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From the President

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From the PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

First, thank you for electing me your president for 2014. The first weeks of 2014 were extremely difficult for me on a personal level, but with this message, I look forward to getting on track with both the duties and pleasures of serving the Georgia Library Association (GLA). Over many years, GLA has given me much, and I want to give back. I have been a member of GLA since 1984. I have seen our profession undergo enormous changes over the years. When I was in library school at Emory, an academic librarian in her dress-for-success business suit visited our reference class to show us what the future held for our profession. Using an acoustic coupler, she connected a telephone to a mainframe computer in Palo Alto, CA and demonstrated how we could search bibliographic databases in DIALOG. Using commands and a controlled vocabulary, she demonstrated how we could retrieve a collection of citations without having to search dozens of paper indexes. We were wowed! Someday wouldn't it be wonderful if we could also supply the full text of the articles themselves? But that was a dream for the future.

Well, we all know how the architecture of reference and other library services has changed. We know how the curriculum of library schools has changed. We know that GLA, by providing a platform to share the knowledge of new products and best practices, has aided us as Georgia librarians to change. And we know that GLA itself has changed and, in order to remain healthy, will likely continue to change in the future. The Georgia Library Association was founded in 1897 as the Georgia Library Club. Over the years the makeup of the organization, the favored meeting places, the

media used by its members to communicate to each other and to the rest of the world, and the day-to-day practices its members use to carry out its mission have all changed. This is because our institution is made up of living, breathing members. Being made of flexible live members, GLA can carry on and thrive under a great range of circumstances.

This was illustrated vividly to me on January 16 when, due to a family crisis, I found that I was unable to carry out my duties as your new president at our Mid-Winter meeting scheduled for January 17. Though I was upset at not being there, I am really proud that numerous members of GLA took up the banner and made the day a success! This is the beauty of having a vital, working institution to rely on. Luckily our keynote speaker had been set since last summer. I was told that Mathew Hauer's presentation on the changing demographics of our state and the Q&A that followed was well-received. It follows that our institution—the Georgia Library Association—must also grow and change if we are to remain relevant to both the people we serve and also to ourselves as an organization. I heard that there were lively break-out sessions with many great ideas generated for possible changes for our organization as well as for COMO 2014 in Augusta October 1–3.

I've used the term "institution" several times in the preceding paragraphs. The concept of "institution" has been on my mind a lot lately. Among the several definitions I have found, an institution can be:

- An organization or establishment founded for a specific purpose, such as a hospital, church, company, or college.

- A custom, practice, relationship, or behavioral pattern of importance in the life of a community or society.
- Any familiar, long-established person, thing, or practice; fixture.

Libraries are institutions. Librarianship is an institution. Even some librarians are institutions! But most important to us as a whole, GLA is an institution. We were founded for a particular purpose, are of importance in the life of our communities, and are a fixture in Georgia's landscape.

Speaking of institutions, the organization we know as COMO is an institution that GLA has been connected with for twenty-six years. This year, instead of the usual three participating organizations to divvy up planning duties, there will be two—GLA and GAIT. GLA will be largely in charge, since GAIT was in charge last year in Macon. We will be lucky this year to have the Southeastern Library Association join us again, enriching the conference by contributing sessions to the program.

COMO XVII will provide GLA with the opportunity to showcase librarianship on all levels in Georgia. The membership of GLA is diverse. Our membership is composed of the retired and near-retired, the mid-career librarians, the neophyte librarians, and those who are still library school students. Some of us have doctorate library degrees; others of us don't have any formal library degree but have instead a wealth of practical experience as paraprofessionals. We work in schools, public libraries, colleges, research universities, law firms, medical facilities, and corporations. We all have something to offer. Giving to GLA by participating, as well as taking what it has to

offer by attending, will help to keep us healthy and vibrant as an institution.

The changeover meeting between GAIT and GLA from COMO 2013 to COMO 2014 will be in mid-March. GLA will also soon be having our second Executive Board meeting to go forth with planning not only for our part in COMO 2014, but for possible changes and revisions to GLA itself: Do we need to revise the Handbook? Are there committees or interest groups which need to change, update, or retire? Are there procedures either in the Constitution or the By-laws that need revision? Do any allocations of funds need to be revised?

Change in any institution is usually slower than some would like, but that is the nature of being an institution. Hasty changes without aforethought can have disastrous consequences; look at certain events taking place on the world stage right now. There is a cliché that goes something like "You have to know where you're coming from to know where you're going." While GLA needs to keep changing to remain alive, we also need to know why things are done like they are now before we simply do away with a procedure or a committee. Evolution is usually less painful than revolution. Within GLA we need to talk and work inter-generationally and inter-institutionally to strengthen ourselves. The Executive Board and I will be calling on all of you to work to make 2014 a great year for GLA and for COMO 2014.

Thank you,
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