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## Quincy Pugh retiring after 42 years working in public libraries

Lisa Gieskes  
*Richland Library*

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## Quincy Pugh retiring after 42 years working in public libraries

### Abstract

Quincy Pugh, Film & Sound Manager of Richland Library, has announced that he is stepping down this summer. Pugh is Richland Library's first film and sound librarian and he shares his vision for libraries.

### Keywords

librarian, libraries, Quincy Pugh, SCLA, public service, retirement, community, leadership



# NEWS FROM AROUND SCLA

## Quincy Pugh retiring after 42 years working in public libraries

Reporting by Lisa Gieskes

*How /when did you become a librarian?*

I was lucky in that my local library partnered with the college I attended and provided some part-time work study positions so I started at the Augusta (GA) Public Library as a student assistant in the Circulation Department in 1976. While completing my degree in Studio Art, I took a full-time position as a library assistant in the Adult Services Department. Upon completing my degree in 1982, I was promoted to a paraprofessional librarian position. I loved my job and had some great mentors who encouraged me to pursue library school. I enrolled at USC SLIS in January 1988 and completed my degree in December of that year. I was fortunate to land a job offer with Richland Library before getting my degree in hand and started my first job there as a "professional" librarian in January 1989.

I was always impressed by Richland Library's collection and had often interlibrary loaned books for patrons at the Augusta Library. Although I had no intentions of staying in South Carolina, I was happy in the fact that Richland Library was a growing system with a dynamic director. It also didn't hurt that this job involved music, film and art and would allow me to be in close proximity to my family.

*How and why did you become involved with SCLA?*

I've always believed in the importance of service and giving back to one's community so becoming involved with SCLA was important to



Photo by Lisa Gieskes

me. I was lucky to hold several positions in the organization and hope that I contributed to our profession through this service. I also thought it was very important for me to represent African American males in this profession by being active. There are few of us in this field as a whole and only a handful in this state; I believe we all share a sense of responsibility as leaders. I was also the recipient of a small scholarship from an even smaller library association so I knew such organizations did great things and wanted to be part of the effort.

*What has been the most rewarding aspect of your career/work?*

There are far too many rewarding aspects to mention just one. I can only hope that I have positively contributed to my community and to our humanity.

*Do you have any regrets about your career choice?*

No. I will always think of myself as an artist first and foremost. I think that was what I was ordained to be. Even though I don't practice my craft professionally, I use my creativity in all that I do, even as a librarian. I have always known where to derive my satisfaction and have been lucky to have positions that allowed me to use my creative abilities. It's important to know who you are before you can live your passion. I also think that I followed the right path in becoming a librarian in that I've found my work very rewarding and it allowed me to meet and work with various artists, musicians, writers, actors and other kindred spirits.

I've been lucky enough to work with many gifted librarians. This is their mission in life. I often think of them as super librarians. You will know them when you meet them and know that they are living their authentic lives. They can be found in every level of library work.

*What advice do you have for librarians in the workforce?*

It's not that serious! Pick your battles carefully! Sometimes there may only be room for one super librarian. Seek the positive and always make your health and well-being top priority. If you are not happy in your position, maybe it's time to consider other options. This does not mean you can't be happy in your profession. I understand that it's not easy for many of us to move on and it's easier said than done. If that's your case, make sure you have someone you can trust and go to in order to vent.

*What developments would you like to see in libraries?*

In lieu of the fact that libraries have really been going through a paradigm shift in the last 10 years or so, that's really an interesting question. Because of digitalization, physical collections aren't as important as they were upon starting

my career. When I used to do exhibits years ago without a dedicated budget to support the efforts, I would often debate with myself if it was a service we should provide. I was quite passionate about the work and wanted it done right. Today, libraries are much more supportive of these type ventures and may even support customers in making their own artwork. We provide studio spaces, career building, social work services, collaborative spaces, etc. Libraries are in the position to do great things when properly funded so long as they continue to evolve and support the needs of our diverse communities.

*Any last words?*

I've noticed that whenever someone ask my occupation, I have to repeat it a few times. It's not that I speak it softly or muffle my words, it just doesn't register with them that a black man "like me" is a librarian. They have a stereotypical view of a librarian and must be sure they heard correctly. We must get beyond our stereotypical views of librarians and libraries. I'm proud to have been part of our transition and hope to see more leadership opportunities for black men in the field and libraries that defy the expected.

*Lisa Gieskes, Librarian, Film & Sound, Richland Library*