

[Back to previous page](#)



document 1 of 1

RCC yearbooks available online through NC Digital Heritage Center

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Abstract

RCC's yearbooks from 1974 to 1986 have recently been made digital and are now available at www.DigitalNC.org as part of a project of the N.C. Digital Heritage Center, which is housed in the North Carolina Collection at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. According to Graham, even some of North Carolina's local celebrities can be seen in their younger years through DigitalNC.

Full Text

Aug. 24--There's a new digitizing project that is bringing the past back to life for some Richmond Community College graduates.

RCC's yearbooks from 1974 to 1986 have recently been made digital and are now available at www.DigitalNC.org as part of a project of the N.C. Digital Heritage Center, which is housed in the North Carolina Collection at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**.

The project was coordinated by Nick Graham of Chapel Hill.

"The yearbook project is part of a larger program called the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center -- a statewide digital library program set up by the state library of North Carolina at Chapel Hill," Graham said. "The center works with organizations around the state who have materials they're interested in sharing by digitizing and hosting materials online.

"We started digital yearbooks because we knew these were popular materials. Nearly every college library had them in their collection. For the most part they weren't available online so we wanted to make them available to people across the state," said Graham.

RCC Dean of Learning Resources Carolyn Bittle learned of the project and was excited to include RCC's history in the mix.

"I'm interested in genealogy and I've searched many websites," Bittle said. "I found the Digital Heritage Center one day and started looking through it ... We put the idea in the background because we had all these yearbooks but not enough staff to get them together."

Bittle said she began to watch the site more closely, and saw how quickly new schools were being added.

This summer, RCC decided to jump on board with the digital yearbook project.

"Whatever yearbooks we had stored, we gathered them and put them in order by year and shipped them to Chapel Hill," said Bittle. "They took it over from there."

Bittle said she wasn't sure if word had spread about the online yearbooks, but she is hopeful that the trend will catch on.

"It's definitely something we're excited about," Bittle said. "We managed to keep three complete sets and send them to the digital center as a way to preserve them for later on. We're hoping that former students will have a chance to look at them."

More than 50 universities, colleges, and community colleges have participated in the project so far.

"I think it draws, not necessarily a different audience, but a broader one," Graham said about the digital yearbooks. "There's no replacement for looking at an original one, but it's easier this way. By putting them online, it makes it easier for people to access. We've heard from people using the digital yearbooks all over the country who are finding their family members or people they know and are enjoying having such easy access to them."

According to Graham, even some of North Carolina's local celebrities can be seen in their younger years through DigitalNC.

"On the page, we have a link to our Flickr site where you can view yearbooks of notable North Carolinians," Graham said. "We found Andy Griffith, we found a great photo of David Sedaris while he was at Western Carolina. We found Emmylou Harris and a really young Jesse Helms. We also found the famous comedian Lewis Black."

Although RCC has not produced a yearbook in just under 30 years, RCC Director of Recruiting Jennipher Love said she wished it was something the school could produce again.

Love, who is recorded in more than one volume of the digital yearbooks, was both a student and current employee of the college.

"I was a student from '70 to '73," Love said. "Our first yearbook was in 1970. I was on the yearbook staff that year and my picture is in there as SGA Treasurer. I went back to work there in 1980. From '80 to '85 or '86, we had a yearbook and I was the yearbook advisor."

Love said she believed yearbook production was discontinued due to its expense, but that she liked the idea of continuing the tradition -- both in hard copy and online.

"I think it's great that everybody will have access to it," she said. "My only regret is that we haven't had a yearbook since 1985, because it was always neat to be able to go back and look at students. I would think that if we could go to a digital yearbook, that would definitely make it more accessible and people would be more involved."

Gail Riley, a librarian at RCC, said she has heard a few good reactions about DigitalNC.

"People have said it's really neat," Riley said. "This is our history and it's very, very important. If we don't do something like this, we'll be forgotten. People put forth a lot of effort to come back to school and get a degree. They need to have their picture put up so people will know how hard they worked."

To explore the digitized yearbook project, simply visit www.DigitalNC.org and click on Yearbooks.

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