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**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- News About the Dacus Library and Archives
- News About New Friends Life Members

**IN THIS  
ISSUE:**

- Woebegone! 1
- Woebegone Cont'd and New Life Members 2
- The Dacus Library of Winthrop University 2

## WOEBEGONE! ... Mark Y. Herring

Doomsayers get all the headlines. It's hardly surprising when you think about it. "World Ends Tomorrow!" is certainly catchier than "World Continues for Yet Another Day." For about a decade, doomsayers, or scryers if you prefer the more positive term, have been calling for the end of libraries. That, too, is easy to see why.

Library funding is costly, and in today's frugal-minded world, that is by itself an enormous problem. Add to that the vast ignorance about what libraries are and what librarians do, and you have a recipe for a failed, inedible cake, so to say. Moreover, the evidence is mounting in places like Europe that the proverbial handwriting is on the wall, at least for the public libraries there. More have closed in the last five years than have closed in the last fifty.

Certainly the pressures of end-of-libraries-doomsaying are everywhere. Smartphones are, disconcertingly, ubiquitous. They ring incessantly, maddeningly, no matter where you are: movies, plays, worship, the classroom, the bathroom, and very probably the bedroom. Like gum on the shoe, they are hard to get rid of, even when you try. E-books are gaining ground, though the majority of the public still prefers print

books, and everyone still thinks everything is on the Internet. The Internet of Things—that vast project to make everything barcode responsive—is the talk of many towns.

Media muckety-mucks call libraries "vanity projects," while some college administrators have called on them to be blown up (but in a figurative, not a literal way, so, whew!). Still others are scratching their heads about just how much longer we can keep libraries.

So, can we?

I think we can, for another generation anyway, and while I feel like taking coals to Newcastle, here are three reasons why: people, places, and things.

*People:* Libraries are nothing without the people who run them, no matter how self-serving that may sound. Without the library staff, they are warehouses with books arranged in a curious and, to some anyway, inscrutable way. But the people who run them can guide you to whatever it is you may need. If the last election taught us anything, it taught us that the Internet can get us in trouble in many different and inexplicable ways. While fake news sites intentionally tried to mislead

on both sides of the aisle, candidates of every stripe discovered that the "delete" button doesn't really work. It turns out that what you say (or do) in cyberspace can come back to haunt you, and all who know you. Library staffs, on the other hand, still serve up service for all that you want and in many cases all that you didn't know you need but turns out you do. We protect your privacy, show you the where to find the what, and even more than that, help you understand what it is you've found.

*Places:* Whatever one can say about the advantages of the web and surfing in your pajamas or even, let's be honest, au naturel, libraries provide convenient collaborative spaces for finding those who are like-minded and those who are not. They are places for reading, reflection, study, and creating. For having your ideas championed, and having them challenged. Sure, you can do that in Starbucks but here it's free, and most libraries also have coffee. Many of them are also open longer. And most of them have such a feel and look of elegance and class that you often don't want to leave them even when you have to.

*Things:* Libraries also have things, and I use the word purposely. At one time, I might have written books. But while

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**The Dacus Library of Winthrop University** was constructed in 1969 and named for the school's first librarian Ida Jane Dacus, who served from 1900 to 1945 and was also the first person in South Carolina to receive professional training in library studies. Today the facility houses over 500,000 volumes and provides extensive online resources to support the educational and research needs of the Winthrop academic community.



## **WOEBEGONE ESSAY CONT'D AND NEW LIFE MEMBERS**

### **CONT'D from pg. 1**

libraries have books, they also have journals, fitdesks, group study rooms, individual study rooms, maker spaces, and so much more. But don't race by books and materials. Not even Midas can afford to house all that a medium-sized library like Dacus can provide. It's true that libraries must become more creative in reducing the cost of scholarly communication. That process is already underway with open access, but until that is complete, no other place, not even the Internet, can provide you with *reliable*, scholarly information in abundance.

People, places, things. Three very good reasons for libraries to exist and to continue to thrive. In our headlong rush to get rid of the bathwater, let's take a little more time to remember the baby. In our damn-the-torpedoes-full-steam-ahead rush to change, let's remember to preserve what is timeless and necessary.

Yes, in some ways, libraries are quaint, aging, and hopelessly traditional. But so is the democracy that vouchsafed them, along with so many other facets of our American heritage.

### **OUR NEWEST LIFE MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS**

On October 3 new Life Members of the Friends of Dacus Library were recognized at the annual meeting at Tuttle Dining Room, McBryde Hall.

The honorees included **Sandra White** and her husband **J. Spratt**. Sandra received both her B.A. and M.A.T. degrees in English from Winthrop. Spratt, a retired attorney, received his degrees from Wofford and the University of South Carolina. Sandra taught middle and high school English for a number of years in various school systems and at York Technical College. She also served as a member and chair of the York County Library Board of Trustees and was a member

of the first Friends of Dacus Library Board. She was elected at the October meeting to her third full term serving on the Friends of Dacus Library Board. In 2008 she and her husband established the **J. Spratt and Sandra Hagler White endowment** at Winthrop to provide scholarships for English majors and to help pay for students and faculty members to travel to conferences, lectures, and seminars.

Also recognized was Dr. **Ronnie W. Faulkner**, Head of Content Services and Professor at the Dacus Library. A librarian holding degrees from Campbell University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and USC-Columbia, Faulkner has been the secretary-treasurer for the Friends group for the last 6 years and is editor of the *Friends of Dacus Library Newsletter*. He has been a librarian for 37 years and has been involved in fundraising for Dacus Library. He is also the secretary of the Rotary Club of Rock Hill. For him, supporting libraries is both a vocation and a passion.