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Georgia Librarians at ALA 2019: Reports from the Field

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Laurie Aycock, Jina DuVernay, Marlee Givens, Catherine Mancini, Stephen Michaels, Emily Rogers, Sofia A. Slutskaya, and Virginia Feher

Georgia Librarians at ALA 2019: Reports from the Field

By Laurie Aycock, Jina DuVernay, Marlee Givens, Catherine Mancini, Stephen Michaels, Emily Rogers, and Sofia Slutskaya; compiled by Virginia Feher

From June 20–25, 2019, librarians descended on Washington, DC for the American Library Association’s (ALA) Annual Conference & Exhibition. Featured speakers included Jason Reynolds, Sonia Sotomayor, Hoda Kotb, Carla Hayden, George Takei, Mo Rocca, and more. Numerous Georgia librarians attended and presented at the conference. Following are reports from some of these Georgia librarians and Georgia Library Association members:

Laurie Aycock

*Interim Director of Collection Development and Librarian Assistant Professor
Kennesaw State University*

The 2019 ALA Conference was another great conference that included a whirlwind of activities, sessions, speakers, and free books!

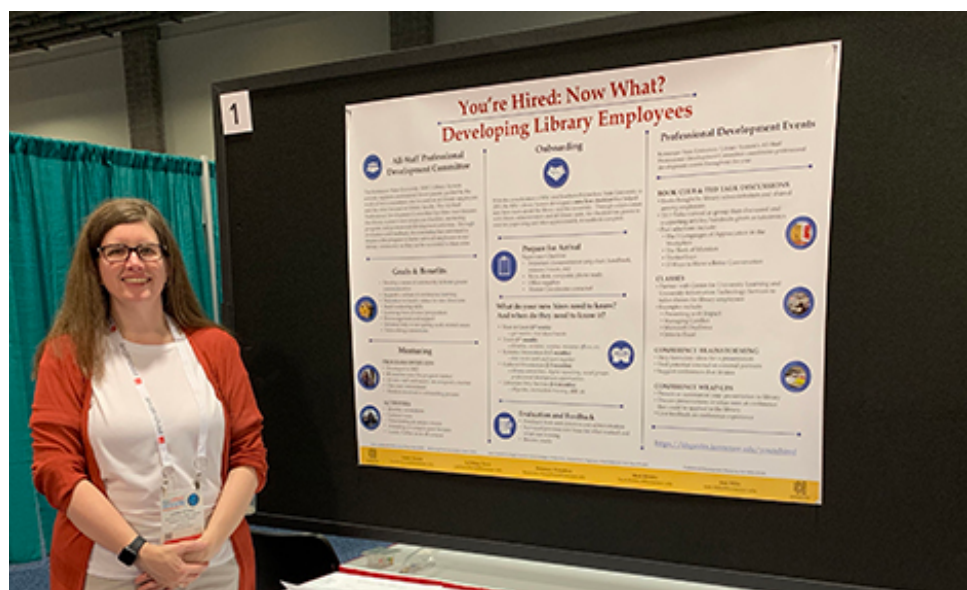
I presented a poster session entitled [“You’re Hired, Now What? Developing Library Employees.”](#) The poster, created along with my colleagues LaTiffany Davis, Rosemary Humphrey, Mark Kirkley, and Ann Mills, showcased the onboarding and mentoring programs we have for new employees at the Kennesaw State University (KSU) Library System. It also highlighted events that our All-Staff Professional Development team coordinates for all library employees.

I’m a member of the ALA Government

Documents Round Table (GODORT) Awards Committee. At the GODORT Awards Reception, I presented the W. David Rozkuszka Scholarship, which provides financial assistance to library school students currently working with government documents in a library. It was so fulfilling to have the opportunity to present this scholarship to the winners this year since I’m a previous recipient.



The exhibit hall was a massive hub of activity—including vendors, author talks, cooking demonstrations, mini concerts, and live podcast recordings. I attended two author panels. One featured authors who contributed stories to the anthology *The Hero Next Door, Stories of Courage and Compassion*. The other panel was



“Fierce! Why We Can’t Get Enough Empowering Female Characters in YA.” I talked to two authors at their book signing and found out they are from Atlanta and have a book club in Decatur. What a small world!

On the last full day of the conference, I attended the Stonewall Book Awards and the Odyssey Book Awards ceremonies. I enjoyed hearing the authors read from their work and talk about their inspiration behind the stories. Kacen Callendar, author of the award winner *Hurricane Child*, spoke about how they had considered suicide as a teenager. However, at the time, the last book in the Harry Potter series hadn’t yet been published. Kacen said they decided they couldn’t go without knowing how the story ended so decided they had to stay. This story was an important reminder to me of the power of books and how important libraries and librarians are in making those stories available to readers.

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Jina DuVernay

*Visiting Archivist for African American Collections, Rose Library
Emory University*

The ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC was time well spent. The location of the conference was attractive as there are many things to do in the city when one is not conferencing. Also, the weather was great each day of the conference and did not hinder traveling by foot, which was nice. Overall, I deem the conference as being successful. Personally, it was productive, educational, and fun.

As a part of the 2019 Emerging Leaders (EL) cohort, I, along with the other 49 EL members, attended the last group session on the first day of the conference. Later that afternoon, my team and I presented a poster to a curious and supportive crowd. Honestly, the number of people who came into the EL poster session room surprised me. There were so many people interested in the work that the entire cohort



Emerging Leaders Project Team H with their poster: Catherine Mancini, Mimosa Shaw, Jina DuVernay, Lorisia MacLeod, Robbin Degeratu, and Amber Loveless

did, and it made us all feel comfortable and welcomed. After our poster presentation, we also presented a full report to the Learning Round Table, the group that proposed the project that we worked on, which was well received. So my EL experience was successful.

I also co-presented a poster entitled, "Start a Book Festival in Your Community!" This poster was based on an annual book festival that I volunteered to work on, located in Montgomery, Alabama. A colleague and I spent three consecutive months leading a book discussion for high school students that culminated with the students having the opportunity to meet the author of the book on the day of the festival.

Aside from presenting, I attended some very enlightening and engaging panel sessions such as "Difficult Discussions: Diversity in Digital Collections and Archives" presented by Alex Gil, Amardeep Singh, and Sylvia A. Fernandez. I also very much enjoyed hearing the presentations of Kim McNeil-Capers, Ralph McDaniels, and Ian Lewis during the "Hip Hop Programs, Strategies, & Archiving for Hip Hop Generations" panel session.

I not only enjoyed the beneficial panel sessions and posters but I also enjoyed the book signings and the bit of free time that I had to visit the Library of Congress and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The conference allowed me to spend valuable time with colleagues as well as network and meet new people. I left Washington DC feeling accomplished and rejuvenated.

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Catherine Mancini
Public Programming Librarian
Georgia Tech

The Georgia Library Association made it possible for me to attend the ALA Annual Conference this year because of their generous

scholarship for me as an Emerging Leader. This was my first time attending an ALA Annual Conference, and I felt lucky to have the guidance of the Emerging Leaders program. At the ALA Midwinter conference my Emerging Leaders group was assigned a project by the Learning Round Table to compile resources around equity, diversity, and inclusion for staff development. It was great to get to meet up with my group in Washington, DC after working on this project for several months. Another perk of my group was meeting fellow Georgia librarian Jina DuVernay, who happened to be in my Emerging Leaders group.

At the Annual Conference this year, all of the Emerging Leaders attended group sessions about the structure and governance of ALA, avoiding burnout in leadership positions, social justice in leadership, and reflective activities about our time working together on our projects. The Emerging Leaders program culminated in a final poster session on Friday of the conference, which was a very well attended event. Finally, we presented our work to the Learning Round Table (LRT), and I am now serving on a committee for LRT to help the project move forward with a future Emerging Leaders group.

In addition to my work around the Emerging Leaders project, I got the opportunity to get involved in the Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT) through their Communications Committee. Much of my time at the conference was spent attending sessions, and I feel like I gained a lot both in terms of knowledge and mindsets around the profession. Two exceptional sessions that I attended were "Show Me the Money! Or not? Making Sense of the 4th Factor of Fair Use" and the "Instructional Technologies Tool Share and LITA Guide on Privacy." While in DC, I enjoyed a tour of the Library of Congress, as well as a stroll around the National Portrait Gallery.

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Marlee Givens

*Modern Languages Librarian & Library Learning
Consultant
Georgia Tech*

Sofia Slutskaya

*Metadata Strategist
Georgia Tech*

Proposing a program for ALA should not intimidate anybody who wants to participate and has ideas to share. We worked with the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS); they and other ALA divisions offer many opportunities to participate and share. Interest groups often solicit proposals on mailing lists for a short 15-minute presentation or round table discussions. Both of us have participated in the Creative Ideas in Technical Services Interest Group program that is organized as a series of simultaneous round table discussions with topics ranging from ethics of cataloging to RDA toolkit redesign. If you are involved in teaching or staff training, the LearnRT Training Showcase is another great informal opportunity to present on your training or instruction tips and tricks. The presenters are asked to bring some handouts, posters, or training materials. Attendees move around the tables, mingle and talk to the presenters. The event is held in an exhibit area, and the organizers provide refreshments.

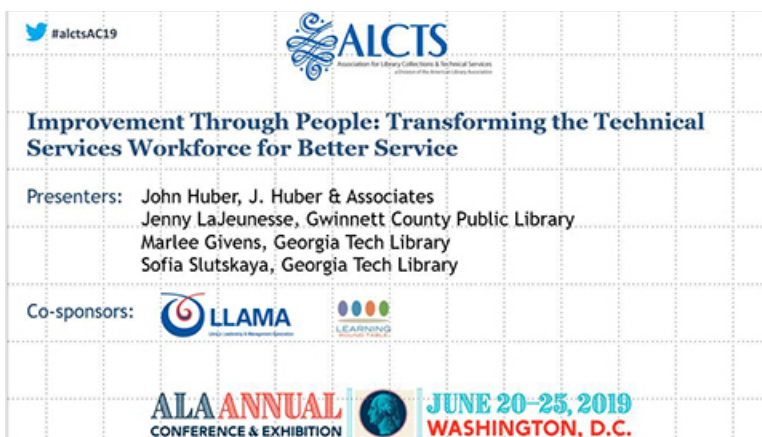
Anybody who ever presented at ALA knows that the conference experience starts long before the conference itself. The program proposals are due nine months before the conference, and many ALA groups and divisions require a

number of additional steps before a proposal is accepted. The ALCTS Program Committee conducts interviews with proposal authors that are very similar in nature to phone job interviews. The committee asks additional questions about a proposed program, but also offers ideas and suggestions on how to make the program more relevant to ALCTS members. For us, the process of preparing the program was as rewarding as the presentation itself. To make our program relevant to the national audience, we had to reach out to colleagues in other academic and public libraries and to other ALA groups and divisions. Our conversations with our fellow presenters helped us see how our viewpoints fit in the technical services

landscape of both academic and public libraries.

The highlight of the conference for us was the program we organized, "Improvement Through People: Transforming the Technical Services Workforce for

Better Service," on Sunday afternoon. This was a panel on the application of business methodologies to transformations in library service delivery, co-sponsored by the ALCTS and LLAMA divisions of ALA as well as the Learning Round Table. Speakers John Huber, president of J. Huber & Associates consulting firm and author of the books *Lean Library Management* and *The Purpose-Based Library*, and Jenny LaJeunesse, technical services manager from Gwinnett County Public Library, joined us in front of a standing room only crowd. After Sonya introduced the topic and the speakers, John and Jenny engaged in a lively conversation about applying principles of Lean management to improve delivery of new books at Gwinnett. Marlee then gave an overview of the project management, supply chain, instructional design,



and training methods used to create new service models at Georgia Tech. Lastly, Sonya led the audience through a discussion and questions about reorganization, preparing staff for new roles, enabling staff to embrace change, and where to go from here.

Learning more about the ALA host city and visiting some of the attractions is always a pleasant part of the ALA experience. Marlee, who traveled to DC with her son and her mother, visited the International Spy Museum at the end of the conference day on Saturday. This museum, which first opened in 2002, recently moved to a new 140,000 square-foot purpose-built facility south of the National Mall. Exhibits covered the history of espionage, personal accounts from actual spies, and objects from tiny cameras and hollow coins up to James Bond's Aston Martin. Visitors adopt a secret identity and mission embedded in their visitor badge, which they use to interact through RFID with exhibits throughout the museum. One favorite was a screen with a camera and digital tools for creating a virtual disguise, which was then rated for its ability to blend into the environment where your virtual mission takes place. The museum balances popular depictions of spying with the real-life work of intelligence analysts and agents, and the triumphs along with the risks, hazards, and failures of spy work.

Sofia had a chance to visit the National Portrait Gallery and learn about the very fascinating process of acquiring presidents' portraits.

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Stephen Michaels

*Reference Services Librarian
University of North Georgia*

As a mid-career librarian who had never been to the ALA Annual Conference before, I have heard many opinions both enthusiastic and hesitant about attending. The most common advice I've heard is "you should go at least once to

experience it." I was lucky to have the opportunity to attend in DC, and I certainly found the experience worthwhile.

I kicked off my visit by joining a colleague to visit the Library of Congress for the first time. I had no idea that so much of the space was dedicated to art and exhibits. I was in awe of the place before I ever stepped foot inside and, once inside, I was downright slack jawed. More than anything else I've ever experienced, the Library of Congress clearly illustrated (literally) how the founders, leaders, educators, architects, artists, and librarians sought to take the best parts from past civilizations in order to foster an educated and reflective citizenry. Although I don't know when the next time will be that either of us will visit the library, we both got our official Library of Congress Reader Identification Cards—free of charge!

A highlight of the conference for me was a talk from Yale history professor Dr. Joanne Freeman about her book *The Field of Blood: Congressional Violence in Antebellum America* that uncovers the shocking instances of physical violence and intimidation that took place in and around Congress leading up to the Civil War. In addition to the interesting subject matter of the book, Dr. Freeman told us stories and answered questions about her research and writing





process, which required years of tireless work. My main takeaway from her talk was that even the most brilliant scholar can still struggle with research and require help and reassurance at times.

Another memorable session, “Cause for Collaboration: Integrating Journalism and other Allied Professions into Library Instruction to Fight Fake News,” discussed different levels and modes of collaboration between libraries and journalistic organizations in efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation. While some research in the field of psychology paints a grim picture with regards to people’s natural tendencies when encountering “fake news,” the presentation focused on the opportunities for librarians and journalists to share expertise in meaningful ways. One exciting idea that the presenters discussed was creating space and support for people to work together on local fact-checking endeavors, like creating a local Snopes or PolitiFact. One heartening finding

shared by the presenter, taken from a study at Stanford, stated that most people still trust libraries.

A colleague suggested that I volunteer to review resumes at the ALA Placement Center during the conference, and I’m glad that I did. I met with librarians and library students of varying ages in various stages of their careers and shared my perspective on how to present themselves to prospective employers based on their experience and goals. While I hope that I dispensed some advice of value, I can confidently say that the stories we shared with one another broadened our understanding of the trials, tribulations, and opportunities of the library job market.

A chance meeting at a restaurant with an old college friend led me to attend a panel she was participating in the following day: “Discussing Social Issues through Speculative Comics.” Among the presentation’s topics, I was

especially interested in hearing the writers' talk about how to tell stories of trauma without relying on the frequently exploitative portrayal of explicit suffering.

In other comics happenings, I met two of my favorite writers and artists in the exhibit hall. I didn't even know that they would be at the conference until the day before, but I was absolutely thrilled (not to mention a bit starstruck) to meet Jaime Hernandez, of *Love & Rockets* fame, and Gabrielle Bell, whose autobiographical work has meant so much to me over the years.

In closing, I will share another piece of advice that was shared with me from a more experienced attendee: "don't forget to take a breather. It can be very overwhelming the first time because it's so easy to want to go to everything."

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Emily Rogers

Reference Librarian

Valdosta State University

I attended the 2019 ALA Annual Conference in order to meet with the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT) Awards Committee, which I chaired this year, and help introduce and present awards to the 2019 GODORT awards recipients at the Awards Reception, at the George Washington University Jacob Burns Law School on Sunday, June 23, 6:00–8:00 p.m. I also attended the GODORT Membership Meeting and the GODORT Steering Committee Meeting.

Other conference programs and events I attended focused mainly on government information resources and included:

"Financial Literacy: Free Resources for Librarians" (Preconference Friday, June 21)

Many Americans are struggling with questions about personal financial topics such as retirement, college planning, fraud prevention, and investing. This interesting preconference presented representatives from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Department of Labor, Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Trade Commission, Office for Victims of Crime, New York Public Business Library, FDIC, and National Endowment for Financial Education. Speakers highlighted the variety of resources available from these nonprofit and government agencies to help promote financial literacy. Of the most value was the panel of three librarians who discussed financial literacy programs held at their libraries. This panel provided much useful information for us if Valdosta State University, Odum Library wishes to pursue any financial literacy programming in the future.

"Federal Information Interest Group (GODORT)"

This interest group meeting featured representatives from the Economic Indicators



Division of the Census Bureau and the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis presenting information about data literacy. Of primary interest are the Statistics in Schools program from the Census and the variety of resources available for monetary data from the Federal Reserve.

“Collectively Curating Government Information and Data: The PEGI Project and the Collective Impact Model”

This program featured representatives of the Preservation of Electronic Government Information (PEGI) Project, which brings together librarians and other information professionals who are seeking solutions to improve long-term access to at-risk born-digital government information of historical significance. The program reviewed the history of the project, illustrated how it fits the collective impact model for large-scale social issues, and forecast future directions for the project in its efforts to preserve born-digital government information permanently.

“Federal Librarians Interest Group”

This interest group meeting featured a presentation on the ways that federal libraries (for agencies such as the EPA, the CDC, the Department of Labor, and others) fit into the Federal Depository Library Program and gave an update on Title 44 and recent legislation that tried to affect the FDLP. Resources that I discovered from this meeting include a history of federal libraries, available on the Library of Congress website, and a comprehensive list of all of the laws and bills that have affected the FDLP and the dissemination of federal government information since 1857.

“Counting on Trust, Trusting the Count: Census 2020”

This panel presented speakers including Robert M. Groves, former Census Bureau director, now Provost at Georgetown University; Hansi Lo Wang, NPR; and Thomas A. Saenz, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. They discussed past and current controversies with the Decennial Census, including the pros and cons of the citizenship question that might be included on the 2020 Census form. Because of issues of privacy and confidentiality, the Census predicts a possibility of undercounting, and starting in January there will be a concerted outreach effort to try to get the United States populace to trust the Census Bureau’s efforts to collect accurate demographic information. In 2020 most households will be urged to complete the short Census form online. One interesting fact from the program is that in every Census children ages 0–4 tend to be undercounted.

“National Archives from Anywhere: Online Primary Sources for History, Genealogy, Foreign Relations, and Teaching about the American Experience”

This presentation introduced the multitude of online resources available from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) through the archives.gov website, while emphasizing that the largest proportion of NARA holdings are actually not available online. Interesting sites included DocsTeach.org, Founders Online, the Center for Legislative Archives, NARA’s Citizens Archivist Missions, the NARA Catalog, and the Access to Archival Databases (AAD).

In addition, I visited with Dr. Linda Most of VSU’s MLS program in the Exhibit Hall, attended the Readex Breakfast with a presentation on historical violence in Congress, and participated in the Library of Congress’s Open House for ALA Members.