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The South Carolina Library Association: A Brief History

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The South Carolina Library Association: A Brief History

Abstract

With images curated from the collections of the South Carolina State Library, Amanda Stone and Brent Appling provide a brief history of the South Carolina Library Association.

Keywords

South Carolina Library Association (SCLA), libraries, librarians, South Carolina



FEATURED ARTICLE

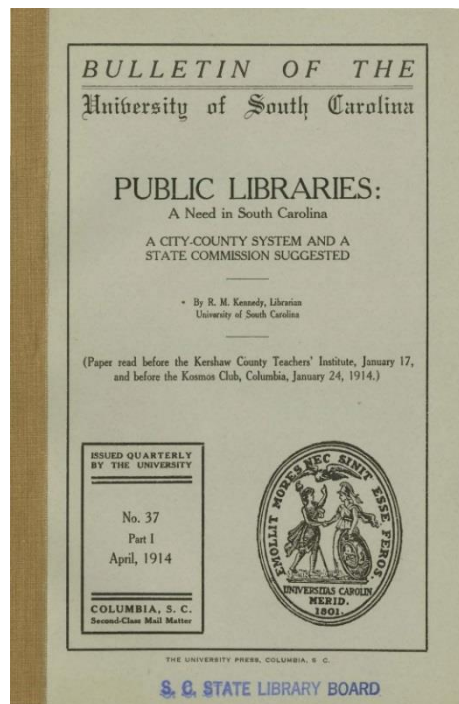
The South Carolina Library Association: A Brief History (Images curated by Amanda Stone)

by Brent Appling



Robert M. Kennedy, University of South Carolina Librarian, c. 1914

On January 17, 1914, encouraged by infrastructural promises made by new reform governor, Richard Manning, University of South Carolina Librarian and eventual inaugural president of the South Carolina Library Association, Robert M. Kennedy gave an inspired speech to the Kershaw County Teachers' Institute where he lambasted the present condition of South Carolina libraries. During the speech, Kennedy pointed out that at the time, only five towns in South Carolina had libraries that could be considered free, and that the state was only one of eleven that had no state-wide library commission. He then went on to call for the development of city-county library systems and a state commission, a call that essentially encouraged for the organization of a public library movement, (Hux, 1990). This movement opened the doors for state-wide library initiatives including the formation of the South Carolina Library Association.



Reprint of speech R.M. Kennedy gave on January 17, 1914 to Kershaw County Educators

On October 27, 1915, a group of fourteen librarians and library supporters from across the state met at the University of South Carolina in response to an open invitation Kennedy published in *The State* newspaper the previous day. The attendants unanimously voted to establish the South Carolina Library Association (SCLA) as an institution intended to "arouse and stimulate an interest in the building and development of libraries and to bring together those laboring for the cause that they might gain new strength and inspiration," (Rawlinson, 1948).

At the same meeting, the attendees also elected Kennedy to be the association's first president, a position he held through 1921, (Rawlinson, 1948, Hux, 1990).

LIBRARIANS MEET. TO FORM SOCIETY

State Body to Be Organized
Tomorrow.

PLACE IS FLINN HALL

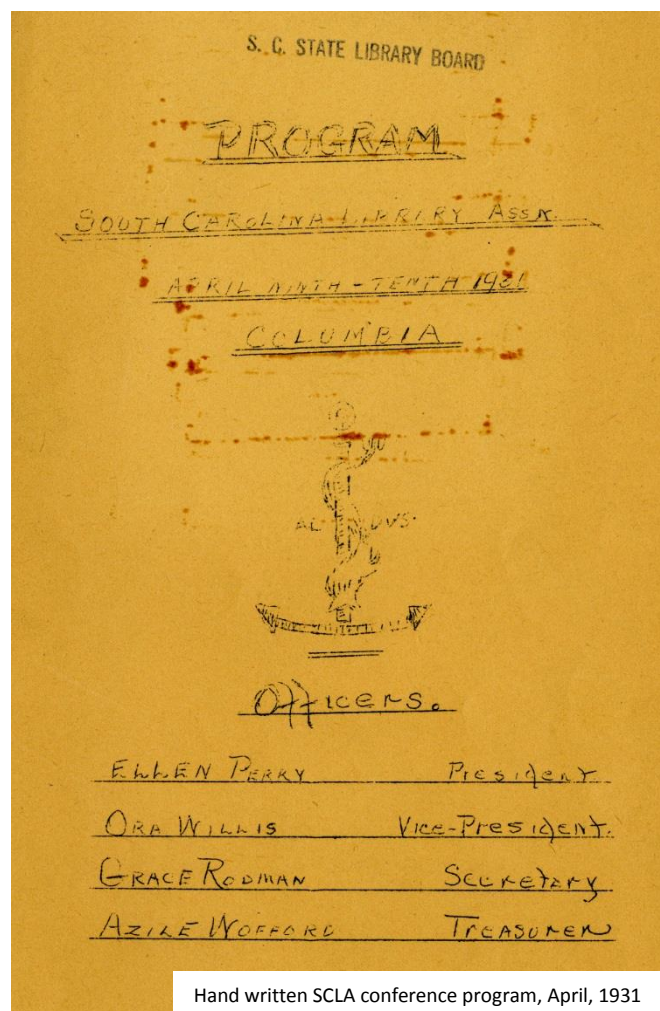
Presidents Currell, Riggs and
Johnson Have Given Project
Hearty Indorsement.

A State association of librarians
will be formed tomorrow at a meet-
ing to be held at 4 o'clock in Flinn
hall, University of South Carolina.
Not only are librarians asked to attend
this meeting, but an invitation is ex-
tended all persons of the State who
are interested in library work, all who
would encourage an organized move-
ment for the creation of new libraries,
the development of the old and the
advancement of this important phase
of educational work in general.

No credentials are necessary and no
further notice can be given in the
limited time; therefore all who believe
in the value of such an association
are asked to attend.

The State, Tuesday October 26, 1915

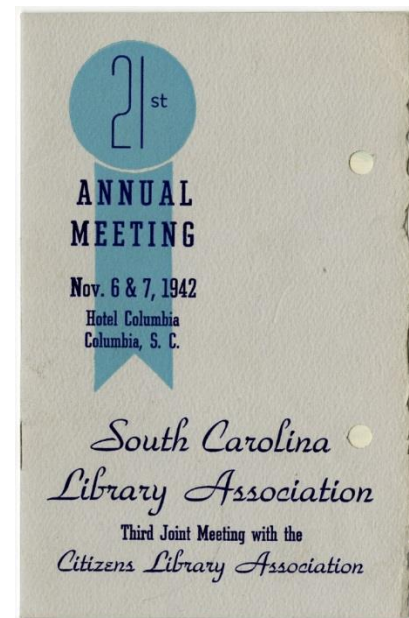
Though this new group's membership included academic librarians, archivists, museum curators, and representatives from subscription libraries, its primary focus was the creation and promotion of public libraries. This original cadre agreed with Andrew Carnegie that "free libraries are the best agencies for improving the masses of the people," (Hux, 1990).



Hand written SCLA conference program, April, 1931

Annual meetings of SCLA started sporadically, taking place just six times in the first 12 years of the association's existence. However, regular annual meetings have steadily occurred since 1927. By 1947, the attendance of these meetings had increased from the original 14 members to close to 200 attendees, (Rawlinson, 1948). Since then, annual conference attendance has gradually increased as the profession grows throughout the state, with conference attendance reaching 377 at the 2015 Centennial Conference.

SCLA's annual meetings have taken place in many cities throughout South Carolina, most frequently in Columbia, Greenville, and Charleston. Less frequently, the association has met in Myrtle Beach, Florence, Rock Hill, Beaufort, Darlington, and one meeting was held in Hilton Head in 1989. Three times the annual meeting has even taken place outside of South Carolina with the 1946 meeting being held in Asheville, North Carolina, the 1950 meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, and the 1981 meeting being held in Charlotte, North Carolina, (Hux, 1990).



Program for the SCLA conference on November 6-7, 1942 in Columbia

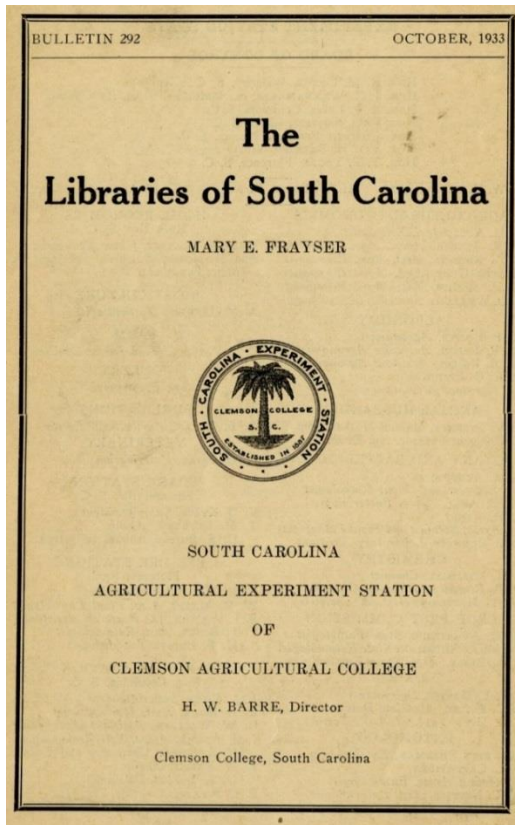
<u>HOTELS</u>	
<u>New Columbia</u>	
Near Library - Double Room with Bath	\$4.00 to \$5.00
<u>Marmac Hotel</u>	
Near Library - Single room with bath	\$2.00 to \$2.50
Double room with bath	\$3.50 to \$4.50
Single room without bath	\$1.50
Double room without bath	\$2.50
<u>Jefferson Hotel</u>	
Single room with bath	\$2.50 to \$3.00 (Single bed)
Double bed two in room	\$2.00
Double room with bath -	\$4.00 to \$4.50
Single room without bath	\$1.50 to \$2.00
Double room without bath	\$3.00

Hotel prices for the SCLA meeting on April 9-10, 1931 in Columbia

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6th	
1:00 P.M.	Registration Ballroom, Hotel Columbia
2:00 P.M.	General Session Greetings: Mr. Clark Brockman, Chairman of the Board, Richland County Public Library Address: Dr. Louis R. Wilson, Professor, University of North Carolina Library School
4:00 P.M.	Group Meetings: Public Libraries—Mrs. Grace R. Bailey, Chairman School Libraries—Mrs. Frances Lander Spain, Chairman College Libraries—Mrs. V. M. Salley, Chairman Citizens' Library Association—Miss Mary E. Frayser, Chairman
8:00 P.M.	Dinner Meeting. Hotel Columbia Address: Dr. Sylvester Green, President, Coker College, Hartsville, South Carolina

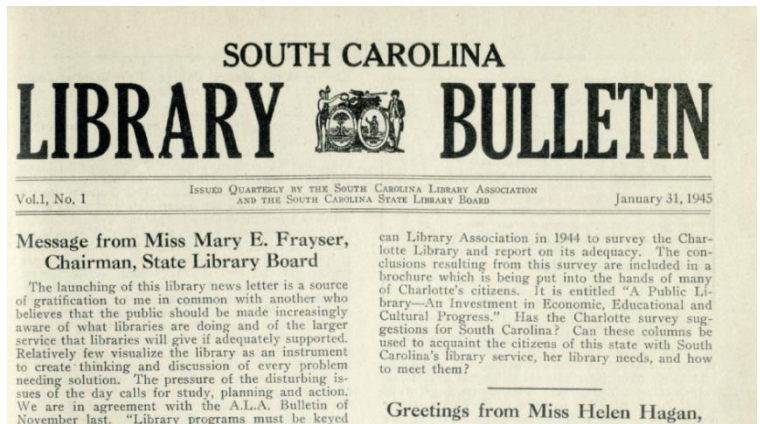


Luncheon for SCLA regional meeting, 1946



Mary Elizabeth Frayser, educator, home economist, social worker & club woman, wrote *The Libraries of South Carolina* as a bulletin for Clemson October, 1933

Beyond annual meetings, SCLA also incorporated regularly produced print publications as a form of interstate communication among professional librarians starting in 1933 with a bulletin on South Carolina Libraries, written by Mary Elizabeth Frayser. The endeavor was cemented further with the formal establishment of the *South Carolina Library Bulletin* in early 1945, the result of a collaboration between SCLA and the South Carolina State Library Board, (Hux, 1990). This publication was geared for communication of library issues and the promotion of library advocacy, such as urging state librarians to participate in the "Library Development Fund," a national campaign to convince the federal government to disseminate surplus Army books to rural libraries, (*South Carolina Library Bulletin*, 1945). This quarterly publication ran



First issue of the *South Carolina Library Bulletin*, Jan. 31 1945

for ten years until the endeavor broke away from the State Library Board, and SCLA decided to publish on its own, thus the establishment of the *South Carolina Librarian* in November of 1956.

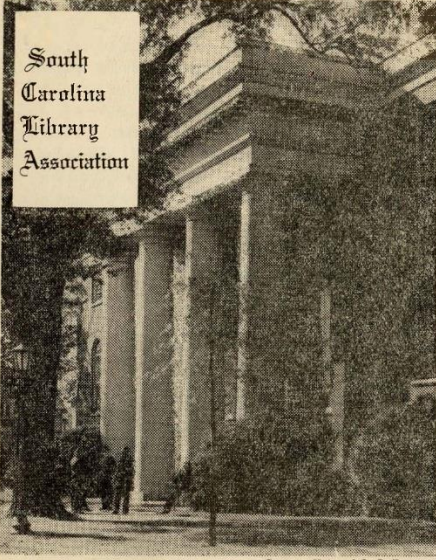
The *South Carolina Librarian*, under the initial editorship of Clemson's J.B. Howell, continued the work of the *South Carolina Library Bulletin* but also expanded the reporting of local and national meetings, as well as the inclusion of spotlight articles on specific libraries, such as the Fort Jackson Post Library. These issues also featured photographs, some taking up full pages, a feature that was not available in the *Library Bulletin*. An archive of both the *Bulletin* and the *Librarian* can be found on the [South Carolina Libraries Special Issues Archive page](#).



First issue of *South Carolina Librarian*, November 1956

Another goal in the early days of SCLA was to help with recruiting within the field of librarianship. Below are examples of press produced by SCLA in an attempt to educate and recruit citizens into the field.

Open Door to Library Careers



SOUTH CAROLINIANA LIBRARY

Courtesy Univ. of S. C. Press

What salaries can be expected

SALARIES ARE COMPARABLE with those in other fields that are similar in purpose and preparation. Beginning salaries vary according to location and types of libraries.

The American Library Association recommends that the minimum annual beginning salary for the lowest professional level library position should be not less than \$2,800. Salaries of chief librarians of larger libraries range from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

There is a serious shortage of professional librarians. New opportunities in library work have created a growing demand for librarians. It is estimated that 18,000 library school graduates will be needed in the next six years.

Information regarding employment opportunities may be obtained by writing to representatives of various types of library service such as The South Carolina State Library Board, 1207 Calhoun Street, Columbia, S. C.; and School Library Supervisor, State Department of Education, Columbia, S. C.

Open Door to Library Careers, 1949

SOUTH CAROLINA LIBRARIAN

Vol. 3, No. 1

RECRUITING FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

By AGNES L. REAGAN

(Editor's note: Practically every library administrator, library trustee, or even library patron has realized the need for trained librarians through whom library service may be both continued and improved. There is a need, also, for all who are interested in this problem to become well-acquainted with the background of the situation, the existing conditions, and the responsibility resting with each individual to contribute to its solution.)

In keeping with this line of thought, your Editors asked Miss Agnes Reagan, Associate Director of the Division of Librarianship at Emory University, Georgia, to contribute a paper for the *South Carolina Librarian* on the subject of recruiting. Miss Reagan has made an extensive study of recruiting in the field of librarianship and is well qualified to offer much needed and greatly appreciated ideas which should help us as librarians to draw promising young people into the career of Librarianship.)

In an article on recruiting for librarianship which is to appear in a journal read chiefly by librarians, considerable knowledge of the subject on the part of the readers can be taken for granted. These readers are aware, not only from all that has been written and said but often from direct experience as well, of the general dimensions of the present shortage of personnel in the library field. They are familiar, too, with the profession's activities to increase the supply of recruits—in fact, they themselves, individually, have in all likelihood been engaged in some kind of recruiting activity. This being the case, neither the shortage nor the steps being taken to alleviate it need reiteration here. Instead, it may be beneficial to review the experiences of several young people who have come recently to the field of librarianship and to consider these experiences as they relate to library recruitment.

For some little time now, students in the Division of Librarianship at Emory University have been asked certain questions concerning their choice of a library career. One student's experience was described as follows:

While at [a certain college] I believe I attended every vocational lecture offered—I heard talks on the glories of being a girl scout leader, and the joys of the social worker. But never did I hear a word about librarianship. Of all the jobs, professions, and occupations which I considered I never once came across librarianship.

Not long ago another student wrote:

... There seems to be some sort of popular opinion, at least among the younger people, which is unfavorable. I have had to take a great deal of ribbing about my choice of a profession.

I think that the reason a good many younger people never consider librarianship is that they just don't know anything about it—other than very obvious services such as circulation. Their idea of librarianship is based not on facts but on rumor and popular opinion.

A third student had this to say:

I've always enjoyed reading and liked the little library work that I have done. I had it in mind when I selected English as my major in college. However, without the fellowship that I received, I would never

have been able to attend this year. I also feel that each year I waited would decidedly lessen my chances of ever attending library school.

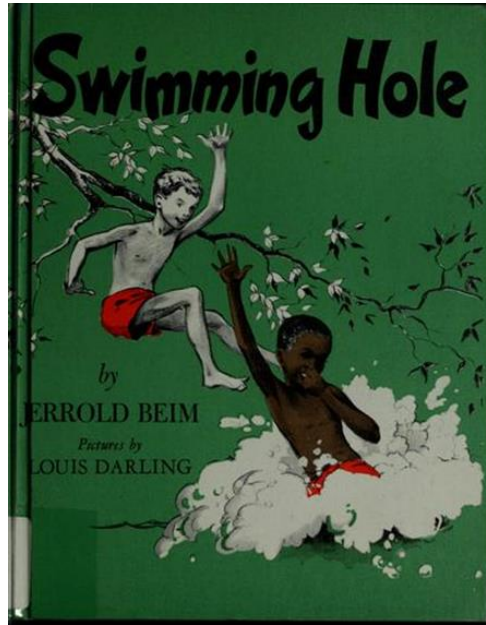
These three statements indicate clearly some of the difficulties encountered by the profession in recruiting. Simultaneously, they suggest three stages through which an individual may go in selecting librarianship as a career. Given a person with abilities, interests, and attitudes which mark him as a desirable prospect for the profession, it is first of all necessary, if he is to become a recruit, for him to be conscious of librarianship as a possible field of work. He cannot consider it unless he is aware of it. Once librarianship is brought to his attention, he must then, in order to consider it fairly, have full and reliable information about it. On no other basis can he make an intelligent decision regarding a library career. Finally, having decided that he wishes to become a librarian, he has still to obtain his professional education. For many prospective recruits, a consideration that may loom large is the financial problem posed by this final step.

We have no way of knowing how many potential librarians are lost to the profession because they never reach the stage at which an individual becomes aware of librarianship as a career. We do know, however, that librarians as a group make their vocational choice later than do members of a good many professions. As a matter of fact, research studies show that as many as half of the individuals who decide upon librarianship make this decision sometime after graduation from college. Among these librarians are ones who will say, when questioned, that the idea of a library career never occurred to them either in high school or in college. They had used libraries and they had seen people working in libraries, but this experience in itself had not made them think of librarianship as a profession in the sense that they might think of medicine or teaching or nursing or law. Occasionally, one of these librarians will go on to say that if the library field had been brought to his attention sooner, he would in all probability have been a librarian sooner. Be that as it may, such cases suggest that among the individuals who do not become librarians there must be some who do not for the simple reason that they are never cognizant of librarianship as a career.

As soon as a prospective recruit realizes that there is such a profession and begins to think of it as a possible career, he has entered the second stage referred to above. At such time his reaction can hardly fail to be conditioned by the information on librarianship then available to him, and by his previous impressions of libraries and librarians, no matter whether these were gained first-hand or from portrayals in literature, film, or other media. Again, we do not know the number for potential librarians lost during this second stage because of a limited or distorted view of the profession. Studies show, however, that, on the whole, young people are disinclined to commit themselves to a library career. These studies indicate further that, by and large, high school and college students have little conception of the nature and diversity of the work performed in libraries. Moreover, the inclination of students to "type" librarians suggests unawareness of the fact that the library field requires individuals with varied backgrounds, interests, and personalities. Thus, it seems reasonable to

In concert with communicating library related information and recruiting for the profession, SCLA has historically been dedicated to addressing a plethora of issues. These include broad issues such as censorship, integration, and advocacy for federal library funding and more localized issues such as professional development.

In 1956, SCLA was faced with an issue that intersected race and censorship when it was revealed that the State Library Board had distributed a book called *The Swimming Hole* by Jerrold Beim, which featured cover art that depicted an African-American child and a white child swimming together. When the State Legislature called for the Board to remove all books "antagonistic and inimical to the state's customs and traditions," SCLA countered with resolutions in support of the Board's decision to circulate the book as part of its state aid books. SCLA's president and vice-president at the time, Robert Tucker of Furman University and

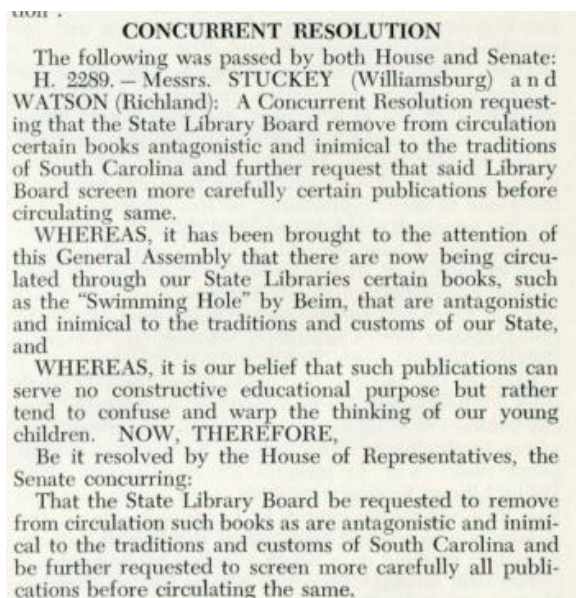


Charles Stow of the Greenville County Library, respectively, each testified in favor of the Board. Despite the support of SCLA though the issue was laid to rest when the Board decided to remove the Beim book from its collection, (Hux, 1990).

In the early 1960s, SCLA weighed in on the issue of racial integration. Noticing the fact there were no African-American members as of early 1961, ALA asked SCLA what its formal stance

was in relation to African-American membership. According to the President's Report of 1961, Nancy Jane Day confirmed that membership would be granted to "any interested person who paid dues." This declaration allowed for the first African-American members to attend the 1962 annual convention Greenville. Despite the Association's willingness to integrate, segregation laws at the time proved to be a problem. African-American attendees were not permitted to stay in Greenville's Jack Tar Poinsett Hotel where the conference was held, and were instead required to stay at the Ghana Motel. Conference organizers also struggled with hotel rules that forbid African-American presence at meetings where food was served, (Hux, 1990). The restrictive nature of southern segregation doubtlessly stalled the full integration of SCLA until after public segregation was made illegal by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In regards to library advocacy, SCLA has proven exemplary on several occasions. In addition to the original mission of the Association, an early example of dedicated advocacy was shown through SCLA's response to the Nixon



South Carolina Librarian, November, 1958

administration's attempt to cut grant funding for the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) during the early 1970s, (*Congressional Quarterly*, 1973). When the Act, originally put into effect in 1956, was under threat of de-funding, members of SCLA provided correspondence through its ALA councilor and the even more active Federal Relations Committee. They wrote letters to these entities in support of the LSCA and regularly attended the ALA Legislative day each year in Washington, D.C. (Hux, 1990). Another way South Carolina librarians have supported library advocacy is with their involvement in National Library Week. One prime example of this involvement came in April of 1991 when the South Carolina State Library sponsored a "Read-In" that featured a procession that started on the State House steps and a poetry reading from Augusta Baker.

As previously stated, SCLA has organized annual meetings on a regular basis in 1927. In addition to the more professional activities, these conferences also provide venues for milestone celebrations. These celebrations have often been marked by some remarkable cake designs, as evidenced by the following photos.



Fiftieth anniversary celebration of SCLA at 1965 convention in Greenville. Cutting the cake is President Susie McKeown with Vice President Josephine Crouch looking on. (Photo courtesy of Francis Marion College)

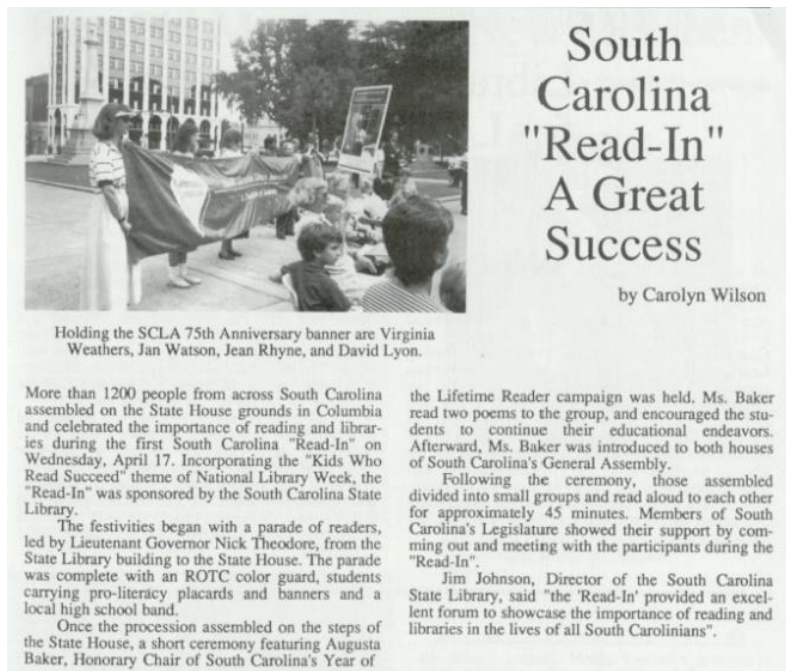
50th anniversary celebration at conference in Greenville, 1965



90th anniversary celebration at conference in Columbia, 2005



100th anniversary celebration at conference in Columbia, 2015



April 17, 1991 SCLA banner at the first Read-In

Another fun aspect of SCLA's annual conferences have included a number of celebrity involvements. As early as the Greenville conference in 1940, SCLA has been visited or acknowledged by well-known names in many different fields including poets, astronauts, and even professional wrestlers. At the 1940 conference in Greenville, the then Librarian of Congress and Pulitzer Prize winning poet and playwright Archibald MacLeish gave a speech that encouraged attendees to actively participate in educating Americans on the importance of democracy, a speech that was likely received enthusiastically in light of the war presently raging in Western Europe, (Hux, 1990).



Archibald MacLeish, courtesy of the Library of Congress

SCLA has also been visited by astronaut Charles Bolden in 1990, and was fortunate enough to secure keynote speeches from South Carolina poet laureates Ed Madden, 2014, and Marjory Wentworth, 2015.



Astronaut Charles Bolden at SCLA, October 1990 presenting Outstanding Librarian Award to Louise S. McAulay, Director of the Marion County Library.

One of the bigger surprises for attendees at the 100th SCLA conference this past October were the celebrity cameos included in the SCLA 100th Anniversary Montage video that was shown at the Opening Keynote Address. The video can be found at the 2015 Conference [webpage](#), and features cameos from celebrities like wrestling legend Ric Flair! Be sure to check out the link to see some amazing 100th birthday wishes.



Ric Flair, <http://scla.org/content/scla-conference-2015>

The South Carolina Library Association has done excellent work since its founding in 1915. Whether it be advocating for government support of libraries, supporting professional development for librarians throughout the state, or tackling complicated social issues, SCLA has excelled in all of its endeavors. Here's to another hundred years of SCLA!

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