The Challenge

In 1992, the Virginia Folklife Program at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities brought together the Commonwealth's finest living Piedmont blues guitarists and singers to perform at ten sites across the state. The tour featured National Heritage Fellowship recipients John Jackson and John Cephas, along with Phil Wiggins, Daniel Womack, and the Foddrell Brothers. VFH recorded their live performances and accompanying interviews using what were then state-of-the-art technologies: Digital Audio Tape (DAT) and Hi-8 backed up on U-matic and VHS tapes.

If you took all of this footage in all of these once state-of-the-art formats and dumped them on my office floor today, I wouldn't even be able to pick out a DAT, let alone a Hi-8. And I only know VHS tapes because I've got a dozen or so boxed up in my attic. Even if my VCR didn't now eat tapes, I wouldn't watch them. The movies look and sound better on DVD, and streaming them is more convenient. If I weren't lazy, I'd throw those old tapes in the trash.

That's not an option for VFH, of course. In this case, the content that lives on DAT and Hi-8 doesn't just one day appear in an updated format. It's our job to update it and, in so doing, act as good stewards of the invaluable material we create every day. After all, unlike my personal tape library, the Virginia Folklife Program's twenty-two-year-old documentation of Piedmont blues legends is a unique record of the Commonwealth's cultural heritage and history. And yet in their current state only the person in possession of these tapes can see and hear the musicians' performances, stories, and interviews. What is more, unlike the small VHS library in my attic, if my old VCR ate these tapes, that would be it—the stories and music captured on this tour would be lost, a loss almost as poignant as the fact that nearly all of the musicians themselves have passed away.

The mission of each VFH program encompasses some aspect of Virginia's past with an eye toward how that past informs the present and is relevant to our future. The Folklife Program, for instance, strives to document diverse folk traditions to advance our understanding and appreciation of the state's traditional cultures and to help Virginia communities strengthen their own cultural traditions. In documenting these ways of life we also recognize that we have an implicit duty to preserve what has been captured so that others can use and learn
The 21st Century Digital Challenge
CONTINUED FROM COVER

from it. Otherwise, what is the point of documentation?

Jon Lohman, the program’s director, certainly recognizes that duty, and has worked hard to create, preserve, and deliver his content through new media. “You’d be amazed at the things we have recorded over the last twenty years,” Lohman says. With his recent efforts to resurrect some of this material, Lohman points to the work of the great R&B musician Charlie McClendon. “Hailing from the Hampton Roads area, McClendon was just so important to the vibrant R&B scene that was happening there in the 1960s. This was a time and place of great music and great struggle. You had schools being closed under Massive Resistance to fight off desegregation and then you had this strong message of vitality and hope coming out of music. With generous private support we’ve been able to create an online exhibit of recent and archival material that allows users to get into the depths of McClendon’s work and to see it in the context of Virginia’s civil rights struggles.”

“To allow these kinds of materials to go unpreserved and inaccessible,” continues Lohman, “would be a horrendous loss not just to Virginia’s cultural memory but to the nation’s.” (If you haven’t gone to the Folklife website and explored the audio and video footage in “Magnificent: The Charlie McClendon Story,” you are missing something special.)

In choosing state-of-the-art formats and standards to record and create content twenty-two years ago, we were responsible stewards of our mission; however, like all technologies, these were subject to the slings and arrows of planned (sometimes unplanned) obsolescence. (Sony, the developer of DAT, for example, stopped making DAT machines in 2005, officially making that format obsolete.) While the content on these old media can still be moved to newer, web-accessible, and, at least for now, more stable platforms, the task is easier said than done.

The Scope of Our Challenge

Increasingly, VFH programs require more resources to produce and manage content on the web or in other Internet-accessible applications for their audiences. The Virginia Indian Programs, in collaboration with Encyclopedia Virginia (EV), recently created a repository of images and oral histories from various Virginia Indian communities, the Virginia Indian Archive, that will continue to grow over the next few years to support the exploration and understanding of Virginia Indian history and culture. With content such as the McClendon recordings, the Folklife Program wants to build an archive that will require multiple terabytes of storage and many hours to transport, refresh, and back up.

The radio program With Good Reason also sees the need to create a digital archive of its past and current shows. According to Sarah McConnell, the show’s director, With Good Reason consistently receives appeals from teachers who want to use interviews in the classroom. “Wouldn’t it be great,” McConnell says, “to give them easy access to this treasure trove of sound? For instance, we have a series of interviews with great African American poets like Lucille Clifton, Sonia Sanchez, and Frank X. Walker. With a searchable archive containing this wealth of material a teacher from anywhere at anytime could quickly find and play the whole series. With over twenty features and interviews it is imperative that we find a way not just to preserve and maintain this material but also to provide access to it—to give these rare conversations of the past new life!”

VFH has identified similar needs with the partners we support through our grants. We recently sent a survey to more than thirty Virginia cultural organizations that are current or past grantees to get a sense of their digital environments, future needs, and content management strategies. When asked if they created and saved their digital collections using archival standards and with sufficient storage and backup policies...
in place in case of hard drive failures or other catastrophe, 75 percent of VFH grantees and education partners responded in the negative. The challenges they face are cost, insufficient staff time, and training. While solutions exist for archiving this community’s paper-based publications—VFH currently gives its paper archives to the Library of Virginia—there is no such sustainable plan in place to preserve and manage all of the digital content that our grantees and we create.

With all of these “archive” and collection-based demands, it only makes sense to think about how VFH can construct a more sustainable framework for content preservation, management, and discovery that benefits the Commonwealth in a more systematic and efficient way. Two VFH programs, EV and Documents Compass, can serve as models or at least guide how we can manage the needs and lifecycle of content from distributed sources and partners. Over the past six years EV has developed extensive expertise in aggregating text, audio, and still and moving images and giving users access to this material. The EV team has migrated content and databases to different platforms and confronted and successfully handled the costs and complexities of running machines and systems to ensure the publication’s durability through the years. Documents Compass has collaborated with numerous organizations to produce projects such as Founders Online and People of the Founding Era. From these collaborations, the Documents Compass team has learned to create coherent and cohesive publications from sources with divergent information architectures and workflows.

VFH wants to ensure that users can access tomorrow the content that our partners and we create today. Because of cost and time, VFH recognizes that priorities will have to be established, hard questions will have to be asked, and difficult decisions made about what we can and should preserve and what we should not. Currently we are looking at how research libraries—where best practices for digital content creation and preservation are tested and implemented—are trying to solve these challenges through the development of institutional repositories. Like many organizations, we recognize that to create content today requires us to behave and think like a library; that we need to invest in the machine and human resources to make what we created yesterday and what we produce today available tomorrow and for years to come.

If the 1992 Piedmont Guitarist Tour was the only thing VFH had to worry about preserving and making more accessible, I wouldn't be writing this article. The Folklife Program has collected more than twenty years of audio and video field recordings. The Piedmont Guitarist Tour is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. What is more, VFH has almost a dozen other programs and a multitude of grant partners that have similar content management needs. Those materials range from digital images and photographs to radio interviews and oral histories related to African American and Virginia Indian history, from “unpublished” interview material for With Good Reason radio shows to raw footage for a never completed documentary film on artists in and around the Galax region in the mid-1990s. Preserving and managing all of these assets efficiently and bringing them together, so that they can be discovered in a single environment is an enormous challenge that requires expertise, planning, and, of course, money—a lot of money. But VFH recognizes that if we defer this effort or, worse, never act, then the cost will be much greater and the loss will be immeasurable.

Toni Morrison (Princeton University, Emerita) won the Nobel Prize for literature. “I don’t care what the world thinks. I want the people who know me to say that they could count on me, and that I was a person whose friendship was of some value. That’s good. That’s really good.”

Bruce Greyson (University of Virginia) is one of the first researchers to gather empirical data related to near-death experiences using scientific methods. “If you ask them about time, people in the near-death experience, they say that it was timeless...It’s as if everything was happening all at once and everything lasted forever.”

Chris Kjornaess (Longwood University) shares the music and life of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the Godmother of Rock n’ Roll. “You just feel this energy, you can hear her stomping her foot, and you can just imagine everyone jumping up and stomping with her.”

David Jeffrey (James Madison University) tells the life of Harry Crews, a Southern gothic writer whose work is still relatively unknown. “What makes Harry unique is he’s a product of that kind of rural poverty and sees it from the inside honestly, because his characters are like himself: relatively uneducated, authentic outsiders, outcasts.”
SEgregation, DeSegregation, and Civil Rights in Virginia

By David Bearinger

How do we help children understand what the experience of school desegregation in Virginia meant to those who lived through it? How can we explain this complex story in a way students can fully grasp? How do we persuade them that this history still matters more than a half-century later?

It’s a rainy Saturday, March 29, 2014. Dozens of Arlington County teachers are gathering in the art room of Hoffman-Boston School to explore these questions with a dream team of historians and community scholars.

Today’s program is the second of two content academies offered through a partnership between VFH and Arlington County Public Schools. The academies are one-day, content-rich programs designed to immerse teachers in the subject matter they teach, to inspire and challenge them to think about these subjects in fresh new ways.

The first academy, held last October, focused on Virginia Indian history and tribal cultures in the present. Today, the next six hours are devoted to exploring the history of segregation, desegregation, and civil rights in Virginia, with explicit connections to the Virginia Standards of Learning for the 4th and 7th grades.

The focus is on two Virginia counties—Arlington and Prince Edward. Arlington was the first locality in Virginia to begin desegregating its public schools following the U.S. Supreme Court’s two separate decisions in Brown v. Board of Education (1954, 1955). In Prince Edward, the all-white board of supervisors cut off funds for public education in the autumn of 1959, closing the public schools for five years in defiance of the court’s desegregation mandate.

“These are complicated stories. The inequities of segregated public education prior to Brown were stark. The road to Brown was long and arduous, and the Supreme Court decision, when it came, was a landmark in the struggle for civil rights.

But it’s also true that desegregation turned out to be a mixed blessing for many all-black schools like Hoffman-Boston, and for many of Virginia’s black neighborhoods where school was at the center of community life.

There were losses as well as gains, in other words. There are pitfalls in a “triumphalist” reading of the desegregation story. This will emerge as one of the day’s most important themes.

Another example. In Prince Edward, white students who could not afford private school faced many of the same grim choices black students were forced to make in response to the school closings. Some had to leave the county to continue their education. Others stayed and managed as best they could until the schools reopened. Some ended their formal education and never went back.

It’s tough to come to terms with this history personally, even tougher to communicate it to students six decades later. True, but our shared understanding of citizenship and community was also tested and challenged during the desegregation era; both Virginia and the nation changed profoundly as a result. Those changes shape our lives today.

Which is one way of explaining why this history still matters. But there’s another way of looking at the desegregation story, too, and it’s through personal experience, through the memories of people who lived it.

“Our challenge is to desegregate the way we tell the story of desegregation. It’s not a black story or a white story. It’s a community story.”

—LACY WARD JR.

In the late 1940s, Hoffman-Boston was the focus of an important legal case, Carter v. School Board of Arlington County, which challenged curriculum disparities under “separate but equal.” It’s a historic place in its own right; the perfect setting for the stories we’re about to hear.

Kimberley Graves, the school’s principal, is welcoming teachers as they arrive. The four scholars are making last-minute preparations, ready to begin.

Peter Wallenstein teaches history at Virginia Tech and has written widely on the
history of race and racial segregation in America, most recently in a book called Tell the Court I Love My Wife (2004). Larissa Smith Ferguson is a professor at Longwood University and another of Virginia’s leading scholars of the civil rights era.

Lacy Ward Jr. is the director of the Robert Russa Moton Museum in Farmville. The museum interprets the history of desegregation in Prince Edward and is a “site of memory” for the civil rights struggle nationwide. (Ward has since stepped down as director of the museum. He is now the director of the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina.)

The fourth member of the team, Dr. Alfred Taylor, is a community historian who has been researching Arlington’s African American communities for more than fifty years. He’s also the author of the forthcoming book Bridge Builders of Nauck/Green Valley, supported by a grant from VFH.

All four are gifted, inspired presenters. But when Dr. Taylor speaks about his own life and his struggle to secure an education in the pre-Brown era, many of us are moved to tears. Later on, he’ll moderate a community conversation designed to draw forth the memories and the voices of the Hoffman-Boston neighborhood and the broader Arlington community, asking: What do you remember about the movement from segregation to desegregation? How did it affect your family? And why does this matter today?

“We have to understand where we are coming from so that we can appreciate where we are going.”

—DR. ALFRED TAYLOR

The idea to follow the content academy with a community event was conceived by Cathy Hix, Arlington County’s social studies supervisor, and Emma Violand-Sanchez, a member of the county school board. We’re in the Hoffman-Boston auditorium and more than a hundred people are in the audience. The first featured speaker is Michael Jones, one of four African American students who were the first to integrate Arlington’s public schools. His presence is a powerful reminder that the makers of this part of Virginia’s history still live among us.

Other speakers include Mrs. Louise McGregor, now ninety-two, who began teaching Home Economics at Hoffman-Boston in 1958; the Rev. Richard Green, a plaintiff in the Carter case who was eventually hired to teach in the same school where he had once been denied admission; and Yvonne Dangerfield, a former student at Hoffman-Boston who later served as the school’s principal.

In our work, VFH seeks to blend two streams of knowledge: one stream comes from the world of academic scholarship, the other flows through the community itself. VFH is also committed to serving the needs of Virginia’s teachers and to creating a complete, accurate, and honest portrait, of Virginia, past and present.

Programs like this matter. Strengthening the hand of teachers in the classroom matters. Blending the two streams of knowledge matters. So do the voices of Hoffman-Boston; and so do the kinds of partnerships that made these two pilot academies possible. Their success inspires us to do more.
In his lovely book *Bloody Promenade: Reflections on a Civil War Battle* (1999), Stephen Cushman writes about acoustic shadows, a phenomenon in which people sometimes could hear battles from far away but not from up close. His research on the Battle of the Wilderness, which occurred 150 years ago in May, produced such a pocket of silence, he writes. Or at least it did metaphorically.

Black soldiers fought at the Wilderness, but they are rarely mentioned in traditional narratives of the battle. Primary records, meanwhile, obscure as much as they reveal. To the Union officer Morris Schaff the black troops “were not ordinary stragglers, and I remember no more pleading objects. Most of them had lately been slaves, and across the years their hollow cheeks and plaintive sympathy-imploring eyes are still the lone-some roadside’s bas-reliefs.”

In frustration, Cushman notes how such writing only “deepens the silence” that surrounds black soldiers “by representing them not as quiet men who suffer stoically but as sculpted figures raised just slightly above the background surface of the landscape.”

Cushman’s observations got me to thinking about whether such pockets of silence exist in *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Certainly they do. Although we have excellent entries on the battle and on the United States Colored Troops (USCT), neither mentions the black soldiers who fought at the Wilderness. In the USCT entry, there is mention of five black Virginians who won Medals of Honor during the Civil War: Powhatan Beaty, James Gardiner, Miles James, Edward Ratcliff, and Charles Veal.

But who were these men? How can we help raise them above the background surface of the landscape? For one, we might observe the tremendous arc of Beaty’s life. Born a slave in Richmond, he later moved to Ohio, where he farmed as a free man. He won his medal in fighting back home, on the outskirts of Richmond in 1864. And after the war he joined a company of African American actors. The *Washington Post* noted, in 1887, that his performance of Shakespeare pleasantly “surprised those in the audience competent to judge.”

Our encyclopedia doesn’t yet have an entry on Beaty, but we do have an excellent one on Mary Richards Bowser, an African American spy in Richmond during the war. Our contributor, Lois Leveen, has challenged head-on this problem of silent and confusing records, coaxing from the historical shadows a fascinating character who, even after the war, seemed drawn to pseudonyms and misdirection.

A reader recently wrote us to point out another kind of silence in the encyclopedia: “I must say I was taken by the bias displayed in this entry [Free Blacks during the Civil War]. It is as though there was not a single free black who willingly supported the Confederacy.” In another entry, Black Confederates, we acknowledge that a few black men appeared to have fought for the Confederacy, but only in Ervin L. Jordan’s *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (1995) will you learn the story of George and Stafford Grimes, two free blacks from Caroline County who posed as white in order to join the Confederate army.

We can’t avoid such acoustic shadows completely, but we at *Encyclopedia Virginia* can do our best to minimize them and, in so doing, give voice to all Virginians.
Holly Cowan Shulman’s Dolley Madison Digital Edition forges a new path for documentary editors

BY LAURA BAKER

"New tools should do something," Holly Cowan Shulman says emphatically of her pioneering work on the Dolley Madison Digital Edition (DMDE), the only comprehensive collection of the First Lady’s correspondence. “The whole point of digital publication is not to show off a new gadget, but to provide quality content to a wide audience.”

What, then, does Shulman’s DMDE do? Like a traditional print documentary edition, the project annotates and publishes the 2,500 letters that Dolley Payne Todd Madison wrote and received between 1788 and 1849. (As of December 2013, more than 1,800 of the 2,500 letters have been digitally published.) Unlike a traditional print edition, however, or even a digital book, the born-digital DMDE allows users to explore the world in which those documents were written. The DMDE letters can be browsed by time period, location, subject, and person. The project ambitiously identifies every named person in Madison’s letters, and offers insight into relevant social and historical contexts. “Dolley is a perfect candidate for this new form,” Shulman explains, “because her world is a ball full of unknown customs and characters that history has forgotten. Readers need a dance card, and that’s what we have been able to provide for them.”

Shulman has a PhD in history, and is currently a research professor at the University of Virginia and the founding director of Documents Compass, a program of VFH. And as the daughter of a radio-producer-turned-television-executive at CBS, Shulman has spent a lifetime considering innovative technology.

Shulman created her own roadmap for the Dolley Madison project, explaining, “Nobody was doing what I wanted to do, and the people at Rotunda [the University of Virginia Press’s electronic imprint] were just starting out, too. They were willing to build something with me.” That process included broadening both the audience and scope of the project from a typical print volume.

Shulman credits much of her success with the Dolley Madison Digital Edition to early supporters, including the Virginia Center for Digital History and VFH. Shulman was a VFH fellow in 1996 and in 2000, working on the DMDE; it was the first digital project ever supported by the Foundation.

Ten years later, VFH’s digital initiatives include groundbreaking efforts like Encyclopedia Virginia and Documents Compass. Shulman cofounded the latter, a document-editing program, with Susan Holbrook Perdue. Documents Compass has created Founders Online, a free and searchable National Archives website, and People of the Founding Era, a website profiling more than 12,000 people born between 1713 and 1815. (Both sites are copublished by Rotunda.) Perdue explains, “Documents Compass continues to mine new technologies in order to bring scholarly publications into the digital era.”

Shulman hopes her work helps make digital tools more accessible to editors without extensive technical backgrounds or deep financial support. And while her primary ambition remains completion of the Dolley Madison Digital Edition, she also plans a book on Madison’s years as a widow.

Shulman ultimately believes anyone can start a digital project who is willing to “work on a shoestring budget, and persevere.” She adds, with a wink, “You also need chutzpah.”

Since 1974, VFH has worked to connect people and ideas, to explore the human experience, and to inspire cultural engagement across the Commonwealth. Over the past forty years, that work has taken many shapes and reached countless people and places.

This story is one of forty we are sharing, from our past and present, in honor of our anniversary. Read more stories at VirginiaHumanities.org/40-years-40-stories

Visit the sites mentioned:
- Dolley Madison Digital Edition Rotunda.UPress.Virginia.edu/dmde
- Founders Online Founders.Archives.gov
- People of the Founding Era PFE.Rotunda.UPress.Virginia.edu
BOOK FESTIVAL:
“JEFFERSON DREAMED OF YOU”

BY JANE KULOW

In its twentieth year, the Virginia Festival of the Book once again took five days in March to elevate Charlottesville into a book lover’s paradise. Dan Pink, the New York Times best-selling author of To Sell is Human, kicked off the festival with a lively presentation for the early morning breakfast crowd on Wednesday, March 19.

At the opening ceremony, Rita Mae Brown challenged readers: “Jefferson dreamed of you. He dreamed of an informed electorate.” The Virginia Letters About Literature award recipient, Julia Wicks, a student at Washington-Lee High School in Arlington, wowed the audience with her letter to Robert Penn Warren, describing the impact she felt from reading All the King’s Men.

Thousands of area students attended sixty-one in-school programs offered by authors, illustrators, game designers, and Chip Kidd, a world-renowned book cover designer. Other youth-oriented events included the Bus Lines Poetry contest, StoryFest for the very young, and Publishing Day programs for teen writers.

On Wednesday evening, poet Gregory Orr read from River Inside the River, envisioning a sacred book in which all poems and songs appear; he was joined by Patricia Smith, whose prize-winning collection Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah explores her family’s experience of the Great Migration.

Fiction lovers enjoyed hearing the best-selling thriller writer David Baldacci speak at the festival luncheon on Thursday, followed by Alice Hoffman that evening. Hoffman spoke about her interests and influences: “Books were the magic in my life.” Friday night’s Crime Wave brought in Ellen Crosby, Dan Fesperman, John Gilstrap, Victoria Thompson, and Lisa Scottoline; Scottoline also entertained a sold-out mystery brunch on Saturday.

Saturday night offered “Homecoming: A Twentieth Anniversary Celebration” at the Paramount Theater, bringing back a few of the Festival’s most popular past participants: Kwame Alexander, Rita Mae Brown, E. Ethelbert Miller, Sonia Manzano, and Lee Smith. Lois Lowry and Kathryn Erskine entertained readers of all ages on Sunday afternoon, bringing the anniversary to a joyous finish.


For audio and video from the Festival, visit vabook.org

ABOVE: Author Tom Cotter shares stories with readers at the Woolly Mammoth.
LEFT: Novelist Alice Hoffman listens to a reader’s question.
PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE GROSS

PHOTO BY PAT JARRETT

Nancy Damon announced her May retirement following fourteen years as the Festival’s program director. Authors, colleagues, volunteers, and friends filled a handmade book with remembrances and greetings for Damon, which was presented at the Homecoming program. PHOTO BY PAT JARRETT

BY THE NUMBERS

Adult Events: 133
Youth Events: 16
School Events: 61
Outreach Events: 7
Related Events: 6
TOTAL EVENTS: 223
ATTENDANCE: 20,009

PHOTO BY PAT JARRETT
OUR ENVIRONMENT, SHAPED AND ADAPTED BY US

By Emily Charnock

Preindustrial-era greenhouse gases, the uncalculated costs of night lights, and diaperless babies enlivened the discussion for an overflow crowd at the University of Virginia’s Brown Science and Engineering Library, when four experts from different fields came together at the recent Virginia Festival of the Book.

William Ruddiman, professor emeritus in environmental science at U.Va., discussed his new book Earth Transformed (2013). In it, Ruddiman traces the human impact on the environment back to the first agricultural revolution 6–7,000 years ago—when levels of greenhouse gases first began to climb.

Preindustrial societies may have played a role in atmospheric pollution, but light pollution is a feature of the modern world, explained the next speaker, Paul Bogard.

Bogard, who teaches creative nonfiction at James Madison University, read from his book The End of Night, Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light (2013), “a book about the beauty of nighttime, the importance of darkness, and costs of light pollution,” he said. Those costs can be measured in more than just monetary terms (about $100 billion on overuse and misuse of light). The loss of truly dark night skies negatively impacts our physical, mental, and spiritual health, Bogard emphasized, adding we are only just beginning to understand the toll it takes on ecosystems.

Australian historian Bill Gammage researches the sophisticated methods aboriginal peoples used to both utilize and maintain their environment in The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia (2013). Their controlled use of fire, pollution, “a book about the beauty of nighttime, the importance of darkness, and costs of light pollution,” he said. Those costs can be measured in more than just monetary terms (about $100 billion on overuse and misuse of light). The loss of truly dark night skies negatively impacts our physical, mental, and spiritual health, Bogard explained. “It’s fundamentally our job to leave our kids a better planet,” Chatterjee said, and her book offers a roadmap for doing just that.

Lois Lowry: “I Wish All Events Could Be Like This One”

By Allison Quantz

Until recently, author Lois Lowry’s home included what she called “The Wall of Perpetual Self-Adoration.” This wall was home to the many awards and medals that she had earned over the years for beloved young adult books like Number the Stars (1989) and The Giver (1993). During a move, however, those awards—including two Newbery Medals—were mistakenly discarded.

“For a long time I was sort of beside myself,” Lowry told a full house at the University of Virginia’s Culbreth Theatre on Sunday, March 23. “Then after a while I thought, ‘Oh, those are just things, but that isn’t why somebody writes.’” Lowry, who has written and published more than thirty books, explained that she writes because, “I, more than anything else in the world, like to sit all by myself in a room at a computer and play with words.”

Lowry spoke during the final event for the Virginia Festival of the Book and was joined on stage by area children’s writer Kathryn Erskine. Erskine, who won a National Book Award for her young adult novel Mockingbird (2010), questioned Lowry about her life, her process, and of course, the upcoming movie adaptation of The Giver. “A lot of what happens in that book happens within the thoughts of the boy,” Lowry explained. “And if that were all you saw on the screen it would be a boring movie.” While the movie will add some action, she said, it also stays true to the ideas and spirit of The Giver.

By which she means, of course, the themes of community, friendship, and freedom that are familiar to Lowry fans. A strength of Lowry’s novels lies in her willingness to address subjects frequently shielded from children. Both writers agreed that publishers and readers have become more conservative and certain topics are more difficult to include in young adult fiction.

“Anybody who wants to be a writer is already doing the things that I was doing, which is, a) reading a lot and, b) writing a lot. There’s no other way to become a writer except by reading and writing,” Lowry noted, lending her advice for young writers.

The event brought together generations of Lowry fans, with adults and children, boys and girls equally enthralled. Afterward, Lowry herself praised the format of the event and called attention to Erskine’s interview skills, remarking, “I wish all events could be like this one.”
When master Malian griot Cheick Hamala Diabate joined two of Virginia’s finest traditional musicians, Sammy Shelor and Danny Kniceley, in Charlottesville for three days of musical fellowship, the results were pure magic. These three amazing artists collaborated for private jam sessions, a public workshop at Rhe Bridge PAI, a visit to WTJU-FM, and a program for students at Jackson-Via Elementary School.

The signature event of the week was a scintillating evening performance to a standing-room-only crowd at the Jefferson School. The artists were joined by Diabate’s full band, as well as fine local artists Nate Leath, Aimee Curl, and Madeline Holly Sales of Beleza Brasil. More than a history lesson, the evening featured three contemporary artists at the peak of their game, and spoke to the transformative and boundary crossing power of music.

The development of the five-string banjo, among the first truly American-born instruments, provides a lens into the development of American popular music and culture, and its immense contributions by African cultural traditions. What we now know as the banjo was derived from lutes brought by enslaved Africans to the New World, most notably the West African n’goni and kora. The European violin, or fiddle, and the African-derived banjo comprised “the first duet” in the New World, providing the cornerstone of American musical forms for centuries to come. Charlottesville was a most fitting site for this exchange, as one of the first times the word “banjar” appeared was in the diaries of Thomas Jefferson, as he observed the entertainments of his slaves at Monticello.

The Folklife Program extends its gratitude to Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, which provided support through their Mid Atlantic Folk Arts Outreach Project initiative, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Videos, audio samples and photographs captured the sights and sounds of this three-day residency and can be accessed via our website, VirginiaFolklife.org/Africa-Appalchia.

Join the Virginia Folklife Program at festivals and other events across the Commonwealth:

**Wayne C. Henderson Music Festival and Guitar Competition**
**JUNE 21 / Grayson Highlands State Park**
Come celebrate the twentieth anniversary of one of the most celebrated events in southwest Virginia, hosted by one of the true treasures of the Blue Ridge.

**River & Roots Festival**
**JUNE 27-28 / Berryville**
This inaugural festival on the lovely banks of the Shenandoah River will feature bluegrass, old time, and eclectic Americana music.

**Red Wing Roots Festival**
**JULY 11-13 / Mount Solon**
Located in the stunningly beautiful Natural Chimneys Park, this festival came out of the gate last year with a spectacular lineup, matched again this year.

**Galax Old Fiddlers Convention**
**AUGUST 4-9 / Galax**
What can we say? The granddaddy of them all—the country’s largest fiddlers convention, now in its seventy-ninth year.

**Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Showcase**
**SEPTEMBER 21 / Charlottesville**
A Charlottesville jewel: this intimate gathering honors and showcases the participants of the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship.

**Watermelon Park Fest**
**SEPTEMBER 25-27 / Berryville**
Watermelon Park was the site of the nation’s first bluegrass festival in 1960. After years of hiatus, the festival was revived and features some of the finest in bluegrass and beyond.

**Richmond Folk Festival**
**OCTOBER 10-12 / Richmond**
Celebrating its tenth year, the festival has become the largest folk festival on the East Coast. This year we will bring some of our favorite artists from twenty-five years of work in the Commonwealth to our Virginia Folklife Area.

**Blue Ridge Folklife Festival**
**OCTOBER 25 / Ferrum**
In our opinion, this is one of the finest folklife festivals in the country. Come see everything from coon dog races to moonshine, from mountain whistlers to ballad singers.

For more information, visit VirginiaFolklife.org
STEM and the Humanities: BETTER TOGETHER

BY ALLISON QUANTZ

When my With Good Reason colleague Kelley Libby and I visited a fourth-grade class in Louisa, we discovered something surprising. If you ask kids to draw a picture of a scientist, they all draw pretty much the same thing: a white man. Unfortunately, those pictures aren’t so far from reality. Data from 2011 indicates women made up only 26 percent of the science and engineering workforce, and while students of color made up 33 percent of the college-age population, they earned just 18 percent of the bachelors’ degrees in science and engineering and 5 percent of the doctorates.*

“We still have unequal education in the United States,” says educator and VFH Board member Oliver Hill. “And it still breaks down along racial lines.” This is especially true in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—known collectively as STEM. In late 2012, Hill, a professor of psychology at Virginia State University, approached With Good Reason with an idea: use radio to bring the issues of inequality in STEM education to a broad audience. Working with Hill and the National Science Foundation, With Good Reason waded into the national conversation about STEM with a ten-part series called “Engineering Change.”

We spent over a year investigating STEM through conversations with top historians, teachers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs across the nation. We visited classrooms, makers’ labs, and even a local pub for a science talk. In the episode “Do the Math,” host Sarah McConnell speaks with civil rights activist Bob Moses, whose Algebra Project advocates the belief that math literacy is a civil right. “The information age, like it or not, has added quantitative literacy along with reading and writing as a prerequisite for democratic citizenship,” Moses tells McConnell.

In a later episode, McConnell speaks with engineer Debbie Sterling, who was so frustrated by what she calls the “pink aisle” for girls in toy stores that she gambled her life savings—and won—on the creation of GoldieBlox, a series of books and construction sets designed to teach engineering concepts to girls.

An episode focusing on the importance of great teachers highlights Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). He relates how marching with Martin Luther King Jr. as a child gave him the leadership skills to make UMBC one of the nation’s top producers of African American PhDs in science and engineering.

STEM is often positioned in opposition to the humanities, but With Good Reason’s “Engineering Change” series argues that the two actually complement each other. Doctor-poet Daniel Becker explains how studying narrative can make for better doctors. “I listen to patients and they say things that really make me curious,” he says, “or they connect two things that I’ve never connected before.” Engineering professor Mohamed Gad-el-Hak points out that anyone who has tried to assemble an Ikea table knows how important it is for engineers to learn to write.

Reflecting on the series, McConnell says she was surprised by how rich the topic of STEM education turned out to be. “Each time we felt like we had reached the end, we found another guest, with another story, and a new perspective on why STEM education matters and how critical it is to make sure all students, not just our elite students, have access to excellence in STEM fields.”

We can bet this won’t be the final word on STEM in America, but With Good Reason’s series raises pressing questions about an issue that drives education policy today. All ten episodes of “Engineering Change” will be offered to public radio stations across the nation and are available on With Good Reason’s website, WithGoodReasonRadio.org/change.

EPISODE GUIDE

1. Engineering Change: Why STEM Matters
2. Edna the Engineer: Who Gets to Be a Scientist?
3. Not Your Mother’s Shop Class
4. Do the Math
5. The Art of Science
6. Those Who Can … Teach
7. Up to Speed: Remedial Math and Community Colleges
8. STEM vs. the Humanities?
9. Nuts and Bolts: Our Brains on STEM
10. Beyond the Books

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Morris was born in 1872 on the same farm in Bath County where her mother, Ann Crawford Lindsay Morris (b. 1832), had been enslaved.

Lizzie was twenty-seven when she married Charles Bolden, a carriage driver from Charlottesville. They had a daughter, Alice. Family members say she loved gardening but hated to cook. That she was a devoted member of her church, Mt. Pizgah Baptist. And that she lived in the Warm Springs community of Bath County all her life.

We don’t know if it was her mother or her half-sisters who taught her to sew, but we do know that by 1890 she was earning a living making fashionable clothing for affluent, paying clients, as well as members of her own family and community.

Fast-forward to the fall of 2013, to a chance meeting between Perlista Henry, Lizzie’s great-granddaughter, and Kathleen Curtis Wilson, one of the world’s leading scholars of Appalachian fabric and textile art.

Wilson has twice been awarded VFH research fellowships, one of which resulted in the book *Textile Art from Southern Appalachia: The Quiet Work of Women* (2001). She also organized and curated a traveling exhibit on woven coverlets from Southwest Virginia, supported by a VFH grant.


After more than two decades spent traveling through Virginia’s Appalachian Mountains, being steeped in the history and family stories of mountain communities and researching the distinctive textile traditions of the region, Wilson instantly recognized the significance of what Henry showed her in that first meeting.

Some of Lizzie’s handwork has survived. Not just one, but four pieces remain, including two quilts, remarkably intact, made of remnants of other garments stitched together with care and consummate skill.

They were passed down the line, from mother to daughter, along with memories of her career as an African American Appalachian dressmaker.

Each fragment has a story to tell. Through these quilts, the life of Lizzie Morris Bolden is preserved and revealed in the work of her hands.

It’s a rare opportunity to see the quiet work of women through a new lens. As Wilson later wrote, within the world of scholarship, “the existence of 19th century textiles with a reliable African American provenance is extremely rare. Extant textiles made by a daughter of an enslaved woman in Appalachia are unheard of.”

We can be sure that other, similar works of African American textile art exist within families, but all fabrics disintegrate over time, sometimes very rapidly without proper care, and the chances of such priceless remnants of the past emerging into public view grow slimmer with each passing year.

Fast forward again, to a cold day in late March, 2014. Wilson and Henry are in Waynesboro, Virginia, in the studio with Pat Jarrett, photographing the quilts.

Madelyn Shaw has flown in from Rhode Island to join them for this day. Shaw is a museum consultant, a former Curator of Costume & Textiles at the Rhode Island School of Design, and one of the most experienced textile experts in the United States.

Imagine them on their hands and knees, stretching the delicate fabric so the camera, perched high, can get a better view. Imagine them laughing with joy and amazement at the significance of what lies before them.

VFH supported this photo-documentation through a grant made to the Bath County Historical Society. The grant also supports development of a series of public presentations exploring the life of Lizzie Morris Bolden and what her work reveals.
Close analysis of the quilts’ individual pieces show what fabrics and dress styles were popular in Appalachian Virginia in the years 1885-1915. This knowledge in turn sheds light on the lives of other African American women (and men) in Bath and neighboring counties—and throughout the Southern Appalachian chain—during that time.

Three presentations of Lizzie’s work were initially scheduled: in Virginia Beach and Portsmouth, the latter as part of an ongoing exhibition titled Changing Appalachia: Custom to Cutting Edge; and in Bath County, at the same church in Warm Springs (Mt. Pisgah Baptist) where Lizzie Bolden spent her life.

In all three programs, Wilson presented these textiles in their Appalachian context, and Henry was on-hand to answer questions about her great-grandmother’s life and work. All three programs featured historic photographs of Lizzie, her family and her community, along with Pat Jarrett’s photos of the two quilts, a drawstring purse and a knitted bedcover.

The entire project will record and preserve a little-known part of Appalachian life and the work of an exceptionally talented woman.

There are exceptions; but historically, in most rural Appalachian communities the number of African Americans was—and remains—relatively small. The 1860 federal census included 956 enslaved men, women, and children and 86 free persons of color in Bath County. Today, fewer than 100 African Americans live in Bath County. Such numbers partially explain why textiles made by African Americans in Appalachia so rarely come into public view.

But it’s also true that mainstream scholarship has rarely focused on the achievements of women like Lizzie Bolden; and that the hand-work of African American craftsmen and women, where it still exists, has tended to be held closely within its family (and community) of origin.

Also, until recently, historians have largely consigned Appalachian textiles to the realm of folk art, often missing in the process what these artifacts can reveal about the culture and economy, the webs of commerce and social connection that define a place like Bath County.

In supporting this project, our hope was that many people, in Virginia and beyond, would gain a greater appreciation for the lives of African American women in Appalachia. We wanted to honor the achievements of Lizzie Bolden in particular and to encourage the work of community-based scholarship, informed by some of the leading textile experts living today.

But we also hoped this work would encourage other families to consider what their own heirloom textiles might reveal about their communities, knowledge that will advance our shared understanding and appreciation of what so-called ordinary people have achieved and contributed to Virginia’s common wealth, sometimes against great odds.
AN INTERVIEW WITH

Peter Onuf

BY ELIZABETH PIPER

Peter Onuf is the 18th century Guy on BackStory with the American History Guys, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Virginia, the author/editor of eleven books, including most recently, The Mind of Thomas Jefferson (2007), and a longtime supporter of VFH. I sat down with him recently to learn more about why VFH is important to him.

EP: You and your wife have been two of VFH’s most loyal supporters through the years, over twenty years. Why? Did your affiliation begin with your VFH Fellowship in 1992?

PO: It began with my fellowship that I shared with my brother Nick; we were in the middle of writing Federalists in a Modern World together. I kept up with Andrew Wyndham along the way and, years later, began BackStory with him, Ed [Ayers], and Brian [Balogh].

EP: What other causes are important to you and why?

PO: There are a number across the spectrum; it’s a mixture of some enlightened self-interest and ones you’re indebted to in my line of work. I’m a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Antiquarian Society. But VFH has been my favorite Virginia cause by far! We also give to the American Friends Service Committee and Doctors Without Borders.

EP: What’s it like being a BackStory History Guy with Ed Ayers and Brian Balogh?

PO: There are some things that are unmitigated joy; one is hanging out with the “Guys.” We are collegial in the best sense; we are very concerned about the dynamic and about each other as people. It has been nice to see Ed and Brian grow in their positions. I think they’re both marvelous. Sometimes—our producers might think too often!—we just crack each other up. And we love the producers—Tony is a genius; we have great respect for him. Two things that are really gratifying are, one, the cross-generational relationship between us and the associate producers, who are really smart young people. That gives you a really good feeling about the future. It does seem that they have a skill set that can lead to the transformation of history as we know it. Secondly, we are accustomed to having students, but these producers are better because they have skills and they move at ease in the digital world. There’s a quality of reciprocity going on here that we don’t get in the classroom. We are grateful that we can attract such talent to the production staff of BackStory.

EP: When you started out with BackStory, did you ever expect it to gain the momentum that it has and turn into a national program?

PO: No, gaining that high profile was never high on my list of goals, it was the process and satisfaction of doing it, it was hanging out with the Guys. It’s staggering in retrospect that Andrew thought we would ever become something, and I say that based on the two years it took us to produce a really lousy recording in the beginning.

The transformative point was the idea that we could do a different theme every week, because in the beginning we thought we could just do an anthology show with callers. We found that we could have fun and be interesting about stuff we didn’t really know a lot about because we had the period expertise. Probably the closest we came to a sweet zone was our three-part series on the Civil War. In our collective memories, that one would stand out to me as a turning point.

Read the complete interview online at VirginiaHumanities.org/an-interview-with-peter-onuf
VFH WELCOMES New Staff Members

SARAH MULLEN joined VFH as associate director of development in January. Her focus is major gifts and corporate support. Previously she was director of annual giving at The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia. Mullen holds a BA in English and Art History from the University of North Carolina, and is ABD in American Studies from the University of Texas.

ANDREW PARSONS is an associate producer at BackStory. His stories have been broadcast on PRI’s The World, Marketplace, and NPR’s Snap Judgment, and he has produced radio everywhere from NPR to WNYC. He also spent a summer in prisons around the country for Appalshop’s Prison Poetry Radio Series. Parsons is a graduate of Columbia University’s School of Journalism.

MICHELLE TAYLOR is a PhD candidate in English literature. Her dissertation focuses on representations of dogs in nineteenth century British literature, but her interests also include bibliography/textual studies and digital humanities, both of which she gets to employ in her capacity as primary resource specialist at Encyclopedia Virginia.

LILIA FUQUEN is an assistant producer at With Good Reason. After graduating with a BA in integrated studies from Kent State University, she journeyed throughout her home country of Colombia. Fuquen, who is fascinated by language and communication, finds VFH a fertile environment for growth and creativity.

TRANSITIONS

After two and a half years, JESS ENSGBRETSO, the first associate producer to sign on for the weekly BackStory, has left the show to visit her brother and friends in Indonesia—and to reflect on what comes next for her, possibly graduate school in English. CAITLIN NEWMAN, associate editor for Encyclopedia Virginia (EV) since 2010 and editor for the Forty Years, Forty Stories series, will be moving to Minneapolis. LAURA BAKER, project manager for Documents Compass, will step into a new role as associate editor for EV. JANE KULOW is moving into a new role as program director for Virginia Festival of the Book. We wish our colleagues well in their new pursuits.

Reid and Mullen Join VFH Board of Directors

IN OCTOBER, VFH WELCOMED TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Daphne Maxwell Reid is best known as Aunt Vivian from the hit comedy, The Fresh Prince of Bel Air. Her thirty-five-year acting career is still vital, with current roles including hosting Virginia Currents on Richmond’s WCVE (PBS) and VSU Today, for Virginia State University. With her husband, actor/writer/producer Tim Reid, Reid co-founded and is a principal partner in New Millennium Studios, the first full-service film studio in Virginia. Reid serves as the chief operating officer and as a producer on various projects. She serves on several boards, including the Board of Visitors of Virginia State University, the Petersburg Library Foundation, the Richmond Forum, the Petersburg Area Art League, and the Citizens’ Action Committee for the Governor’s Mansion. Reid is also an avid photographer and exhibits and sells her “Fresh Prints” collection.

Edward Mullen, a native of Alexandria, received his BA in English literature from the University of Virginia and his JD from the University of Virginia School of Law. He is an attorney with Reed Smith LLP in Richmond, focusing on administrative practice before all Virginia state agencies, legislative practice before the General Assembly and the Virginia congressional delegation, and commercial litigation practice. Mullen also serves as an adjunct professor at the U.Va. School of Law, teaching courses in legislative drafting and statutory interpretation as well as government ethics and lobbying. Prior to law school, Mullen worked as a senior aide to then-governor and now-Senator Mark Warner. He serves on a variety of boards and advisory committees across the Commonwealth and has been repeatedly recognized by Virginia Business Magazine as Legal Elite for Legislative/Regulatory/Administrative Law.
Please, tell us if you're ready for a change:

☐ Your address?
☐ Your name?
☐ Switch to email subscription?
☐ Receive biweekly program emails?
☐ Remove a duplicate address?
☐ Unsubscribe?

Please check the appropriate selection above and make any necessary changes to the mailing address (at right). Send changes to VFH, 145 Ednam Drive, Charlottesville VA 22903.


VFH GRANTS DEADLINES
Since 1974, VFH has awarded more than 3,000 grants to nonprofit organizations that serve audiences throughout the Commonwealth. VFH Open Grant applications are considered in two grant cycles per year, with these deadlines:

**OCTOBER 15**
Draft proposals submitted by October 5 • decisions in early December

**APRIL 15**
Draft proposals submitted by April 5 • decisions in early June

Discretionary Grant applications may be submitted at any time throughout the year. For full application guidelines, please see VirginiaHumanities.org/grants.

Virginia Foundation for the Humanities

2013-2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephen K. Adkins
CHARLES CITY, VA

Carolyn Bell
LYNCHBURG, VA

Bob Blue
RICHMOND, VA

Robert H. Brink
ARLINGTON, VA

Scott Colley
KESWICK, VA

Theodore DeLaney
LEXINGTON, VA

William Freehling
FREDERICKSBURG, VA

Barbara J. Fried
CROZET, VA

Joanne Gabbin
HARRISONBURG, VA

Oliver Hill Jr.
PETERSBURG, VA

W. Tucker Lemon
ROANOKE, VA

B. Thomas Mansbach
WASHINGTON, DC

Maurie D. McInnis
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

Edward A. Mullen
RICHMOND, VA

Michelle DuPont Olson
MCLEAN, VA

Daphne Maxwell Reid
PETERSBURG, VA

Rita Roy
RESTON, VA

Walter Rugaber
MEADOWS OF DAN, VA

Martha J. Sims
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

Dennis H. Treacy
SMITHFIELD, VA

Robert C. Vaughan III
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

Emma Violand-Sanchez
ARLINGTON, VA

Peter Wallenstein
BLACKSBURG, VA

Lacy Ward Jr.
FARMVILLE, VA

VFH FELLOWS
SPRING 2014

The 2014 spring semester commenced in January at VFH with the arrival (and return, in some cases) of a new set of residential Fellows. From left to right, starting in the front row, meet novelists Fran Cannon Slayton and Faulkner Fox; independent historian Beth Taylor; Japanese culture and literature scholar Mary Knighton; nonfiction author Earl Swift; civil rights historian and University of North Carolina associate professor Tom Jackson; Flinders University Professor and American Studies chair Don Debats; independent historian and scholar John Ragosta; University of Arizona associate professor in history Benjamin Irvin; VFH president and director of the Fellowship program Rob Vaughan; and senior research professor in classics and religious studies at Washington and Lee, George Carras.