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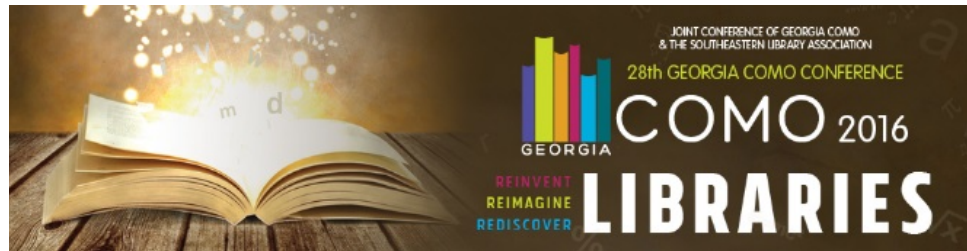
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## History of the Georgia Council of Media Organizations (COMO) Conference

By Gordon Baker

*Delivered by Gordon Baker on the occasion of the 28th Georgia COMO Conference, Athens, Georgia, October 6, 2016*



Hello, my name is Gordon Baker, and I am Dean of Libraries at Clayton State University and the 2016 President of the Georgia Association for Instructional Technology (GAIT). I want to talk to you for a few minutes about my very good friend Georgia COMO.

The idea of COMO began on a day in the middle of May 1985 when the leaders of the three library organizations, GAIT, the Georgia Library Association (GLA), and the Georgia Library Media Association (GLMA) received a letter inviting them to participate in an open forum in Macon to discuss the state of professionalism.

The letter came from Grace Burke (Savannah-Chatham Schools), Dorothea Goodloe (Clarke County Schools), and Frank Winstead (DeKalb County Schools).

So on May 25, 1985 the library leaders met with more than sixty other library folks.

They were told: our associations are not doing what they should be doing.

The librarians in the state needed more professional development, more networking (of course that was not the word used at that time), and a venue to see the latest and greatest.

We needed a good library conference not three little piddly conferences!

So following this forum, the library presidents of these three groups, Jane Morgan, Robert Harrell, and Mary Jean Sloan met in June 1985.

They discussed the situation and rallied to the cry—give us lemons, and we'll make lemonade! On October 25, 1985 during the biennial conference of the Georgia Library Association in 1985, COMO was born, well not the name, but the concept.

At the third meeting of this group, Sunday, January 12, 1986 at Clayton State College, it was decided to form an inter-organizational council and cooperative working relationship and that this relationship be called the Georgia Council of Media Organizations (COMO).

So the group decided to try holding one conference to see if the three groups could work together as one.

The first Georgia COMO steering committee included Charles Beard of West Georgia College, Paula Galland of Glynn County Schools, Mary Jean Sloan of Cobb County Schools, Bill Early, publishers' representative with Bound to Stay Bound Books, and me, Gordon Baker, of the Clayton County Schools System.

Somehow, I was appointed the job of serving as the first conference chair and treasurer.

This group worked and worked...and had many sleepless nights, but finally on May 17–19, 1988

the first Georgia COMO Joint Conference—  
Cooperative Ventures was held at Jekyll Island.

Great speakers, great concurrent sessions, great networking! A tremendous success from all of the evaluations. In 1989 each of the groups returned to their individual meetings, but something was missing...COMO...so in 1990, COMO became an annual event.

Over the past twenty-eight years COMO has met at Jekyll Island ten times, Athens seven times, both Columbus and Macon have hosted three times, and finally both Savannah and Augusta have hosted two times.

The one thing that has remained steady during these last twenty-eight years has been to put on an affordable quality conference with lots of vendors...and we've done that for all this time.

We can be proud of our keynotes, including two State of Georgia superintendents: Dr. Werner Rogers and Dr. John Barge; technology experts: Dr. David Thornburg, Keith Kyker, Christopher Curchy, Dr. Thomas Reeves, Larry Johnson, and Annette Lamb; authors: Terry Kay, John Berendt, Dr. Ferroll Sams, Gail Haley, Tina McElroy Ansa, Carmen Agra Deedy, Sharon McCrumb, Bill Diehl, Newbery winner E.L. Konigsburg, Steve Berry, Annette Laing, Carolyn Haines, Eric Litwin, and James Dean of *Pete the Cat Fame*; American Library Association (ALA) presidents and Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) presidents too many to mention; humorists Ann White, Will Manley, Roy Blount, Jr., Dr. Elliott Engle, and Fanny Flagg, oops, that's a slip.

Let me tell you about the author of *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*. Who better to speak at a southern librarians' conference than a funny southern author! Fannie had been a contestant in the Miss Alabama beauty

contest seven times, never winning. We contacted her agent and in a brief time, we had signed Fannie Flagg as our speaker! There was one caveat: there was a possibility she might have a publicity tour for the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, but they would give us plenty of notice. And as luck would have it...they gave us a month's notice to find another keynoter. Thank goodness we did!

I like to look at Georgia COMO as a friend. My gosh, Georgia COMO is my longest relationship! I have had the privilege of serving as chair of this great group twice and co-chair once and have served on the steering committee twenty-four times!

So Georgia COMO is an old friend. And when I am with this old friend, I see other old friends who are no longer with us, like Charles Beard, Mary Jean Sloan, Jane Morgan, Harriett Brown, and Ona Blankenship.

Now, do me a favor. Close your eyes. Visualize Georgia COMO as a person or an object.

Look...why is Georgia COMO stepping into that phone booth? OMG there's an explosion, look up in the air, it's a bird, it's a plane, it's the Georgia Libraries Conference!

I can't tell you anything about our new friend the Georgia Libraries Conference.

You'll have to meet it next year, at this time, in historic Columbus.

Goodbye old friend, goodbye Georgia COMO, hello Georgia Libraries Conference.

Thank You!

*Gordon Baker is Dean of Libraries  
at Clayton State University*