VLA Paraprofessional Conference Report: Communication 2012

May 20–22, 2012 • Richmond, Virginia

Communication 2012 was the theme for the 20th annual Virginia Library Association Paraprofessional Forum (VLAPF) Conference held May 20–22 at the Holiday Inn Select/Koger South Conference Center in Richmond. Susan Carroll of Longwood University and Deloris Thomas of the College of William and Mary were co-chairs for this special anniversary year. There were 240 conference attendees with 43 attending for the first time. The conference was a successful one that provided many opportunities for networking and professional development.

The conference opened on Sunday evening with a dessert social that featured Kathleen Mix as the guest speaker. Mix has an impressive resume, and as an accomplished sailor and licensed charter boat captain she has lived a life that seems more like a dream than reality. She has a Computer Engineering degree from the University of Connecticut and has developed software ranging from submarine combat control systems to a database devoted to the feeding habits of storks. She and her husband now call Virginia home, and of course, they enjoy sailing on the Chesapeake Bay. She began her second career writing articles about sailing and travel for regional and national magazines. After discovering that she enjoyed writing, she began to write fiction for publication. Mix is now the author of six books of romance and romantic suspense.

Mix began her presentation by saying that she loves stories, which are the oldest and dearest form of communication. She went on to say that dialogue is the most important element in making a story come alive and dazzle. With
the three most important parts of a story being dialogue, narrative, and description, dialogue stands apart as the element that keeps one reading. In order to demonstrate how powerful dialogue can be, Mix read some famous lines from classics such as *Gone With the Wind* and *Casa Blanca*, and asked those in the audience to identify the book for each one. This exercise reinforced the point she was making; the book for every line of dialogue she read was easily identified. She went on to say that good dialogue must sound natural; it must avoid being too repetitious. She said that dialogue must be used to reveal each character’s personality. For example, the line “Make my day!” is one that reveals a lot about the well-known character, Dirty Harry. She went on to share additional reasons why dialogue is so important in creating a great story. Dialogue is used to reveal relationships in a story. It shows a character’s emotional highs and lows and reveals how characters develop and change as the story progresses to its end. Dialogue is used to engage readers so they will want to continue reading. It connects a story’s various scenes; it adds local color to a story; it reinforces the tone of a scene. Mix closed by reading a story filled with dialogue to demonstrate how powerful it can be and to show how good dialogue dazzles. Mix said she hoped her remarks would give us a better understanding of how dialogue works in bringing a story to life.

**Monday’s Opening Session**

VLAPF Co-chairs Susan Carroll and Deloris Thomas provided opening remarks and a welcome on behalf of the Forum’s Executive Board during Monday’s general session. Virginia Library Association President Connie Gilman further welcomed the group on behalf of VLA. Gilman offered words of appreciation to the group saying that she thinks of library support staff as professionals who keep libraries running. She offered her congratulations on the Forum’s 20th conference year.

On this special occasion Susan Carroll shared a few facts related to the history of the Board and introduced some of the movers and shakers from the Forum’s past. It all started with Carolyn Tate who was persistent in encouraging other members of the board to give the two-day conference a try. Many original board members were unable to attend the opening session,
but special guests Carolyn Tate, Lee Adams, and E. A. Mayo were in attendance, and they were recognized as founding board members. Ona Turner, who is still active on the board, was also recognized as one of the founding board members. Current board members were also recognized.

Bill Fiege, Vice President for Academic Affairs at John Tyler Community College in Chesterfield, was the Monday keynote speaker. A long-time friend of the Paraprofessional Forum and a favorite presenter of veteran conference attendees, Bill not only offered a warm welcome to all, but he was warmly received by attendees.

Networking and self-analysis were topics of his address. He began his presentation with some personal examples from his life that show how networking and self-analysis have helped him reach success in his career and personal life. Each step in his development, from school to a career, has been a successful one because of his ability to understand what he was capable of and to know when to change course. Also, he began by developing relationships with individuals who wanted to help him succeed. He gave the example of starting college wanting to be a famous baseball player and quickly understanding that this was not possible because he was not a very good player. He then began to network with members of the academic faculty who helped him come up with a plan that helped him reach his full potential.

Fiege asked the attendees to try a networking exercise that got everyone in the room up and talking to one another. The room was filled with activity and conversation. When everyone reclaimed their seats, Fiege went on to offer some advice to help with our networking skills. He explained that as we come in contact with others our attitude and tone are very important. We need to think about how we approach others and address problems in a kind manner. It is easy to respond to attitude with attitude; but we must think about positive ways to work out problems with others in order to successfully communicate and succeed. Fiege said we need to focus on the positive people who motivate us to move forward, and forget the grumpy ones who bring us down. Don’t ignore those who have issues with you; listen to what they have to say so that problems can be quickly resolved. Bill shared tips from a writing titled 14 Ways to Be a Champion in Life, taken from the website http://www.turnbacktogod.com. A few of the tips are as follows: Be the first to say hi; compliment three people each day; treat others like you want to be treated; never give up on anyone—miracles happen; never take away someone’s hope (it may be all they have); show cheer

VLAPF founding members posed with current board members.
Bill Fiege delivered the keynote address during Monday’s opening session.

Below, Fiege had everyone up and communicating with one another during his session.

even when you don’t feel cheerful; and keep your promises.

Fiege ended his presentation with a reading of the poem “Mother Teresa’s Anyway Poem,” which is filled with advice regarding how to deal with the people we come in contact with as we travel along our paths to success. Quoting just a few stanzas from this poem, it reads as follow:

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centered; / Forgive them anyway./ If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; / Be kind anyway. / If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; / Succeed anyway. / Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; / Give the world the best you’ve got anyway.
Monday Birthday Celebration and Conference Social

The Monday Evening Social included music, dancing, karaoke, games, and a birthday cake in celebration of the Forum’s 20th anniversary celebration. DJs Ron Gilder and Rick Ripley shared the spotlight in providing music and encouraging the dancers and singers to share their talents throughout the evening. Communication was in the air as old friends chatted and new friendships were formed. Some party-goers played games, some danced, some sang, and some just enjoyed socializing. This festive evening was one filled with food, fun, and camaraderie. Everyone agreed that it ended too soon.
Tuesday’s Closing Session/Awards/Raffle Drawing

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, Deloris Thomas introduced the featured speaker, L. B. Taylor, who has authored 14 books about the ghosts of Virginia. Opening with several humorous ghost stories, he had the audience chuckling. As he moved to more serious material, he said that he was not attempting to make anyone a believer. He said he had never seen a ghost, but many believers had shared their ghostly encounters with him. Taylor went on to say that 99% of these ghostly encounters have a scientific or rational explanation. The first part of Taylor’s presentation included slides of strange apparitions that had been sent to him with the observer asking for an explanation. Taylor said he believes that the unusual incidents are caused by persons who have died tragically but who don’t know they have died. Instead of moving on to the next realm, they remain in familiar surroundings and manifest themselves through sounds, smells, and feelings.

Taylor’s presentation was filled with colorful, ghostly legends related to many historical homes and landmarks in Virginia. Taylor said his first publication about the ghosts of Williamsburg was commissioned by Simon and Schuster. Since this first book, he has continued to write many additional volumes filled with ghost sightings. Taylor concluded by saying that teachers and librarians purchase his books because young people enjoy reading the ghost stories while they learn something about the history of Virginia at the same time. He closed with a couple of humorous ghost stories that turned out to be wild ghost tales with no truth to them. Mr. Taylor provided a lively and entertaining talk on a subject that is often a frightening one.

VLAPF Co-chair Deloris Thomas thanked Mr. Taylor for sharing his ghost stories with us and then presented him with a gift from the Board. The session continued with the presentation of special awards and recognitions. The Para-professional of the Year Award was awarded to Samantha Thomason of the Central Rappahannock Regional Library. Peggy Poirier received this year’s conference award which provided her with a grant that paid for her conference registration. Susan Carroll then turned over the Forum’s gavel to the newest co-chair, Everett Seamans of George Mason University. Deloris Thomas and Everett Seamans will serve as co-chairs during the coming year.

The last event of the conference was the scholarship raffle which earned $2,033 for the Clara Stanley Scholarship Fund sponsored by
the VLAPF. Members of the VLAPF Executive Board generously donated fourteen unique and attractive baskets, and the Moss Society donated a beautiful print for the raffle which was framed by Chris Mason of Christopher’s Fine Arts and Framing in Farmville. Everyone donated lottery tickets that were added to a lottery tree that became another raffle prize. This was another successful raffle made possible by the generosity of those who donated the raffle prizes and all those who purchased raffle tickets.

The theme for the 2013 VLAPF conference is Libraries: Gateway to the Digital Future. Once again the conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Select/Kroger South Conference Center in Richmond. Mark your calendars for May 19–21, 2013 and make plans to attend the 21st annual conference.

—Reports for the general session, special speakers, and social event provided by Lydia Williams, Greenwood Library, Longwood University.

As his first official duty, incoming co-chair Everett Seamans closed the conference.

Below, Scholarship Raffle prize winners gathered for a photograph.
Session Reports

MONDAY, MAY 21
10:45 a.m.–12:00 Noon
Diabetes Resources for Patrons
Presenter: Allison Scripa, Virginia Tech

Allison Scripa began her session by sharing the following definition of diabetes: “Diabetes is a group of diseases marked by high levels of blood glucose resulting from defects in insulin production, insulin action, or both.” She described the three types of diabetes—type 1, type 2, and gestational—and underscored the prevalence of the disease. Diabetes affects 25.8 million people (10.9 million over the age of 65) in the United States alone. There are many resources available to help the general public, including the latest news, juvenile resources, and information ranging from general to highly targeted. (Since the disease has many related issues and complications, individual library patrons are often seeking information on a specific aspect.) Scripa provided session attendees with numerous websites and facts to be taken back to their libraries and shared with patrons. This was a worthwhile session for those seeking information and facts about a very dangerous disease.

— Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech

10:45 a.m.–12:00 Noon
Creating a Technology Education Program for Patrons
Presenter: Douglas Keith, Augusta County Public Library

Because libraries are now widely known for offering free technology training, many patrons visit public library facilities for that specific purpose. These patrons are often at different levels of proficiency, however, which can make it a real challenge for class instructors. Presenter Douglas Keith described the steps he has taken in his library system to develop a program that offers instruction at different levels of learning. He also shared information on how his library goes about finding and training volunteers, how statistics are kept to track the time it takes to do any kind of training, and what resources are available to patrons when no immediate one-on-one training is available. This presentation provided useful information for any library staff planning to implement a technology education program.

— Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library

Matt Todd presented a session on middle management.

John Wiley shared interesting information about Margaret Mitchell and her famous novel, Gone with the Wind.
10:45–12:00 Noon

**In One Ear, Out the Other — Getting the Most out of Your Transitional Workers**

Presenter: Crystal Boyce, Earl Gregg Swem Library

Crystal Boyce began her session by offering each attendee a cookie from a selection of four kinds. Based on the type of cookie selected (whether chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, shortbread, or white chocolate macadamia), each attendee was asked to share their thoughts on one of the following: (1) the best part about supervising transitional workers (chocolate chip); (2) the most common problem presented by transitional workers (oatmeal raisin); (3) the one thing they would like to change in regard to working with pages, student employees, and volunteers (shortbread); or (4) comment on any of the above (macadamia).

Attendees took turns describing the best part about supervising transitional workers, as well as the various challenges they have encountered. Some of the more common problems described included lack of dependability in showing up for work and being on time, failure to complete assignments, avoidance of work in general, and hanging out with friends during work time.

Boyce shared many useful tips to help supervisors motivate their transitional employees. For example, she explained that supervisors need to look at the big picture and remember what they are ultimately trying to accomplish. Ask yourself how your transitional employees can help you accomplish the task. Set realistic goals for your transitional employees, and strive to be the best manager you can be no matter what is happening around you. Boyce said that supervisors should focus on achieving extraordinary results rather than simply getting things done. It helps to know what motivates your employees. Connect your transitional employees’ interests with your interests. Build relationships with an open door policy. Be professional but friendly. Take time to get to know your transitional workers, and make everyone a winner. When something goes well, give away all the credit; when something goes wrong, take all the blame.

Boyce went on to say that managers should put trust into action by encouraging their transitional workers to take ownership of projects and then praise positive results. Avoid being critical of any worker in front of co-workers and never use demeaning language when something goes wrong. Encourage creativity, listen to and discuss ideas, and say thank you often. Divide large projects into small ones with obtainable objectives and then celebrate accomplishments. Reward successes in a timely fashion and make the rewards meaningful. Empower your employees by allowing them to take ownership of their jobs, and then give them freedom to do their jobs while still offering help when needed.

— Lydia Williams, Longwood University

The “7 Habits in 7 Minutes” session was a popular one.
1:45–3:00 p.m.

**The Romance Genre from A Writer’s Perspective**

Presenter: Christyna Hunter, Loudon County Public Library

The presenter, Christyna Hunter, not only described the history and structure of romance novels, but also shared her own personal story about writing such a novel and getting it published. She used PowerPoint slides to present the history of the genre and highlight some of the most prominent romance writers. Prior to describing her own experience as a writer, Hunter also explained the structure of the romance novel. This portion was intended to be tongue in cheek, since romance novels are so formulaic. However, Hunter explained how the formula allows room for individual creativity within its structure. The number one rule (after placing obstacles in the way of the lovers) is to always have a happy ending.

As someone with little knowledge of this area of literary endeavor (and admittedly little inclination to explore it), I found the presenter’s information very useful since this genre makes up such a significant percentage of public library collections. Also, as someone who sometimes writes in his spare time, I always find tales of writers who manage to get published inspiring ones. In this case, Hunter’s own “happy ending” came when she was able to hold a copy of a book she had written in her hands.

—Ray Mullins, Washington County Public Library

1:45–3:00 p.m.

**Empowering the Library Middle Manager**

Presenters: Jessica Scalph, Potomac Community Library; Judith Rodriguez, Chinn Park Regional Library, Prince William Public Library System

These ladies shared many examples of the different kinds of problems and issues they deal with as “middle managers.” When serving in this capacity, they stressed how there are hardly ever any clear-cut answers as to what action(s) to take; only that one should make every effort to use the most caring/ethical yet firm approach possible when faced with problem situations. This approach will be based on one’s own personal management style and the personalities of the individuals involved. Rodriguez said that at times, she has opted to do nothing, thereby letting the problem work itself out or fizzle out on its own. This will prevent “making a mountain out of a mole hill.” The presenters said that they remind themselves daily to keep a positive outlook and demeanor in order to be good role models for their staff. They do not want those they supervise to see them as harsh and uncaring; they strive to gently, yet firmly, steer problem situations and problem employees in the right direction. Each supervisor has to find their own approach to managing others. To help with finding one’s management style, the presenters shared an extensive pathfinder that lists some good books on this subject that they felt would be most helpful.

—Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library

1:45–3:00 p.m.

**Dodging Dangerous Library Patrons**

Presenters: Lt. Jimmie Barrett, Court Security Supervisor, Arlington County Sheriff’s Office, and Ellen Krupar, Virginia Tech

Armed with an arsenal of genuine rapport, humor, pertinent data, and wonderful chocolate, Lt. Jimmie Barrett and Ellen Krupar are the real deal! Barrett, an expert on threat assessment from Arlington County Sheriff’s Office, and...
Virginia Tech Librarian Krupar shared real-life experiences dealing with threatening situations, and they stressed the importance of planning and implementing plans to deal with inappropriate, disruptive, and threatening individuals and events. The key to creating an effective plan is getting to know your library as a physical space. A solid safety plan will address a library’s vulnerabilities: people, buildings, and line of sight. Threats can be immediate or longer term and a library’s guidelines should incorporate the location (inside vs. outside, upper floors vs. ground floor) and the appropriate reaction to threats. The duo also expressed the urgency of scenario training on a regular basis, the value of instinct or “gut” feelings, the pertinence of keeping communication lines open, and the monumental importance of a plan’s constant analysis and modification when necessary.

— Mary Fran Bell-Johnson, Longwood University

3:15–4:00 p.m.
Working in a Multicultural Environment: Cultures and Resources
Presenters: Christie Hoerneman and Mutahara Mobashar, Central Rappahannock Regional Library

Presenters Christie Hoerneman and Mutahara Mobashar provided a novel and interactive way for attendees to learn about the diverse cultures that make up the population of Virginia. The two presenters had the audience play a Jeopardy-like game consisting of four categories of questions: Demographics, Culture, Religion, and Wild Card. Audience members selected a category, and if they correctly answered the question they won a sweet treat. At the same time, everyone learned something new about the ethnic diversity of Virginia libraries’ customers. Following the game, the presenters discussed ways to provide multicultural services in the library setting, and they provided handouts listing various ways to implement these services. The session ended with an engaging question and answer period.

— Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

TUESDAY, MAY 22
8:30–9:30 a.m.
Oodles About Moodle
Presenter: Enid Costly, Children’s & Youth Services Consultant, Library of Virginia

Being a wonderful repeat Paraprofessional Forum presenter, Enid Costly chose this year to demonstrate the skills needed to take an ALA or Library of Virginia online course using the open-source Moodle software platform. She shared detailed information about the early literacy courses that are available, but also pointed out that there are myriad types of courses from which to choose. The Moodle program is very similar to the online sites used for the Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC) program’s online technology course where students post their homework assignments, interact with the instructor and fellow classmates, and receive feedback regarding assignments. It’s a very effective and easy-to-master virtual classroom environment that enables professionals to keep updated on skills needed to stay current and relevant in the workplace (and be able to continue to offer exceptional patron services).

— Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library
8:30–9:30 a.m.

It’s in The Bag

Presenters: Nichole Sheppard and Dawn Fisher, Bedford Public Library

This was a detailed presentation on how a system of using ready-made bags can facilitate children’s programming. This type of bag system was introduced in the Bedford library system where individual branches are responsible for presenting their own story times and other children’s programs. The bags are pre-filled with books and materials for presentations based on various themes and topics. There is an intricate system of scheduling and color coding to make sure the bags are at the next branch in time for staff to look over and supplement with other materials if necessary. The presenters brought along some of the bags to show to attendees. It helped that one of the presenters admitted to being initially skeptical of the idea, but she came around as it was being implemented. This could be a useful system in situations similar to the one in Bedford where each branch is responsible for presenting their own programs which are scheduled by the main branch. It allows for continuity as well as some “wiggle room” for the presenters at various branches.

—Ray Mullins, Washington County Public Library

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Researching Private Companies: From Facebook to Burger King

Presenter: Dan Gingert, Library Clients Group for PrivCo

During this session, those who help patrons locate business information learned how to find financial data and other information on privately-held companies. Presenter Dan Gingert gave an overview of what PrivCo does, and why the services provided by PrivCo are so helpful. With 90% of all major corporations being privately held and therefore not regulated by the federal government, finding financial data on these companies is very difficult. PrivCo provides an online interface to search for this type of information. However, this presentation was not a sales pitch for obtaining subscriptions to PrivCo. Gingert also presented several free websites that can be used to find information about private companies and he demonstrated how some of these websites can be used together to obtain even more data. He also showed how to use the freely accessible components of the PrivCo website, the Knowledge Base, which could be a boon to smaller libraries who have limited funding.

—Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Citizen Science Resources

Presenter: Allison Scripa, Virginia Tech

Allison Scripa began her presentation by asking attendees to define the term “citizen science.” Citizen Science is a phenomenon where men, women, and even children gather scientific data while enjoying favorite hobbies like bird-watching and star-gazing. (It is often defined as scientific research that is conducted by amateur or nonprofessional scientists.) During this session, Scripa shared websites that might be useful in libraries where patrons are involved in citizen science projects. There are many Citizen Science projects available via the Internet that could be applied in libraries to help stimulate young and adult minds. The world and the Internet provide an open playing field for the young with an interest in science and for adults who think of these science projects as a hobby. Citizen Science resources can be used in libraries to help youth and adults who wish to explore the sciences.

—Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech

9:45–10:45 a.m.

Making Gentle Transitions

Presenters: Pamela Cavedo, Long and Foster Realtors, Relocation Specialist; Leigh Burke, Transitions with Leigh; Senior Move Consultants; Brian Haug, Prosperity Mortgage, Branch Manager

What do you need to do when downsizing for yourself or for older parents or relatives? During this session, three presenters addressed this question from different perspectives. Pamela Cavedo got things off to a lively start with a game of Boomer Trivia, which introduced the session attendees to various facts related to housing and downsizing, or as Cavedo phrased it, “right sizing.” She went through a checklist of things to consider when “right sizing” and provided tips on preparing to sell a home (if that’s what needs to be done). She emphasized that the best time to prepare for a move is “when you don’t have to move.” Leigh Burke, a member of the National Association of Senior Move Managers, then explained how to prepare for a move by cleaning out all the “stuff” you no longer need. She then talked about how to handle the move from the placement of materials on the moving truck to what needs to be set up first in a new residence. Her presentation was filled with anecdotes of moves or cleanings gone “bad” and of those that went well.

The final presenter, Brian Haug, described what you need to do in order to properly evaluate housing needs prior to retirement. He
gave attendees an explanation of a reverse mortgage and discussed refinancing as part of retirement planning.

There were plenty of questions for each of the presenters during the question and answer period, and attendees were left with many things to consider after the session had ended.

— Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

9:45–10:45 a.m.

The Importance of Play
Presenter: Enid Costley, The Library of Virginia

Play is the work of children. This was the central theme during this presentation given by Enid Costley, who described the importance of play during early childhood development and the ways in which libraries can further develop and enrich the spaces that have been set aside for children. Costley summarized research findings that show how new neurological pathways are formed as children play, and how patterns of thinking and feeling become ingrained during the play process. She also explained how new studies indicate the significance between early childhood development and future emotional stability and productivity in adulthood. Too much television, and even too much structured activity, can interfere with this development.

The presenter showed clips of videos that reinforce the theories she discussed. She also shared examples of age appropriate playthings for different age groups and explained why particular toys are helpful for particular age groups. Overall, Costley did an excellent job emphasizing the importance of child’s play and giving pointers on how libraries can develop areas that are set aside just for children.

— Ray Mullins, Washington County Public Library

9:45–10:45 a.m.

Video Format and Conversion
Presenter: Ken Hopson, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Libraries

Do you have old tapes, films, or other material that you would like to convert into a digital format? If so, this would have been a worthwhile forum session to attend! Presenter Ken Hopson provided a very compact session on video conversion and formatting. He displayed the type of equipment needed for converting media and explained that the equipment and software does not need to be
expensive (some is even free). After describing how to determine what to reformat; discussing the space needed for compression; and defining pixels, dimensions and bit rates, Hopson showed session attendees how to perform an actual conversion. With so much information to share, and not quite enough time, Hopson ended the session by providing a link to his online conversion guide (located at guides.library.vcu.edu/video-conversion).

—Karen Jacobs, George Mason University

11:00–12:00 Noon

Basics of Professional Writing

Presenter: Suzy Palmer, Dean of the Library, Longwood University

If you look at the qualifications for just about any job in the library, the one qualification most often included is excellent written and oral communication skills. This session, presented by Suzy Palmer, provided the attendees with plenty of practical tips for improving their written communication skills. Palmer illustrated the various parts of the writing process using examples from different writing scenarios. She also showed the group how to use the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed) analysis method to determine the effectiveness of any written communication. Palmer then asked the audience to test their grammar knowledge by reviewing several grammatical errors that often trip up even the best of writers. She rounded out her presentation by reviewing what she called the ten big rules for email exchange. One of the most helpful tips Palmer provided was the recommended number of times you should review an email prior to hitting the send button. If the email is to go to a friend, read it over once. Should the email be going to colleagues and supervisors, the higher the positions, the more times you want to review the email. According to Palmer's formula, emails to the “big boss” should be reread four times! If everyone in the audience followed these tips, not only would communication be clearer, but there would be fewer “oops” emails cluttering our inboxes.

—Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

11:00 a.m.–12:00 Noon

Library Support Staff Certification Programs—Candidate Experiences

Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library; Mary Schmotzer, Swem Library, College of William & Mary

These presenters shared their first-hand knowledge of what it is like to work through their respective library support certification programs (the ALA-sponsored Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC) program and the Rutgers School of Communication and Information Online Training Program for Library Assistants). They included information on all the
requirements needed to successfully complete each program, and shared all the tips, tools and suggestions they had learned from their experiences to help interested attendees decide if enrolling in one of these programs would be a good choice for them both personally and professionally.

— Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library

11:00 a.m.–12:00 Noon

The Life and Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe: Poe and the Poe Museum

Presenter: Christopher P. Semtner, Curator of the Poe Museum

Christopher Semtner opened this session by showing many images of Poe that have been created since his death in 1849. Numerous books, magazines, journals, and creators of movies have depicted Poe as a dark, tormented figure looking for his Annabel Lee. According to Semtner, this image of Poe is a misconception. He was a brilliant individual who excelled in the art of writing. Poe’s first book of poems was published when he was 18 years old. During his lifetime, Poe wrote short stories, mysteries, poetry, essays, travel logs, book reviews, and science fiction. Poe’s parents passed away when he was a young child, so he came to live with the family of John Allen in Richmond. With little financial assistance, it was not possible for Poe to continue his education at the University of Virginia where he attended school as a freshman. As a young person with little in the way of financial resources, Poe strived to find his place in the world. He was eventually hired by Richmond’s Southern Literary Messenger where Poe finally found his life’s work as a magazine writer.

Semtner shared interesting information about the establishment of the Poe Museum located in downtown Richmond. The Poe Memorial Society was founded by Richmonders who wanted to honor Poe. They eventually acquired the oldest home in Richmond called the Old Stone House and created a garden behind the house. This home is now the Poe Museum and both the Museum and its garden are open to the public. The museum offers a variety of programs including a summer program for young writers. There are art events, musical programs, and Halloween events that are all open to the public.

This session was filled with fascinating facts about the life, legacy, and works of Edgar Allan Poe and the Poe Museum. Semtner invited everyone to visit the Poe Museum and suggested taking a look at the Museum’s website for additional information about Poe, the Museum, and its upcoming events. The link to the Museum’s website is http://www.poemuseum.org/about.php.

— Lydia Williams, Longwood University