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President's Column

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Happy New Year! I am honored to serve as SELA President for the 2019-2020 biennium and I look forward to working with you all as we seek to fulfill Article II of the SELA Constitution (see http://www.selaonline.org/sela//contacts/SELA_Handbook.pdf): “The objectives of this Association shall be to promote and foster library and information services in the southeastern region of the United States through cooperation, research, and the encouragement of staff development.” We need *your* participation. There are many committees, round tables, and sections and they all need volunteers. Be sure to indicate when you fill out your membership registration form your areas of interest for service. Serving on a SELA unit is also an excellent way to get started for those seeking leadership positions. As one who is moving into the senior ranks of librarianship (I started Library School in 1979) I can attest that having newer and younger colleagues in the leadership pipeline is highly desirable both for the wellbeing of SELA and the wellbeing of the broader library profession.



While I don't intend for this to be such a self-referential column in the future, let me briefly introduce myself so you have some idea from where I am coming. I've been a Reference Librarian (recently renamed Research and Instruction Librarian) at Auburn University since 1992, first, working in the Government Documents Department and, more recently, serving as Subject Specialist for History and Political Science. Previous tours of duty include working for the University of New Hampshire at the beginning and then at the end of the 1980's serving as Special Collections Librarian and Archivist sandwiching my tour of duty at Barry University (Miami Shores, Fla.) where I served as Serials and Reference Librarian.

I've been a member of SELA since 1992 but only belatedly became an active member starting in 1999. I've enjoyed serving in several capacities prior to my current office, chairing the Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Membership and Mentoring Committee; the Government

Documents Roundtable; the University and College Libraries Section; serving as Alabama State Representative; and finally, serving as President-Elect for the 2017-2018 biennium. While not serving as chair, I also was active on the Legislative Committee about 10 years ago or so sending out monthly state and federal library-related legislative updates. I've also had the honor of serving as a manuscript reviewer for *The Southeastern Librarian* since 2001 and have also enjoyed submitting the occasional book review as well. Hats off to longtime *SELn* Editor, Perry Bratcher, for a job well-done!

As I complete making and confirming appointments to SELA committees, etc., I hope to accomplish a few basic goals over the next two years. My hope is to increase the size of SELA's membership. Please be sure to promote SELA to new colleagues and to encourage any lapsed members you know at your institutions to rejoin! I also hope to keep SELA visible and at the forefront of professional activity in the Southeastern region. Among other things, this means working with individual state library associations as we continue to host joint conferences. Please consider attending and, even better, submitting a program proposal form for the following joint conferences that will be coming up: Arkansas Library Association in Hot Springs September 28-29, 2019 and Georgia Library Association in Macon Fall 2020 (note: 2020 will be SELA's Centennial!).

Finally, I am hoping we might be able to come up with some new or improved strategies for engaging in library advocacy. As we all know, libraries continue to be under pressure as funding remains level or is actually sometimes cut. The Internet is an amazing resource and is beneficial in all sorts of ways but there is no denying it has also greatly eroded the public's perception as to the usefulness or even the need for libraries. It is no longer self-evident that libraries are, if anything, more useful and relevant than ever. My hope is that SELA can do something to keep the public informed and to convince funding authorities that all types of libraries (and the people who work in them) are valuable and very cost-effective resources. Most of my career as a librarian has been spent in adapting to vast changes and training and retraining as resources and services have changed in response to the rise of computers, the Internet, full-text databases, etc. Libraries and librarians are very adaptable to these ongoing changes but it looks as if we are going to have to “toot our own horn” as the twenty-first century moves on. I believe SELA can serve as an advocate on behalf of libraries and library employees.

Tim Dodge
SELA President, 2019-2020