

2016

Student Associations News and Events

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Student Associations News

LISSA Update

Overwhelming Reassurance: A First-timer's Experience at ALA Annual
By Michael Oden, LISSA President

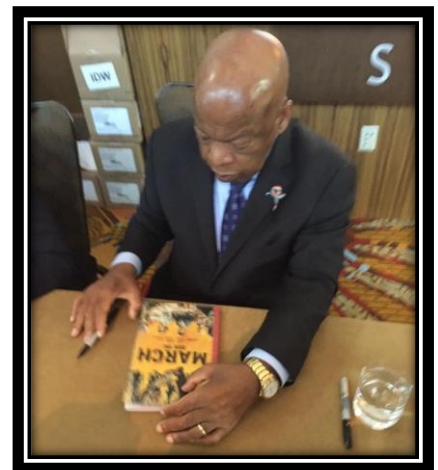
'Overwhelming' was the first word that popped into my head upon arriving at the Orange County Convention Center for the first day of ALA's Annual Conference. This was early on Friday, the official opening day of the conference, before the exhibits had opened and the bulk of the crowd had arrived. Still, the sheer size the place (what I would later find out is the second-largest convention center in the United States), not to mention the two-inch-thick event brochure, awed me. I don't know exactly what I was expecting of the conference, but it wasn't what I found. This was certainly no trivial event, nor was it evidence of an outdated, dying profession, as librarianship is often thought of by the general public and portrayed in the media. If I had any doubts about my career choice going into the conference, they were soon dispelled. In fact, I would soon discover that this conference was evidence of a vibrant, thriving profession, filled with engaging and energetic people who are striving to be on the cutting edge of technology and society as a whole.

A little background on my situation: I was an MLIS candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi who was also working at the campus as a graduate assistant. One of my professors encouraged me to apply for the ALA's Student to Staff program, a program that allows 40 MLIS students from across the country free registration to the ALA's Annual Conference, along with free lodging in the area. The only condition is that they must work at least 16 hours over the course of the conference assisting an ALA unit. It seemed like a pretty great deal to me, so I applied and was, fortunately, accepted. I eventually learned that I would be working with the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS). This would not only allow me to experience the conference as a whole, but also to see the inner workings of a specific area of librarianship.

The Orlando Convention Center is massive; and yet, the space did not seem wasted. From almost the get-

go the place was teeming with people and most of the rooms were being used (or were preparing to be used) for various events. And this was before the massive exhibition area even opened its doors! That first day I spent mostly gathering my bearings and planning for the remainder of the conference. After looking over the conference grounds and studying the schedule of events, one thing struck me: librarians do not shy away from social issues. Evidence of this came from the bathrooms, every other one of which was labeled "Gender Neutral" and open to everyone, regardless of gender identity. It was a bold statement in light of the controversial legislation in North Carolina, and showed the willingness of the ALA to speak out on issues of inclusivity and discrimination. Further evidence of the ALA's progressive nature could be found in the featured speaker list, which included teen environmental and girls' rights activist Maya Penn; actress and autism awareness activist Holly Robinson-Peete; and transgender personality and LGBTQ rights activist Jazz Jennings. In fact, the entire list of speakers was full of diverse personalities from all backgrounds, races, and gender and sexual identities. However one may feel about these issues, it cannot be denied that the ALA has made every effort to be inclusive and to make sure all voices are heard.

One of the highlights of the conference for me came on Saturday morning, my second day, when Congressman John Lewis of Georgia spoke about his graphic novel *March*. I had only learned the day before that he would be there and had originally planned on seeing featured speaker Margaret Atwood during that time; however, I could not pass up the opportunity to see Representative Lewis. His presence was even more poignant due to the recent shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando less than two weeks earlier. He addressed it, of course, in a stirring fashion which helped to comfort and give



hope to the crowd. He also touched on his history of civil rights activism, which is the subject of *March*. Lewis' message of disobedience for a good cause resonated with the crowd and he received multiple (and deserved) standing ovations. It was a message that we could get behind, not just in the wake of recent events, but in general as we sought to allow the free access of information and ideas even when they are controversial and unpopular. I imagine it helped us all to appreciate what we do (or are trying to do) and pushed us to be better. This was no doubt one of the best parts of the conference, and the fact that I was able to shake Congressman Lewis' hand and have him sign a copy of his book was icing on the cake.

I spent the next couple of days in a whirlwind, attending all manner of events. As a book enthusiast, I was quite excited by the large number of authors attending the conference. Although I had missed her earlier, I was able to catch another session with Margaret Atwood in which she spoke about her upcoming graphic novel *Angel Catbird*.



Atwood was extremely funny and just delightful overall. She also divulged that her classic novel *The Handmaid's Tale* would be made into a graphic novel in the not-too-distant

future. The takeaway here is that graphic novels are not just an emerging literary form; they have emerged, and prominent authors (as well as politicians and activists such as John Lewis) are embracing them more and more. They are a legitimate form of adult literature and librarians, if they have not already done so, should take notice!

I also attended a session in which science fiction authors discussed alternate history, and another in which a diverse array of award-winning authors discussed (and later signed) their books. Overall, including the numerous advanced reader copies I picked up from the exhibition floor, I ended up with

close to 30 books, which was enough to break the strap on my complimentary tote bag.

While I could have spent the entire conference going to book signings and meeting authors, I also wanted to gain some professional development and insight into the profession of librarianship. I was able to attend some sessions on using Internet tools and emerging technologies for library instruction. These were quite useful, and I was able to take what I learned from them and turn it into a presentation which I later delivered to the staff of the library at South Georgia State College, where I was working as an intern. I also attended a helpful session on using data for library assessment.

Throughout the conference I met a number of interesting and innovative people. I was able to talk with a woman from Nebraska who created a space that focuses on allowing the community to learn and create using the latest technology. It brands itself as a technology library and is almost like a giant makerspace, allowing patrons free access to expensive equipment and software. It demonstrates what is possible in librarianship and how the profession has evolved (and continues to evolve). Promoting digital and technological literacy was a major focus of much of the conference. It shows that libraries are not only surviving in the digital age but thriving, and they will continue to do so as more people seek instruction and guidance in the use of emerging technologies.

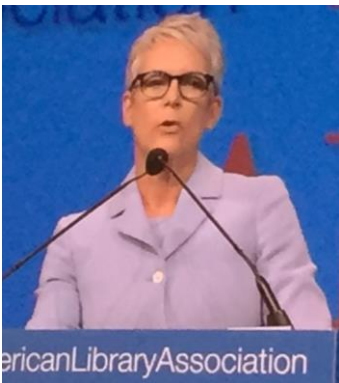
As part of the Student to Staff program, I was required to work for the privilege of attending the conference. Thankfully, the work was just as rewarding as the sessions I attended. A highlight of my duties was assisting in a book signing by bestselling author Brad Meltzer. I ended up with a signed copy of his new children's book *I am Martin Luther King, Jr.*, as well as a brief chat and grateful handshake from Mr. Meltzer, who is a very nice and down-to-earth guy. Another highlight was being able to attend two board meetings for ALCTS. It was great insight into how a division of ALA functions. One of the major topics of conversation at the meetings was a discussion about making the unit's peer-reviewed journal (*Library Resources & Technical Services*) entirely open-access. It was fascinating and

encouraging to hear them talk about responding to recent trends and developments in the field. To cap things off I spent some time volunteering at the ALA Lounge, where people occasionally stopped by to ask for directions or take pictures with Snoopy, who was there to promote Library Card Signup Month.



(signed editions by Charlie Jane Anders, Caherynne Valente, Brian Staveley, Sarah Monette)

The conference closed with a talk from actress Jamie Lee Curtis. Her message, like so many of the others at the conference, was one of hope and change. These are also the ideas that I took away from the conference: hope for the future, no matter the present; and the need to change and innovate to bring that hope to fruition.



Far from being a dying profession, librarianship is riding the wave of the future and seeking to evolve, not just technologically but socially as well. As keepers and distributors of knowledge, librarians bear a heavy burden; they must keep that knowledge flowing, no matter who wants it, and not matter their personal feelings. This, inevitably, leads to change and to controversy, but it also leads to growth, and librarians are responsible for allowing that growth to happen. Based on what I saw at the conference, I have no doubt that librarians, as a whole, are up to the task of continuing that growth. Their place in the world is not threatened by technology; rather, it is bolstered, and they are needed now more than ever.

I am extremely encouraged by what I saw at ALA and have never been happier to have chosen librarianship

as a profession. I began the conference overwhelmed; I left it overwhelmingly reassured.

LISSA broadcasts its meetings via Blackboard and meeting dates are announced via the SLIS listserv. You are invited to join our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/southernmisslissa

Southern Miss Student Archivists (SMSA) at the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival



GAs Carlie Burkett and Mary Dugan at the SMSA/LISSA student groups table

For their Spring 2016 service project, the Southern Miss Student Archivists (SMSA) group participated in the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival, held April 6-8, 2016, at USM Thad Cochran Center.

SMSA, in partnership with the Library and Information Science Student Association (LISSA), organized a hospitality table on the second floor. Student officers and Faculty Advisor, Dr. Matthew Griffis, distributed information about SLIS programs and helped direct attendees as needed. To fundraise, the SMSA/LISSA sold a variety of items (including buttons, magnets, and canvas bags). On Wednesday, SMSA sponsored a Coffee Meet-and-Greet during the first of the Book Festival's autographing sessions.

SMSA membership is free and open to all USM students, alumni, faculty, and staff with an interest in archives and special collections. Our membership form for 2016-17 is available here: docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdc87pd_zygS3ZJZzaaxKeTC9ZxVLPWrAeeKwruNnzBG151dQ/viewform?c=0&w=1.

Being a registered member of SMSA not only will enhance your resume or CV, you will also have access to information about additional learning and development opportunities. Local and non-local members are invited to attend association meetings via Blackboard and will have access to useful information about the groups' activities and community projects. And of course, everyone is welcome to "like" our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/Southern-Miss-Student-Archivists-SMSA-203760579638985/

If you have questions about our projects or SMSA in general, please contact us. We always welcome new members as well as ideas for projects and activities.

Kind regards,
Dr. Matthew Griffis, Faculty Advisor

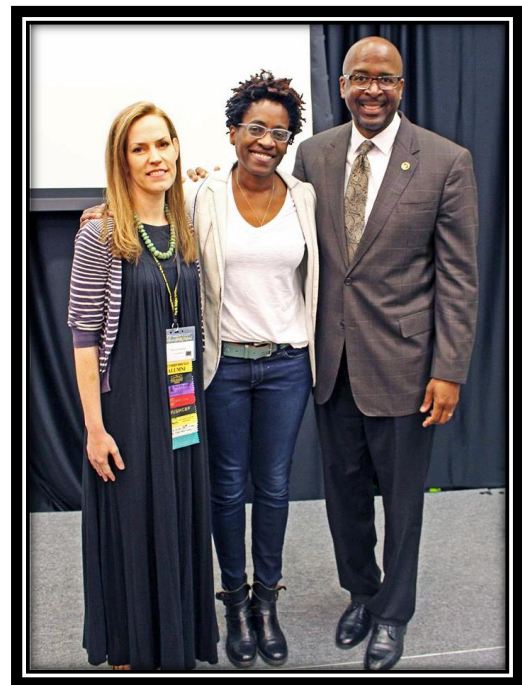
2016 USM Children's Book Festival Featured Jacqueline Woodson

The 49th annual Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival, sponsored by the Southern Miss School of Library and Information Science was held April 6-8, 2016, at USM Thad Cochran Center. The highlight of the festival was the presentation of the Southern Miss Medallion awarded to **Jacqueline Woodson**. Woodson was the 2014 National Book Award Winner for her *New York Times* bestselling memoir, *Brown Girl Dreaming*.

The author of more than two dozen books for young readers, she is a four-time Newbery Honor winner, a recipient of the NAACP Image Award, a three-time National Book Award finalist, a two-time Coretta Scott King Award winner and was recently named the Young People's Poet Laureate by the Poetry Foundation.



Other outstanding authors and illustrators included: **Michael Cart**, a columnist and reviewer for *Booklist* magazine, is a leading expert in the field of young adult literature. The author or editor of 23 books including his history of young adult literature *From Romance to Realism* and the coming of age novel *My Father's Scar*, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, he is a past president of both the Young Adult Library Services Association and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English. He is the 2000 recipient of the Grolier Award and the first recipient of the YALSA/Greenwood Press Distinguished Service Award.



Karen Rowell, Jacqueline Woodson,
USM President Dr. Rodney Bennett

Southern Miss 2003 Medallion winner **Lois Lowry**, one of the world's most beloved and versatile authors, has sold millions of books worldwide and twice received the Newbery Medal, for *Number the Stars* (1990) and *The Giver* (1994). Other honors: Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, California Young Reader's Medal, and Mark Twain Award. She is the U.S. 2016 nominee for the biennial, international Hans Christian Andersen Award and In 2007, she received the Margaret A. Edwards Award for her contribution to young adult literature.

George O'Connor's first graphic novel, *Journey Into Mohawk Country*, used the historical journal of the 17th century Dutch trader Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert. He followed up with *Ball Peen Hammer*, first graphic novel written by playwright Adam Rapp, a dark dystopian view of a society's collapse as intimately viewed by four lost souls. Now he has brought his attention to *Olympians*, an ongoing series retelling classic Greek myths in comics form. In addition to his graphic novel career, Mr. O'Connor has published several children's picture books, including the *New York Times* best-selling *Kapow*, *Sally and the Some-Thing*, and *Uncle Bigfoot*. He lives in Brooklyn.

As Executive Director of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, **Dr. Deborah Pope** has directed its work toward increasing diversity in children's literature and enriching the quality of public education. Through her efforts, the Ezra Jack Keats Book Award is recognized internationally as an imprimatur of quality children's books for a multicultural audience. Deborah came to the Foundation after an extensive career in theater and arts-in-education. She has two daughters, and lives with her husband in Brooklyn, New York.

Joyce Sidman is winner of the 2013 NCTE Award for Excellence in Children's Poetry and author of many award-winning children's poetry books, including Newbery Honor book *Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night*, and two Caldecott Honor books: *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems* (Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award winner) and *Red Sings from Treetops: A Year in Colors* (won the Claudia Lewis Poetry Award). She teaches poetry writing to children and participates in national poetry events. Her recent critically acclaimed book, *What the Heart Knows: Chants, Charms & Blessings*, is a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award. Joyce lives with her husband and dog in Wayzata, Minnesota.

Since entering the world of children's books with illustrations for James Howe's *Pinky and Rex* series, **Melissa Sweet** has illustrated many children's books, from board books to picture books. She received a Sibert Medal for *Balloons over Broadway* and Caldecott Honors for *A River of Words* by Jen Bryant and *The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus* also by

Jen Bryant, and two *New York Times* Best Illustrated citations. Melissa currently lives in Rockport, Maine, and loves riding her bike and hiking with her two dogs. Melissa's newest book, *Some Writer! The Story of E.B. White* is to be published in fall 2016.

Tim Tingle is an Oklahoma Choctaw and award-winning author and storyteller. His great-great grandfather, John Carnes, walked the Trail of Tears in 1835, and paternal grandmother attended a series of Indian boarding schools in the early 1900s. Tingle began collecting tribal stories in the early 90s. His first children's book, *Crossing Bok Chitto*, (Cinco Puntos Press, 2005), garnered over twenty state and national awards. In 2010 Tingle released *Saltpie* and contributed the story *Rabbit's Tail Tale* to award-winning anthology *Trickster*. Both *Saltpie* and *Trickster* were selected as American Library Association Notable Books.

Author of several award winning novels, **Rita Williams-Garcia** continues to break new ground in young people's literature. Known for their realistic portrayal of teens of color, Williams-Garcia's works were recognized by the Coretta Scott King Award Committee, PEN Norma Klein, American Library Association, and Parents' Choice. She says, "My readers are always sharper than my characters. They are always telling the characters a thing or two. I like that. That's why I enjoy writing for teens. Teens think. They question." Rita recently served on the National Book Award Committee for Young People's Literature and is on faculty at Vermont College MFA Writing for Children and Young People.

The Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival is Proud to Host the Ezra Jack Keats Book Awards

Since 1985, the Ezra Jack Keats Book Awards have been given to outstanding new writers and new illustrators of picture books for children who share Ezra's values: the universal qualities of childhood and multicultural nature of our world. Now in partnership with the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, the EJK Book Awards continue to encourage the next generation of talented authors and illustrators who are committed to celebrating diversity through writing and art.

For more information about the 2017 Children's Book Festival, please visit www.usm.edu/children-book-festival or call 601.266.4228.

British Studies Class of 2016

The Southern Miss British Studies LIS class of 2016 consisted of students from USM as well as from other LIS programs from across the country: San Jose State University, Simmons College, University of Buffalo SUNY, University of North Texas, University of South Carolina, University of Wisconsin, and Wayne State University. The class was led by Dr. Teresa Welsh and Graduate Assistant and British Studies alum (class of 2014) Mary Dugan.



Students at King's College Maughan Library Special Collections



British Studies LIS Class of 2016
Steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, London

This year's class stayed during the month of June in London at University of Westminster Alexander Fleming Hall and in Edinburgh at the University of Edinburgh Pollock Hall. Day trips included visits to Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon with optional visits to Bletchley Park and to Blythe House Beatrix Potter Archive.

Something new this year was an overnight stay and visit to a beautiful and historic Durham. Our host, Jon Purcell, Director of Durham University Library, provided wonderful lectures and guided visits to Durham Cathedral, Durham University Libraries, and Ushaw College Archive.



University of Edinburgh New College Library

Information about the program is available at the British Studies link at: <http://www.usm.edu/slris>