

Fall/Winter 2024

# IMAGINE

University Libraries at Virginia Tech

Gaming  
Studio



The Unexpected  
Archivist



Yoga for  
Everyone





## The Presidents' Caregiver

Virginia Tech alumnus donates mother's unique collection, offering private glimpses into presidential history. Photo by Chase Parker. See page 22.



*Christmas Greetings*

# Imagine

Fall/Winter 2024 Vol. 6, No. 2



Dear friends of University Libraries,

As the New Year arrives, it is a perfect time to reflect on the past year and look towards the future. University Libraries is a key partner in teaching, learning, and research at Virginia Tech. In this magazine, you will meet the people behind the services we provide to our university.

Library services help students and faculty succeed, from providing new and emerging technologies for exploration and innovation to offering geospatial and research data support. You'll read about some of these services and others we provide to our campus and regional communities.

Throughout these pages, we showcase the accomplishments, expertise, and experiences of library friends, faculty, and staff. University Libraries at Virginia Tech is an organization of people with varied expertise and backgrounds. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths, which we use to empower, elevate, and serve our Virginia Tech community and our profession.

Every year, we celebrate faculty and staff who have published books in the past year. The Virginia Tech Authors Recognition Event highlights the dissemination of knowledge and the global impact of Virginia Tech scholarship. In this magazine, we highlight our friend Don Caudill, who has supported this special event through the Alfred and Shirley Wampler Caudill Endowment for Special Events he created in honor of his parents.

Thank you for being a friend of University Libraries. Cheers to the New Year and another successful year!

All the best,

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

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Front cover: Photo by Chase Parker. Features photos: Kat Zin. Photo by Nataly Lopez for Virginia Tech (top right). Students learn construction safety. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech (middle right). Author, Jason Higgins, "Prisoners After War: Veterans in the Age of Mass Incarceration." Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech (bottom right).

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# A P R A I R P L A N E C O M P E T I T I O N

HISTORY MEETS  
AERODYNAMICS DURING LIBRARY'S  
**PAPER AIRPLANE  
COMPETITION**

By Elise Monsour Puckett

**ON A TUESDAY IN APRIL**, Special Collections and University Archives hosted Aviation in the Archives: An Open House and Paper Airplane Competition.

The celebration featured the Archives of American Aerospace Exploration collections. Visitors dove into the rich history of American space exploration while they built their own potentially prize-winning aircraft.

### Elevate your paper-folding skills

The fun began at 4 p.m. in Newman Library's first-floor commons area, when pilots meticulously assembled their paper planes, scrutinized each flap, fold, and adjustment in hopes of unlocking the perfect aerodynamic design. They put their aircraft construction skills to the test in a paper airplane competition. The Special Collections staff provided all materials needed as well as snacks to fuel competitors' creativity and steady hands as they folded, creased, and tuned their flying machines.

"People will be folding paper and throwing it, but there's some science behind it, even on a small scale," said Kat Zinn, project archivist at University Libraries. "If you want your plane to go far, you have to think about things like lift, drag, and thrust while keeping gravity in mind. So having this event in tandem with an open house, showcasing some of the manuscript materials we have that explore some of these concepts, is really perfect."

### Come one, come all

Aviation in the Archives was open to people of all ages including faculty, staff, students, and the community. "I am passionate about bridging the gap between Virginia Tech and the surrounding community whenever possible because I think it's important that we give back to the community," said Zinn.

Zinn loves doing programming with K-12 children because she believes they are the next generation of scientists, doctors, writers, and teachers.

"Young people aren't always aware of all the options that are available to them after they graduate high school, so I think it's important to provide opportunities such as this one to potentially inspire them to pursue something as a career," said Zinn. "Even if we don't inspire a lifelong love of aviation and aerospace exploration, maybe just attending a University Libraries event will make them realize they want to attend Virginia Tech or be a librarian."

### Ready, set, fly

At 5 p.m. sharp, the launchpads opened for the test flights in Newman Library's first-floor commons area. One by one, the competitors stepped forward and let their creations soar across the room. The archives staff measured and recorded each plane's flight distance.

After the last aircraft was flown, Special Collections archivists awarded prizes to the top aviators whose designs defied both physics and gravity, flying impressively far before succumbing to the laws of paper aerodynamics.

### The collection

Founded in 1986, the Archives of American Aerospace Exploration is a repository dedicated to preserving and providing access to published and unpublished materials that chronicle the rich history of American aviation and space exploration as well as related scientific disciplines. Its collection encompasses a wide range of artifacts including books, articles, personal correspondence, notes, photos, memoirs, memorabilia, oral histories, patents, and technical drawings and schematics.

Currently, the archive houses over three dozen collections of papers, documenting the contributions of pilots, astronauts, physicists, chemists, engineers, administrators, and project managers including writers, illustrators, and researchers from industry and academia alike.

### Archivists and access

Zinn, who is responsible for processing and describing several collections related to the Archives of American Aerospace Exploration, makes these collections available to the public, including digitizing parts of collections to access online, developing access tools such as finding aids, and promoting the project through community events like this one.

"I want to give attendees a fun, positive experience with University Libraries and the university that keeps them invested in what we're doing and encourages them to come back for more," said Zinn. "This event was an opportunity to have fun and learn something new, exploring through materials and hands-on experimentation."

The project team included

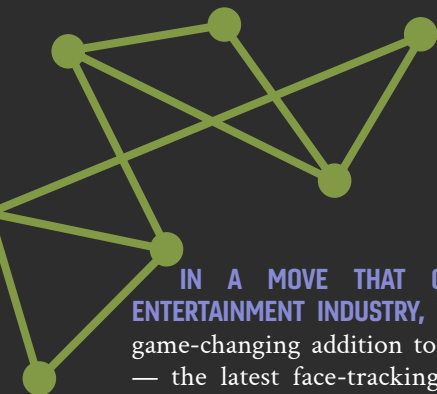
- Aaron Purcell, director of Special Collections and University Archives and co-principal investigator
- LM Rozema, processing and special projects archivist and co-principal investigator
- Zinn, project archivist for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission-funded project "Piercing the Veil: Creating Access to the Archives of American Aerospace Exploration at Virginia Tech"
- Bess Pittman, Zinn's predecessor, was a co-principal investigator for the project and completed about 75 percent of the processing. ■



# FACE TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

OFFERS STUDENTS A CHANCE TO DABBLE IN HOLLYWOOD MAGIC

By Chase Parker



**IN A MOVE THAT CONNECTS ACADEMIA AND THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY,** University Libraries unveiled a game-changing addition to its Virtual Environments Studio — the latest face-tracking technology from Faceware, an industry-leading company in facial animation and motion capture.

The same technology that helps create realistic characters in video games and blockbuster films is now at the fingertips of the Hokie community, opening up a world of creative possibilities.

## A new era of digital storytelling

This sophisticated face tracking system captures and translates human facial expressions onto digital avatars with accuracy and realism.

“This Faceware helmet offers a unique take on how facial motion capture is done,” said Jonathan Bradley, assistant director of learning environments and innovative technologies at University Libraries. “This technology is an extension of some of the other things that we’re trying to do here, which is to provide a full suite of software and hardware related to immersive environments, research, and development to Virginia Tech.”

## From Hollywood to Hokie Nation

Faceware’s technology contributed to the creation of lifelike characters in popular video games such as Legacy, Spider-Man 2, and Mortal Kombat. It has also been used in movies like “Doctor Strange,” “Godzilla,” “Kong,” and “Star Trek Beyond.”

“We wanted our students and faculty to have access to the same technology they would most likely use in a professional context,” Bradley said.

Students across various disciplines – from computer science and engineering to art and cinema – will have the opportunity to work with tools that are actively shaping the entertainment industry. This experience with professional-grade technology will give Virginia Tech students an edge as they prepare to enter the workforce.

“Making all of this available gives students like me a leg up over graduates from other universities that don’t have access to this type of technology. I can tell potential employers that I have experience with the same equipment that major studios are using,” said Varshita Usem, a graduate student studying computer science.

## Research potential

The potential of this technology reaches far beyond the entertainment industry. Researchers at Virginia Tech can use this equipment to research areas such as of psychology, micro-expressions, communication disorders, and speech patterns.

“There’s a lot going on with the face that communicates some things that cannot be said verbally. Any kind of study about speech pathology or facial cues could benefit from this Faceware helmet. This technology also can help anyone who wants to do research in virtual reality or augmented reality,” Bradley said.

## Looking ahead

As Virginia Tech continues to invest in new technology, the University Libraries’ Virtual Environments Studio is becoming a hub for digital innovation on campus. The addition of Faceware’s face-capturing technology will support students dreaming of careers in animation, game development, or visual effects. And for those looking to push the boundaries of what’s possible with digital human representation, the tools to bring those visions to life are now just a library visit away. ■



CREATIVITY

20:42:54:00



SEE THE VIDEO

[news.vt.edu/videos/k/2024/09/1\\_rde22777.html](https://news.vt.edu/videos/k/2024/09/1_rde22777.html)



# GAMING STUDIO

## Level Up Learning

By Elise Monsour Puckett

**THIS FALL**, University Libraries' Newman Library is leveling up its offerings with an exciting new addition: the Gaming Studio. Located on the fourth floor at the beginning of the semester, this innovative space promises to be a hub for digital and analog gaming enthusiasts alike. The space opened on Sept. 12.

### Game on

The Gaming Studio is the latest in the University Libraries' network of creative spaces, designed to support the burgeoning game design program and eSports team at Virginia Tech. Beyond serious gamers, the studio aims to welcome all students interested in exploring game design and development, providing them with hands-on experience and industry insights.

"We've wanted a Game Studio for years," said Jonathan Bradley, assistant director of studios innovative technologies, who oversees all studio spaces in Newman Library and will be the acting manager of the Gaming Studio. "Game studios are not uncommon in library spaces, and games and game development mesh really well with our other studio offerings, like media creation, immersive environments, and our makerspace."

The new studio will capture all aspects of gaming, boast an array of gaming equipment and resources, and allow students to congregate and make connections. Visitors can play solo or with friends and will find six high-end gaming PCs loaded with popular eSports titles and games used for teaching in the game design program. A cozy console gaming area with an oversized couch will feature the latest systems alongside retro consoles, offering a journey through gaming history.

For those who prefer analog gaming, three tables of varying sizes will accommodate board games and tabletop

role-playing games, with an extensive collection available for use. A list of the available games can be explored on the Gaming Studio's website.

### Beyond play

But the Gaming Studio isn't just about play – it's also a space for learning and creation. The PCs will be equipped with game development software, and the studio will provide prototyping materials for aspiring game designers to build their own physical games, learn more about the industry, and be better prepared for the job market. "We need to support the students who are preparing to enter this industry," said Bradley. "There are specialized resources on campus, but the libraries will be able to offer the space to the entire Virginia Tech community, regardless of departmental affiliation or level of prior experience, which allows us to support the university's educational mission as broadly as possible."

Patrick Tomlin, associate dean for academic and creative engagement echoed the sentiment. "With its growing presence in education, technology, and entertainment sectors, among others, gaming and game design can offer vital opportunities for real-world student learning," said Tomlin. "From storytelling to graphic design, from coding to user experience studies, game design allows students to harness and hone a variety of skills. We simply want to create a space that will eliminate as many barriers to access to these technologies and tools as we can."

### Synergy in action

The studio's proximity to other creative spaces in the library is a key advantage. "Someone could pop over to the Prototyping Studio to work on a game piece for the board game they're building or stop by the Virtual Environments Studio to

do some motion capture for a video game they're developing," said Bradley. "This move puts us one step closer to fulfilling one of the goals of the modern library — to bring together all of these emerging technologies and make a playground for students to be able to move around in and have all the tools to finish any multimodal project."

### Flexible spaces

The Gaming Studio will be open from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. daily. However, the space will be available for study or computer use whenever the library is open, showcasing the University Libraries' innovative approach to maximizing valuable campus space. The studio will be one of the first experimental, hybrid spaces the team is trying out in the library.

"We know that study space is at a premium on campus, but we also know it is important to provide these sorts of learning opportunities to campus, so we're trying a new system in which the space can be used for study when it isn't acting as a studio," said Bradley.

The studio is also looking to build partnerships with others on campus working on projects related to video, board, or role-playing games, and their history and impact on society and culture.

### Overcoming industry barriers

While excitement for the new studio is high, the project hasn't been without challenges. "By far the biggest challenge has been digital games acquisition," said Bradley. "Like many industries, the gaming industry has a tendency to overlook

the education market, instead focusing on those areas that are more profitable. The tools for purchasing and managing large collections of games aren't designed with this sort of service in mind."

Despite these hurdles, the team behind the Gaming Studio is passionate about its potential impact. "The games industry is gigantic, far larger than other media industries," said Bradley. "Some of the most impactful and emotional moments of storytelling I've experienced in my life have come from games I've played."

Bradley is an avid gamer himself. "I think games are a medium of storytelling that other media can't match in that they can be very immersive and malleable. I love that style of storytelling and engagement," said Bradley. "I'm also a programmer and the development of video games is something I have been interested in for years. I think it is often overlooked because for so long games were considered 'immature' and lacking substance but that interpretation has really shifted in recent years, which is exciting."

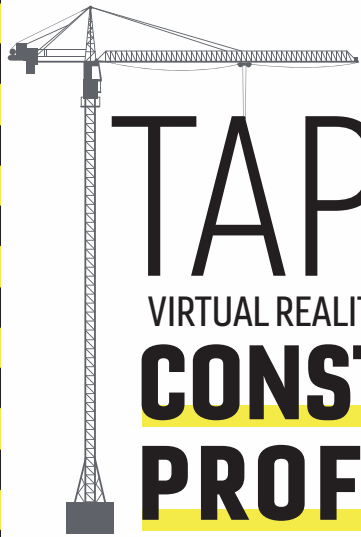
“  
*I think games are a medium of storytelling that other media can't match...*  
”

**JONATHAN BRADLEY**  
ASST. DIRECTOR OF STUDIOS  
INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

### The next level

As the Gaming Studio prepares to open its doors, it stands as a testament to the evolving role of University Libraries in the digital age. "The research and learning needs of Virginia Tech students and faculty continue to change, and to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the present moment," said Tomlin. "Likewise, University Libraries is always looking for new and more effective ways to meet those needs, and to support the university's goals. Technologies may change, but the mission of the library remains the same." ■





# TAPPING

## VIRTUAL REALITY TO INCREASE SAFETY IN

# CONSTRUCTION

# PROFESSIONS

By Elise Monsour Puckett

**THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY** has one of the highest number of fatalities among all employment sectors in the U.S., according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Traditional safety education methods struggle to provide students with the experiential learning necessary to truly understand and internalize safety protocols. As a result, The College of Engineering's Myers-Lawson School of Construction is addressing this concern and proactively elevating its approach by introducing a new major, demonstrating its commitment to safety and enhancing the Virginia Tech experience while solidifying its position as an industry leader in construction education.

At Virginia Tech, an innovative collaboration between the University Libraries' ARIES (Advanced Research in Immersive Environments and Simulations) team and Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, associate professor in the College of Engineering Myers-Lawson School of Construction created a revolutionary approach to construction safety education. Using cutting-edge virtual reality (VR) technology, the team aims to transform how future construction professionals learn about and experience workplace hazards.

### Virtual reality: a game-changer in construction safety education

The ARIES team along with Roofigari-Esfahan created immersive and interactive virtual reality scenarios that simulate real-world construction environments with various safety hazards based on actual construction work sites. Through these scenarios, students can encounter and learn from potentially hazardous situations in a safe and controlled setting.

"The use of group-based VR developed in this research will address the gap in current teaching and learning methods," said Roofigari-Esfahan, Associate Director of the Center for Innovation in Construction, Safety, Health, and Well-being. "It provides an educational aid that enables interactive engagement and experiential learning for students, taking into account the specific job environments they will be exposed to."

### Reimagining construction safety

The virtual reality construction safety project began with conversations between Roofigari-Esfahan, construction safety

instructors, and industry professionals. These discussions consistently highlighted a critical need — improving current safety training with experiential learning. This insight led to a series of funded initiatives, culminating in a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

ICAT (Institute for Creative Arts and Technology) seed funding supported the development of VR scenarios for improving highway construction workers' safety awareness on the job. After successful completion of the project, the team presented the information at Virginia Tech's CUBE (Collaborative Undergraduate Biostatistics Experience) and Visionarium to multiple stakeholders including the Myers-Lawson School of Construction's Industry Advisory Council, BLAST highschool summer camp, and construction students.

Based on feedback, the team expanded its work through an Innovation in Learning grant from TLOS (Technology-Enhanced Learning and Online Strategies) to add building construction scenarios to the virtual reality training library. Roofigari-Esfahan plans to use the highway construction and building construction scenarios in her Fall 2024 Construction Safety Systems course, part of the school's new construction safety leadership major.

A spinoff of the project, funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, creates virtual reality scenarios based on real highway accident reports to better analyze factors impacting highway workers' situational awareness.

Sarah Tucker, ARIES program coordinator at University Libraries, played a key role in building the virtual world at the Visionarium. It included a model of the newly constructed Hitt Hall on Virginia Tech's Blacksburg campus with construction safety scenarios. The simulations incorporate specific job environments and student preferences while visually conveying information through creative strategies.

### A passion for safety and innovation

For Roofigari-Esfahan, this project is more than just an academic endeavor.

"Improving construction worker safety is absolutely critical," said Roofigari-Esfahan. "From an educator's perspective, enhancing safety education serves as a cornerstone of our mission to protect and empower those on the job. Beyond the ethical imperative of safeguarding lives and preventing injuries, implementing robust educational tools and safety measures equips our students and the future workforce with the knowledge and tools to mitigate risks effectively. Ultimately, my hope is that this approach can instill a proactive safety mindset that ensures every worker returns home safely each day, contributing to a more resilient and productive construction industry."

Her collaboration with ARIES has been instrumental in bringing this vision to life. "These technologies are available at our fingertips; we need to look at them as supporting tools and not rivals," said Roofigari-Esfahan. "That's why I appreciate my collaboration with the library and ARIES. Todd Ogle and his team are my technology experts that I can rely on. They always help me make what may start as a crazy idea into a reality!" ■





# RESEARCHERS WORK TO MAKE

# YOGA

# FOR EVERYONE



By Max Esterhuizen

**From the downward dog to the reverse warrior,** yoga’s popularity has blossomed recently, partly because of its accessibility to a wide range of people at a variety of skill levels.

With benefits ranging from physical to mental to social and spiritual, yoga offers an approach to holistic well-being. Virginia Tech researchers are working on ways to broaden its appeal even further.

“The historical underrepresentation in yoga makes this the perfect thing to study in regard to equitable translation of health evidence,” said Mary Frazier, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in the Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health Graduate Program and is the graduate student lead on the project. “So many people think yoga isn’t for them and that’s largely because of how it’s often portrayed. We want to find ways to reach the groups that don’t think yoga is for them – because it could be.”

The underrepresentation of people from rural areas in yoga practices highlights significant accessibility and awareness issues, often due to a lack of local resources and classes that could introduce and nurture an inclusive yoga culture, the researchers said.

Additionally, according to the research team, prevailing narratives around body image within the yoga community can deter many from participating, as the physical component of yoga is easier to capture ‘on screen’ (e.g., photo or video), but the imagery often lacks representation of the diversity of human bodies.

“These challenges underscore the need for a more inclusive approach to yoga, one that embraces and promotes diversity in all forms, from geographical background to body shape, ensuring that the benefits of yoga are accessible to all,” said Samantha Harden, an associate professor in the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise and a Virginia Cooperative Extension specialist.

To help bridge this gap, the research team made up of Harden, Frazier, Brad Frick, a master’s degree student in the School of Communication; and Therese Osborn, an undergraduate student in public health, as well as Rachel Kaplan, Cassidy Powers, and Kayla Markley, all students in human nutrition, foods, and exercise, created a messaging survey to identify terms and tactics that resonate with the historically underrepresented groups.

The development of a survey aimed at identifying effective tactics and messaging to engage historically underrepresented groups in yoga represents a strategic approach to fostering inclusivity within the practice. Through a collaboration with University Libraries, this research project can leverage advanced data visualization tools and expertise, transforming raw survey data into compelling, easy-to-understand insights that highlight opportunities for outreach and community engagement.

Therese Osborn and Mary Frazier do a yoga pose in front of a fountain in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. Photo by Max Esterhuizen for Virginia Tech. (Left)

“This partnership not only amplifies the survey’s impact through sophisticated analysis but also ensures that the findings are accessible and actionable for stakeholders aiming to create a more inclusive yoga community,” said Harden, who is also affiliated with the Fralin Biomedical Institute.

“It’s going to be interesting to see and transform the raw survey data into insightful and meaningful visualizations,” said Michael Stamper, University Libraries data visualization designer. “Once we can see the stories within that data, we can begin to take notice of and address them.”

The research project also gave Frazier valuable experience as a graduate student.

“This project has been instrumental in advancing my Ph.D. journey, providing a solid foundation for my dissertation on the importance of inclusivity in wellness spaces and highlighting the transformative potential of yoga when it truly embraces diversity in all its forms,” Frazier said. “The research into the underrepresentation of individuals from rural areas in yoga practices has illuminated critical gaps in accessibility and awareness, underscoring the urgent need for community-based interventions and inclusive programming.”

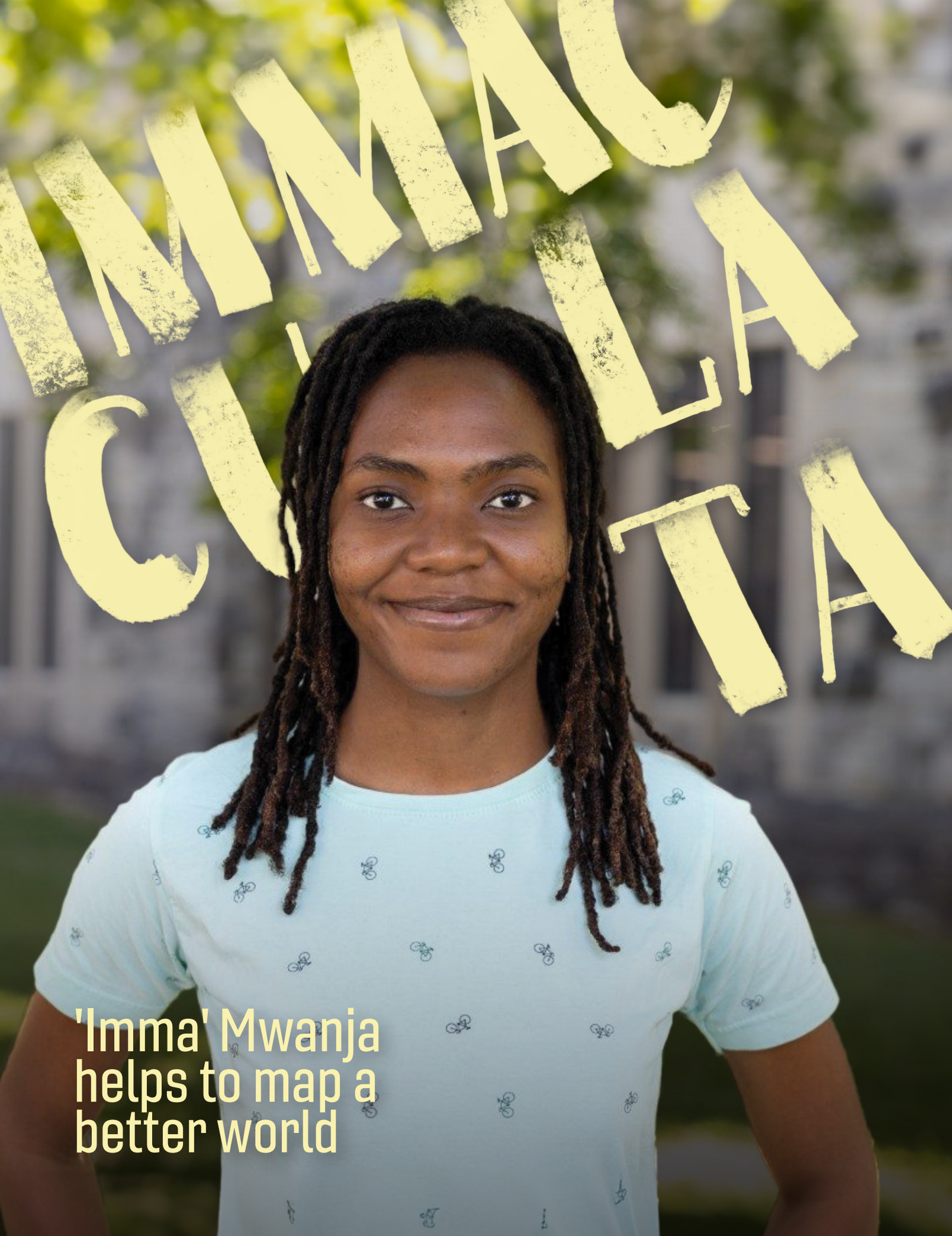
Osborn, a sophomore, was “nervous” when she first joined the lab — it’s the same nervousness that keeps people out of studios: the unknown. She now acknowledges that the experience has equipped her with valuable skills, preparing her for the workforce.

“Dr. Harden, Frazier, Megan Pullin, and the rest of the lab have been so welcoming and encouraging,” Osborn said. “Not only has the lab allowed me to apply what I have learned in my classes, but it has also taught me new things entirely, that help me to feel prepared for the future. This project taught me how to build a successful survey and analyze qualitative data.” ■

“It’s going to be interesting to see and transform the raw survey data into insightful and meaningful visualizations. Once we can see the stories within that data, we can begin to take notice of and address them.”

Michael Stamper





'Imma' Mwanja helps to map a better world

By Elise Monsour Puckett

**HAILING FROM TANZANIA**, home of the highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro, Immaculata “Imma” Mwanja, has brought her summit-reaching spirit to University Libraries. As the geospatial data curator in the data management and curation services department, she is charting new territory and bringing a wealth of international experience and a passion for using geospatial data to improve lives.

**A journey from Tanzania to Virginia Tech**

Growing up in Tanzania, she witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by cities with informal construction, pollution, flooding, and congestion. Inspired by her aunt, she pursued a degree in urban and regional planning at Ardhi University. During her studies and an internship with the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team, she found her footing in geographic information systems (GIS) and was hired to collect data in the field, map infrastructure, and then clean the data that would be used to improve infrastructure in the city. Mwanja’s first big project was called Ramani Huria, which in Swahili is “open map,” to collect and visualize information in Dar es Salaam to make the city more resilient to climate change.

Mwanja then became the operations manager for a local organization called OpenMap Development in Tanzania, and after two years she became a global projects associate for the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team. Her work led her to Germany, Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, Senegal, and Indonesia. One of her notable projects was Women-Centered Disaster Resilience in Small Island Developing States, which focused on working with women and girls to help them gain critical mapping skills. “It aimed to build local disaster resilience with a gender perspective by fostering collaboration among women leaders and helped me personally to think of inclusion and diversity in a very new and interesting perspective,” said Mwanja. “Throughout it all, I became a strong advocate for using data and technology to improve people’s lives, especially in developing countries.”

**A move to Virginia Tech**

At University Libraries, Mwanja’s role as geospatial data curator allows her to guide faculty, staff, and students through the terrain of their geospatial mapping needs. Her responsibilities include:

- Helping researchers find data sets for map creation
- Supporting the map-making process
- Giving guest lectures to classes on geospatial mapping
- Curating data sets for the Virginia Tech Data Repository

Mwanja is particularly excited about her current project, which might be her most challenging summit yet. In collaboration with a history professor and two student employees, Mwanja serves as a co-principal investigator for the Chicago Covenants grant project, which focuses on documenting and interpreting racial segregation and racial covenants in Chicago and neighboring Cook County. These covenants include explicit racial restrictions that forbid the properties from ever being inhabited or owned by anyone not of the Caucasian race. This multidisciplinary project involves:

“ I have seen firsthand how data and mapping can change lives. IMMA MWANJA

- Researchers in Chicago identifying source documents
- The Digital Imaging Lab digitizing covenants and plat restrictions
- Metadata team identifying and extracting metadata
- Mwanja’s Mapping Team, including two students, drawing the covenant’s boundaries and mapping and visualizing the covenants on the map

The project’s mission is to help current property owners identify neighborhoods with racial restrictive language in their deeds and facilitate the removal of such language. The team was recently awarded new funding under the Library Collaborative Grant to continue this same work in Lake County, Illinois.

“These are very important projects to me personally as someone with a planning background, but also to the land owners,” said Mwanja. “They are projects that involve diversity and inclusion of people of color and other minorities to be able to access land. Even though these restrictions were terminated in the 20th century, some houses still have the racial restriction clauses to date.”

**A panoramic view**

From her vantage point in the library, Mwanja has a panoramic view of the research landscape. Her international background and experience bring a unique perspective to the work and serving the greater Virginia Tech community with an inclusive approach.

“I have seen firsthand how data and mapping can change lives,” Mwanja said. “They say knowledge is power and giving people access to tools and data can help them make important decisions.” Her passion for using GIS and mapping in diverse sectors makes her an asset to the university community.

“As someone who comes from a very different culture and a nonacademic background, I wasn’t sure what to expect coming to work at an American university,” said Mwanja. “Everyday people surprise me with their kindness, willingness to help, and quick responses. You don’t expect that in a big institution like this, but Virginia Tech has shown me otherwise.”

Her experience collaborating with peer institutions has been eye-opening, and she credits her colleagues for facilitating these valuable learning opportunities. Mwanja recounted a recent dinner with Tanzanian students who praised the accessibility of resources at the library. “It made me really happy hearing them say this,” said Mwanja, “and I could see how bright their eyes lit up when they were talking about the Libraries. That made me believe that I made the right decision coming to work for the University Libraries at Virginia Tech, because I have always wanted to have an impact.” ■

DATA



# CREATE, INNOVATE, AND LEARN



Digital Collections Use

**19.88M**  
7.39%

Subscription Electronic Collections Use

**20.94M**  
13.32%

Website Use (includes homepage and LibGuides)

**2.67M**  
48.73%

Physical Collections Use

**44,546**  
29%

**12,880,442** 16.10%

**6,805,082** 6.71%

**958,072** 12.85%

**297,246** 87.06%

Databases  
Journals  
eBooks  
Multimedia

## Library Resources

University Libraries provides the Virginia Tech community with the resources they need to create, innovate, and learn. Resources include traditional books, journals, and electronic publications along with emerging technology for academic and extracurricular projects and exploration. ■

## Technology lending through studios

Technology lending in FY24

**12,546**  
loans

**3,326**  
unique users

**560,228**  
hours booked

Technology lending in FY23

**9,591**  
loans

**2,813**  
unique users

**299,969**  
hours booked

SUBSCRIPTION  
USE



# VOICES OF INCARCERATED VETERANS

By Elise Monsour Puckett

**IN HIS NEW BOOK** “Prisoners After War: Veterans in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” historian Jason Higgins uncovers the untold stories of veterans, men and women, who were punished for mental health disorders and incarcerated after serving in America’s wars from Vietnam to present day.

Higgins, humanities digital scholarship coordinator for Virginia Tech Publishing housed in University Libraries at Virginia Tech, has always been more interested in studying history from the bottom up.

“Oral histories make history personal and more human,” said Higgins. “I began recording oral histories with World War II veterans as an undergraduate. Then I completed an oral history project with Vietnam veterans. Since then, I’ve spent my life studying the lasting effects of war, trauma, and veterans’ experiences.”

## Tracing roots of injustice

Higgins traces the roots of this injustice back to the Vietnam era, when Nixon’s “war on drugs” unfairly targeted soldiers struggling with substance abuse, such as marijuana and heroin, to cope with the horrors and traumas of war. Thousands of veterans, disproportionately Black, were discharged without benefits and resources, fueling a cycle of discrimination, mental illness, and mass incarceration that continues today.

“As a public historian, I hope to raise public awareness of the experiences of veterans who went to prison after war,” said Higgins. “My book explores the radiating effects of mental health, disabilities, and wounds of war on these lives and uncovers a history of discriminatory policies in the military, Veterans Administration, and criminal justice system.”

## A wake-up call

Higgins said studying Black history forever changed his worldview.

“After learning about the violent experiences of Black veterans throughout U.S. history — from lynching to incarceration — I was both enraged that I never learned about this in school and equally impassioned to teach others,” said Higgins.

He has spent the last 10 years filling in the missing gaps of historical knowledge. “This project became more than a dissertation topic to me,” said Higgins. “I have become an advocate for justice through scholarship, teaching, and service.”

The central question of Higgins’s book asks what the relationship is between trauma, discrimination, and incarceration. To answer this question, Higgins launched the Incarcerated Veterans Oral History Project while earning his Ph.D. in history from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His research revealed that during the Vietnam War, African American veterans were unfairly punished with “less than honorable” discharges, denied disability benefits, and were disproportionately incarcerated after the war. By 1978, 1 out of 4 Americans in prison were military veterans and nearly half of them were Black veterans with less than honorable discharges.

“Unfortunately discrimination did not end after the Vietnam War,” said Higgins. “It took new forms. Oral history interviews with Iraq and Afghanistan veterans uncovered striking parallels.”

The next generation of veterans experienced a mental health crisis produced by the conditions of fighting the global war on terrorism. Multiple deployments increased the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, and moral injury. Military doctors and the Department of Veterans



Jason Higgins, humanities digital scholarship coordinator for Virginia Tech Publishing housed in University Libraries at Virginia Tech. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech.

Affairs also overprescribed opioids. Hundreds of thousands of veterans developed substance-use disorders. Although the military initiated mental health reforms during the war on terror, many service members continued to be punished for mental health and behavioral problems, including members with service-connected injuries and women who experienced sexual assault. They were kicked out without veterans’ benefits.

## Resilience against the odds

Yet among the accounts, inspiring stories of resilience emerge — such as that of David Carlson, an Iraq War vet who broke the cycle of intergenerational trauma and incarceration in his family by becoming a law student, activist, and youth mentor after serving two combat tours and spending over four years in prison. Higgins documents how many formerly incarcerated vets have transformed their lives to become community leaders effecting social change.

## A grassroots movement for justice

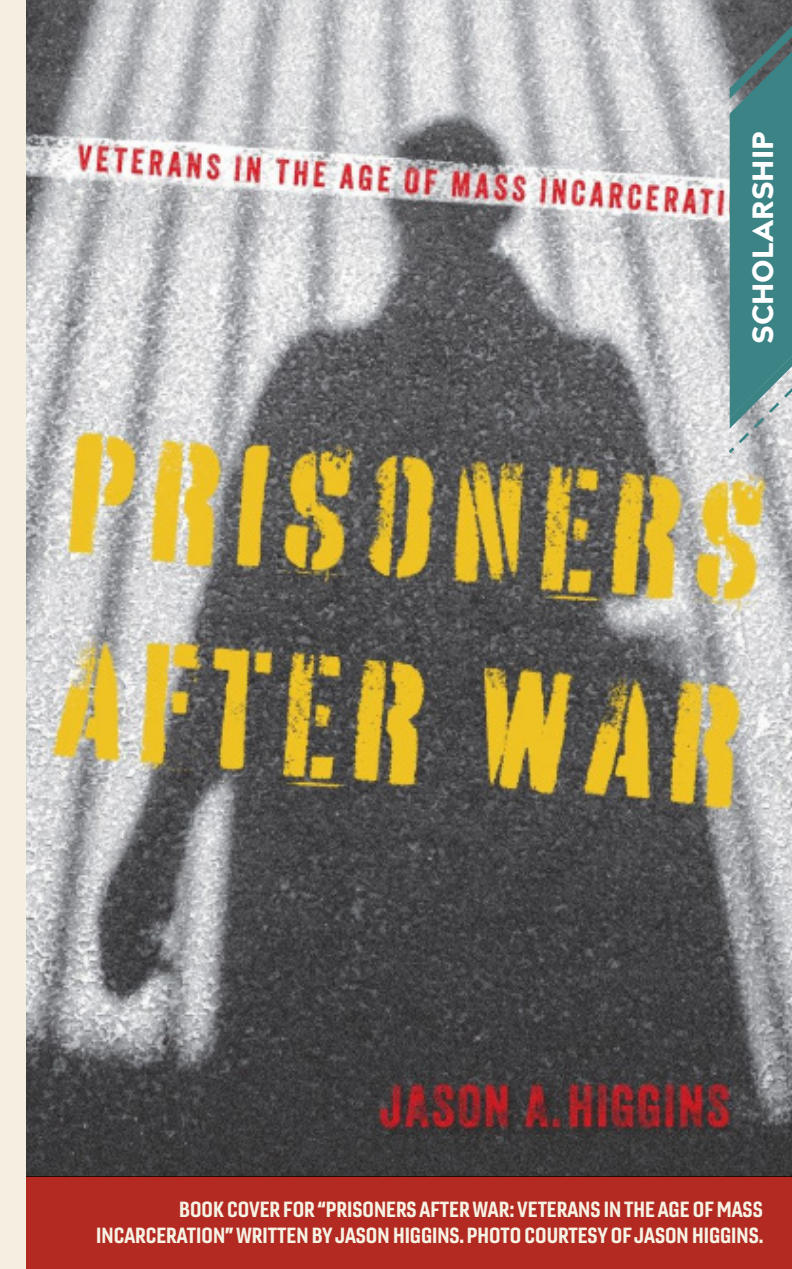
The book also chronicles the proliferation since 2008 of nearly 600 Veterans Treatment Courts across the U.S. — a grassroots movement pioneered by Vietnam vets advocating for alternatives to incarceration. These innovative courts are hybrid mental health and drug treatment courts, specializing in veterans with PTSD, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, and substance use disorders. They promote alternatives to incarceration and connect veterans to resources such as health care, housing aid, disability benefits, counseling services, and job training, drastically reducing recidivism.

“As Virginia Tech seeks to make education more affordable and aspires for Global Distinction, our research, teaching, and service have enormous potential for positive social change,” said Higgins. “With generous support from Virginia Tech TOME [Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem Grant], “Prisoners After War” can be read online or downloaded for free. More than anything, I want this research to reach people living in the margins of society.”

Higgins said this work would not be possible without the support of many people at Virginia Tech and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, none more influential than Christian G. Appy, a mentor and historian of the Vietnam War. “My former supervisor Peter Potter provided invaluable insight into open-access scholarly publishing while I was revising my dissertation into a book,” said Higgins. “Virginia Tech Publishing also hosts the Journal of Veterans Studies, which produces cutting edge, open-access scholarship in the field of Veterans studies.”

Higgins’s work intersects with several past and ongoing University Libraries initiatives including the Center for Oral History, the Veterans in Society initiative, the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Higher Education Faculty on Veterans Studies, and the Journal of Veterans Studies. “When I joined Virginia Tech as a postdoctoral fellow, I stood on the shoulders of many,” said Higgins.

# JASON HIGGINS



BOOK COVER FOR “PRISONERS AFTER WAR: VETERANS IN THE AGE OF MASS INCARCERATION” WRITTEN BY JASON HIGGINS. PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON HIGGINS.

## Expanding access to veteran stories

Last year, Higgins proposed a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for K-12 teachers called Crossing Divides to train educators in facilitating student oral history projects in their communities. With a 4-VA grant, he also partnered with William & Mary’s Andre Taylor, oral historian and Ph.D. candidate, to record oral histories from diverse veteran groups like African Americans, women, LGBTQ, antiwar, and disabled vets.

“Interviewing veterans as an undergraduate changed my life, and now I introduce students to the transformative power of oral history,” said Higgins. In his Vietnam War class, for example, students have recorded nearly 40 new oral histories and many are archived with the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. Currently, in partnership with the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, Higgins is supervising cadets who are interviewing Virginia Tech alumni who served in the Vietnam War.

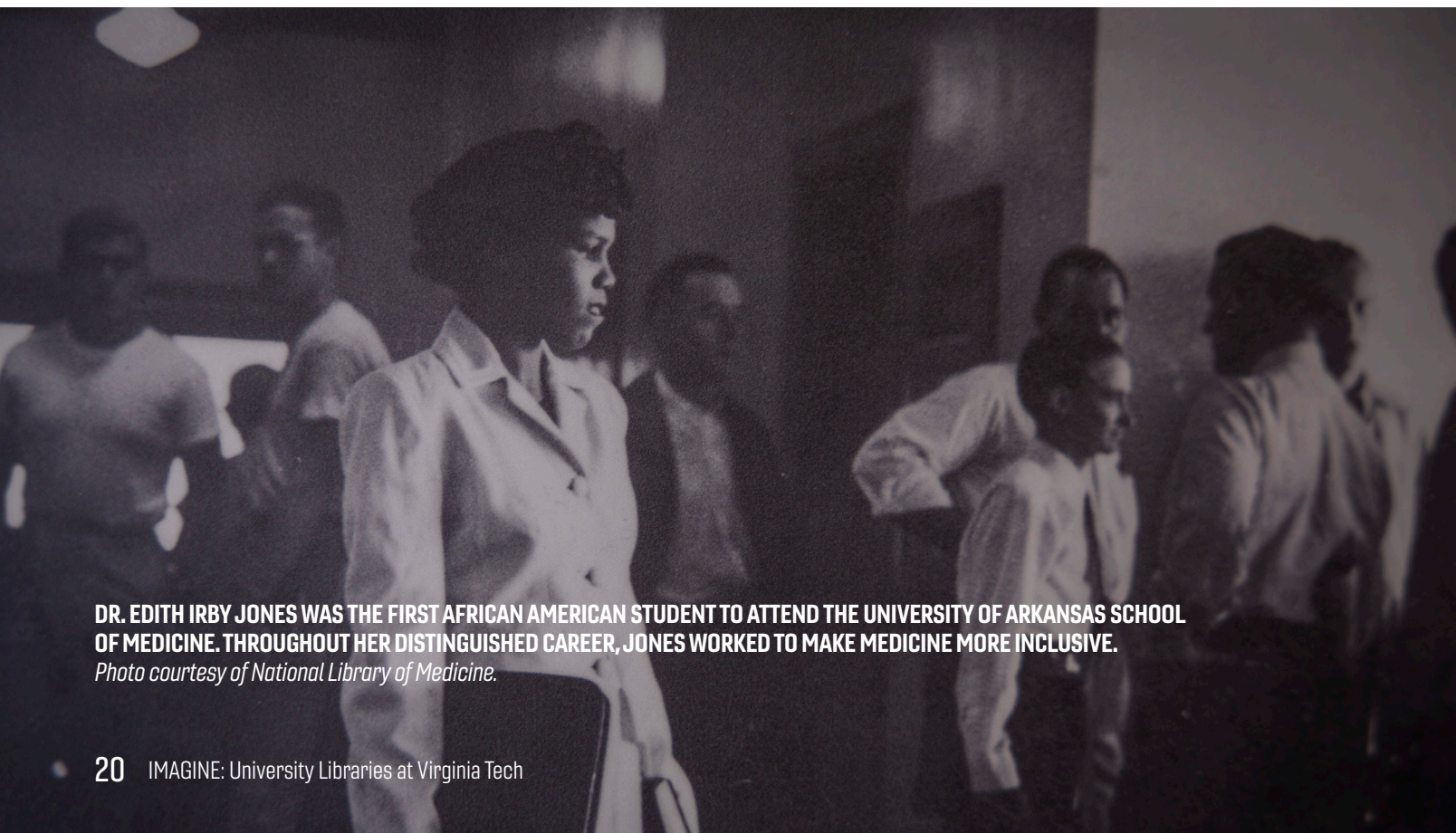
“In this community, I have discovered an authentic devotion to service,” said Higgins. “I am honored to join the storied tradition of Ut Prosim by recording the untold stories of those who served.” ■



# RISE SERVE LEAD!

By Chase Parker

VIRGINIA TECH CARILION SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
LIBRARY HOSTS 'RISE, SERVE, LEAD!' EXHIBIT



DR. EDITH IRBY JONES WAS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE. THROUGHOUT HER DISTINGUISHED CAREER, JONES WORKED TO MAKE MEDICINE MORE INCLUSIVE.

Photo courtesy of National Library of Medicine.

IN AUGUST, VIRGINIA TECH CARILION SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, a branch of University Libraries at Virginia Tech, highlighted women health care leaders with the traveling exhibit "Rise, Serve, Lead! America's Women Physicians."

#### Highlighting women's leadership in medicine

Developed by the National Library of Medicine, the exhibit served as a platform to shed light on trailblazing women who have made remarkable strides in medicine, often overcoming significant barriers to lead and inspire future generations.

"Historically, the role of women in leadership positions often gets overlooked," said Kiri DeBose, University Libraries' director of the Health Sciences Libraries. "We wanted to use this exhibit to provide examples of women leaders in that historical context, connect back to Virginia Tech's health sciences programs where we have made significant progress in having women serve in leadership roles."

The exhibit offered an enlightening experience for a diverse audience, including medical professionals, students, and history enthusiasts. Through carefully curated narratives and displays, visitors delved into the challenges, triumphs, and enduring legacies of women physicians who have played a critical role in shaping the landscape of American health care.

In addition to the physical exhibit, a digital slideshow provided insights from women leaders in the health sciences working at Virginia Tech and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

#### Special panel discussion

University Libraries and Virginia Tech Roanoke Women's Connect hosted a panel discussion on Sept. 10 from noon to 1 p.m. During the discussion, six Virginia Tech women leaders described the challenges, opportunities, and rewards they have had in their professional journeys:

- Carla V. Finkelstein, professor, director of the Virginia Tech Molecular Diagnostics Lab, and interim director of the Cancer Research Group, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC
- Emily Holt Foerst, assistant dean, Student Affairs, and director of the Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
- Ginny Pannabecker, assistant dean and director of the Research Collaboration and Engagement, University Libraries
- Rebecca R. Pauly, vice dean, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
- Melanie K. Prusakowski, associate dean, Admissions, and director of Pediatric Emergency Medicine Education, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
- Shari Whicker, assistant dean for faculty development, senior director of the Office of Continuing Professional Development at Carilion Clinic, and director of the Teaching Excellence Academy for Collaborative Healthcare at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine

The panel session fostered a rich dialogue on the importance of diversity in leadership and the ongoing efforts to promote gender equality in medicine.

Inspiring future generations, The "Rise, Serve, Lead! America's Women Physicians" exhibit was a tribute to the past and an inspiration to the future.

The exhibit underscored critical importance of diversity and representation in health care, celebrating the progress while also acknowledging the ongoing journey

"Glass ceilings have been shattered and continue to be shattered," DeBose said. "Women have been instrumental in providing leadership throughout many different aspects of the health sciences, including research, medical education, administration, and other services that support and advance the health sciences."

The exhibit highlighted the strides women have made in medicine and the importance of continuing to support and elevate women leaders in the field. ■



A swearing-in ceremony for Antonia C. Novello as surgeon general of the United States on March 9, 1990. Photo courtesy of Antonia C. Novello.



# THE PRESIDENTS' CAREGIVER



Virginia Tech alumnus donates mother's unique collection, offering private glimpses into presidential history



By Elise Monsour Puckett

**GROWING UP ON A FARM IN NORTHWEST ILLINOIS,** young Genevieve Raders Herrell could never have imagined her life's path. Losing her mother at the tender age of two and facing a challenging childhood, she found her escape — and her calling — in nursing school. This decision led her to the corridors of power in Washington D.C., where she would spend 25 years caring for America's First Families.

## An unexpected assignment

Herrell loved nursing and began her career as a stewardess nurse on the railroad. During this time, she met Cal Herrell in 1942 as he traveled home to be inducted into the Army. They secretly married that December and settled in Virginia after the war. In 1952, Herrell, then a civilian nurse for the U.S. Army, received an assignment that would change her life: to assist in the care of Margaret Wallace, Harry S. Truman's mother-in-law, who often stayed at the White House. This initial role evolved into a position with the White House Medical Unit, where Herrell would serve until Gerald Ford left office and she retired on December 31, 1976.

## A witness to history

During her tenure, Herrell witnessed firsthand the personal side of six presidencies, from Truman to Ford. Her son, Greg Herrell, a 1975 Virginia Tech history alumnus, donated his mother's collection of White House memorabilia to University Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives.

"My mother was not a cabinet official or a political adviser," said Greg Herrell. "She provided care to people we elected to serve our country. Her interaction was personal with no agendas. There would be no tell-all books or sensational interviews. My mother's long time there and the affection shown to her by the first families reflect the comfort and pleasure they took in her care and company."

Genevieve Herrell's letters, cards, and photographs tell the untold story and share the often-overlooked contributions of the many individuals who work behind the scenes to support the nation's leaders.

## More than just memorabilia

The one-of-a-kind collection includes Christmas cards signed by presidents and First Ladies; personally inscribed photographs of presidents and their families; letters from First Ladies Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, and Betty Ford; travel credentials for Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to Moscow, and an invitation to a formal dinner in Beijing from Premier Zhou Enlai during Ford's 1975 visit to China.

The collection is valuable for historians, students, and scholars in political science, nursing, women's studies, and American culture because the personal nature of these artifacts provides a clear lens through which to examine the intersection of professional duty and national leadership.

Beyond these tangible items lies a wealth of personal experiences that paint a more human picture of America's leaders. Ren Harman, University Libraries' oral history projects archivist, captured Greg Herrell's memories of his mother and

his family's experiences during an extensive recorded interview that will accompany the collection.

"What struck me most while documenting Nurse Herrell's experiences was the balance she maintained between professionalism and compassion," said Harman. "Her stories reveal the everyday humanity of our nation's leaders, reminding us that even in the halls of power, there's room for kindness and personal connection."

## A unique perspective on power

During the oral history interview, Greg Herrell shared a special memory from 1963. He was just ten years old and interested in the Civil War. "My parents took me to Gettysburg to see the battlefield," said Greg Herrell. "When former President Eisenhower found out Mom was there, he invited us for a visit. The president showed this ten-year-old boy photos of his career and talked about Winston Churchill, who I had already read about. It was as if we had just dropped in on a retired colonel next door instead of the former President of the United States. Later, Mrs. Eisenhower invited us to their home. Greeting us in her housecoat, she gave us a brief tour and visited with my parents."

This casual interaction with one of America's most prominent figures illustrates the unique position held by Genevieve Herrell — trusted and valued by those at the pinnacle of power, yet maintaining a down-to-earth approach to her extraordinary circumstances.

## Preserving a legacy of service

"Virginia Tech's acceptance of this collection will help preserve the life of a special person who happened to be my mom," said Greg Herrell. "She also observed and cared for the people who led our country. Her life is an example of the countless people who serve but are seldom remembered."

In an era of political polarization, Genevieve Herrell's story serves as a reminder of the shared humanity that exists beyond partisan lines. Her collection provides valuable historical insights and inspires future generations to approach public service with compassion and dignity.

"We now live in an age where public officials in particular are vilified and demeaned because of their political beliefs," said Greg Herrell. "One can certainly disagree, protest, and speak out. But it should not be an excuse to forget our leaders are abundantly human and share many of the same fears and eccentricities we all have. I believe my mom's service at the White House is a reminder of how we should treat those in the public arena as well as our neighbor next door."

## Indispensable and irreplaceable

From assisting President Eisenhower in Geneva in 1956 to accompanying President Nixon to Moscow in 1972, Herrell's career was filled with remarkable experiences. When even on maternity leave, President Eisenhower was said to have asked where she was and advised she would not be replaced while she was out. He also mentioned her in his memoir, "Mandate for Change." She formed a special bond with First Lady Betty Ford as they were close in age and often traveled with Betty Ford on

trips throughout the U.S. and China. Betty Ford also attended Herrell's retirement party in January of 1977 at the White House, a testament to the deep connections she forged.

In 2013, Genevieve Herrell passed away leaving behind her White House nurse legacy, now available for research and study by current and future generations of scholars in the University Libraries Special Collections and University Archives.

"She is greatly missed but her memory and role in our history will now be preserved," said Greg Herrell. "She had a remarkable life."

## A chance to view history

Community Collections Archivist Anthony Wright de Hernandez organized a small exhibit featuring the rare presidential Christmas cards, prints, and memorabilia from the White House. These were displayed in Special Collections and University Archives' reading room from Nov. 4 through Dec. 20. Wright de Hernandez will curate a more robust exhibit in 2025 after the collection is fully processed. ■



White House nurse Genevieve Herrell is pictured with President Lyndon B. Johnson and White House staff. Photo from the collection of Genevieve Herrell, Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives. (Top)

Herrell receives honor for service, Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives. (Bottom)



# UNEARTHING

## *The Coal Mining Story of Major Tams*

By Elise Monsour Puckett

**WHEN RETIRED ATTORNEY JAMIE WOODHOUSE** decided to delve into the rich history of coal mining in Appalachia, he turned to University Libraries at Virginia Tech.

Woodhouse, a Radford resident since 1965, is working on two books about early 20th century influential figures.

His first book is a biography of Virginia Tech alumnus, forgotten hero, and coal mine operator Maj. William Purviance Tams Jr., who bucked industry trends by prioritizing worker welfare.

“Maj. Tams was unique,” said Woodhouse. “He was anything but the typical money-hungry coal mine owner. He cared about his miners, used the most up-to-date techniques, and lived in the same town with his employees. He established a profit-sharing plan for his miners and urged other mining firms to do likewise. He viewed the technically trained as key contributors to the economic uplift coming from the industrialization of America and thought Virginia Tech men should lead in those fields.”

In those days, ambitious men were willing to take leases on promising coal-bearing lands and then build whole towns from scratch along railroad lines that wound through the hills of West Virginia, Virginia, and Kentucky. In 1908, Tams received a lease from Beaver Coal Company, which owned 50,000 acres in Raleigh County, just below Beckley, West Virginia.

Tams hauled a sawmill over the hills and cut the first-growth timber for the houses that would become the town of Tams, West Virginia. Located in the town’s center, next to the coal tipple that poured coal into railcars, sat Tams’ four-room cottage that served as his home and office. Other than a stint in the Army during World War I, Tams lived in his town for

the rest of his life. He became rich enough to live anywhere, but he stayed with his miners. Even after selling his mines to Westmoreland Coal in 1955, he still contracted with the company to allow him to stay in his cottage until he died in 1977.

### **From the courtroom to coal mines**

Woodhouse first learned about local mines when working with law clients connected to the coal business. Intrigued, Woodhouse read about Montgomery and Pulaski county coal mines known as the Valley Coal Fields of Virginia.

“As I sought to learn more about the active mines farther to the west in Virginia and West Virginia, I stumbled upon a monograph written by Tams about the coal fields just over the state line in West Virginia, where he got started in the business in the early 1900s,” said Woodhouse. “Tams was not your average coal mine operator, and as I learned more about the coal industry, it seemed to me that a Tams biography was a needed contribution to the existing history.”

Because Woodhouse was busy with his law career, he knew any writing would have to wait for retirement. In 2016, Woodhouse retired from the BASF Corporation law department, and in 2018, he began his Tams biography.

### **Digging into the archives**

Woodhouse’s journey began with Special Collections and University Archives in Newman Library. After some research, he discovered that all of Tams’ school records were stored there and Tams had been a generous Virginia Tech supporter. Woodhouse uncovered a wealth of information about Tams

and his brother, Frazier. Both were 1902 graduates of Virginia Tech, then known as Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute. They graduated summa cum laude with degrees in mechanical engineering and were first lieutenants in the Corps of Cadets.

“That early jump-start on understanding the ethos of Virginia Tech in the days when all students were in the Corps of Cadets allowed me to see the Tams brothers in the context of America of that period,” Woodhouse said.

### **Pages of the past**

The library’s resources proved invaluable throughout the research process. “Newman Library allowed me seamless access,” Woodhouse said. “A biography is only as good as the surrounding history and any biographer worth his salt does a lot of cross-checking.”

The library’s physical collections proved helpful and its expertise invaluable. Woodhouse credits Marc Brodsky, retired archivist, for pointing him toward crucial resources and a treasure trove — The Bugle yearbooks from 1898-1902.

### **Research allies**

Beyond Special Collections and University Archives, Woodhouse received help from University Libraries’ Director of Collections Ed Lener and Electronic Resource Specialist Laura Carruba. Woodhouse said Carruba helped gather the “last mile” delivery of resources he needed, particularly materials on World War I.

Carruba said Woodhouse’s story exemplifies how community members use University Libraries resources because it’s a university-affiliated library and a public library.

“I found his story interesting because it shows how people from the community with indirect connections to the university, or maybe even none at all, can use the resources here at Newman Library to their benefit,” said Carruba. “Community members can get a library card at any public library in Virginia as long as they have in-state residency and this applies to the state universities too. It shows how Virginia Tech is making an impact in the New River Valley and

encourages other community members with similar projects and interests to consider our collections here as a resource.”

### **From research to publication**

Woodhouse’s book on Tams is still seeking a publisher and is being considered by two university presses in states with long histories in the coal business. In the meantime, he’s already begun work on a second book focusing on Joe Burk, a champion Olympic rower, coach, and decorated World War II veteran. Though not directly related to Virginia Tech, Woodhouse has continued to rely on Newman Library’s resources to provide historical context for this work as well.

The author’s library user experience highlights the often-overlooked role that academic libraries play in supporting local scholarship and creative endeavors. “University Libraries is here not only for Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and students, but also for the surrounding community,” said Carruba. “We’re thrilled to see our resources being used to uncover and share these important historical stories.” ■



University Libraries Electronic Resource Specialist Laura Carruba and Jamie Woodhouse discuss mining documents from Tams, West Virginia. Photo by Chase Parker for Virginia Tech. (Above)

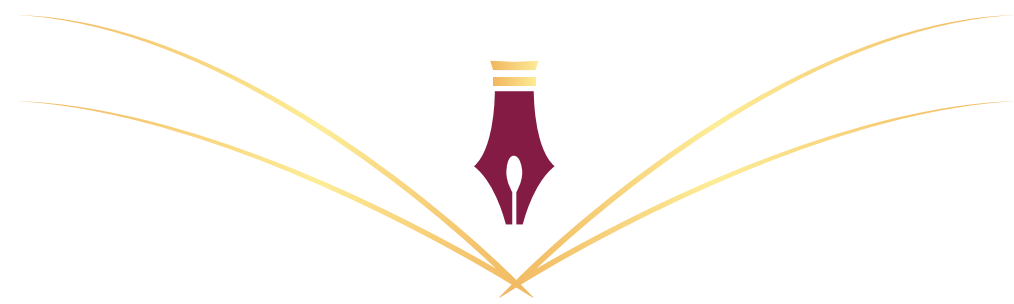
Photo of Tams, West Virginia. (Below) Photo courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives.





# Q&A

## with Donald Caudill



By Ann Brown

**SEASONED MARKETING PROFESSOR AND SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR DONALD W. CAUDILL** knows what it takes to be persistent and work hard toward challenging goals. Growing up in a loving family with modest means just outside the Appalachian mountain city of Norton, Virginia, his parents held higher education in great esteem even though neither had more than an eighth-grade education. In honor of their personal and financial sacrifices to ensure Caudill earned his bachelor's degree, two master's degrees, and a Virginia Tech Ph.D., he created the Alfred and Shirley Wampler Caudill Endowment for Special Events.

The endowment sponsors University Libraries' annual Virginia Tech Authors Recognition Event, which honors Virginia Tech faculty and staff from across the university who published a book that year. As a published author of "The Success

Pyramid: A Scientific Formula to Getting Everything You Desire," Caudill understands and appreciates the great sacrifice, dedication, and hard work that goes into book authorship. That's why he recognizes authors and supports their efforts to make a global impact on society through published books.

**WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND BEHIND THE ALFRED AND SHIRLEY WAMPLER CAUDILL ENDOWMENT FOR SPECIAL EVENTS?**

I graduated with my bachelor's degree from Berea College in 1980. My mother would send me \$5 every Monday. I'd get it with a letter, and it was so hard to spend that \$5 because I knew she earned only \$1.60 an hour at the sewing factory. Dad also made \$1.60 an hour, because that's about what the minimum wage was back then.

They made a lot of sacrifices so that I could earn these college degrees.

I've always wanted to honor my mother and dad's memory for their sacrifices. That is why the endowment exists. I support seven charities in a major way. Most of these endowments are for higher education because I believe the path to success and a better life is through education and especially higher education.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES FOR THIS ENDOWMENT?**

Because I love books. I own over 10,000 books and gave over 600 volumes a few years ago to University Libraries at Virginia Tech for a special collection. I remember as a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, I would often go to the library and spend hours in the stacks. I would find a book and read it from start to finish or I would get a study carrel and have some quiet time studying.

Virginia Tech has made its library even more inviting with everything that they've added including the new technology, renovations, and the programs they sponsor. The library was the center, and still is the center after all these years, of the university community. Today, with the electronic resources and databases, you don't have to physically go there. But people do in droves because it's a favorite study spot for students and a community center. It was then and it still is. It's just incredible.

**WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO SUPPORT SPECIAL EVENTS?**

I like events that make a difference. I want the library to spend the funds where they are needed. I've been a faculty member in the Godbold College of Business at Gardner-Webb University for a long time, and there were times when my students needed something for class and I would go ahead and buy it. It would have been nice to have had a fund where that particular project, field trip, luncheon, or speaker could have been done without worrying about how to finance it.

I also like that the library used some of the funds for the University Libraries Homecoming Tailgate tent and honored my parents there. I like the idea of using the endowment for different things.

**WHAT MAKES THE VIRGINIA TECH AUTHORS RECOGNITION EVENT SPECIAL?**

I've looked at other universities, and I haven't seen an event like this. I thought it was very interesting and the list of authors is extensive, and the topics are so diverse.

About 10 or 15 years ago, I began supporting undergraduate research, and a few years afterward I started honoring graduate

research as well. These were basically presentations students made about their research or in many cases had published. The logical next step was from supporting undergraduate research to faculty research in the form of books. Virginia Tech faculty and staff authors deserve to be recognized for their efforts and this event is a way to do that.

Caudill is looking forward to attending the Virginia Tech Authors Recognition Event scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 11, 5-7 p.m. on the second floor of Newman Library. The event will honor close to 100 Virginia Tech authors with many of their books on display. ■

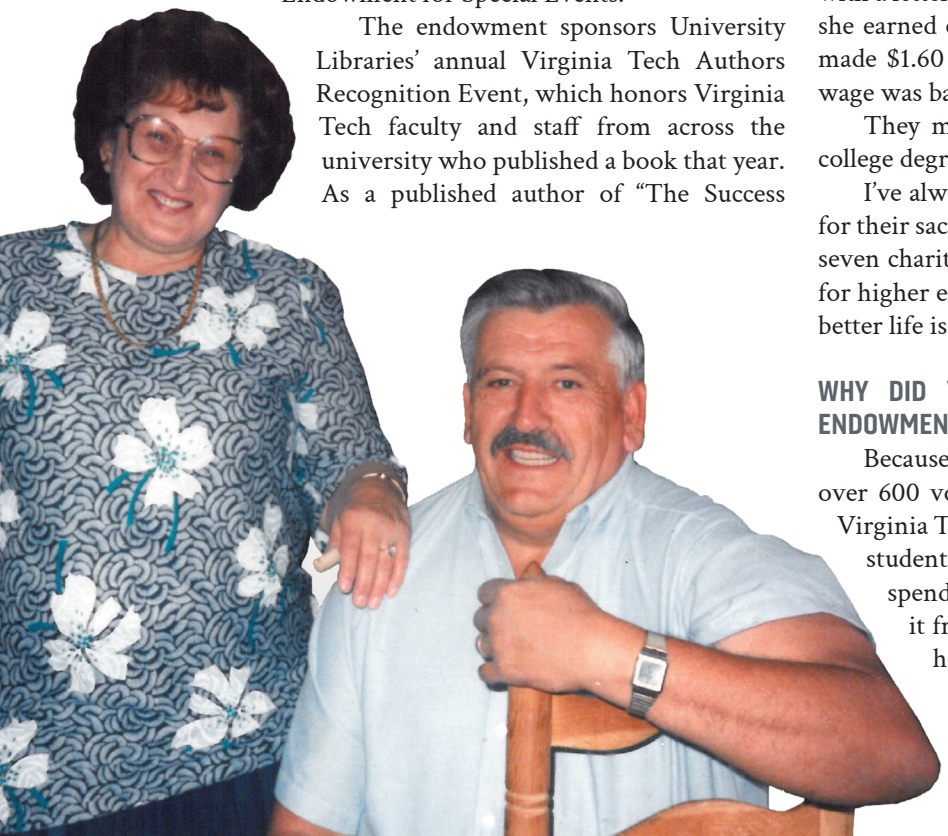


Photo of Don Caudill's parents, Alfred and Shirley. Photo courtesy of Don Caudill. (Left)



Photo of Paul Bramer (Left), Don Caudill (Middle), and Sherelle Morgan (Right).



# LIBRARY FACULTY HONORED FOR SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

**RACHEL MILES,**  
Research Impact  
Coordinator



**ROBERTO SILVA,**  
Head of the  
Fralin Biomedical  
Research Institute  
and Health Science  
& Technology  
Library



**ED LENER,**  
Director of  
Collections



## **RACHEL MILES, RESEARCH IMPACT COORDINATOR**

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost named Rachel Miles a 2024 member of Virginia Tech's Academies of Faculty Service and Leadership for her exemplary contributions in formal service roles.

Miles currently serves as president of Virginia Tech's faculty senate. She has served as a member of the Faculty Senate's Policy and Procedures Committee, chair of the Responsible Research Assessment Task Force, member of the subcommittee on Assessing Faculty Assessment, and member of the Assessment of Faculty Scholarship Committee.

For University Libraries, she served as president of the Library Faculty Association and chair of the University Libraries Diversity Council, among other roles. Her extensive, dedicated, and impactful service has earned her support from colleagues across the university.

To be nominated for the Academy of Faculty Leadership, faculty must model exemplary leadership in formal or informal roles within the university in ways that significantly advance a culture of collaborative leadership; promote faculty, staff, and student development; advance program or curricular transformation; and make a notable and demonstrable positive impact within the university community.

## **ROBERTO SILVA, HEAD OF THE FRALIN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE AND HEALTH SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY**

Roberto Silva received two awards from the university — a 2024 Administrative and Professional Faculty Award and a Presidential Principles of Community Award. Silva was one of three honored this year with an Administration and Professional Faculty award, which recognizes a few of the university's roughly 2,500 administrative and professional faculty for their extraordinary contributions, accomplishments, and consistent performance.

The Presidential Principles of Community Award, which recognizes faculty and staff members who exemplify and promote a welcoming and inclusive environment in

the spirit of the university's Principles of Community. These principles are fundamental to the university's efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members.

In his capacity within University Libraries, Silva helps Virginia Tech community members access University Libraries' extensive collections, services, and spaces in a creative, thoughtful, and collaborative manner. Continuously advancing Virginia Tech's land-grant mission, he extends access and services to individuals beyond the university. He also oversees two book clubs in partnership with Casa Latina, a nonprofit organization in the Roanoke Valley dedicated to meeting the immediate needs of the Spanish-speaking community. In his work, Silva continuously fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion where all individuals experience a sense of belonging.

## **EDWARD LENER, DIRECTOR OF COLLECTIONS**

Edward Lener received the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign Volunteer Recognition Award for his service to the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign. The Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign is an officially sanctioned, non-profit fundraising program for the more than 120,000 Virginia state employees to safely and easily donate to their favorite causes throughout the year.

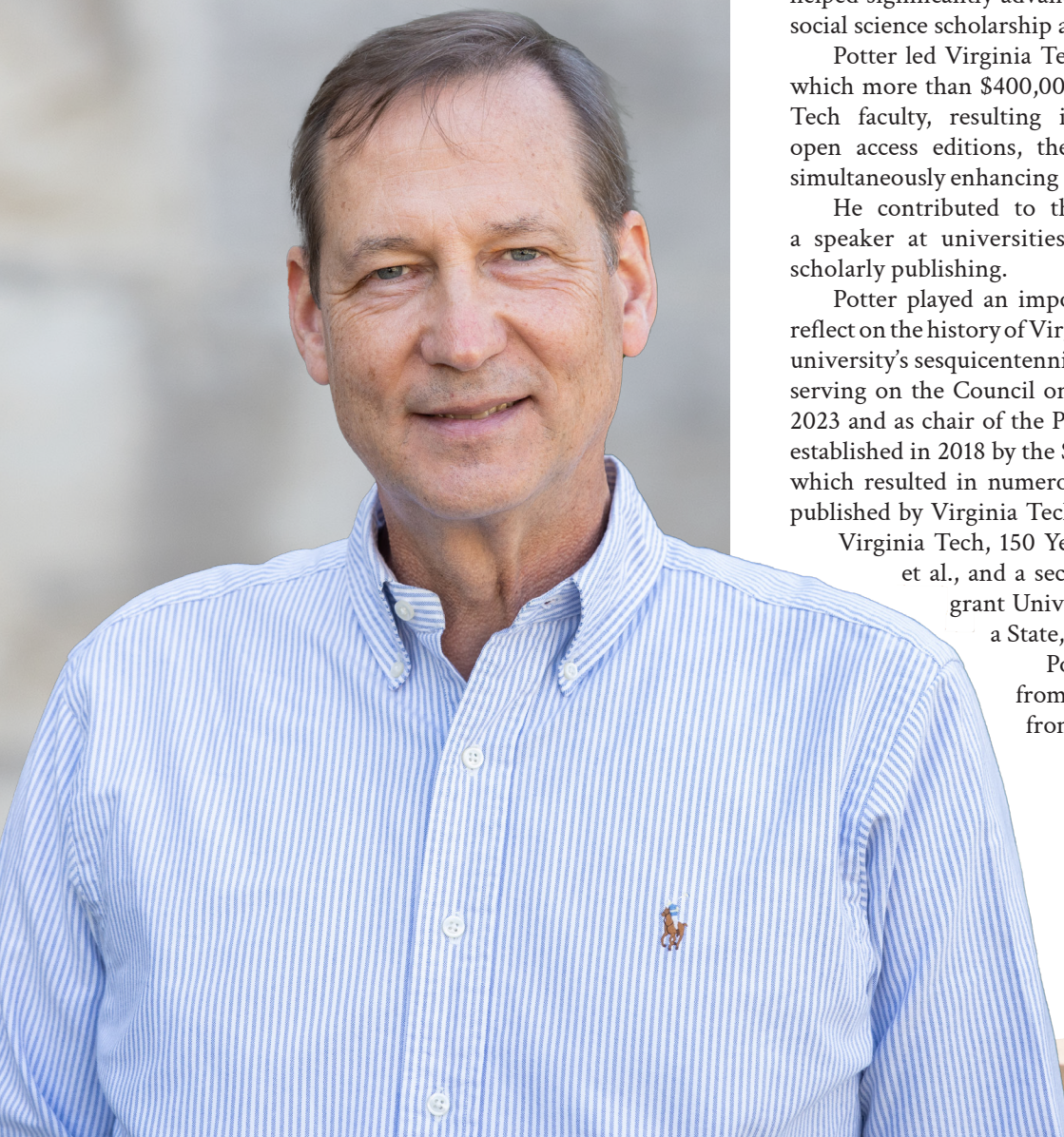
A double Hokie, Lener has worked at Virginia Tech for over 30 years. Since 2009, he has been Virginia Tech's representative on the Collections Committee of the Virtual Library of Virginia, Virginia's academic library consortium. Lener helps run the library's annual recognition event for Virginia Tech authors and is the author of the book "Graduate Research: A Guide for Students in the Sciences," which is held in over 1,350 libraries around the world.

Lener has served on the university's Faculty Senate and University Council. His longest term of service has been as a volunteer with the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign, where he began as a departmental campaign representative in the 90s. ■



# PETER POTTER

*honored* with emeritus status



**PETER POTTER, DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING SERVICES** for University Libraries at Virginia Tech, has been conferred the title of director emeritus of publishing by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

The emeritus title may be conferred on retired faculty members who are specially recommended to the board by Virginia Tech President Tim Sands in recognition of exemplary service to the university. Nominated individuals who are approved by the board receive a copy of the resolution and a certificate of appreciation.

A member of the Virginia Tech community since 2016, Potter's career in academic publishing spanning nearly four decades, including more than 25 years as editor-in-chief at Penn State University Press and Cornell University Press.

Potter became the first director of publishing services in the University Libraries, and in this role founding Virginia Tech Publishing, the university's first home-grown scholarly publishing enterprise. While leading the Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem (TOME) initiative, a five-year pilot project of the Association of American Universities, Association of Research Libraries, and Association of University Presses, he helped significantly advance the goal of making humanities and social science scholarship accessible on the internet.

Potter led Virginia Tech's participation in TOME, through which more than \$400,000 in grants were awarded to Virginia Tech faculty, resulting in their books being published in open access editions, thereby increasing their impact while simultaneously enhancing the global reputation of the university.

He contributed to the broader academic community as a speaker at universities and conferences on the future of scholarly publishing.

Potter played an important role in efforts to research and reflect on the history of Virginia Tech in the years leading up to the university's sesquicentennial celebration in 2021-2022, including serving on the Council on Virginia Tech History from 2017 to 2023 and as chair of the Projects and Products Working Group established in 2018 by the Sesquicentennial Steering Committee, which resulted in numerous publications including two books published by Virginia Tech Publishing: "No Ordinary Moment: Virginia Tech, 150 Years in 150 Images" by Aaron Purcell, et al., and a second edition of "Virginia Tech, Land-grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation" by Peter Wallenstein.

Potter received his bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech and a master's degree from the University of Virginia. ■

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# MARC BRODSKY

*honored* with emeritus status

**MARC BRODSKY, PUBLIC SERVICES AND REFERENCE ARCHIVIST** in University Libraries at Virginia Tech, has been conferred the title of associate professor emeritus by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

The emeritus title may be conferred on retired faculty members who are specially recommended to the board by Virginia Tech President Tim Sands in recognition of exemplary service to the university. Nominated individuals who are approved by the board receive a copy of the resolution and a certificate of appreciation.

A member of the Virginia Tech community since 2008, Brodsky made significant contributions to develop and expand the instructional programming for Special Collections and University Archives, spanning simple introductory sessions on using primary sources to more specialized instruction on historical topics.

Brodsky helped hundreds of students, ranging from grade school to graduate school, to complete assignments based on the use of primary sources; collaborated with dozens of faculty to develop instructional sessions for Virginia Tech students; and led an average of 25 instructional sessions per semester for 15 years, with at least five and as many as 40 students per class.

In addition, he introduced students to the challenges of reading and transcribing handwritten text from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries; and created and taught the popular "Demystifying Special Collections" instruction course, designed to reach library employees and new university graduate teaching assistants.

As part of his duties, Brodsky responded to thousands of virtual and in-person reference requests from researchers, administrators, faculty, students, journalists, television and film producers, genealogists, and community members and provided countless researchers with scanned material to support their research requests.

From 2021 to 2023, Brodsky served as acting university archivist, supporting activities for Virginia Tech's 150th sesquicentennial celebration in 2022 and aided in the development of "Celebrating Virginia Tech: A Chronology of 150 Years," a collaborative exhibit in Newman Library.

Brodsky received a National Distinction Award in 2019 and was nominated for the President's Award for Excellence in 2019.

Brodsky published articles, book chapters, and short essays on the diverse topics of the archival challenges of teaching with primary sources, veterans studies, and science fiction collections. He presented papers at national, regional, state, and local professional conferences and other meetings on archival and historical topics and he served on committees for professional organizations including the Appalachian Studies Association, the Society of American Archivists, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. He served as an editorial board member of publications including the Smithfield Review, Appalachian Curator, and Archival Practice.

Brodsky received his bachelor's degree from Hampshire College and a Master of Science in Library Science degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. ■





# CORINNE GUIMONT

Library Publishing Coalition honors  
Corinne Guimont for exemplary service

By Ann Brown

**THE INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY PUBLISHING COALITION (LPC)** awarded Corinne Guimont, University Libraries at Virginia Tech's associate director of publishing and digital scholarship, the 2024 LPC Award for Exemplary Service. According to the coalition the award "recognizes substantial contributions by an LPC community member to advancing the mission, vision, and values of the Library Publishing Coalition."

Guimont served as a member of the coalition's research committee and program committee, co-authored the LPC's digital preservation model policy to support publishers in the creation of preservation policies, and represented LPC on the NASIG digital preservation model license subgroup. She was also a key author of the coalition's 2023 Platform Crosswalk, a case study comparing 10 publishing platforms that are academy-owned and open source.

The Library Publishing Coalition is a robust network of more than 60 libraries committed to advancing the field of library publishing and marked its 10th anniversary this year. University Libraries Dean Tyler Walters was one of three library deans who were instrumental in launching LPC in 2014 and Virginia Tech has been involved ever since.

Guimont values the professional development opportunities and the ability to make a difference in the library publishing industry through LPG.

"The LPC community is full of some amazing people who are all incredibly supportive and knowledgeable," said Guimont. "It's been a pleasure and an honor to be a part of this community throughout my career and to work with so many folks at different institutions."

Guimont looks to the future and the impact the Library Publishing Coalition will continue to have on the changing publishing landscape in higher education.

"I hope to help grow and expand publishing and open access through libraries and other university-based publishers, whether this be through larger initiatives in advocacy and resource development, or through the nitty gritty pieces like preservation and research," said Guimont. "I believe there continues to be space to advance and grow our publishing efforts both at our own institution and as a profession. By connecting and collaborating with organizations like LPC, we can make a broader impact on the future of scholarly publishing." ■





# KAT ZINN

## THE UNEXPECTED ARCHIVIST: How literature shaped an alumna's career

**KAT ZINN**, a 2023 graduate, has always been passionate about literature and writing. This led her to pursue a degree in English, a path that many might not expect to culminate in a career as a project archivist at University Libraries focused on aerospace exploration. Yet, Zinn's journey demonstrates the versatility of an English degree and the valuable skills it imparts.

### Children's literature class ignites inspiration

Zinn's love for literature deepened at Virginia Tech. A particular class, Literature for Children with Jane Wemhoener, a senior instructor emerita, stands out in her memory.

"The way Jane taught the class was amazing," Zinn said. "And I could tell that she loved children's literature."

The experience solidified Zinn's own appreciation for the written word and its power to inspire. Zinn, who was a triple major in creative writing, literature, and professional and technical writing, said her writing style is unique and is characterized by a strong focus on voice and rhythm.

"I often find inspiration in unexpected places," she said.

Her process involves what she calls "word vomit," a free-flowing exploration of ideas sparked by interesting phrases or words she encounters in her work. This approach allows her writing to take on a life of its own, driven by the inherent rhythm of the language.

### From English major to archivist

While working as a student library assistant in the Special Collections and University Archives, Zinn stumbled upon a job opening that caught her eye. The position was for a project archivist focused on aerospace exploration, but offered much more than what was presented. Zinn applied. Although her background is in English, she said her strong organizational skills honed through her studies proved to be an asset.

She said every day on the job is different. A project might involve meticulously backlogging and processing historical documents related to aerospace exploration, while another

could see her planning an event centered around a paper airplane competition. This diversity extends to her physical workplace as well. One day, she might be sorting through large collections of documents at a warehouse, and then the next, collaborating with colleagues at Newman Library.

The unexpected nature of her work is what she enjoys most. "While digital archives are becoming increasingly important, there's a certain satisfaction in organizing physical documents," Zinn said.

Prioritization is a crucial aspect of her role. When deciding which materials to preserve, she considers factors like the project's focus and the fragility of the documents.

"It's important to be careful, especially when handling older materials," she said.

### Life after literature

For English majors navigating the competitive job market, Zinn offers the following advice:

"Gain as much experience as you can, even if it doesn't seem directly related to your field," she said.

She also recommends utilizing resources like Handshake to find internship and career opportunities.

"I had an idea of what I was signing up for when applying to be an archivist," Zinn said, "I was looking forward to starting my new job and I really enjoy it."

Looking ahead, Zinn's path is clear. She plans to pursue a master's degree in library science with a specialization in archives. This also aligns with her desire to remain within the educational field, potentially teaching or mentoring younger generations.

Written by Nataly Lopez, a junior majoring in creative writing and professional and technical writing. ■

Photo of Kat Zinn enjoying the greenery and sunshine outside Newman Library. Photo by Nataly Lopez for Virginia Tech. (Left)





By Ann Brown

**ERIC GLENN**, director of belonging, engagement, and organizational development for University Libraries, was appointed the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries' visiting program officer for leadership development during its August meeting.

During Glenn's one-year appointment, he will serve in project management and relationship-building roles. He also will facilitate programming to foster ongoing connections and professional growth for library professionals across the southeast.

Glenn said his focus will be on organizing monthly sessions for association members and the organization's Oct. 2 event tailored for human resources and organizational development professionals including workshops, panel discussions, networking opportunities, leadership development, and organizational culture assessments.

"My role emphasizes outreach to the BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and other people of color] community within librarianship, a field that has historically faced challenges in diversifying its talent pool," said Glenn. "Being a part of an effort to make this profession more inclusive and accessible to BIPOC individuals is something I find incredibly meaningful and important."

According to the association, more than 100 library professionals have participated in its leadership development institutes in the last year, which focus on cultivating the talents and skills of librarians and staff from underrepresented groups.

"I'm most excited about the chance to connect with people," said Glenn. "Throughout my career — whether in sales, research, food service, or federal government — I've never encountered a profession as welcoming and supportive as librarianship. It's the people who make this field truly special, and I'm honored to be a part of such a vibrant and inclusive community." ■

# ERIC GLENN

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Libraries

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Eric Glenn



# Homecoming!



**UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES** participated in the university-wide homecoming celebration on Oct. 26. Alumni and friends played games to win prizes and explored augmented reality and prototyping with library experts.



SEE THE VIDEO  
[youtube.com/watch?v=Qzqd1XUgHds](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Qzqd1XUgHds)





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