



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Finders Keepers:  
Building the Arlington History Archive**

**2016 VACo Award Submission**

**Included with Submission:**

- **Application**
- **Overview and Summary**
- **Program Description**
- **Visuals**
- **Final Report**

*If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday.*

*~ Pearl S. Buck*

## **OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY**

Arlington County Government is committed to preserving the unique history of Arlington County for residents and future generations. The County has an established mission to archive the history of the Arlington community managed by the Department of Libraries and a mandated duty to archive government records managed by the Department of Technology Services. As each Department faces the task of digitizing a backlog of records and archival materials, an opportunity has emerged to unite these efforts and create a shared, online Arlington History Archive that will tell Arlington's story for future generations of students, historians, and public policy makers.

What does it mean to come from somewhere? The Arlington Local History Task Force was convened to discover just that. In the fall of 2014, Arlington County Manager Barbara Donnellan appointed a task force of community members including archivists, artists, community activists, and historians. The task force also included County staff liaisons from historic preservation, cultural affairs, libraries, and technology services.

The task force was asked to articulate a vision and make broad recommendations toward the goal of ensuring Arlington's history – in a variety of media – is collected, digitally preserved, and made publicly available in an online archive. The work of the task group resulted in a final report to the County Board and a staff work plan to be carried out over several years by both County staff and community members.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **Problem or Issue**

Arlington's history is deeply intertwined with America's story. From the early settlers of the land we now call Arlington, through the American Revolution, Civil War, the two world wars of the 20th century, the integration of the public school system, the evolution of transit-oriented design, and the tragic events of September 11, 2001 that struck Arlington directly, our local history has been an important component of our nation's narrative.

The artifacts, documents, oral histories, and ephemera that tell this rich history are currently located with many different community members, community groups, and government institutions. There is no easy way to access all this information efficiently and comprehensively. Why does it matter? As technology both broadens the amount and types of information that must be preserved, it presents a huge opportunity as well. Through technology and a clear vision of what is important to collect, we can ensure our local history is preserved and readily available for future generations through an Arlington History Archive.

### **Who are the players in solving this problem?**

The Center for Local History (CLH), a division of the Arlington Public Library, is the lead government agency for the collection of local community records gathered from individuals, civic groups, and local businesses under the banner of "collecting, preserving, and sharing our community's history." Their efforts at preserving our local history are enhanced by community organizations, such as the Arlington Historical Society and the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington. Collected media range from newspapers, photographs, maps, letters and diaries, oral histories and high school yearbooks, to an iconic street sign of a shuttered local business.

The Department of Technology Services (DTS) is the lead agency in preserving Arlington County's official government records. DTS has established policies for collecting and preserving millions of records at the departmental and program levels. The department faces the challenge of heightening awareness within each government department of the importance of records preservation within a defined set of records management standards.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) joined in this effort to preserve Arlington's historical records, in particular on behalf of Arlington students and scholastic programs emphasizing our rich local history. Access to the records encourages students to utilize the archive as a critical resource in their educational track, from pre-K through high school. Artifacts and other display items leave their archival homes to visit school children, sparking interest in local history from the earliest ages. Carry this education forward into adulthood and you will find a person knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the place where they grew up. Investment in development of an Arlington History Archive is an investment in the education of our young people instilling a strong sense of community in our shared history. The benefits from this investment will be realized for years to come.

### **Results of Program – Outcomes**

The Task Force met throughout 2015 to conduct interviews, tours, presentations, surveys, and research inquiries. In December, the Task Force presented its findings to the County Board and the County Manager. The year-long study yielded six recommendations, to be implemented over the next five years:

- Develop a long-term strategy to implement a unified digital archive to include County government and community materials with a common metadata cataloging scheme
- Allocate staffing/resources to support ongoing County operations for archiving (capture, classify, digitize, and preserve)

- Invest in facilities and infrastructure dedicated to storing, preserving, and providing public access to digital and physical records
- Appoint dedicated Records Coordinators and create templates to enable life-cycle management of key government projects
- Expand records preservation training and education program for County employees
- Collaborate with Arlington Public Schools to integrate local history topics into the school curriculum through the use of primary source material, and ensure preservation of historical school records

Progress has been made with several of the recommendations:

***Enable life-cycle management of key government projects.*** In September 2015, staff from Libraries, DTS, and the department of Human Services (DHS) agreed to aggregate and make publicly available materials related to the funding, planning, and implementation of the Mary Marshall Assisted Living Residence, the first of its kind in the nation. Over nine months, DHS staff gathered and digitized all available documentation (reports, minutes, planning documents, letters, and photographs). The digital files were transferred to the County Records Manager for retention and storage. Arlington Public Library archivists have begun to review copies of the files to produce a comprehensive finding aid that will complement the government record collection with any related community records, including oral histories.

The result? The first comprehensive County-community research collection specifically packaged for access by scholars and researchers. This pilot project is a model that can be applied to other significant collections of county and community records such as planning projects, records from 9/11, and records from the era of school integration.

***Government Records and Information Management.*** In December 2015, the County Manager issued an Administrative Regulation to ensure County compliance with

the Virginia Public Records Act (VPRA) and to require that permanent County records be preserved and nonpermanent records disposed of in a timely and orderly manner.

***Collaboration with Arlington Public Schools (APS).*** County staff who served on the task force met with APS staff to increase use of County records and collections of the Center for Local History in school curricula. Several projects are now underway to introduce primary resource material from the Center for Local History to K-12 students: publishing an Arlington history picture book for children; creating “artifact trunks” for Early American and WWII eras aimed at elementary and middle school students; preparing a field trip guide to local history sites to include walking excursions, and student-directed photo documentation of neighborhoods and sites of historical interest; and a speaker series featuring local residents who have made unique contributions to Arlington’s history.

***Increase Staffing Resources*** An existing vacant position was reclassified as a Digital Archivist responsible for planning, managing, and executing archival digitization projects. Additional interns will be recruited to supplement professional staff in Libraries and DTS.

***Raising public awareness of County records and the local history program.***

Ongoing community outreach is an important mainstay of the Arlington history program. The Task Force conducted a number of surveys at the annual Arlington County Fair and online to inform the community about the archive, elicit their input on collecting and digitizing priorities, and invite them to participate in building the online archive as potential users or contributors. The sustainability of an Arlington History Archive will require an ongoing public information campaign with outreach to individual citizens, schools, community organizations, business groups, churches, and civic organizations.

## **Benefits of Program**

Public awareness and participation will be critical to the Arlington History Archive's long term success. Relations between the County and Arlington Public Schools will be particularly beneficial to young Arlingtonians and will deepen their sense of their community and its history. Increasing the presence of local history in schools' curriculum will strengthen the ties that bind younger people to our collective heritage.

The lessons of local history -- everything from the changing appearances of neighborhoods and buildings over the decades, to the tensions in the early morning darkness as nine Confederate soldiers squared off against hundreds of Union troops at Arlington Mill, to the integration of our public schools -- is how our history comes to life and makes us proud stewards of the place we call "home."

## Visuals

1

Saturday Aug. 18 1917  
11 days at sea / Boat  
U.S. Transport San Jacinto

Dearest Mamma

How to beat the  
old censoras this is my only chance  
Am sending this letter to be  
posted in the States by a  
gunner on board our trans-  
port.

Now to get down to facts  
Where are we? It is 7 P.M.  
not and were <sup>and</sup> about 48 hours  
from port. Haven't seen any  
thing of a submarine al-  
though we are in the most

2

dangerous zone now. Namely  
off the coast of Spain. Now  
that I have told you this  
much I will begin at the  
beginning and tell you all  
everything.

Sunday night <sup>and</sup> we were  
ordered to be ready to go at 10  
o'clock Monday morning. Monday  
came and nothing happened ex-  
cept that we got payed 30. Lu.

The evening a truck came  
and took our baggage away.  
We were ordered to sleep in  
our clothes. At eleven o'clock  
the sarge came around and

Example from the Arlington Community Archives Collection

The Eastman-Fenwick Collection houses a wide variety of personal papers of first the Eastman and then Eastman-Fenwick family, spanning several generations. There is correspondence (including some from the front lines of the Civil War and World War I), photographs, financial and legal papers, sermons, diaries, maps, and even Virginia State reports and campaign materials from Charles Fenwick's time in the state legislature. It is a unique, wide-ranging collection that gives a comprehensive view of an important Arlington family.



*A Center for Local History exhibit at the Arlington County Fair. The Task Force conducted community surveys at the 2015 Fair.*



*Delegate Alfonso Lopez presents a resolution to the Arlington History Task Force and Library Director Diane Kresh (pictured) honoring former Arlington County Preservationist Sarah Collins.*