



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Lost & Found Exhibition Examines the Constantly Changing Fabric of Our World

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For Immediate Release

Fading black-and-white photographs and yellowing handwritten letters in a safe deposit box. The records of a historic African American business found in a dumpster. The conscious decision to destroy private papers. The destruction of archives by chance and nature. All illustrate what we collect and value in our cultural landscape.

Lost and Found, a new exhibition opening at the Library of Virginia on February 27, examines the constantly changing fabric of our world. Things disappear, sometimes almost without notice—signs, buildings, even towns—and others go into attics, basements, and landfills. Some are saved and carefully stored and preserved; others intentionally destroyed, sometimes dramatically.

Visitors can explore the various layers of the world of *Lost and Found*, from the spectacular destruction of archives by chance and nature to the intentional destruction of personal papers, from the deliberate preservation of family items to the careful assemblage of materials in a bank safe deposit box. You will be asked: “What do I collect and value?” and to consider what is ephemeral. The experience of the exhibition can be contemplative or interactive.

The Library of Virginia holds the most comprehensive collection of materials related to Virginia’s history and culture. Yet these materials are only a fraction of what once existed. Fire, war, flood, decay, and digital “data rot” have obliterated pieces of our individual and collective past. *Lost and Found* explores examples of this destruction—from the fires during Bacon’s Rebellion to Martha Washington’s burning of her correspondence with George Washington to the floods and fires that destroyed records kept in courthouses around the state—and doesn’t neglect the story of mundane losses from deteriorating acetate negatives and floppy disks.

The exhibition also examines how people collect and order the records of their lives through scrapbooks, time capsules, private libraries, family papers, and collections of advertising cards—all reflecting how we see the world through the selection and ordering of such material. Some objects that we collect have deep personal and governmental meaning.

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One item on display in the exhibition poignantly highlights the difference a piece of paper can make. Lucy Jarvis Pearman Scott registered in the Hustings Court of Henrico County on June 19, 1848, as a Free Person of Color. She turned in her “free papers” from York County that she had carried on her body every day, so that she could receive a new registration in the county where she now lived. The difference between quasi-freedom and jail—even re-enslavement—for Lucy Scott was a mere scrap of paper. If challenged, she would need to produce her papers or be arrested. This document had a meaning for Lucy Scott that we can barely understand, and the vital item is a key piece of *Lost and Found*.

Most of us collect something—baseball cards or autographs, books or family mementos. Many of us create scrapbooks that reflect our personal interests. *Lost and Found* showcases the personal and the professional, the ephemeral and the profound, examples of personal collections, scrapbooks, and time capsules. It tells large stories and small ones. The exhibition highlights items in the Library’s vast collections that offer intriguing glimpses into our past and show the promise of new endeavors such as the Civil War 150 Legacy Project in garnering greater insight into our shared history.

Lost and Found runs through August 25, 2012, and is free and open to the public Monday through Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, excluding state holidays.

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