

Spring/Summer 2024

IMAGINE

University Libraries at Virginia Tech



Bone by Bone

Highlighting
History

Feeding
Hungry Hokies





Animatronics

Animatronics course encourages innovation and collaboration. Photo by Chase Parker. See page 4.

Imagine

Spring/Summer 2024 Vol. 6, No. 1



Dear friends of University Libraries,

As the academic year comes to a close, I see many of our student employees, dressed in commencement regalia, being photographed in front of Torgersen Bridge, the Pylons, and Newman Library. Our graduating students take with them the knowledge and skills they learned in their many different degree programs and the soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and professionalism they practiced in their roles as University Libraries employees.

Don't miss the special pages dedicated to our graduating student employees and their experiences. In addition to celebrating our graduates, stories highlight how University Libraries lends its unique skills, technology, and expertise to build upon research, teaching, and learning. Topics include a unique animatronics class hosted by the Prototyping Studio, a striking exhibit that describes research into the hidden history of slavery in Charleston, and the efforts of faculty to write award-winning freely available textbooks for students.

Also, the end of the semester means grills are hot and grilled cheese sandwiches are on the menu. Every finals week, University Libraries and campus partners serve more than 6,000 grilled cheese sandwiches, fruit, snacks, and drinks to studying students. This has become a Hokie tradition and we look forward to it every semester.

We encourage you to stay connected and join us on social media @VTLibraries. Thank you for being a supporter and friend of University Libraries at Virginia Tech.

All the best,

Tyler Walters, Ph.D.
Dean, University Libraries
Virginia Tech

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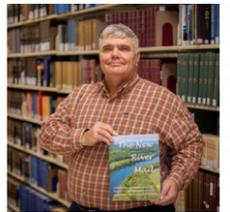
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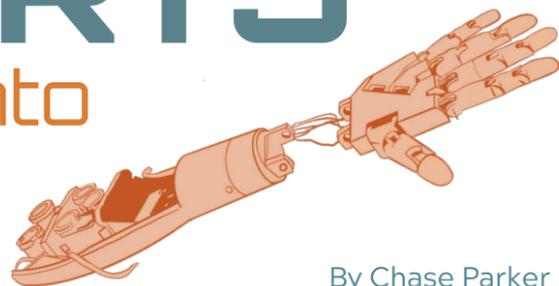
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Front cover: Photo by Jack Micallef, '24. Features photos: HokieBird and volunteers grill up sandwiches at Cheesy Nights. Photo by Jack Micallef for Virginia Tech (top right). Anita Walz and Erin Hopkins with the "Sustainable Property Management" textbook. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech (middle right). Author, Robert "Bob" Hill Jr. and his book, The New River Mail. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech. (bottom right).

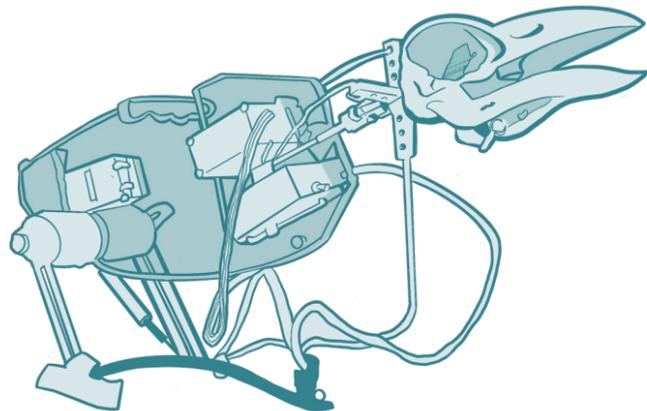
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VISUAL ARTS

Breathe Realism into ROBOTICS



By Chase Parker



THIS FALL, AN INNOVATIVE PILOT ANIMATRONICS course sparked the imagination of students as visual arts and robotics collided.

Newman Library served as the creative hub for this class, leveraging the tools available through the Studios Network at University Libraries.

“Since their inception, libraries have been places to convey knowledge,” said Prototyping Studio Manager Max Ofsa. “We are able to help someone of any skill level and support a wide range of classes and ideas. We’re willing to adapt our services and get in new equipment that is necessary for collaboration.”

Led by Thomas Tucker, associate professor for the School of Visual Arts in the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design, the course delved into animatronics principles, creating lifelike robotic pieces capable of realistic movements and expressions. Students learned to design and build animated objects such as realistic forearms, hands, and robotic ravens. From crafting intricate features to coding and programming nuanced movements, the class covered the entire spectrum of animatronics creation.

“My favorite thing about the class was that we were able to work in a group setting at all times. For each project, there was always someone else to consult with, and that helped us to all be more creative and productive,” said Malasia Cherry, a senior studying creative technologies and art history.

The animatronics course, offered to any student regardless of major, provided a valuable experience for students, fostering a wide range of skills and interactions.

“This class prepares students for the future by emphasizing collaborative and transdisciplinary teamwork. Working in small teams exposes students to the dynamics and challenges

of collaboration, helping them develop skills necessary for productive engagement in structured environments,” Tucker said.

The resources available through the Studios Network proved to be a game-changer for the course. University Libraries’ commitment to fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and providing access to tools and technology created a superb environment for the class.

“I think Newman Library is the most ideal location for this class. The fact that the library has all of these resources available to us and the fact that we can have class in that same space is super ideal and helpful to the students and faculty,” said Sophia Nadasy, a senior studying creative technologies.

The course heavily utilized the Prototyping Studio throughout the semester. Packed full of 3D printers, power tools, nuts, bolts, and other maker tools and technology, the studio offered an accessible space for the students to learn and gain new skills.

“If it wasn’t for the Prototyping Studio here, this class would have probably never taken place,” Tucker said.

Helping to create avenues to new curriculum has always been a part of the Prototyping Studios’ mission. As a maker space equipped with tools to create full-scale prototypes, along with a knowledgeable staff ready to lend a helping hand from the conceptualization of a design to the refined making stage, the Prototyping Studio is built to support a wide range of needs.

“We’re happy to take the time to find a way to support you, even if it’s just a small way, but especially if it’s a big way,” Ofsa said.

In the future, Tucker plans on implementing a broader range of animatronics projects and emphasizing quicker assembly and animation. An advanced animatronics class tailored for students who have completed the initial course is also in the works. ■



SEE THE VIDEO

news.vt.edu/videos/k/2024/01/1_nd507oxy.html

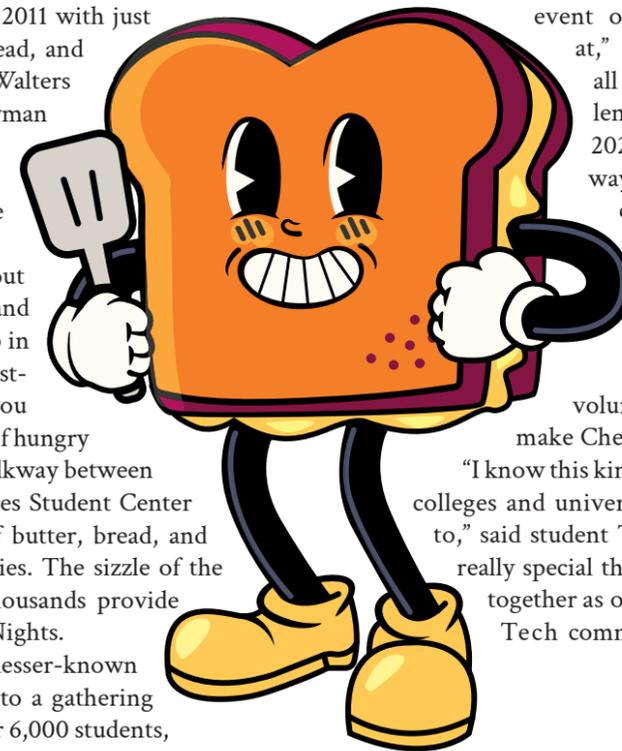


By Chase Parker



THE CHEESY TRADITION

Cheesy Nights continues to grow with student need



Cheesy Nights has become such a popular event that the line runs from Newman Library to Squires Student Center. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.



CHEESY NIGHTS AT NEWMAN LIBRARY WAS BACK for the spring 2024 semester on May 2, 3, 5, and 6 beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the library plaza on the Blacksburg campus.

Every semester during finals week, the delicious tradition captures the hearts and taste buds of students one grilled cheese sandwich at a time. Cheesy Nights, hosted by University Libraries, has become a beloved tradition on campus.

“Cheesy Nights is an event that started small but became very large based on the need around the campus of students who are hungry during finals week,” said Therese Walters, founder and co-coordinator of Cheesy Nights and wife of University Libraries Dean Tyler Walters.

Cheesy Nights began in 2011 with just \$100 for cheese, butter, bread, and a small griddle. Therese Walters walked the halls of Newman Library feeding hungry Hokies with one cart full of food and two teenage volunteers.

Word quickly spread about the cheesy goodness, and students started showing up in droves for the tasty treats. Fast-forward to the present, and you can expect to see long lines of hungry students taking over the walkway between Newman Library and Squires Student Center as the irresistible aroma of butter, bread, and melted cheese lures in Hokies. The sizzle of the griddles and laughter of thousands provide the soundtrack for Cheesy Nights.

The once small and lesser-known event has now morphed into a gathering that draws in crowds of over 6,000 students, uses more than 100 volunteers, and is funded by thousands of dollars donated by Virginia Tech families, alumni, and friends each semester through crowdfunding. Campus partners including the Virginia Tech Police Department, Dining Services, and Virginia Tech Athletics help make this tradition possible.

“I am completely shocked at how big it has become,” Walters said. “It’s exciting to know that year after year we’ve been able to keep growing to meet the needs of these students.”

The success of Cheesy Nights can be attributed to several factors. First, the event offers a variety of foods,

such as gluten-free bread and vegan cheese, so all students can enjoy a little bit of comfort during finals week.

The event’s growth is a testament to the dedication of its organizers, campus partners, and the volunteers who return year after year and sometimes travel from all over the country to be part of Cheesy Nights.

“The No. 1 thing you hear when it comes to traditions at Virginia Tech is the term *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve). That’s what we’re doing here. We’re serving the community of students by giving something to them that hopefully they’ll remember,” said Phil Scott, a long-time volunteer and supporter of Cheesy Nights.

“I have a volunteer heart, and this is my favorite event of the whole year to volunteer at,” said D’Lyn Biggs, who traveled all the way from Austin, Texas, to lend a helping hand during the fall 2023 Cheesy Nights. “I came all this way because I believe that students can’t learn if they’re hungry. So this is a great chance to come and experience the Hokie Spirit and give back to this community.”

Students take notice of the volunteers who work tirelessly to make Cheesy Nights a memorable event.

“I know this kind of stuff isn’t happening at other colleges and universities that my friends are going to,” said student Toby Kuhns. “Cheesy Nights is a really special thing because we are able to come together as one and be a part of this Virginia Tech community.” ■

“It’s exciting to know that year after year we’ve been able to keep growing to meet the needs of these students.”
Therese Walters



BONE BY BONE

SKELETONS THOUGHT LOST TO HISTORY are being recreated one fragile fossil at a time in University Libraries' Prototyping Studio.

3D scanners and printers are constructing strikingly realistic replicas of the extinct *Teleocrater rhadinus* using ancient fossils from more than 240 million years ago. Funded through an Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology grant, University Libraries is showing how technology can illuminate the past and bring long-extinct organisms face to face with the present.

The team, led by Sterling Nesbitt and Michelle Stocker of the Department of Geosciences, had about 80 percent of the skeleton from the collections of five individuals from two fossil sites in Tanzania to use to replicate the bones in the studio.

The first incomplete specimen was found in the 1930s and housed in the Natural History Museum in London. Nesbitt, paleontologist and professor, was still missing pieces, so he was part of a team that trekked to Tanzania to the area where the first specimen was found and unearthed more bones from a rich fossil deposit.

All of the original bones except for the ones in London are temporarily on loan to Virginia Tech for study and will be returned to Tanzania in perpetuity.

At 9 feet long and 2 feet tall at the hips, the *Teleocrater* was first named in 2017 and is a dinosaur cousin that is closer to birds and dinosaurs than crocodiles. "Teleocrater is the perfect specimen for this project as it gives us a first look at how dinosaurs inherit their features," said Nesbitt. "The smaller size also makes it easier to print."

"By harnessing the power of 3D printing rather than relying on traditional casting methods, we can bring extinct species back to life for a fraction of the cost and weight and make it accessible to the world via digital files," said Max Ofsa, manager of the Prototyping and 3D Scanning Studios. "A museum-grade exhibit of cast fossils of this size would likely get into the hundreds of thousands of dollars in cost to develop and fabricate whereas the printed fossils are only in the hundreds."

"Using an iterative process while developing the final printed model has allowed us to remove the need for most of the external support structures and instead design a model that interlocks and self supports the

fossil structure," said Ofsa.

Prototyping Studio Specialist Rob Jackson used the skeleton's 3D render to prepare it for printing. "This was done by converting individual fossil pieces provided into larger segments with additional supports and interlockings," said Jackson. "This way, parts can be manufactured in large easy-to-assemble segments instead of a weaker and tedious piecemeal process."

Nesbitt did the modeling of the skull and much of the body. "I worked meticulously using relatives of the *Teleocrater* and other reptiles to fill in the gaps where pieces were missing and then created a digital sculpture," said Nesbitt.

The first skeleton is going to the Natural History Museum in Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania. The second replica will be on display in the Virginia Tech Museum of Geosciences.

These skeletons are accompanied by an innovative app built by students and staff in the Applied Research in Immersive Experiences and Simulations program in University Libraries and Jonathan Bradley, assistant director of studios innovative technologies, using technologies that animate the creature and provide insightful information, serving as a centerpiece of an immersive educational experience. Wandering among the towering skeletal constructs on museum floors, visitors will be transported back millions of years to when these majestic creatures roamed the earth. The app will feature a translation in Swahili in honor of where the original bones were born.

"It's about bringing content to people who aren't exposed to it," said Nesbitt. "You can walk into a museum and see a skeleton, it's neat and a part of the history of our planet, but you only have a small panel to describe the details. This project brings technology to tell the stories of what extinct animals represent - its history, biology, how it was collected, how it was made and printed, the entire process it went through. The app plus the skeleton brings it all together. These are gateways into our past and our present."

In addition to Nesbitt, Stocker, Ofsa, and Bradley project team members include

- Thomas Tucker
- Phyllis Newbill
- Scott Fralin
- Todd Ogle

"This project has united a massive group of great thinkers across campus," said Nesbitt. "The library, scientists, engineers, the School of Visual Arts — the list goes on. It's a huge collaborative project at many different levels, unraveling the mysteries of the dinosaur age." ■

By Elise Monsour Puckett



“
By harnessing the power of 3D printing rather than relying on traditional casting methods, we can bring extinct species back to life quicker and more accurately and make it accessible to the world.
Max Ofsa

Prototyping Studio Specialist Rob Jackson.
Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.

UNLOCKING HISTORY

By Elise Monsour Puckett

A NEW COLLABORATION between University Libraries and the Department of History at Virginia Tech is opening the doors to the past by making early 20th century real estate documents searchable.

Associate Professor LaDale Winling is leading research to track the path of housing racial covenants in early 20th century Chicago. To do this, Winling needs access to the text of hundreds of old real estate covenants held in archives. The challenge is that these documents have only been preserved physically and cannot be searched digitally.

This is where University Libraries steps in. Through optical character recognition (OCR) technology, library experts are extracting the text from scanned images of these documents, improving readability, and making the contents searchable. University Libraries Data Informatics Consultant Chreston Miller is heading up the effort.

"I'm passionate about finding solutions to challenging problems and making an impact," Miller said. "It was extremely rewarding to discover a way to process these scanned documents and extract as much text as possible. Now we can help unlock insights into key questions about our country's past."

Racial covenants uncovered

Real estate and racial segregation are tightly linked in American society. "There have been numerous ways that this exclusion has been wrought upon the landscapes and communities of American cities," said Winling. "I am someone who wants to shine a bright light on these injustices and to show that the way things are isn't the way things have to be. Segregation was actively created, practiced, and reinforced in numerous ways and we have

to be just as active and intentional to understand how it came to be, and just as active and intentional in order to undo the work of segregation."

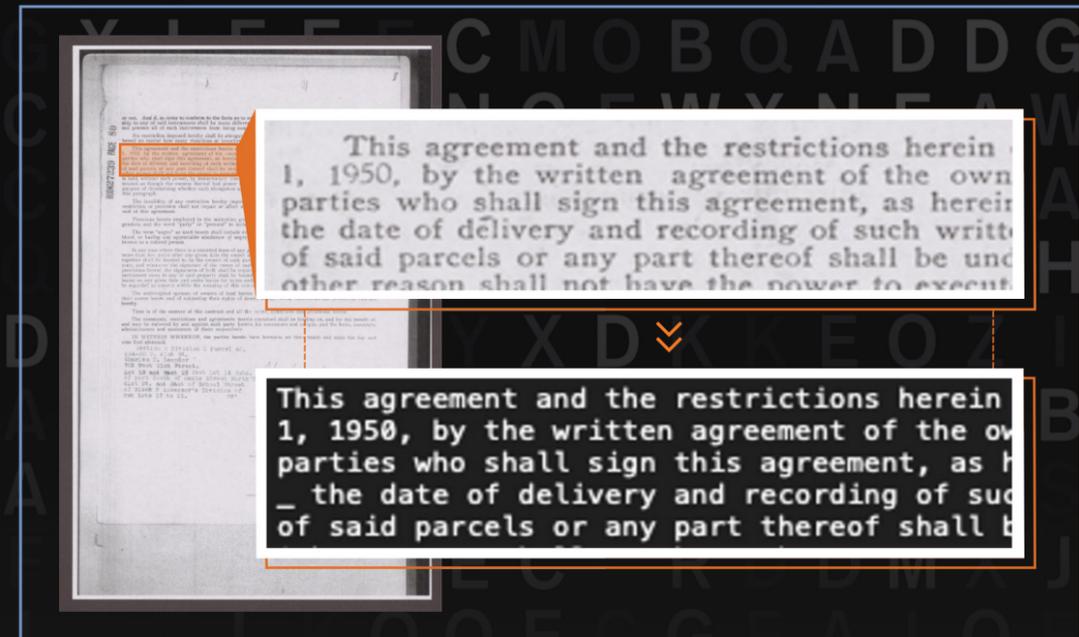
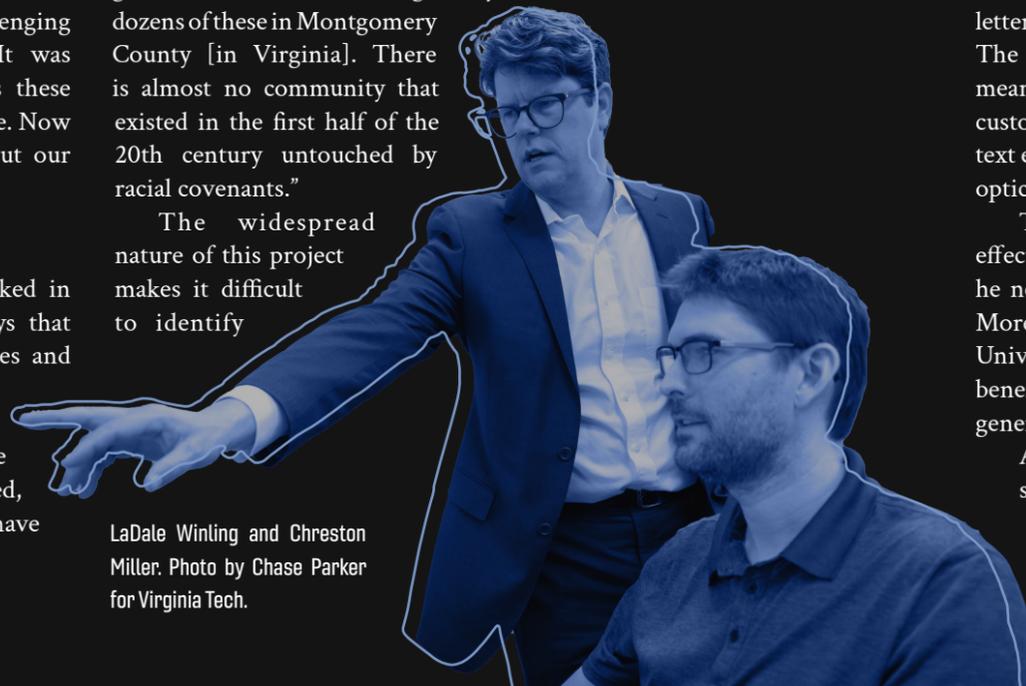
The history department and University Libraries have long been collaborators on digital projects. "This is a continuation of a great relationship," said Winling. "This kind of collaboration with the library enhances our ability to take on big projects and to explore important research topics in a variety of ways that would not be possible with individual research alone."

No needle in a haystack

The bulk of the project has concentrated on Chicago, but Winling has linked up with other researchers across the country. "They are everywhere," said Winling. "I have graduate students researching locally and we have even found dozens of these in Montgomery County [in Virginia]. There is almost no community that existed in the first half of the 20th century untouched by racial covenants."

The widespread nature of this project makes it difficult to identify

LaDale Winling and Chreston Miller. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.



covenants systematically. "They are so quotidian, they do not stand out," said Winling. "It's not just a needle in a haystack, they are hay in a haystack."

This challenge alone led Winling to reach out to Miller. "Having large document collections meant that we would have to develop some automated ways of doing some research, because we could not look at every single document by eye to draw our conclusions," said Winling. "Thus OCR, natural language processing, and visualization have become a major part of our research process."

Obstacles of digitizing old documents

The project has had its challenges. Although the documents are scanned at a high-resolution, the quality of the text in the old documents makes accurate optical character recognition difficult. Because of age, there is fading that makes lines of letters thin and sometimes very weak or even creates breaks. The background often is not white or near white, which means less contrast. However, Miller has managed to develop customized pre-processing methods for the images to improve text extraction. He has also secured access to the high-accuracy optical character recognition program John Snow Labs.

The completion of this project will have wide-ranging effects. Most directly, it will provide Winling the information he needs to complete his research into housing segregation. More broadly, it showcases innovative digital solutions from University Libraries to open access to primary sources. This benefits the research community, the university, and the general public.

As for what lies ahead, this is just the start. "Figuring out solutions for digitizing historical documents paves the way for answering so many key questions about our shared history," explains Miller. ■

“
Figuring out solutions for digitizing historical documents paves the way for answering so many key questions about our shared history.”

Chreston Miller

Community Leader: Data Expert Named Maintainer Community lead for THE CARPENTRIES



Nathaniel Porter teaches a workshop from The Carpentries in Newman Library. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.

By Elise Monsour Puckett

WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD CARPENTRY, most think of woodwork, but in the realm of research, it's about coding and data science. Nathaniel Porter, social science data consultant and data education coordinator for University Libraries, is taking on a new role as the maintainer community lead for The Carpentries, an international community of data and computing educators.

About The Carpentries

According to its website, The Carpentries is a “worldwide community of instructors, trainers, maintainers, helpers, and supporters who share admission to teach foundational computational and data science skills to researchers.” There are currently three carpentries: software, data, and library covering tools including programming languages such as R and Python, tools for working with data such as SQL databases and spreadsheets, and tools for streamlining and automating computing and project management such as Unix, Git.

Software Carpentry is focused on computing skills. Data Carpentry concentrates on workflows and data management and analysis skills in specific disciplines such as social sciences, ecology, genomics, geospatial data, and astronomy. Library Carpentry centers on skills for people working in library and information science.

A potential fourth carpentry, High-Performance Computing Carpentry, is in the early stages of joining the organization and will cover similar tools to other carpentries but with a focus on parallel and cloud computing for computationally intensive tasks such as image processing and training artificial intelligence models.

What is a lead maintainer?

The maintainer community lead's primary role is to recruit, connect, and coordinate The Carpentries' lesson maintainers from all over the world. This includes hosting monthly meetings, recruiting and onboarding new maintainers, coordinating with curriculum leads, and encouraging and equipping non-maintainers to contribute effectively.

“Most of all, what I hope to do is build a stronger sense of community,” said Porter. “Carpentries-wide, that likely will mean bringing back real-time co-working events and

encouraging active engagement through asynchronous platforms like Slack. But I also plan to work with maintainers for specific programs, lessons, and tools to coordinate sub-communities of interest to meet occasionally to support and encourage others with similar challenges rather than replicating each other's work unnecessarily.”

There are currently 105 maintainers from around the world across the four carpentries including the instructor training and lessons in three languages — English, Spanish, and Japanese.

An expert in the industry

Over the years, Porter has been involved in The Carpentries in a variety of ways as an instructor, trainer and local community lead, maintainer in instructor training, Curriculum Advisory Committee member, and trainer leadership. Porter is also a part of a cohort supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the University of California, Los Angeles, that is designing new library carpentry lessons related to open science. Porter is a globally recognized data expert in this internationally respected community.

“I found working as a maintainer to be rewarding and wanted to help build both the size and connectedness of the maintainer community, so it was a natural fit for me,” said Porter.

The Carpentries' executive board and curriculum lead made the final decision to select Porter for the role.

Premier workshops

The Carpentries' two-day workshops are distinctive in that they are all openly licensed and designed to be accessible to novice learners who are new to programming and data. “We have a ‘never teach alone’ philosophy,” said Porter. “So every workshop has at least two instructors and one or more helpers. Those instructors and helpers that aren't leading the demo help individual learners who encounter challenges or have questions about the material.”

Another key philosophy is no learner left behind. “We strive to model errors as opportunities for learning rather than problems, and helpers and instructors make sure everyone

understands the material before moving on,” said Porter.

Workshops are most often taught in universities like Virginia Tech, but can also be found at nonprofits and businesses, professional organizations, and government agencies. “Ultimately, this service also comes back to Virginia Tech,” said Porter. “We have among the largest and most active instructor communities of any university and teach at least eight two-day workshops a year, which totals around 200 faculty and graduate students annually. The best way to ensure this community and resource can continue to thrive is to build connections among its volunteers, at Virginia Tech and globally.”

This role is unique in its potential to support instructional best practices for dozens of workshops taught hundreds of times a year, including many outside traditionally well-resourced areas of the world.

“My service also means Virginia Tech will have an enhanced membership and can train more instructors to add to our local community, including faculty and graduate students, who can use those skills and certifications to secure and further their careers and build the program's capacity from within,” said Porter.

The Carpentries' workshops have been a central part of University Libraries' Data Education Program since before Porter began working at Virginia Tech in 2017. Just this year, Porter's team began a community of practice for carpentries instructors that meets monthly to discuss a topic related to teaching data and computing skills, both in a carpentries setting and beyond. The instructors serve as trainers, maintainers, and members of committees that guide lesson development, inclusion, and accessibility efforts.

Transferable skills for better teaching and professional success

“Because instructor training is not just about teaching these exact workshops, faculty instructors find their teaching in traditional courses improves, and because the certification is widely recognized, graduate student instructors also enhance their teaching skills making them more attractive job candidates from the start,” said Porter. For the last two years, Porter has also offered a popular workshop for graduate

teaching assistants on teaching with data built around The Carpentries' philosophy.

Porter said he is passionate about teaching with data and building inclusive, accessible communities of practice that support both data literacy and technical skill development.

“I talk to classes of new graduate students in a dozen departments every single year to share about University Libraries' data services and almost without fail, there is at least one student who shares their worry about not being good enough at math, programming or computers to succeed, even though they know their research is important,” said Porter. “Carpentries curriculum is not only designed to help anyone learn, regardless of talent or background, but to teach instructors and learners alike to have a growth mindset that replaces an ‘I can't’ with an ‘I can't yet’ mindset.”

University Libraries at Virginia Tech hosts online and in-person workshops from The Carpentries three times a year in January, May, and August. All faculty, staff, students, and community members can take part by registering through the library events calendar or Professional Development Network.

New this January is the Data Carpentry Ecology Workshop. Porter's team also plans to launch a new series of qualitative data analysis workshops in the spring semester that he is developing using The Carpentries' philosophies, techniques, and infrastructure that will introduce key aspects of qualitative research with five programs: NVivo, Dedose, Atlas.ti, and two free open source tools.

“I've tried a lot of things in The Carpentries' community and taught workshops online and in four states. Almost every volunteer I've interacted with has been positive and engaged,” said Porter. “The community has been a critical part of my growth into the new-to-me and relatively unique role of data education coordinator so helping build it up both at Virginia Tech and beyond is an obvious next step.” ■



DataBridge inspires futures

By Chase Parker



UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES DATA BRIDGE PROGRAM helps students like senior computer science major Skylar Mayfield bridge the gap between academic coursework and real-world career possibilities.

DataBridge, led by Anne Brown, associate professor and associate director of DataBridge, and Jonathan Briganti, DataBridge manager, pairs students with data problems proposed by researchers from across Virginia Tech. Students collaborate directly with faculty members while earning course credit or monetary payment and building their data analysis skills along the way. These data problems span and intersect many domains including data science, computational biochemistry, and pedagogical research, to name a few.

“DataBridge has prepared me for the workforce by exposing me to what the environment is like. It’s less of a classroom and more of an actual hands-on job,” said Mayfield, who joined the program in January 2023.

By actively collaborating with research faculty on high-level data science challenges, she has developed critical

programming and data visualization skills. But more importantly, Mayfield discovered a passion for data research that she never had before. The experience of working on impactful real-world problems within a professional environment sparked her interest in pursuing a career in data research.

“Before I joined DataBridge, I was more interested in software development,” Mayfield said. “But this program exposed me to data science, and now I know that this is what I want to do with my life and I feel prepared for the professional world.”

The program launched in 2018, and since then, 135 DataBridge students have assisted faculty and graduate students across the university with their research data challenges. Many of these students have used this experience to become software engineers, research associates, data visualization analysts, and other roles in data science fields.

“I hope that DataBridge is beneficial for students in multiple ways and that they learn teamwork, technical applied data science skills, and that they grow comfortable

“DataBridge has prepared me for the workforce by exposing me to what the environment is like. It’s less of a classroom and more of an actual hands-on job.

Skylar Mayfield

in a collaborative environment,” said Brown. “The goal is for the students to think creatively about solutions that might be needed for the various projects that they work on.”

From analyzing data during the COVID-19 pandemic to creating data lake maps that depict the impacts of the opioid crisis, the work done in DataBridge makes a difference that expands beyond Virginia Tech.

“We’ve had several projects go on to make an impact,” said Brown. “It’s important for the students to see their work have a positive influence on both the field and communities as well as locally and globally.”

DataBridge’s commitment to making hands-on experiences available to students offers participants an opportunity to grow and be ready for their future.

“Experiential learning is so important for students,” said Brown. “We want to make sure students are getting hands-on, applied skills that they can utilize in any career path after Virginia Tech. It also allows them to see the variety of options they can have in their careers, which is a huge benefit of this program.”

By facilitating opportunities like Mayfield’s, DataBridge continues to serve both student professional growth and critical university research needs – a powerful bridge across disciplines and between emerging talent and academic innovation. ■



SEE THE VIDEO
news.vt.edu/videos/k/2024/03/1_rathtido.html

NEW OPEN TEXTBOOK FOSTERS ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP

AS CONCERNS OVER CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY continue to shape industries, sustainable property management has become an increasingly crucial discipline. To meet the demand for relevant education in this emerging field, Erin Hopkins, associate professor of property management in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech has authored an openly-licensed textbook titled "Sustainable Property Management."

Released through the Open Education Initiative and Virginia Tech Publishing, housed in University Libraries, this pioneering work fills major gaps that existed in sustainability resources for undergraduate and graduate college property management programs.

The book provides timely instruction on implementing green building initiatives such as energy efficiency, water efficiency, indoor environmental quality, waste management, and site sustainability while also considering the social and economic impacts on stakeholders such as building users, owners, investors, the property management company, vendors, and the community.

"Since building operations represent 28 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions related to energy, implementation of green building initiatives can make a significant impact on lowering carbon dioxide emissions during the building's operation and maintenance building lifecycle phase," said Hopkins. "I am passionate about this because environmental, social, and governance are critical topics within the property management industry that sometimes get overshadowed by the economic bottom line."

Future leaders of sustainability

Integrating real-world examples and activities, the textbook connects to students' aspirations as they prepare to

enter the working world. The positive reception from student reviewers validates the book's relevance for cultivating future leaders who embrace ecological stewardship.

"Feedback from students after utilizing this textbook within the new sustainable property management course has been an increased awareness on sustainable property management issues," said Hopkins. "I have heard time and time again that they were unaware of many of these concepts and they have not heavily focused on sustainability in other classes, so I am pleased that students are receiving this knowledge somewhere during their studies at Virginia Tech. Students learning these concepts will have the knowledge to make informed decisions about green building initiatives upon entering the property management industry and perhaps be ecological stewards within the industry."

Kindred Grey. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.

By Elise Monsour Puckett



Anita Walz and Erin Hopkins with the "Sustainable Property Management" textbook. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.

proofread the text and typeset the text into the Pressbooks publishing software.

When asked about key takeaways from their experience creating the textbook, the team emphasized the importance of open educational resources to promote access and success for all students.

"By providing cost-free course materials, professors can empower students to excel regardless of financial limitations," said Walz.

Authoring and adopting open educational resources are a way faculty can help reduce students' college costs and an example of Virginia Tech Advantage, the university's commitment to providing the full educational experience to students who have financial need.

Supporting students through open access

"Sustainable Property Management" stands out as the first open textbook focused specifically on property management and green buildings. Available in multiple formats online at no cost and under a Creative Commons license, the work advances sustainability education on a much wider scale as well. Inspired by the book, Hopkins has also developed a new course required for property management majors and minors, PM 3684 Sustainable Property Management, first offered in fall 2023.

Anita Walz, assistant director and open education scholarly communications librarian, collaborated on the project grant proposal, coached the design and development of project workflows, provided project oversight, coordinated external peer and student reviews, and handled overall project management. The project, originally titled "Green Real Estate Management," was funded in part by a 2021 Open Course Grant from VIVA, Virginia's academic library consortium.

Kindred Grey, Open Education Resources graphic design specialist in University Libraries, designed the book with color contrast and accessibility in mind.

"I worked to create a text that is accessible to a wider range of readers by using visual content to illustrate and more clearly convey conceptual information that is lucid and visually cohesive," said Grey. She also formatted, edited, and

“ I worked to create a text that is accessible to a wider range of readers by using visual content to illustrate and more clearly convey conceptual information that is lucid and visually cohesive.”

Kindred Grey

As ecological awareness reshapes property management, this textbook ushers in a new generation prepared to build a sustainable future.

"By teaching our future leaders the importance of these concepts, we are cultivating a more holistic view on the value of our built environment besides the economic bottom line," said Hopkins. ■

History of Mail

Alumnus chronicles the role of postal mail in New River Valley's history.

By Ann Brown

ON A WARM SUMMER DAY IN 1966, 7-year-old Bob Hill met his dad, long-time Blacksburg postal carrier Robert "Rip" Hill Sr., along his afternoon mail route. The two conversed about their day, neighborhood news, and route logistics. During these routine but precious walks, Bob Hill learned important lessons in public relations and geography.

Rip Hill, with his official uniform and mail bag, was one of two original walking mail carriers in town. He sold stamps, talked with residents about family news and current events, and made sure the correspondence from loved ones and a few bills were promptly delivered. Bob Hill said these walks weren't just about time with dad and summertime exercise — they sparked his interest in the history and impact of the postal service on the region and its people.

"Besides getting some good exercise, I later realized I was learning communication and organizational skills, geography, and math," said Hill, who graduated in 1982 with a degree in biology and is the author of "The

New River Mail: A Postal and Social History of Virginia's Montgomery, Pulaski, and Giles Counties."

Treasure found

A year later, when his dad showed Hill a box of century-old letters found in the family's home from the previous owners, he was hooked. The letters displayed old stamps and postmarks and included tidbits of written first-hand stories of regional history.

After high school, he had to set aside his interests to pursue a Virginia Tech biology degree and later a Master of Science and Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia. Upon graduation, Hill practiced large animal medicine in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia for 30 years.

"During that time, I began to collect local Montgomery, Giles, and Pulaski envelopes and old letters as tangible pieces of history and genealogy," said Hill. "I began to realize that these letters tell a story through postal markings and social perspective that would be interesting and fresh."



A stamless envelope from about 1840 was postmarked at the Ingles Ferry Post Office at a rate of 18 3/4 cents. The recipient was Congressman William Campbell in Washington, D.C. Postage stamps were not issued by the U.S. Post Office until 1847. "At that time of national expansion, Ingles Ferry was extremely busy as the Great Road crossing of the New River with hundreds of wagons, stagecoaches, riders, and foot travelers daily," Bob Hill said.

History revealed

Hill began researching and writing as a weekend project about eight years ago. After his retirement in 2020, he was able to finish the book in two years. Throughout his research process, he delved into University Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives at Virginia Tech.

The 466 pages of "The New River Mail: A Postal and Social History of Virginia's Montgomery, Pulaski, and Giles Counties" contain photographs, maps, and images of stamps, letters, and postal markings that tell their own stories. Some of those are surprising.

"Among many was the fact that the Confederate government used boats, specifically batteau, on the New River for troop movements and supplies. The batteau were long and relatively narrow tiller craft that could carry up to 12 tons of freight, including cannon," said Hill. "During 1862-1863, the government blasted rocks and boulders in the New River from Radford to Narrows to make a more navigable supply line as the roads were typically in poor condition."

As a local history buff, Hill said Special Collections and University Archives is a wonderful resource for research and reminiscing.

"The photographs and maps enhance and enlarge the understanding of local history and events," said Hill. "After paying usage fees to other databases for images used in the book, I think it's commendable that Special Collections does not extract a fee for the use of its resources. Accordingly, careful attribution is required. It's a great resource that exemplifies the Hokie motto, Ut Prosim."

Postal service helped expand a nation

"In the early days, each settlement boasted a post office, which gave the inhabitants an identity beyond their remote circumstances," said Hill. "Correspondence among family members eased the separation and encouraged new settlement as migration expanded westward. In particular, the safe and consistent crossing of the New River at Ingles Ferry was key to regional and national expansion."

Learning first-hand through the letters of people living their lives during the country's both calm and tumultuous times adds more than dates, facts, and names to the historical record.

"Their own words add passion, feeling, and nuances to the known framework of our accepted historical accounts," said Hill. "The neat thing is, old letters are still being uncovered in attics and archives and brought to light." ■



Robert Hill Sr., Blacksburg, Va., "Mr. Mailman."
The New River Mail by Robert "Bob" Hill Jr., page 271.



SCHOLARSHIP

Open textbook project wins

PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL AWARD

By Elise Monsour Puckett

WHEN ANITA WALZ sat in the audience at the 2023 Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) Annual Conference Awards ceremony in Manchester, England, she was surprised to hear that a new award was specifically created to honor her team's open textbook project "Original Études for the Developing Conductor." A nomination had been submitted for the ALPSP Impact Award 2023 and the

team won a newly created "highly commended" designation in the Impact Award category.

"While I accurately predicted the winner for the original Impact Award, the fact that they created a separate award for us was completely unexpected," said Walz, University Libraries' assistant director of open education and scholarly communication librarian.

"I wasn't able to attend the conference, but shocked and honored would sum up my emotions pretty well," said Jonathan Caldwell, assistant professor of conducting and director of bands at the University of North Carolina Greensboro and co-editor of the textbook. "It was an honor to be recognized and know the committee sees the value and innovation in the book."

Far more than a trophy for bookshelves, the prestigious ALPSP Impact Award honors initiatives, projects, campaigns, or collaborations within scholarly publishing and academic research that are making a positive difference and resonate deeply through society. The impact can be on any area that can make a significant difference to people such as the community, education, the environment, or advancing diversity and inclusion.

Winning the award attested to the value, impact, and foresight of the team's work. Award chair David Sommer wrote, "We awarded highly commended to 'Original Études for the Developing Conductor' in recognition of the notable impact this educational resource is having in terms of improving quality, accessibility and diversity." This international award had multiple levels of scrutiny and the judges reviewed written applications, video presentations, blog posts, a live presentation, and Q&A session.

"I sat unknowingly next to one of the judges from the panel at the awards dinner," said Walz. "The judge mentioned that our project not only looked good on paper but the judges really liked our team and collegiality."

Never been done before

The winning textbook is a first of its kind: a freely available, peer-reviewed, Creative Commons licensed collection of supplemental études designed to enhance contemporary conducting educational resources by amplifying the voices of composers from historically excluded groups. Published by the Virginia Tech School of Performing Arts in association with

the Open Education Initiative and Virginia Tech Publishing, both housed in Newman Library, this book is also a cross-institutional collaboration between Virginia Tech and the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Developing a more navigable resource gave the team opportunities for innovation. "When we were in the process of creating the book, there were a couple of times when we would ask each other, 'Well, how is this usually done?' and most of the time the answer was, 'We don't know because it hasn't been done before,'" said Kindred Grey, University Libraries' open educational resource and graphic design specialist. "At the end of the project, it was nice to have a tangible book that serves as a guide for other communities if they wish to publish music. This would be the case with or without the award, but having international recognition helps promote our work and let other communities know that it exists if they want to use it or replicate it."

Blazing a new trail

"Music publishing is ripe for change in its approach to open access, and I think this book illustrates a new path for the publishing of music performance materials designed for educational use," said Caldwell. "It's also significant in that the book celebrates the voices of composers who have traditionally been marginalized by classical music, particularly composers of color and women-identifying composers. We really worked to center those voices in the project and hopefully the award brings those people the recognition they rightfully deserve."

"For me, this book is a testament and a reflection of our ethical values, which is why I'm so passionate about it," said Caldwell. "There are so many compositional voices that need to be heard but aren't included in music performance textbooks. Students need to see those composers and hear their voices."

Derek Shapiro, assistant professor and director of bands in the School of Performing Arts and co-editor of the book, said, "This award is significant because it brings attention to the fact that this kind of publishing model can work in music and can bring new voices with fresh musical ideas to our students. We were hoping for 1,000 downloads and now we have over 7,000."

"This is also an opportunity to give our students a significant resource at no cost," said Shapiro. "As college tuition inflates it is important that we search for new and innovative ways to provide our students with new and engaging ways to learn about living composers and various styles of music."

Hard work pays off

As a librarian, Walz has a leadership role on the content

creation team. She collaborates closely with subject matter experts across Virginia Tech and beyond to envision and implement high-quality open education projects.

"I am so grateful to University Libraries Senior Associate Dean Julie Griffin who supported my travel to Manchester," said Walz. "The finalists' projects were all so interesting, unique, and impactful. Even without the award, our team was honored to just be shortlisted — and for a freely available, Creative Commons licensed work at a for-profit publisher-centered conference nonetheless. I was so honored to be able to represent our team and the composers who contributed to the work."

Kindred Grey, whose main role in the project was usability, design, and production, said, "When I heard the news, it felt rewarding to have our months and months of hard work be recognized and applauded. It's a great feeling to finish a project and be proud of your work, but an even better feeling is when other people recognize the thoughtfulness in your work and deem it high quality enough to use it in their own lives."

"Quite frankly, without all of the work Anita and Kindred did, this book would have never happened," said Caldwell. "Together with the composers who contributed études, Anita and Kindred are the people who deserve the credit for all the book's success."

The power of open access

Open access is something that the music industry has been hesitant to embrace. "Rethinking the financial model of how composers are compensated for their work is something that needs to happen," said Caldwell. "This book does that

in a truly ethical way. Creating a textbook that centers the student experience rather than the needs of the instructor is an uncommon approach to textbook design but frankly is the right thing to do. By incorporating the feedback we received from students in the design of the book and considering the student experience first, we created something really innovative. I think this book does all these things in a really powerful and unique way and I couldn't be prouder of the final product."

"This work could not have been done without Derek, Jon, and Anita," said Grey. "Their individual experiences and expertise made the work incredibly high quality. And their personalities made the work incredibly fun."

Walz hopes this special international award will amplify awareness and influence even beyond her field. "We hope that other collections of scores will leverage the advances we made in student-centered navigation for educational use. This is a game-changer for students." ■

“It's also significant in that the book celebrates the voices of composers who have traditionally been marginalized by classical music, particularly composers of color and women-identifying composers.”

Jonathan Caldwell

LIST OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Exhibit highlights research into the hidden history behind the romanticized representation and perception of Charleston, South Carolina.

By Ann Brown



"Hidden in Plain Sight" tells the story of Charleston, South Carolina, through pictures and descriptions. Photo by Jack Micallef for Virginia Tech.

THE SWEEPING PORCHES, IMMACULATE GROUNDS, and luxurious spaces of historic mansions and plantations in Charleston, South Carolina, are popular backdrops for modern weddings and vacations. But behind this beauty and romanticized history of plantation life hides the fact that Charleston, once the wealthiest city in the 13 American colonies, was built on the profits from trading enslaved people and from the cotton, indigo, and rice enslaved workers produced.

The exhibit "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Politics of Memorialization of Slavery in Charleston, S.C.," on the second floor of Newman Library, shines a light on the history of slavery in Charleston. The interactive exhibit, based on research by Laura Zanotti, political science professor in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, and Zuleka Woods, graduate research assistant for the Center for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies, examines themes in the memorialization and representations of slavery in Charleston's public spaces including Southern charm and nostalgia, Southern charm and violence, and enslaved narratives.

"This project started as a result of a casual conversation with my Ph.D. student Zuleka Woods," said Zanotti. "We had both independently visited Charleston as tourists, and we both were puzzled by how the memory of slavery is almost absent in the streets of historic Charleston and by how plantations are still marketed as wedding venues. We decided to dig deeper."

With the support from Dean Emeritus Jerry Niles of Virginia Tech's College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and the college's Juneteenth Scholars Program, Woods and Zanotti spent four days visiting mansions, museums, and plantations in Charleston — much like a tourist would but with a different lens.

"Because this research started as the result of our discomfort about how the story of slavery is told, or not told, in public spaces, we felt that its findings should first and foremost be an intervention in public memory," said Zanotti. "Also, we felt that our message needed to be documented through pictures, showing the contrast between the beauty of the mansions and the luxurious lifestyles of their owners, and the toiling and sufferings of those who made that lifestyle possible."

Woods and Zanotti partnered with Scott Fralin, University Libraries' exhibit curator and learning environments librarian, to shape the research into a free standing visually and intellectually striking exhibit.

"I knew it was an important story that should be told, but it took a while to process and synthesize the raw data they collected on their research trip," said Fralin. "The researchers and I had many meetings where we talked about the content and how to best tell the story they were

trying to present. I made suggestions on how to shape it into a story more suitable for an exhibit format, and they patiently explained their arguments and reasoning to me. In the end, we had a set of text and photos that at the same time presented their research well and told a story that works as an exhibit."

For exhibit viewers, it can be a much easier way to learn about a complicated or difficult subject.

"The visual nature of an exhibit draws people in and helps reinforce the researcher's points in a way not possible in a paper or article," said Fralin. "In an exhibit, the text is concise and to the point, working with visual and physical elements to make a point via a holistic experience. Being in a purposefully designed space can be more memorable and impactful to visitors than reading a paper."

"By sharing our findings in a visual exhibit, we essentially could share our experience in a play-by-play fashion," said Woods. "The visual exhibit brings people into the field with us and along the way as we collected the information for this project. Although we still plan to continue to share the findings from this project in other ways, the visual exhibit is by far the most inclusive and engaging for many audiences."

According to Zanotti, the work aims to make an impact on public memories that contribute to national identity and to shift narratives about race, racism, and the making of America that has been clouded by a selective memorialization process.

Woods said being able to share it in a public space like Newman Library is important.

"The university plays a key role in the development and education of the community," said Woods. "Newman Library is the heart of research in and around Virginia Tech. The exhibit's purpose is to start a discussion surrounding the representation of slavery in public spaces and more broadly the politics of memory. Newman Library is an ideal location for not only housing these discussions but also continuing to provide resources to the Virginia Tech community to engage in these discussions."

Community members can visit the exhibit in Newman Library during library hours through the summer. Zanotti, Woods, and Fralin also built an online exhibit featuring the research.

Zanotti and Woods hope to conduct similar research in other locations in the American South.

"We hope to be able to attract more funding to expand our research on public memory to different locations in the South," said Zanotti. "Maybe Savannah will be next?" ■

MAP OF CHARLESTON, S. C.

PUBLISHED BY Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., CHARLESTON, S. C.

COMPILED BY SIMONS & HUGER.



Packaging Design Major Leaves His Creative Mark on University Libraries

By Elise Monsour Puckett

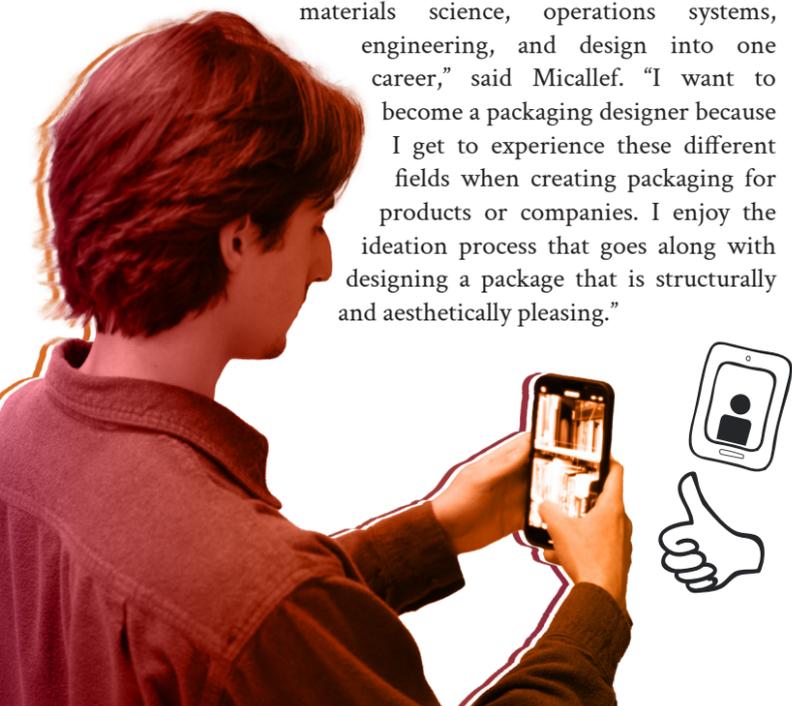
IF YOU'VE SCROLLED THROUGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES'

social media feeds over the last three years, chances are you've seen the face of Jack Micallef '24. From Cheesy Nights to Giving Day, the library homecoming tailgate, and Game Night, Micallef has produced and starred in many library photos and videos. Micallef isn't just another student; he's the creative student force behind the library's entertaining social media presence.

One student's unique dream

Micallef, University Libraries' student social media production assistant, is graduating in May 2024 with a degree in packaging systems and design. He plans to use his Virginia Tech degree to be a packaging designer, which became an interest of his after attending a campus majors fair early in his college career.

"I find packaging systems and design interesting because it combines a variety of fields such as materials science, operations systems, engineering, and design into one career," said Micallef. "I want to become a packaging designer because I get to experience these different fields when creating packaging for products or companies. I enjoy the ideation process that goes along with designing a package that is structurally and aesthetically pleasing."



Content Creator

At the library, Micallef creates content for the library's social media channels including Instagram, Facebook, X, Threads, and LinkedIn. With a DSLR in one hand and iPhone in the other, he's always ready to capture the next big viral moment through professional photos, horizontal and vertical videos, and snappy post captions. Whether it's promoting events, showcasing exhibits, or highlighting spaces, he does it all with boundless energy and flair.

"My job is unique because I am creating social media content for Hokies, like myself," said Micallef. "My favorite part of my job is creating Instagram reels and short videos around the library with my co-workers on the strategic communications team. It's a cool feeling to know that something you created will be watched by thousands of other Hokies."

In the ever-evolving social media landscape, Micallef has proven invaluable at keeping the libraries relevant. New platforms pop up while others become less popular. "When Jack joined our team our only social media channels were Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter," said Elise Monsour Puckett, communications and development coordinator, who manages the library's social media and serves as Micallef's supervisor. "Over the last 3 years, we have added Threads, LinkedIn, Twitch, and were on TikTok for a while. Jack helped us launch these new platforms, learning the ins and outs, training other student employees, searching for trends, and creating new content tailored for each unique platform."

"Embracing new platforms is always a learning curve," said Micallef. "But I pivot and dive in head-first until I've mastered the video editing tricks for that app's style. When you are used to creating a vertical video in one app and then suddenly have to switch apps you have to relearn how to apply filters, add text, use stickers, and find audio again. But I quickly got the hang of it."

Jack of all trades

Of course, Micallef's path to library social media stardom has featured no shortage of outrageous stunts and hilarious hijinks. "I have dressed in a suit and tie to eat grilled cheese with a fork and knife," said Micallef. "I've sprinted down the sidewalk for Giving Day. I've 3D printed donuts with sprinkles, stacked books to make animal shapes, created virtual reality videos, served as a model for the socks campaign, photographed 3D printed skeletons of dinosaurs, created stop-motion videos of Scrabble for Game Night, captured the VT Therapy Dogs' birthday parties, contributed photos for Imagine Magazine, and shared rare items in Special Collections and University Archives with the digital world. You name it, I've probably done it!"

"He's going to be hard to replace," said Puckett. "Jack is a true creative, brimming with fresh ideas, and up for anything! Not to mention he is smart, dependable, a team player, and universally adored by library faculty and staff."



Library skills honed

Micallef says working at the library has given him the opportunity to learn all that libraries have to offer. "I've gained such an appreciation for all the cool resources right at our fingertips," said Micallef. "The knowledge that I've gained has been very useful when doing work for my classes."

Learning how to communicate effectively has been a key takeaway for Micallef during his time on the University Libraries' Strategic Communications Team. "A lot of times when I am photographing or taking video, especially for events and exhibits, I need to ask people if they are okay with being in a photo or video," said Micallef. "Being confident and having a clear message when talking to new people allows for effective communication in any situation, including in my career in packaging. I am glad that I have been able to practice and become better at this while working at University Libraries."

"I have really enjoyed working at the library," said



SPOTLIGHTS

Micallef. "It has given me the opportunity to work creatively in a welcoming environment. Everyone at the library is nice, supportive, and open to working on any ideas I've had. I have loved working on the Strategic Communications Team and plan to take what I've learned into my future career."

As his Virginia Tech journey nears its end, Micallef encourages fellow Hokies. "Try new things and take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way during your time as a student at Virginia Tech," said Micallef. "Because this is where you'll create lifelong memories and friendships."

His whirlwind stint capturing the library's spirit certainly did just that while delighting the entire university community with engaging, unforgettable content in the process. ■



University Libraries receives 2024 Insight Into Diversity magazine's Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award

By Ann Brown

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES AT VIRGINIA TECH received the 2024 Library Excellence in Access and Diversity (LEAD) Award from Insight Into Diversity magazine for its programs and initiatives that encourage and support diversity and inclusion.

Among the 56 academic library award recipients from across the nation, University Libraries at Virginia Tech is the only Virginia awardee.

"We are honored to be chosen for this award," said Tyler Walters, dean of the University Libraries. "We strive to actively encourage partnerships and provide programming that is inclusive and accessible to all. This exemplifies our commitment to the university's motto *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of diversity and community."

A few initiatives highlighted in the nominating materials included the library's commitment to supporting underrepresented authors and researchers through open access publishing and celebrating

authorship at the annual Virginia Tech Authors Recognition Event, scheduled for Feb. 26. The materials also featured the creation of Virginia's only U.S. Patent and Trademark Resource Center in Newman Library to support inventors and entrepreneurs in the region and the library's work in finding and creating research connections with historically Black colleges and universities.

University Libraries will be featured as a LEAD award recipient in the magazine's March issue. Insight Into Diversity is the largest and oldest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education.

"We know that many academic libraries are not always recognized for their dedication to diversity, inclusion, and access," said Lenore Pearlstein, the magazine's owner and publisher. "We are proud to honor these college and university libraries as role models for other institutions of higher education." ■



FEATURING HISTORY

A.J. DAVIS

COLLECTION

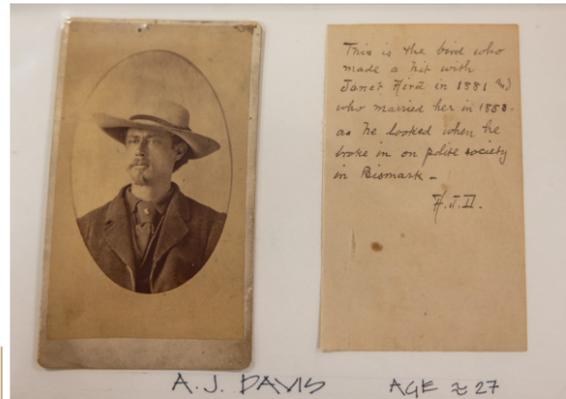
By Ann Brown

THE A.J. DAVIS FAMILY COLLECTION

in Special Collections and University Archives holds moments in time from the eyes and pen of Albert John Davis (1854-1935). This collection, which spans his career as an officer in the U.S. Army in the Dakota Territories and with the Weather Bureau in the Northeast and Southeast, includes diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, and other artifacts.

"This collection offers noteworthy glimpses into an age of exploration, which coincides with the expansion of the railroad," said Jack Davis, dean emeritus of the School of Architecture and Design who gifted his family's collection to the University Libraries. "A.J. Davis traveled the United States extensively, more extensively than many people I know today. He chronicled his military and weather bureau careers in diaries and journals spanning over 50 years."

"The A.J. Davis Collection is an outstanding example of a family history collection that appeals to more than just the descendants of the Davis family," said Aaron D. Purcell, director of Special Collections and University Archives. "The collection contains fantastic handwritten journals documenting military life in the Dakotas during the 1880s. The family has roots in Virginia and many years of service at Virginia Tech, which made it an obvious collection to have in Blacksburg."



Portrait of A.J. Davis, member of the U.S. Army 7th Cavalry

A.J. Davis was one of a few literate cavalrymen and was tasked with transcribing military treaties and operating the telegraph. His views and experiences during this tumultuous time of Western expansion paint a vivid picture of Army life on the Plains in the 1870s, conflict with Indigenous people, discrimination, and war.



Diary of A.J. Davis (1874 - 1897)

In addition to drafting treaties, Army General Nelson Miles asked Davis to accompany a photographer to a photo session with Native Americans. The photographer gave Davis some of the photographs taken during the session, including a signed photograph of Sitting Bull.



A signed photograph of Sitting Bull

The collection also contains a 19-page history of Woods Hole, Massachusetts, authored by Davis, while he served in the Weather Service.



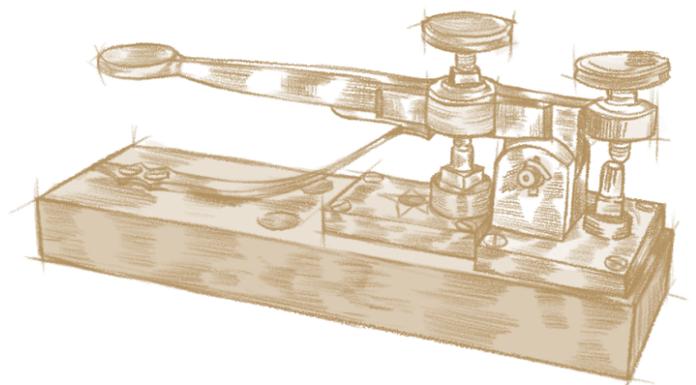
The journal, "A Brief Outline of Woods Hole Sciences and People from a Strictly Biased View," describes the area and those who lived there.

Davis later settled in Norfolk with his family in 1904 and retired there in 1924.



A.J. Davis

Special Collections and University Archives in University Libraries' Newman Library is devoted to collecting, preserving, and providing access to primary source materials for teaching, learning, and research. "We want people to use our collections, no matter what the reason - for academic research, for use in a class, to satisfy their curiosity, for entertainment, or to trace their family history," said Purcell. "Primary sources like manuscripts, family papers, diaries, ledgers, interviews, and scarce publications offer unique insights into the past and help us understand the challenges of today." ■



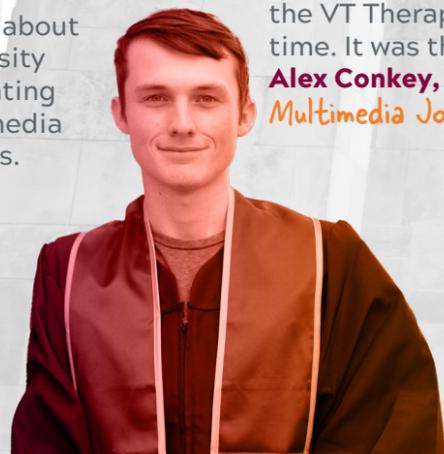
For all HOKIES

We celebrate our graduating student employees who helped the University Libraries in its mission to serve all Hokies, near and far.



“ My favorite thing about working at University Libraries was creating engaging social media content for Hokies.

Jack Micallef,
Packaging Design



“ My job was so much fun. I just got to take pictures of the VT Therapy Dogs all the time. It was the best.

Alex Conkey,
Multimedia Journalism

“ It was awesome getting to work with really cool old manuscripts and books.

Tyler Williams, History



“ My favorite thing about working at University Libraries is the staff. Working with all of those wonderful people makes the experience fun.

Ava-Grace Carll, Studio Art



“ I was able to enhance my multimedia skills and I had an awesome boss and coworkers.

Kaleigh Miller,
Cinema



“ My favorite thing about working at University Libraries was seeing the community come together for a ton of great events.

Mehru Adnan,
Public Relations



“ I loved the inclusive faculty that I was able to work with every day, and it was an exciting environment where I got to work with students.

Anna Sisk, Communication



“

My favorite thing about working at University Libraries has been being able to analyze the current immigration policies for the United States and translating videos and audio files from Spanish to English.

Lila Bartolomeo,
International Relations



“ My favorite thing about working at University Libraries is the fact that it's in the center of campus so it's easy to clock in, do my work, then clock out and be within walking distance to my classes.

Gabriel Philipsen,
Multimedia Journalism



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