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Smyrna Library Celebrates a Life of Service

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Leebaw appointed to post at Emory Library

Danya Leebaw has been appointed a business research librarian in the Goizueta Business Library of Emory University's Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Danya completed a master of library and information science degree in August 2006 at the University of Pittsburgh. While working on her degree, she worked concurrently in two graduate internships and a part-time position. Previously, Danya worked for eight years in the corporate sector in marketing and media. ►►

Smyrna library celebrates a life of service

On January 31, former Smyrna Public Library Director Doris Patterson Morris was honored at a dedication ceremony for a library meeting room named in her honor. Her husband, Max, children, extended family, friends, library patrons and local political leaders attended the ceremony and reception. Mrs. Morris began working in the library, where she shared her love of reading with thousands of children, in 1972. She was director of the library from 1982-1987.



Current library Director Michael Seigler (left) chats with Mrs. Morris.

During that time, she established the classic antique book collection and oversaw the feasibility study that resulted in the new library completed on the Village Green. In 1995 Mrs. Morris came out of retirement to serve as interim director until the current director, Michael

Seigler, was hired. Mrs. Morris also played a major role in developing the library at Smyrna's First Baptist Church and served as Sunday school director.

Established by volunteers in 1936, the Smyrna Public Library is the only city-operated library in Georgia and has a collection of more than 100,000 items. ►►

South Georgia Regional director to retire

Liza Newsom, director of the South Georgia Regional Library System (SGRL), is retiring after 11-plus years of exceptional service. Liza's contributions to the library, library staff, community and library patrons have not gone unnoted, and she will be greatly missed by all. Liza taught in the Lowndes County and Valdosta City school systems for 14 years before becoming director of the Brooks County Library System, where she worked for

seven years. She started her work as director of SGRL in 1995 and has been witness to a number of significant changes within the system.

"By far the biggest change has been the Internet," Liza said. Thanks in large part to the Gates Foundation, SGRL now has 80 public access computers in their library system, a wireless computer lab with 24 computers at the main library, and a heavy schedule of free computer classes. She remembers how folks said computers were going to create a paperless society, and the Internet was going to make libraries obsolete. But within her first year as director, SGRL had a 63 percent increase in library visits. "The number of people using our libraries climbs every year, and I accredit that to our dedicated staff," she says.

"We were determined that people were going to use our libraries, and if they wouldn't come to us, we'd go to them," she recalls. Library staff members visit schools, both public and private, every day, and book van staff members have become vital library ambassadors. Because of all this activity, SGRL has led the state in the number of children per capita attending library programs for years. More than 80,000 have participated in programs for each of the past five years.

"There's a direct correlation between strong libraries and strong communities," Liza says. "I want the people in our community to see the neighborhood library as a community center and a tool to enrich and enhance their lives and their children's lives."

Liza cites *The Valdosta Daily Times* and the local Friends of the Library as library heroes. According to Liza, the paper has promoted the library and its events "shamelessly," and in many ways the newspaper staff deserves much of the credit for advances the library has made in the past decade. And, of course, the Friends of the Library are near and dear to her heart. "These are the folks who treasure the library and celebrate the joys of reading," Liza says. Over the past decade, the Friends have donated more than \$500,000 to the SGRL library collections. The once moldy collection has been replaced

Library Director Liza Newsom (center) is flanked by Friends and co-workers at a retirement gathering on March 22.

