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President's Column

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The President's Column

To build off of the great advocacy efforts of our Past President, Tim Dodge, I have been aiming for SELA to embrace our multicultural roots by emphasizing INCLUSION this biennium. You may have heard me say it more than once: "If we don't work together, we don't work at all." Inclusion efforts are as important now as they have ever been in academia and public librarianship. Our organization was created in order to support each other and lift up libraries that struggle in communities where injustice is prevalent. We are an inclusive organization and I want all of our members to feel included. I want you to know that when you are in a SELA meeting, your voice is being heard and you matter. I've been seeing a lot of Facebook posts with librarians wearing a t-shirt that reads "What's more punk than the public library?" Perhaps you even own one of these shirts inspired by the DC Punk Archive, hosted by the DC Public Library. I love it because it reminds me that our profession began by advocating for fairness and equality in education and information access to anyone in a community, especially those cast as "outside the mainstream." If you strip down the missions and visions and political red tape that comes with all of our libraries, you are reminded that we all want to have a library that is inclusive for everyone, to encourage learning for a lifetime without class, sex, race, gender, political, or religious barriers.

I am excited to expand on our inclusiveness at our upcoming virtual summer conference, August 5-6. This will be the first summer conference for SELA since 2017 when we met in person at Birmingham Southern University. Aptly named, "Envision the Future," this year's conference will be our first virtual summer conference to date. Right now, the coronavirus and all of its variants are still problematic for large gatherings. Nevertheless, our wonderful, multi-talented organizers Crystal Gates and Dr. Gordon Baker have developed a thoughtful lineup of sessions and have secured author Joshilyn Jackson as our keynote speaker. As an added bonus, a copy of Jackson's book, *Mother May I*, is included with registration.

SELA summer conferences in the past have always been great opportunities for members to connect with each other without the outside distractions that come with meeting during a joint-conference, a time for just us to plan with our sections, committees, and round tables, a time for just us to meet new members and reconnect with old friends, a time for just us. I hope you will block off time for this summer conference and jump into each session with a willingness to open up and connect with each other. I want to hear your ideas for SELA and inclusion within the profession as well as your own stories. Summer conference will be a good time for us to laugh together and learn together.

We are still celebrating our 2020 centennial and still planning on a captivating hybrid conference in October with our friends and colleagues at NCLA. Please email me if you want to be more involved in SELA. I will gladly connect you to a team where you will feel included. Your work with SELA is what makes us strong. Say it with me: if we don't work together, we don't work at all.



Melissa Dennis
University of Mississippi