

D. Paul Sommerville, Vice Chairman  
September 29, 2010  
Beaufort District Collection – Ribbon Cutting

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Council Chairman Weston Newton asked me to express his regret at being unable to participate in this important event for Beaufort County today and he asked me to offer his sincere congratulations. It is my privilege to represent your County Council in his stead and share this exciting moment with you.

At a time when we face the challenges of serious fiscal limitations, it is heartening to see a worthy public service strengthened, improved and protected. I realize this project has been planned for years – before the economic downturn, however it gives me hope for the future of our valued public institutions. Libraries make a tremendous impact in the lives of a community — nowhere is this more true than in Beaufort County. In addition, the Beaufort County Library System serves as the steward of our local history. You may not know that Beaufort County is a “burned county” and our documented history is scattered and sadly often unavailable. The purpose of the Beaufort District Collection is to acquire, preserve, maintain and make accessible a research collection of permanent value to record our history and to better protect it. That is why the BDC was moved to this new location which has improved climate control and several other protective features.

This project took a lot of commitment and hard work on the part of the County library administration and staff. It could not have been accomplished without the dedication of the library Board of Trustees and the generosity of both the Friends of the Beaufort Branch Library, the Public Library Foundation of Beaufort County, the Clover Club of Beaufort and some charitable individuals. A special thanks should also go to Grace Cordial, BDC Historic Resources Coordinator for her continued dedication and to Hillary Smith Barnwell, past Assistant Director of the Library System. Hillary spent more than 20 years working to protect our historic collections at the library; when she passed away in 2008 from cancer, she had not yet come to see this achievement that had been so long awaited. Her own accomplished history is now part of this institution just as those who have come together to support the Beaufort District Collection and given their time, their talent and their treasure to this project. Thank you to everyone of you who has done such good work for the citizens of Beaufort County.

Whether you were born and raised in Beaufort County as I was -- or whether you have adopted Beaufort County as your home -- I am sure you all agree that protecting our local history is crucial to the identity of our shared community. By preserving our past we help ensure the future for generations to come.

I love the idea that my children will be able to visit here and read the words of their grandfathers and grandmothers. This will help affirm in them a sense of place that empowers, inspires and creates pride and awareness of our important position in American culture.

I encourage all of our citizens to visit this important new resource, to know our wonderful local history and to discover some of the amazing Beaufortonians who have come before us. Perhaps in years to come, someone will discover what we celebrated here today. Thank you for being part of our history.

And now, let the ribbon cutting ceremony begin.