



# 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



## Upcoming August Highlights Eastern Shore Public Library System

- 7th: Summer Reading Pizza Party - NFL
- 8th: Summer Reading Pizza Party - ESRL
- 14th: Summer Reading Wrap Party - CIL
- 14th: Adult Craft - NFL
- 14th: Teen Creative Writing - ESRL
- 16th: Author Talk: Drucilla Matthews-Beach - ESRL
- 20th: Memory Café - ESRL
- 21st: Kid's Craft & Story Time - NFL
- 23rd: Adult Crafternoon - ESRL
- 28th: Family Movie Night: *Dog Man* - ESRL
- 29th: Owl Prowl - CCML
- Tech Help: Every Wednesday - NFL
- Ancestry Help: Every Wednesday - ESRL
- Heritage Center Reference Assistance:  
Every Thursday - NFL
- Storytime Anytime: Every Monday &  
Wednesday - NFL

For times & more information: [espl.org](https://espl.org); (757) 787-3400

CIL = Chincoteague Island Library

CCML = Cape Charles Memorial Library

ESRL = ESVA Regional Library & Heritage Center

NFL = Northampton Free Library

July 2025

## Director's Update



**Christopher Pote,**  
System Director

On the next page you will find a snapshot of the library system use statistics. These numbers indicate a significant increase in usage and participation by citizens with the Library System. The total number of in-person visits to library facilities **increased 21%**. Our materials, programming, eResources, wi-fi, and Heritage Center use are also up substantially. This is encouraging as we faced a tough winter with many closings and is also evidence to the fact that libraries are much more than just book-lending services. We are a community-focused organization; we have something for everyone; and all are welcome.



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA

# Public Library System

## FISCAL YEAR 2025 USE SNAPSHOT

### Circulation

<i>+4% increase</i>	<b>110,555</b>
<b>Books</b>	
84,001	<i>0% change</i>
<b>Audio</b>	
1,481	<i>-1% decrease</i>
<b>Video</b>	
8,548	<i>+1% increase</i>
<b>In-House Use</b>	
5,365	<i>+80% increase</i>

### Internet Use

<i>+80% increase</i>	<b>88,438</b>
<b>Computer Use</b>	
7,224	<i>0% change</i>
<b>iPad Use</b>	
559	<i>-17% decrease</i>
<b>AWE Computer use</b>	
784	<i>+13% increase</i>
<b>WiFi Connections</b>	
79,871	<i>+92% increase</i>

### Database Use

<i>+83% increase</i>	<b>100,606</b>
<b>MilesFiles</b>	
54,700	<i>+91% Increase</i>
<b>Libby</b>	
22,293	<i>+97% increase</i>
<b>Ancestry</b>	
10,157	<i>N/A</i>
<b>Kanopy</b>	
2,374	<i>N/A</i>
<b>Other</b>	
11,746	<i>N/A</i>

### Visits

<i>+21% increase</i>	<b>129,076</b>
<b>Card Holders</b>	
13,138	<i>+15% increase</i>
<b>New Cards Added</b>	
1,964	<i>+15% increase</i>
<b>Program Attendance</b>	
15,650	<i>+47% increase</i>
<b>Heritage Center Ref.</b>	
543	<i>+12% increase</i>



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA

# Heritage Center

[esplheritage.org](http://esplheritage.org)

Jazmine Collins, Reference Manager & Local History

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Fiscal Year 2024-2025 ended in June and the Heritage Center's statistics show a 15 percent increase in overall reference encounters, which include visits to the Eastern Shore Room, and contacts via email, phone, and social media. Not counting the GHOTES Conference visitors of 2024, the amount of visits has increased by 13 percent, and email contacts by 85 percent, from 107 to 199. Contacts from Accomack patrons increased by 18 percent from 179 to 213 and Northampton patron usage increased by 9 percent. Of the total patronage, Accomack accounts for about 40 percent and Northampton at 20 percent. Patrons from other parts of Virginia has remained the same, Maryland patronage has increased by 43.75 percent and patronage from states other than Virginia and Maryland has increased by 15 percent. These numbers may be slightly skewed by the GHOTES attendees as well. While our overall numbers have increased, the Heritage Center shows a decrease in patronage by potential authors or professional academic researchers.

Our online database usage shows a significant increase in AncestryLibrary usage, from 1,464 to 10,157 which is almost 6 times more usage than previous years, and our inquiries of basic technical assistance in Ancestry has increased as well. Although we are a FamilySearch Affiliate Library, FamilySearch is a free account. Our statistics only report when someone logs in to their account in order to view a collection record image that can only be viewed from an Affiliate library, and that number has increased by 31 percent from the previous fiscal year. The most notable statistic is from MilesFiles. While the number of users increased from the FY23-24, our statistics for FY24-25 is based off MilesFiles sessions. Statistics show that about 54,700 sessions using the MilesFiles were conducted by 28,880 users. Furthermore, using Google Analytics, the Heritage Center is able to see that the majority of MilesFiles users are in Virginia and Maryland, but the last year has seen more than 1,000 new users from each Florida, New York, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Texas, North Carolina, and California.

Most patrons express interest in more than one topic, for example, genealogy and a historic home or property. Consistently, the most popular topics of interest Heritage Center patrons are Eastern Shore History, Genealogy, which combined make up over half of all research topics that we measure, and African American History and Genealogy, at about 17 percent. The number of researchers interested in genealogy connected to the Eastern Shore of Maryland showing a significant increase this past fiscal year. Researchers looking for information such as an obituary or a specific article from a newspaper is one of the next most consistent requests, at about 10 percent. Library of Virginia's Virginia Chronicle Newspaper database is much easier to search than old microfilms, but most visitors either are not aware of the database, or are looking for items in the Eastern Shore News for years that have not been added to Virginia Chronicle as of yet. Eastern Shore Geography, Historic homes and properties, and prominent Eastern Shore figures, each account for about 5 percent of inquiries.

We have made changes to our statistics tracking to include more precise information about local patron interest, and to track the number of patrons that we serve specifically at the Northampton Free Library. Overall, our statistics are showing significant increases. Heritage Center staff will review statistics quarterly to account for trends and areas that we could improve upon.





## 2025 American Library Association Conference

In late June, Tiffany Flores and I were fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the American Library Association's 2025 Annual Conference in Philadelphia. With over 14,000 attendees and exhibitors, and with educational sessions, pavilions, stages, and exhibits spread throughout the 2 million square foot convention center, the library-related possibilities for learning seemed limitless.

In addition to educational sessions, authors were available to sign copies of their works, keynote speakers inspired and motivated the audiences, and vendors were on hand to demonstrate the latest technology, furnishings, and trends in the library world.

After arriving in Philadelphia, and with comfortable walking shoes on, we set out to explore the conference with the opening of the exhibit hall. Traveling up and down the many aisles, we gathered information and ideas that we could bring back to the ESPL.



Early the next morning, the full conference began. Even with the extremely helpful conference scheduling app, it was not easy to whittle down the many interesting and useful programs and events to a realistic number, since there were always several sessions running simultaneously that were pertinent to our library's work and mission. Of the programs that I attended, those focusing on intellectual freedom challenges, welcoming initiatives, increasing access to informational resources, and developing materials collections were of most value, providing overviews of the subject matter and also practical ways to implement and apply what I learned.

For me, the highlight of the conference was attending a session in which Kwame Alexander interviewed the former Librarian of Congress, Carla Hayden. Despite her own recent firing, Hayden was a true inspiration to the library profession and encouraged everyone in the audience to continue to see possibility and to persevere in these challenging times. Another high point was attending a panel of children's book authors featuring Mac Barnett, the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature.

After three full days of conference sessions, and a special author breakfast hosted by Greenwillow Books, we left the city with weary feet but feeling buoyant with excitement. We had gathered many new ideas and much inspiration that we could bring back to our fellow staff. We had also been recharged from our time with others in our field with each of us connecting with an ALA interest group relevant to our specific field of librarianship. There was a sense of true solidarity among the conference goers, which renewed our determination to return to our work and make the ESPL even better for the community we serve.



# Programs & Outreach Report

Tiffany Flores, Programs and Outreach Librarian

For the second year in the row, the Eastern Shore Community Services Board and the Library have collaborated for Summer Storytimes featuring social emotional stories and lessons. In July, there had been 26 attendees between 4 programs. Due to its success the Library and the Community Services Board are discussing the possibility of extending the program to Northampton Free Library in 2026. Additionally, the library collaborated with Accomack County 4H for a program featuring financial literacy and piggy banks. The attendees got to paint piggy banks while discussing money saving and financial planning. Stuffie Sleepovers during the Summer were a hit! The kids really enjoyed the story and craft. When they returned the next day they got to view photos of their friend's endeavors in the library which included conga lines featuring cows, board games, and plenty of fun. Teen Stuffie Sleepover was also well attended. They were equally as happy to see what their stuffies got up to while at the library. Free form kids' art programs have been really popular in the library as well. Held at both the Regional Library and Northampton Free Library, Kids' Crafternoon supports the idea that free form art programs is another way to get kids in the library. More art programs are scheduled for the Summer and Fall.



Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Library hosted their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Super Smash Brothers Tournament. Super Smash



Brothers is a brawl type video game featuring mainly Nintendo Characters. Participant compete against each other for prizes. This year there were ten contestants and an additional attendees which is remarkably better than last year. Everyone had a blast cheering on contestants. The winner was Kelian Davis who received a \$50 gift card. Parents in attendance have requested an Adult Super Smash Brother's Tournament. In the future, Tiffany plans to host more tournaments like this for adults, kids, and teens.

During the Summer, Tiffany Flores was approached by Arcadia Middle School to do a field trip for their summer school kids. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, eight English as a second language middle schoolers and their teacher visited the library. Throughout the tour, the students expressed interest in the Spanish materials, board games, and activities scattered throughout the library. They were especially excited to see that the library had 'Dogman' in both English and Spanish. Tiffany was excited to see non-library users excited about what the library space could offer them. She hopes to see these kids in the library more often.







# Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



July was a big month for Northampton Free Library. Our aging book drop was replaced with a shiny new unit with a larger capacity and better ability to keep out the elements. Inside the building, all public and staff computers were replaced with brand new all-in-one models. Patrons and staff alike have been enjoying the new, faster devices. July was also a very successful month for public programs at Northampton Free Library. We hosted another children's story time on the 3rd and an adult craft on the 11th—attendees to the latter learned how to craft their own yarn coasters on cardboard looms. On July 17th the library hosted one of its most popular kid's programs yet with a free-form paint-your-own-canvas art activity. Each kid was able to express their creativity by painting two miniature canvases with whatever they wanted. Tech Help also continued to be offered on demand on every Wednesday.



August's first public program will be our monthly children's story time and snack, taking place starting at 4:30 PM on Thursday the 7th. No sign-up is required. The next week on Thursday the 14th, we'll host a mug painting adult craft with tea provided at the end! This program is free, but space is limited and registration in advance is required. This program will start at 6:00 PM. Northampton Free Library will close out the month with a watermelon art activity for kids on Thursday, August 21st starting at 6:00 PM. This program is free and no registration is required.







# Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



This July started with a bang as we celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July at Cape Charles Memorial Library through themed Storytime programs for both 0-4 and 5-11 age groups, Grab & Go Bags, and a display table at the Cape Charles 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade!



This month we also celebrated our local helpers with a Community Helpers Day on July 16<sup>th</sup>, where community helpers (Cape Charles Police, Cape Charles Fire Department, the Bookmobile, The Coast Guard, etc.) set up booths and gave goodies and demonstrations of their work for all the people who attended.



This has been a jam-packed July, all our staff have been working non-stop facilitating both our summer programs and our regular monthly programs, like STEM Club, Crochet & Knit Club, the Master Gardeners visit, and the ever-popular Creature Catch ID and Release. We were also very excited to have a bunch of performers visit such as The Barefoot Puppets theater troupe who come all the way from Richmond to perform their rendition of the *Gingerbread Boy* thanks to funding from the Virginia Commission of Arts and the Virginia Living Museum from Newport News who gave a terrific informative presentation about a host of fun critters, alongside some terrific programs with some guest instructors such as a recycling program led by Northampton 4H's Erin Morgan, and a Ballet Basics class led by Megan Valentine. We were also excited to close out a busy July with our Family BINGO Event, full of fun and prizes for the whole family!





# Chincoteague Island Library

Linda Ryan, for the Board of Directors



**This July was very special for our Library. On July 4th, the library celebrated its 30-year anniversary at its Annual Independence Day Parade.** We are so appreciative of the support we have received from the Eastern Shore Public Library Trustees and staff through the years.

Master of ceremonies and board president, Paul Miller, welcomed everyone, introduced Chincoteague Mayor, Denise Bowden, parade organizer, Lou Bender a.k.a. Uncle Sam, and thanked all the current and previous board members and volunteers who have helped make our library such a vital part of the Island Community.



Pastor Jon Woodburn of the Christ United Methodist Church gave the invocation, Aaron Reames sang God Bless America accompanied by members of the American Sign Language Class, and Lou Bender led everyone around the Town Park with Doug Mills from the Island Theatre providing the sound system and marching music. Island Creamery gift certificates were given to the oldest participant, the youngest participant, and the group with the most participants. This parade has become an annual tradition and is enjoyed by all.

**Library Displays:** The library has been decked out with patriotic buntings for Independence Day. Chincoteague Ponies and Misty's Birthday are the main themes of the indoor and window displays. Our puzzle for the month was, of course, Chincoteague Ponies. This year, to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Pony Penning, volunteer, Jodie Novak, and library manager, Teresa Wright, prepared a scavenger hunt for patrons and visitors to acquaint themselves with facts about the Annual Pony Swim.



Continued...



## Summer Children's Programs:

**Young Explorers (for children age 5 and older):** This program has grown significantly since it began several years ago. Over 20 children are attending each week. This July, we were visited by the Chincoteague Bay Field Station and the Virginia Spaceport Authority. We had a tour and were shown a movie at the Island Theatre, and had a tour of the Beebe Ranch. Next month we will be going to the newly renovated Chincoteague YMCA for warm-ups and exercise, and be visited by art teacher, Jackie Allan, for sea shell art. We hope to have more Young Explorers' STEAM Programs throughout the year.



**Tales 4 Tots (for children age 3 to 4):** This month the themes were Colors, Shapes, Numbers, and Shells. Next month, we will be reading about Sea Creatures and having a "Kraft 4 Kids" day.



**Summer Reading—"Lubbock's Learners":** Twenty students have enrolled in the summer reading program, which began on June 14 and will run through August 9. The students are busy reading and filling in their slips to enter the drawing for Kindle Fires which will take place at the wrap-up party on August 14. This program is funded by the owners of Lubbock, a beloved pet that died several years ago.