

## Barriers to Diversity to Be Examined

BY SARAH KITH

The Library is preparing to enter a new phase in its effort to expand diversity, equity and inclusion at every level of the organization. Building on the input of the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (DIWG) over the past two years, next steps will include analyzing barriers in recruitment, hiring and retention practices that affect the Library's ability to maintain a diverse workforce.

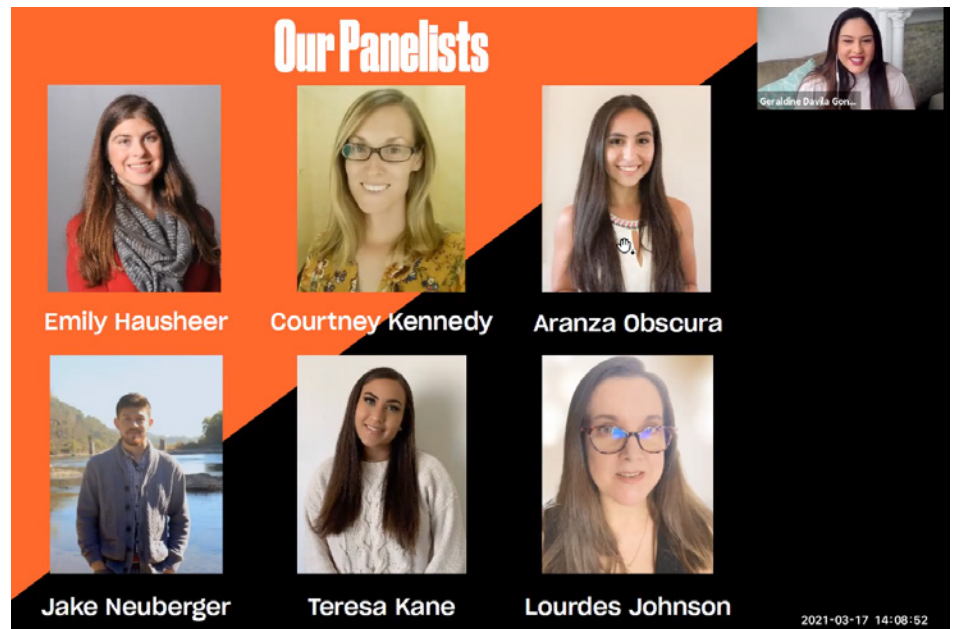
The DIWG came into being in 2019 to support the Library's 2019-21 Diversity and Inclusion Plan (<https://go.usa.gov/xfYzu>). Its membership is made up of representatives from service units across the Library and from the Library's staff unions. The representatives were nominated for appointment to the DIWG by their service unit heads or directorate.

The DIWG has worked since its launch to promote a culture of shared commitment and continuous improvement on matters of equal employment opportunity and diversity and inclusion based on a data-driven understanding of the Library workforce and workplace. Most recently, on Nov. 10 and 17, the DIWG hosted two hour-long online staff forums to inform the Library community about the group's mission and activities.

Staff had the opportunity before and after the forums to share their concerns, comments and questions by email or through DIWG representatives. Key themes that emerged ranged from a desire for transparency and accountabil-

**DIWG, CONTINUED ON 7**

### Our Panelists



Emily Hausheer   Courtney Kennedy   Aranza Obscura

Jake Neuberger   Teresa Kane   Lourdes Johnson

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Law Library

Law Library interns who helped to transcribe Spanish legal documents shared their discoveries during a [lunchtime webinar on March 17](#).

## Spanish-Language Crowdsourcing Project Has Successful First Year

More than 800 volunteers transcribed rare documents from a unique Law Library collection.

BY GERALDINE DAVILA GONZALEZ

The debut of the Library's first-ever crowdsourcing transcription project in a language other than English at first seemed ill-fated: Just days before the launch of Herencia: Centuries of Spanish Legal Documents, scheduled for March 19 of last year in the Great Hall, the Library closed to the public to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Quickly, however, project staff pivoted to a virtual unveiling, holding an online transcribe-a-thon on the same day. Then, they added other

outreach initiatives, most recently a remote internship program. Slowly but surely, interest in the project began to grow. Now, a little more than a year after its launch, more than 800 volunteers have transcribed over 3,000 pages.

"The pandemic disrupted our plans to host Herencia transcription and review events on-site," Robert Brammer, chief of the Law Library's Office of External Relations, said. "As it turns out, we have been able to host more events virtually and invite people across the world to participate."

**CROWDSOURCING, CONTINUED ON 6**

# NOTICES

## DONATED TIME

The following employees have satisfied eligibility requirements to receive leave donations from other staff members. Contact Lisa Davis at lidav@loc.gov.

Lynette Brown  
Bailey Cahall

William Mahannah  
Eric Wolfson

## COVID-19 UPDATE

The Health Services Division (HSD) recognizes that some employees have received COVID-19 vaccines. However, the Library is not modifying its on-site health and safety protocols based on the vaccination status of employees. Library staff are required to wear masks when they are in shared workspaces where at least six feet of distance cannot be maintained and in common areas, hallways and restrooms.

HSD continues to monitor Library staff members with symptoms, clinical diagnoses or positive test results associated with COVID-19. On April 15, HSD announced that it had received two new reports of symptoms of COVID-19 or confirmed cases since its previous COVID-19 announcement on April 8. Most employees reporting symptoms are not diagnosed with COVID-19, but, out of caution, the Library is monitoring all reports of symptoms.

More information on the Library's pandemic response: <https://go.usa.gov/xdtV5> (intranet) or <https://go.usa.gov/xdtVQ> (public-facing staff webpage)

## UPDATED EMERGENCY GUIDANCE

With enhanced security measures still in place on Capitol Hill, the Security and Emergency Preparedness Directorate has made available [phase 2.2 of its protective action guidance for responding to building emergencies](#). Now that perimeter fencing around the Library has been removed, the updated guidance includes detailed information about social distancing during emergencies, evacuation assembly areas and best ways to contact emergency services.

Staff are encouraged to download the Joint Emergency Mass Notification System (JEMNS) mobile app on their personal devices and register to receive text alerts. For instructions and more information, go to <https://go.usa.gov/xs5mR>. Learn more about the Library's emergency guidance: <https://go.usa.gov/xs5mQ>.

Questions? Call (202) 707-8708 or send an email message to [epp@loc.gov](mailto:epp@loc.gov).

# GAZETTE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

[loc.gov/staff/gazette](http://loc.gov/staff/gazette)

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### MISSION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library's central mission is to engage, inspire and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

### ABOUT THE GAZETTE

An official publication of the Library of Congress, The Gazette encourages Library managers and staff to submit articles and photographs of general interest. Submissions will be edited to convey the most necessary information.

Back issues of The Gazette in print are available in the Communications Office, LM 143. Electronic archived issues and a color PDF file of the current issue are available online at [loc.gov/staff/gazette](http://loc.gov/staff/gazette).

### GAZETTE WELCOMES LETTERS FROM STAFF

Staff members are invited to use the Gazette for lively and thoughtful debate relevant to Library issues. Letters must be signed by the author, whose place of work and telephone extension should be included so we can verify authorship. If a letter calls for management response, an explanation of a policy or actions or clarification of fact, we will ask for management response.—Ed.

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### GAZETTE DEADLINES

The deadline for editorial copy for the May 7 Gazette is Wednesday, April 28.

Email editorial copy and letters to the editor to [mhartsell@loc.gov](mailto:mhartsell@loc.gov) and [wmal@loc.gov](mailto:wmal@loc.gov).

To promote events through the Library's online calendar ([www.loc.gov/loc/events](http://www.loc.gov/loc/events)) and the Gazette Calendar, email event and contact information to [calendar@loc.gov](mailto:calendar@loc.gov) by 9 a.m. Monday of the week of publication.

Boxed announcements should be submitted electronically (text files) by 9 a.m. Monday the week of publication to [mhartsell@loc.gov](mailto:mhartsell@loc.gov) and [wmal@loc.gov](mailto:wmal@loc.gov).



**Copyright office PRESENTS**

## THE CREATIVE BUSINESS:

Celebrating World IP Day and Taking Your Ideas to Market

**Monday | April 26, 2021**  
NOON – 1:00 P.M. ET

An Online Event  
Register at [copyright.gov/events/creative-business/](http://copyright.gov/events/creative-business/)

# New Season of ‘America Works’ Podcast Launches

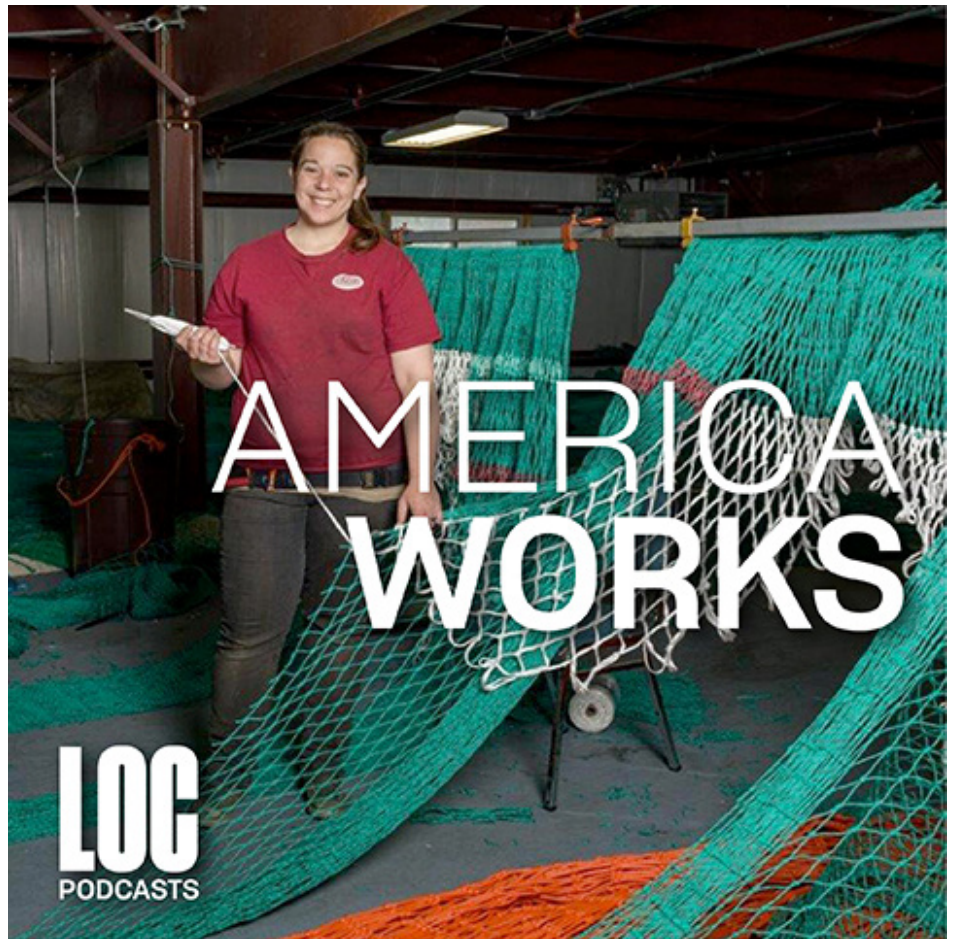
The American Folklife Center (AFC) is bringing more workers’ voices from around the country to listeners with the second season of “America Works,” a podcast series celebrating the diversity, resilience and creativity of the American workforce during a time of economic challenge and transition. The new season features first-hand accounts of a port worker, an electrician, a nurse, a waste collector and more.

Each 10-minute episode of “America Works” introduces listeners to an individual worker whose first-person narrative adds to the wealth of our shared national experience. The first two episodes are available on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher and at [loc.gov/podcasts](http://loc.gov/podcasts). The subsequent six episodes will be released each Thursday through June 3.

“America Works” is a “testament to the wisdom, wit, knowledge and dedication of today’s working Americans,” said Nancy Groce, the senior AFC folklife specialist who hosts the podcast. “It is inspirational to listen to their stories and insights and realize how many committed, thoughtful and creative fellow citizens are out there working to improve their communities, support their families and build a better future for all of us.”

Each podcast episode is based on a longer interview from AFC’s ongoing [Occupational Folklife Project](#), a multiyear initiative to document the culture of contemporary American workers. Over the past 12 years, AFC fieldworkers have interviewed more than 1,200 working Americans and documented their experiences in more than 100 professions. More than 500 of these full-length interviews are now available online.

This season of “America Works” reflects the occupational and regional diversity that characterizes the entirety of the Occupational Folklife Project’s collection. In the season’s first episode, listeners are introduced to Sarah



**Sarah Fortin discusses her on-the-job experiences making fishnets in the new season of “America Works.”**

Fortin, a fishnet-maker in New Bedford, Massachusetts, one of the country’s most important fishing ports. She discusses gaining the necessary skillset for her trade and the challenges she faces as a young woman worker.

“There’s been a bit of a struggle here and there with some of the old-timers because ... they’re just not used to seeing a woman that knows as much about the twine and stuff,” Fortin said.

Other featured workers of the season include Kim Spicer, an electrician and proud member of Local No. 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Queens, New York. Jennifer Sgro is a nurse practitioner who provides treatment to residents

of Chicago for the Night Ministry’s outreach bus, a nonprofit that travels to low-income neighborhoods every evening. Mike Peabody of Montpelier, Vermont, is a garbage worker who also leads the New England community’s recycling program.

The new episodes join those from the first season of “America Works,” which launched in August 2020.

Listen to a trailer for “America Works” and subscribe [here](#). ■



Signe Carey

## Signe Carey

*Signe Carey is a collections specialist in the Researcher and Reference Services Division.*

### **Tell us a little about your background.**

I grew up in rural Upper Michigan after my folks left suburbia for a simpler life in the 1970s. It was a unique childhood that taught me self-sufficiency and gave me a deep appreciation of the outdoors. After high school, I majored in elementary education at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, while working at several libraries part time. By graduation, I knew library work was for me, and I went on to earn a master's degree in library science from the University of Illinois, Champaign.

My first job was as assistant director of a small town public library in northern Minnesota. I was fortunate to be part of its new library building project and was charged with leading fundraisers, speaking at town hall meetings and doing all kinds of terrifying things that I never learned in library school. After eventually moving back to Michigan, I took a librarian position at a small liberal arts univer-

sity, where I did everything from reference and cataloging to bibliographic instruction. I also taught a seminar orienting new students to campus life.

### **What brought you to the Library, and what do you do?**

My future husband was living in Maryland, so I moved to this area 15 years ago to join him. I started at the Library as a technician in the Congressional Loan Department, where I filled book and article requests from Congress, the White House, the Supreme Court and other courts. The job gave me a valuable understanding of the Library's vast collections and a good insight into what Congress needs.

Five years later, I became a librarian on the same team, and I now work as a collections specialist. I participate in collection development, track down books for Congress in the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate and the Copyright Office and do some light cataloging.

During the pandemic, I have been teleworking full time, going in only every so often to hunt for books needed by Congress. We have been offering more electronic services to Congress, which has gone quite well. Overall, my duties have actually transitioned easily to telework, but I do miss seeing my co-workers in person.

### **What are some of your standout projects?**

Just as the pandemic hit, we were about to roll out a program to offer more services to local embassies. Many were eager to get started. Unfortunately, we had to shelve the project, but I look forward to revisiting the endeavor down the line.

### **What do you enjoy doing outside work?**

I'm an amateur genealogist, and I enjoyed discovering that many of my ancestors on both sides settled in Maryland as early as the 1600s. So, it has been fun ending up where my family originated. I also enjoy hiking, baking and

gardening. But these days, keeping my 11-year-old daughter off of social media and focused on virtual school takes up most of my extra time. I am also currently reading "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig and highly recommend it.

### **What is something your co-workers may not know about you?**

I have been able to speak or read five languages over my lifetime: Latin, ancient Greek, Italian, Spanish and Finnish. Right now, I am not fluent in any of them anymore, but I try to keep up with a little Finnish since it was the most challenging to learn. ■

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## **UNCERTAINTY AND LOSS: THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC**

**April 27, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

The Health Services Division and the Science, Technology and Business Division are hosting a webinar to promote understanding of grief and loss during the pandemic. Physical health, emotional well-being, economic security, social connections and spiritual life have all been affected over the past year. The Library is fortunate to have access to researchers and mental health experts who are willing to share their knowledge and cutting-edge information to bring hope, promote health literacy and encourage a dialogue about coping skills and mental health. [Register here.](#)

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## **HCD SERVICES PORTAL**

During this period of remote work, the Human Capital Directorate (HCD) services portal (<https://bit.ly/31fqIKw>) is there to help. Ask questions of HCD professionals; submit documents related to benefits, retirement and payroll matters; and track requests.



## Ruth Freitag

Ruth S. Freitag, 96, who retired from the Library in 2006 after 55 years of federal service, passed away on Oct. 3 at Powhatan Nursing Home in Falls Church, Virginia, and was buried with military honors in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She was a legend at the Library for her skills in bibliography and reference and was admired and respected by scholars, scientists and writers, including Carl Sagan and Isaac Asimov, who wrote a limerick for her.

Freitag grew up in Lancaster and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Penn State. She began her federal career in 1945 when she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps, serv-

ing three years in China. She then joined the Foreign Service and served as a communications specialist at the American embassy in London and later in Hong Kong. After two years there, she and her widowed mother traveled around the world, finally settling in California.

She earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Southern California and came to the Library in 1959 as one of six special recruits. She spent 19 years in the Bibliography and Reference Correspondence Section before moving to the Office of Bibliography. A stickler for accuracy and good form, she compiled correspondence and bibliographical style manuals to ensure excellence and consistency and taught classes of special recruits and staff. In 1965, her bibliographic expertise and knowledge were instrumental in shaping the MARC (machine-readable cataloging) format. She joined the then Science and Technology Division as a senior science specialist in the 1980s.

Freitag became one of the Library's foremost experts in reference work, known for her encyclo-

pedic knowledge of resources in science and technology. She had a special interest in astronomy, compiling "Recent Publications Relating to the History of Astronomy" for the Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society between 1988 and 2001. She spent her vacations in the British Library and at university observatories throughout Europe.

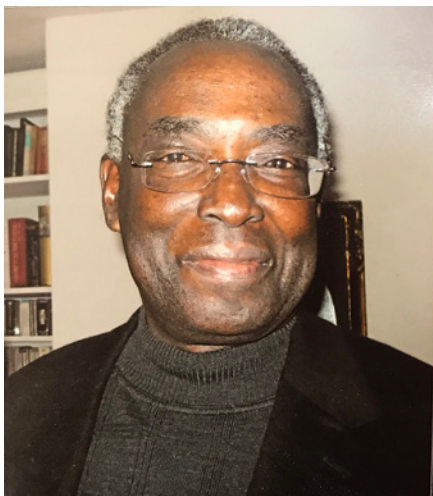
Freitag's other compilations include the "Star of Bethlehem: A List of References" (1979); the 3,235-entry bibliography "Halley's Comet" (1984); "Battle of the Centuries" (1995); and "Women in Astronomy: A Comprehensive Bibliography."

In their book "Comets," Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan wrote that encountering Freitag was one of the most pleasant experiences they had in writing it: "Ms. Freitag's knowledge, enthusiasm for her subject and willingness to share a treasury of comet illustrations speaks well of the nation's library."

"She was a walking encyclopedia," Constance Carter, the retired head of the Science Reference Section, said. "She lived in the collections and taught us how to mine those collections." ■

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## JOSEPHUS NELSON MEMORIAL SERVICE



**May 29, 11 a.m.**

**Amphitheater, Washington National Cathedral**

Join colleagues to remember the life of longtime and much-admired Library of Congress staff member Josephus Nelson, who died last April. The service, delayed because of the pandemic, is being hosted by St. Augustine's Episcopal Church and will be held at the Washington National Cathedral, located at 3101 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, D.C., 20016. All attendees are asked to wear masks and observe social distancing.

Questions? Contact Rev. Scott Lipscomb at [priest@staugustinesdc.org](mailto:priest@staugustinesdc.org) or (202) 554-3222.

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## OIG WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

Report suspected illegal activities, waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement in Library of Congress administration and operations to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). A link to all Library regulations is available on the staff intranet at <http://staff.loc.gov/sites/rules-and-regulations/>.

To make a report, contact OIG via the online form at [www.loc.gov/about/office-of-the-inspector-general/contact-us/](http://www.loc.gov/about/office-of-the-inspector-general/contact-us/) or report anonymously by mail to 101 Independence Ave., S.E., LM 630, Washington, D.C., 20540-1060.

## CROWDSOURCING, CONTINUED FROM 1

Herencia (<https://go.usa.gov/xHrX5>) is a collaboration between the Law Library; the Hispanic Reading Room; the African, Latin American and Western European Division; and the Library's inaugural crowdsourcing transcription project, By the People.

It focuses on a collection of Spanish legal documents in Spanish, Latin and Catalan dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries. By making the documents more searchable and accessible online, the campaign aims to open the legal, religious and personal histories of Spain and its colonies to greater discovery by researchers, historians, genealogists and life-long learners.

Herencia, which translates roughly to heritage or inheritance in English, operates the same way By the People (<https://go.usa.gov/xHrNz>) works and uses the same platform. Volunteers are invited to transcribe historical documents word-for-word or peer-review transcribed documents. Completed transcriptions are then integrated into the Library's digital collections, making them searchable by keyword and readable with accessibility technologies.

The Law Library acquired the Spanish Legal Documents collection in 1941. Most of the documents relate to disputes about inheritance and titles of nobility, taxes and privileges of the Catholic Church. Items of special interest include rare print and manuscript documents pertaining to the Spanish Inquisition, opinions of legal scholars of the Church, decisions rendered by the king's court and other decrees by Spanish kings and government officials.

In the early 1980s, funds became available to organize, index and microfilm the collection. Then, in 2017, digitization began. Herencia was selected for crowdsourcing because of its value as a collection and its likely appeal to historically minded volunteers. Still, the pool of potential volunteers interested in Spanish legal documents tends to

be smaller than for By the People projects focusing on widely popular topics such as U.S. presidents, baseball history and civil rights, even considering the fact that Spanish or Latin proficiency isn't required – Herencia volunteers can simply transcribe what they see.

To build participation, the Law Library introduced a remote Herencia internship in January. Interns are transcribing documents and reviewing transcriptions, helping to identify names, places and dates missing from existing descriptions and researching secondary sources that provide context about documents. They are also identifying and inviting potential new volunteers to participate in Herencia.

Among this spring's seven interns are a first-generation Mexican American undergraduate at Texas A&M International University who seeks to learn more about Spanish history and culture; a first-year student at Claremont McKenna College who wants to put her knowledge of Latin to use; a librarian born and raised in Lima, Peru; and a historian specializing in Latin America who is pursuing a master's in library and information science.

"The Law Library is fortunate to be able to host such a talented group of multilingual interns who can perform original research and help us share Herencia with a broader audience," Jay Sweany, chief of the library's Digital Resources Division, said.

To celebrate the first anniversary of Herencia, the Law Library hosted a review challenge in March in which volunteers peer-reviewed 159 transcriptions within just four days. As a point of comparison, and evidence of the project's growing popularity, during its first review challenge in July 2020, it took volunteers 10 days to complete review of 140 transcriptions.

The library also hosted an online conversation with interns in its "lunch and learn" webinar series to mark the anniversary. The panel, which explored the interns' experiences and favorite discoveries (<https://go.usa.gov/xHrm9>), attracted 50 participants. Herencia is now accepting applications for summer internships (<https://go.usa.gov/xHrmv>).

"It's hard to believe that this campaign started over a year ago and that we now have thousands of fully transcribed pages that will become part of the Library's permanent collection," Sweany said. "We are grateful for the work of our volunteers, our interns and our staff for making this possible."

Now that the Law Library has a full year of experience with a crowdsourcing project, it's time to launch another. In honor of Law Day 2021, the Law Library and By the People will release Historical Legal Reports from the Law Library of Congress. Look for an announcement next week! ■

**More information:** <https://go.usa.gov/xHWQb>

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## JOIN THE CAPITOL HILL TENNIS CLUB

The Capitol Hill Tennis Club is an informal organization of current and former staff of the Senate, House, Supreme Court and Library of Congress. It begins its 52nd season on May 2 with social doubles, drills and lessons from 3 to 6 p.m. The club welcomes players of all levels, from beginner to advanced, to play on the clay courts at the tennis center in East Potomac Park. Membership for permanent, full-time Library staff is \$90 for the season. For more information, contact Marc Levinson, [mlevinson@crs.loc.gov](mailto:mlevinson@crs.loc.gov), or (202) 707-7240.

## DIWG, CONTINUED FROM 1

ity on the part of Library leaders; staff training and education on unconscious biases, disability and accessibility; input and metrics on diversity, equity and inclusion; and improved hiring practices.

“The Library values diversity and inclusion,” Mark Sweeney, principal deputy Librarian of Congress, said. “When we listen and respect what is both similar and different, we foster an inclusive workplace where staff with diverse backgrounds are contributing toward innovations and accomplishing the Library’s mission and vision so that all Americans feel connected to the Library.”

Based on its work to date, the DIWG has identified three areas to prioritize in efforts to improve diversity and inclusion at the Library: education and training, communications and retention and hiring practices. The DIWG has also advocated for highly visible senior leadership support for diversity and inclusion; it will be a cornerstone of the Library’s diversity and inclusion initiatives and practices going forward.

In support of the work of the DIWG, the Library is taking action at the executive level. Ryan Ramsey, the Library’s chief of staff, noted that Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden has accepted the 2019–21 Diversity and Inclusion Plan and approved the DIWG’s request to hire an expert consultant to recommend best practices to cultivate diversity and inclusion at the Library.

Marcia Byrd, a former Library human resources consultant, will work with the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Programs (EEODP), the Human Capital Directorate and the Office of the General Counsel to undertake a barrier analysis, or study of roadblocks to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce. “If barriers are identified, we will take measures to eliminate them, where practicable,” Byrd said.

Barriers can exist in employment policies, practices or conditions of

employment, she explained. The Library will attempt to address potential barriers by developing hypotheses about their causes, which can then be tested.

“The entire process is designed to provide equality of access, competition and opportunity,” she said. “Notably, the objective is not proportional representation, as numerical goals for hiring, promotion or other employment benefits are illegal.”

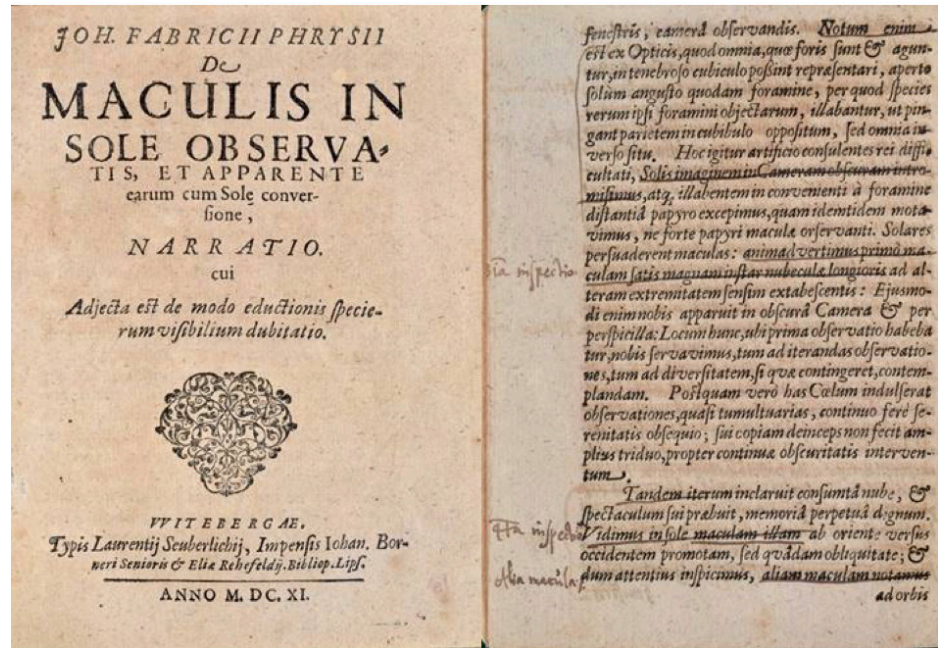
Throughout the remainder of 2021, the DIWG will serve as the key sounding board for these efforts. “I am deeply appreciative for the DIWG members’ dedication and commitment to our ongoing work to create and sustain an inclusive work culture and grow a diverse

workforce at the Library,” Vicki Magnus, chief of EEODP and chair of the DIWG, said.

In addition to its internal efforts, the Library is engaged in outreach on diversity and inclusion. The Library’s recently announced grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, for example, provides the opportunity for the Library to engage with diverse partners representing underrepresented community organizations and to increase its engagement with diverse Americans and record stories in their voices.

“Our diversity, equity and inclusion effort is a journey to align our internal culture our mission to serve Congress and our diverse constituents,” Magnus said. ■

## RARE WORK OF ASTRONOMY ACQUIRED



The Rare Book and Special Collections Division has acquired the first edition of the earliest printed work on sunspots. The extremely rare account by Johann Fabricius was printed in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1611. The Library’s James Madison Council supported the acquisition.

Your Employee Personal Page (EPP) is at [www.nfc.usda.gov/epps/](http://www.nfc.usda.gov/epps/)