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Message from the President

Judith Gibbons

Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, judith.gibbons@ky.gov

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The Southeastern Librarian

Volume 54, Number 2 Summer, 2006

Message from the President

My hometown public library just finished a marvelous renovation and expansion project that transformed a 1906 building into a Twenty-First Century showplace. Funding for this project was provided by a successful 2003 tax petition.

Actual construction was delayed by the filming of the movie, *Elizabethtown* which featured major location work filmed in Versailles, Kentucky. It was amazing to see the window dressing that changed a dilapidated storefront into a cozy fishing nook nestled against the imposing Beaux Arts library. The former health club/engineering firm destined for the wrecking ball was decorated like a bait shop during the shoot.

After the movie set was dismantled, work began in earnest. During the construction process, I was always thrilled to have the opportunity to tour the site and see the progress. Like other building projects, there were myriad surprises. Most became expensive change orders like some walls that needed to be removed or a roof that had to be totally replaced.

On various visits, I saw mantles and railings being carted off for storage, a building coming down, walls removed and vestiges of an early Twentieth Century fire. It was fun to see the varied color schemes evident on the walls. There were paints of colonial blue, pale peach and mid-century shades of institutional green.

The library has always been a vital community asset but the transformation created a continual buzz. At the grocery store, potluck suppers and post office, the library was a central part of the conversation. When there was a large crane needed on the job, it shut down Main Street. The revitalization of the building was a major source of community pride and curiosity.

Periodically, our local newspaper, *The Woodford Sun* would show interior pictures and give updates from the library director and chairman of the board. Driving by the site, I would see evening walkers peering in the front windows.

Plans were made to include local art in the final project. Our former colleague, Ellen Hellard, commissioned a horse sculpture for the front entry. Kentucky's horse industry is centered in the county so the children's department plans featured photos of prominent farms, a stable design and even tack. The Friends of the Library hosted a contest for artists to submit works to complement the interior design.

Gradually the landscape changed from a muddy hole to a two story structure. Then the bare bulbs hanging in the cavernous space gave way to light fixtures. Architectural elements reappeared, carpet was unrolled and furniture was assembled.

Finally after two plus years, the library was ready for the rededication on July 1, 2006. The community was abuzz with anticipation. The day was warm and muggy. There were cub scouts, local dignitaries and the citizenry.

As a librarian, my proudest moment came during an invocation offered by the Rev. David Duggan. His text concentrated on the value of libraries to the American people. After talking about the grandeur of the building, he stressed the principles of librarianship and the commitment of librarians to a free society. This speech helped me reflect on the many reasons that I had chosen my profession.

To quote, “Yet, there is something even grander than renovated buildings, expanded space, beautiful art, and a new look that we celebrate today, and that is what the library, be it Logan Helm Library or any other library across this nation of ours, represents to the communities they serve. Each and every library in our country is a place in which the basic rights and privileges upon which a democracy is built are practiced each and every day.”

Libraries do change lives.

All the best,

Judith Gibbons

CORRECTION

Newkirk Barnes was misidentified in her article “Promoting Federal Depository Libraries: Improving Public Access to U.S. Government Information” published in the Spring 2006 issue of *The Southeastern Librarian*. She can be reached at NBarnes@library.msstate.edu I apologize for any inconvenience this has caused – Perry Bratcher, editor.

SELA ACTIVITIES:

Prior to the 2008 KLA/SELA Joint Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, the SELA Membership Committee will be involved in seven projects. These projects will help create new opportunities and professional activities for SELA members and library science students. The individuals helping to complete these projects include Membership Committee members as well as other SELA members. Specifically, the projects include:

- Conducting a logo contest to up date the SELA logo
- Planning a Soiree at the 2008 SELA/KLA meeting
- Creating a mentoring program

- Updating the SELA Web page
- Writing a descriptive paragraph for the various SELA Committees
- Writing a job description for State SELA Representatives
- Creating a new level of giving - Corporate Level.

If you have any questions about the projects listed, or wish to volunteer for any of the activities above, please contact:

Hal Mendelsohn
Chair, Membership Committee
SELA
Reference Librarian
University of Central Florida
P.O. Box 162666
Orlando, FL 32816-2666
hmendels@mail.ucf.edu
407-823-3604

Conference Grant/Scholarship Recipients

The following individuals are recipients of the **2006 Frances Coleman/Thomson Gale Conference Grant:**

- *Bradley Brazzeal* (MS), Mississippi State University