



Library System Report

EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA • PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Regional Library and Heritage Center • Cape Charles Memorial Library • Chincoteague Island Library • Northampton Free Library

January 2025

Director's Update



Christopher Pote,
System Director

January proved to be a difficult month with several closures and programming cancellations. When we face dangerous conditions, I must consider the safety of staff and patrons as paramount. Therefore, we unfortunately had to close or open late several days in January. Thank you for understanding and bearing with us as we dealt with the weather conditions. And thank you to all of those that help us mitigate the conditions. Just because the buildings are closed, you still have access to all of our digital resources free of charge with your library card: espl.org/read-watch-listen/



Upcoming February Highlights Eastern Shore Public Library System

- **12th: Craft & Story Time w/ Chincoteague Bay Field Station - ESRL**
- **12th: Kids' Game Day - ESRL**
- **13th: Lecture "Not Your Disney Pinocchio" - ESRL**
- **13th: Adult Craft No-sew Heart Pillow - NFL**
- **14th & 15th: Death by Chocolate - CIL**
- **16th: Town Wide Read *Hidden Figures* - CCML**
- **17th: LIBRARIES CLOSED**
- **20th: Grayson Chesser "Eastern Shore Decoys & Their Makers" - ESRL**
- **20th: STEM Night, Snap Circuits - NFL**
- **27th: Teen Creative Writing - ESRL**
- **Tech Help: Every Tuesday - NFL**
- **Teen Gaming Night: Every Tuesday - ESRL**
- **Storytime Anytime: Every Monday & Wednesday - Northampton Free**

For more information: espl.org; (757) 787-3400

CIL = Chincoteague Island Library

CCML = Cape Charles Memorial Library

ESRL = ESVA Regional Library & Heritage Center

NFL = Northampton Free Library



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA

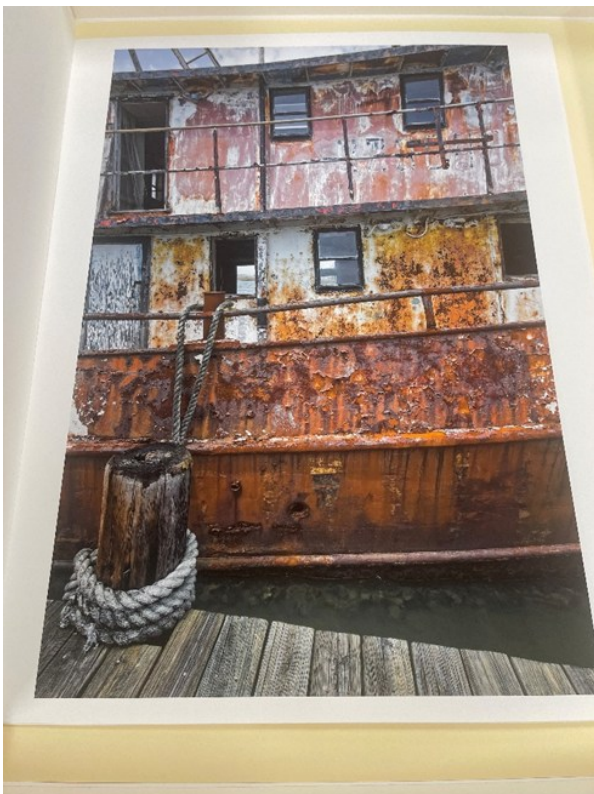
Heritage Center

esplheritage.org

Jazmine Collins, Reference Manager & Local History

It was a busy first month on the job for the Heritage Center's new archivist, Luke Kelly. Seven new donations of various shapes and sizes made their way to the Heritage Center this month starting with over sixty scrapbooks from the Northampton-Accomack Memorial Hospital (now Riverside Shore Memorial) Auxiliary group. The scrapbooks range from the early 2000s to 2020. They cover important times in the history of our community such as the development of the new hospital in Onley and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additions were made to the Edmonds' Family Papers, including letters and photographs that belonged to several members of the family. One such member, Katherine H. S. Edmonds, is the namesake of our Eastern Shore Room. Paul Muhly donated his papers regarding the creation of the Eastern Shore Regional Library and Heritage Center's facility in Parksley. Muhly was instrumental in the process of building the new library from selecting its location, reviewing design plans, and serving on the Steering Committee which oversaw final decisions during construction. His papers join a growing series of collections from other members of the community who helped to shape our library.

Lastly, the Heritage Center received the first part of what will be a large photograph and digital image collection. A former resident of the Shore spent years photographing the Shore's landscape, barrier islands, and agricultural and aquacultural lifestyles. The full collection will contain several thousand images, making it one of the most comprehensive photograph collections of the Shore taken in the 21st century. Heritage Center staff are thrilled with the recent donations and the continued support for preserving local history. Luke is hard at work preserving this material and looking into ways that it can best be catalogued and made accessible to the public for future use.



Next month, Master Carver Grayson Chesser will join us for a conversation "Eastern Shore Decoys and their Makers" on February 20th at 6PM. The Heritage Center will also be hosting a Black History Month Trivia Tournament for high and middle school students on February 25th. Trivia questions will be based on the biographies of local African American notable figures as detailed in Frances Bibbins Latimer's book, *Life for Me Ain't Been no Crystal Stair*. Community engagement for this event is promising and the Bibbins Latimer Working Group is actively promoting and soliciting prizes for student participation.



Technical Services

Charle Ricci, Collection Management and Acquisitions Librarian



ESPL and SOVALUe — a Successful Partnership

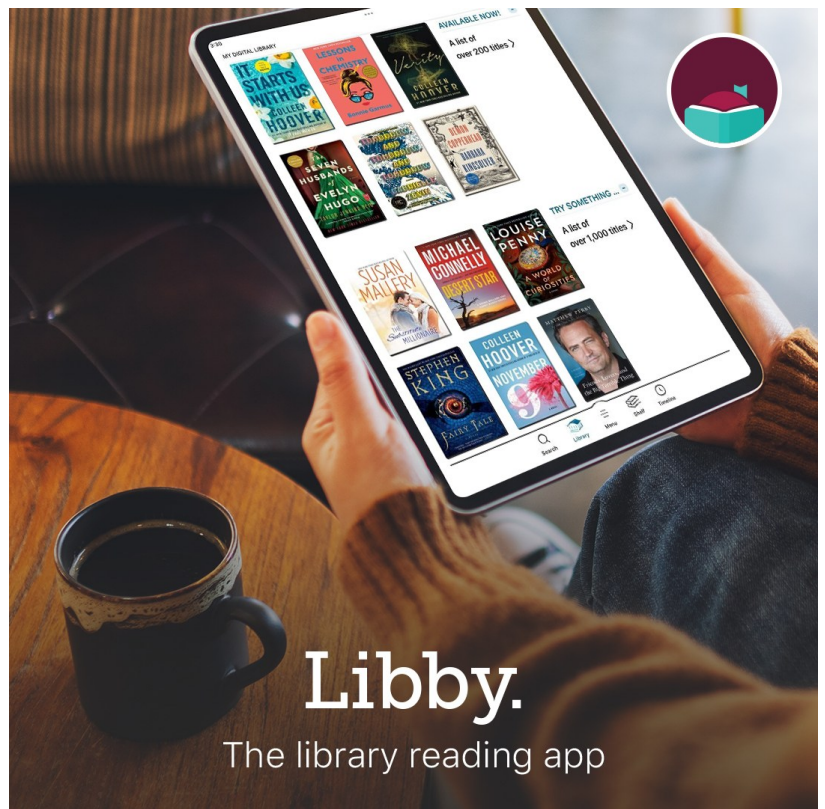
In October 2022, ESPL joined the SOVALUe consortium of 23 Virginia public libraries with the goal of making a larger shared collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks available to our patrons. By pooling resources and sharing content, each SOVALUe member library could offer significantly more titles through the Overdrive app, Libby, than any one library could provide independently through their own purchased Overdrive collections.

ESPL Librarian, Charle Ricci, attended SOVALUe's annual meeting on January 29th, where the consortium's Overdrive representative offered a look back over the past year, as well as a statistical comparison to other library consortia of similar size. The SOVALUe consortium, when measured against similar groups, demonstrated notable growth in both eBook and eAudio collection size, number of unique users, and number of reserves placed by users. In addition, after a collaborative effort among SOVALUe members in early 2024 to share a greater number of member purchased titles with the larger group, a marked decrease in the average wait time for requested items was evident in the data as well.

At the end of the 2024 calendar year, ESPL patrons could access over 25,000 eBooks and almost 7,000 eAudiobooks through SOVALUe and through the library's own purchased content from Overdrive. 2024 saw a 30% increase in eBook circulation and a 46% increase for eAudiobook circulation for the consortium. For both eBooks and eAudiobooks, the top subjects in order by number of checkouts were Romance, Thriller, Suspense, Mystery, Fantasy, and Historical Fiction.

While the significant increases in circulation for the consortium as a whole are impressive, the increase from 2023 to 2024 for ESPL alone are even more remarkable. In 2023, ESPL patrons checked out 6,800 eBooks and eAudio, but in 2024, the number of checkouts more than doubled to 16,734, which is an increase of 146%!!!

With an ever growing selection of eBooks and eAudios in the shared SOVALUe collection, and an increase in the portion of the ESPL materials budget allocated to purchasing digital content for the library, local readers are enjoying a wider selection of reading and listening possibilities and are demonstrating their interest in and appreciation for these content formats through their reserves and checkouts.



Libby.

The library reading app



Programs & Outreach Report

Tiffany Flores, Programs and Outreach Librarian

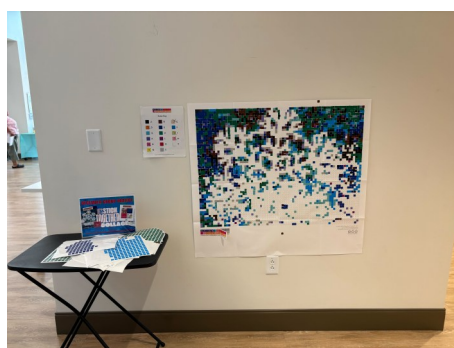
Even in the winter lull, Storytimes continue to grow. This month we had 17 attendees between 2 Storytimes. Additionally, the library teamed up with The Nature Conservancy to bring a family fun 'Nature Day' on Saturday, January 25th. This program was a huge success with 20 attendees who greatly enjoyed the opportunity. Children were able to see some aquatic crabs, shrimp, and oysters and participate in a craft. The library also hosted telescope-themed STEM programming for both adults and kids. In addition to the attendees, there was a lot of interest in patrons who stopped by the circulation desk. The overcast weather greatly impacted attendance, but this sparked an internal conversation about forming an astronomer's club and how the library can better perform these programs.



For adult programming, the Crochet Stitch-a-long had 2 attendees. Both attendees enjoyed discussing crochet and how to get more people to join in. Starting in the spring, The Stich-a-Long will become a Yarn Club where fiber artist can collaborate and share their knowledge. The library also purchased a movie license so we can host movie nights on a regular basis. This month we hosted a family movie night featuring *Inside Out 2*! 20 people attended including multiple families, a birthday girl who chose to come to the library to celebrate, and a group of individuals with intellectual disabilities. This program was so successful attendees expressed interests in monthly movie nights.

Passive programming has been going well during the winter months. The Winter group Sticker Poster had about 10-15 people participate a month. During February, the library put out an origami table for the 'With Love Campaign'. At least 10 people took origami paper instructions to make flowers.

In collaboration with the Community Partners of the Eastern Shore, Eastern Shore Public participated in the Point-in-Time Homeless Count. Each year the library participates as a survey location for individuals experiencing homelessness.



Finally, Summer Reading Program plans have begun! This year's theme is "Color Our World" which is all about bringing joy through artistic expression. Tiffany is very excited about this theme because it allows for a lot of creative expression in the library. The Summer Reading Program will run from June 14th to August 9th. Like last year, The Eastern Shore Community College is providing us access to their space to host our SummerFest Program for SummerFest, our summer kick-off program. Tiffany plans to meet with the college soon to discuss plans and logistics for this event. After last year's success, the library plans to go bigger to encourage youth reading and gain greater participation.



Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



January was a challenging month for Northampton Free Library, with several unplanned closings due to inclement weather. Even so, the library was still able to host a full calendar of public programs. Tech Help was offered on every Tuesday, and January saw the highest monthly attendance for this program since it was first offered in late 2023. The library also hosted a children's after-school story-time on January 9th, an adult snowflake earring craft on January 16th, and a star-gazing children's STEM night on January 23rd. The Friends of Northampton Free Library donated a combination children's reading bench and dinosaur stable that is already being enjoyed by our younger patrons. Necessary repairs were also made to a storm-damaged gate outside the building.



February may be the shortest month of the year, but Northampton Free Library will still be offering a full roster of public programs. Tech Help Tuesdays will continue to be offered all day on every Tuesday. February's evening story-time is scheduled for 4:30 PM on Thursday, February 6th. This program is free as always and no sign up in advance is required. Snacks will be provided. The following week on Thursday, February 13th, the library will host a Valentine's Day themed adult craft night starting at 6:00 PM. Attendees will be able to make and take home their own no-sew heart pillows. This event is free, but spaces are limited and registration in advance is required. Please watch our Facebook page or ask at the front desk for more information. Finally, an electrifying children's STEM night will start at 6:00 PM on Thursday, February 20th. Kids are invited to come on down and learn how to build their own simple circuits. this program is free and is open to kids aged 5 to 11.

Northampton Free Library will be closed on Monday, February 17th in observance of Presidents Day.





Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



Between the holidays and the winter weather, Cape Charles Memorial Library experienced a quiet start to the New Year. Despite the frigid temperatures, our January programs were decently attended, with 174 participants at nine monthly programs. We are excited that our new Crochet & Knit Club is popular with adult patrons. The club meets at CCML on the first and third Thursday of each month at 11:00 a.m. (and no particular skill set is needed to attend – *all levels welcome!*)

Staff took advantage of less footfall and became engaged in early stages of planning Spring and Summer programs. Spring planning includes taking inventory of remaining seeds in our Seed Cart and ordering additional non-GMO vegetables and native flower seeds. Once the new seeds are delivered in bulk, staff must disperse the seeds into individual packets. We're hoping to have everything ready by early March for spring planting. Another spring event is Earth Day. Each year we use grant funds from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for educating the public about the importance of recycling and reusing of daily items. CCML is able to provide wonderful giveaways to encourage all of us to keep our Earth clean and safe.



No, it is *never* too early to begin organizing for Summer Reading Programs! This summer we are again part of the Collaborative Summer Library Program with the 2025 theme, *Color our World*. Staff has started creating a calendar of programs and reaching out to performers and local community partners. Staff are also researching ideas for story times, crafts, and STEM programs. June 18th is our kickoff celebration (more details to come).



Chincoteague Island Library

Linda Ryan, for the Board of Directors



It's been a cold, snowy, January on Chincoteague. As a result, we were closed several days because of the weather and had to cancel some programs. However, when we were open, many patrons and visitors came into the library and the programs we held were well attended.

Tales 4 Tots Storytime: Our first story time of each year is a Pajama Party. Children, parents, and volunteers all come dressed in pajamas, robes, and slippers. The children stretched, sang songs, and listened to volunteer Diane Fisher read Llama, Llama Red Pajamas. Afterwards, they colored a llama puppet and pasted colored paper squares onto a paper bag for his bed.



The following week, on a cold, windy day, members of the U.S. Coast Guard/Chincoteague Station, visited the library. Capt. Chad Ferrell and his crew docked two Coast Guard vessels in the boat slips adjacent to the library. Capt. Ferrell read several Coast Guard stories, showed the children safety equipment, and, with his crew, led the children outside to climb aboard the boats. Next, they came back into the library to paint Coast Guard pictures. A wonderful time was had by all.



Upcoming story times include stories and crafts about penguins, bears/hibernation, Valentine's Day; visits from the Chincoteague Bay Field Station, and a field trip to the Island Creamery.

Continued...



Chincoteague Island Library

Linda Ryan, for the Board of Directors



Adult Programs: "Explore Antarctica @ The Library" originally scheduled for January 23 was rescheduled for February due to the weather. The Tuesday evening book club discussed "Banned Books." The Thursday morning book club discussed "Favorite Books of 2024."

A financial wellness seminar was held on January 16 by financial advisor Derek Fairchild. This free seminar presented strategies for defending from financial risks including down markets and retirement.

The Island Writers' Group which meets twice monthly continues to be well attended.

Displays & Promotions: This month, our displays revolved around Martin Luther King Jr. and the Chinese New Year. We held a "Puzzle Blow-out" to sell our many donated gently used puzzles at a reduced cost. And, sales for our annual fundraiser, an adult raffle basket and a children's raffle basket, will begin on February 14 during the Downtown Merchants' "Death by Chocolate" event.



Birthday Celebration for Harriet Lonergan: On January 2, several library volunteers arranged a surprise 85th birthday party for Harriet Lonergan. Harriet has been with our Chincoteague Island Library since its inception. She has served as our staff librarian, volunteer coordinator, Board Member extraordinaire and has kept our library running efficiently for thirty years. Volunteers and board members were on hand to celebrate this special day with Harriet.

