THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25

10:00–1:30 a.m.

Opening General Session

VLA President Connie Gilman opened the first session of the 2012 Annual Conference by noting how exciting it was to see so many familiar faces in the audience and thanking all of the Conference Committee members who masterminded the spectacular Williamsburg event. Conference Co-chair Sheila McDuff received special acknowledgement when Connie presented her with the “Double-Dare Chardonnay Award” for having the gumption to show up wearing pajama bottoms. (Nobody will ever accuse VLA of taking itself too seriously!)

Next, Elizabeth Swisstock, Chair of the Jefferson Cup Award Committee, stepped up to the mic to announce this year’s winners of the award recognizing authors of outstanding books for young people. This year’s winners were Gary Schmidt for his young adult title Okay for Now and Melissa Sweet for her picture book titled Balloons over Broadway.

The General Session moved along swiftly, and before conference attendees could fully warm up their chairs, Keynote speaker Nancy Dowd was introduced as the co-author of the bestselling book Bite-Sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for Overworked Librarians, co-author of the “M” Word blog for librarians, and the former director of marketing for the New Jersey State Library. Dowd underscored the important difference between “success” and “value,” pointing out how impressive numbers won’t necessarily help in your promotional efforts; rather, what we really
need to do is provide (and market) services that are truly valued. Dowd used plenty of visual images, personal accounts, and examples of successful “marketing” events taking place in libraries around the country. Using the term “value proposition,” Dowd described the importance of authentic listening so that we can create programs and services of true value to our patrons and funders (including our elected politicians).

Dowd described some of the ways that local libraries have genuinely engaged their communities, supporting local businesses and bringing folks together. For example, the Fredrickson Library in Camp Hill Pennsylvania hosts an annual “Bee Local” festival in celebration of honey and local foods, and the Princeton Public Library helps the community celebrate “Pi Day” in celebration of Albert Einstein’s birthday on March 14 (3.14, which are the first three numbers in the “pi” ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter).

Nancy Dowd reminded all of the librarians and library supporters in attendance that the best approach in today’s economic climate is to think in terms of being benefit driven, rather than information driven, and to assess what our communities value and most need, whether it’s financial literacy programs, instruction for seniors, services for veterans, or children’s programs. She reminded us that the sweetest words that can come out of a child’s mouth are, “Wait, let me finish this chapter!” She also told a story about “Sean,” which went something like this: A homeless boy walked into his public library one day and wanted to borrow a book but didn’t have a library card or even a street address. The librarian told him that he could borrow the book anyway just as long as he promised to bring it back. The next day Sean showed up at the library with the book in hand, beaming, “You trusted me!” The trust that librarian showed him was life changing for Sean, and he went on to become an upstanding citizen and role model for young people.

As we all wiped tears from our eyes, Connie Gilman brought us back to reality with a quick wrap-up of the morning’s General Session. She expressed her pride in the variety of quality programs offered at the conference and thanked everyone again, including all of the conference sponsors. Everyone was then encouraged to attend the evening Social, consisting of an
Conference Co-chair Sheila McDuff receives “Double-dare Chardonnay Award” from VLA President Connie Gilman for having the gumption to show up wearing pajama bottoms.
improv comedy group from William & Mary, followed by some music and dancing.
—Beth DeFrancis Sun, MCH Library, Georgetown University

1:15–2:00 p.m.

**The Immediacy of Poetry:**
A Reading by Virginia’s Poet Laureate Sofia M. Starnes

Virginia’s Poet Laureate Sofia M. Starnes opened the session by sharing information about her life and explaining how certain events have been the inspiration for her poems. She went on to say that she sees language as a way of creating landscapes using elements from both the past and present.

Starnes said that we are all immigrants, leaving the familiar for the unfamiliar, and she feels that language rescues us. She explained that she became a poet when she was 16 as a result of her experience of moving away and leaving behind all that was familiar. The belongings she brought with her seemed totally out of place in her new surroundings. This perception inspired her to write a poem.

Starnes said that language accumulates meaning; it moves and changes, and you can take it with you wherever you go; you never lose it. She showed slides of images that had inspired her to write specific poems and she read *The Previous Hour*, *Slept on Mats in the Philippines*, and *First House*, along with others. Each image and poem had special meaning for the author, and in turn, each one became special to the audience of poetry lovers.

The author introduced her current project, *The Nearest Poem Anthology*. This collection will include poems that readers find meaningful and will serve as a testimony to the immediacy of poetry in everyday life. This is a project to celebrate and encourage readers of poetry. Starnes encouraged those in the audience to get involved by submitting their most meaningful poem along with a statement explaining why the poem is meaningful. (Those interested in this project can learn more by visiting Sofia Starnes’ webpage at http://www.sofiamstarnes.com.)

Starnes ended this session by saying that she enjoys visiting libraries to spread the love of poetry. Judging from the positive reactions to Starnes’ presentation, I think she will be spreading the love of poetry in many more libraries during the coming year.

—Lydia Williams, Greenwood Library, Longwood University

1:15–2:00 p.m.

**Speaking Tech-nically**

Presenters: Stella Pool, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library; Melissa Davis, Southern Virginia University; Nicole Sheppard and Jenny Novalis, Bedford Public Library System; Kurt Plowman, City of Staunton; Chris Glover, Central Rappahannock Regional Library

During this well-attended panel discussion, front-line public service librarians and IT (tech support) staff discussed ways that they might improve the way they work together to enhance the library patron’s experience. The presenters took turns sharing their own experiences and lessons learned. They discussed common “miscommunications” between the front-line staff and tech support team, and offered suggestions on how to overcome these.
Chris Glover pointed out the “language barrier” between IT and library staff, noting how “nowhere is there more jargon than in the software field.” Stella Pool concurred, pointing out that “everyone has a different name for ‘jump drive.’” Suggestions provided to help eliminate the language barrier included using pictures in combination with oral communication and/or written instructions, and being very careful about using technical terms. Jenny Novalis then pointed out how “IT” is often separate from the library; for example, some libraries use local government IT services, while other libraries might have their own IT staff of tech experts. She explained how helpful it is to provide tech experts with “clues”—for example, details on the type of system, the software version, or the pop-up messages that might appear on a screen—so they can be as helpful as possible. (Nicole Sheppard agreed, explaining how a picture of an error message, using control print screen commands, can mean more than words.) It’s a good idea to have IT policy in place to eliminate arguments over network control and to answer questions such as: Who has the authority to download? How should thumb drives be handled? Patrons should receive help with those things that they should do, and not with the things they shouldn’t.

Glover added that “the conversation between staff and IT is similar to the one between staff and front-line patrons,” and he received a chuckle from the audience when he added that you should “never put your hands on the patron’s equipment.” Other panelists shared their insights on promoting conversation and effective communication not only between library staff and IT personnel, but also between staff and patron users of technology. Nicole Sheppard explained how the Bedford Public Library avoids playing the “telephone” game (where a message becomes increasingly garbled with
each repetition) by having patrons who are having a problem with a public computer simply write down their contact information so IT staff can get in touch with them directly. Another effective technique shared was the use of the IT task ticket, particularly when your IT support works with the local government and your library is just one part of the overall picture. In this case, local government IT staff can help libraries by explaining government priorities—for example, by explaining that they’ll assist your library just as soon as they get through Payroll, or that one whole branch is down and they have to resolve that larger problem first. Some of the panelists then shared suggestions on the use of free prioritizing software like Spiceworks. However, Kurt Plowman explained that libraries need to be careful when using Open Source software. It’s always good to have a backup, since you never know when your “expert” in nontraditional software might suddenly retire.

Stella Pool admitted that she loves working with novices because it gives her a chance to show off her tech savvy! She then proceeded to share some of her tips and tricks of the trade, while other presenters chimed in. Here are a handful of their insider tips:

1. Google is our friend; even paid consultants look up error messages on Google;
2. Rebooting your computer solves 99% of the problems;
3. IT training for student workers is very valuable;
4. Laminated cheat-sheets written in simplified form are very useful to patrons;
5. The idea of having a “tech authority” in each building.

Sean Bonney describes Snapshot Virginia, the library advocacy project that captures the essence of our state’s libraries.
is good; and (6) having a set of “IT Core Competencies” as a reference for tech controllers is useful.

Although some of the tech expert panelists confessed to being somewhat “controlling,” they also acknowledged the importance of remaining human—and humble—and not pretending that you know everything, because the technology is constantly changing. After all, it’s all about the people, and the problem, and almost never about the technology.

—Beth DeFrancis Sun, MCH Library, Georgetown University

2:15–3:00 p.m.
Writing Effective Cover Letters for Library Positions
Presenter: Susan Vandale, Hollins University

Susan Vandale of Hollins University shared advice on preparing cover letters when applying for library jobs. A great letter takes time, she explained; first, for research, then for writing, checking, and editing. You need to check for proper spelling and grammar, since one error can send your letter into the wastebasket. Be sure to provide job-specific details: if your letter isn’t crafted to convince the hiring manager or academic search committee that you’re an excellent candidate for this particular job, don’t bother.

Vandale discussed the dos and don’ts of writing effective letters, presented actual examples, and outlined the steps needed to ensure that your application has a shot at the short list. While your resume is a list of the facts, your letter is a story that proves the relevance of your unique experience. Ask yourself these questions,
and then incorporate the answers into that story: (1) Why are you applying for this particular position at this particular library? (2) What do you bring to the table? (3) Does anything in your resume need explaining? The last question prompted a lively discussion. Items that might need explaining include location (“I look forward to the opportunity to move closer to my family”) or gaps in employment (“When I left my last position to spend a year as a caregiver, I kept up with the rapid changes in public/academic libraries with the help of professional literature and free webinars.”)

Vandale suggested that we use our personal story to guide the format of our cover letter, which should read like a narrative rather than a bulleted list. “Don’t just write about your talents; give concrete and compelling examples,” she advised. Avoid monotonous sentence structures, and if the letter becomes too long, work on tightening up your phrases.

Vandale also explained the importance of paying close attention to tone and presentation. When it comes to hiring practices, the atmosphere in many libraries (especially academic institutions) still tends toward the formal. Your letter should use a professional tone and avoid informal elements such as word contractions, she advised. At the same time, avoid being too impersonal. If you know the name of the library’s director, HR manager, or the search committee chair, address your correspondence to that individual. For example, begin with “Dear Ms. X and members of the search committee,” rather than “Dear Sir or Madam.” One final no-no: avoid bold, italic, or underlining. It’s a letter, not a flyer.

Vandale closed by sharing some resources that she feels are more useful than generic resume books,
which are written for the business world. At opencoverletters.com, you can see “anonymous cover letters from hired librarians & archivists,” while career.vt.edu/jobsearchguide is a great guide for any job search, from start to finish.

— Maryke Barber, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University

2:15–3:00 p.m.

Lafayette: Lessons in Leadership from the Idealist General

Presenter: Marc Leepson, author

Journalist, historian, and author Marc Leepson shared information about his latest book, Lafayette: Lessons in Leadership from the Idealist General, which is a concise biography about the life of the Marquis de Lafayette. The book focuses on Lafayette’s military and diplomatic accomplishments during the American and French Revolutions. Leepson’s presentation was a reminder of what a remarkable man Lafayette was and how dedicated he was to the American cause. Leepson said that this biography reveals the significant role Lafayette played in the outcome of the American Revolution. This book would be a great way to learn more about Lafayette, whose experiences and adventures sound more like those found in epic novels, rather than works of non-fiction. As well as being a great writer, Marc Leepson is also a great speaker, whose presentation made his book, Lafayette: Lessons in Leadership from the Idealist General, a must read for all who attended this session.

— Lydia Williams, Greenwood Library, Longwood University

2:15–3:00 p.m.

Management, Planning, and Fundraising Strategies for Library Needs: Capital, Collections, Technology, Program, and Endowment

Presenters: Mary Ellen Stumpf, Stumpf & Associates, Inc; Charles Wray, Jr., BCWH Architects

Presenter Mary Ellen Stumpf, founder of Stumpf & Associates Inc., paired up with Charles (“Chuck”) Wray, Jr. from BCWH Architects to present their insights on securing sufficient funding for libraries, whether for individual projects or comprehensive packages. Since the 2009 recession, the economic climate has been a real challenge, and more and more public libraries in particular have had to partner with private entities to raise money. Mary Ellen, who has been in the business of helping libraries and museums secure funding for many years, explained that “It’s all about the money—you’ve got to be able to talk about dollars and cents,” uncomfortable as that might be.

During the session, Mary Ellen shared specific strategies to help libraries take a proactive approach to fundraising. For example, she suggested that when preparing an annual budget, it’s important not to skimp, and make sure you have a separate line item for everything you need. Don’t hold back, be sure you’re telling the complete story, and consider building public growth into the budget. “You want to take the full picture to potential outside funders,” she advised. She
also explained that libraries “need to become much more external" in assessing their needs and developing programs. “Libraries have become community centers,” she reminded the audience.

In your library’s efforts to foster public/private partnerships, Stumpf stressed the importance of using ambassador advocates year round, including off season, and making sure that you line up your relationships with all of the people who affect your budget planning. She also strongly advised committing to an ongoing fundraising/capital campaign, and setting up a database for this.

As you continue your efforts to solicit funding for your library from outside sources, you might also consider what you might do to “earn” income. For example, “you might charge for library rental space, if you can get away with it,” she suggested. The bottom line? “You have to have people who are comfortable asking for money.”

— Beth DeFrancis, MCH Library, Georgetown University

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26

8:00–8:45 a.m.

Elegant Digital Collections Made Easy

Presenters: David Hemingway-Turner, Innovative Interfaces Inc.; Heather Crocetto, Arlington County Public Library

David Hemingway-Turner of Innovative Interfaces, Inc. and Heather Crocetto of Arlington County Public Library shared information about the institutional repository module, Content Pro, explaining how it makes life easier for those working with archival collections and also helps users locate specific materials within collections. Content Pro can digitize, preserve, and store all formats, including streaming audio and video. In addition it serves as a powerful discovery tool.

Turner shared all of the product’s capabilities, while Crocetto shared her first-hand experience as a user of the system. She said that it is a simple yet powerful cataloging interface that allows the user to create templates for entering metadata. With Content Pro, users can create, edit, and delete records; gather web usage stats; and convert CSV and Marc files to Dublin Core.

Crocetto then took her audience on a virtual tour of the Arlington County Public Library site, pointing out what can be accomplished with the use of this product, including easy access for users, more visibility for the library since anyone anywhere can visit the site, engagement with local users who send comments about what they view, and better intellectual and physical control of the Library’s collections.

— Lydia Williams, Greenwood Library, Longwood University

8:00–8:45 a.m.

Citizen Science

Presenter: Allison Scripa, Virginia Tech

“Citizen science” refers to participation by those without formal scientific experience or training in science experiments that aid the community. Science has a long history of citizen contributions. After World War II, the focus on scientific education meant that the majority of scientists had advanced university degrees; however, before that, discoveries were made chiefly by people who had the money, time, and interest. These people, including prominent citizens such as Benjamin Franklin, were educated but did not have formal scientific backgrounds. Thomas Jefferson performed agricultural
experiments and found fossils; Audubon was self-taught, and his paintings showed a lot of scientific knowledge.

Frank Chapman, one of the founders of the Audubon Society and the conservation movement, started the Christmas Bird Count. The previous tradition of the “side hunt” had families splitting into sides and killing any birds they could find. Chapman changed this to a recorded count in which the family would gather to spot snowy owls, great horned owls, and other birds, competing without killing as they learned what birds visited the area at Christmas.

Such projects are currently enjoying a renaissance. Schools sponsor projects like bird-watching and measuring frogs. Technology makes it easy to contribute; adults can help with experiments set up as games. This participation has led to real discoveries, such as backyard telescope observations that have pinpointed planets and new stars (for instance, go to http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/10/15/162952704/citizen-scientists-discover-a-strange-planet-in-four-star-system). Foldit (http://fold.it/portal/) has home participants playing games to help with protein folding, which has applications that include possible treatments for cancer; other Foldit projects involve identifying and counting abnormal cells, thus helping build more effective computer models for cancer.

Citizen science is a good match with libraries because libraries are all about literacy, and scientific literacy is very important. Patrons learn more about their own health and the environment, as well as how to apply the scientific method to better understand policy debates. By encouraging citizen science, libraries help to create knowledge, not just store it. It’s a mutually beneficial relationship: library resources like field guides assist citizen scientists, who assist with worldwide scientific knowledge, contributing to the information that libraries can use to help patrons.

Another great benefit is publicity. Many who might wish to contribute simply haven’t heard about citizen science; the library is a great place to increase participation, while also drawing attention to the library amongst the citizen enthusiasts. Astronomy and ornithology are two areas in which amateurs have always provided a lot of information. For those who have telescopes, the American Association of Variable Star Observers will assign one star that fluctuates and one that is constant for comparison; the resulting observations are put to real use. Meanwhile, an app called Meteor Counter allows...
iPhone and iPad users to help NASA gather data by clicking every time they see a meteor. A newsfeed alerts them to upcoming showers. Citizens really do help with scientific knowledge and progress. Audubon and Cornell get information from eBird (http://ebird.org/content/ebird/) to discover how migration is changing in response to habitat change. Meanwhile, Celebrate Urban Birds (http://celebrateurbanbirds.org/) monitors 16 species, including pigeons and house sparrows. While contributing information about how birds are adapting to city conditions, the project also helps city kids become aware of wildlife in their own backyard.

Environmental monitoring is performed by the Albedo Project (https://sites.google.com/site/albedoproject/). Participants photograph a white sheet of paper and send it in, thus helping to measure the strength of rays from the...
sun, particularly on certain dates like the solstice. Did You Feel It? (http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/dyfi/), a part of the U.S. Geological Survey, measures how strong an earthquake was and how far off people felt it. World Water Monitoring Day (http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org/) encourages citizens to use a water monitoring kit, raising worldwide awareness of how important it is to have clean water.

There’s a project for everything. Ancient Lives from Zooniverse helps translate the writing on ancient papyrus. Citizens tag the symbols in the pictures, whose hand-drawn shapes are not standardized enough for a computer to reliably recognize the characters. National Geographic’s Field Expedition-Mongolia (http://exploration.nationalgeographic.com/mongolia/home) asks the public to help find Genghis Khan’s tomb. The Mastodon Matrix Project (http://www.museumoftheearth.org/research.php?page=Mastodon_Research/Mast_Matrix) sends participants a bag of dirt from places where mastodons lived and died. Citizens sift for hair, leaves, and rocks, leading to the discovery of DNA evidence and information.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology (http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citsci/projects) lists available bird projects. Scientific American (http://www.scientificamerican.com/citizen-science/) offers a project list with descriptions and contact information. Scistarter (http://www.scistarter.com/) has a website and blog with many different projects; some are very regional, while others are nationwide. A newsletter alerts interested parties to new projects. Zooniverse (https://www.zooniverse.org/) has its own list of projects, many of them set up like games.

Quality control is an issue, and there are a lot of studies that compare the data from citizen science to that from official scientists. Usually, the citizen contributions have a very good quality level. The participant-volunteers are serious, and most projects include some training for accuracy. A lot have built-in quality control; for instance, in eBird, if you enter a bird that’s really outside the range, the program asks, “Did you really see this?” A “yes” alerts someone to contact the observer personally. Though the quality of kids’ data is generally high, in one study that measured average tree size, the children were so excited by the importance of big trees to the environment that they measured mostly large trees.

So what role could libraries play in citizen science? They could pick a project and sign up volunteers. Requirements for participation always include some kind of training; most comes from self-explanatory instructions, but there are some in-person training sessions. Library programming could include visits from live owls, growing sunflowers and observing bees, participating in eBird, and hosting speakers from the American Association of Variable Star Observers or the local ornithology club. Kids love to participate in projects like making bird feeders and counting birds.

At Virginia Tech, a new citizen science challenge partnered the library with the Residential College at West Ambler Johnston Hall. The academic portion required resident students to participate in three projects throughout the academic year. The program brought in guest speakers, such as a storm chaser team. Students gained points with the completion of each task, such as data submission to the 3D model of Blacksburg or a poster session resulting from a weather project. Program coordinators, realizing how busy students are, tried to pick easy projects to fit their schedules. For instance, the Space Science and Engineering Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (http://www.ssec.wisc.edu/news/ Have you hugged a librarian today? Presenter Cindy Church, from Library of Virginia, captured on camera with her colleague, Paula Alston, director of Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library.
articles/755) developed SatCam, an app for student phones or library-lent devices that compares ground weather conditions to what the satellite saw, thus aiding computer weather modeling. Students can help with the Great Backyard Bird Count (http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/) in February, taking as little as 15 minutes to help measure winter bird populations. With Project BudBurst (http://budburst.org/), students could pick a plant, such as a dogwood, and submit data about when the first buds and leaves are visible.

Incentives to make the process fun and get students involved included tea on Fridays with the professor assigned to the dorm and the Residence College’s House Cup Competition. Prizes included the Citizen Science Challenge Cup for the overall winner. The house competition divided the students into four houses, named for trees such as Honey Locust and Poplar, with mostly graduate students as the house leaders. Competition also included a scavenger hunt that brought students back to the library to find resources. Though organizers fear some students may have signed up for the residence hall to get academic credit without paying attention to the scientific components, plans are underway to make the program even more fun and appealing.


— Adele Gardner, Hampton Public Library

8:00–8:45 a.m.

Patron Access and Find It Virginia: Let’s Spread the Word!

Presenters: Stacey Knibloe, Gale Cengage Learning; Rose Schoof, the Library of Virginia

Session attendees learned about tools and techniques to help library patrons access database collections through Find It Virginia, the eResource supported by federal funds through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The presenters shared techniques to help users access Find It Virginia via mobile apps for Android and Apple devices, and showcased some of the resources developed by Gale Cengage Learning to help libraries increase and enhance patron access and use. The session began with a demonstration by Rose Schoof, technology consultant at the Library of Virginia, who described how Gale’s “Access my Library” mobile app for Apple
and Droid devices uses GPS technology to help patrons find their nearest library and access electronic resources remotely. She also explained how search widget apps have been shown to significantly increase the number of searches performed by library patrons, and how social media tools such as Google+, Facebook, RSS, twitter, and postings on Pinterest can be used to pull patrons into the Find It Virginia collections.

The presenters also demonstrated how the Find It Virginia mobile app can be downloaded by using a smartphone browser at http://va.boopsie.com or searching the app store for Find It Virginia or Virginia libraries. Once you’ve successfully located your own library,
you can then access your library account (items check out, holds, or overdue items); access newspapers and magazines through the Gale Cengage database; download an e-Book from your library, or type in an ISBN number to find out if your library has a particular book. You can even use the app to find a street view of the physical library.

Before the session was over, questions from the audience prompted technical explanations and responses to help libraries get their mobile apps up and running so they can assist their patrons in accessing Find It Virginia. Stacey Knibloe, training specialist from Gale Cengage Learning, explained how libraries can customize Gale’s free posters to help promote Find It Virginia resources. She also shared more information on Gale’s widgets, including the Consumer Products review app and the Power Search app (this is the most popular), and other tools that can help
boost usage of online resources. In conclusion, Stacey explained how Gale is experimenting with new ideas such as “workshops in a box” and other content that might help meet the needs of library patrons through Find It Virginia.

—Beth DeFrancis Sun, MCH Library, Georgetown University

9:00–10:30 a.m.

Second General Session

“Business before pleasure” aptly sums up the sequence of announcements and events that took place during the conference’s second General Session. VLA President Connie Gilman began with a quick reminder that the November 14th deadline for submitting session applications for the Paraprofessional Conference was fast approaching, and then invited Secretary Diane Atkins and Treasurer Maryke Barber to provide their reports. The Secretary’s minutes were accepted, and the Treasurer’s report was full of good news: The Virginia Libraries Association is in the black, and the success of the 2012 conferences had exceeded all expectations.

Next, President Gilman gave a brief recap of the year, highlighting the conference call between VLA members and Senator Mark Warner; the new editors of the Virginia Libraries journal (Beth DeFrancis Sun, editor, and John Connolly, assistant editor); stepped-up fundraising efforts and scholarship funding; the Jobline policy posted on the Website; and VLA’s involvement in ALA’s Emerging Leaders Project. Gilman also shared some of the highlights from the quarterly Council sessions held at the Twin Hickory Area Library in Glen Allen, including the wonderful presentation provided by Sandra Treadway, Librarian of Virginia. She also called on all VLA members to continue to support grassroots efforts such as food drives to support local communities.

Gilman was delighted to report that VLA membership had increased by 160, and conference attendance was up 20 percent from the previous year! She then alluded to the 2012 Presidential Citation, but before announcing the recipient(s), Past VLA President Matt Todd (2011) stepped up to offer more good news: As a result of the Keynote speech that Rebecca Kamen gave at the VLA conference in 2011, she received a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to continue her work of illuminating scientific concepts and discoveries by creating visual art inspired by primary source library and archival material.

Before this year’s Keynote speaker was introduced, Gilman had a few more important announcements to make: Marylyn Scott, from the James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) would be serving as the new VLA secretary, and Kevin Smith, from York County Public Library, would be serving as Vice President.

Next, President Gilman announced that “The Presidential Citation goes to … (silent drumroll here) … New Members Roundtable committee chairs, Rebecca Miller and Megan Hodge!” When the two enthusiastic recipients came up to accept their Citation, they noted that they were already well into making plans for the 2013 VLA Conference.

The order of business was not completed until the winners of the Scholarship Awards (to students pursuing a Master’s in Library
Science) were announced. This year, there were eight applications, with the VLA Scholarship going to Claire Covington of Fishersville, Virginia, and the VLA Paraprofessional Clara Stanley Scholarship going to Zoe Dellinger from Edinburg, Virginia.

The VLA Friends of the Library Award was then presented to the Friends of the Waynesboro Public Library, who had raised more than $160,000 to help pay for shelving and other major library enhancements; and the VLA Trustee Award was presented to Mrs. Latane Long, who noted, as she accepted the award, that “Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart.”

If this wasn’t enough to ignite enthusiasm in the packed auditorium, Keynote Speaker Hillary Jordan—introduced as the author of the novel, Mudbound, which has won multiple awards, and her newer title, When She Woke—was soon to display her talents, not only as a gifted writer but also as a motivational orator.

Author Hillary Jordan began by acknowledging how much she loves speaking to librarians, while also admitting how much attention authors crave. “We authors are a bunch of tinkerbells,” she explained. “We just kind of fade away if you ignore us.” She then went on to share many personal stories about her struggles to move beyond her career as an advertising copywriter to become a “serious” fiction writer. Since she was determined to learn the distinctions between good writing and fine literature, she went back to school to get her MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia University. She then shared some of the challenges she encountered along the road to becoming a writer. She acknowledged that her own “process” for creating fiction was actually to “NOT know what’s coming.” When her stories take a twist, she’s just as surprised as her readers will be.

Jordan explained how good writing can touch the heart but “literature is writing that pierces the soul.” She also explained how literature does not shy away from difficult topics such as race or slavery. “I think it’s the job of literature to tackle the big stuff,” she said.

As all of the aspiring writers in the audience took mental notes, President Connie Gilman stepped up to the podium to make a few final announcements.
The 2013 VLA conference will be held a month earlier in the coming year (September 25–27) but in the same Conference Center in Williamsburg.

The President’s Gavel was then passed along to President-Elect Lisa Lee Broughman, and the General Session was adjourned.

—Beth DeFrancis Sun, MCH Library, Georgetown University

11:30–12:15 p.m.

Searching the 1940 Federal Census — Where Were Grandma and Grandpa in 1940?

Presenters: Patricia Little Taylor, Portsmouth Public Library; Cynthia Clark, Appomattox Regional Governor’s School

Hoping to navigate your way through the twists and turns of the “new” 1940s Federal Census data? If so, this was a session not to miss. Librarians Patricia Little Taylor and Cynthia Clark shared some tips and tricks that only the most patient of genealogists could have figured out on their own. But first, the presenters shared some basics about Census searching. For example: Census data are released 72 years after a census is conducted; anyone born after April 1, 1940 (for example, April 2) would not be listed in the ‘40s Census; and an “X” next to a name on the Census designates the person who actually provided the information.

Presenters Patricia Taylor and Cynthia Clark then shared some of the unique aspects of the 1940s Census with their attentive audience. It turns out that you can now retrieve a map of the area where a person lived; however, you need to be really careful, since the enumerator district locators can go right down the middle of a street! The folks on one side of that street might show up on one map, while the folks on the other side would show up elsewhere. Another interesting fact is that tourists or temporary residents in hotels or boarding houses would have been “counted” in the specific location where they were staying at the time of the Census. This might help explain why you were able to locate someone in the 1930s Census but find them to be missing from the 1940s Census! Another important detail to keep in mind while searching the Census data is that spellings of names can vary

In 2012, there were eight applicants for the VLA Scholarship Awards—presented to students pursuing a Master’s in Library Science. Zoe Dellinger, from Edinburg, Virginia, was awarded the VLA Paraprofessional Clara Stanley Scholarship, while Claire Covington of Fishersville, Virginia, was awarded the VLA Scholarship. Congratulations to both!
widely, since the previous transcribers often saw things (letters and numbers) a different way. If a name doesn’t appear where you expect it, try imagining how it could have been spelled and then check there.

Great resources for genealogical history include Familysearch.org—a free site and service made available by The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, which includes links to online genealogy courses—and the 1940 Census National Archives site, which makes it easy to search by location.

In wrapping up the session, the presenters reminded those in attendance that it was important to pay close attention to the details in the 1940s Census; that you often have to think creatively when you’re searching; and that it’s important to have fun in the process of discovery.

—Beth DeFrancis Sun, MCH Library, Georgetown University

11:30–12:15 p.m.

Don’t Pollute the Water-Cooler: Team Morale Starts with You!

Presenters: Caitlin Flanagan and Rita Scrivener, Hampton Public Library

As new managers, Caitlin Flanagan and Rita Scrivener found themselves walking into a work environment that already had extremely good morale. They wanted to understand why. Good morale has the power to affect every aspect of the work experience for coworkers, supervisors, and patrons, and even affects life outside the job. With good morale, a library can save money, experience lower turnover, and foster a more enjoyable environment for everyone. But how does one create a morale ecosystem, where morale can thrive?

In 2010, the American Psychological Association found that the 24 publicly traded companies with the highest morale outperformed other companies in the field by a ratio of 2.5 to 1. Higher morale leads to a higher productivity rate. But it’s not effective to look at morale as the end result. Morale is not the goal, but the byproduct of a morale ecosystem: a trust-rich, supportive, and productive work environment, where morale can thrive on its own.

To learn more about morale, Flanagan and Scrivener distributed an
anonymous survey that could be completed online or in print. Questions covered subjects like the level of activity at work, flexibility in the respondents’ positions, how strictly rules were enforced, how comfortable workers felt approaching their supervisors, how meaningful their work was, whether they felt they were properly trained when hired, and whether they felt the team was committed to them. Scrivener and Flanagan found that the keys to morale are communication, autonomy, and training. A workplace with high morale gives workers a certain amount of autonomy, provides them with meaningful work and a sense of purpose, and trains them well, thus building confidence and equipping them for success. Employees should be coached in how to give and take constructive criticism and should always feel comfortable approaching their supervisor.

Stephen C. Lundin, John Chris-tensen, Harry Paul, and Philip Strand describe the Fish! philosophy for finding meaning and enjoyment in one's work. Rather than waiting to achieve one's dream job, one should strive to love the job one is already doing. This provides a boost for employee and manager alike. When we come to work, we can choose to have a positive attitude. This is an amazingly powerful tool that affects our own happiness and improves the workplace environment for everyone. The Fish! philosophy recommends focusing on play and injecting fun into the day. We can make the workplace fun while still accomplishing all our goals—and more. Another way to improve one's enjoyment at work is to focus on others—to “make their day,” giving the customer—and our co-workers—a glowing experience. Use energy when you interact with others, and don’t forget that positive attitude! Finally, remember to be present. When at work, turn your entire attention to what you have to do. Whatever the task is, focus on that—don’t be a zombie. By transforming your attitude, you can transform your job and your own experience of work.

Flanagan and Scrivener gained additional insight from Daniel H. Pink’s Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us. Intrinsic motivation is the key to morale; in other words, enjoy what you do and do it for its own sake. With extrinsic motivation—otherwise known as the carrot and the stick—one can achieve results, but the change is usually not long-lasting and doesn’t transform morale or provide a sense of purpose. In addition, extrinsic motivation corrodes intrinsic motivation by taking the focus away from a job well done and placing it on an external and temporary goal. As soon as the carrot is achieved, work loses its meaning. This breeds less creativity and risk-taking, as well as less job satisfaction. By contrast, people achieve higher productivity and morale with intrinsic motivation, in which one finds meaning and pleasure in one’s work; the job itself is the goal, and workers enjoy the internal reward of increasing their skills and contributing to the overall mission. To encourage intrinsic motivation, the most important factor is autonomy: giving the employees power over their work, the chance to contribute in new and creative ways, and the opportunity to own their work and feel satisfaction for their accomplishments.

Communication is essential to a positive workplace. Particularly important are praise for a job well done (including from a coworker), appreciation of each individual, and the free flow of information at all levels so that employees feel a part of the big picture and recognize the importance of the tasks they perform. At the same time, gossip should be avoided—and one of the best ways to do this is through open communication about what is truly going on. A lack of communication creates conflict, while open communication can actually improve the entire workplace as employees gain the opportunity to contribute their ideas and

Keynote speaker Hillary Jordan, author of Mudbound and When She Woke, describes her life in the writing trenches.
know that they are a vital part of the mission.

On a related note, one should appreciate not only the hard work, but also the individuality of one’s coworkers. While listening to their wonderful ideas, you can learn more about your coworkers; and when you take the time to listen, it lets people know you have time for them. Be friendly, not fake; you don’t want to alienate people, and not everyone will be friends. Be honest, but kind; be friendly, but don’t go overboard; and above all, be yourself. And listen to your employees, whether they are offering positive suggestions or complaining. Sometimes, the most important thing is simply for that employee to be heard. It also gives you the chance to offer a different perspective, another way to look at the problem.

Give yourself a break when you make mistakes. Take your job seriously, but not yourself; you’re not infallible. Recognize your mistakes and learn from them. Remember to forgive yourself as you’d forgive others. Everyone makes mistakes, and you wouldn’t want to beat a coworker or employee over the head with theirs—rather, help them solve the problem and move on. Letting others see that you’re learning from your mistakes is far better than continuing to berate yourself. Remember to let go of the small stuff, and if you find yourself getting upset, stop and ask yourself what’s really bothering you.

In a similar vein, if you have something good to say to a coworker or employee, don’t hesitate to put it in writing; but if it’s something critical, sleep on it first. Praise in public; criticize in private. And stay flexible; it’s important to be able to adapt. If you’re too rigid and uncompromising, you’ll never get your way, and coworkers and employees will fear you’re going to hold them to the same hard standard. Relax! Change may not be easy, but it is possible.

You can make all the difference to morale in your workplace. Build a sense of community by bringing food or flowers, getting to know people, and showing
thoughtfulness and trust for your team. You can also initiate morale-building activities, such as friendly competitions (depending on the interests of the team) and opportunities to get together outside the daily routine. Staff meetings could involve taking a walk instead of sitting around a table. Opportunities to interact as people rather than just as employees, to show thoughtfulness for each other, and to have fun together will all improve morale.

Above all, choose to have a positive attitude—this is the part of your day over which you have the most control. You can choose to approach challenges constructively, and not let a temporary problem affect your long-term happiness. Don’t ever give up and always have fun. You never know when you’ll get through to someone or make someone’s day. Just by being a cheerful presence, you may be helping someone without even knowing it.

12:30 p.m.

The Jefferson Cup Luncheon featuring Award-Winning Author Melissa Sweet

The Jefferson Cup luncheon is always a treat and this year was no exception. Melissa Sweet’s book, Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy’s Parade, was the 2013 Jefferson Cup Award Juvenile Winner. Sweet is both the author and illustrator of this biography, which is about puppeteer Tony Sarg, who designed the first massive balloon figures used in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade. Not only is Sweet an award-winning author, she’s also a wonderful speaker, and listening to her talk about her experiences was a special treat.

Sweet began her presentation by sharing a few stories about how she fell in love with creating art. Even as a child, she found inspiration in books. She said that Miss Flora McFlimsey’s Easter Bonnet was one book that inspired her as a child and that stayed with her into adulthood. She admitted, however, that her love of drawing began with an etch-a-sketch and paint-by-the-number art kits.

Sweet then talked about the process she uses in creating an illustration. She spends six to eight hours a day in her studio, which she said is the time she sets aside to be creative. Sweet said that drawing and illustrating books came first, but then she decided to write and illustrate a unique version of Little Red Riding Hood titled Carmine: A Little More Red. In creating that book, Sweet began by making a list of words she could use to tell the story. After selecting her favorite words from that list, she then placed them in alphabetical order and applied decorative hand lettering to each of these.

Sweet went on to talk about the process of researching, writing, and illustrating her book, Balloons Over Broadway. As explained in her biographical information included in the VLA Conference program, Sweet used “…mixed media images to create a whimsical depiction of this great puppeteer, showcasing Sarg’s spirit and enthusiastic nature….” Sweet shared many interesting details related to her research for this biography. She said she wanted to bring Tony Sarg to life and make him real to youth. During her presentation, Sweet inspired attendees to learn more about this interesting puppeteer by reading her award-winning biography, Balloons Over Broadway.

—Lydia Williams, Greenwood Library, Longwood University

3:15–4:00 p.m.

Social Media Management: Using Hootsuite for Efficiency

Presenter: Jennifer Nardine, Virginia Tech Libraries

Libraries have made great strides in their use of social media, but those in charge of their library’s blog,
Facebook, Twitter, and/or Pinterest accounts know just how much time the management of these services can take. Jennifer Nardine presented information on Hootsuite, a low-cost social media management tool that helps streamline posting to multiple platforms.

Nardine began by recounting the history of Virginia Tech Libraries’ use of social media, a story of increasing numbers of accounts, formats, and postings that had many participants nodding in recognition. When Tech’s librarians set goals for increasing their posting while sharing and reducing the time spent on this work, they evaluated several social media dashboards.

Nardine presented a comparison of the finalists, Tweetdeck versus Hootsuite. The winner, Hootsuite, showed more flexibility. While Tweetdeck managed Facebook and Twitter very well, the other software provided the opportunity for integrating many other platforms as well. It also had robust functionality, analytics, and reporting—all for a reasonable fee. Its intuitive navigation made training and use easy. Virginia Tech’s implementation of Hootsuite reduced the two-plus hours Nardine spent on social media each day, to a more manageable two-and-a-half hours per week. It also increased the libraries’ numbers of “likes” and “follows.”

Nardine demonstrated Hootsuite, showing participants the ease of adding and deleting social media streams, and posting one message to multiple accounts. Beyond sending to multiple accounts, one can also load messages in batches, and then set a schedule for when they will be posted.

She then suggested some best practices for social media use; for example, use one central login and password; post five times per day; create a variety of posts on resources, services, campus-related announcements, and items of general interest; and finally, even when you are not busy posting, someone needs to stay signed in to respond to comments and questions. She encouraged participants to try Hootsuite, which is free with basic functionality.

—Maryke Barber, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University

3:15–4:00 p.m.

The Sphere: Teen World Building and Role-Playing Club

Presenters: Jeffrey Wood and Shalon Hurlbert, Roanoke City Public Library

Roanoke City Public Library has a highly interactive teen program, Sphere (http://sphere.libraryjunction.com/), which encourages teens to write, draw, act, and interact with each other, helping to build skills for cooperation and socialization that aren’t taught in school, among a group of children who are traditionally shy and may even feel like outsiders among their more mainstream peers. Sphere is both a game and an entire world that gives the participants experience in publishing and web design and exercises a lot of imagination.

Roanoke librarians had noted that teens didn’t come voluntarily to events and wanted to come up with something that would engage them enough that they wanted to come on their own. They’ve succeeded admirably: one teen said Sphere is the only thing that gets her through the week at school. The program started with about three or four participants each time and slowly grew and expanded.

Sphere targets teens who are interested in science fiction and fantasy, writing, web design, and acting. The participation takes place in both physical and virtual spaces. Saturday meetings offer a physical space at the library, while a special wiki gives virtual space that is co-edited by the teens and the library. On the library’s blog, teens can publish their finished works as they collaborate to build an original, alternate universe, exploring themes that don’t exist in the real world. As part of this shared imaginative space, teens...
create their own languages and stories and draw colorful and highly skilled representations of their magical and alien creatures. Some teens who are interested in publishing enjoy editing and copyediting the space. The library’s document scanner allows them to upload their art, and the library provides basic art supplies. It’s a very low-cost program, with the teens themselves supplying the energy and excitement.

The physical program on Saturdays usually lasts about three hours, with half devoted to creating and writing together and the other half to role-playing and acting. In addition to providing a fun space for teens that encourages them to exercise their creative talents, the program teaches collaboration and social literacy, which aren’t targeted by SOLs. These life skills have benefits in adulthood, since studies have shown that a lack of collaborative skills is a great detriment in new hires, and may be the biggest problem faced by new employees. Meanwhile, in their current lives, these teens are often outcasts who are bullied or treated poorly by their peers. Sphere helps to counter this. Everyone in the program is treated as an equal and given respect and input, regardless of their differences—including special needs. Everyone works together, and the group includes a wide range of youth—some are very smart, some have high-functioning autism—but all have the option to participate or watch, and the teens often help each other, taking on a protective role.

In terms of materials, Sphere is easy to set up and maintain. There are free collaborative tools online, such as Wikispaces, which has a free educational version. WordPress offers free blogs, while Flickr will host images. For the role-playing side of the program, the library has acquired vinyl wet-erasable mats on which a library volunteer or teen role-player can prepare a map for the adventure. It doesn’t matter how detailed the map is, because the kids use their imaginations. The game requires dice, which could be just one pair of 20-sided dice or a “pound o’ dice” from a local game shop. Chessex.com sells a variety of mats for maps. The gaming system for Sphere is administered under a Creative Commons license; the library can modify it as long as it’s not being sold. In this case, the library got permission from the author to adapt it for teens, removing any references to sexuality, drug use, mental illness, etc. To find similar available games, search “open gaming license.” Creation can be shared among many people; other libraries could, for instance, choose to collaborate with Roanoke online. There are a lot of distance multiuser games now, and the technology is elaborate enough to allow Skype with a chatbox and a sideline for maps and pictures.

The game allows participants to pick and choose their characters. Setting up characters really makes one think about ethics, and the fantasy world gives teens a chance to explore complicated choices without real-world consequences. The game does have rules, but these can be modified; at its heart, Sphere is a collaborative storytelling experience. It can be as simple or complex as the library and the participants desire. One library is running Sphere as a steampunk adventure. A lot of times the teens don’t care so much about the rules, they just like the story. (For the curious, Sphere is a hollow planet with an inner surface that is orbiting two suns.) It’s an alternate universe built by teens for teens—an open book for which the library provides the framework, but the teens can write whatever they want, including creating whole species. New participants can jump in anytime; the Sphere program at Roanoke has an entirely new set of teens now. The teens enjoy teaching each other. This is truly social media. Learn more about Sphere at libraryjunction.com/spheresaga/

—Adele Gardner, Hampton Public Library