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Baker Elementary Learning Commons

The Baker Elementary Learning Commons is an elementary school library serving over 800 students in grades K–5. Located in Acworth, Georgia, its mission is to inspire students to be great digital citizens, empower students to be independent readers, and for students to achieve a sense of lifelong learning.

The Baker Learning Commons has a lot of resources to help reach its mission. It has over 10,000 print books, over 900 ebooks, 16 computers, and 30 iPads. Staff and students also have access to the Cobb Digital Library, where they can access research databases such as encyclopedias, BrainPOP, and PebbleGo. In addition to all of this, students have Library PASS which allows them to use the Cobb County Public Library’s databases and check out any books from any branch with just their student number.

Students at Baker are welcome to visit the Learning Commons at any time during the school day (7:15 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.). Students are welcome to come on their own to check out books, read quietly, do schoolwork, etc. Students are also welcome to come as a group to do groupwork. Classes also rotate through the Learning Commons on a regular basis for lessons that incorporate digital citizenship, STEM, read alouds, research skills, and technology integration.

To learn more and see the wonderful lessons students participate in, please visit the website: http://www.cobblearning.net/bakermedia/.
STEM Academy @ Bartlett Library Learning Commons

Located in Savannah, Georgia, the STEM Academy @ Bartlett Library Learning Common’s mission is "to ignite a passion for learning and teaching at high levels."

The STEM Library Learning Commons (STEM LLC) is a makerspace, a classroom, an information-gathering space, hang-out, and lab. The stakeholders at The STEM Academy @ Bartlett demand learning and collaboration at high levels and the learning commons reflect that environment of success and 21st century learning.

The library serves nearly 700 students and approximately 70 staff members. The school offers a 1:1 iPad initiative that is managed through the STEM LLC, along with a physical print library. A growing makerspace is also available for students to create and explore. Students have used this open space to design custom birthday gifts for parents, 3D print science fair models, and create projects just because they were curious.

The STEM LLC collaborates with classrooms and offers lessons on research, coding, and makerspace resources. Each month a different theme encourages student circulation with contests and activities. Students are provided with resources, lessons, and the physical space necessary to blossom into life-long creators and learners at the STEM LLC. There are many other programs offered, such as Georgia Student Media Festival, Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl, and the STEM LLC Giving Tree through the learning commons.

To learn more, please visit stem.sccpss.com and follow @MediaCenterSTEM on Twitter to keep up with the STEM LLC.
Winder Elementary School Media Center

Create! Communicate! Collaborate! While these are buzzwords in education, they are also the mantra of the Winder Elementary School (WES) Media Center. The media center is a learning commons where all students learn in a variety of ways. From the MOID classes to gifted classes, all students are included. The media center promotes literacy and learning.

Each school year begins by allowing students to explore and experience learning that is active and not always quiet. Pokémon Go gave the media center the inspiration for themed scavenger hunts to help teach students about the different areas in the library. QR codes and Flipgrid allow students to blend technology and learn media center rules in a fun and interactive way.

The makerspace encourages students to think outside the box and be responsible for their own learning. The media center requires students to use the Design Process and develop a plan before they begin creating. There are also many exploratory STEM-based learning stations. Students often use the Lego Challenge cards to stretch their creative powers as they work to build something new. Card games are a quiet way to motivate students to read detailed directions and then work with peers to follow them in a fun, engaging way.

While the littles are eager to try new things, the older students sometimes need a bit more motivation. This year, the media center integrated a badging program: WES Ninja Warrior Challenge. Students choose from a variety of challenges including creating avatars, using YouTube to build something in the makerspace, coding, creating videos in the production room, engineering projects, and trying new genres of reading. Students proudly wear the badges they have earned on their library card lanyards.

Throughout the year, the media center engages students with exciting schoolwide literacy competitions. In October, the media center holds the Trick-or-Treat Reading Challenge. Classes compete to see who can read the most minutes and books. In January, the media center hosted the Reading Super Bowl with cross-grade leveled teams that earn points while meeting reading requirements. In the spring, the media center sponsored a two week Read-a-thon.

The media center encourages students to write as well as read. The Blog Board (a large whiteboard) displays student’s thoughts regarding various topics. The media center also
utilizes a mailbox in the shape of a school bus, hosting a variety of contests to encourage students to write the media center and put their submissions in the mailbox. For example, the media center celebrated Picture Book Month in November by having students read picture books and enter written summaries for prizes.

Student voice is a driving force! In addition to the daily excitement, the media center has many special programs. SPED Pre-K and toddler siblings attend a monthly story time. MOID classes come weekly for interactive literature experiences. The gifted students published books and created data-driven book orders for the library. To promote language arts and history, classes participate in Escape Room and Living History reenactments.

There is always something new and exciting in the WES Media Center where everyone creates, communicates, and collaborates! To learn more visit the website at https://www.barrow.k12.ga.us/schools/wes/services/media-center
I expected this issue’s column would focus on the work done at this year’s Midwinter Planning meeting and preparations for our annual conference! Who could have predicted how the world would change in the short months since.

As the COVID-19 crisis escalated in early March, the Georgia Library Association (GLA) Executive Board supported me in issuing a statement calling on libraries in Georgia to close (https://gla.georgialibraries.org/gla-statement-regarding-covid-19/). Most libraries did close, and Georgia librarians made a fantastic effort to continue supporting our communities, students, and colleagues.

Our divisions and interest groups are continuing to support continuing education, collaborative learning, and networking. When possible, events are moving to online formats and will be announced on the GLA listserv.

The Annual Georgia Libraries Conference this year is a joint conference with the Southeastern Library Association and is a celebration of SELA’s 100th anniversary! Due to the health threat posed by COVID-19, the Georgia Libraries Conference committee has made the difficult decision to shift the 2020 conference to a virtual format. Moving to a virtual conference was a necessary decision based on the uncertainty about the likelihood of a fall spike in COVID-19 cases, the lack of a vaccine for the illness, and the devastating impact of the current shutdown on the state budget that funds many of our library travel budgets. We look forward to seeing everyone in person for the 2021 conference.

The Executive Board is working on several initiatives this year. There is a group working on a structure for how GLA can merge or affiliate with other local and regional library organizations. This initiative follows on the structure created last year for organizations to be partners or co-hosts for the Georgia Library Conference. Another group is examining the GLA dues structure and will be making recommendations to the Executive Board for a new model.

An initiative is underway this year to update the Constitution and Bylaws to reflect current practice, adopt new practices, and implement needed changes. Look for votes on these changes during election season this year, in addition to the officer elections.

Later this year, look for some changes to the Membership portal on the GLA Website. An exciting new change that is coming is a new membership directory. This opt-out feature has been a long-desired addition and will be a great new membership benefit.

Now live in the portal, when you renew your membership (or join GLA for the first time) or register for a conference, you will be asked to agree to abide by the GLA Community Agreements https://gla.georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GLACommunityAgreements.pdf. These Community Agreements were approved by the Executive Committee and represent expectations of all members and participants in their interactions at our professional events.

The Advocacy Committee is hard at work tracking bills at the state and federal level that
impact libraries and alerting membership when your voice is needed to call on your representatives for support. You can always click on the Advocacy link on the GLA website to find out about current initiatives, locate your elected officials, and follow activities at the American Library Association (ALA) Washington Office.

2020 is not the year that any of us expected, but Georgia librarians are adapting and continuing to support each other. Thank you.

Laura Burtle
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For many years, my private library existed in a fragmented state. While much of the shelf space in my childhood bedroom was occupied by books (The Hardy Boys, The Lord of the Rings, The Way Things Work, the Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia that my father brought home from the grocery store two volumes at a time), there was ample room left for my boombox, cassette tapes, a few comic books (before they required their own boxes to be stored elsewhere), trophies, and various odds and ends. Conspicuously absent from my shelf was The What’s Happening to My Body? Book for Boys by Lynda Madaras which, obviously, I kept hidden from view in a lower cabinet, covered by heaps of papers even though it was given to me by my parents. It served as my guidebook through puberty and as a successor to Where Did I Come From? by Peter Mayle and Arthur Robins. Some other books from childhood were similarly kept out of sight out of the fear of someone accusing me of having “baby stuff” on my shelves. I simply could not part, however, with my copies of Arnold Lobel’s Frog and Toad are Friends or Charles Schultz’s Christmas is Together Time. They held too many warm, fuzzy memories. Many years later I was to come across Schultz’s holiday classic in the compact shelving while working at Swilley Library at Mercer University. The unexpected jolt of nostalgia I received at that moment was remarkable.

After I went off to college, many of my books, and—most disappointingly—my comic books, vanished into thin air. I was now free to build a new collection from scratch, beginning with the used paperbacks I bought at the University of Georgia (UGA) bookstore for my comparative literature classes. How lucky I was to sidestep the expensive organic chemistry and anatomy textbooks for which my more science-oriented friends were required to take out loans. To top it all off, my books were fun! Well, they broadened my literary horizons anyway. Several of my comp lit professors at the time were focused on postwar Eastern European literature that often dwelled on the banality of life and meditated on crumbling communist ideals. While my friends spent their free time giggling their way through A Confederacy of Dunces, I was desperately trying to hold on to the narrative threads of books like Witold Gombrowicz’s Trans-Atlantyk and wrap my head around the fundamentals of Marxist hermeneutics. I kept some of these books on my shelf the way some hunters mount heads on walls; I fought these books and I won, meaning my eyes moved over every word contained therein but, in the end, comprehension often eluded me.
These were the books of an intellectual, however, so they remained on my shelves over the years—if for no other reason than to anchor an otherwise aimless collection of cookbooks, art books, comics, and zines—and I gave them little thought. A few of the authors from my comp lit days did become favorites, and my Milan Kundera, J.G. Ballard, Yukio Mishima, and Haruki Murakami sections grew. My library grew stagnant in the few years between graduating college and beginning my career in libraries. Predictably, once I began working as a library assistant in a public library system, incidental books started to appear in my hands and on my shelves. The library would partner with a local book distributor during the Friends of the Library book sales and they would donate pallets of extraneous books that had been collecting dust in their warehouse. This is how I ended up with such shelf-fillers as The Corn Cookbook, The Zucchini Cookbook, and an outdated edition of Bicycling Magazine’s Complete Guide to Bicycle Maintenance and Repair. Similarly acquired books through subsequent jobs include The Magician and the Cinema, Analyzing Children’s Art, and A History of Industrial Design. Maybe one day I will open these books again and blankly stare at a few pages before putting them back on the shelf, maybe not.

A defining moment in the life of my library occurred the day I lugged home the pieces for an Expedit 5x5 cube bookshelf from Ikea. Finally, I had one shelf—the shelf—to store most, if not all, of my modest book collection. No longer would I have to sit in front of boxes of books and decide which ones would make the cut and be displayed on the shelf and which ones would remain in a half-empty box being crushed by another, heavier box. Hours after bringing it home and assembling the monolithic shelf, the air still charged by a torrent of inspired cursing, I looked up at what Ikea hath wrought and realized that I didn’t even have enough books to fill this thing. This was a good thing, however, because I wanted to store my LPs on it as well, and this shelf is a popular choice for record owners, with good reason. While I enjoyed having most of my media in one place, the shelf proved to be an imposing and sometimes impeding presence in some of my smaller apartments over the years. It was satisfying, however, to see most everything together in one place, like a family reunited.

The organization schema of my reunited media collection is roughly grouped across fiction/nonfiction and genre. Nonfiction groups include memoirs, primarily by or about comedians and musicians—my current favorite among them being Will Not Attend by Adam Resnick. The books on peak oil that somehow dominated my reading list a few years ago triggered a couple of years of collecting books on self-sufficiency, gardening, and food storage. Being a dedicated city mouse, I file these under “just in case.” The other nonfiction is too varied to properly categorize and the cookbooks live in the kitchen, so that leaves fiction on the big bookshelf. Currently, comics/graphic novels and “literature” are neck-and-neck in the race for shelf space, with the comics growing at a significantly more rapid pace. I’ve taken to
reading one or two good reviews of a comic series that has been around long enough to produce a few trade paperbacks and filling my shelves with multiple volumes without having read a single page. I guess that’s the collector in me. My current dilemma involves the popular series Saga. I am struggling with the decision of collecting the content of its first 54 issues in trade paperbacks or a 1,328-page compendium. I like big books, and I cannot lie, but that much book on my lap might put my legs to sleep.

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Changing the Habitat at Academic Conferences: Using a Learning Ecosystem with Active Learning During a Panel Presentation

By Gail Morton, Lee Olson, Stephanie Miranda, Adam Griggs, Kristen Bailey, Christian Pham, and Kathryn Wright

Introduction

Active learning is commonly used by teaching faculty and librarians as a method of instruction delivery to facilitate student learning and retention. This technique allows students to participate in the learning process rather than passively listening. Examples of active learning include “writing exercises and reflections, debates and dialogues, role playing, problem-based learning, simulations, and small and large group discussions” (Bonnet et al., 2018, p. 501). In addition to delivery of instruction, an active approach often includes an assessment to determine what the students learned. Fosmire and Macklin (2002) have identified an “active learning wave” that has propelled many of the recent trends in higher education in general and library instruction, noting, “research has shown that students learn better when they actively engage the course content, rather than passively absorb lecture material” (para. 1).

Given the popularity of active learning systems among instructional librarians, it is striking how infrequently the strategy is used for conference presentations, the setting in which librarians learn from each other.

The researchers defined their learning ecosystem as the connected learning environment between students, teaching faculty, and librarians (fig.1) that improves and showcases student learning and research. This learning ecosystem is mutually beneficial for all parties involved by promoting academic and professional development, encouraging engaged research, and creating extended learning communities.

In order to assess the effectiveness and feasibility of an active learning approach during a panel session at an academic conference, Mercer University librarians presenting at the Georgia Libraries Conference, Building Better Together, switched the traditional model for their presentation “Brick House: Building Stronger Academic Connections for Student Learning Success.” A traditional structure for a
conference panel presentation allows presenters to deliver prepared remarks, followed by a briefer period of questions and answers. For this panel, the librarians gave a brief overview of their topic and then devoted most of the session to an active learning exercise with the audience. Using two active learning techniques, discussion and brainstorming, the presenters led attendees in a conversation about project ideas involving teaching faculty members, librarians, and students and how this type of learning ecosystem would work, or already works, at their institutions. The librarians participating in the discussion and brainstorming session worked on various library projects, but the model of the learning ecosystem of the projects remained consistent. The Mercer University team of librarians proceeded to assess the use of active learning in the conference presentation.

**Literature Review**

Many conference goers have noted the shortcomings of the traditional conference presentation model and called for an approach that is more learner centered. For example, Levine (2012) argued that conferences are all focusing on the wrong sorts of things, writing that all the “presentations, videos, talks, can be done before the event, and we can use the bulk [of] the time for the stuff that counts—discussion, debates, conversations” (para. 7). It is to these higher-level activities that we should be devoting the majority of our time at academic conferences.

One common suggestion for moving past the traditional conference format has been to flip the conference as an instructor would a classroom. Watters (2012), in her blog entry “Inside Higher Education, Flipping the Conference,” echoes Levine when she wrote, “why do we sit and listen to lectures and panels when what we want most out of our time together is, well, time together?” (para. 1). Watters suggested to send out prerecorded presentations before the conference so that “when we are all in the room together, we can talk and build and share, rather than just sit and listen” (para. 9). Rom (2015) also argued that viewing panels and presentations prior to the conference is necessary, writing that “if we are to remain an innovative profession, it is incumbent on us to embrace technologies that can enhance teaching and learning” (p. 336). Rom provided various “degrees” of change that can help improve the conference format; these range from having all presentations fully pre-recorded and pre-viewed (fully flipped), to showing a video presentation in the conference, to having attendees read the papers in advance. Going on with business as usual, on the other hand, is referred to by Rom as “The Belly Flop” (p. 335).

Laist (2017), in writing for The Chronicle of Higher Education, went even further by bluntly arguing not just that “the panel format is broken” but that academic conferences are plain boring. Laist wrote that “rather than inspiration, what I remember most from those sessions is trying to calculate—based on the number of pages the speaker was holding at the lectern—how much longer the droning would continue” (para. 3). Laist went on to recommend many ways to improve conferences, from banning paper readers to incorporating active learning techniques like flipping the conference, using writing exercises, and live-tweeting the presentations.

Much of the discussion around flipping the conference is focused on ways to make conference panels more engaging with the audience. Abrahams and Weinstein (2017) argued that engagement is key and that we should be inviting our audience to be collaborators. They wrote that “audience engagement fosters positive affect, retention of information, and better recall later” (para. 27).

Another important factor in advocating for better conferences has been the rise of the “unconference” which “brings people together
to talk about topics that they declare via a pre-
unconference wiki or simply on the day” (Thomson, 2014, para. 6). The idea is that
conferences should be personalized and
relevant to those attending and attendees
should have the opportunity to be collaborators
in their own professional development.
Importantly, the unconference model has an
emphasis on active learning techniques and
participatory learning. Overall, there is a strong
sense among those involved in higher education
that the traditional conference needs to be
more balanced between the presenter and the
attendees in order to create learner-focused
sessions.

Learning Ecosystems

Learning ecosystems become fruitful when we
as educators are able to enter the habitat of the
learner using active learning techniques.
Learning ecosystems, defined a little differently
depending on the institution or business, have a
common underlying theme:

To date, our education and training
systems have generally focused on the
delivery and documentation of formal
learning. As a result, we have fostered a
society that values the accreditation of
formal training and education (think
college degrees) and proxy measures of
aptitude (time-based promotions) rather
than life experiences and direct measures
of competence. (Vogel-Walcutt & Schatz,
2019, p. 7)

In the case of a library instruction session,
students placed in an active learning
environment increase their knowledge of the
subject and skills acquired throughout their
student lifecycle. Resources needed in this type
of learning ecosystem include the class’s
instructor, one or more librarians, and an active
learning assignment or project that is
meaningful to the student. The product could
be a written paper about an activity that took
place in the classroom, something created in
service of an assignment, or a researched topic
that will be presented at a student conference.
Within this learning ecosystem, teaching faculty
are available to provide expertise, help with
forming a research question or thesis, or talk to
and provide guidance to students about their
research topic. For their part, librarians are in
an ideal position to teach students information
literacy skills as they are preparing their work
and throughout their research process, and the
product of this research assignment represents
the dynamics of student learning and creativity.
Kenedy and Monty (2011) suggested that there
are “benefits of combining collaborative
teaching and information literacy as
partnerships between librarians and faculty
members […] through the use of a three-stage
pedagogical technique we call Dynamic
Purposeful Learning (DPL)” (p. 116). They wrote:

The partnership between the librarian
and faculty member starts with the
development of the curriculum and the
assignment, and continues well past the
library session to the mentoring of
students throughout the course. To
students, help from both the librarian
and faculty member was seamless as
both were partners in the learning
process. (p. 118)

Background

Active learning at an academic presentation
begins with the setup of the learning session.
Meyers and Jones (1993) identified “four key
elements associated with active learning that
we all use to create new mental structures:
talking and listening, reading, writing and
reflecting” (p. 21). Those elements are the basic
building blocks to creating effective active
learning activities. Furthermore, the four key
elements played a crucial role as we explored
the question: can active learning occur in a
learning ecosystem during a flipped academic
presentation? At our panel presentation, we
emphasized all four elements for both
presenters and attendees. A moderator gave an
outline of the presentation emphasizing the four elements and then introduced the panel. The presenters, one by one, briefly spoke about a project they were working on, focusing on the learning ecosystem of the project rather than what the project was about, thus establishing a learner focus. In the middle of the presentation, two active learning techniques, discussion and brainstorming, were used to interact with the audience. The presenters left the podium area and positioned themselves closer to the audience, and attendees were invited to share what they were doing at their institutions relating to learning ecosystems. Based on those responses, the presenters offered ways to create a learning habitat at these institutions. At the end of the presentation, attendees were given a survey to find out if an active learning event during a panel presentation at an academic conference is an effective and viable strategy to utilize at a conference.

Librarians at Mercer University recognize the importance of an active learning environment. Mathews et al. (2018) proposed that we “embrace the conflicting notion that although more content is being published and more interactions are occurring online there is an ever-greater need for personalized, face-to-face consultation. We know that just because something is digital, that doesn’t mean it is intuitive” (p. 53). Though traditional library-service interactions such as finding research materials, one-on-one research consultations, and citation help are important and well used by patrons, we also recognize that expanding services to include active learning techniques is essential for student achievement in the learning process. Rader (1999) discussed this point:

Librarians are in a unique position to become partners with faculty in curriculum reform and achieving resource-based learning for students. However, to achieve this new role, librarians will have to break out of their traditional reactive mode and become leaders and innovators in their interaction with faculty. (p. 21)

To communicate and express our commitment to these ideas, we prepared a presentation that not only addressed the topic in terms of content (highlighting relationships formed with faculty, their role in the active learning process, and the results of a learning ecosystem focusing on student learning) but also in terms of modality. Laist (2017) wrote, “panel presentations should be the highlight of the conference circuit, yet they tend to be thought of as the ‘vegetables’ that attendees must eat in order to deserve the good stuff” (para. 7). He continued with how inadequate panel presentations are and offers ways to make them more thought provoking and to “transform the panel from a dreary snooze-fest into an energizing encounter” (para. 9). Among the seven ideas, all of which resonated, there was one that we chose to utilize: the flipped presentation. Laist wrote, “the important innovation—the flip—is to replace the typical read-through with a discussion of the presenter’s arguments” (para. 15).

Laist is not the only one who sought new ways of presenting at conferences. Rom (2015) has called “for an almost total transformation of the conventional conference into the ‘customized conference.’ It is, admittedly, a radical proposal—although I believe that there are strong grounds for embracing it” (p. 332). The author continues with the idea of flipping the entire conference, videotaping presentations and providing attendees with the papers to read before the actual presentation is presented. Since we were only involved in flipping our one presentation, we took his idea of a customized conference and turned it into a customized panel of active learning. Additionally, as our discussion is about the learning ecosystem for student learning achievement, we applied this process to our panel attendees. Hurt (2010) suggested a list of techniques that “encourage maximum learning, participation and retention […] including the Jigsaw Grouping
Brainstorming” which resounded with our group. Hurt (2010) suggested:

The attendees are divided into separate groups each with a pre-established, topic, facilitator and flip chart. The participants brainstorm the topic of their group while someone keeps notes on a flip chart. After a prearranged time, members of the group separate and go to other tables where that table’s topic is discussed and the flip chart shared. The facilitator at each table helps start the brainstorming where the previous group ended. At the end, all charts are shared with the attendees. (para. 14)

Method

We used the Jigsaw Grouping Brainstorming model to create the active learning strategy for our library conference panel. The moderator announced to all participants, eight in attendance, what we were going to do in the presentation, gave a handout of what a learning ecosystem looked like at Mercer University, then introduced the panelists. Each panelist spoke very briefly about the project they worked on, emphasizing their successful learning ecosystem. A PowerPoint presentation played in the background as each panelist stood up to speak, connecting the project to the panelist. The moderator then invited all of the panelists to change their physical position to one that was closer to the attendees, and two librarians were designated as facilitators to guide the group using two active learning techniques, discussion and brainstorming, to explore the question: what are the best practices for facilitating learning ecosystems in higher academia or at your institution? Two other panelists were designated as note takers during the session. At the end of the presentation, another panel librarian was responsible for the survey distribution.

The six-question survey contained a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions [Appendix]. The note takers used a similar mixture of methods.

Survey results

A. Quantitative data

All attendees had earned the Masters in Library and Information Science (MLIS). One participant
had both an MLIS and another graduate degree. Five participants had five to fifteen years librarian experience, two had fifteen plus years of experience, and one had one to five years of experience. In response to the question, “how many panel presentations have you attended in your career?” all attendees reported “more than three.” For the last quantifiable question in the survey, seven out of eight reported that they would apply what they learned at this active learning panel presentation. The eighth person responded with “maybe, have some ideas now.”

B. Qualitative data

The last question on the survey was an open-ended question: “What would you change about this presentation?” The answers were favorable.

Figure 3: Active learning technique: Brainstorm

Figure 3: Learning ecosystem created during panel presentation
with comments such as, “it was great, and I wouldn’t change a thing.” A few of the comments included feedback like the interaction/discussion was great, try and incorporate public libraries, the variety made it interesting, and explain how programs were started. A large part of the qualitative data came from the note takers.

The responses to the question “what are the best practices for facilitating learning ecosystems in higher academia or at your institution?” were involved and meaningful. The outcome of this learning event is represented by two Venn diagrams (figure 2 & 3), one using the results from the discussion technique and the other from the brainstorming technique.

Both note takers are reference and instruction librarians. One specializes in the humanities and the other in the sciences. The discussion technique produced more feedback than the brainstorm technique. This was expected, as less time was spent on the brainstorming session. Fifteen minutes were dedicated to discussion and ten minutes to brainstorming. The presentation created its own learning ecosystem residing in the habitat of the librarians’ environment presented in figure 4.

Conclusion

Mercer University librarians presenting at the 2019 Georgia Libraries Conference switched the traditional panel presentation model to encourage active learning. They created a more conversational environment by moving closer to attendees, engaging attendees in a discussion to learn what they are doing at their institutions, and ending with a brainstorming session. A subsequent assessment survey suggested that this approach is feasible and effective at fostering a more productive and collaborative environment. Attendees were open to the idea of presenting this way, and the habitat created was one in which all participants, including presenters and attendees, learned. While these results were encouraging, the number of responses was insufficient to draw a conclusion. It is recommended that this technique be used at future conferences to allow for a larger data pool.

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Christian Pham is Systems Librarian at Mercer University

Kathryn Wright is Archivist at Mercer University
References


Appendix

Survey Questions

1. What is your degree? Select all that apply.
   a. MLIS
   b. Other Graduate Level Degree (Masters or Ph.D.), Subject? ______
   c. Current Student
   d. Other ________

2. How long have you worked in a library?
   a. >1 year
   b. 1-5 years
   c. 5-15 years
   d. 15+ years
   e. Never

3. How many panel presentations have you attended in your career?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. More _____

4. Do you think you have learned anything during the presentation? Yes or No

5. Will you apply what you have learned at the active learning panel presentation? Yes or No

6. What would you change about this presentation?
Georgia Library Association Advocacy Committee

Representing all Georgia libraries, the primary charge of the Georgia Library Association (GLA) Advocacy Committee is to maintain and grow the relationship between libraries and statewide legislative efforts. This involves working to understand the needs of legislators and legislative groups as well as discovering ways to effectively communicate the goals and needs of libraries to these legislative groups and individuals.

Ensuring that various voices across the state and our profession are heard, GLA organizes several advocacy efforts allowing libraries to share with legislators the outcome and impact that both local and statewide decisions have made benefitting libraries and the community they serve. Also, these efforts give libraries the platform to foster important relationships with government agencies. For example, through the Advocacy Committee, GLA coordinates a Library Day at the state Capitol, where library staff from various types of libraries work together to distribute an art print by Debi Davis to every state legislator. There is always much excitement in distributing these prints. Prints from previous years are on display and framed in many of the offices at the Capitol. With the print in hand, legislators and office staff often greet these advocates with a smile as advocates petition for library needs.

On March 4, 2020, a group of library advocates, including library staff and trustees from across the state, gathered together before breaking into small groups and hand delivering prints by Debi Davis to the offices of the legislators. This year’s art print highlights the Carnegie Education Pavilion, more commonly known as the Carnegie Monument.

The Advocacy Committee is dedicated to advocating for all libraries in Georgia. As libraries continue to evolve in services offered, groups served, and in meeting changing demands, government relations must be a primary function of library leadership and professional organizations. Library advocates must shift the conversation from pleading for library needs to demonstrating community outcomes and possible political intersections. Yes, the committee focuses on gathering funding support from Georgia legislators, but librarians must also create relationships allowing us to fully inform legislators, so they are able to make decisions that help libraries and communities.
grow. The fostering of legislative relationships is not a short-term or easy effort. Advocacy efforts require consistency and dedication, a stern will, and belief in what libraries offer. The GLA Advocacy Committee looks forward to continuing its good work with all GLA divisions, interest groups, and committees to sustain these long-term efforts.
Georgia Library Association Reference and Instructional Services Interest Group

The Atlanta Area Bibliographic Instruction Group (AABIG) and the Georgia Library Association (GLA) Reference and Instructional Services Interest Group (RISIG) are pleased to announce that AABIG has folded into the Georgia Library Association. Going forward, AABIG will operate as a part of RISIG.

The AABIG conference has been a staple in the Atlanta area since the early 1980s, offering reference and instruction librarians the opportunity to network and share innovations and best practices in information literacy instruction. The conference’s mission aligns well with RISIG’s statement of purpose, which aims to “advance the informational, bibliographical, instructional, and research services in all types of libraries and at all levels within the State of Georgia” (GLA Interest Groups). Merging AABIG with RISIG allows the conference to move beyond Atlanta to increase access for interested library workers state-wide.

The merger is the result of tireless work by past AABIG President Karen Doster-Greenleaf and 2019 RISIG Chair Catherine Manci. After the 2020 conference, AABIG will move to rebrand and transition its name to the Georgia Libraries Instruction, Teaching, and Reference (GLITR) conference.

RISIG has also started an informal writing group in Slack for GLA members interested in writing and publishing about library instruction and reference. The RISIG Writing Group is hosted in Slack and provides a relaxed environment for prospective and experienced writers alike to share ideas and resources, find collaborators, and workshop writing pieces. The group aims to host virtual and, circumstances allowing, in-person meetups for writers, as well.
Georgia Library Association
Technical Services Interest Group

The Georgia Library Association (GLA) Technical Services Interest Group (TSIG) provides an avenue for those in the technical services field to share the latest news, and discuss current issues and trends in acquisitions, cataloging, classification, electronic resources management, library systems, serials, and related disciplines.

In spring 2020, TSIG has been busy working on agenda items for the year. TSIG deactivated their Pinterest and Slideshow accounts, but fear not, Rachel Evans has been transferring all relevant presentations to GLA’s Slideshow page.

Linh Uong surveyed the membership to determine if there was enough interest in hosting technical services-related workshops. These would be virtual workshops held outside of the annual Georgia Libraries Conference and GLA Midwinter Planning Meeting. Out of 67 respondents, 91% said yes! There were numerous suggestions for topics and the top 10 included OCLC demos & refreshers, tools for data cleanup, Alma demos & refreshers, cataloging serials, special collections and non-book formats, metadata/linked data, cataloging fundamentals, “RDA for the rest of us,” and new trends in cataloging. With such a positive response, TSIG created a new Workshop Subcommittee to start the planning process. The members of the subcommittee consist of the TSIG officers, along with Kelly Ansley, LaGrange College, and Bernard Buleme, South Georgia Regional Library.

Keep an eye out for upcoming dates for the first Technical Services Workshop and other news posted by the TSIG secretary, Rebecca Hunnicutt, and visit TSIG at:

TSIG page: https://gla.georgialibraries.org/interest-groups/

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/150109465199446/

Your TSIG Officers:
Linh Uong, Chair
Rachel Evans, Vice Chair/Chair Elect
Rebecca Hunnicutt, Secretary
**In the News**

**Digital Library of Georgia**

Valdosta State University Archives Map and Plat Collections Now Available Online

Three map and plat collections featuring historical maps, plats, deeds, records, and correspondence pertaining to South Georgia land holdings dating from 1767 to 1899 are now available in the Digital Library of Georgia (DLG). These resources belong to Valdosta State University Archives. They have been made available online thanks in part to the DLG's Competitive Digitization grant program, a funding opportunity intended to broaden DLG partner participation for statewide historic digitization projects.

The three digital collections include:

- **Deeds and Plats, Georgia**, available at [dlg.usg.edu/collection/valdosta_ms18](dlg.usg.edu/collection/valdosta_ms18), consisting of residential and commercial deeds, plats, maps, and other documents from counties and towns, mostly in southeast Georgia, dating from 1767 to 1899.

- **Deeds, Camden County, Georgia**, available at [dlg.usg.edu/collection/valdosta_ms21](dlg.usg.edu/collection/valdosta_ms21), which includes deeds, plats, land grants, and legal documents dating from 1833 to 1899 regarding land in Camden County, Georgia, and northern Florida.

- **John Adam Treutlen, June 1767**, available at [dlg.usg.edu/collection/valdosta_ms165](dlg.usg.edu/collection/valdosta_ms165), a land grant dated June 1767 assigned by King George III of England conveying 400 acres of land in the parish of Saint Matthew, Georgia to John Adam Treutlen, Georgia’s first elected governor.

Digitization, description, and online access to these collections provide historical value to Georgia genealogists, and researchers of South Georgia and its development.

John G. Crowley, associate professor in the Department of History at Valdosta State University noted:

Materials such as these are invaluable to genealogists and historians. They reveal patterns of land use, settlement, industrial development, and those involved in such enterprises. For the genealogist, land records are a source of general background information on individuals and families, establish patterns of movement and employment, and often reveal family relationships otherwise unknown or unproven. Southern historians, local historians, and genealogists both amateur and professional will profit enormously from improved access to this material.

Chris Meyers, professor of history at Valdosta State University stated that “the collections to be digitized represent what a genealogist would consider a prized find. Deed records fill significant gaps in genealogical research and making these records available to all, through digitization, represents a significant service to all genealogists.”

**Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Select Georgia Towns and Cities Dating From 1923–1941 Now Available for Free Online**

The Digital Library of Georgia has just made Sanborn fire insurance maps produced between
Sanborn maps were designed to assist fire insurance agents in determining fire hazards for properties by outlining the construction of buildings and their elements, as well as the location of water facilities, house and block numbers, and the names of streets. They have proven useful in researching urban growth and decline, urban planning design, and the historic use of buildings in a city.

Cari Goetcheus, associate professor in the College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia noted:

Sanborn maps are a wonderful snapshot of place in time from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. Originally created by insurance companies to understand building materials in cities so they could decide what and how to insure the built environment, these maps offer much more than that by providing insight into Georgia’s diverse cultural, political, social, economic, and geographic history. For example, my students and I have most recently been using Athens Sanborn maps to document land-use change in an area known as Hot Corner, the historically black business district of Athens from the late 1800s to the 1970s.

Valerie Glenn, librarian and head of the University of Georgia’s Map and Government Information Library noted:

Because the maps contain such rich details, they provide a clear picture of a town as it existed—culturally, socially, economically, geographically. Users can see how many banks, or theatres, or piano stores existed; the “colored” schools and churches; and the distance between the river and the cigar factory. Over time this makes it easier for users to, for example, identify changes to historically African American neighborhoods in a given town or see the development, expansion, and/or decline of a central business district.

Digitization of City Directories for Albany, Georgia, Dating From 1922–1950.

New online records are now available for people researching their families in Albany, Georgia. The Digital Library of Georgia has just added a collection of city directories housed at the Dougherty County Public Library, dating from 1922–1950. The collection, Albany, Georgia City Directories, is available at dlg.usg.edu/collection/zgn_albcd and contains 11 directories covering Albany during
intermittent years from 1922 to 1950, and one 1937 directory from Americus.

City directories existed before telephone directories and often listed the names, addresses, occupations, and ethnicities of people in American towns and cities. Because they contain so much detailed information, they are vital resources for researchers, genealogists, and the general public. According to the Library of Congress, city directories "are among the most important sources of information about urban areas and their inhabitants. They provide personal and professional information about a city's residents as well as information about its business, civic, social, religious, charitable, and literary institutions."

Christina Shepherd, head of reference for the Dougherty County Public Library described the relevance of Albany's city directories to the researchers in her library:

Several patrons have asked to use the directories to see who lived in their house, to trace an ancestor’s life, verifying use of land, or to see who ran what businesses. A specific example is in 1940 there was a tornado that came through and destroyed a lot of downtown Albany. While these directories do not show that event, they show the city stayed strong after that event. The directories have the addresses where businesses were before the tornado in 1939 to where they had to relocate in 1941. Just think, those directories were the same books that our relatives, our city leaders, and others used to find an address or phone number!

J. Douglas Porter, a writer based in Albany, Georgia noted:

Much of the material I have been looking at has been digitized and is searchable. This has not only been a useful time-saver, but it has also proven to be more reliable than my visual scans of many pages of materials. The city directories have a high level of historic value and potential for reuse by multiple audiences well into the future. In fact, they will become even more valuable as time passes and the paper copies crumble.
Coming of Age in a Hardscrabble World: A Memoir Anthology edited by Nancy C. Atwood and Roger Atwood (The University of Georgia Press, 2019: ISBN 9780820355320, $29.95)

Coming of Age compiles 30 chapters from 30 memoirs, each chapter telling a single author’s coming-of-age tale. Well-known authors such as Maya Angelou, Tobias Wolff, and bell hooks are included in this anthology, as well as some lesser-known authors. Each author has a unique coming-of-age story, with veins of similarity running between most. Poverty, single mothers, immigration, and feelings of inadequacy are common themes in these autobiographical Bildungsromane.

The editors, Nancy C. Atwood and her son Roger Atwood, have organized these 30 nonfiction stories into nine like sections (e.g., neighborhoods). They have provided critical commentary at the end of each section as well as discussion questions.

In the chapter “All Over but the Shoutin’,” author Rick Bragg describes growing up in rural Alabama during racial segregation under the oppressive rule of Governor George Wallace, a.k.a. Fighting Judge. Bragg describes living in poverty with his alcoholic, abusive father whose heated language was peppered with racial slurs and his mother who tried to protect him and his brothers from the constant abuse. Of his dad, Bragg says, “…to find what ultimately shaped and softened my own family, I have to reach back into the darkest and ugliest time of my childhood…we have to peel back layers of bad, the last few months we lived with our daddy, the year we went to sleep every night afraid.” Bragg has a vivid memory of walking in on his mom pouring his dad’s moonshine down the drain at the kitchen sink one day after school, while thinking, “He’s gonna kill you, Momma. He’s gonna kill you for that.” Momma’s response to his dad’s anger over the discovery: “don’t hurt my teeth.” When his dad finally left the family for good, Bragg was shocked at the kindness of an African American sharecropper family who lived less than a mile away. He wondered how one of these families could send their little boy to his house with corn to eat after he and his brothers had thrown rocks at and made fun of them. In the neighboring town of Anniston, white people beat the Freedom Riders and burned their buses, yet this family had the courage to help a white family in need. Bragg would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize for his work with The New York Times.

In 1960, author Sandra Scofield found herself at the University of Texas, Austin at 17 years old to escape her stepfather and stepmother, who preferred she skip college and find work as an unskilled laborer. Never having attended a college football game, she happily accepted an
invitation to watch her college team play on television at an acquaintance’s house. While the guys at the party got drunk on beer purchased at a nearby 7-Eleven with a fake ID, Sandra also got drunk for the first time. She decided she’d had enough when the living room began spinning, so she found an air-conditioned room, threw up and peed, and then passed out. She awoke to being raped. Three of the partygoers took turns raping her, while she cried, begged, and screamed, “No!” She was unable to discuss her trauma until several months later when she confessed to her roommate, Darlene. She responded, “…really it was nothing and I would get over it.” Darlene had also been raped by half of the high school team for which she had been a cheerleader. Darlene ended up in the hospital while the boys who viciously took her virginity escaped punishment. Her parents were raising her baby as her little brother to avoid scandal. Scofield would later win a literary award from the Texas Institute of Letters and become a National Book Award finalist.

This title is highly recommended for public and academic libraries, high school media centers, and historical society libraries.

Kristi Smith is Catalog/Metadata Librarian at Georgia Southern University, Armstrong Campus
A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia

Filled with an abundance of natural and cultural wonders, from the flora and fauna to the colorful people who inhabit the land itself, Appalachia is a unique region of the United States. In A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia, McLarney, Street, and Gaddy have compiled a love letter to the multifaceted nature of the southern Appalachians—that is, the Appalachian Mountains in the southern United States.

In this “literary field guide,” the editors have put together a compendium of poetry, art, and facts about the flora and fauna of the southern Appalachians. The book is broken into seven sections, one for each type of organism—from plants and fungi to mammals and insects. Each of these sections contains an entry for an organism found in the region, with information about its habitat and various notes on population, cultural significance, or other interesting scientific or historical facts. Also included is a sketch and a poem inspired by the organism.

While the book contains works by well-known authors such as Wendell Berry and Janisse Ray, it also includes works by lesser-known authors. Similarly, it covers species widely known throughout the region and species found only in isolated locations. The most interesting part of the work is the poetry paired with each entry, so this review will take a look at some particularly poignant poems. In the entry for the American ginseng, Glenis Redmond writes in her poem “Living Jazz,” “No doctor’s care for us, so with poultices we/mishmash and make-do/living jazz./ Ginseng, you sing loudest in June./Hear us sing too. Read sang...” This is in reference to the belief in folk healing that ginseng (colloquially “sang”) is a remedy for injury and sadness. Redmond’s poem connects the plant to its cultural significance in Appalachian culture. Similarly, Thorpe Moeckel takes an historical approach to the Oconee bells, a flower native only to the banks of Lake Jocassee in the Carolinas. Moeckel imagines the flowers narrating two girls plucking them and laying them on their dead relatives after a raid killed many Cherokee villagers in the area in 1760. He writes, “Runner-stem by runner-stem, the sisters/unstitched us from the duff: leaf, flower, root/and all. June, Green Corn Moon, it was,/De ha lu yi, and we were in capsule, mute/as ever while the two maidens bent, fingers/still quivering, numb with numb... and with us/wrapped every corpse—there were a lot.”

Other notable entries include one for the eastern wood rat, commonly known as the pack rat, where Nickole Brown extolls the value of making do with what one has, of taking from life what one is given and creating something
useful—even beautiful—from it. Adrian Blevins, in his poem for the gray fox, catalogues lists of creatures once native to the Appalachians but now extinct there, such as the Carolina parakeet, the woodland bison, and the mountain lion. In this way, he praises the gray fox for her fortitude in staying strong in the face of competition with the non-native red fox and takes his own strength from this knowledge.

This book offers a unique look into both the natural and cultural history of a unique and vibrant region of the country. The combination of poetry and natural history creates an understanding of the Appalachian region as a place tied to a sense of identity and belonging. This book is highly recommended for collections that focus on Appalachian or Southern history and culture or any library located in that region.

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