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From the President

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From the PRESIDENT

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.

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