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Remarks on the occasion of the retirement of Merryll Penson, Executive Director, Library Services, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG) made on April 28, 2016 at the University of Georgia's Main Library.

P. Toby Graham
University of Georgia, tgraham@uga.edu

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*People, Libraries
and Agencies* **IN THE NEWS**

Remarks on the occasion of the retirement of Merryll Penson, Executive Director, Library Services, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG) made on April 28, 2016 at the University of Georgia's Main Library.

Good afternoon!

It is my honor and privilege to represent RACL (the Regents Academic Committee on Libraries) at this event, the membership of which consists of the library directors from our twenty-nine institutions of the University System of Georgia.

During the course of her thirty-two-year career in Georgia at Columbus State University, the University of Georgia, and for the past sixteen years at the Board of Regents, Merryll Penson has infused her spirit into nearly all of our libraries in Georgia, academic, public, and K-12; and certainly within the University System of Georgia.



When I try to think of the *adjectives* that describe Merryll's role in our work and in our professional lives, *verbs* come to mind, instead, the things that Merryll *does*: She encourages, reaches out, prompts, questions, advises, steers, connects, associates, teaches, shares, guides, and mentors.

"Act like it will happen," Merryll counsels us, "and eventually it *will*."

And, so many things have happened.

GALILEO is the product of many hands, but it would not be what it is today without Merryll Penson.

Now more than twenty years old, GALILEO stands as what my predecessor Bill Potter described as "the most successful multi-agency collaboration in Georgia's history." It has saved the state millions of dollars through collaborative purchasing, while uniting all of the education and library communities in providing a core set of resources, equalizing access for patrons, faculty, and students no matter where they are in the state.

Merryll's role dates back to the very beginning, when as director at Columbus State, she chaired the USG Committee that created GALILEO. She

did the same for GIL, a program that helped to automate our USG libraries, provide a shared integrated library system program, and support express universal borrowing among our institutions. As GALILEO executive director, she strengthened and expanded this network adding the Digital Library of Georgia collaborative digitization program (now a regional hub for the Digital Public Library of America); Civil Rights Digital Library; and GALILEO Knowledge Repository. She led us in implementing the GALILEO discovery service and open URL linking to full text, both of which have helped to simplify access to the myriad of resources that we provide. She has been key to the origination and ongoing support of the online New Georgia Encyclopedia, which has become such an important fixture on our educational and cultural landscape. Merryll has led the redesign of GALILEO to help it keep pace with changing needs, and she represents us with vendors (including some here today) through which we provide a core collection of databases,

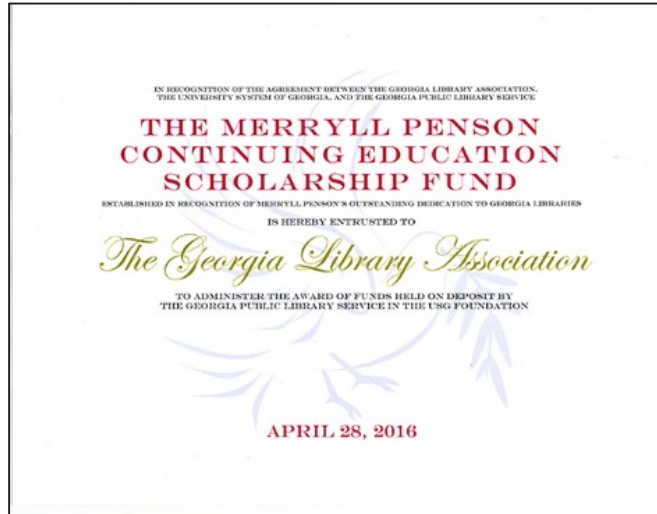
e-journals, and e-books to USG and across Georgia's libraries. Under her direction, GALILEO rose to the challenge presented by Chancellor Hank Huckaby and Executive Vice Chancellor Houston Davis to lead Affordable Learning Georgia, which already has saved students millions of dollars in textbook costs and fostered pedagogical innovation across our institutions. Merryll also has led us into our current system-wide implementation of a next-generation library management platform that will help academic libraries to be both more efficient and effective in fulfilling our vital role in the education of Georgians.

Merryll Penson's work has reached millions across Georgia and well beyond, most of whom will never know her name. But we do, Merryll, and we thank you.

In honor and celebration of your distinguished career, we have a surprise announcement. The Regents Academic Committee on Libraries has begun a campaign to establish The Merryll Penson Continuing Education Fund, which will support the professional growth of Georgia

librarians and library staff members. The Georgia Library Association will award the scholarships with the Georgia Public Library Service accepting and administering the endowment funds.

With the help of our guests from EBSCO and Ex Libris and contributions by GALILEO staff, the GPALS GALILEO community, and RACL members, we have raised approximately \$10,000 thus far.



Accepting on behalf of the Georgia Library Association is Cathy Jeffrey.

Note: Those wishing to make contributions toward the Merryll Penson Continuing Education Fund may make out their checks to the USG Foundation designating them for the Merryll Penson Fund on your check's notation line. You may mail your check to State Librarian Julie Walker at the Georgia Public Library Service, 1800 Century Place, Suite 150, Atlanta, GA 30345-4304.

Toby Graham
University Librarian and Associate Provost
University of Georgia