

SECTION 4b: HISTORY OF ESPL

HISTORY OF EASTERN SHORE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

- 1892 The Parksley Free Library opened Saturday, March 26th, with 500 volumes. It is not known when it ceased or where it was located.
- 1919 A public library was formed by citizens in Cape Charles in a private home.
- 1926 After being relocated to multiple buildings, the library in Cape Charles was moved to the vacated First Presbyterian Church, 500 Tazewell Avenue. This shingle, Victorian building was built in 1900. The building is now the Town's Civic Center.
- 1927 Northampton Memorial Library was dedicated in 1927 to the memory of local men who died in World War I and was the first memorial library in Virginia. A bronze tablet bearing their names is located at 500 Tazewell Avenue.
- 1959 Jefferson C. Grinnalds started the Twyford Memorial Library with his large book collection and endowed the library, but the library lasted only briefly. The building later became Runninger's Pharmacy.
- 1957 Eastern Shore Public Library started as demonstration project of the Commonwealth of Virginia, located in the Town of Accomac's Community Hall, a 1903 building that was originally a dry goods store on Front Street (no longer standing).
- 1958 Eastern Shore Public Library (ESPL) established as a regional library system, May 5, 1958 with an agreement between Accomack and Northampton Counties On Aug. 28, 1958, bylaws were adopted stating the board of trustees would be comprised of five members, including Superintendents of Schools to serve alternately for two years; two members at large from each county to be appointed by the Judge of the Circuit Court of Accomack and Northampton Counties. The officers were to be chairman, vice-chairman, and with the librarian to serve as secretary and Accomack County treasurer to serve as treasurer.
- 1964 The ESPL library building was built in town of Accomac at 23610 Front Street. The building is owned by ESPL.
- 1982 Accomac library expanded to 11,500 sq. ft.
- 1987 Bylaws revised to say three trustees shall be from Accomack and two from Northampton, one of whom will be a superintendent of schools with superintendents of the two counties serving alternate terms of two years each.

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The funding formula portion of the Resolution passed by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors on April 23, 1958 from the cost basis of two-thirds by Accomack County and one-third by Northampton County to an annual patronage use formula.

- 1988 Bylaws revised to provide for 4 trustees from Accomack and 1 from Northampton, appointed by respective Boards of Supervisors for 4 year terms (this is apparently when the Superintendents of Schools left).
- 1993 Northampton Free Library (NFL) organized by local residents.
- 200x NFL became a branch of ESPL.
- 2005 Northampton Free Library 2,500 sq. ft. building built for approximately \$595,600. Funds were primarily raised by the Friends of NFL. ESPL owns the property.
- 2008 Regional Library Agreement between Accomack and Northampton Counties updated on December 1 to reflect population changes in the counties. The cost share is changed to 75-25 from 2/3-1/3.
- 2008 Agreement with Chincoteague Island Library approved.
- 2009 Agreement with Town of Cape Charles for Cape Charles Memorial Library on January 9. The name was changed to the Cape Charles Memorial Library.
- Regional Agreement revised to provide for nine members; six from Accomack and three from Northampton
- 2009 ESPL Foundation is formed as a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization for the purpose of raising funds for the system.
- 2012 The Town of Cape Charles purchased the former Bank of America building to expand the Cape Charles Memorial Library. In May 2013, the Library moved into its new location at 201 Mason Avenue.
- 2014 Accomack County voters turned back a referendum that would have provided \$3.5 million for a new main branch of the Eastern Shore Public Library. The unofficial tally was 4,498 votes for the referendum and 4,944 votes against it. In all, 52 percent of the voters were against the referendum and 48 percent in favor.
- 2015 Accomack County Board of Supervisors approve \$2 million for a new regional library.
- 2018 Memorandum of Understanding approved between Accomack County Board of Supervisors, ESPL, and the ESPL Foundation defining the financing of the new regional library to be built in Parksley.