Virginia's Deaf Culture Digital Library Offers Resources and Information to the Commonwealth's Deaf Community

New website is a collaboration between the Central Rappahannock Regional Library and the Library of Virginia.

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(Richmond, Virginia) – The Library of Virginia is pleased to present Virginia's Deaf Culture Digital Library, deaflibva.org, a website with resources and information for the commonwealth's Deaf community. A collaboration between the Central Rappahannock Regional Library and the Library of Virginia, the Deaf Culture Digital Library was established in 2021 after a two-year review and development process that included interviews with Deaf community members and research into Virginia resources for the Deaf.

Babak Zarin, Access Services librarian at CRRL, had been contacted by ReBecca Bennett, who at the time was serving as the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach coordinator at the disAbility Resource Center in Fredericksburg. She felt that the local community could benefit from a Deaf Culture Digital Library similar to one in Maryland and wanted to know whether the local library system would be interested in starting one. In 2019, Zarin brought the idea of addressing this unmet need for all Virginians with hearing loss to the Library of Virginia's director of Library Development and Networking, Nan Carmack.

"Deaf culture digital libraries allow for vital community resources and Deaf culture to be shared with relative ease, and can help foster greater connection between public libraries and members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community," said Zarin. "I continue to be surprised at how often this particular community gets overlooked in library services. As a 2019 article in Forbes magazine noted, ASL (American Sign Language) is currently the third most commonly studied language in colleges and universities and the third most frequently requested language for court interpretation, which implies that ASL users are the fourth largest monolingual population in the U.S."

Virginia's Deaf Culture Digital Library offers:

- resources and information related to deaf culture

- an excellent collection of deaf resources in digital formats

- access to information regardless of location

- assistance for Virginia residents, for library staff in local public library systems, for academic librarians in colleges and universities, and for staff in other Virginia libraries

The website is a work in progress and seeks the collaboration of the Deaf community through feedback, referrals to additional resources, and submissions of Deaf culture events across the commonwealth. To offer information for inclusion, please contact Babak Zarin at babak.zarin@crrl.org or Nan Carmack at nan.carmack@lva.virginia.gov.

Virginia's Deaf Culture Digital Library is made possible by funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and was created within the context of a federally funded Library Science and Technology Act project that provides a user-friendly web development platform to Virginia libraries that need extra support.

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ABOUT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA
The Library of Virginia is one of the oldest agencies of Virginia government, founded in 1823 to preserve and provide access to the state's incomparable printed and manuscript holdings. Its collection, which has grown steadily through the years, is the most comprehensive resource in the world for the study of Virginia history, culture, and government with over 130 million items in the collections. The Library also engages the public through in-person and virtual events, education programs, and online resources that reach nearly 4 million individuals each year throughout the commonwealth and beyond.

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