

broadSIDE



the magazine of the **LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA**

2025 | NO. 3



VIRGINIA UNTOLD
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN NARRATIVE

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LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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LIBRARIAN OF VIRGINIA

Dennis T. Clark

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THE INSIDE STORY

From the Librarian of Virginia

As we close out 2025, the Library of Virginia continues to build momentum toward a transformative future. This issue of Broadside features two stories that reflect both our enduring mission and our strategic evolution.

First, we're proud to share an update on Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative. This project remains one of our most vital efforts to illuminate the lives of enslaved and free Black Virginians before 1867. The collection continues to grow, and with it, our understanding of the individuals and communities whose stories have long been hidden. We hope you'll explore the latest additions and share them widely.

You'll also learn about Scott Weingart, our new chief technology officer, in a Q&A-style profile. Scott brings a fresh perspective and deep experience in digital strategy. We're thrilled to have him on board as we expand our technology-rich experiences using our collections.

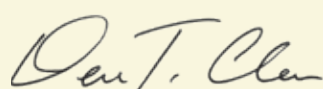
Speaking of expansion, I'm pleased to share that we've selected Baskervill, a Richmond-based architecture firm with deep experience designing spaces for cultural institutions, to lead the schematic design of our building renovation.

Shepley Bullfinch, a Boston-based design firm with significant expertise in library design, will join Baskervill on the project. This marks a major milestone in what will be a multi-year effort to reimagine the Library's public and staff spaces. Over the next few months, our initial work will include focus groups to gather input to help inform how our spaces will evolve to serve Virginians of today and tomorrow. We're excited about what's ahead and will keep you informed throughout the process.

As this edition arrives during the holiday season, I want to take a moment to thank you for being part of the Library's story. Whether you visit us in person, explore our collections online or engage with our programs across the Commonwealth, your curiosity and commitment inspire our work every day.

From all of us at the Library of Virginia, we wish you a joyful holiday season and a bright start to the new year.

Sincerely,



Dennis T. Clark



This marks a major milestone in what will be a multi-year effort to reimagine the Library's public and staff spaces.

ON THE COVER

Cabins at headquarters of B.S. Cassel, superintendent of Freedmen's Bureau, Poplar Grove near Petersburg, Virginia, 1866. Visual Studies Collection.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

The Library of Virginia is the leading source of information on Virginia's history, government and people. Our resources, exhibitions and events attract thousands of visitors each year. Our collections, containing more than 134 million items, document and illustrate the lives of both famous Virginians and ordinary citizens.

INFORMATION

804.692.3500 | www.lva.virginia.gov

LOBBY & EXHIBITION GALLERY HOURS

Monday–Saturday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

READING ROOM HOURS

Tuesday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Plus special Saturday hours:

Jan. 10 & 24, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Feb. 7 & 21, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

March 14 & 28, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

www.lva.virginia.gov/use/plan

ADMISSION IS FREE

Some special programs may have fees.
Check calendar listings for details.

PARKING

Limited parking for Library visitors is available in the underground parking deck, accessible from either Eighth or Ninth streets.

EXHIBITIONS

**House to Highway:
Reclaiming a Community History**
Through Feb. 28, 2026

EVENTS

804.692.3999

CALENDAR

www.lva.virginia.gov/LVAevents

LIBRARY REFERENCE DESK

804.692.3777 | refdesk@lva.virginia.gov
Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
(On Mondays by phone or email only)

ARCHIVES REFERENCE DESK

804.692.3888 | archdesk@lva.virginia.gov
Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
(On Mondays by phone or email only)

FACILITY RENTALS

804.692.3929

WHISK CAFÉ AT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

THE VIRGINIA SHOP

804.692.3524
Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

THE VIRGINIA SHOP AT THE CAPITOL

Monday–Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

STATEWIDE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

804.692.3999
www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/education

SUPPORT THE LIBRARY

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www.lva.virginia.gov/donate

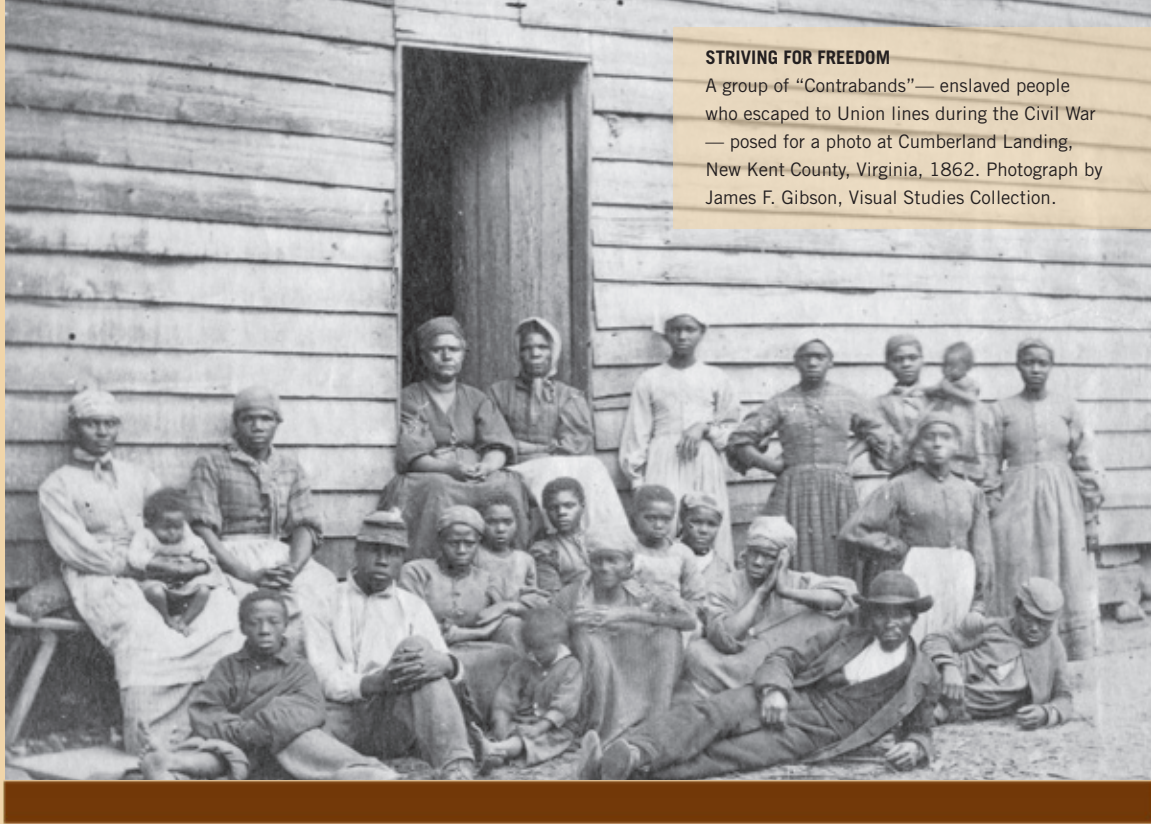
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Photograph © Ansel Olson

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STRIVING FOR FREEDOM

A group of “Contrabands”—enslaved people who escaped to Union lines during the Civil War—posed for a photo at Cumberland Landing, New Kent County, Virginia, 1862. Photograph by James F. Gibson, Visual Studies Collection.

VIRGINIA UNTOLD

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN NARRATIVE

Transforming access to Black history and genealogy in the Commonwealth

On Jan. 11, 1856, Jane Connelly, a free Black woman living in the City of Richmond, was committed to jail for falsely forging a copy of a certificate of her free Black register. According to evidence submitted with the court case documents, Connelly altered her free papers for the purpose of helping an enslaved man named James escape. This is just one of the many stories to be found through the Library of Virginia’s groundbreaking project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative, which provides digital access to records that document some of the lived experiences of enslaved and free Black and multiracial people in the Commonwealth. This ongoing effort improves accessibility to pre-1867 African American history and genealogy found within primary sources, helping the public break through the roadblock that has long impeded African American history research.

More than 28,000 digitized original documents are available for research through the Virginia Untold collection. While traditional description, indexing and digitization are part of this effort, the project also encourages conversation about and engagement with the records, providing opportunities to create a more diverse narrative of the history of Virginia’s communities. Virginia Untold’s website, bit.ly/VaUntold, offers search guidance and resources, video tutorials, links to relevant research websites and information about how to get involved by transcribing and indexing records for the project.

Lydia Neuroth, the project’s manager, adds records to the Virginia Untold digital collection from the Library of Virginia’s collections and travels to county and city courthouses to find and borrow materials from their records rooms. She also visits locations and organizations across the Commonwealth to give presentations and share information about the project and lead volunteers in transcription and indexing sessions to help make the records accessible.

“It’s important to recognize that the majority of the government records digitized through Virginia Untold provide only a limited version of the story, and I’m often left wondering what these men and women would have said

about their lives had they been given the chance,” said Neuroth. “Even so, projects like Virginia Untold are fundamental to ensuring our collections are accessible to a wide variety of Library users. I’m hopeful that enhanced searchability and access will pave the way for new insights into the lives of enslaved and free Black Virginians.”

The Virginia Untold website is growing in popularity with researchers, receiving nearly 100,00 page views during the first three quarters of 2025. Its records have been cited this year in multiple academic papers, books, websites and exhibitions. These include Reginald D. Butler’s book “The Evolution of a Rural Free Black Community: Goochland County, Virginia, 1728–1832” from the University of Virginia Press; “Un/Bound: Free Black Virginians, 1619–1865” at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture in Richmond; and Virginia Humanities Fellow Tev’n Powers’ website titled “Fugitive Data Portraits” (fugitivedataportraits.com), which features interactive data visualizations that illuminate trends and patterns in what is documented of Black Virginians’ escapes from slavery.

Notable additions to the collection this year include many volumes of “Free Negro Registers” (read more about them on page 4), a set of church records documenting the biracial history of Cumberland Baptist Church, and additions to existing record type collections such as deeds and bills of sale from Lynchburg City. Because enslaved people could be transferred as property through these documents, deeds and bills of sale continue to serve as some of the most illuminating documents in Virginia Untold for tracing and identifying enslaved people.

Another fascinating item added this year was an Arlington County record book known as the Gladwin Record. It documents death, burial and marriage information about formerly enslaved people in the Alexandria area during the later years of the Civil War and the early days of the Freedmen’s Bureau. Some enslaved people self-emancipated in the early days of the Civil War, recognizing that if they made it into Union-

controlled territories like the City of Alexandria, they could be free. In fact, so many self-liberators flocked to Alexandria that the federal government installed a “superintendent of contraband” in 1862, the Rev. Albert Gladwin, to manage the growing population and record those who had died. The federal government created a cemetery, known today as the Contrabands and Freeman Cemetery, for the purpose of burying those who had fled slavery. The names of those buried there, as well as the self-liberators who began a new life in the early days of emancipation, are recorded in the Gladwin Record. ■

“I’m often left wondering what these men and women would have said about their lives had they been given the chance.”



MAKING BLACK HISTORY MORE ACCESSIBLE

RIGHT: Virginia Untold project manager Lydia Neuroth looks at a register documenting free Black Virginians. ABOVE: This family tree was submitted as evidence in a chancery court case in Lynchburg in 1820 to prove the relationships of several members of the Evans and Gibson families who were suing for their freedom.

The Free Registers Project

Many volumes of this rich resource have been added to Virginia Untold

BY LYDIA J. NEUROTH

“Free Negro Registers” or “Registers of Free Negroes and Mulattoes,” as they were historically called, were created to comply with several Virginia laws that required local court clerks in Virginia localities to register and record details of free Black and multiracial men and women. The 1793 Act of Assembly specified that the clerks record the “age, name, color, stature and by whom, and in what court emancipated.” These records contain hundreds of names in a single digital object, making them extremely useful for researchers.

In 2021, the Library began a digitization initiative to scan all extant volumes of “Free Negro Registers,” many of which remain in the courthouse archives of localities across the state, for Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative. After digitizing the initial volumes in our collection, we developed a system in which the Library would borrow volumes from each courthouse for scanning and then return the books to the localities.

Virginia Untold now has a total of 87 “Free Negro Registers” available online. Staff members have added nearly 40 volumes to the original set of “Free Negro Registers” in our collections. Since we first launched the “Free Registers” collection on the From the Page transcription and indexing site in 2022, we’ve indexed 72 registers equaling approximately 12,500 pages with over 47,000 names.

Statistics the Library has collected reveal that the “Free Negro Registers” collection is regularly in the top five collections accessed

by users when searching Virginia Untold. For example, in June, the Carroll County Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes and Election Record, 1846–1895, was requested 77 times and the Arlington County (Va.) Register of Free Negroes, 1797–1841, was requested 63 times.

We’ve been digitizing free register books for about four years, and I am still shocked and intrigued by the glimpses they offer into the lives of free Black Virginians.

We compare these figures with other record types that are typically requested fewer than ten times in a month or quarter.

This year I traveled across the Commonwealth to borrow free register books for the project from Charlotte, Louisa, Nelson and Northumberland counties. Some are now in the Virginia Untold digital collection, while others are available for indexing on the From the Page site. We’ve also worked this year to make volumes available that we digitized last year from localities including Fluvanna, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Northampton, Orange and Pulaski counties.

It’s disheartening to learn that many of Virginia’s registers were lost to fire, theft or other types of damage over the years. Some were known to exist up until several years ago and were microfilmed between the 1970s and the 1990s, but the physical volumes are nowhere to be found. For those localities, we plan to digitize

the images from microfilm. If you’re researching free Black or multiracial ancestors, we suggest looking at minute books or order books for a locality as well to see if the clerk wrote down any registration details alongside other daily activities of the court.

We’ve been digitizing free register books for about four years, and I am still shocked and intrigued by the glimpses they offer into the lives of free Black Virginians. The following are just a few that I’ve run across recently while indexing records.

Malinda Russell traveled from Washington County, Tennessee, to be registered in Montgomery County, Virginia. These two locations are approximately 150 miles apart. Travel would have taken days. Was the 25-year-old migrating toward family? Looking for better living and working conditions? Or trying to get away from something in Tennessee? It would be interesting to research the registration laws and records from that state to find out more about Russell’s journey.

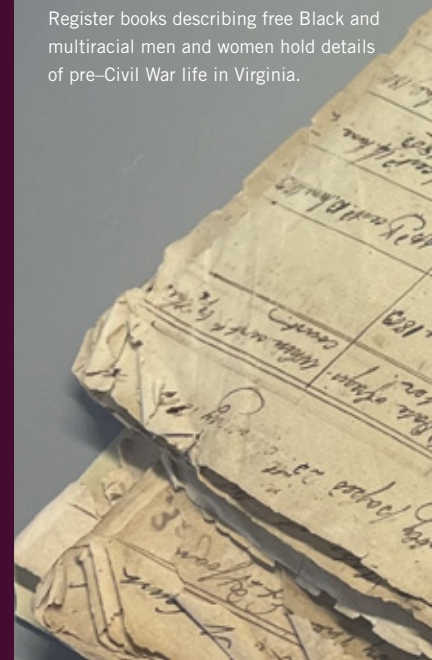
In 1863, Spencer Bright had to return to the Montgomery County court to have a new copy of his registration made because it was “taken from him by the enemy while in the Kanawha Valley.” The registration entry does not explain how Bright did so, but he apparently provided satisfactory evidence to confirm his status and demonstrate he was not a fugitive from slavery. His previous registration on file at the courthouse probably helped his cause. Had Bright been requisitioned to Public Works during the war? What did a Union soldier want with his registration? His registration entry provides few clues.

Rachel Findley and her family members were enslaved illegally and taken to Wythe County before they could sue for freedom. Relatives with the surname “Findley” and “Findly” are recorded in the Pulaski County register as having been born free in Wythe County. Charlotte Findly and her children are also recorded. In 1858, Charlotte was described as “having obtained her freedom many years since by suit in Wythe County.” While Rachel fought for freedom in Powhatan, Charlotte fought for freedom in Wythe. Because we’ve added the Pulaski County free register to Virginia Untold, we can learn even more about the Findley family and their fight for freedom across the localities of Virginia.

Lydia J. Neuroth is the Library’s Virginia Untold project manager. A version of this article previously appeared on the Library’s blog, The UncommonWealth.

RECORD BOOKS REVEAL EVIDENCE OF LIVES

Register books describing free Black and multiracial men and women hold details of pre-Civil War life in Virginia.





Virginia Untold's Unsung Hero

Ed Jordan retires after more than a decade of dedicated service to the project



Virginia Untold project manager Lydia Neuroth estimates that more than three-fourths of the material in the collection is the result of the work of part-time archival assistant Ed Jordan, who retired in October 2025. Jordan started at the Library as a volunteer with the Local Records section after retiring from a career with the Social Security Administration. In 2013 he began working on records for Virginia Untold as a part-time employee. Before he retired from the Library, he had processed records from 48 different Virginia localities. The numbers below reveal the extent of his work.

- **385 cubic feet of records examined/processed**
- **7,586 items mended**
- **116,554 names indexed**
- **60,559 records scanned**
- **3,077 pages transcribed**
- **21,638 pages approved**

Jordan's favorite part of his work with the materials was learning about how people in the past lived and died. "I'm really glad to have 'illuminated' these old records," said Jordan. "So many members of the public are unaware that these records exist, and we're able to fill in a few missing family details." The Library of Virginia thanks Jordan for his many contributions to Virginia Untold. He will be missed!

RELATED EVENTS

GENEALOGY WORKSHOP

African American Genealogy to 1870

Friday, Feb. 13 | 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m | Free

Place: Conference Rooms

Registration required:

<https://lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/15784241>

Explore the methods and resources for African American genealogy through the end of the Civil War. This workshop will focus on how to find free Black ancestors in the Library of Virginia's collections using records such as "Free Negro Registers," wills, chancery court records, deeds and tax lists. Participants will learn how to determine whether an individual was enslaved or free. Archivists will describe records related to Black and multiracial people who were free before the Civil War and demonstrate the use of digital resources such as the Chancery Records Index and Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative project for further research.

CULTURESCAPE SATURDAYS

Black History Month Celebration

Saturday, Jan. 31 | 12:00–3:00 p.m. | Free

No registration required.

Join us for a special Saturday event at the Library of Virginia honoring Black artists and storytellers as we kick off celebrating Black History Month. This event will feature:

- A pop-up exhibition highlighting local Black artists
- Storytelling workshops
- Guided tours of the "House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History" exhibition
- Resource sharing from community partners
- Reference and genealogical assistance

The Culturescape Saturdays series is a new Library of Virginia programming initiative exploring the intersections of art, culture, history, and community across Virginia.

HELP PRESERVE & SHARE VIRGINIA'S STORIES!

Your support helps the Library preserve and provide access to amazing digital collections that hold the stories of Virginians. Please consider making a gift at lva.virginia.gov/donate.

WIRED FOR THE FUTURE

Scott B. Weingart leads digital-first charge as the inaugural chief technology officer

Technology leader and acclaimed scholar Scott B. Weingart joined the Library of Virginia this fall as its first chief technology officer. Serving as part of the Library's senior leadership team, Weingart provides strategic vision and leadership for the Library's information technology and digital initiatives, including digital collections, web applications, digital engagement, and the management of critical systems like Alma, Primo and Rosetta. The divisions maintain and provide access to over 130 million digital collection files.

Weingart brings more than a decade of leadership experience in library technology, data strategy and digital scholarship. He most recently served as chief data officer and inaugural director of the Office of Data and Evaluation at the National Endowment for the Humanities, where he shaped policy for national humanities initiatives, led multimillion-dollar grantmaking and contracting activities, and built strategic partnerships across government, nonprofit and philanthropic institutions.



What drew you to the Library of Virginia, and what excites you most about your new role?

Scott Weingart: The Library of Virginia feels like a national library. By that, I mean that its ambitious charge, its vast collections and the breadth of its services chase an ideal that often gets lost in today's world: that a library can strive to fully steward a culture's collective memory, and to act as the backbone of its civic information infrastructure. So often — by necessity of funding and scope — we approach cultural heritage and civic infrastructure piecemeal. No so-tasked institution, be it the Library of Virginia or the Library of Congress, can ever achieve this ideal. But without institutions that try, we're lost. That the Library of Virginia strives towards that ideal excites me.

I'm a true believer in libraries. Especially now, the public needs institutions that reinforce our shared histories and shared humanity, they need information they can trust, and they need spaces and services that offer orientation in a disorienting world. Libraries have a long tradition of supporting those needs. But the world is changing, and libraries must adapt to meet those changes. I'm excited to work with the Library of Virginia to figure out what that means for the Commonwealth.

Can you tell us a bit about your background and how you got into this field of work? How has your experience prepared you for this position?

SW: I'm a historian of science who dreams of long nights reading letters between 17th-century scholars. Below everything else, that's me. In support of my research, I often bartered my technical skills for funding or access to collections, which accidentally became a career of its own. I managed a technical project for the National Library of the Netherlands, served briefly as Stanford Libraries' first data scientist, and directed digital initiatives at the libraries of Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Notre Dame. Most recently, I served the National Endowment for the Humanities as its first chief data officer.

Though leading cultural heritage technology wasn't my goal, it's become a passion. I quickly learned how necessary and fulfilling it is to build and maintain the scaffolding of cultural memory.

At CMU, I focused almost exclusively on innovation. My colleagues and I created new methods for describing and analyzing large collections, ranging from biodiversity data to institutional photo archives. Notre Dame, on the other hand, required me to focus more on everyday technical infrastructure, ensuring all our patrons had what they needed to succeed. At NEH, a lot of my attention was on how federal policies, data and culture influenced one another. Across all my roles, I led teams large and small, scrappy and well-resourced.

The Library of Virginia offers an opportunity to put all these puzzle pieces together: from innovation to infrastructure, and from practical daily needs to far-reaching policies.

How do you balance innovation with the responsibility to protect the Library's digital assets?

SW: Excellent question! It's true that digital innovation and stewardship often pull against each other. It's easier to preserve a book than a website, and easier to preserve a website than a complex social media environment. At the same time, our public often demands a greater focus on library innovation than on traditional library services. What's more, innovation costs a lot of money, and even a narrow focus on it can seriously drain the resources of more traditional core library services.

But done well, these forces don't need to be at odds. The models I've seen work best take into account that you don't need to fully set the dial at one end or the other. Libraries absolutely must keep innovating to preserve and keep accessible tomorrow's records as well as we do with yesterday's, and to ensure the services we offer continue to be those that patrons actually need. But yesterday's records and services are no less important to maintain.

To keep yesterday and tomorrow in mind means intentional, continued investment in keeping all staff abreast of and knowledgeable in the latest technological needs; it means collaborating with other institutions as consortia to spread the costs of innovations; and it means thinking with care about a library's evolving role over the next century.

For-profit companies that specialize in innovation — both those from Silicon Valley and those that serve the library sector — focus their attention on the next quarter. That's their job. It means they can get away with riskier moves, and it means we can sometimes partner with them to offset our own risks. But our job is to innovate toward a farther future than thinking in quarters can get us. This has *always* been the job of libraries and archives, with or without computers, and looking to how we've handled sudden disruptions in the past can give us a guide to adapting as we move forward.

Realizing most of my answers have been abstract, let me take a moment to be concrete. I would like to see the Library of Virginia work together with other cultural heritage organizations to adapt to and continue to serve a changing world. Similar consortial experiments — like the Ohio College Library Center (which eventually became the Online Computer Library Center, or OCLC, and helped establish modern library catalogs), HathiTrust (a groundbreaking

academic collaborative repository of digital books) and the Digital Public Library of America (a collective discovery tool for digital materials held in libraries, museums and archives) — facilitate both safety and innovation. Sometimes these experiments fail and sometimes they flourish, but our best way forward is together.

Are you enjoying life in Virginia?

SW: Virginia is a true joy. Moving across the country to Virginia, with my Subaru Outback and the rooftop cargo box packed to bursting, I randomly stopped at an interesting-looking park along the way. I'd never heard of this remarkable 200-foot-tall natural stone bridge, which apparently captivated everyone from the people of the Monacan Nation to Thomas Jefferson to Herman Melville. Imagine my surprise when I saw a painting of Natural Bridge the next day on my first family visit to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and *another* painting of the natural wonder here on the Library of Virginia's second floor. Stumbling on this local celebrity felt like fate.

“I quickly learned how necessary and fulfilling it is to build and maintain the scaffolding of cultural memory.”

What's one piece of technology that you personally can't live without?

SW: A pen and a little spiral notebook. I'm not joking. I use mine every day. The author Douglas Adams defined technology as whatever doesn't yet work. “We are stuck with technology,” he wrote, “when what we really want is just stuff that works.” I don't like this definition, but it basically fits how most people think of the word. AI is definitely technology, smart phones are generally so, and TVs and vacuums stopped being technology around the same time we stopped having TV and vacuum repair shops.

A few years later, author Ursula K. LeGuin wrote, “We have been so desensitized by 150 years of ceaselessly expanding technical prowess that we think nothing less complex and showy than a computer or a jet bomber deserves to be called ‘technology’ at all. As if linen were the same thing as flax — as if paper, ink, wheels, knives, clocks, chairs, aspirin pills, were natural objects, born with us like our teeth and fingers — as if steel saucepans with copper bottoms and fleece vests spun from recycled glass grew on trees, and we just picked them when they were ripe...”

Much as I love the latest gadget — and I do *absolutely* love the latest gadget — to me the most essential technologies are the ones that never break. Before he passed away, my grandfather gave me a shoebox of photos, some of which were well over a hundred years old. The odds are a lot worse that I'll be able to bequeath my grandkids digital photos I took in 2005, some of which I already no longer can access. We need to re-learn how to celebrate technology as stuff that works, and that lasts. My spiral notebook never runs out of batteries.

A TRUE BELIEVER IN LIBRARIES

As the Library's first chief technology officer, Scott B. Weingart (OPPOSITE PAGE) will help the Library adapt to a changing world. AT LEFT: Weingart talks with members of his team in the Library's Digitization Lab. SHOWN LEFT TO RIGHT: Jessica Beavers, manager of information security, compliance and risk management; Kathy Jordan, Digital Initiatives & Web Presence division director; Weingart; and Paul Casalaspi, Information Technology division director.



WINTER EVENTS calendar

For the latest information, please follow us on social media and visit our Calendar of Events at www.lva.virginia.gov/lvaevents.

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.



Wednesdays: Jan. 7 & Feb. 11 | 5:30–7:30 p.m.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Making History With LVA

Place: Online

Registration required: bit.ly/LVAvirtualvolunteer

Join us for a virtual session to learn how you can transcribe historical documents and help make them more searchable and usable for researchers. For more information email makinghistory@virginiamemory.com or call the Community Foundation at 804.330.7400.



Wednesday, Jan. 14 | 6:00–7:30 p.m.

BOOK CLUB

Literary Virginia Book Group

Place: Online

Registration required: lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/15022194

Read and discuss the best of today's Virginia literature — including books by Virginia Literary Award winners and finalists in fiction and nonfiction. On the second Wednesday of each month, join a virtual book group discussion. January's book is "The Bookshop: A History of the American Bookstore" by Evan Friss (2025 People's Choice Award for Nonfiction winner). For more information, contact Casey Clauberg at casey.clauberg@lva.virginia.gov or 804.692.3545.



Thursday, Jan. 22 | 12:00–1:00 p.m.

EXHIBITION-RELATED VIRTUAL TALK

Urban Renewal in Roanoke

Place: Online

Registration required: <https://lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/15784638>

Join us for a virtual talk by journalist Mary Carter Bishop exploring the history of urban renewal in Roanoke and its impact on the city's Black community. Beginning in 1955 and continuing throughout the remainder of the 20th century, much of Roanoke's Black neighborhoods were destroyed by urban renewal projects to build an interstate, parking lots and a civic center. This event is one of a series of programs highlighting stories of displacement in Virginia communities as part of the Library's programming related to the exhibition "House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History," on view through Feb. 28, 2026. Exhibition-related programming is provided with support from Virginia Humanities and the Mellon Foundation. For more information, contact education@lva.virginia.gov.

Saturday, Jan. 31 | 12:00–3:00 p.m.

CULTUREScape SATURDAYS

Black History Month Celebration

Place: Lobby & Conference Rooms

No registration required.

See more details on page 5.

Saturdays: Jan. 31 & Feb. 21 | 12:00–2:00 p.m.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Making History With LVA

Place: Computer Classroom

Registration required:

bit.ly/makinghistory-inperson

Join us for a virtual session to learn how you can transcribe historical documents and help make them more searchable and usable for researchers. For more information email makinghistory@virginiamemory.com or call the Community Foundation at 804.330.7400.



Thursday, Feb. 5 | 12:00–1:00 p.m.

EXHIBITION-RELATED VIRTUAL TALK

The Displaced Families of Shenandoah National Park

Place: Online

Registration required: <https://lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/15784706>

Join us for a virtual talk by author and professor Katrina M. Powell exploring the history of the families and homes displaced through eminent domain for the construction of Shenandoah National Park. This event is one of a series of programs highlighting stories of displacement in Virginia communities as part of the Library's programming related to the exhibition "House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History," on view through Feb. 28, 2026. Exhibition-related programming is provided with support from Virginia Humanities and the Mellon Foundation. For more information, contact education@lva.virginia.gov.

Wednesday, Feb. 11 | 6:00–7:30 p.m.

BOOK CLUB

Literary Virginia Book Group

Place: Online

Registration required: lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/15022230

Read and discuss books by Virginia Literary Award winners and finalists in fiction and nonfiction. On the second Wednesday of each month, join a virtual book group discussion. February's book is "Devil Is Fine" by John Vercher (a 2025 Virginia Literary Award for Fiction finalist). For more information, contact Casey Clauberg at casey.clauberg@lva.virginia.gov or 804.692.3545.

Friday, Feb. 13 | 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

GENEALOGY WORKSHOP

African American Genealogy to 1870

Place: Conference Rooms

Cost: Free

Registration required: <https://lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/15784241>

See more details on page 5.

EXHIBITION AT 800 EAST BROAD



HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Wednesday afternoon–Friday,
Dec. 24–26, 2025
Closed for the Christmas Holiday

Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026
Closed for the New Year's Day Holiday

Monday, Jan. 19, 2026
Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

HOUSE TO HIGHWAY

RECLAIMING A COMMUNITY HISTORY

AN EXHIBITION ON JACKSON WARD

Through Feb. 28, 2026

Monday–Saturday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Exhibition Gallery & Lobby | Free

The Library's exhibition on the history of Richmond's Jackson Ward neighborhood, "House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History," explores the historic district that was once the center of Richmond's Black community through the lens of the Skipwith-Roper family. Using a combination of archival records, maps and photographs from the Library's collection, the exhibition covers a period from 1767 through the 1950s, when eminent domain displaced many residents and businesses of Jackson Ward for the construction of the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike. The exhibition is presented in partnership with The JXN Project (JXN), a historic preservation nonprofit organization dedicated to capturing the pivotal role of the ward in the Black American experience as one of the country's first historically registered Black urban neighborhoods.



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- And by including the Library in your will or as a **retirement account beneficiary**, you create a lasting legacy that helps preserve Virginia's stories for generations to come.

Whether you're looking to maximize tax benefits or ensure your support continues well into the future, thoughtful giving options can help you do both. For more information or to schedule a private conversation, please email Kerry Kinnison at kerry.kinnison@lva.virginia.gov.

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Beth Askew

Paying Forward a Lifetime of Blessings

Beth Askew caught her first “library world break” when Emily Lawrence held open a page position for her in the Boys & Girls Department at the Richmond Public Library while Askew was away on a family trip. After two years as a page, Askew graduated from Westhampton College and earned a scholarship from the Library of Virginia to attend Rutgers University’s Graduate School of Library Service.

Her career began at the Richmond Public Library, continued at the Research Library of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and came full circle when she returned to Richmond Public Library to open its Business, Science and Technology Reference Section. There, she worked alongside Becky Walker — an expert librarian, mentor and dear friend.

In 1980, Askew became head of the Fairfax County Business Library before changing careers to become a stockbroker with Wheat First Securities. Her commitment to libraries never waned; she volunteered weekly at the Tysons-Pimmit Library and later served on the Fairfax County Library Foundation Board.

Driven by her belief that libraries are vital to democracy, Askew chaired the Virginia Library Association’s Legislative Committee, advocating for full funding of the Commonwealth’s State Aid Formula for Public Libraries.

“Let’s all support others who love the profession and their work to keep fit and up to date.”

To many, that might sound like “all work,” but Askew loves libraries, the people who staff them and the people who use them. Continuing education and technical skills demand ongoing learning, and Askew wants to help the Library of Virginia provide resources for its team to deliver “the BEST” for Virginia’s citizens. Emily Lawrence and Becky Walker got Askew started as mentors for “the BEST” in the library profession. “Let’s all support others who love the profession and their work to keep fit and up to date,” said Askew.



SUPPORTING CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR LIBRARY STAFF

Beth Askew reviews a historic Virginia document in the Library’s Special Collections Reading Room. Askew has established a fund to support training and professional development for the Library’s staff, volunteers and partners.

To honor the mentors who shaped her career, Askew established the **Elizabeth Engle Askew Fund** through annual gifts to the Library of Virginia Foundation. Created in memory of Walker and Lawrence, her “little project,” as she affectionately calls it, supports training and professional development for the Library’s staff, volunteers and partners. She has also included the Foundation in her estate plans through a legacy gift to help another important area of the Library’s work.

“I’ve lived a lifetime full of blessings,” says Askew, “and my support of the Library of Virginia is my way of paying it forward.”

The Library of Virginia and its Foundation are incredibly grateful for Askew’s leadership and vision. Now more than ever, donors like Askew are answering the call to action to help ensure that the Library of Virginia and libraries across the nation remain trusted educational institutions. If you would like to join her by contributing to the Askew Fund or learning more about how you can bolster the Library’s work in the areas of conservation, education and community outreach, please contact Elaine McFadden at elaine.mcfadden@lva.virginia.gov. ■

Honor Roll continued

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Christie Simmons
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Every care is taken to make sure our donor list is accurate. If there is an error in this listing, please accept our sincere apologies and notify the Foundation office by calling 804.692.3592.

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WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE LIBRARY



1. Author and historian **Laura E. Helton** signed books after discussing her work “Scattered and Fugitive Things: How Black Collectors Created Archives and Remade History” during her Carole Weinstein Author Series talk in September.

2. Attendees at our Transcribe-a-versary Celebration in September posed for a group shot on the stairs. This yearly event celebrates the volunteers who contribute to our Making History crowdsourcing program.

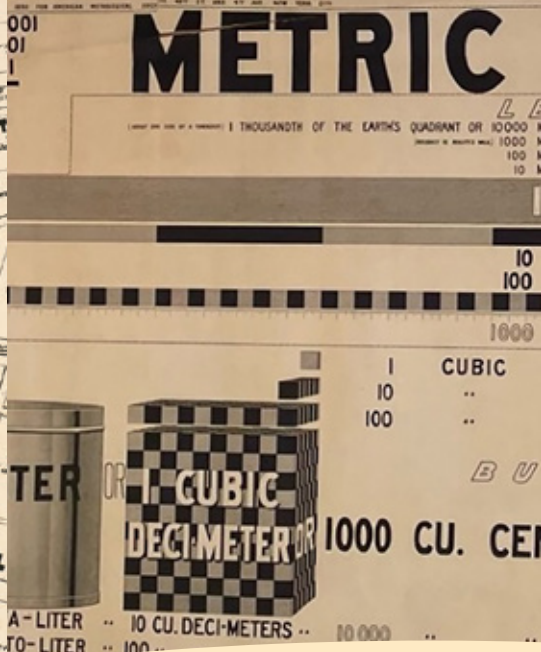
3. Visual artist and educator **Em White** (CENTER) led a workshop on creating cyanotypes at the Library in honor of this year’s Virginia Archives Month theme, “Oh, Snap! Photography in the Archives.” The workshop was part of an Archives Month open house in October that also included tours of the Library, archivist talks and maker station crafts.

4. During our symposium inspired by the exhibition “House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History” in October, historian **Gregg Kimball** (LEFT) moderated a panel discussion on grassroots historic preservation efforts with (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

Sesha Joi Moon, co-founder and executive director of The JXN Project; **Viola Baskerville**, former Virginia Secretary of Administration and former member of the Virginia House of Delegates; and **Ana Edwards**, a public historian and assistant professor of African American history at Virginia Commonwealth University.

5. Award-winning author and culinary historian **Michael W. Twitty** took a selfie with fans during the book signing following his Carole Weinstein Author Series talk on his new book, “Recipes From the American South,” in October.

6. Historian **Jody Lynn Allen** discussed her book “Roses in December: Black Life in Hanover County from Civil War to Civil Rights” in October.



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ADOPT VIRGINIA HISTORY

Help the Library of Virginia conserve the treasures of the Commonwealth. By adopting an item for conservation in your name, or as a gift to honor others, your fully tax-deductible donation will keep Virginia's history accessible and alive for generations to come!

Below is a selection of what is available for adoption at www.lvafoundation.org/Adopt:

VISUAL STUDIES COLLECTION

1. *Virginia Exposition 1888. Opens Oct 3rd Closes Nov 21st, At the Historic City Richmond.*
\$1,000

MAP COLLECTION

2. *Gray's New Map of Liberty, Bedford County, Virginia, 1878*
\$1,000

VISUAL STUDIES COLLECTION

3. *Metric System by the American Metrological Society (Poster)*
\$500

Adopt Virginia History items are updated regularly as items are identified for conservation. If you would like more information, please contact Elaine McFadden, director of development, at elaine.mcfadden@lva.virginia.gov.



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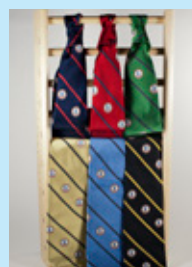
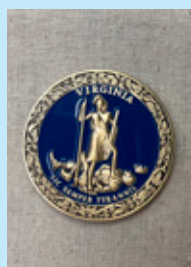
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