

Part X

2006-2106

The preceding broadsides have given the reader an insightful look at how our public library has developed over the last one hundred years. From a room in Thalian Hall, the library has



The library in 1906 and in 2000



expanded to a major downtown facility, three branches, and a law library served by a 50-member staff .

The dramatic increase in the number and size of library buildings is only one part of the library's growth. In addition:

- We now have over 100,000 registered borrowers, which is more than three times the number of people living in New Hanover County one hundred years ago.



From card catalog to computer catalog



- In 1906, the library opened with a collection of 1,700 books; the library now has over 400,000 items in its collection.

- Circulation of library books in our first decade averaged about 25,000 items a year. Today the library annually circulates over one million books and audiovisual materials.

- In 2006, 2,000 visitors daily walk through library facilities—a ten-fold increase from 1906.

- Today, library staff answer over 600,000 questions each year—a statistic not deemed important enough to track in 1906.



Today, electronic resources supplement traditional books



- Finally, today's public library provides a wealth of services not even imagined 100 years ago. Audiobooks, electronic journals, e-books, consumer health information, grant resources, digital photographs, Internet access, etc., are all part of a century of library progress.

Supporting this growth has been a significant increase in the library's budget. In 1906, the City of Wilmington appropriated \$1,200 to fund the operation of the library. In

2006, New Hanover County appropriates over \$3,500,000 including state and federal funds. On a per capita basis, the cost to operate our library system is less than that of most libraries in North Carolina.

An Increasingly Digital World

Having looked back at the last one hundred years, one inevitably begins to think about the next hundred years. Currently, library services are arranged around three factors: collections, staff, and facilities. This troika will continue into the future.

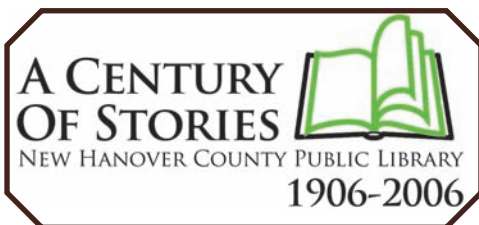


Resources such as WorldCat make library holdings universally accessible

Regarding collections, clearly the digital world will continue its advance, and all for the good, since the resources available on the Internet will continue to enrich all libraries. This is especially true in the area of reference collections and journals. In

both of these areas our library has been able to significantly enhance its

collections at little cost because of its association with NC LIVE, North Carolina's virtual library for public and academic libraries. The future will see increased funding for initiatives like NC LIVE



which provide an economy of scale while equalizing resources available to communities statewide—a fact that is very appealing to those who fund libraries. Audiovisual departments will also take increasing advantage of the many Internet options available to libraries to strengthen their collections.

A Smaller World

While print collections may grow at a slower pace, they will be better tailored to user needs through the increased sophistication of library computer systems. Customers will develop user profiles, and libraries will move from a passive role of holding collections to promoting the use of specific material to their users based on self-generated profiles.

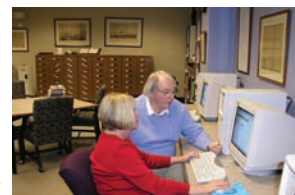


NextReads provides suggested reading lists based on user preferences

We shall also see better integration of unique library resources such as our special collections and catalog within the worldwide web, and our users

will correspondingly come from all over the world—not just New Hanover County. In a global environment, paradoxically, local collections will increase in their importance, as public libraries become the natural repository for locally produced materials. New

Local history resources like the library's North Carolina Room will be widely used



Hanover County has been a leader in this area and will continue to develop such collections.

Workplace Challenges

Library staff will continue to assist users in research and in reader advisory. Their skills will help people make better sense out of the amazing complexity and variety of information resources now available.



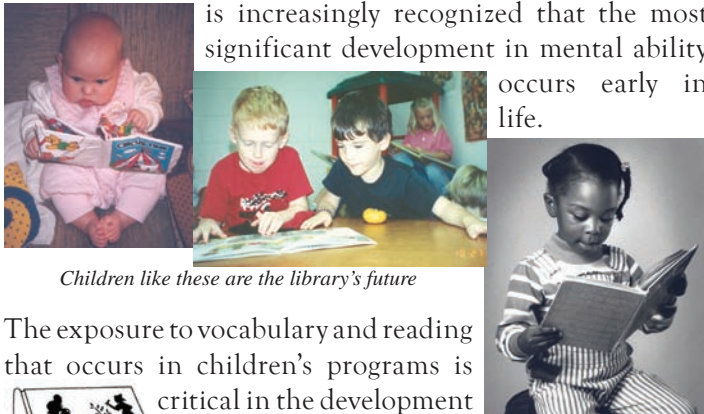
Patrons help themselves at Northeast Library's self check out station

Library staff will need to be well-educated, technologically adept, and culturally aware if they are to continue to provide excellence in customer service. At the same time, new skills in marketing, assessment, and training will need to be developed.

Self-service applications will allow library staff to spend less time on support activities and more time in providing customer assistance.

Children Still Come First

One area in which public libraries will find increasing recognition is in their work with young children. It is increasingly recognized that the most significant development in mental ability occurs early in life.



Children like these are the library's future

The exposure to vocabulary and reading that occurs in children's programs is critical in the development of a child's literacy skills. Programs such as our "Growing Readers" will be expanded and become mandatory throughout North Carolina.



Building for the Future

While the remote user will become as prevalent as the person walking into a library, this will not obviate the need for well-designed libraries.



Myrtle Grove Branch Library in 2000

Communities have always been defined in large measure by the public institutions they create. A community with an excellent public library makes a strong statement on how it values

learning and intellectual pursuits.

Libraries will remain centers for self-education, but they also will serve an even more fundamental role as a gathering place for community. Our library system has



Events such as the Cape Fear Crime Festival grow in popularity

always been characterized by the diversity of its users. There are very few places where you can find such a wonderful mix of ages and background.



Libraries provide much needed meeting space

I know from experience that one of the first things that newcomers to Wilmington do is to get their public library card—almost as if that act validates them as members of the community. At any rate this speaks volumes about the centrality of the public library in people's minds.

Library Supporters Lead the Way

As we conclude our centennial year, I would be remiss if I did not remark upon the many people who have both used their public library and supported their public library in so many ways.

In reviewing the past one hundred years, one is struck by how often it is the general public which has taken the lead in the development of library services. From the Sorosis Club, which in 1906 advocated the creation of the



Sorosis Club members in 1955

Wilmington Public Library, to the Friends of the Library in 1976 who organized to support the creation of the



Fundraising for the Northeast Regional Branch Library

New Hanover County Public Library, and more recently, to the Northeast Library Action Committee, which led the charge for improved branch services, it was our users and potential users who spearheaded the effort for improved public library service.

Perhaps their dynamism was based upon a passion for reading and learning that they could only envision fully realized in a library. As long as this is the case, the next one hundred years of library service in New Hanover County will be as fruitful as the last one hundred.

—David M. Paynter, Library Director