

Fall 10-1-2019

## President's Column

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### Recommended Citation

Dodge, Tim (2019) "President's Column," *The Southeastern Librarian*: Vol. 67 : Iss. 3 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol67/iss3/2>

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## President's Column: Fall 2019

What a wonderful conference!

The joint conference of SELA with the Arkansas Library Association, held in Hot Springs September 27-29, was certainly one of the highlights of this year. The variety of programs, appealing to all kinds of librarians, was stimulating; the food served at the luncheons was delicious; the convention and hotel facilities were high quality; and the exhibits were interesting and quite varied (everything from the Brodart library supplies company to Brian Sivills, a most interesting musician and singer who provides children's programming in libraries, to the Arkansas Secretary of State).

I am proud to report that there were at least 11 SELA-sponsored programs on the schedule. This confirms the value to the 12 individual state library associations of co-hosting a joint conference since one of the main reasons for hosting conferences is the exchange of knowledge and programming. Of course, SELA benefits tremendously too as these joint conferences provide opportunities for presentation outside of one's own state and the chances to meet in person with colleagues from all over the Southeast. Also, if all goes well, SELA is able to attract new members from the state hosting the joint conference with us too. All this and at a much lower cost than doing so through the American Library Association! Membership and participation in ALA is to be encouraged but for many of us, the costs of membership not to mention travel to conferences, can be prohibitive.

This was my first visit to Hot Springs. Even though most of my time and attention were focused on the conference, I did get out a few times to look around. Bathhouse Row occupies a major portion of Central Avenue and features vintage architecture of bathhouses built to take advantage of the naturally occurring hot springs in the area (some bathhouses are still open for business). Gangsters of the 1920's and 1930's frequented the area and this is commemorated by the statue of a seated gangster on a bench who looks somewhat like Al Capone and the Gangster Museum.. My wife and I tried to visit the museum but, alas, there was no (required) guided tour available at the time. We did, however, visit the odd and interesting Wax Museum. I found the figure of the late actress, Elizabeth Taylor, disconcerting: not only was it lifelike but Taylor seemed to actually be staring me directly in the eyes. There are several excellent restaurants in Hot Springs. We greatly enjoyed our visits to the Kilwins ice cream and chocolate candy shop for dessert. The former Army Navy Hospital, opened in 1933, is an impressive structure hulking over the town; its massive stone tower is nicely lit up by colored lights at night.

Many thanks go to Crystal Gates, SELA Secretary and ArLA President-Elect, and her committee, and SELA President-Elect Melissa Dennis for planning a wonderful and memorable conference.

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