



F·R·I·E·N·D·S

OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Supporting Friends of the Library Statewide

F * R * I * E * N * D * S TALK

July 2025

Dear Friends,

When this column began, the foremost topic on my mind was the weather. How fast that changed with national and international news of bombings and retaliations in the world. It's difficult to know where to go from here. Being the ultimate optimist, I'm hoping we can soon get back to talking about surviving summer heat by reading good books, staying cool by visiting our libraries, and enjoying good music and programming for children and adults. And, my favorite holiday of all - World Chocolate Day! on July 7!

If June is any kind of an example for our weather, July is going to be chancy. Here in the mountains, one day will be sunny and warm and the next will be the exact opposite! The coast, and really the entire state, has been having a similar experience. Whatever the weather, summer reads will help pass the time and keep one cool - unless, of course, you are into steamy romances. . . .

In Sparta, we have been envious of libraries that have installed story walks on library property or in nearby parks. Some Friends groups have more than one. So, I am proud to announce that a story walk is finely coming to our downtown Crouse Park in the very near future! It's on order and will be installed before the summer is over. This project is funded entirely by our Friends of the Library. The town maintenance folks will be in



charge of the installation, but Friends and staff will take care of the story walk books and other features. If those of you who have story walks have hints or experiences to share, please do so. We're the newbies to this effort and are excited to begin.

Staying here in the mountains, if you will indulge me, I'd like to share another exciting addition to our little town. The Alleghany Sparta Trail Association (ASTA) celebrated the reopening of the Sam Brown Mountain Park after years of neglect and hurricane damage. A ribbon cutting was held on Saturday, June 21. ASTA raised the money and spent countless hours working to rehabilitate this beautiful park in our town. Trails have been cleared and made safe. Huge trees downed by age and Helene had to be professionally removed. A new entrance was prepared and enhanced. New benches and

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Joyce's Column (continued from p.1)

picnic tables were installed - including two handicapped accessible picnic tables. There is a meditation area, signs for identification of "wildlife" that might be encountered on the trails, and other amenities. The reason for mentioning this now is that this wonderful park is at the end of the building that houses our library. With this proximity, library programming can be expanded in the park and benefit

both children and adults. We'd love to have you come visit both our library and Sam Brown Mountain Park.

Stay cool by visiting your library and reading lots of good books!

Yours in Friendship,

Joyce Speas, President

NC School Libraries Under Pressure

Why consider school library issues when our focus is the public library? It is important for FOL's to see what is happening in our local schools to be aware of in case attention turns to those libraries next. Best to be prepared.

Catawba County Schools have been embroiled in controversy since 2022 when a few people tried to have books taken out of circulation, even though the majority of the community objects to book bans.

This school year they have a detailed plan to work within the "Parents Bill of Rights" a NC law that gives extraordinary power to parents in determining their children's education. The superintendent, Matthew Stover, wrote a letter to parents giving them clear

directions and a link on the school website to look over books, censored materials, and how to have their child "Opt Out" for certain titles. The webpage includes results of a survey, steps to opt out, and a list of restricted materials. You may access that page [here](#).

The extent of the restrictions, the time and energy devoted to working around such challenges, takes time away from educating and engaging with young students. Although would be censors believe they are protecting kids, they are instead holding them back and hindering their ability to learn and grow.

You may enjoy this [video statement](#) from YA author Laurie Halse Anderson. Her argument for including books and making them accessible for teens is eloquent and powerful.



NC Libraries May Help Homeschoolers

North Carolina law defines a "home school" as "a nonpublic school consisting of the children of not more than two families or households, where the parents or legal guardians or members of either household determine the scope and sequence of academic instruction, provide academic instruction, and determine additional sources of academic instruction."

They may choose to operate their homeschool as one of two different types of "nonpublic" schools: (1) a qualified nonpublic school, or (2) a private religious school or a school of religious charter. The requirements are the same regardless of the type of homeschool.

We are not going to get into the requirements, because that is not the purpose of this article. What we want to discuss here is how NC libraries and Friends might help those who homeschool their children. What we all want is to ensure a superior standard of education.

Libraries may play a vital role in supporting homeschooled children by providing access to a vast array of educational resources, creating a sense of community, and fostering a love of lifelong learning.

Beyond resources, libraries may host workshops, classes, and events specifically designed to support homeschooling families.

This all starts with the library connecting with a homeschooled community—developing lists with contact information and email addresses. This begins with contacting and attending homeschool gatherings. Bring library information, calendars, resources, and SWAG. Once you create the database, it is important to keep it current. This is the library's life-line to that group. Consider a monthly newsletter with information and tips. Use surveys and questionnaires to better understand their needs. Partner with other organizations serving this group.



North Carolina Homeschool Law At a Glance

- › Options for Homeschooling: One
- › School Required for Ages: 7–16
- › Notification Required: Yes
- › Teacher Qualifications: Yes
- › State Mandated Subjects: No
- › Assessment requirements: Yes
- › Immunization requirements: Yes

[How to Comply with North Carolina's Homeschool Law](#)

Creating the Database

- **Start with a simple list:** Begin by keeping a list of emails or using a spreadsheet.
- **Consider database software:** For more robust databases, explore options like LibraryThing, Zotero, or specialized library software.
- **Utilize Google Forms:** Google Forms can standardize the entry of information and prevent errors if multiple people are managing the database.
- **Ensure data privacy:** It's important to comply with data privacy regulations and policies when collecting and storing patron information

Specific programs and offerings might include:

Host opportunities for homeschoolers: Consider hosting various opportunities specifically for the homeschooled population, such as:

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NC Libraries May Help Homeschoolers (Continued)

Weekly on-site Homeschool Hangouts

- Workshops, classes, and events designed for homeschooling families
- Free educational programs for students (art, coding, etc.)
- Supportive discussions and lectures for homeschooling parents

Provide designated spaces: Offer a quiet, focused space for homeschoolers to study. Consider a homeschool resource center with textbooks, learning materials, and equipment like laminators and microscopes.

Offer specialized borrowing privileges: Many libraries extend teacher borrowing privileges (increased borrowing limits, extended borrowing periods) to homeschooling parents and co-ops.

- **Provide access to educational databases and resources:** Libraries offer a wealth of digital resources like:
 - Scholastic Teachables: Worksheets, lesson plans, and other teaching resources
 - Online databases like Gale, Universal Class, Goodwill Career & Technical Academy, and Mango Languages
 - Homework help resources like Britannica Kids and National Geographic Kids
 - Ebooks and audiobooks through services

like Libby by OverDrive and Hoopla

- Online tutoring services like Brainfuse

Facilitate online collaboration: Libraries can facilitate online collaboration via Facebook groups for homeschool families.

Provide space for testing.

Friends—How you might help

Find out what services, if any, your library provides to homeschoolers. If there are none, you might initiate the conversation and offer to help make connections and build the database.

Review the information above and determine how your Friends might assist. For example, if one of your Friends is a retired teacher, they might have some ideas or something to offer. You might help find resources. You might purchase STEM or coding kits. You could provide refreshments for workshops or programs. You could assist them with awards or graduation ceremonies.

The most important thing is for all parties to develop a trusting, respectful, relationship. Understand the needs and constraints. Understand the requirements and rules.

There are many, many websites devoted to this topic—explore them.

This type of partnership has the potential to be both rewarding and impactful.



North Carolina Public Library News...by Karen Robbins

Yancey County Library, a member of the AMY (Avery Mitchell Yancey) regional library system, will be withdrawn from AMY and come under the control of Yancey County Commissioners as of July 1, 2025. "All current staff will be terminated and the commissioners' hand-picked replacements will be installed." AMY Regional Library is one of twelve regional libraries across North Carolina, and has operated as a regional system since 1961. ([Click here](#) to view)

The Yancey County Commissioners voted in a short meeting in June of 2023, in response to a Pride Month display, to take control of the library "to show no bias to any religious, political or ethnic platform with oversight from the Yancey County Board of Commissioners..." Before the Pride display, the commissioners were "mostly uninvolved" in the library system's operations. They began the library take-over by adding seats to the library board, and then appointed 7 new members, several of which had been complaining about the Pride display.

In June of 2023 the Burnsville Library had placed a display of LGBTQ books on a table, without banners or signs or other labels, in the adult section of the library, as they had for nearly ten years. Then they noticed something—books with LGBTQ themes or authors were missing from the shelves. This appeared to be part of Hide the Pride, checking out or mis-shelving books so others could not borrow them. Since then, librarian Wayne Edwards has been harassed, called names, vilified in his own town. Even though protests have been held to support the library, the county commissioners have not changed their plan nor have they defended the staff or asked for people to tone down their rhetoric.

Edwards, who will lose his job July 1, described the countless hours of work done by Burnsville library staff during the aftermath of Hurricane Helene last fall. He tells about individ-

uals who have found solace at the library, a welcoming place to help recover from unimaginable loss. Edwards said, "I never once asked somebody who walked through those library doors who they voted for, who they pray to or who they have at home that they love. Every patron interaction starts with a simple questions, 'How can I help you?' (Johnny Casey, "Yancey Residents plan lawsuit in response to July 1 library takeover by county over Pride display", Asheville Citizen Times, June 13, 2025.)

Because funding will be affected, the library will lose services that they depend on, including a children's librarian, a digital literacy librarian, and around \$98,000 in regional block funding. Instead of the current 5 dedicated staff members, and 6 regional support staff, there will be 3, hired by the commissioners.

According to Jessica Wakeman, a freelance reporter based in Asheville, "Changes may also be afoot at AMY's other branches. A new draft contract for Avery and Mitchell counties released in May would ban 'displays of a political nature or dealing with matters of current political events,' and 'culturally charged topics.' It would require library directors to 'ensure that member libraries are not seen as endorsing a viewpoint or lifestyle choice related to any such issues,' and grant local boards final approval over purchasing library materials."

Resident Landon Beaver helped organize a lawsuit on First Amendment grounds, to keep the commissioners from controlling the library for political purposes. The website cited above gives more information and details. The group hopes to set a precedent to protect other NC libraries across the state.

AI & Libraries by Cindy Shipley

Editor's note: Cindy is an FONCPL Board member. She retired from being in charge of the US Marine Corps libraries worldwide. Cindy will be writing a monthly column on this topic.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and impact on Library Services

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) assists us in our daily lives from driving instructions to ordering groceries. As historical institutions in providing information, libraries need to lead the way and embrace this technology and oversee the responsible use of AI by both patrons and library staff. The downside of AI can be disinformation and misinformation as well as privacy, security and ethical issues.

In future columns how AI can benefit both library patrons and staff as well as the challenges will be explored and expanded.

Below this line, the remaining content of this column was generated by ChatGPT in less than 10 seconds using the prompt "AI and the impact on library services". This demonstrates the power of this technology.

AI has a growing impact on library services, enhancing both the efficiency and the accessibility of services offered to patrons. Here are ways AI is transforming library services:

1. Improved Search and Recommendation Systems

- **Personalized Recommendations:** AI algorithms can suggest books, articles, or other resources based on a patron's reading history or preferences. These systems, like Netflix's recommendation engine, could help patrons discover new books or research materials that match their interests.

Enhanced Search Capabilities: AI-based search tools can better understand natural language queries and context, making it easier for

patrons to find information. Advanced AI tools can also help process metadata and suggest relevant resources even if users do not have specific keywords in mind.

2. Chatbots and Virtual Assistants

- **24/7 Support:** AI-powered chatbots or virtual assistants can provide round-the-clock help for patrons. They can answer frequently asked questions; help locate materials and even guide users through more complex library systems or databases.

Language Translation: AI can be used for real-time translation services, making libraries more inclusive for non-native speakers.

3. Automated Cataloging and Management

- **AI-Assisted Cataloging:** AI tools can automate the cataloging of new books and materials, which saves time and reduces the risk of human error. This allows library staff to focus on more personalized services.

Resource Allocation: AI can analyze usage patterns and help libraries optimize their collections. For example, it can suggest which books or resources are used frequently and which are underutilized, helping libraries make informed decisions about acquisitions and deaccessions.

4. Enhanced Accessibility

- **Text-to-Speech:** AI-driven text-to-speech tools help visually impaired patrons

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AI & Libraries by Cindy Shipley (continued)

by reading books or articles aloud to them. Some libraries are even offering AI-powered audiobook services.

Speech Recognition: Patrons with disabilities may use voice commands to search the catalog, ask questions, or even check out materials, making the library environment more accessible to a wider range of people.

5. Automation of Routine Tasks

- **Self-Checkouts and Returns:** AI-powered systems are increasingly being used for self-checkout and returns, reducing wait times and the need for human staff during off-peak hours.

Inventory Management: AI-based systems can help libraries keep track of inventory, reducing the chances of lost or misplaced books. Some libraries use AI to automate the process of finding books on the shelves, especially in larger collections.

6. Data-Driven Decision Making

- **Predictive Analytics:** AI tools can analyze patron behavior and trends to predict what materials or services will be in demand. This helps libraries plan better for future acquisitions, events, or educational programs.

Improved Programming: Libraries can use AI to analyze feedback and interaction patterns, helping them tailor programs and events to patrons' needs.

7. Virtual Libraries and Online Services

- **Digital Access:** AI can enable libraries to create virtual assistants for patrons accessing digital collections, providing better navigation and more precise recommendations.

Interactive E-Learning: AI can enhance the delivery of digital educational programs by personalizing learning experiences, helping patrons study, read, or learn more efficiently

through tailored resources.

8. Natural Language Processing (NLP) for Research

- **Improved Research Assistance:** AI can assist patrons with research by parsing large volumes of academic papers, articles, or databases, and providing summarized insights. AI-powered tools can highlight key passages, suggest citations, or even generate quick summaries.

Semantic Search: AI models can understand context and intent better than traditional keyword searches, helping patrons get more accurate results when looking for information on complex topics.

9. Improving Patron Engagement and Interaction

- **Predictive Services:** AI can identify trends in library usage, allowing libraries to predict when a patron might need a specific service or material (e.g., a new book by an author they read previously).

Event Planning: AI can also analyze social media activity, check-ins, or feedback to identify popular events, topics, or speakers that might engage the community, helping libraries plan relevant events or workshops.

10. Security and Safety

- **AI for Security:** Libraries may use AI for surveillance or security purposes to ensure the safety of patrons and materials, using facial recognition or anomaly detection to prevent theft and vandalism.

AI for Fraud Prevention: Some libraries are exploring AI solutions to prevent fraud, such as ensuring that patrons are

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AI & Libraries by Cindy Shipley (continued)

not illegally sharing accounts or accessing materials inappropriately.

11. Libraries as Information Hubs

Information Curation: As AI improves, libraries may become more proactive information curators, offering customized collections or knowledge databases for specific communities or needs, such as health, legal advice, or technology.

Potential Challenges and Considerations

- **Privacy Concerns:** With AI tracking patron preferences and behaviors, libraries need to be vigilant about data privacy and security, ensuring patrons' personal information is not misused.
- **Digital Divide:** As libraries implement AI-driven services, they must be aware that not all patrons may have access to the technology

or internet connections required to use these services.

Job Displacement: While AI automates certain tasks, it could also impact jobs traditionally done by library staff. Libraries need to balance automation with ensuring the human touch is retained where it matters.

In Summary:

AI is transforming the landscape of library services, making them more efficient, accessible, and personalized. However, it also requires careful management to ensure that AI technologies are used responsibly and equitably. As libraries continue to embrace AI, they have the opportunity to enhance their roles as centers of learning, research, and community engagement in the digital age.

Good Questions for FOLs Statewide by Karen Robbins

Judy Hills, past President of the Friends of the North Carolina Public Libraries has been following trends across the state for a long time. She writes:

"The truth is that censorship (a type of banning) takes place on many levels. It could involve what company the library sources its purchases from, to how and who decides on new purchases, to how and who decides to purge a book from the collection, to the process of challenging a book and requesting a removal from it collection, to how the removed books might be reinstated (is there even one?), to policies and procedures on how to request a book be added to the collection, to policies and procedures on where the book is placed, to policies and procedures about who can check it out, etc. Removing a book from a collection due to a challenge is a more direct way, but those others are more subtle.

"We need to consider all factors in this continuing discussion. The above questions are things that our Friends should be asking their libraries so they can better understand how things are done. Armed with that information, they are in a better position to argue for change, if needed."

Asking simple, apolitical questions of the library and the Board of Trustees, can help clarify the libraries preparedness for challenges that may occur. Using Judy's simple questions is a great tool for navigating the complexities of library policies that impact staff and patrons alike. If your Friends group has not been involved in discussions with the library staff or trustees about the policies in place to protect access to materials, books, and information, perhaps it is time to do so.

NC History Center in New Bern—Library Associations

Library Associations

During the colonial era, libraries remained the private domain of gentlemen like Governor Tryon, whose library in New Bern consisted of more than 400 volumes.

In the early days of the nation, wealthier citizens formed circulating libraries to provide cultural opportunities for paid subscribers. The New Bern Library Company, which opened in 1804, at first suffered from the reluctance of subscribers to pay their fees and return books, but soon became "the fashionable resort of all respectable people."

Later, philanthropic societies established circulating libraries for working people. In 1890, the King's Daughters, a ladies' society, started a modest subscription library as one of its first orders of business.

True public libraries with no fees did not appear until the early 1900s. Beaufort established a library in 1911. A year later, the New Bern Library Association assumed control of the King's Daughters' library. In 1936, the New Deal's WPA program helped create the New Bern Colored Library.




The Old Yacht Club became the first home of the New Bern Public Library in 1896.

Friends Tip:

Every time your Friends are approving budgets and expenditures, ask "Does this expense align with the purpose stated in our bylaws?" If it does not, you should deny the expenditure. If it does, when you send a check to the library or an organization, always include a letter that says that this is a grant and detail what the money is to be spent on.

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Library BILL of RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and **enlightenment of all people** of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information **presenting all points of view** on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should **challenge censorship** in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with **resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas**.
- V. **A person's right to use a library should not be denied** or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such **facilities available on an equitable basis**, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a **right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use**. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council, amended October 14, 1944, June 28, 1948, February 4, 1970, June 27, 1971, January 13, 1980, January 19, 1990, Institute of "95" reaffirmed January 12, 1996.


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Freedom to Read STATEMENT


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Freedom to Read STATEMENT

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension.

Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untuned voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended

discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

To read the full Freedom to Read Statement, visit ala.org/intellectualfreedom

Books Celebrating America for Kids



Books About Immigration for Adults





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Public Libraries**

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Contact Information

1190 18th Ave NE

Hickory, NC 28601

828.446.9472

826mechanic@gmail.com

<https://foncpl.org/>

CALENDAR

All material for the newsletter is due to editor **Judy Hills** by the 25th of each month.

Click here for the 2025 Calendar of National Events—use these to plan your activities.

FONCPL Board Zoom Meetings 10 AM on: 8/9, with annual meeting on 11/15.

Challenge Grant Applications due **9/15/25**.

Friend of the Year nominations due **9/30/25**.

Here are a few dates of note:

JULY

7/1 International Joke Day

7/2 World UFO Day

7/4 Independence Day

7/17 World Emoji Day

7/20 National Ice Cream Day

7/26 Uncle and Aunt Day

7/27 Parents' Day

AUGUST

8/1 Anniversary of the World Wide Web (1990)

8/4 Coast Guard Birthday

8/5 National Night out

8/7 National Lighthouse Day

8/7 Purple Heart Day

8/9 National Book Lovers Day

8/13 National Left-Handers Day

8/16 Tell a Joke Day

8/19 World Photography Day

8/21 Senior Citizens Day

8/22 National Tooth Fairy Day

8/26 Women's Equality Day

8/30 International bacon day

