backgrounds and experiences are different, organizations must carefully identify and address factors that can influence employees' ability—and desire—to share aspects of their identity in the workplace.

There are strategies, both conceptual and operational, that can help organizations foster a work environment where employees can feel comfortable presenting their authentic selves. It is important though, that organizations approach these strategies in ways that are inclusive, empowering, empathic, and holistic.

Conceptual Strategies

To nurture a work environment where employees can effectively bring their whole selves to work, organizations must clearly articulate what they are trying to accomplish by creating such an environment. Why would the organization want employees to bring their whole selves to work? What are the benefits, disadvantages, challenges, and risks? How would this premise align with the organization's missions, values, and core commitments? How would internal expectations of what constitute professional behavior affect the organization's perception of employees' productivity, professionalism, and overall performance?

The answers to these questions vary from organization to organization, and from individual to individual. It is critical, then, that organizations that wish to foster an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their authentic selves establish a clear vision. This vision, built collectively and inclusively, should articulate a common understanding of what bringing one's whole self to work means in the context of the organization's culture and strategic agenda. It should also acknowledge past and present challenges, outline current objectives, and describe long-term aspirations.

Operational Strategies

From an operational perspective, there are major aspects that need to be addressed in order to build a work environment where employees can bring their authentic selves: Leadership, expertise, support, and capacity. All these aspects play a key role in creating such an environment.

Leadership

The role of leadership is to provide the tools to support and maintain a work environment where employees can express their authentic selves. This includes not only providing the necessary tools and support, but also legitimizing the work required to establish and maintain such an environment. In this context, "legitimizing" refers to articulating and reinforcing a common understanding across the organization of the initiative's importance.

Leaders should take ownership of setting overarching priorities through strategic alignment and goal setting. Different departments often operate with competing demands, and it is leadership's responsibility to unify these efforts under common organizational goals. This also involves allocating appropriate resources and implementing policies that facilitate progress.

When developing policies to foster a work environment where employees can express their authentic selves, leadership must ensure that these policies clearly define expectations, boundaries, and accountability mechanisms. Given that every organization has its own culture, mission, and operational realities, a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective. Instead, policy development should be tailored to reflect the organization's unique context.

A common misstep organizations make when seeking to create a work environment that empowers employees to express their authentic selves is delegating this responsibility to individuals, committees, working groups, or other entities that may have relevant expertise, but lack the authority or organizational reach to establish cross-departmental priorities. While their input is of paramount importance, it is ultimately up to leadership to ensure that such efforts are integrated, supported, and prioritized at the institutional level.

Creating the conditions for a work environment where employees feel empowered to bring their whole selves to work requires intentional, organization-wide commitment. To this end, leadership bears responsibility for several key strategic and operational aspects, including:

- **Aligning organizational values:** If an organization seeks to encourage authenticity and vulnerability, it is essential that this commitment is clearly aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and core values. Accordingly, it is leadership's responsibility to review—and, when necessary, update—the organization's aspi-

rational principles to ensure they meaningfully support the structures and practices that empower employees to express their authentic selves at work.

- **Setting the tone:** Bringing one's whole self to work requires authenticity and vulnerability, expectations that can feel burdensome for many employees, especially those from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups (Cain et al., 2023; Eigenheer, 2023; Harkema, 2023). If an organization seeks to encourage this practice, it must ensure that it applies equitably to all employees, not only those in supportive and frontline roles. To that end, leaders are responsible for modeling authenticity and vulnerability through their management and leadership practices, sending a clear message that these behaviors are valued, supported, and safe.

- **Practicing inclusive leadership:** To encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work, organizations must cultivate environments in which individuals feel empowered to share their ideas, perspectives, and lived experiences. One effective approach is the practice of inclusive leadership, which "promotes participation of others beyond administrators in governance processes and advocates for leadership approaches grounded in the principle of inclusion" (Ryan, 2007, p. 93). Accordingly, leadership holds responsibility for modeling inclusive leadership by implementing strategies that foster open dialogue, recruit and elevate diverse voices, establish policies to mitigate systemic biases, and create meaningful opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making processes.

- **Fostering psychological safety in the workplace:** Psychological safety is critical for creating a work environment where employees feel empowered to show their authentic selves. Psychological safety, according to Charles Duhigg, allows individuals to 'talk about what is messy or sad, to have hard conversations with colleagues who are driving us crazy" (Duhigg, 2016). Leadership plays a critical role in enabling open, safe, and productive dialogue among employees by setting clear expectations, implementing supportive policies and accountability mechanisms, and championing initiatives such as employee resource groups, training programs, affinity groups, and other learning and networking opportunities that promote understanding, respect, and inclusion.

- **Removing Barriers:** Fostering a culture of respect and acceptance is essential to empowering employees to be truly authentic at work. Leadership plays a key role in identifying and dismantling barriers to authenticity, including implicit bias, outdated practices, and narrow definitions of professionalism. By clearly defining, modeling, and enforcing expectations for professionalism, leadership can foster a work environment where employees are enabled and encouraged to show their authentic selves.

- **Embracing Diversity:** To foster an environment where authenticity and vulnerability can thrive, organizations must embrace diversity and recognize the value that different backgrounds, experiences, and identities contribute to the workplace. Leadership plays a critical role in this effort by implementing fair and equitable structures that support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of diverse talent. This includes championing policies and practices that ensure all employees feel seen, respected, included, and valued. Examples include inclusive professional development opportunities, transparent hiring practices, flexible work modalities, open and transparent communication channels, and opportunities to recognize team achievements, cultural observances, and holidays.

Expertise

Given the diverse backgrounds and experiences of employees, organizations that aim to foster a work environment where employees can bring their whole selves to work must be prepared to navigate the complexities of cultural nuances, values, traditions, and protocols. This requires specific expertise to assess the current organizational culture, identify needs and priorities, define goals and objectives, select training and educational opportunities, and establish best practices.

The role of those who provide expertise is different from that of leadership. Experts are responsible for planning, coordinating, and guiding the efforts towards building and maintaining the desired work environment. Leadership, by contrast, is tasked with enabling this work by providing the necessary resources and implementing the strategic foundation that empowers experts to succeed.

Organizations can develop this expertise internally through education and training, or engage exter-

nal specialists. In either case, they should consider investing in both broad educational initiatives and targeted, role-specific training to equip the organization with the necessary expertise to support an environment where employees feel empowered to bring their whole selves to work.

Support

Bringing one's whole self to work means different things to different people. Research suggests that individuals whose personal image and presentation do not align well with the more traditional perception of professional appearance and behavior may feel less comfortable bringing their whole selves to work (Pillemer, 2024). Similarly, individuals whose identities align well with the traditional perception of professional appearance and behavior may need support navigating an environment where the notion of what constitutes professional appearance and behavior is being redefined. It is important then, that when organizations attempt to create a work environment where employees feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work, they provide their employees with support in two distinctive areas: Personal support, and training and educational opportunities.

Personal support refers to tools and methodologies for employees to navigate their work environment and develop a sense of belonging. Affinity groups, counseling sessions, advocacy groups, and opportunities to safely engage in dialog are examples of initiatives in the area of personal support organizations can make available to their employees.

Training and educational opportunities address the knowledge and skills needed to build, support, and effectively navigate an environment where employees can bring their whole selves to work. In order to meet employees' collective as well as individual knowledge needs, organizations should invest in general educational opportunities as well as in group-specific and role-specific training.

Capacity

In order to foster an environment that empowers employees to display their whole identity, organizations must give employees the time and resources to participate in initiatives that are conducive to achieving this goal. Considering that all units within an organization have different responsibilities, timelines, priorities and stressors, it is important that the time employees allocate to activities intended to nurture the desired environment is standardized and formalized. This can be achieved by framing this principle as a job responsibility, with clear objectives, expectations, and accountability mechanisms.

Conclusion

Navigating the complexities of bringing one's whole self to work requires support on multiple levels for employees, as well as functional systems for organizations to define and operationalize the concept within their specific environments. Research suggests that no single approach fits all organizations; workplace contexts vary widely,and fostering spaces that encourage authenticity and vulnerability demands systemic investment in cultivating stronger, more supportive cultures.

Equally important is the development of operational definitions for commonly-used terms and concepts, along with policies and procedures that are grounded in historical and cultural context. These factors can shape employees' perception of the psychological safety and autonomy organizations provide, which in turn influences their willingness to express their whole identities. Because each employee is unique, the level of comfort with self-expression will naturally vary.

Organizations aiming to support authenticity and vulnerability should develop systemic structures that align with their values. Leadership plays a central role in this process, as they bear responsibility for setting the tone, fostering and modeling psychological safety, and promoting inclusive practices across teams. Effective leadership can strengthen workplace culture by embracing diversity, removing barriers, encouraging open dialogue, and ensuring that organizational values are reflected in their actions.

Creating the conditions that allow employees to bring their authentic selves to work requires attention to leadership, expertise, support, and capacity, along with an ongoing commitment to learning and adaptation. By intentionally addressing these elements, organizations can build sustainable systems that empower employees and foster environments where authenticity can thrive.

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BETH THOMPSON • ALI NORVELL

Silent Spores: Hidden Threats to Library Collections

ABSTRACT

This article explores the persistent and often overlooked threat of mold in library collections, using Western Carolina University's Hunter Library as a case study. Following multiple mold outbreaks exacerbated by aging infrastructure and environmental instability, the library undertook extensive remediation efforts, including large-scale weeding, relocation of materials, and environmental monitoring. A statewide survey of public and academic libraries revealed that mold and other environmental issues are widespread, often stemming from deferred maintenance, inadequate HVAC systems, and limited institutional support. The findings underscore the urgent need for proactive building management and sustainable funding solutions to preserve library collections. The article also examines available funding mechanisms in North Carolina, including grants and state aid, and highlights the challenges libraries face in securing resources for environmental remediation. By sharing Hunter Library's experience and broader survey insights, the authors aim to raise awareness and encourage collaborative strategies to protect library materials from environmental damage.

KEYWORDS: *library buildings, mold, material damage, deferred maintenance*

Western Carolina University (WCU) is the westernmost institution in the University of North Carolina System and serves a population of approximately 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The primary campus is in Cullowhee, NC, nestled near the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge mountains. WCU is part of the NC Promise program, which includes four UNC system schools that serve high numbers of students from traditionally underserved populations. Under this initiative, tuition is set at $500 per semester for all in-state students and $2,500 for out-of-state students. WCU maintains strong regional relationships, particularly with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, an important and historically underserved community (Western Carolina University, n.d.).

Western Carolina University's Hunter Library has a long-standing history, with its original structure dating back to 1953 and expansions occurring in 1967 and 1982. A renovation in 2011 introduced several updates, including a modernized coffee shop featuring both external and internal access. However, much of the building's infrastructure remains outdated. The current HVAC system, for instance, was installed during the 1982 renovation, and portions of the ground-floor carpeting still date back to that era.

Our research indicates that such incremental updates are common in aging library buildings, while comprehensive remodels or complete rebuilds are far less frequent. Today, Hunter Library supports over 50 full-time equivalent faculty and staff, along with numerous student workers. On average, the library welcomes more than 6,215 visitors each week, including students, faculty, staff, and community members.

In the spring of 2022, a significant mold outbreak was discovered in the bound journal collection. Consultations with environmental specialists pointed to aging infrastructure and elevated humidity levels as likely contributors. This incident prompted a deeper investigation into environmental conditions in libraries and their impact on collections. To better understand the scope of the issue, we developed and distributed a survey to gather insights from other institutions regarding mold outbreaks and remediation efforts.

This article presents our ongoing experience at Hunter Library, shares findings from the survey, and explores the broader implications of deferred maintenance on the preservation of library collections.

The First Mold Outbreak: Evaluating and Cleaning Collections

The presence of mold in Hunter Library's bound journal collection came to our attention through an unexpected source. In November 2021, an air quality study was conducted in preparation for construction with the library's building partner, the Technology Commons, which is managed by WCU's IT department. Samples were taken to evaluate between No-

vember 2021 and March 2022. When the report was released in April 2022, it revealed a significant mold outbreak in the area housing the library's bound journal collection.

At that time, the mold appeared to affect only a portion of the collection, though the full extent was still unclear. By June 2022, the university became actively involved, providing training and support for cleaning the affected materials, as well as providing portable dehumidifiers throughout the building. Throughout the weeding and shifting process, staff volunteers were equipped with protective gear, including gloves and masks, to ensure their safety while handling compromised materials. A professional cleaning company was brought in to sanitize the shelving and remove certain volumes that were selected for weeding. Meanwhile, library staff worked collaboratively to clean and retain other affected titles, making decisions based on the condition of the materials and their value to the collection. University administration also provided direct financial support of $150,000 in one-time funds to purchase electronic backfiles of journals that were lost due to the mold outbreak.

Unfortunately, during the summer of 2022, the campus HVAC and air dehumidification system was shut down for scheduled upgrades and maintenance, causing humidity levels inside the library to spike dramatically. These conditions created an ideal environment for mold to spread, leading to a second, more widespread outbreak that affected a much larger portion of the collection. As a result, the focus shifted from cleaning to weeding and removing damaged materials.

The Second Mold Outbreak: Weeding and Shifting the Collection

Once we discovered the renewed outbreak of mold on our bound journal collection, it became clear that our cleaning efforts would not remain effective. A large weeding project was coordinated after consultation with subject librarians and library administration. By running a list of all titles in the bound journal collection, librarians had an opportunity to evaluate the entire collection and make weeding decisions. Items that had been identified with mold were marked, and those were given priority for evaluation. While the items weeded first included those with heavy mold, there were more decisions made on other titles that could be discarded, as print journals are seeing far less use than in the past, and electronic access is increasing. Once decisions were made in the first round of weeding, the library rented dumpsters, and volunteers from the library, as well as university facilities, spent several weeks disposing of affected items. During this time, we also applied for and received one-time funds from the university to purchase electronic backfiles of some critical titles. We could not order every title that had been prioritized due to cost and availability, but we were able to achieve most of our wish list, as well as a large-format book cutter that allowed us to cut covers off books and recycle the pages, or to prepare for rebinding. These efforts led us to believe we had contained and mitigated our mold issue. However, we soon experienced another outbreak.

After new mold was discovered, a second round of weeding took place. We now had to decide if keeping the journals in the same location made sense. We ultimately decided to move the location of our bound journals to a different floor in the library, where we kept older bound journal titles. We ordered new shelving to accommodate the extra volumes and began moving them. Student workers were hired for the express purpose of cleaning and moving books. Because we were dealing with such a large number of volumes, despite the weeding, and because library workers could only donate so much time to this project, we spent several months moving journals, identifying further volumes to weed, and setting priorities for cleaning or rebinding our most important titles.

Third Outbreak: Professional Mitigation and Safety Concerns

Mold growth or regrowth was found on the pages of some books, and the decision to rebind certain titles was abandoned. At this point, staff exhaustion and our ability to continue managing this extra workload were beginning to show. There was also ongoing, widespread concern among the staff about the safety of the air quality within the library building. While there are standards for a variety of indoor air pollutants, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention does not recommend routine sampling for mold because there are no established standards for determining what constitutes a "normal" level (Thompson & Dion, 2023, p. 22). Library administration requested and were granted funds to hire an outside firm to remove the rest of the mold-affected volumes identified for weeding. Library staff moved the rest of the collection to its new location, leaving empty shelves where roughly 56,000 volumes once lived. The new location for the reduced bound journal collection was already housing a portion of the journals. This area is less humid and has more airflow in general due to being on a mezzanine level open to the floor below. Significant time was dedicated to logistical planning to ensure there would be enough room to move the rest of the collection. Measuring shelving based on the number of inches needed, the library ordered an extra set of shelves and was able to safely begin planning to move it all. Additionally, the university paid for a second, comprehensive air quality study in the library building with a particular focus on employee workspaces and areas used by the public. While there are no firm guidelines for mold levels indoors, the type of mold found in the building is generally not considered dangerous, with concentrations of mold outside the building being equal to those inside. This helped alleviate concerns about indoor air quality, allowing us to focus on mitigation efforts for our physical collections.

Survey

To better understand the scope of environmental challenges facing libraries across the state, during the fall of 2023, the authors conducted a survey of public and academic institutions. A Qualtrics survey was distributed to the NCLA and Lyrasis email lists. It was also made available at the 2023 NCLA biennial Conference. There were 62 responses received, including 29 academic libraries, 26 public libraries, 2 community colleges, 3 special libraries, and 2 other libraries from North Carolina. The results revealed a troubling pattern: mold outbreaks and related issues are not isolated incidents, but part of a broader systemic problem linked to aging facilities and insufficient infrastructure.

During our survey, we asked the question, "What do you suspect caused the environmental issues?" A total of 35% of respondents cited HVAC, temperature, and humidity issues as a primary concern. Building leaks were mentioned by 28%, followed by plumbing problems at 20%, and natural disasters at 6%. An additional 11% selected "other," often elaborating with responses such as "deferred maintenance," "aging HVAC equipment," "age of structure," "lack of upkeep," "poorly built facility," and "poor maintenance by the city and county." Collectively, these responses underscore a broader theme of deferred maintenance.

Institutional Funding – Public Libraries

We asked in our survey, "*Did you receive institutional support?*" regarding mitigation efforts with environmental issues. Of the public libraries surveyed, 73% reported that they did receive some form of support. For instance, one library upgraded its HVAC filtration system as part of COVID-19 mitigation efforts, which also resolved a persistent mold problem around ceiling vents. Despite ongoing building leaks due to overlapping jurisdiction between the county and the shopping center from which the building is leased, the HVAC upgrade indirectly solved the mold issue. However, staff felt that mold concerns were previously not taken seriously due to potential mitigation and liability costs, leading to a lack of institutional confidence.

Another library benefited from county support, which included bringing in professional cleaners and movers to resolve mold issues. Subsequently, the entire building was torn down and rebuilt from the ground up in 2017. This comprehensive approach ensured a fresh start and addressed all underlying problems.

Additionally, a third library tackled mold and structural issues by cleaning the HVAC system, replacing moldy insulation, and fixing roof areas where leaks occurred. Temporary measures, such as covering affected collections with plastic sheets, were implemented until repairs could be completed. The involvement of city property management specialists and health and safety representatives further ensured thorough assessments and renovations.

The other 27% of public libraries said their institution did not provide any support and have struggled with maintenance issues due to a lack of institutional funding. One library, for example, noted that

"we wiped down all the bound volumes in our local history/genealogy room once a year to try to remove mold and mildew. We used ARPA funds to install a whole-system dehumidifier in our basement meeting room. County maintenance tries to repair leaks as they find them, but the general humidity issues are much more difficult to solve." In cases like this, staff have had to rely on annual manual cleaning efforts to combat mold and mildew, and while county maintenance attempts to address leaks as they arise, a comprehensive solution for the local history/genealogy room remains out of reach due to the lack of secured funding for long-term renovations.

Another library has faced similar challenges, with the town's maintenance crew addressing leaks and the Friends of the Library purchasing a new HVAC system. Despite these efforts, the older building continues to present various problems that are addressed on a case-by-case basis. The library is actively striving to raise funds for a new building to better meet their needs, highlighting the ongoing struggle for adequate institutional support.

Institutional Funding: Four-Year Academic Libraries

Regarding four-year academic libraries, 79% of respondents said their institution received support for mitigation efforts of environmental issues. Institutional funding has proven crucial for academic libraries in managing and mitigating various disasters. One four-year college experienced a major flood that required extensive repairs, including asbestos remediation, after experiencing water damage to equipment and supplies. Despite the lack of funding for immediate solutions, the library managed to dry out wet photo prints by closing off its exhibit gallery and reading room. Currently, they are dealing with a mold outbreak caused by a new HVAC unit installed without humidity control and suffering from high humidity for a length of time. The library is now exploring dehumidification options, but the question remains whether the university or the library will bear the costs. The situation underscores the need for proactive funding to prevent such predictable issues from escalating.

Another four-year college has faced recurring mold problems due to inadequate HVAC systems that fail to control humidity, especially during the summer. Despite cleaning the books multiple times, the mold keeps returning. The high humidity in their geographic location exacerbates the issue, and the aging HVAC systems are unable to manage it effectively. The library remains hopeful that the administration will address the HVAC system in the future, highlighting the ongoing need for institutional support to maintain a healthy and functional environment.

The other 21% of four-year institutions did not receive institutional support and faced significant challenges due to a lack of funding. One library had to pull thousands of affected items for manual cleaning and install thermometers and humidity checkers to monitor conditions. Staff described how "multiple thousands of books were cleaned by hand, using a vacuum with a HEPA filter"—a process that required extensive staff time and labor. Even with these efforts, the institution provided minimal support, forcing the library to rely on dehumidifiers running constantly.

Another library corrected a leaking pipe but continues to experience regular HVAC issues. They said that a comprehensive space improvement project is needed to fully address problems related to air flow regulation and window upgrades. While their monitoring system and tracking have helped prevent a larger mold outbreak, the lack of funding and capacity for significant improvements remains a major obstacle and underscores the importance of institutional support in maintaining and upgrading library facilities to ensure they remain functional and safe.

Deferred Maintenance

Because many responses to our survey cited deferred maintenance as one cause of the issues, it makes sense to define that term. Deferred maintenance is "the postponement of maintenance for any reason, such as the need to keep equipment in full-time operation, the lack of funds for repair, or the unavailability of parts" (Harris, 2006). Older buildings, deferred maintenance, and deteriorating equipment are common contributors to environmental issues in libraries. "As a rule, buildings have two critical stages in their lifetimes: At 25 years, a building needs significant updates and renovations; at 50, a major overhaul of its

structure and systems" (Carlson 2023). With so much construction happening in higher education in the post-World War II years, many colleges are facing the same issues of deteriorating facilities. Since so many buildings are due for renovation at similar times, it is easy for these issues to fall behind schedule.

Mitigation Efforts

Mitigation efforts across libraries varied widely, reflecting differences in building age, climate conditions, staffing levels, and available resources. Yet several common strategies emerged from our survey responses, offering a clearer picture of how institutions are attempting to address environmental challenges before they escalate into full-scale preservation crises. These are a few of the statements our survey takers shared in response to the question, "What mitigation or remediation efforts did you take?" Their answers reveal both the creativity and the constraints that shape environmental management in library spaces.

- "Twice we hired an outside vendor to remediate the books on-site. Since then, we have had smaller outbreaks that we are attempting to deal with. For the environment we started to track the temp and [relative humidity] daily and also set up dehumidifiers that we emptied daily."
- "We removed all the affected wood flooring and replaced with vinyl. [The] Leak is still present, but a small dam was constructed to hold back the waters from affecting the collection storage when it rains."
- "We pulled all the affected items, cleaned as best we could. We installed thermometer and humidity checkers, but, for the most part, the institution did not provide support."
- "Currently, the county is putting band-aids on the issue. Our whole HVAC system needs to be gone through. The builders used compression fittings, which are now catastrophically failing."
- "Mold remediation; window repair (to repair leak); attempts have been made to fix the HVAC, which is the source of the mold issues, but so far we have been unable to fix, and do not have the funds to replace."
- "First, we had a leaking roof.…When the holes in the roof were eliminated, air had nowhere to go. That's when we were told that the whole design of the HVAC ductwork was flawed. Previously (2005), we were told that the system installed when the building was built was obsolete at the time, so it cannot be repaired because there are no parts available....Since 2016, mold has become a widespread losing battle. Since the roof was repaired, the university has allocated no funds to mitigate the problem.

While not surprising, the results of our survey did show similarities between different types of libraries and their buildings. Deferred maintenance of issues such as leaks and HVAC systems is common, and libraries have had to be increasingly adaptable to find work-arounds and solutions to these problems.

Funding Resources

Trying to mitigate environmental issues in library buildings can be costly, and funding options vary depending on the system that supports the library. In this section, we will describe funding resources that are available to support libraries.

Grants

Grant funding is a great way to update library services and bring innovative ideas into a library. Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants are funded by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) through the State Library of North Carolina. Public, academic, and community college libraries that meet a specific need can apply for an LSTA grant. However, securing LSTA funding for environmental issues may be challenging. Unallowable expenditures include the construction or renovation of a building, as well as preservation activities or materials for preservation. This could mean that if a library has a leaky roof that needs to be repaired, they could not apply for an LSTA grant to fund it (State Library of North Carolina, n.d.). That said, allowable expenditures such as consulting or contractual services, furnishings, or materials that support a project can still be leveraged creatively to address parts of an environmental issue.

As of mid-2025, however, the future of IMLS and LSTA funding is uncertain. A recent executive order aims to dismantle IMLS "to the maximum extent of the law, and the agencies are ordered to reduce their services and personnel to the minimum amount required to perform the functions required by law" (American Library Association, 2025, para. 3). While this executive order plays out in courts, there is much uncertainty over the future of IMLS. As a result,

libraries may need to seek alternative funding sources or advocate more strongly for the restoration of federal support to address critical infrastructure and environmental challenges.

Libraries in North Carolina seeking external support for building improvements or environmental upgrades can look to the American Library Association's Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities grant program. This national initiative offers $10,000–$20,000 awards to small and rural libraries to enhance the accessibility and resilience of their facilities, services, and programs. The grant is open to eligible libraries in all U.S. states, and recent funding rounds have supported hundreds of institutions across 48 states. For North Carolina libraries facing environmental challenges, this program represents a valuable opportunity to secure resources for meaningful, community-focused improvements.

Funding for North Carolina Public Libraries

In North Carolina, public libraries are primarily funded through a combination of state and local funding sources. The North Carolina General Assembly appropriates funds for public libraries through the annual state budget, supporting statewide library initiatives, system administration, and local services. Local funding typically comes from county appropriations, municipal allocations, and library taxes. However, deferred maintenance on public libraries can be costly to the communities they serve. When maintenance is delayed, minor issues can escalate into major problems, leading to higher repair costs, loss of collections, and potential disruptions in library services. This can negatively impact the community by reducing access to valuable resources and safe, welcoming spaces. Addressing maintenance needs promptly is crucial to avoid these escalating costs and ensure libraries remain functional and beneficial to the public.

Non-recurring State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) Aid to Public Libraries was an initiative funded by the North Carolina General Assembly during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This funding was part of the North Carolina allocation from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)'s State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Allowable expenditures included capital improvements such as carpet, ceiling, floor repair or replacement, and environmental remediation for things such as mold, improvements to HVAC systems, or adding a dehumidification system. These funds have been distributed to North Carolina public libraries that qualify for State Aid to Public Libraries and have been given out in lump sums: the first during the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year (FY), and the second in the 2024-2025 FY. These funds need to be spent by December 31, 2026.

The Aid to Public Libraries Fund, better known as "State Aid," supports North Carolina public libraries by enhancing and balancing library services across the state. To access this aid each fiscal year, North Carolina public libraries must submit a completed application along with supporting documents. However, these grants cannot be used for capital expenditures, which include acquiring real property, new construction, renovating existing facilities, and making repairs and renovations, as defined by North Carolina General Statute 143C-8-13.

Conclusions

We were not surprised that other libraries experienced environmental issues. North Carolina can experience many extreme weather events such as hurricanes, heavy snowfall, and torrential downpours, throughout the state. Additionally, most library buildings are reliant on entities such as city and county facilities management or college/university administration to maintain their buildings. With so many other competing departments at the local and state levels, libraries are often placed at the bottom of renovation and rebuilding plans. However, many of the problems stated in the survey could have been prevented by timely maintenance and renovation. HVAC systems in particular were a concern for many survey respondents, and some libraries described only being able to take minimal action in the face of larger issues—one respondent noted they simply "shifted books to get them away from leaks. Put up caution tape. That's it." Outside factors, such as inflation and labor costs, are a determining factor when deciding if buildings are eligible for improvements, and often, the money is just not there. Library administrators are encouraged to seek other funding sources to improve and update library spaces.

Look to the future

Hunter Library staff are still finding mold on books in parts of the general collection, especially on the ground floor, where temperature and humidity levels tend to fluctuate the most. Mold outbreaks seem to be concentrated in areas with consistently higher humidity. In response, library leadership, staff, and facilities worked to put some temporary solutions in place, like shifting the collection to improve airflow, using floor fans, and running industrial-strength dehumidifiers. These steps have helped slow the spread, but they're not sustainable in the long run. For example, the dehumidifiers need to be emptied twice a day, which takes time and staff effort.

The good news is that a new, more powerful whole-building dehumidification system will be installed, which is a major step toward stabilizing the environment throughout the library and protecting our collections more effectively.

As we move forward, we plan to keep monitoring conditions, learning from others, and sharing what we find. We hope that this work not only helps the Hunter Library but also sparks conversations at other institutions facing similar challenges. Environmental issues in libraries aren't always visible until they become serious, but with more awareness, collaboration, and creative problem-solving, we can all do a better job of preserving the materials on which our communities rely.

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C. ALLISON SILLS

Library Privacy Heroes: Trailblazing Librarians Through Time

ABSTRACT

This article explores the history of privacy advocacy in American libraries, highlighting key figures who defended intellectual freedom against government surveillance and censorship. From early 20th-century anti-anarchist crackdowns to McCarthyism, the Patriot Act, and today's legislative challenges, librarians like M. Louise Hunt, Judith Krug, and the Connecticut Four have stood up for the right to read without fear. Their efforts shaped core library policies on confidentiality and continue to guide best practices in an era of mass data collection and surveillance.

KEYWORDS: *privacy, intellectual freedom, government surveillance, censorship, M. Louise Hunt, Judith Krug, Connecticut Four, McCarthyism, Patriot Act, Library Bill of Rights, Code of Ethics, confidentiality, Freedom to Read statement, Zoia Horn, Charlemae Hill Rollins, Ernestine Rose, Flora Ludington, Library Awaremess Program*

Privacy. In today's digital age of constant tracking online, social media sharing, and data collection by both corporations and governments, it's easy to forget that privacy is a fundamental right,[1,2] recognized in documents like the U.S. Constitution, which offers protections under the First and Fourth Amendments.[3] Privacy is vital to intellectual freedom and the open exchange of ideas. As the American Library Association (ALA) states, "privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association."[4]

U.S. libraries now serve as defenders of intellectual freedom, safeguarding patrons' right to seek information without fear of surveillance or repercussions. However, in earlier eras, their commitment to privacy was less certain. Throughout U.S. history, threats of government overreach, wartime hysteria, and ideological purges inspired pioneering library advocates to champion privacy, both for themselves and for their patrons. The actions of these past library privacy heroes highlight the ongoing importance of protecting privacy today and in the future.

1900s-1920s: Surveillance and Suppression

Privacy in libraries can be traced back to the early 1900s.[5] While many people were excited about new technologies and globalization at the turn of the twentieth century, others saw these same forces as silencing the voice of the individual.[6] Their anger led to bloodshed, and several high-profile assassinations by anarchists occurred, including the assassination of Russian Czar Alexander II in 1881[7] and U.S. President William McKinley in 1901. Anti-anarchist sentiments ran high.[8]

In 1906, the United States and Russia were allies to the extent that Russian spies were permitted to surveil places thought to be anarchist hangouts.

[1] American Library Association, "Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," *American Library Association*, June 19, 2002, amended 2019, https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/privacy.

[2] International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, "IFLA Statement on Privacy in the Library Environment," 2015, revised 2020, https://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-statement-on-privacy-in-the-library-environment/.

[3] U.S. Constitution, amends. I, IV.

[4] American Library Association, "Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights."

[5] Steven Witt, "The Evolution of Privacy within the American Library Association, 1906–2002," *Library Trends* 65, no. 4 (2017): 639–657, at 641, https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/110646.

[6] PBS, "Rise of Anarchism," *American Experience*, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/1900-anarchism/.

[7] David C. Rapoport, "Terrorism as a Global Wave Phenomenon: Anarchist Wave," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, ed. William R. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.), https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-646.

[8] Thomas O'Rourke, "Chronicle Covers: The Assassination of President McKinley," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 4, 2018, https://www.sfchronicle.com/chronicle_vault/article/Chronicle-Covers-The-assassination-of-President-9200614.php.

Libraries that carried a wide range of materials, including controversial political works, became targets of such monitoring.[9] A New York court case that made national news revealed that Russian agents were watching library patrons and that "they follow all who call for books on anarchy." Testimony showed that the Russian government had "under observation all libraries in the city, including the Jewish branches."[10] In this case, an immigrant reader was followed home and arrested after stealing two German-language books, one of which was a flagged book.[11]

Public criticism at the time, however, was not aimed at the spies who violated patron privacy or the librarians who cooperated with them, but at the libraries themselves for providing anarchist materials in the first place. In 1919, Senator Clayton R. Lusk remarked that "literature of an extremely radical nature is being very generally and very openly circulated throughout the entire state, principally by organizations located in New York City."[12]

As the United States entered World War I, fear of internal threats and foreign influence intensified, leading to what became known as the First Red Scare – a period marked by suspicion of radicals, anarchists, socialists, and anyone perceived as disloyal.[13] Building on earlier fears of anarchist violence, the federal government enacted the Sedition Act of 1918, an extension of the Espionage Act of 1917, which made it illegal to criticize the U.S. government, the military, or the war effort.[14] In the climate of wartime paranoia, federal officials urged libraries to remove materials considered subversive, including books on anarchism and many written in German.[15]

The shift was abrupt. Cleveland Public Library Vice Director Linda Eastman recalled that before the war her library "carefully maintained an attitude of strict neutrality in all matters affected by the war." But after war was declared, "all of the policies and methods above mentioned were reversed; not only was the Library no longer neutral, but it had its own contributions to make toward the winning of the war."[16] As women devoted themselves to the Red Cross and other wartime efforts, fiction checkouts declined. Libraries shifted their collections toward books on military affairs, food production, and conservation, selecting titles that fostered patriotic unity, avoided controversial viewpoints, and encouraged the Americanization of foreign-born citizens.[17]

Patriotism rose to such a fever pitch that even pacifist librarians were not immune to scrutiny. M. Louise Hunt, who privately opposed the war, refused to buy war bonds, even though she organized the bond drive at her Portland, Oregon, library. Her privacy was violated when Liberty Loan officials interrogated her at work after receiving an anonymous tip.[18] The press sensationalized the story, falsely claiming, "she would rather be ravished by a Hun than support the United States in this war."[19] What Hunt actually said was, "I merely wish to claim the constitutional right privately to hold a minority opinion." For that, the library board threatened her with dismissal.

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[9] Witt, "The Evolution of Privacy within the American Library Association," 641.

[10] "Russian Spies on Watch in New York Libraries," *The New York Times*, June 23, 1906, https://www.nytimes.com/1906/06/23/archives/russian-spies-on-watch-in-new-york-libraries-they-follow-all-who.html.

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[14] Christina L. Boyd, "Sedition Act of 1918," *First Amendment Encyclopedia*, Middle Tennessee State University, January 1, 2009, last updated November 13, 2025, https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/sedition-act-of-1918/.

[15] Kathleen Doane, "Anti-German Hysteria Swept Cincinnati in 1917," *Our History* (Cincinnati.com blog), June 6, 2012, archived January 20, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140120043547/http://cincinnati.com/blogs/ourhistory/2012/06/06/anti-german-hysteria-swept-cincinnati-in-1917/.

[16] Wayne A. Wiegand, *An Active Instrument for Propaganda: The American Public Library during World War I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 30.

[17] Wiegand, *An Active Instrument for Propaganda*, 32.

[18] Kimberly Jensen, "Women's 'Positive Patriotic Duty' to Participate," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 2 (2017): 199–233, at 210, https://www.ohs.org/oregon-historical-quarterly/award-winning-articles/2018-joel-palmer-award.cfm.

[19] F. J. D. John, "'Traitorous' Librarian's Crime: Not Buying Bonds," *Offbeat Oregon*, May 20, 2018, https://offbeatoregon.com/1805c.traitor-louise-hunt-wouldnt-buy-war-bonds-496.html.

When her director defended her, she, too, was threatened with dismissal, and Hunt ultimately resigned to keep the peace.[20] Hunt left Portland to go back to her home state of Maine. She continued her career as a librarian, and rose to be head librarian at the Racine Public Library in Wisconsin.[21]

1930s: Birth of Ethical Standards and the Library Bill of Rights

After the upheaval of World War I and the First Red Scare, librarians sought to define their professional values more clearly. A code of ethics for libraries had been proposed for decades, but it was Flora B. Ludington who took a ten-year-old draft and shaped it into a formal statement which was approved in 1939.[22] Ludington later served as ALA president (1953-1954), created the National Book Committee, and received the Joseph W. Lippincott Award in 1957.[23]

Ludington's *Code of Ethics* has changed several times in eighty-five years, but one constant has been its intention to protect privacy, as evidenced in the words, "It is the librarian's obligation to treat as confidential any private information obtained through contact with library patrons."[24]

At the same time Ludington was helping formalize the profession's ethical foundations, Ernestine Rose was broadening its reach to include diverse and underserved communities. A World War I Service librarian in France and Germany,[25] Rose later worked at New York City's Seward Park Branch, serving a predominantly Jewish community, before transferring to the 135th Street Branch in Harlem, which had become a majority African American neighborhood after the war.[26] There, she integrated the library staff by hiring the first African-American librarians[27] and purchased Afro–Puerto Rican scholar Arthur A. Schomburg's collection of African American literature in 1927, which became the foundation of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.[28] Her commitment to expanding access was so well regarded that M. Louise Hunt contacted her in 1936 for help locating books written by a prominent African American bishop from Racine, Wisconsin.[29]

In support of minority rights, Rose introduced the first *Library Bill of Rights* in 1939. The document reinforced every person's right to read and access literature that reflected their own experiences and voices.[30] The original version did not mention privacy, but its principles laid the foundation for later additions. In 2019, in response to expanded surveillance under the PATRIOT Act and Edward Snowden's revelations about NSA monitoring, the ALA added Article VII to the *Bill of Rights*, stating that "all people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use."[31]

1940s-1950s: McCarthyism and the Fight Against Loyalty Oaths

After World War II ended in 1945, the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union esca-

[20] Jensen, "Women's 'Positive Patriotic Duty' to Participate," 209.

[21] John, "'Traitorous' Librarian's Crime."

[22] American Library Association, "Midwinter Council Minutes," *ALA Bulletin* 33, no. 2 (February 1939): 127-132, at 128, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25690092.

[23] Margaret L. Johnson, "Flora Belle Ludington: A Biography and Bibliography," *College & Research Libraries* 25, no. 5 (1964): 375–379, at 376, https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/article/view/11711/13157.

[24] ALA, "Midwinter Council Minutes," 128.

[25] April Sanford, "Rescuing Ernestine Rose (1880–1961): Harlem Librarian and Social Activist," *Long Island History Journal* 22, no. 2 (2011), https://lihj.cc.stonybrook.edu/2011/articles/rescuing-ernestine-rose-1880-1961-harlem-librarian-and-social-activist/.

[26] Betty L. Jenkins, "A White Librarian in Black Harlem." *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 60, no. 3 (1990): 216–31, at 218, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4308477.

[27] Jenkins, "A White Librarian in Black Harlem," 225.

[28] Jenkins, "A White Librarian in Black Harlem," 223.

[29] M. Louise Hunt, "Hunt, M. Louise (1936)," New York Public Library Digital Collections, 1936, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/ae5feba0-c31e-0139-94e3-0242ac110004?canvasIndex=2.

[30] Jenkins, "A White Librarian in Black Harlem," 225-226.

[31] American Library Association, "Privacy Article Added to Library Bill of Rights," *American Libraries* (May 2019), 7, https://alair.ala.org/items/6c399c9f-5b75-4d62-933b-cba03cf3a3f7.

lated, sparking the Second Red Scare. Fear of communist infiltration permeated every level of American society, giving rise to McCarthyism – a campaign led by Senator Joseph McCarthy to expose alleged subversives.[32] In response to this tension, President Harry S. Truman initiated the Federal Employee Loyalty Program, which subjected government workers to loyalty screenings in an effort to ensure their allegiance to the United States.[33]

Although the program only applied to federal employees, similar loyalty requirements soon appeared at the state and local levels, fueled by public fear and political pressure. State-employed librarians who followed the ALA principle that people should have access to multiple viewpoints found themselves under investigation for their associations and subscribed reading material, like newspapers. Some states like California had extremely strict loyalty oaths. In 1947, when half the Los Angeles County library staff resigned rather than sign such an oath, librarian Julia L. Steiner sued.[34] Described at the time as "a country librarian of old New England Stock,"[35] Steiner's case became the first loyalty-oath challenge to reach the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court found she lacked standing because she had not been fired,[36] but later plaintiffs who were fired also lost their cases.[37] Loyalty oaths remain legal in some forms to this day.

At the 1948 ALA Conference, members debated how to resist these pressures. Members recognized that librarians must be free to practice their profession without fear of dismissal for political, religious, or racial reasons.[38] One memorable voice was Charlemae Hill Rollins, an African American librarian at the Chicago Public Library for more than thirty years and a pioneering figure in children's literature. She advocated for the creation of African American literature written free of racial and ethnic stereotypes and wrote *We Build Together: A Reader's Guide to Negro Life and Literature* (1941).[39] During the conference, Rollins spoke candidly about government surveillance:

> I am speaking as a librarian under investigation…. They say my husband [federally employed meat inspector] is under investigation, but all the questions are about me. All the people up and down my stairway have been questioned as to what do I read, what magazines do I take, what organizations do I belong to?[40]

Her concerns were justified. Materials received by the author in response to her Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request revealed that while no FBI file existed under her name, forty-six pages about her husband contained thirty-three pages dedicated to her activities. This information included club memberships, public appearances, and teaching work, which documented an indirect connection to a local Communist Party.[41] Despite the revelations, neither Rollins faced professional consequences, and both continued their distinguished careers until retirement.[42,43]

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[32] Martin and the Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Red Scare."

[33] Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, "Truman's Loyalty Program," *National Archives*, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/trumans-loyalty-program.

[34] Louise S. Robbins, "After Brave Words, Silence: American Librarianship Responds to Cold War Loyalty Programs, 1947–1957," *Libraries & Culture* 30, no. 4 (1995): 345–365, at 348, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25542799.

[35] American Civil Liberties Union, "ACLU Seeks to Enjoin Los Angeles 'Loyalty Test,'" *ACLU-News* 12, no. 10 (October 1947): 2, https://digitallibrary.californiahistoricalsociety.org/object/14421?islandora_paged_content_page=2.

[36] Edwin N. Hughes and John E. Smith, "Loyalty at the Los Angeles County Library," *California Librarian*, December 1950, 107, https://archive.org/details/sim_california-librarian_1950-12_12_2/page/106/mode/2up.

[37] Louise S. Robbins, "The Library of Congress and Federal Loyalty Programs, 1947–1956: No 'Communists or Cocksuckers,'" *The Library Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (1994): 365–385, at 370-377, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4308967.

[38] "Council." *ALA Bulletin* 42, no. 9 (1948): P18–22, at P21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25693048.

[39] Carolyn Tiedt, "Charlemae Hill Rollins," *Jim Crow Museum,* 2018, https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/question/2018/october.htm.

[40] *Proceedings, Sixty-Seventh Annual Conference of the American Library Association: Council Meetings, 14–18 June 1948, Atlantic City, New Jersey*, Record Group 1/1/1, Box 9, American Library Association Archives, photographed copies of quote provided to author via email.

[41] Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Rollins, Joseph Walter Sr. FBI Investigation Records During Truman's Loyalty Oath Program Began 1947*, FOIA Request No. 1645409-000, email to author, September 20, 2025.

[42] Tiedt, "Charlemae Hill Rollins."

[43] FBI, *Rollins, Joseph Walter Sr. FBI Investigation Records*, FOIA 1645409-000.

In 1950, the ALA formally protested such investigations with the passage of its *Resolution on Loyalty Programs*, declaring "the ALA strongly protested loyalty programs which inquired into a library employee's thoughts, reading matter, associates, or membership in organizations."[44]

By 1953, book burnings and censorship had become so pervasive that President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned in a Dartmouth College speech, "Don't join the book burners. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book, as long as any document does not offend our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship."[45]

That same year, ALA President Flora B. Ludington – the same Ludington who drafted ALA's *Code of Ethics* – released the *Freedom to Read Statement*, which reinforced Eisenhower's message and became a cornerstone of intellectual freedom.[46]

> We are aware… that books are not alone in being subjected to efforts of suppression. We are aware that these efforts are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, films, radio and television. The problem is not only of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads… to an even larger voluntary curtailment [self-censorship] of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy.[47]

This seminal statement affirmed that patron reading choices should not be subject to external judgment or pre-labeling, thereby protecting patrons' right to privately explore ideas without intrusion or having their selections publicly scrutinized.

1960s-1970s: Rise of Government Surveillance and Fight for Confidentiality

In 1970, the Vietnam War dominated headlines, and anti-war protests were widespread. Librarians began reporting that so-called "IRS agents" were asking staff for lists of patrons checking out any bomb-making books. When these reports reached the press, North Carolina Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, summoned Treasury Secretary David M. Kennedy to testify. Ervin said:

> I know that many members of Congress share my concern that practices so contrary to the Constitution of the United States and so inimical to intellectual freedom could be allowed or authorized by any federal department for any purpose. This is so because throughout history, official surveillance of the reading habits of citizens has been a litmus test of tyranny.[48]

Ervin discovered that the agents making the inquiries were not from the IRS but from another Treasury division – the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). Kennedy responded, "The names of certain individuals were copied from the [library] records for comparison with suspects in specific bombings.... This information was furnished to the... police.... the FBI, County Sheriff… and.... the Secret Service." Although Ervin received answers, Kennedy did not commit to end the practice of seeking patron records.[49]

Among those alarmed by the revelations was librarian Judith Krug, a staunch First Amendment advocate who would become one of the most influential defenders of library freedom. Krug later helped found the Freedom to Read Foundation, launched Banned Books Week, and served for forty years as the first director of the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF).[50] In response to the ATF's overreach, she introduced ALA's *Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records*, asserting that "circulation records and other records identifying the names of library users [are] confidential in nature" and should not be released

[44] American Library Association, "Resolution on Loyalty Programs," *ALA Bulletin* 44, no. 8 (1950): 306, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25693425.

[45] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Don't Join the Book Burners… Dwight David Eisenhower," *Library of Congress,* 1953, https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.0980090c/?sp=1&st=image.

[46] Johnson, "Flora Belle Ludington," 376.

[47] American Library Association, *The Freedom to Read* (May 2–3, 1953), https://www.library.illinois.edu/ala/wp-content/uploads/sites/74/2023/06/FreedToReadStatement_May1953.pdf.

[48] Judith F. Krug and James A. Harvey, "[Intellectual Freedom]," *American Libraries* 1, no. 9 (October 1970): 843–845, at 843, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25618054.

[49] Krug and Harvey, "[Intellectual Freedom]," 844.

[50] Leonard Kniffel, "We Remember – Judith Krug," *Jewish Women's Archive*, https://jwa.org/weremember/krug-judith.

"except pursuant to such process, order or subpoena" supplied by law enforcement.[51]

Zoia Horn, a Jewish immigrant from Ukraine, had come to the United States in 1926 at the age of eight.[52] Her love of libraries began soon after, during visits to New York's Seward Park Branch Library – the same branch where Ernestine Rose had worked. One of Rose's successors nurtured Horn's passion for reading and inspired her to become a librarian.[53]

By 1971, Horn was head of the reference department at Bucknell University and an active participant in the peace movement. While working at the library, she became acquainted with a new employee who later turned out to be an FBI informant. Through that connection, she was introduced to antiwar activists later known as the "Harrisburg Seven." That association brought her under FBI scrutiny when the activists were accused of conspiring to bomb heating tunnels in Washington, D.C. When asked to testify against them, Horn refused, explaining, "Spying in libraries and schools is something I protest."[54]

Horn was held in contempt of court and jailed for twenty days, becoming the first U.S. librarian ever jailed for an act of conscience. After the case collapsed when a key witness's credibility fell apart, she was released.[55] In the years that followed, she joined the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), where her ethical reform efforts at times conflicted with those led by Judith Krug, Director of OIF.[56] In the wake of her arrest, Horn also introduced ALA's *Resolution on Governmental Intimidation*, urging that "the confidentiality of the professional relationship of librarians to the people they serve… be respected in the same manner as medical doctors to their patients, lawyers to their clients, and priests to the people they serve." The resolution was adopted in 1971.[57]

What librarians did not yet realize was that the FBI had launched an initiative called the Library Awareness Program to surveil library patrons. By 1973, word began spreading through the ALA that agents were again visiting libraries to request patron information.[58] By 1975, the ALA reaffirmed that patron confidentiality was a core professional value in its *Statement on Professional Ethics*, declaring that librarians "must protect the essential confidential relationship which exists between a library user and the library."[59]

1980s-1990s: Library Awareness Program Exposed and Progress Toward Privacy

However, FBI surveillance did not stop. In fact, it intensified in the 1980s. As political and military tensions between the Soviet Union and the U.S. escalated, the rivalry between the two superpowers deepened. Called the Cold War for avoiding direct warfare, this period was marked by espionage, propaganda, and the threat of mutual nuclear annihilation.[60] As tensions rose, librarians began to notice federal agents quietly asking about patrons – especially foreign nationals – who requested scientific or technical materials.[61]

Although none of the libraries contacted held any classified or top-secret material, agents urged librarians to report patrons whose research seemed

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[51] American Library Association, "Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records (Council Document No. 46)," *American Library Association Institutional Repository,* July 4, 1975, https://alair.ala.org/items/85a5bb32-edca-4026-b9dd-e4e00f903464.

[52] Bob Egelko, "Zoia Horn, Librarian Jailed for Not Testifying Against Protesters," *SFGate*, July 15, 2014, https://www.sfgate.com/nation/article/Zoia-Horn-1st-U-S-librarian-jailed-over-alleged-5624023.php.

[53] Zoia Horn, *Zoia!: Memoirs of Zoia Horn, Battler for People's Right to Know* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1995), 16-17.

[54] Jennifer Tibbetts, "The Outlaw," *Bucknell Magazine* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 34–38, at 35, https://magazine.bucknell.edu/issue/fall-2022/the-outlaw/.

[55] Tibbetts, "The Outlaw," 36.

[56] Horn, *Zoia!,* 201–217.

[57] American Library Association, Social Responsibilities Round Table, *Government Intimidation*, June 1971, American Library Association Institutional Repository, https://alair.ala.org/items/a2635d08-10da-4a48-a2ce-450fe2b4df90.

[58] Bob Egelko, "FBI Checking Out Americans' Reading Habits: Bookstores, Libraries Can't Do Much to Fend Off Search Warrants," *SFGate,* June 23, 2002, https://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/FBI-checking-out-Americans-reading-habits-2826830.php.

[59] Paul Barber, "ALA Accepts New Statement of Professional Ethics," *American Library Association News,* January 19–25, 1975, https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/12124.

[60] "Cold War," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War.

[61] Robert D. McFadden, "F.B.I. in New York Asks Librarians' Aid in Reporting on Spies," *New York Times*, September 18, 1987, sec. A, p. 1, https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/18/nyregion/fbi-in-new-york-asks-librarians-aid-in-reporting-on-spies.html.

"suspicious." In 1987, the New York Times exposed the practice in a front-page story. Dr. Helen Flowers, then president of the ALA, immediately denounced the FBI's actions in a letter to Acting Director John F. Otto, condemning "the use of intimidation by government officials as a means of obtaining information about library users."[62]

The controversy culminated in 1988, when the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights held hearings to investigate the FBI's Library Awareness Program. The FBI maintained that its actions were intended to protect national security, but librarians challenged that justification. Representing the ALA, Judith Krug testified, "Other kinds of court orders we must, of course, abide by, but it's so that we are NOT obstructionists….[W]e do show our willingness to participate in legitimate law-enforcement endeavors where the facts warrant it." Krug emphasized that librarians were not being defiant; they were standing up for every patron's right to read without fear of surveillance. She explained that any request accompanied by a lawful subpoena would be honored in accordance with ALA policy, but she rejected the idea of blanket surveillance without cause.[63]

Another key witness in that hearing was Herbert Foerstel, head of branch libraries at the University of Maryland.[64] In 1982, a departing librarian confided to him that FBI agents had asked her to monitor patrons' use of certain technical reports and to report their names. She admitted she had stayed silent because, as a foreign national herself, she felt intimidated. Deeply concerned, Foerstel instructed his staff not to release any patron information without a lawful subpoena.[65] In 1988, Foerstel explained on a visit to the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, "It is our obligation to maintain what has traditionally been a relation of trust and confidence between library users and librarians…whether they have a foreign sounding name or not."[66]

Foerstel also played a pivotal role in securing Maryland legislation guaranteeing the privacy of library records, and was invited to the bill's signing ceremony with then-Governor William Donald Schaefer.[67] In 1991, he published *Surveillance in the Stacks: The FBI's Library Awareness Program*, the definitive account of the controversy. His book exposed the scope of the FBI's activities and helped spark national outrage. The efforts of Krug and Foerstel not only prompted the FBI to "back away" from the program[68] but also inspired a cascade of state laws protecting library patron privacy, including in North Carolina.[69]

2000s-2010s: The Patriot Act Reverses Everything

Privacy experienced a short renaissance until 2001, when the terrorist attacks of September 11 reshaped national policy. Within weeks, Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act, vastly expanding government surveillance powers. Under this law, the FBI could access library circulation and computer-use records without a subpoena or warrant. By June of the following year, rumors were circulating that FBI agents had begun requesting patron data again, but librarians bound by accompanying gag orders could not speak about it publicly.[70]

An anonymous 2002 survey revealed that 8.3% of 1,020 public libraries had received such requests from law enforcement. In response, the ALA released 2003 guidelines urging libraries to adopt data minimization practices – collecting and retaining only the

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[62] Ibid.

[63] House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, *FBI Library Awareness Program* (video, June 20, 1988), *C-SPAN,* https://www.c-span.org/video/?3074-1/fbi-library-awareness-program.

[64] Tony Roberts, "Herbert Foerstel, Longtime University of Maryland Librarian, Dies," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 30, 2024, https://www.baltimoresun.com/2024/09/30/herbert-foerstel-librarian-obituary/.

[65] Herbert N. Foerstel, *Surveillance in the Stacks: The FBI's Library Awareness Program* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 60.

[66] *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, PBS, "Focus — '88: The Big Chill," July 6, 1988, American Archive of Public Broadcasting, accessed November 20, 2025, https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_507-804xg9fv3n.

[67] Roberts, "Herbert Foerstel, Longtime University of Maryland Librarian."

[68] Egelko, "FBI Checking Out Americans' Reading Habits."

[69] Foerstel, *Surveillance in the Stacks,* 133-137.

[70] Egelko, "FBI Checking Out Americans' Reading Habits."

information necessary for essential operations.[71]

In 2004, four librarians, dubbed the Connecticut Four, joined the ACLU in a lawsuit contesting the PATRIOT Act's gag order.[72] Although the law was framed as a tool for investigating foreign suspects, it included a "two hops" provision that enabled investigators to collect data not only on a target but also on the target's contacts – and the contacts of those individuals. This exposed tens of thousands of potentially innocent Americans to surveillance.[73] George Christian, one of the Four, said, "The fact that the government can and is eavesdropping on patrons in libraries has a chilling effect, because they really don't know if Big Brother is looking over their shoulder." The librarians eventually won their case, lifting the gag order in their instance and helping spur modest reforms to the PATRIOT Act.[74]

As concerns about patron privacy continued to surface within the library community, the ALA undertook its first revision of the *Library Bill of Rights* since 1980. In 2019, the ALA Council adopted Article VII, affirming that all people have a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Developed by a joint working group of the IFC and Privacy Subcommittee and shaped by extensive feedback from librarians, Article VII reflected a renewed commitment to protecting user confidentiality.[75]

2020s: Contemporary Challenges

Book challenges, bans, and broader censorship efforts in U.S. schools and libraries increased dramatically in the 2020s due to rising political polarization.[76] According to the ALA, there were 821 documented attempts to censor library materials in 2024 alone, with the number of unique titles challenged remaining far above pre-2020 levels.[77]

At the same time, several states enacted "Parents' Bill of Rights" laws expanding parental control over curriculum, library access, and student information. In North Carolina, the General Assembly enacted its version in 2023, granting parents the right "to review all available records of materials their child has borrowed from a school library."[78] Because the law did not clarify how community colleges should interpret these provisions, librarians and administrators were left to determine how to align compliance with professional privacy standards – particularly considering many community college campuses also serve minor-aged early college students. Across North Carolina's community colleges, librarians objected to newly enabled borrower-history tracking systems, citing longstanding professional privacy standards. Most institutions ultimately chose to disable the tracking feature after consulting campus leadership.

In response to this growing climate of restriction, North Carolina libraries took visible stands for intellectual freedom. The Chapel Hill Public Library launched its "Right to Read" campaign, hosting Banned Books Week events and postcard-writing drives to defend access.[79] Meanwhile, librarians in the Wake County Public Library system issued an open letter after *Gender Queer: A Memoir* was temporarily removed. The book was quickly reinstated, and the system revised its reconsideration policy.[80]

Nationally, libraries have continued strengthening privacy and access policies. ALA's *Privacy Guide-*

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Alison Leigh Cowan, "Four Librarians Finally Break Silence in Records Case," *The New York Times,* May 31, 2006, B3, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/nyregion/31library.html.

[73] Alex Abdo, "Are 'Two Hops' Too Many?" *American Civil Liberties Union News & Commentary*, March 27, 2014, https://www.aclu.org/news/national-security/are-two-hops-too-many.

[74] Cowan, "Four Librarians Finally Break Silence in Records Case," B3.

[75] American Library Association, "Privacy Article Added to Library Bill of Rights," 7.

[76] Uttara M. Ananthakrishnan et al., "Book Bans May Have Unintended Consequences in an Increasingly Polarized United States," *Heinz College Policy Impact*, Carnegie Mellon University, October 2023, https://www.heinz.cmu.edu/media/2023/October/book-bans-may-have-unintended-consequences-in-increasingly-polarized-united-states.

[77] American Library Association, *Book Ban Data*, https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data.

[78] North Carolina General Assembly, *Senate Bill 49, SL 2023-106* (2023), https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2023/S49.

[79] Chapel Hill Public Library, "*Right to Read*," https://www.chapelhillpubliclibrary.org/right-to-read.

[80] Anisa Khalifa, "*How a National Debate over Book Censorship Is Playing Out in North Carolina*," *WUNC*, February 1, 2022, https://www.wunc.org/2022-02-01/how-a-national-debate-over-book-censorship-is-playing-out-in-north-carolina.

lines for Vendors recommend limiting data collection and purging records regularly.[81] The *Library Privacy Checklist for Public Access Computers and Networks* emphasizes anonymizing reference interactions and establishing clear privacy policies.[82] The *Library Privacy Toolkit: Training & Programming* advises educating both staff and patrons about privacy tracking features.[83]

Learning from the Past

The story of library privacy is, at its heart, a story about courage. Across generations, librarians have stood up for the right to read freely, even when doing so carried real personal risk. From M. Louise Hunt's quiet act of defiance during World War I to Flora Ludington's work to define librarianship's ethical code, and from Ernestine Rose's fight for inclusivity to Charlemae Rollins's bravery under FBI investigation, each of them helped shape what privacy in libraries means today. Decades later, people like Judith Krug, Zoia Horn, and Herbert Foerstel carried those values forward, turning conviction into policy and giving privacy a place in library law and professional ethics.

Their influence still echoes today. As libraries confront digital tracking, data collection, and renewed censorship efforts, the same questions persist: Who gets to decide what people read? And who has the right to know what people are reading? The answer hasn't changed. Privacy is not a privilege. It is a fundamental right and the foundation of intellectual freedom. Upholding it requires vigilance, courage, and a continued commitment to the values that have defined the profession for more than a century.

For more information, see the author's LibGuide on this topic at: https://cccc.libguides.com/privacyinlibraries.

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[81] American Library Association, *Library Privacy Guidelines for Vendors* (July 30, 2015), http://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/guidelines/vendors.

[82] American Library Association, "*Library Privacy Checklist for Public Access Computers and Networks*," https://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/checklists/public-access-computer.

[83] American Library Association. "Training & Programming." *American Library Association,* https://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/training.

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ALLAN SCHERLEN

Legacy in the Library

ABSTRACT

The following poem celebrates Appalachian State University Library Advisory Board member Barbara Freiman, whose generosity to the university and the library are deeply appreciated. Mrs. Freiman and her family have supported the university's Appalachian Summer Festival and the Hayes School of Music, and established 3 endowments for student scholarships. Their contributions to the library include equipment for the makerspace, a study room, and the Friedman Endowment for Library Student Employees, which awards scholarships to library students. On December 12, 2025, Barbara Foard Freiman received an Honorary Doctorate Degree.

Passing by the library's makerspace
she hears the hum of creation,
students coaxing masks from molten plastic,
bones from filaments,
costumes stitched with quiet resolve.

In corners, circuits spark to life,
soldered with care,
ideas leaping from mind to hand,
each invention a whisper
of what might come next.

Some gifts are not loud—
they arrive as open doors,
as scholarships for students,
as rooms where silence
becomes sanctuary.

In the Freiman Family Study Room,
its hush is a kind welcome.
Here, solitude is not loneliness,
but a place to begin again,
to imagine, to write, to rest.

It takes her belief in futures unseen,
in the slow bloom of learning,
to build such spaces—
to leave behind
a legacy that nurtures.

Left to right: Dr. James Douthit, Barbara Freiman, Allan Scherlen, and Dean Sue Polanka

Author Note

Allan Scherlen is a poet and librarian at Appalachian State University for over 20 years. The mountains and music of the region have inspired his poetry. They appear in many journals including *The Appalachian Journal*, *As the Crow Flies*, *Progenitor*, *Vermilion* of the Catholic University of America, *The Hong Kong Review*, and *Galway Review* in Ireland. See his poetry and videos at https://scherlen.squarespace.com/.
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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.

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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.

https://doi.org/10.3776/ncl.v84i1.5536

Lagniappe*

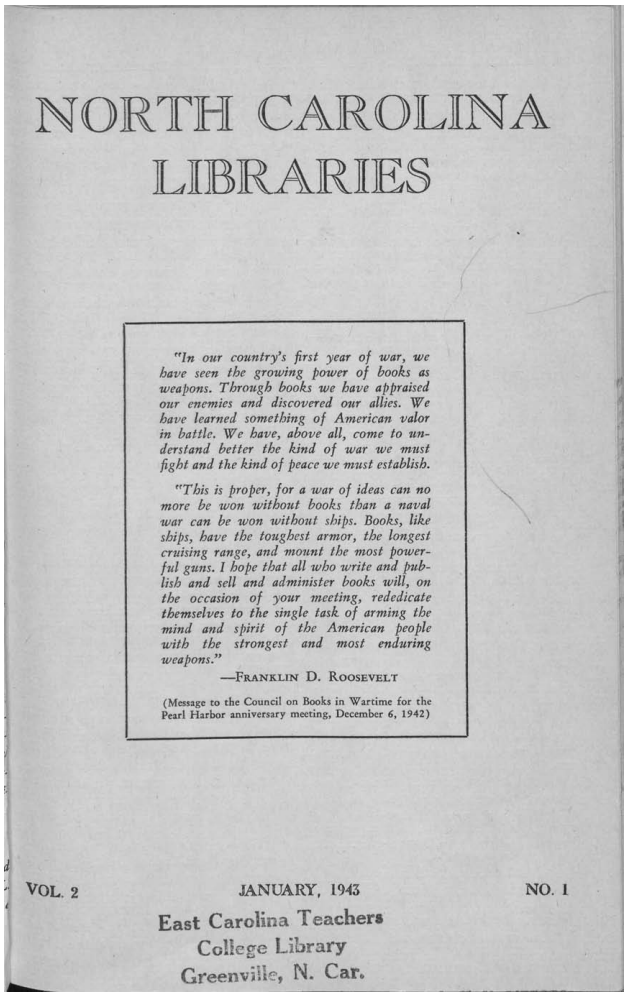
*Lagniappe (lăn-yăp′, lăn′yăp ʃ n. An extra or unexpected gift or benefit. [Louisiana French]

GERALD WARD • HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

Books on the Home Front: *North Carolina Libraries* as Democratic Infrastructure in Wartime

"In our country's first year of war, we have seen the growing power of books as weapons" (Roosevelt, 1942, as cited in *North Carolina Libraries*, 1943, p. 1). In the same message, Roosevelt frames wartime reading not as ornament or escape, but as a practical necessity in a "war of ideas." North Carolina's library record from the World War II years makes that claim tangible. Here, libraries were not merely symbols of morale; they were working systems that moved information, extended access, coordinated civic participation, and preserved evidence for the future.

If we want a grounded definition of "libraries as democratic infrastructure," understood as the often-invisible systems that make public life workable at scale (Star, 1999), North Carolina offers an especially instructive case. In a largely rural state, librarianship in wartime became inseparable from transportation networks, staffing models, public appropriations, and the everyday logistics of getting the right book to the right reader at the right moment. The story is also full of the unglamorous details that make infrastructure real: mending backlogs, fuel rationing, loss of federal labor, and urgent advocacy to keep services from collapsing at the very moment demand surged ("Library appropriations," 1943).


NORTH CAROLINA
LIBRARIES

"In our country's first year of war, we have seen the growing power of books as weapons. Through books we have appraised our enemies and discovered our allies. We have learned something of American valor in battle. We have, above all, come to understand better the kind of war we must fight and the kind of peace we must establish.

"This is proper, for a war of ideas can no more be won without books than a naval war can be won without ships. Books, like ships, have the toughest armor, the longest cruising range, and mount the most powerful guns. I hope that all who write and publish and sell and administer books will, on the occasion of your meeting, rededicate themselves to the single task of arming the mind and spirit of the American people with the strongest and most enduring weapons."

—FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

(Message to the Council on Books in Wartime for the Pearl Harbor anniversary meeting, December 6, 1942)

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East Carolina Teachers College Library Greenville, N. Car.

North Carolina Libraries, Vol. 2 No. 1

Laying the groundwork, how public library service spread before the war

North Carolina's wartime library work did not appear out of thin air. It rested on decades of uneven development, in which public libraries emerged early in a few cities while much of the state remained outside sustained service. Patrick M. Valentine's historical overview of 1900 to 1960 is particularly helpful here because it describes library growth as a civic and geographic problem, not simply a professional one. In his account, early "public" access was frequently driven by local women's clubs, civic associations, and philanthropic gifts, and it often served white communities first, with Black North Carolinians facing systemic exclusion and later, uneven expansion (Valentine, 1996).

"North Carolina's library history shows that democratic infrastructure is not self-sustaining. It requires visible work and invisible maintenance, steady coordination and repeated political defense."

That prewar spread matters to the wartime story in two ways. First, it helps explain why extension models, county service, regional cooperation, and bookmobiles became central in North Carolina. Second, it clarifies why state-level support became such a critical lever. Even after legislative changes expanded what counties and multi-county systems could do, funding, staffing, and political will remained fragile and locally variable (Valentine, 1996).

One of the most useful bridges between "prewar" and "wartime" is Elizabeth H. Smith's retrospective synthesis of North Carolina library development around 1945. Smith describes the late 1930s as a period of partial recovery after severe Depression-era cuts, aided by federal programs that supported building repairs, extended hours, and book mending, even as the early 1940s brought a new tension: growing wartime demand for information, paired with losses of personnel to the war effort (Smith, 2006). Smith's overview also underscores that the profession itself was building connective tissue during the war years, including the launch of *North Carolina Libraries* in 1942 as a publication meant to serve not only public libraries but all types.

Federal labor and the mechanics of extension

North Carolina's extension story is inseparable from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) library project. Elaine von Oesen's 1952 study remains a key account of the scale and structure of that work. She reports that service coverage rose dramatically across the state by the early 1940s, and she emphasizes how WPA staffing strengthened existing libraries while also helping establish permanent county and regional service (von Oesen, 1952).

The critical point for a wartime article is not only that the WPA expanded service, but that it created dependencies that had to be replaced quickly when the program ended. That vulnerability shows up plainly in North Carolina's professional discourse in 1943, when library leaders warned that the loss of WPA clerical assistance and book mending support would be a severe blow unless state and local funds filled the gap ("Library Appropriations," 1943).

State Aid enters the picture, and the politics of continuity

That brings us to one of the clearest North Carolina-specific infrastructure markers in this story: State Aid. The State Library of North Carolina's summary of the Aid to Public Libraries Fund notes that since 1941 the General Assembly had appropriated money for public library service, and that State Aid was intended to "promote, aid, and equalize" public library service statewide (State Library of North Carolina, n.d.).

In other words, just as the war years intensified the need for reliable access to books and information, North Carolina was also in the early stages of a structural shift toward sustained state responsibility for public library service. That shift was neither smooth nor guaranteed. North Carolina librarians in 1943 were still fighting for appropriations and making the case publicly, not privately, that the state's library system could not hold without adequate support ("Library Appropriations," 1943).

Rural access as a transportation problem, the bookmobile as a philosophy

In a rural state, "equal access" is always partly a transportation question. North Carolina experimented early with traveling libraries and book delivery models, and by the World War II period the bookmobile had become a practical expression of the library's public purpose: take books to people, then build systems sturdy enough to keep doing it under constraints.

A vivid example appears in a 1943 report on regional library service by Mrs. Ford S. Worthy and Elizabeth House. They describe the BHM Regional Library serving Beaufort, Hyde, and Martin counties, a model that treats circulation as a shared regional

resource rather than a set of isolated county shelves (Worthy & House, 1943). Within that system, readers are not limited to "their" county's holdings. Worthy and House emphasize "free exchange" across the region and describe request routines that allow patrons access to any book in the regional collection (Worthy & House, 1943, p. 6).

Their report also captures something librarians recognize immediately: the way demand reveals what infrastructure means on the ground. "People will walk through ice and snow to meet the bookmobile," they note, and some readers walked to different points on the route to avoid going "a whole month without something to read" (Worthy & House, 1943, p. 6). This is democratic infrastructure at its most literal, a system engineered to reduce the inequities of distance, weather, and rural isolation.

War information centers, civic literacy as home-front labor

As the war intensified, North Carolina libraries were asked to do more than circulate books. They became informational nerve centers for communities navigating rationing, mobilization, and fast-moving policy. Von Oesen notes that "almost every library became a War Information Center," supported by bulletin boards, maps, directories of war agencies, and collections geared toward defense work skills (von Oesen, 1952, p. 392).

Smith's retrospective adds an important nuance: wartime demand for information rose at the same time libraries were losing personnel, including trained staff leaving for military library work (Smith, 2006). Taken together, these accounts frame War Information Centers not as a special project layered on top of "normal" service, but as a public role that intensified the need for dependable staffing, coordinated collections, and a credible institutional voice.

The 1943 pinch point, funding fights, labor loss, and the surge in demand

The January 1943 issue of *North Carolina Libraries* captures a moment when expanded wartime responsibilities collided with institutional fragility. A section titled "Library Appropriations" warns that without coordinated advocacy for state aid, North Carolina libraries faced "a great set-back" ("Library Appropriations," 1943, p. 2). The article details budget cuts, urges librarians to mobilize local legislators and civic organizations, and names the immediate operational threat: the end of WPA clerical support in public libraries and the discontinuation of WPA book mending services.

What makes this moment feel so pivotal for infrastructure is the timing. Gasoline rationing and reduced travel kept people closer to home, and the same piece observes that more time could be devoted to reading, with a "marked improvement" in the quality of books being borrowed ("Library Appropriations," 1943, p. 2). In other words, exactly when demand for books and information increased, the system faced a staffing and maintenance cliff. If State Aid is the long arc of stability beginning in 1941, this 1943 appeal is a snapshot of the fight to keep that arc from breaking midstream (State Library of North Carolina, n.d.).

The Victory Book Campaign, logistics, professional judgment, and respect for the reader

If the appropriations appeal shows the political side of wartime librarianship, the Victory Book Campaign notice shows the logistical and ethical side. North Carolina's 1943 campaign ran from January 5 to March 5 and was coordinated by the North Carolina Library Commission ("Victory Book Campaign," 1943). The local message is direct: "Books, good books, are greatly needed," especially for USO centers ("Victory Book Campaign," 1943, p. 7).

The most revealing instruction is not about volume but about judgment: "Quality is more important than quantity," and librarians are asked to be "ruthless" in sorting gift books ("Victory Book Campaign," 1943, p. 7). This is selection as care. It treats servicemen as readers who deserve usable books, not leftovers, and it treats the library as a coordinating institution capable of turning citizen generosity into effective supply.

The New York Public Library's guide to the Victory Book Campaign records adds valuable national context for what North Carolina librarians were participating in. The guide describes how the campaign was structured as a coordinated operation with manuals for state and local directors, formal

collection and distribution routines, and extensive transportation and warehousing documentation, including shipping lists and bills of lading (New York Public Library, n.d.). That national structure helps clarify why North Carolina's notice emphasizes professional sorting and centralized routing through the Library Commission. This was not informal charity; it was civic logistics conducted through systems built to scale.

War records as memory work, and the evidence that remains

The same January 1943 issue highlights another wartime role the public often overlooks: preservation as civic responsibility. In "War Records," Elmer D. Johnson describes a statewide plan to collect records of the war as it unfolded, with county collectors appointed throughout North Carolina and local librarians frequently asked to cooperate or serve as collectors (Johnson, 1943). The program explicitly treats documentation as public work: preserving newspapers, compiling records, and using guidance materials designed to standardize collecting (Johnson, 1943).

The wartime collecting effort also left an archival footprint that remains visible and usable. The State Archives of North Carolina's finding aid for the *North Carolina County War Records* describes a World War II era collection containing county-level scrapbooks, letters, questionnaires, lists of servicemen, photographs, reports of war-related activities, newspaper clippings, and related materials, arranged alphabetically by county (State Archives of North Carolina, n.d.). Read alongside Johnson's call for systematic documentation, the survival of this body of records demonstrates that wartime "memory work" in North Carolina was not merely aspirational or rhetorical, it produced durable documentary infrastructure that continues to support research, public history, and civic remembrance.

What the North Carolina story offers us now

It is easy to read these wartime episodes as inspiring vignettes, the kind that end with professional pride and a warm glow. The deeper lesson is more demanding. North Carolina's library history shows that democratic infrastructure is not self-sustaining. It requires visible work and invisible maintenance, steady coordination and repeated political defense. It also requires a willingness to function as an organizing institution, not merely as a passive warehouse of materials.

By 1943, that organizing role was on full display. North Carolina librarians were simultaneously lobbying for appropriations, bracing for the loss of WPA clerical staffing and book mending support, sustaining rural access through regional cooperation and bookmobile routes, coordinating Victory Book Campaign donations with clear professional standards about what should, and should not, be sent, and participating in statewide war records collection that treated documentation as a public responsibility ("Library appropriations," 1943; Johnson, 1943; Worthy & House, 1943; "Victory book campaign," 1943). Read together, these efforts show a profession operating as infrastructure, building and defending the systems that made access, coordination, and collective memory possible under wartime strain. The arc of State Aid, beginning in 1941 and explicitly intended to promote, support, and equalize public library service, helps explain how North Carolina could translate emergency-scale expansion into a more durable statewide commitment (State Library of North Carolina, n.d.).

For those of us working in North Carolina libraries today, the point is not nostalgia for a simpler era. It is to notice how clearly the profession articulated its public function, and how concretely it organized community participation through trusted systems. Roads require budgets, repairs, and advocates. So do libraries. Collections require stewardship, selection, and sometimes the willingness to say no to what will not serve the reader. Our predecessors put it bluntly: "Quality is more important than quantity" ("Victory book campaign," 1943, p. 7).

Democracy, especially in periods of strain, depends on institutions that can provide knowledge where it is needed, keep it usable, and preserve the record of what happened. North Carolina's wartime library work shows we have done that before, with creativity, grit, and an insistence that access is not an abstract virtue. It is something you build, and then keep building.

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JOANIE DOUGLAS CHAVIS

In Step with Library Leaders

Who I Am and the Journey that Shaped My Forever Career

> *"Having a career in libraries has been deeply satisfying....I am rewarded every day for giving back to my community."*

I have over 25 years of professional leadership experience in academic libraries. I am telling my age here because I am usually just 36. Those years would grow immensely if I told you how many years collectively that I volunteered in a library in school during grades 2-12, and then while a Senior Girl Scout, volunteering in a government library in Raleigh, as a young adult, volunteering in the public library system while in a professional position as my community service choice. I am just like McQuinn's *Lola at the Library* (2006) because I loved being at the library, reading, and doing the work, because I had access to all the books while surrounded by people who felt the same way I did about the library. My two daughters, now 18 and 21, are honorary library workers, having completed almost all of their combined 500 hours of service-learning recognition in the library during high school. Having a career in libraries has been deeply satisfying. As I strive to be a great daughter to my mother, a sister, wife, mother, auntie, colleague, achiever, overcomer, and sometimes a magician, I am rewarded every day for giving back to my community. It has been a constant in my identity.

I received a blessing when I moved to Louisiana with my husband while I was participating in a seminar with Spencer Johnson and his 1998 business blockbuster, *Who Moved My Cheese.* Reading that exact book at that exact time in my life helped me to understand that having to leave North Carolina, where I had been most of my life, was a huge opportunity to really do something I loved. My "cheese was moving," and I had to adapt and move with it. This quick read was a catalyst that showed me I had to adapt to create the life I wanted by choosing to do work that was more meaningful to me. It was then, 25 years ago, as a child bride, that I realized there was a place called "Library School" after volunteering in the public libraries of East Baton Rouge Parish and meeting new friends. I remember being in school at Louisiana State University (LSU) wondering "What am I doing?" I also remember my family and friends asking, what are you studying? It was all new to them, and to me. It wasn't until I spoke with my husband's best friend that I realized the greatness of the new degree and the significance that I had embarked upon. He asked, "Are you going to library school?" As I replied yes, I was a little worried about what he would think. He quickly assuaged my fears by saying loudly, "Librarians ROCK!" (I agree, just like their paraprofessional partners; they are the greatest, too!) Standing, he bent his 6'4" frame to slump over an imaginary laptop, like Schroeder, a character of the *Peanuts*, playing on his beloved piano, and stated, "Those are the people who type into the computer, go to the stacks, find all kinds of stuff, and make school worthwhile. They never give up and make sure you understand what you are doing." Then he straightened up and said, "That is all right!" No matter where I have been in my journey, he has always been in my corner, talking about the wonderful librarians he encountered while attending East Carolina University, where he received degrees that catapulted him into the many businesses he owns and runs today.

In a four-part series for this column, I will outline and discuss what is needed to become a shining example of a library worker, professional or paraprofessional, and how to become a leader in this industry. I'm letting you in on several secrets to give you a head start on the lessons I learned from more than 35 years of leadership. I want to share what some

consider inside information, gained as a leader, from experience with some of the best professional development that money could buy while working at a couple of Fortune 500 companies before coming to librarianship. To me, being a librarian has meant everything. My journey took me from earning an Economics degree at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T), to the School of Library and Information Science at LSU, then to Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC), my first professional employment and leadership position secured before I finished library school. I served there as leader and Dean for more than 16 years and then back to my alma mater, NC A&T. I can say that I have met many wonderful people along the way that positively shaped this journey.

The knowledge I impart will help anyone who wishes to understand more about *becoming* a librarian leader and to gain a better understanding of how librarianship can be a dream come true, as it was for me. This includes helping you create a leadership toolbox to gain experience. Please allow me to give you a quick outline of the things that we will discuss in the following issues of this column. I will provide a booklist or a few articles for each session, a QR code for feedback and assessment, and a way for you to ask questions that I can provide feedback on in the next issue.

What We Will Learn and Practice Part I: The Road to Understanding your Leadership Style and How it Begins with Education

I want to help guide you through the profession and show you some shortcuts, so that you know, wherever you are in your career, how to pivot and what you need to do once you have chosen this profession, or want to move forward in it from any point. What does a librarian or a paraprofessional do today? What do you need to think about how literacy, technology, the introduction of AI, research, and organization impact lifelong learners? We can also break down the types of leadership styles that exist, as discussed by Peter G. Northouse in *Leadership, Theory and Practice* (2021). We will look at information and examples that further support your learning so that you can find your calling or expand it.

What We Will Learn and Practice Part II: Support for the Culture of Librarianship

Bringing in notes from my tribe, from all walks of the library and other industries, to support your journey in understanding the importance of mentorship, sponsorship, and how to build your network, is crucial to understanding your engagement style and how that will work for you. It will be essential to know how to volunteer for the best assignments, where to go, and whom to ask when building skills critical to gaining experience. You will learn how to prepare for an interview by understanding what library leaders are looking for, preparing for what happens during your first professional job interview after you finish school or earn your certifications, and taking the first steps once you have secured the position.

What We Will Learn and Practice Part III: Keeping up Appearances

Information about paid and unpaid internships will be provided, along with a showcase on how to travel for professional development, how to prepare and present at conferences, how to understand strategic priorities, how to begin accreditation practices, how to read budgets, and how to begin grant writing. Jim Collins's *Good to Great* (2001) will be a great start in our discussion for how to hire the right people and recalibrate those who are not fearful to moving as you work on their skill sets, to having to fire those that may not be in the right seat on the bus and refusing to recalibrate, when you are allowed to hire for an open position. Having a better understanding of project management 101 from start to end is always helpful to leaders.

What We Will Learn and Practice Part IV: Run of Show

You will learn how to handle others when differing opinions and experiences can stop the process in its tracks, with the understanding that it takes all of us working together to be successful in meeting the needs of our communities. Because librarians and paraprofessionals shape communities and empower learning for everyone, we are all lifelong learners. I absolutely love what I do and am excited to impart this knowledge to you and to have an avenue to open

a dialogue through the *North Carolina Libraries* journal. It is my life's breath, and I live to support those by reaching back because of so many who did it for me.

I am including a QR code for those who may have additional questions I can answer, or for feedback and discussion. Please feel free to use it to respond or reach out. I will be sure to answer any questions posed and provide feedback on each practice part. Let's learn and work together!

Author Note

Column Editor Joanie Douglas Chavis is a tenured Associate Professor and Assistant Director for Research, Instructional and Engagement Services in the F.D. Bluford Library at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. As a servant leader, her research focuses on mentorship and succession planning, African American women in library leadership, and community college student transfer success.

QR Code: Article Evaluation Survey

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DENELLE EADS • UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARLOTTE

Matching New Technology to Real User Needs

Libraries continue to encounter a steady stream of new web-based tools, such as AI chatbots embedded in library websites, collaborative whiteboards for instruction, analytics dashboards promising insight into user behavior, and next-generation discovery systems marketed as transformative. As early technology adopters, libraries are often eager to experiment. Yet the most successful technology implementations are rarely driven by what is newest or most impressive.

Instead, the most impactful uses of library technology are driven by clearly-articulated user needs. At its best, library technology is not about novelty or trend-chasing, but about selecting tools that are useful, equitable, and sustainable for the communities we serve. Innovation matters—but only when it solves real problems.

Start with the problem, not the product

One of the most common missteps in adopting technology is starting with a solution in search of a problem. Vendors promise efficiency, personalization, or transformation, but without a clear understanding of user workflows, challenges, and institutional priorities, even the most advanced tools can go unused. For example, before implementing an AI-powered chat tool on the library website, libraries should ask whether users are struggling with basic navigation, citation support, or research confidence, and whether automation meaningfully addresses those challenges or simply adds another layer of complexity.

Libraries that successfully integrate technology begin by asking grounded questions:

- What barriers are users encountering?
- Where do students, faculty, or staff experience problems in their work?
- What tasks consume time without adding value?

Whether the issue is difficulty navigating research tools, lack of access to specialized software, or inconsistent support for online learners, technology should be a response to a clearly articulated need, not an assumption.

Listening as a form of innovation

Matching technology to user needs requires deep listening. Usage statistics tell part of the story, but qualitative input, focus groups, reference interactions, instruction feedback, and staff observations, often reveal what data alone cannot.Libraries using web analytics dashboards, embedded feedback forms, or UX survey tools often find that low engagement with a platform reflects unclear relevance, accessibility barriers, or insufficient training rather than lack of interest.

Libraries that treat assessment as an ongoing conversation, rather than a one-time evaluation, are better positioned to adjust tools and services before frustration sets in. In fact, this ongoing conversation can help the library create and adjust training opportunities, guides, and marketing materials to address potential concerns.

Importantly, listening should include voices that are often underrepresented in decision-making. Online learners, first-generation students, adjunct faculty, staff, and users with disabilities often experience technology differently, and their perspectives can prevent costly misalignment. Feedback from these groups could help identify problem areas that are invisible in aggregate usage data but critical to technology alignment.

Right-sizing technology

Not every need requires a complex or expensive solution. Sometimes the best match is a modest tool paired with thoughtful implementation. A light-

weight shared scheduling system, a thoughtfully-configured open-source platform, or a targeted automation process, can deliver more value than a large-scale system that overwhelms users and staff.

Right-sizing technology also means considering staff capacity. New tools bring new maintenance, training, and support demands. When libraries align technology choices with available expertise and workflows, adoption is smoother and outcomes are stronger.

Implementation is where alignment succeeds or fails

Even the most well-chosen technology can falter without intentional rollout. Clear communication about *why* a tool is being introduced, *how* it connects to user needs, and *where* support can be found is essential.

Web-based tools are often assumed to be intuitive simply because they run in a browser, yet even familiar interfaces benefit from clear communication, short tutorials, and point-of-need guidance. Training should be practical, role-based, and ongoing, not limited to a one-time launch. Libraries that invest in staff confidence and user fluency see technology become embedded in daily practice rather than remaining an optional add-on.

Libraries that pair new platforms with role-based training, such as quick-start guides for students and workflow-focused sessions for staff, are far more likely to remain sustainable. Equally important is the willingness to adjust tools and technology that no longer serve their purpose. Letting go of underperforming technology is not a failure; it is evidence of responsible stewardship.

Technology as a relationship, not a replacement

Ultimately, technology does not replace the human role of libraries; it amplifies it. When tools are thoughtfully matched to user needs, librarians spend less time troubleshooting systems and more time teaching, partnering, and supporting learning and research.

In an era of rapid technological change, libraries do not need to adopt everything new. They need to adopt what matters. By focusing technology decisions based on thoughtful assessment strategies, mission-driven priorities, and listening to feedback, libraries can ensure that innovation remains purposeful, inclusive, and impactful.

When web-based tools handle routine tasks such as appointment scheduling, data retrieval, or triage questions, librarians gain time to focus on instruction, research consultations, and partnership-building—work that technology alone cannot replace. The goal is not to keep up with technology, but to ensure technology keeps up with our users.

Conclusion

As new web-based tools continue to emerge, libraries face no shortage of options. The challenge is not keeping pace with every innovation but choosing technologies that genuinely reduce complications for users and staff. Tools that are thoughtfully selected, carefully implemented, and regularly reassessed are far more likely to deliver lasting value than those adopted in response to trends alone.

Ultimately, the goal is not to build a more technologically complex library, but a more responsive one. The most successful library technologies are not those that demand attention, but those that help users accomplish their work with less effort and greater confidence.

Selected Reading

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SCOTTIE KAPEL COLUMN EDITOR • **ANSLEY ARMSTRONG** GUEST COLUMNIST

On the Front Lines

Connecting with Students Through Media Literacy Instruction

Introduction

Virtual environments have become increasingly inundated with misleading information, deceptive posts, and manipulated images. It's hard to spend time online without growing concerned about the amount of misinformation that exists on the internet, especially on social media. As more and more people rely on social platforms as their primary source of news, media literacy becomes increasingly important.

It was that concern that led me to evaluate how I, as a librarian, was contributing to my students' understanding of media messages and their ability to decode those messages. Realizing I could do more, I began to develop a lesson on how students can detect misinformation online and how they can fact-check what they read. In this article, I will share how I developed the misinformation workshop for high school students and how I adapted it for a college setting in my current role at Western Carolina University.

About Western Carolina University

Western Carolina University (WCU) is a regional comprehensive university with approximately 12,000 students. It was founded in 1889 as a secondary school to train teachers in the region, and in 1972, it joined the University of North Carolina System. WCU offers over 120 undergraduate programs and more than 40 graduate degrees at the main campus in Cullowhee, the instructional site at Biltmore Park, and online. As the sole university library, Hunter Library serves the entire WCU community and uses a subject librarian model, with a single point of contact for students, faculty, and staff in each discipline. Subject librarians provide information literacy instruction, research support, and collection development for the disciplines they serve.

Developing the misinformation workshop

I first started presenting misinformation sessions when I worked as a school librarian, seeing a need to help keep my high school students from falling for false information online. Early sessions were lecture-based presentations on media literacy best practices, which in turn led to a lot of bored faces and blank stares.

To increase student engagement, I decided to pivot from lecture to active learning. The revised workshop included both thoughtful discussion and instruction. I began by asking students to share their own examples of spotting misinformation on their feeds or hearing a peer say something they knew wasn't true. After the discussion, I moved into sharing ways that they could think more critically about what they read on social media and how they could use lateral reading to fact-check claims.

This method proved far more effective for connecting with the students and allowing them to conceptualize the issue in their own lives. They were excited to share their experiences and collectively groan about frustrating examples of times they saw misinformation spread online or in person. This approach was more engaging and increased their comprehension by calling on their existing expertise.

Adapting the misinformation workshop

As the Humanities and Social Sciences Librarian at WCU, I support English, Political Science and Public Affairs, Anthropology, Sociology, and Communication. When I moved into this role, I was excited to update my misinformation workshop for an older audience. I saw the workshop as a complementary extension to Hunter Library's existing information literacy program. Working with college students in my subject areas has allowed me to discuss complex

topics and facilitate hands-on activities that weren't possible in phone-restricted environments.

Now, I begin my sessions with examples of how online misinformation can have real-world consequences. I start with three stories: one personal, one related to pop culture, and one concerning national news. The personal story includes my own experience of hearing misinformation repeated by family or friends in conversation. The pop culture example is timely and describes when internet personalities or celebrities spread misinformation or find themselves victims of misinformation. Finally, I tell the story of the 'Pizzagate' gunman who entered a Washington, D.C., pizza restaurant, believing that children were being held there based on claims he read online. Before each story, I show a single photo related to that event, allowing the students to explain who or what is in the picture if they are familiar. If they don't recognize the image at first, they often connect the dots as I begin to explain, and I circle back to check recognition again when I've finished the story.

Using storytelling at the beginning of my sessions allows me to not only capture students' attention but also relate to them with cultural examples they may already be familiar with, activating prior knowledge and making the session more memorable and applicable to their daily lives. I want the class to be informative, but I also want the students to be interested in and engaged with the content.

In addition to being more engaging, narrative is also a powerful way to alter attitudes and increase the chances of students utilizing the fact-checking methods I teach in the session. As I tell the stories, I define misinformation and disinformation and then reinforce the definitions afterward by reviewing meaning and showing examples in different contexts. I show cases of misinformation or disinformation spread through a post or a comment on social media, and I also share an example spread verbally during a podcast or speech.

I apply the same narrative treatment when I begin outlining the SIFT Method,[1] which is an information evaluation strategy developed by Mike Caulfield. As I go through the steps of the method, I demonstrate fact-checking an Instagram post. The post changes depending on the session, and I try to choose an example that is timely or related to the subject of the course I'm visiting. This way, students can see an example of the method in action and make that prior knowledge connection.

The session culminates with students trying the SIFT Method themselves using an activity I borrowed from Poynter's Misinformation Resilience Toolkit for Libraries.[2] This activity connects what students have learned in the session to course content. Using their phones, students scroll through their social media feeds looking for a claim related to that class that they want to investigate. For example, if it is a sociology course on aging, students can locate a post on age or ageism. Then, they follow the steps of the method: Stop, Investigate, Find better coverage, and Trace the claim to determine if the information in the post is true.

I work closely with the class instructor to plan this portion of the session. Based on the length of the class, we decide when the students will locate a post to apply the method. Some instructors prefer students choose a claim to investigate prior to class, while others don't mind them locating one during the activity.

After applying the SIFT. Method to their chosen post, students volunteer to share the claim they fact-checked, the social media platform where it originated, their investigation process, and if they determined the claim to be true or false. Many of their examples spark comments and discussion from classmates who have seen the same claim online and are enthusiastic to share what they found as well. Oftentimes, this is the portion of the session that students seem to enjoy the most, and sharing flows naturally. However, if the instructor indicates that the class tends to be more reserved, the activity can also be performed in groups with a designated speaker for each table to encourage participation. After this activity, I close the session by touching on additional fact-checking tools and sharing ways they can contact me. My goal is for students to walk away from the misinformation workshop feeling like they

[1] Mike Caulfied, "SIFT (The Four Moves)," Hapgood, last modified June 19, 2019, https://hapgood.us/2019/06/19/sift-the-four-moves/.

[2] "Be MediaWise: A Misinformation Resilience Toolkit for Libraries," Poynter, accessed February 13, 2026, https://www.poynter.org/mediawise/misinformation-resilience-toolkit-libraries/.

have learned something new, are better equipped to navigate the online world, and know how to find help when they need it.

Conclusion

These sessions have taught me a lot about our students and their media consumption habits. It's easy to assume that young adults consume media passively, but their insightful commentary and discussion reveal that they have a better understanding of the digital landscape than popular opinion would have us believe. The workshop provides students with a framework to bolster their existing understanding and allows them to assess the veracity of online content more effectively. While it is unrealistic to believe that after the session, students will pause and fact-check every single post that they come across online, I hope it can help them think more critically about what they see as they scroll.

Author Note

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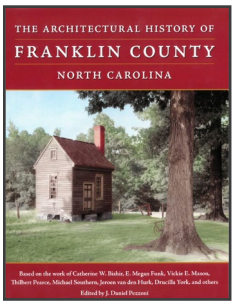
North Carolina Books

Compiled by Laura Mangum



Architectural History of Franklin County

J. Daniel Pezzoni, ed.
Louisburg, NC: Franklin County Historical Association, 2023.
448 pp. $60.00
ISBN 979-8-218-26316-4

Based on the work of Catherine W. Bishir, E. Megan Funk, Vickie E. Mason, Thilbert Pearce, Michael Southern, Jeroen van den Hurk, Drucilla York, and others.

Copies of the book can be purchased from the Franklin County Library system and the Franklin County Planning & Inspections Department.

Edited by preservation architect J. Daniel Pezzoni and grounded in decades of fieldwork by many of North Carolina's leading architectural historians and surveyors, *Architectural History of Franklin County* offers a welcoming and highly readable overview of the county's built landscape. With its strong visual presentation, clear introductory essay, and practical reference tools, the book makes a solid contribution to local architectural documentation, even if some limitations reduce its value for more specialized scholarly use.

The introductory essay stands out as the book's strongest component. It draws on the expertise of Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, two widely-respected figures in North Carolina architectural history whose earlier works include *North Carolina Architecture* and *The Guide to the Historic Architecture of North Carolina* series. Their contributions are complemented by those of E. Megan Funk, Vickie E. Mason, Thilbert H. Pearce, Jeroen van den Hurk, and Drucilla Haley York, all of whom bring years of field survey experience and research to the project. Together, these authors trace Franklin County's architectural development with care, placing local buildings within broader regional and national patterns.

Most of the volume is devoted to an extensive architectural inventory, made up of hundreds of short entries accompanied by photographs and brief descriptions of structures found throughout the county. This section is visually engaging and will be especially useful to local readers. However, the absence of citations for individual entries limits its usefulness for researchers and preservation professionals who may want to verify sources or pursue deeper study. Given the scholarly credentials of the contributors and the strong documentation in the opening essay, this omission is particularly noticeable.

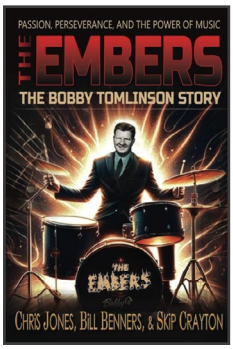
Pezzoni's editorial guidance and the contributors' subject knowledge are evident throughout the book, and the writing remains clear and approachable. While the volume does not delve deeply into preservation theory or offer sustained analysis of the social, economic, or racial forces shaping the built environment, it does succeed in capturing the layered and varied architectural character of Franklin County.

The book is further strengthened by its reference tools. A well-crafted glossary helps orient readers unfamiliar with architectural terminology, and a clear, functional index makes it easy to navigate. The bibliography following the introductory essay reflects a wide range of archival and scholarly sources and provides a useful starting point for readers interested in further research.

Architectural History of Franklin County will likely resonate most strongly with local audiences, historical societies, and public libraries across eastern North Carolina, for whom it offers an accessible, image-rich celebration of place and community history. Academic or research libraries may find it less compelling due to its limited documentation and analytical depth when compared with more scholarly architectural surveys; however, institutions with a collecting emphasis on North Carolina history or vernacular architecture may still find value in the volume as a representative example of a locally-produced historical association survey.

Although it does not aim to be a comprehensive or critical study, the book makes a meaningful contribution to the preservation and appreciation of local heritage. It is best suited to public and regional collections that value community memory and architectural documentation.

Patrick Cash
East Carolina University



The Embers: The Bobby Tomlinson Story

Chris Jones, Bill Benners, and Skip Crayton. New Bern: McBryde Publishing, 2024. 288 pp. $29.95.
ISBN: 978-1-73398-245-0

Performing continuously for nearly 68 years, The Embers are arguably one of the East Coast's biggest party bands. Playing a mixture of classic R&B, rock, and their own material, they've not only helped establish the genre of beach music in the southeastern U.S. but are the band that first coined the term. This book takes the reader on the band's journey through the eyes of its longest tenured member, drummer and bandleader, Bobby Tomlinson.

The authors Chris Jones, Bill Brenners, and Skip Crayton display their extensive knowledge of southeastern beach music history and are undoubtedly devoted fans of The Embers. First-time novelist Jones is a journalistic author of 1960's R&B, northern soul, and beach music. Benners, a former radio producer, playwright, and novelist, is the author of *My Sister's Keeper,* which has won several awards. Crayton is a newspaper columnist and author of multiple books, including the popular *Remember When*. Benners and Crayton previously collaborated on the PBS documentary film *The Embers, The Heart and Soul of Beach Music* released in 2014.

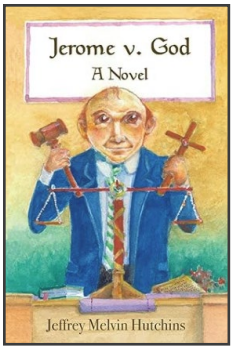
The book's early chapters lead the reader through Tomlinson's childhood, from the moment when drums caught his ear, through grade school and early musical endeavors, to meeting friends who would eventually make up the original Embers lineup. The authors chronicle the band's early shows from 1958 to 1964, after which they decided to commit to being full-time professional musicians and explore new endeavors such as recording and even establishing several nightclubs.

The next set of chapters explore the band's adaptation to the changes of the 1970s, through fluctuating band membership, the development of Las Vegas-style floor shows, partnerships with resort hotels, and the advent of beach music as a specific musical genre. In the 1980s, the growing popularity of their original song, and beach music anthem, *I Love Beach Music,* led to new opportunities such as being used in national radio and television commercials.

The band's 1990s exploits show the first signs of dissension between the clashing egos of the two lead singers, which culminated in an onstage physical altercation and the exit of a founding member. The remaining chapters follow the aging band through new opportunities, such as resort and casino residencies, Christmas shows, and entertaining U.S. troops overseas. This era is also defined by constant lineup changes, including the departure of Bobby Tomlinson as drummer. At age 77, Tomlinson was the last remaining founding member of The Embers.

Averaging about five pages each, the forty-two chapters of this book are easy to read, little entries of the band's exploits, but seem to be written separately from the context of the book as a whole. While presented roughly chronologically, the timeline between chapters is jumpy and can be a bit disorienting at times. In addition to an index, this book contains full lists of the band's members and crew, as well as sponsors and investors who have helped them along the way. This book would be well accepted by fans of beach music and is recommended for academic and public libraries that have a focus on local music and dance histories or the coastal culture of the southeastern U.S.

James Brinkley
East Carolina University



Jerome v. God: A Novel

Jeffrey Melvin Hutchins
Asheville: Pisgah Press, 2025.
317 pp. $22.95.
ISBN 978-1-942016-98-4

What is an avowed atheist to do when his house disappears into a sinkhole, the insurance company deems it an Act of God and refuses to pay, and the land is not sellable? Why, sue the famous preacher Gideon Calhoun, of course, the self-proclaimed agent of God.

Jerome Light does not believe in God, but he must believe in the power of the judicial system to help him recover from the setback of a demolished house that still has a mortgage, which means paying rent for his family to live in an apartment, and the legal fees to plead his case. Suing God is not possible, so Jerome decides to sue the Reverend Gideon Calhoun, a very successful evangelist with a large flock, who claims many times over that he speaks to God and God speaks to him.

The events of this novel by author Jeffrey Melvin Hutchins create an intriguing storyline about faith, belief, and morality. Hutchins took twenty years to write this story about Jerome and his wife Lacy, the former an atheist and the latter Jewish, and their attempt to right a personal wrong.

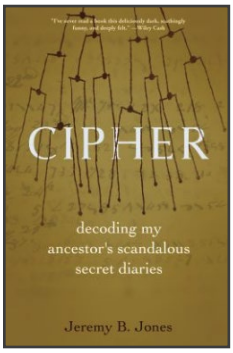
Although the premise of suing a televangelist for an Act of God because he is a self-proclaimed agent of God is a bit far-fetched, the result is an interesting thought experiment regarding the existence of God, the idea of punishment by a higher power, and who has the right to enrich themselves by spreading the Good Word.

The story's point of view switches among characters, including the Lights' children, helping the reader feel invested in all the characters and understand their motivations. This format lends itself to being an interesting story that does not paint any of the characters as right or wrong, which allows the reader to understand and contemplate both sides of the judicial argument. Although the lack of animosity between the plaintiffs and defendant is a little unrealistic, the civility keeps the focus on the argument and not on the characters battling one another across a courtroom.

Hutchins has written other books such as children's stories about Denton the Dragon, which was made into an eponymous musical, and he published *Perpetuonics*, a dystopian novel, in 2024. Hutchins is also a pioneer of closed captioning technology for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

There are discussion points at the end of the novel, which lend themselves to a book club. This novel would be an interesting addition to a college or university library with a religion program or a public library. The topic will appeal to a broad audience. Although the premise is thought-provoking, the language and content are appropriate for young adults and adults alike.

Dana Glauner
South Piedmont Community College



Cipher: Decoding My Ancestor's Scandalous Secret Diaries

Jeremy B. Jones
Durham: Blair, 2025.
280pp. $28.95.
ISBN 978-1-95-888853-7

Also available in NC LIVE HomeGrown E-books Collection

Jeremy B. Jones is an author and essayist native to the mountains of North Carolina, where he currently resides and teaches creative writing at Western Carolina University. *Cipher: Decoding My Ancestor's Scandalous Secret Diaries* is Jones's second book, following *Bearwallow: A Personal History of a Mountain Homeland*. His essays have appeared in publications such as *Garden & Gun* and *The Bitter Southerner*, as well as in the anthologies *Letters to a Stranger* and *Appalachian Reckoning*.

Jeremy B. Jones's *Cipher: Decoding My Ancestor's Scandalous Secret Diaries* explores connections: the bonds that tie individuals to their ancestors and to the places they inhabit across time. At its center are

the encoded diaries of William Thomas Prestwood, a white Southern schoolteacher, farmer, and surveyor, who chronicled his daily life from 1808 until his death in 1859 in his own personal cipher. Discovered in 1975 in a house slated for demolition in Wadesboro, North Carolina, the hand-stitched notebooks were eventually deciphered by a retired National Security Agency cryptanalyst, revealing a rare and intimate record of nineteenth-century life. Jones, Prestwood's four-times great-grandson, takes on the complex task of interpreting these documents, grappling with their personal and historical implications, and making connections to his own journey in life. Jones states the cryptanalyst "came to these diaries with historical interest, at an arm's length. I came with something more complicated, more personal. I wanted to find the flesh and blood of a man who'd made me spread out across these pages. I was looking for resurrection" (p. 35).

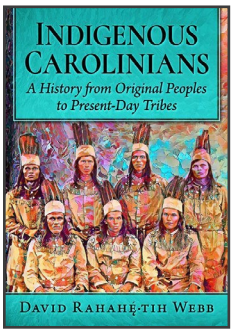
The diaries themselves are remarkable artifacts. Written in a self-created cipher, Prestwood's entries are typically brief and emotionally restrained, yet somehow still rich in detail. He records what he feels is important, everything from agricultural labor, astronomical observations, teaching, travel, and sexual encounters alongside births, deaths, and notable local and national events. The fragmented nature of the diaries invites interpretation, though it resists the creation of a seamless narrative. Jones responds by supplementing the diaries with careful historical research and genealogical inquiry, situating Prestwood within broader social, political, and geographic contexts.

One of the book's greatest strengths—and its most ethically challenging aspect—is its engagement with difficult histories. Jones does not attempt to excuse or rehabilitate his ancestor. Instead, he confronts Prestwood's participation in slavery, including his ownership of enslaved people, his sexual exploitation of an enslaved woman, and his relationship with the resulting enslaved children. He also addresses Prestwood's involvement in events connected to settler colonial expansion and the violence of the Trail of Tears era. These sections are among the most impactful, demonstrating how personal documents can expose the everyday mechanisms of historical injustice.

To find connection with his ancestor, Jones interweaves the historical narrative with reflections on his own life, particularly his experiences as a father. This structural choice creates a dialogue between past and present, underscoring how questions of legacy, responsibility, and identity reverberate across generations. While this approach occasionally slows the forward motion of the historical account, it ultimately reinforces the book's central concern: the emotional and ethical stakes of encountering one's own family history in the archive. One noticeable absence in the book is the lack of a bibliography, index, or appendices. Including these materials could have helped readers feel more immersed in Jones's research journey and better understand how he traced and interpreted his family history.

Cipher will be of interest to readers in history, archival studies, and public humanities, particularly those concerned with family papers, encoded texts, and the interpretive challenges of intimate primary sources. Its blend of memoir and historical analysis makes it suitable for both public and academic library collections, especially those emphasizing North Carolina history or instruction in the use of primary sources.

Erin Gray
East Carolina University



Indigenous Carolinians: A History from Original Peoples to Present-Day Tribes

David Rahahẹ́·tih Webb
Jefferson, NC: MacFarland Press, 2025.
412 pp. $49.95.
ISBN 978-1-4766-9727-7

David Rahahẹ́·tih Webb's *Indigenous Carolinians* is both a story of resiliency and sorrow as it traces the history of the indigenous natives of the Carolinas from the time when they had a strong government and culture to today, when tribes are reestablishing their language and culture and, for some, seeking recognition. Webb's book is divided into five parts: Roots, Resistance, Resilience, Reawakening, and Relatives. It is also part of his history, as Webb

is a citizen of the Tuscarora Indians of Kahtenuaka Territories (roughly the Coastal Plains of North and South Carolina).

Webb weaves together "Indigenous research methodologies and Western qualitative approaches" (p. 4) for the content of his book. The Indigenous approach gleans oral histories passed down through generations, while the Western approach uses records and documents housed in archives and museums, books, and articles written about the indigenous peoples and tribes of the Coastal Carolinas.

Indigenous Carolinians documents three groupings of indigenous people, the Tuscarora, Catawba, and the Coalesced Band (Webb's term for the amalgamated and splintered Indigenous communities). The Coalesced Band were indigenous people who originated from smaller tribes, were forced on to early reservations, and intermarried or married non-indigenous persons. The Tuscarora and Catawba maintained tribal and cultural identities, while the members of the Coalesced Band were generally only identified as Indians in various records without any tribal affiliation. Tribal affiliations, government, language, and culture were lost over time as the indigenous people were forced on to colonial reservations. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some of the Coalesced Band reformed into tribes and communities that sought and received state or federal recognition. The Cherokee are not included in Webb's analysis and history.

The "Roots" section traces the history of the tribes in the Coastal Carolinas. This includes an examination of the language, government, and mythology of the tribes. One interesting fact Webb mentions is that the indigenous peoples of the Carolinas belonged to three distinct language families—Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Siouans.

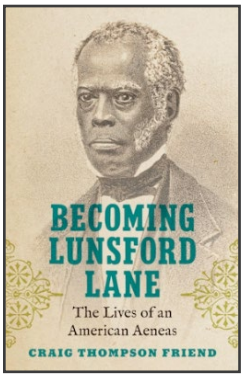
"Resistance" covers the encounters with Europeans and details how the indigenous people tried to maintain their lands. "Resilience" describes how Indigenous tribes sought to retain their own distinctive tribal identities and cultures against European efforts to either eradicate or assimilate them.

"Reawakening" describes the twentieth-century efforts of indigenous people to rediscover the tribal languages and cultures that had been stripped from them in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Webb mostly details the endeavors of the Tuscarora Tribe in North Carolina since he is a member. Other North Carolina efforts are also described, but not in as great detail. "Relatives" provides details about the "Core" families of the Catawba, Tuscarora, and Coalesced Band. It mentions when the names were listed in records and the tribal designation given at that time.

Webb employs an extensive bibliography of sources from books and dissertations to historical documents in state, federal, and international archives. He also makes use of material from tribal websites and museums. He includes a list of terminology for terms, tribes, and communities. Historical images, maps, and pictures are used throughout the work.

Webb's *Indigenous Carolinians: A History from Original Peoples to Present Day Tribes* is recommended for all libraries seeking to broaden their Native American history collection, especially in the coastal areas.

Robert Arndt
University of North Carolina at Pembroke



Becoming Lunsford Lane: The Lives of an American Aeneas

Craig Thompson Friend
Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2025.
420 pp. $37.50
978-1-4696-8534-2

How can a once-enslaved man overcome political and economic obstacles to have a major impact on the course of the abolition movement? Throughout the book *Becoming Lunsford Lane: The Lives of an American Aeneas*, author Craig Thompson Friend details the life and influence of Lunsford Lane (1803-1879). After being raised as an enslaved individual in Raleigh, North Carolina, Lane fought to gain his freedom in 1835. Eventually, he relocated to New England to pursue more professional and economic opportunities. At various times, Lane was able to tell the story about his early years as a

slave and gained notoriety as a speaker. Through the publication of *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane* (1842), he used storytelling as one method to help spread the need for the abolishment of slavery. Ultimately, Lunsford Lane sought to gain freedom for both his wife and children.

Craig Thompson Friend is a Professor of History at North Carolina State University and President-elect of the Historical Society of North Carolina. Prior to *Lunsford Lane*, his other publications include *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (2004), *Southern Masculinity: Manhood in the South Since Reconstruction* (2009), *Kentucke's Frontiers* (2010), *Along the Maysville Road: The Early American Republic in the Trans-Appalachian West* (2017), *A New History of Kentucky* (co-author with James C. Klotter, 2018), *Reinterpreting Southern Histories: Essays in Historiography* (co-author with Lorri Glover and others, 2020), *The Buzzel About Kentuck: Settling the Promised Land* (2021), and *Camp Henry: The History of a Summer Camp in the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina* (2022).

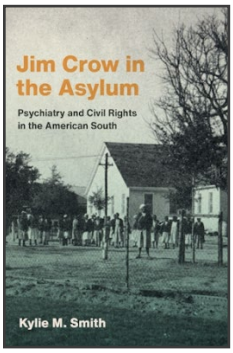
In this book, numerous illustrations are provided, including a genealogical chart of Lunsford Lane's family, which was contained in the cover page from Lane's biography, *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane* (published 1842). Also included are photographs of both Lane and his family. For added reader benefit, the author includes a detailed map showing different locations in New England where Lane had speaking engagements to share his story and where his family settled once fully emancipated.

Based primarily on excerpts from Lane's personal memoirs (which became part of his story), the author sticks successfully to this theme throughout the book. At the end, there is an extensive notes section and index for the reader. Although no bibliography is present, the extensive index with cross-references makes up for this absent feature.

This book is intended to showcase the efforts of Lane to gain emancipation for himself and his family despite racial prejudice not only in North Carolina, but also in New England as well. Lunsford Lane was like Aeneas from Greco-Roman mythology, in feeling a duty to speak out about slavery in order to bring attention to the evil nature of the institution. Ultimately, as Lunsford Lane shared his biographical story with audiences, he became well known in the abolitionist movement.

Because of its specific scope, *Becoming Lunsford Lane: The Lives of an American Aeneas* would be suitable for faculty, students, or researchers with an interest in significant historical episodes in both North Carolina and the United States historical periods as a whole.

David W. Young
University of North Carolina at Pembroke



Jim Crow in the Asylum: Psychiatry and Civil Rights in the American South

Kylie M. Smith
Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2026.
342 pp. $99 cloth, $34.95 paper.
ISBN 9781469689203

Also available Open Access:
https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/109498

This critical compilation of the tangible, devastating effects of segregation in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi focuses on the treatment and lack thereof of their most vulnerable populations: Black patients requiring psychiatric care. The author explains that they deliberately chose to solely share Black patients' stories to "excavate what it was like for the most marginalized of the marginal" (p.12).

Kylie M. Smith has written other award-winning books, such as *Talking Therapy: Knowledge and Power in American Psychiatric Nursing*, and served as an editor of the recent publication *Do Less Harm: Ethical Questions for Health Historians.* She has also written a multitude of journal articles, covering topics that span healthcare, gender, and racial disparities. As a tenured Associate Professor and the Andrew W. Mellon Faculty Fellow for Nursing and Humanities at Emory University, Smith is clearly knowledgeable in these subject matters. This book does not shy away from exposing uncomfortable truths and includes mention of eugenics, sterilization laws, medical experimentation, and miscegenation. The book chap-

ters are classified in three parts: Creating Jim Crow in the Asylum, Performing Jim Crow in the Asylum, and Ending Jim Crow in the Asylum.

From the very first page, which starts with a 1965 petition to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington, D.C., the subject matter is horrifically engrossing. It covers deeply upsetting and problematic material, but an accurate portrayal of the history of psychiatric care in the American South gives those victims a voice and also demands improved conditions, policies, and practices in the future.

Smith provides further detail as to how foundational segregation was to psychiatry by specifying that well-known pioneers such as Thomas Kirkbride and Dorothea Dix, who both made incredible strides towards psychiatric reform in the nineteenth century and advocated for the mentally ill, also showed no concern or interest in the welfare of Black patients.

In the context of psychiatry, this needs to be understood not so much as benign oversight, but the active repudiation of the idea of Black psychology itself—the belief that there was no illness to be cured because Black patients were not capable of complex emotional or affective lives, and if they were institutionalized, it was because their behavior was seen as a threat to white society in some way....the Black patient was never fully human, and this belief laid the foundation for not just institutional segregation, but the way the Black person would be treated as a patient (p. 42).

The author discusses general public disdain for social welfare programs, mental health stigma, racial hierarchies, gendered ideas about patient behavior and vulnerability, and how segregation was maintained in death as well as in life. Black patients had substandard care and facilities, separate cemeteries, and chronic underfunding and overcrowding in institutions, contributing to a high employee turnover rate, which led to unskilled, untrained hires. Black employees at asylums were paid considerably less than white employees and also had lesser, separate accommodations.

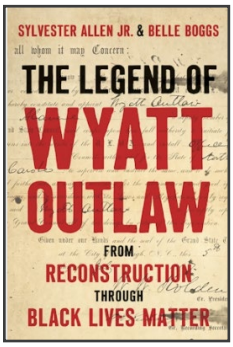
The inclusion of an extensive bibliography and in-text citations with references to archival materials, books, and numerous journal articles and dissertations creates a heavily researched historical account. Research for the work was supported by a grant from the National Library of Medicine.

The author shares raw, heartbreaking stories and specific instances of policies beyond generalizations, forcing the reader to consider the enormity of the challenge of even addressing systemic racism within psychiatry. With segregation so integral to the overwhelming practices and prevailing mindset of the Jim Crow era, racially motivated abuse and neglect were par for the course.

Individual stories and details illustrate the helplessness and severe lack of adequate assistance, accommodations, treatments, and facilities that vulnerable patients were subject to. The people who were and continue to be affected by this system matter and deserve much better. "There are numerous letters in the archives from family members begging for their relatives to be moved or released or admitted in the first place, all of which indicate that legal due process was not in play" (p. 63).

This book is essential for anyone in healthcare, psychiatry in particular, and those interested in expanding their knowledge of the historic context of racial inequities in America. It would be an important addition to academic libraries and special libraries.

Amy Cooley
East Carolina University



The Legend of Wyatt Outlaw: From Reconstruction Through Black Lives Matter

Sylvester Allen Jr. and Belle Boggs
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025
278 pp. $30.00
ISBN 978-1-4696-8999-9

Wyatt Outlaw was a successful Black businessman, town constable, Union League leader, and advocate for education and voting rights in Graham, North Carolina, during Reconstruction. In February 1870, he was kidnapped from his home and lynched by the Ku Klux Klan in Graham's courthouse square. As a long-time, non-native resident of Alamance County, the reviewer was familiar with

Wyatt Outlaw's historical importance to the county, but eagerly anticipated learning more about his life and legacy. The thoroughness of this book's research and its engaging storytelling will not disappoint the reader.

In their book, Allen and Boggs seek to document not only the life of Wyatt Outlaw, but also to tell the story of a North Carolina county and its county seat, which have struggled to recognize and acknowledge its racial past. Sylvester Allen, author of the play, *The Spirit of Wyatt Outlaw: Final Peace*, is a native of Graham and attended local public schools in Alamance County, but never learned about Wyatt Outlaw in the classroom. Belle Boggs is a professor of English at North Carolina State University, the author of *The Gulf: A Novel* and *The Art of Waiting: On Fertility, Medicine, and Motherhood,* and previously taught in private schools in Alamance County.

Wyatt Outlaw's documented historical record is scant; there are no known pictures of him, few written records, and his burial location remains unknown. There is no commemorative plaque in the county. Much of what we know about his murder exists because his mother and other county residents testified at the 1871 impeachment trial of North Carolina Governor William Holden, who had declared a state of insurrection in Alamance and Caswell counties in 1870 in response to rampant Klan violence in the area. The authors searched through state archives and special collections to uncover evidence of Outlaw's life and work.

In addition to highlighting Outlaw's historical significance, this book is a case study of one Southern town struggling to acknowledge its troubled racial past. The authors have included not only Black history relevant to the county but have placed this local historical record within the broader context of Reconstruction, Black Lives Matter, and contemporary race relations in the United States. The book is strengthened by the disparate voices, perspectives, interviews, photographs, and historical records included in it. Its twenty-one chapters are organized into four themes: Home; Family; Outrages, Outlaws, and Accountability; and Reckoning and Responsibility. The authors move smoothly between past and present to tell a more complete history of race relations in Alamance County. A notes section of sources consulted allows the reader to follow the authors' research process.

This book is recommended for academic and public libraries throughout North Carolina and the South, as well as for libraries collecting in Southern and Black history. It is eminently readable and would be appropriate for high school students, undergraduates, and armchair historians.

Teresa LePors
Elon University

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.

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