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Atlanta Emerging Librarians Encouraging Distance Education

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Atlanta Emerging Librarians encouraging distance education

Distance education programs in library science have grown by leaps and bounds in the past five years, allowing people from different locations and backgrounds who cannot move to attend a residential program to earn a degree online. Atlanta has not had a library school since Clark Atlanta discontinued its program in 2005, leading many people in the area to participate in online programs based all over the United States.

In late 2007 a group of distance students in the Florida State University Master of Library and Information Studies program contacted Sarah Steiner, then the chair of the New Members Round Table of the Georgia Library Association. They were seeking help in formally organizing a networking and educational group for library school students in the Atlanta area. The students from Florida State were in virtual classes together, but rarely if ever saw each other in person. Julie Jones, one of the initial organizers, said that they "felt disconnected" and that a meet-up group would help them gain a sense of community while in school. The planning committee called the new group the Atlanta Emerging Librarians to encompass not only students, but also librarians new to

the field, paraprofessionals already working in libraries or anyone interested in librarianship as a career.

Steiner met with Jones and others to plan an initial meeting to determine interest and possible program topics. They used Google Groups to organize the members and promoted the event to library school electronic mailing lists and the Georgia Library Association membership. The meeting took place at a local public library and was a huge success. The program started with about 30 minutes of informal networking then attendees were split into groups and asked to brainstorm ideas for the first year's meetings. Some suggested topics included emerging technologies like podcasts and wikis, reference interview strategies, and job searching and interviewing skills.

This year the group has had some very notable speakers participate in its programs. In March the program on library user instruction featured Anne Wallace, from Luella Elementary School in Henry County, and Casey Long, Business Liaison Librarian from Georgia State University Library. Wallace's library was the recipient of the 2008



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National School Library Media Program of the Year Award given by the American Association of School Librarians. She wowed the crowd with pictures of her safari themed media center and explained ways to get the community involved with a school media center program. Casey Long was named one of Library Journal's Movers and Shakers of 2008, an award given to "emerging leaders in the library world." Long described many of her innovative teaching strategies, such as using a simulated quiz show format (like Jeopardy) to engage students in her library instruction sessions.

Turnout for the meetings has become large enough at times to force organizers to form waiting lists, as the meeting rooms could not fit everyone who wanted to attend. One of the most popular programs was called "Meet with the Admins," which gave students and new graduates a chance to speak to library directors, administrators and deans from a variety of library types. Organizers were surprised at the overwhelming response to their invitation from the administrators. "Almost everyone we invited agreed to participate, and a couple of administrators even wrote to express interest in attending," said Steiner. One of the participants was John F. Szabo, Director of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System, the largest library system in the State of Georgia. He thought the meeting was an excellent idea and was eager to participate. He noted that this was not only a way for him to spread his passion for libraries to the newer members of the profession, but also provided "an opportunity to get a valuable perspective from new librarians on how they view the profession and what changes they see coming to the field." Because the program was so popular the group plans to repeat it again in January 2010.

The Atlanta Emerging Librarians encourage participation not only from students and new librarians, but anyone who wants to meet new people, network, or learn from the presenters and topics covered in their programs. They also want to support other students or emerging librarians around the state who would like to form a group in their local area.

If you are interested in starting a group, some things to keep in mind:

- Most public libraries offer free or low cost meeting rooms for groups to use.
- Librarians in general are very generous with their time and expertise. Don't be afraid to ask anyone — experienced librarians, administrators, deans — to participate in your programs. The group has

rarely been turned down when they have asked a presenter to attend a meeting.

- Groups like this one are a great way for people new to the field to get experience participating in a library organization by planning programs and organizing events.

The current planning committee would be happy to share planning documents and best practices with anyone who wants to get started. AEL hosts a Google Group where participants can sign up to receive emails or contact the planning committee at <http://groups.google.com/group/atlanta-emerging-librarians>. ►►

— Ashley Dupuy

Chair, Atlanta Emerging Librarians Planning Committee

Pearson to address FOGL fall workshop

Friends of Georgia Libraries (FOGL) will sponsor its annual fall workshop on Saturday, Nov. 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Smyrna Public Library.

The program, "It Takes a Village," will be led by Peter Pearson, president of the Friends of St. Paul (Minn.) Library and member of the board of directors of the Association of Library Trustees, Friends and Foundations.

These difficult economic times are not the time to bury our heads in the sand! Libraries need all the support they can get from their Friends, trustees and Foundations. Pearson will share some ways that his Friends have kept library funding on the increase when neighboring library systems' budgets have been cut. The group has built more than \$11 million in endowments that support its library's operations. Learn about this unique organization for advocacy and fundraising, and hear about the keys to its success.

The workshop also features luncheon speaker Joshilyn Jackson, whose short fiction has been published in numerous literary magazines and anthologies. Her bestselling debut novel, *Gods in Alabama* won SIBA's 2005 Novel of the year Award and was a #1 BookSense pick. *Between, Georgia* was also a #1 BookSense pick, making Jackson the first author in BookSense history to receive #1 status in back to back years. Jackson's third novel, *The Girl Who Stopped Swimming*, was shortlisted for an Audie Award.

Cost of the workshop is \$35 for FOGL members and \$45 for non-members, which includes FOGL membership for 2010. For additional details and to register, visit www.georgia-friends.org. ►►