“Libraries Are Filled with Treasures: Check Them Out!” was the theme of the eighteenth annual Virginia Library Association Paraprofessional Forum Conference held May 16–18 at the Holiday Inn/Koger South Conference Center in Chesterfield County. Karen Jacobs of George Mason University and Lydia Williams of Longwood University were cochairs for this year’s conference, which hosted 225 attendees. In addition to attracting library personnel from across Virginia, the conference also brought in attendees from Washington DC, Maryland, New York, and North Carolina. With a variety of concurrent session topics, an author banquet, interesting keynote speakers, and many opportunities for networking and professional development, this conference provided attendees with a wealth of valuable information and resources to enhance their professional development.

Sunday’s Dessert Social Featuring Virginia Author Emilie Richards

This year the Sunday evening event included a dessert social and a presentation by bestselling author Emilie Richards, followed by a book signing. Richards gave a very interesting presentation, during which she talked about her experiences as a writer and shared her techniques for writing a novel.

Richards began her talk by saying that those who work in libraries and writers have a lot in common. Libraries are always cited as the reason people love to read. When she was five years old, Richards started visiting her local library, where she was introduced to the world of books. Richards says changes are on the horizon for both libraries and writers. E-readers are becoming the newest thing, and they are expected to impact libraries and the publishing world.

As she began her career path, Richards never expected that one day she would be a writer, but along the way she did discover that she loved to write. After the birth of her fourth child, she decided to be a stay-at-home parent, and it was during this time that she decided to try her hand at writing stories. She quickly became a patron of her local library, checking out all available materials about writing and publishing books.

Richards said that she likes creating a plot that puts a positive spin on relationships and involves overcoming the obstacles that get in the way. She looks back to her first published book and considers the process a learning experience that taught her much about how to publish and market her materials. Since her first publication in 1985, Richards has written over fifty novels. She believes that writing books should be fun and that authors should write about what they love. Her passion is to write women’s fiction that is filled with mystery and suspense. Although marketers and bookstores always categorize her books as romance, she does not think of herself as a true romance novelist. She would categorize her books as women’s fiction. For example, in her Shenandoah Album series, each of the five novels is set in the southwestern region of Virginia. These books were not written as romance novels, but rather as stories that deal with a variety of family relationships and issues that impact these relationships. Quilting and
Richards talked about her most recent writing projects. She has no tolerance for boredom, and also enjoys writing mysteries. In her mystery series Ministry Is Murder, she has created the unconventional character Aggie Sloan-Wilcox, the wife of a minister, who gets involved in helping others through her gift of solving mysteries. The most recent title from this series, *A Lie for a Lie*, was released this past winter. Richards also shared information about the titles in her most current series, Happiness Key, that deal with the lives of five very different women who live in the rundown development called Happiness Key. The second book in the series, *Fortunate Harbour*, will be released this spring, with the third and final book coming out later this summer. Richards closed her session by reading a selection from *Fortunate Harbour*, and then offered those in the audience an opportunity to ask questions.

This event was the perfect way for attendees to learn more about this very talented Virginia author and the many books she has written, especially her newest publications.

**Monday’s Opening Session**

VLAPF Cochair Karen Jacobs provided opening remarks and a welcome on behalf of the VLAPF Executive Board during Monday’s general session. VLA President John Moorman further welcomed the group on behalf of the Virginia Library Association. Food Bank representative Kristin VanStory shared general information about the Food Bank and thanked conference attendees for their donations to assist in this charitable organization.

Sam Clay, director of the Fairfax Public Library System, opened the conference with his keynote address, “To Read or Not to Read: So What’s the Question?” His presentation was filled with humor, some thoughts about the way people read, and some reflections about how the library and reading are changing as we move forward into the twenty-first century filled with new technologies.

Bringing the conference theme into play (“Libraries Are Filled with...”)
Clay stated that everyone in the room was a treasure. He went on to say that library support staff determine the failure or the success of a library, and that support staff are one of a library’s chief assets.

Getting back to the theme of his address, Clay said that the word of the day is READ. He said the question of the day is, and I quote, “Is it a breach of ethics for those who work in libraries to read from a Kindle?” He went on to say that many library personnel have been seen with a Kindle or a similar e-reading device.

Clay then talked about how relevant reading has always been, and how it will continue to be so in the future no matter the format of the reading material. Sharing a personal story, Clay said that at the age of six he had his first significant “a-ha” moment related to reading. On returning to his classroom from the school library, he thought he saw his name written on the chalkboard, and he panicked. Having your name on the board was embarrassing because it meant you had done something really wrong. It also meant that you were kept inside during the big recess period. After taking a more careful look at the board, he realized the teacher had written Sonny, not Sammy, on the board. This was the moment when he realized the importance of being able to read. Clay said that the ability to read is a gift that should be valued. Since reading provides the reader with the ability to analyze, synthesize, and visualize, it has been viewed as a danger by many civilizations over the centuries. History provides many instances of resistance to books and reading, with the most revolutionary one resulting in the burning of books. On the other end of the spectrum, there is also documentation of words spoken by great minds to encourage reading. For instance, Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “Don’t join the book burners. Don’t be afraid to go to the library and read every book.”

Clay shared quotes from other famous thinkers and leaders who spoke out on either the pros or cons of the issue.

Readers face challenges. Making the decision about what to select is one challenge. All people have their own system for selecting what they wish to read. Another challenge is where to read, and this is determined by an individual’s circumstances. Clay threw out some questions related to one’s personal reading strategy and style: “Do you read an entire book, even if you dislike the beginning? Are you philosophic about what you read, do you fly through the text, or do you savor every word on every page?” But the question of the day was, “Where do you find the books you read?” Books are available in public libraries, bookstores, and online. Friends share books with other friends. But now we have new options for finding the books we read. So, is it a breach of ethics to read from a Kindle? Is reading essential? Will books survive in this new age filled with digital and electronic information? Is it the future of reading rather than publishing? History documents a progression of formats—microfiche, microfilm, long-playing records, videotapes, audiotapes, CDs, and DVDs. What
What lies ahead? What is the future of reading, and how will libraries fit in as new technologies emerge? Will digital technologies unlock the written word to the world? As we move into the future of libraries, it is obvious that the way we read will change. Power browsing will eliminate the need for introspective reading. How we read will be more important than what we read. In libraries, our job will be to decide how these new products can best serve our customers’ needs. Another issue libraries must consider is affordability. Will libraries have the funds to purchase these new technologies?

We must realize that regardless of the format in which books are made available to the public, we must continue to pass on our love of reading to our customers. It is time for us to embrace digital devices and make the decision to help our customers as they begin using these devices. To read or not to read: is it ethical? The answer is yes.

With his humorous presenta-
tion style, Clay provided food for thought and challenged the audience to contemplate the importance of reading and providing access to reading materials. He also made the point that regardless of how emerging technologies change the world of reading, making reading materials available and accessible to everyone will continue to be the main focus of libraries.

**Tuesday’s Luncheon**

Tuesday’s closing session included a speaker, a buffet luncheon, special recognitions and awards, and the drawing for the scholarship raffle prizes.

Following the luncheon, Karen Jacobs introduced the featured speaker, Kim Weitkamp, who is a storyteller, humorist, and musician. She is a commissioned artist through the Virginia Commission for the Arts, serves as the National Youth Storytelling representative for Virginia, and is president of the Virginia Storytelling Alliance. Weitkamp is the founder of the Wrinkles Project, a national campaign that focuses on saving the life stories and memories of elder members of our communities.

Opening with some humorous remarks, Weitkamp then turned the tables on the audience by sharing a story that brought a tear to the eye of everyone in the room. The story was filled with memories of some very special elderly people who spent their last years in a nursing home. She described them so that the listeners understood that she had come to love and appreciate and understand Charles and Jeanie. Weitkamp held the audience spellbound as she used her storytelling magic to bring this couple to life and make them as real to her listeners as they had been to her. Weitkamp said this was a story about love and age and looking back as we appreciate looking forward. Weitkamp had a captive audience as she took her listeners into the world of the nursing home and helped them visualize this environment from the perspective of those who live in it. She proved once again that a great storyteller can totally engage an audience and evoke an emotional response from the listeners.

VLAPF Cochair Karen Jacobs thanked Weitkamp for sharing her gift of storytelling with us and then presented her with a gift from the board. The session continued with the presentation of special awards and recognitions. The VLAPF Supporter of Paraprofes-
sionals Award went to Ida Patton, who had recently retired from her position as the public services coordinator at the Washington County Public Library. Everett Seamans of the Mercer Library on the Prince William Campus at George Mason University received the VLAPF Paraprofessional of the Year Award. Kathryn Boone of Old Dominion University’s Perry Library was this year’s recipient of the Clara Stanley VLAPF Scholarship sponsored by the members of the VLAPF Executive Board. The women from Virginia Tech who have given of their time, talents, and finances to provide a handmade quilt for the last five years to help raise money for the Clara Stanley VLAPF Scholarship received special recognition and certificates of thanks from the VLAPF Executive Board. Two of the quilters, Marion Eaton and Jean Quible, were on hand to accept the certificates. VLA Executive Director Linda Hahne received a special award from the Executive Board in appreciation for her dedication and service to the VLA Paraprofessional Forum.

The conference closed with the scholarship raffle, and many of those who purchased tickets left the conference with a unique basket or special work of art. The beautiful quilt, which was made and donated by the Virginia Tech Quilters, went to Peggy Poirier of the Army Management Staff College in Fort Belvoir. Jim Whaler of the Lynchburg Public Library won the P. Buckley Moss print, Morning Mist #14, a print donated by the Moss Society and beautifully matted and framed by Christopher’s Fine Arts and Framing of Farmville. The twelve baskets that were provided by the members of the board and other generous supporters of the scholarship raffle, the lottery tree, the quilt, and the print earned $1,753, which will go to help fund next year’s Clara Stanley VLAPF Scholarship.

MONDAY, MAY 17
10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Providing Great Customer Service to Culturally Diverse Customers
Presenter: Sam Clay, Fairfax Public Library System

Who can help but enjoy a session by Sam Clay? A great speaker, Clay related tips to help library staff deal with the joys and trials of dealing with diverse populations. His
The social brought friends together for an evening of fun.
gentle humor helped remind the audience that library staff members need to reach out to those of diverse populations and make the library what they need it to be. He also reminded attendees of the cultural pitfalls that can turn a simple situation into a problem. He said that we must be aware of things like body language, volume of speech, and direct eye contact, which could possibly make patrons uncomfortable. This was an informative session from both points of view.

— Nia Rodgers, Virginia Commonwealth University

Beyond Search: What Google Can Do for You
Presenter: Steve Helm, Radford University

The presentation by Steve Helm was both informative and entertaining. Many folks are aware of basic Google applications like Gmail and Google Earth, but so many other applications are available: the language translator, the medical history database, and the financial analysis app that records daily news reflecting Wall Street results; the list goes on. Helm encouraged people to download his presentation from the VLA website to see these and the many other Google apps mentioned in this presentation.

— Kathy Judge, Charlottesville Public Library System

Stories in Creasing with the Origami Swami
Presenter: Megan Hicks,ugg (http://www.meganhicks.com)

Megan Hicks taught participants how to fold colorful paper and tell stories to entertain our patrons. Megan is a surefire winner for chil-
6:30 p.m.–7:45 p.m.

Ellen Krupar and Marion Eaton present a session on customer service.

Allison Scripa provided participants with questions to consider when helping patrons search for health information online. The basic who, what, when, where, how, and why will help you find the red flags. Consider who is publishing the information and who has written papers, what the website is saying, and whether they are selling something. One red flag to look for is whether the site contains attacks against other agencies such as the FDA. When helping patrons locate health information online, finding reliable information should be the ultimate goal. The presentation was very helpful and empowering.

— Deloris Thomas, The College of William and Mary

3:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Graphic Library Invasion: Graphic Novels Format, Function, and Fame**

Presenters: Susan Hampe and Michelle Chrzanowski, Virginia Beach Public Libraries

The presenters started from the ground up, explaining the differences between comics and graphic novels and going all the way through to how to recommend types of graphic novels for various readers. They stressed the collection management aspects related to this genre as well, focusing on the breadth of titles available and cautioning as to the number of volumes that might be included in some of the graphic novel series. The presenters’ passion for the topic led many in the room to comment that they were “going to go find a graphic novel to try.”

— Nia Rodgers, Virginia Commonwealth University

**Finding Reliable Health Information Online**

Presenter: Allison Scripa, Virginia Tech

Allison Scripa provided participants with questions to consider when helping patrons search for health information online. The basic who, what, when, where, how, and why will help you find the red flags. Consider who is publishing the information and who has written papers, what the website is saying, and whether they are selling something. One red flag to look for is whether the site contains attacks against other agencies such as the FDA. When helping patrons locate health information online, finding reliable information should be the ultimate goal. The presentation was very helpful and empowering.

— Deloris Thomas, The College of William and Mary
Quilting 101
Presenter: Rosemary Bowden, Virginia Tech

Rosemary Bowden from the Dizzy Quilters at Virginia Tech gave a very interesting session on the basics of piecing a quilt. She started the session by sharing information about websites where free quilt patterns are available. Bowden explained that cutting the pieces for a quilt requires a lot of math. When all the pieces are cut, the next step is to piece them together, and Bowden showed the session attendees how to get started. She explained how to piece the quilt top with the batting and the bottom layer of the quilt. She also gave instructions on how to hem a quilt and provided information on how to store quilts. At the end of her session, she talked about tying, machine quilting, and hand quilting. Rosemary also brought some samples of quilts that she showed to attendees. The audience was

Left, Ben Norris presents a session filled with information about social networking.

Below, Kim Armentrout shares ideas on how to best utilize your friends group.

Megan Hicks demonstrates how to use the art of origami in library programming.
quite amazed at what was involved in the process of piecing a quilt and creating the finished product.
— Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech

Bikes, Bytes, and Books: Creating a Downtown Library Scene

Presenters: Wendy Allen, River Laker, and Nathan Flinchum, Roanoke Public Libraries

This rousing session on how to increase the patronage at your library was informative, exciting, and downright entertaining, to say the least! The representatives from Roanoke Public Libraries shared some of the many creative programs they have implemented at their downtown location to help welcome and invite the patrons from many walks of life who populate this area. From sneaker collections, an in-house putt-putt course, and jazz concerts by local talent to funny commercials and an increased awareness of biking as a means of trying to live a little “greener,” these librarians and paraprofessionals certainly know how to get the word out about how important the local library is in the community!
— Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library
TUESDAY, MAY 18
8:30 a.m.–9:30 a.m.

Reading Instruction and Children’s Literature
Presenter: Enid Costley, Library of Virginia

There are several different learning disabilities that may affect children as they are just beginning to learn how to read. It is up to everyone involved to know how to help them overcome these obstacles. Costley gave a brief overview of some of the programs that are used to help match children with their reading abilities, including the Lexile program, and tips on how library workers can help these youngsters find which books are best for their reading levels. She stressed that the reading levels assigned to books cannot always be taken for granted; they are not always correct for every child of that age group. Teachers of all kinds must judge what they know about children individually when considering what reading level or type of book will truly be best for them.

—Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library

Meet Zotero: The Coolest Firefox Plug-in Ever
Presenter: Steve Helm, Radford University

Steve Helm, acting university librarian for Radford University, woke up a large group of early morning attendees with an excellent overview of the bibliographic management software Zotero. This free software, developed by George Mason University, is a plug-in for the Firefox browser and an excellent alternative to commercial bibliographic software like EndNote or RefWorks. In addition to a clear, understandable overview of the software and its functions, Helm had several demonstrations of the uses of Zotero. Following his presentation, Helm fielded questions from the audience.

—Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

First Aid: How You Can Help a Person in an Emergency
Presented by Ralph Price, EMT

Ralph Price provided an excellent introduction to the basics of first aid and what procedures might be safely rendered in a library setting. Ralph was blunt and honest about describing situations that cannot
be handled by nonprofessionals and was careful to continually reiterate that in all these situations, one must notify an EMT before beginning to provide any assistance. That constant reminder was actually empowering, as it meant that even in the most dire situations, even untrained people can do something. Topics ranged from simple cuts to life-threatening emergencies such as seizures and heart attacks. Attendees left feeling prepared to act in the case of an emergency.

—Nia Rodgers, Virginia Commonwealth University

So, You Want to Be a Writer

Presenter: John Halliday, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library

John Halliday has combined a writing career with his library career, which he said is not unusual; many librarians are published authors. Author of *Shooting Monarchs* and *Gewitterfische*, Halliday went on to discuss the joys and challenges of mixing professional writing with a full-time library career. He shared resources that provide information about librarians who are authors of children’s and young adult literature. He suggested the website “Authors Among Us,” which provides such a listing and includes well-known authors such as Avi, Beverly Cleary, and Madeline L’Engle.

Halliday stated that those who love to write do so because it is challenging, mentally stimulating, and a great way to make some extra money. One perk of writing is that it provides opportunities for travel. It’s also rewarding to get a compliment on something you have written.

Halliday shared the three T’s for writers. The most important one is talent; possessing the natural talent for writing is invaluable. The second T is time, which is essential for writers. Sometimes isolation is necessary in order to get away from everything that eats away at our time. Tenacity is the third T. Halliday advises aspiring writers to never give up on the dream of becoming a published author. He stated that even J. K. Rowling didn’t find a publisher for her first book until she had received twelve rejections. Stephen King and John Grisham also faced rejection letters during the early years of their careers.

In closing, Halliday offered some words of advice to aspiring writers. You must set aside a time to write. If he waited for the time and for the perfect conditions to exist before beginning to write, Halliday would never write a word. He suggested that aspiring writers find a comfortable spot in which to write and then fit time into their schedules in order to retreat to this spot. Halliday also shared some online resources that will provide helpful information to anyone who is thinking about publishing. Following his interesting presentation, Halliday provided time for questions and answers.

—Lydia Williams, Longwood University

9:45 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

RDA: What’s MARC Got to Do with It?

Presenter: Pat Howe, Longwood University

Pat Howe provided an overview of the new cataloging standard, Resource Description and Access (RDA), which will soon replace AACR2. RDA will change how bibliographic data is created and used. RDA will change the cataloging landscape by providing more resources in both numbers and types, more record sharing internationally, more demand for record enrichment, and more and more data sharing.

Howe shared some informa-
tion about the development of RDA. Because catalogers will be introduced to FRBR (functional requirements for bibliographic records) and FRAD (functional requirements for authority data) when they begin using RDA, Howe explained what these are and how FRBR, FRAD, and RDA are interrelated. RDA is composed of three groups of entities, which Howe described. Using slides, she shared examples of how the data elements in a catalog record will be formulated using RDA and MARC 21 standards. Howe also shared slides that related how RDA will impact authority records. The session closed with information about the RDA Toolkit, which is available at no charge for everyone to try until August 31 (http://www.rdatoolkit.org/). The RDA Toolkit will provide all RDA instructions, workflows, mappings, examples, and much more. This was an informative session that helped attendees understand how RDA will change and impact the job of those who catalog library materials.

—Lydia Williams, Longwood University

Humor in the Workplace

Presenter: Bill Fiege, Germanna Community College

Bill began his session with some funny stunts in order to create the right mood for his presentation about humor in the workplace. Then he continued by telling everyone that humor helps reduce stress, assists with productivity, and increases creativity in the workplace. He had attendees break out into small groups and asked those in each group to share some fun things they have done in their libraries in order to bring humor into the work environment. He ended the session by sharing some activities and ideas anyone could use as a springboard in bringing lighthearted humor to work. Everyone went away with a better and stronger appreciation for creating a workplace in which humor is a healthy component.

—Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech
Diversifying Our Patron and Donor Base: Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE) Project

Presenter: Sonia Yaco, Old Dominion University

Sonia Yaco of the Old Dominion University Libraries Special Collections spoke to a small group about the Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE) Project, spearheaded for the last two years by ODU libraries. The project’s mission is to “identify, locate, and preserve records that document Virginia’s school desegregation process. In addition to tracking down and documenting publicly held records about Virginia’s desegregation past, the DOVE Project is actively seeking private records and oral histories. The project is similar to the Virginia Heritage Project, but with a narrower subject focus and wider scope as it includes private records and institutions outside of Virginia. There are eight regions in the state and task forces in each region charged with documenting any records related to desegregation. Along with locating and preserving these records, plans include expanding funding sources and developing a K-12 teacher’s guide to enable teachers to incorporate the DOVE Project resources when teaching about the desegregation era.

The project’s current major funding source is the Old Dominion University Libraries in partnership with the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Commission. Oral history collections are also being developed at George Mason University, Norfolk State University, and Old Dominion University.

Following the explanation of the project and its plans, there was a discussion session in which several of the attendees recounted their experiences with desegregation. Yaco encouraged the attendees to become involved in the project and find others who might be willing to help. Libraries and interested individuals can visit the DOVE Project website for more information at http://www.lib.odu.edu/special/dove/.

—Carol Lohman, University of Virginia

11:00 a.m. –12:00 p.m.

Taming the Troublesome Patron

Presenter: Frank Howe, Longwood University

Frank Howe’s well-attended session looked at the issues and skills needed for dealing with the difficult patrons that show up in all libraries. Howe began his session with an overview of the issues involved with staff and patron interactions, focusing on difficult patrons. He then moved on to a discussion of the skills needed by library staff to effectively deal with not just the problem patron but all patrons and even colleagues.

Howe then recounted several problem-patron scenarios with recommendations on how they could be handled. He reiterated several points: staff need to know the library’s rules/policies; where the gray areas are with regard to rules and policies; and who resolves conflicts, especially where the gray areas are concerned. All libraries should develop and use a safety plan.

The presentation concluded on an upbeat note, with Howe reminding the audience that most people are fun to help and truly appreciative of the library. They carry the library staff’s goodwill with them when they leave, possibly sharing it with others. Following a lively question-and-answer period, Howe stated, “Troublesome people trouble you occasionally, but they trouble themselves all day long.”

—Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

The Importance of Living Green

Presenter: Theresa Calcagno, George Mason University

In a time of great debate over climate change, oil drilling, and other environmental concerns, Calcagno did not engage in debate about living green as any sort of political statement; rather, she presented the green lifestyle as one of simplicity and cost-effectiveness. She suggested simple ways to alter to a greener lifestyle, and her presentation of facts was interesting and unbiased. Her strategies for greening both workplace and home were inexpensive and easy to implement. With all the “noise” surrounding this topic, Calcagno presented alternatives to a consumption lifestyle that any attendee could embrace.

—Nia Rodgers, Virginia Commonwealth University