

# From the Editor

by Plummer Alston "Al" Jones, Jr., Editor

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## Annual v. Biennial Conferences: A Perennial Debate

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The North Carolina Library Association was organized at the State Normal and Industrial College in Greensboro on May 14, 1904, with seven founding members and forty-nine charter members. The first annual meeting, held November 11–12 of the same year in Charlotte, was attended by sixty-seven people.

From 1904 to 1921, NCLA met annually. The third annual meeting, held May 23–24, 1907, was a joint meeting with the American Library Association at the Battery Park Hotel in Asheville. In 1922, District Meetings were held across the state in Charlotte, Greensboro, Chapel Hill, Goldsboro, Asheville, and Southern Pines. The first biennial meeting was held November 22–23, 1923, at the Robert E. Lee Hotel in Winston-Salem and the second biennial meeting was held November 19–20, 1925, at the Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill. District meetings were held in 1926 across the state in Gastonia, Winston-Salem, Raleigh, Asheville, Wilmington, Rocky Mount, and Sanford.

The fourth biennial meeting was a joint conference with the Southern Conference on Education and the Southeastern Library Association (SELA) in Chapel Hill. District meetings returned in 1930, with meetings held in Charlotte, Statesville, Albemarle, Goldsboro, and Warrenton. A Special Meeting, as opposed to the regular biennial meeting, was held on September 2, 1938, at Woman's College in Greensboro. NCLA met biennially from 1939 to 2003. The forty-fourth conference was a joint conference with the South Carolina Library Association, held October 7–9, 1981, at the Civic Center in Charlotte.

After the 1949 NCLA biennial conference, held April 26–28 in Greensboro, members of the North Carolina Negro Library Association (NCNLA) attended. In April 1952, NCLA members voted against merging with the NCNLA, but on October 24, 1953, NCLA adopted a new constitution, which provided for the acceptance into membership of all librarians and persons interested in libraries. It was reported to NCLA member on October 11, 1954, that a new vote for accepting Negro members had carried 255 to 107.

At the biennial conference held October 29–November 1, 1975, at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, a resolution on holding annual NCLA meetings was defeated. In 1986, the NCLA Futures Committee, was charged to examine all aspects of the association's operation and to suggest changes and improvements. In its final report of October 22, 1986, the committee presented a series of recommended changes to the Executive Board of NCLA, which made an intensive study of all proposals. On April 25, 1987, at the NCLA Executive Board meeting, the committee's proposal for holding annual elections and conferences was rejected.

As we prepare for the 2004 NCLA Centennial Celebration to be held November 9–12 at the Civic Center in Charlotte, it is a perfect time to consider for at least the fourth time in its 100 years the proposition of having annual versus biennial conferences. The Centennial Conference will be a joint conference with SELA, the second in the history of NCLA conferences. The last biennial conference was held September 23–26 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem. The next biennial conference will be held in Winston-Salem in 2005. NCLA will be having in effect three annual conferences in a row. Perhaps the experience gained in planning and sponsoring three NCLA conferences back-to-back will inform the association as to whether future conferences should be annual or biennial. No matter what the collective decision of NCLA, the debate will be perennial.