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## Making a Difference in Georgia: How the Carterette Webinar Series Began

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## Making a Difference in Georgia: How the Carterette Webinar Series Began

By Casey Long & Kimberly Boyd

In 2009, while reviewing the results of a survey sent out by the Georgia Library Association (GLA) Public Relations Committee, Sarah Steiner found that GLA members wanted more opportunities for professional development. At that time, much of the programming offered by the Georgia Library Association occurred during the annual COMO conference. Georgia State University, where Sarah worked, utilized a platform called Elluminate Live which allowed librarians to teach instruction sessions online. Inspired with the idea that GLA could extend its programming by offering professional

development webinars utilizing a tool like Elluminate, Sarah contacted Pat Carterette, the Director of Continuing Education at Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) to see what she thought about the idea. Pat loved it! According to Sarah, Pat said she'd been contemplating the very same idea and that the call was kismet. Thus, the Carterette Series Webinars was born.

"There wasn't much out there when we started with the webinar series," said Sarah Steiner, "Pat was proud that we were one of the first states to start offering free online sessions to anyone, anywhere."

Initially named Wednesday Webinars, the series was coordinated by a three-person team that included Sarah, Pat, and Buffy Hamilton. According to Sarah, "We wanted each webinar to be useful to librarians of all types of libraries,

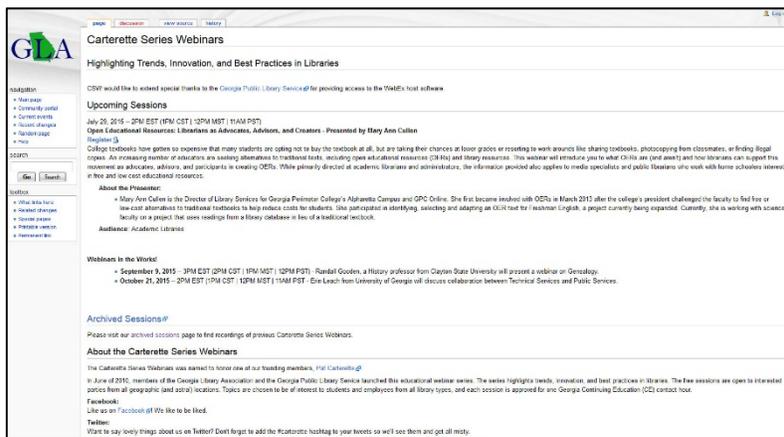
so we brought Buffy on board so that the school media specialists were represented. "

The team also decided to provide two back-to-back webinars once a month. The first two webinars were hosted on June 16, 2010 and featured Bobbi Newman talking about transliteracy and Buffy Hamilton discussing cloud computing and web 2.0 applications in libraries. It was a success! Sixty-two individuals attended. The number of attendees doubled for the second set of webinars hosted on July 21, 2010 featuring Cliff Landis, Charlie Bennett, and

Ameet Doshi. Roughly 140 individuals attended the second set of webinars and nearly all were from academic, public, and K-12 libraries in Georgia. Clearly there was a demand for free online

professional development content tailored to the needs of Georgia libraries.

The series continued to build momentum, but hit a stumbling block when Pat Carterette was diagnosed with terminal cancer a few months after the series began. "I remember the first time we had an inkling something was wrong," said Sarah. "We were at GLA COMO and Pat sat down. She said she was so tired but could not figure out why. She was training for a marathon so we both assumed that was the cause." According to Ed Wittenberg of the Cleveland Sun News, Pat received her diagnosis shortly after completing the Chicago Marathon on October 18, 2010.



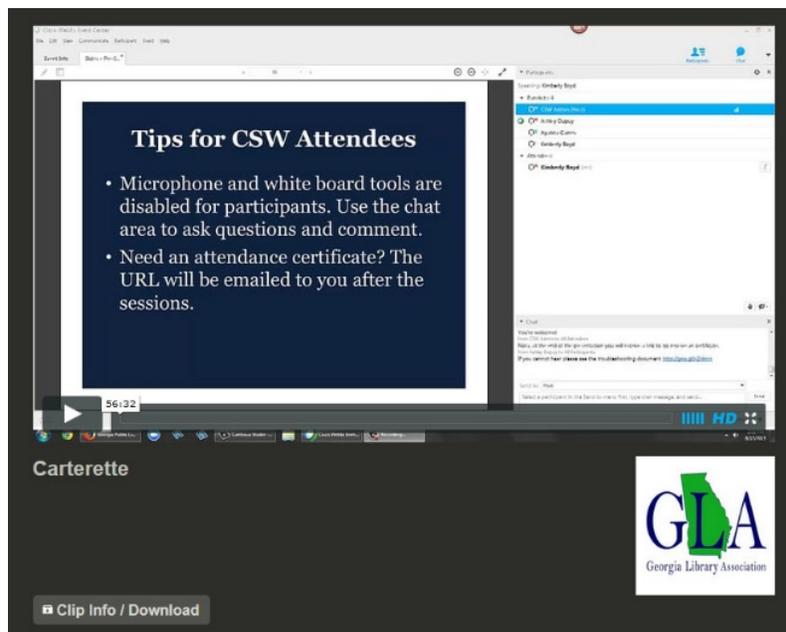
“She worked really hard to keep up with the webinar series despite her illness,” said Sarah about Pat. “Once she emailed me how excited she was for the webinar the next day and said it would be a great one. I couldn’t even reply to her message for a couple of days because the webinar had already happened about a week before. It broke my heart.”

Pat died on January 12, 2011 after a two-month battle with cancer. After Pat's passing, the series was fortunate to recruit Tessa Minchew, a tech savvy librarian then working for Georgia Perimeter Libraries. Tessa, Buffy, and Sarah continued to build an infrastructure for the series.

Tessa, Buffy, and Sarah wanted to do something to commemorate Pat, so over a Google chat session one day, Tessa and Sarah brainstormed ideas for renaming the series. “Sarah wanted to tie it to something Pat was passionate about like running so she proposed names like Running Woman Webinars and Marathon Webinars,” said Tessa. Sarah was trying to capture the light-hearted personality of Pat, who once suggested naming the series Teaching Instructional Technology Series or T.I.T.S.! “Pat laughed and laughed about that name,” said Sarah remembering Pat fondly. Tessa eventually recommended Carterette Series Webinars.

A few months after Tessa came on board, Buffy left the series to spend time on other projects. Karen Viars at Georgia Perimeter College served on the Carterette Series Webinars planning

committee from April 2011 to June 2012 and then Kimberly Boyd from Brenau University was recruited in 2012 when Karen left the series. The series also reduced the number of webinars from two every month to one every six weeks and began to recruit national speakers. “Initially we wanted to highlight home-grown talent,” said Sarah, “but since so many people were unable to attend national professional conferences we wanted to be able to bring some of the best speakers to Georgia. We tried to provide a balance of local and national speakers.”



The Carterette Series Webinars is now a well-established online series viewed by librarians around the nation and even around the world. Tessa Minchew left the series in the spring of 2013 to take a job at North Carolina State University and Sarah

Steiner, who also left the state of Georgia a year later for a job at Western Carolina University, continued to participate until December 2014.

Kimberly Boyd from Brenau University, Ashley Dupuy from Kennesaw State University, and Casey Long from Agnes Scott College are the current coordinators. They are all academic librarians, but strive to provide programming that appeals to a wide range of libraries. Recent topics include: the ACRL Framework, engaging patrons by hosting miniature fandom conferences, developing makerspaces, and tracking net neutrality legislation.

Though there are many more webinar series out there for librarians to choose from than there were in 2010 when the series began, Carterette Series Webinars is dedicated to meeting the needs of Georgia librarians by bringing in interesting speakers from national conferences and highlighting the best presentations and practices of Georgia librarians. The coordinators are open to

suggestions and questions, so please feel free to contact them at [carteretteserieswebinars@gmail.com](mailto:carteretteserieswebinars@gmail.com).

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