Georgia Library Association - Atlanta Emerging Librarians

Gina Viarruel
Gwinnett County Public Library, gviarrue@gmail.com

Kimberly Griffis
Georgia Tech Library, klwgriffis@gmail.com

Tomeka Jackson
Kennesaw State University, tomeka.jackson35@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

Viarruel, G., Griffis, K., & Jackson, T. (2020). Georgia Library Association - Atlanta Emerging Librarians. *Georgia Library Quarterly, 57*(4). Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol57/iss4/16

Georgia Library Association
Atlanta Emerging Librarians

Meetings During a Pandemic

2020 started as a promising year for the Atlanta Emerging Librarians (AEL). The planning committee members were prepared with great ideas and events for new and upcoming librarians in the Metro-Atlanta area. AEL planned a tour of the newly renovated Price Gilbert Library at Georgia Tech, a tour of the Georgia Archives, a get together at a pub for trivia, and a panel featuring professional librarians offering advice to new paraprofessionals on job searching and advancing in librarianship.

Although the new planning committee members had officially taken over in January 2020, it took a month for them to begin to organize. The planning committee had their first official meeting in February with the 2019 AEL committee because a snowstorm at the end of January prevented them from meeting sooner. 2020 committee member Tomeka Jackson's initial reaction to taking on the role summed up how the team felt: "when I accepted the call to become one of three administrators for the Atlanta Emerging Librarians group for 2020, I had no idea what I was doing or how we would put together three events for the year." The 2020 group met a second time to start planning, but the global COVID-19 Pandemic shut down operations in March.

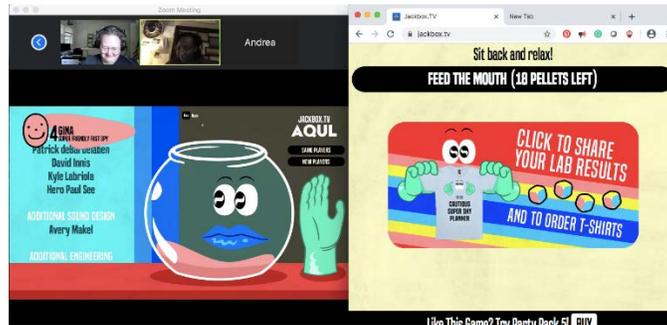The pandemic forced AEL to change all of the in-person events to virtual ones. AEL used Google Chat and Zoom to host programs and meet. The admins had to think outside of the box since none of them had experience hosting virtual social events. AEL ended up hosting three events online. AEL threw a virtual happy hour. AEL organized a watch party in conjunction with the Georgia Tech Library of a classic sci-fi film. AEL's final event was playing Jackbox Party Pack games.

AEL's first event, the virtual happy hour, was a meet-and-greet with the AEL administrators. Jackson was in charge of creating promotional posters using Adobe Spark as well as social media marketing. "I found that marketing was tough and making the posters took time as I had to think critically about eye catching titles, colors that drew the eye, and promoting the event on all our social media platforms. I did not realize that I had to use Eventbrite as well," said Jackson. Five people attended. From the attendees' feedback, AEL learned that the lack of any icebreakers to prevent quiet moments between conversations with the members was a problem. However, it was still a success as the members talked to one another and exchanged job searching tips.

AEL's second event was a collaborative watch party, which the Georgia Tech Library hosted through Facebook. During early summer, the Georgia Tech Library held virtual watch parties of classic sci-fi films. AEL decided to piggyback on the event since emerging librarians might be interested in watching too. "The movies were familiar only in title to me," said Gina Viarruel. "I actually ended up sitting in on all three of the

movies they showed during their watch party series. The attendees were highly engaged with commentary the whole way through. For being stuck inside, it was pretty entertaining to be a part of." The AEL admins were able to track who came to this event through the web algorithms collected from sharing the watch party on the AEL Facebook page. It was just one of the ways AEL used technology in the virtual event environment.

The Jackbox Party Pack was purchased by Kimberly Griffis for the last virtual event. "I had heard of others doing events including online games, and it sounded like a lot of fun," said Griffis. The group thought if more people had attended, it would have been a hit, but the one attendee seemed to have had a blast.

Unfortunately, attendance declined for each event: the first event had five attendees, the second two, and the final only one. The opinion of the group was that as the year progressed people were more and more burned-out attending virtual events. AEL is still working on how to host events in the time of COVID-19, but it is a process that everyone is dealing with. AEL would love to hear from others about events they offered and those they would be interested in attending. Although it is unclear how much longer everyone will be planning virtual events, being able to adapt to new ways of keeping librarians connected and engaged has expanded the planning committee's skill sets and allowed them to think of events outside of an in-person, "normal" environment.