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Shawn Miller

Katie Daughtry, a digital conversion specialist in the Preservation Services Division, surveys books shelved in the Jefferson Building in June.

Survey to Assess Condition of General Collections

Involving millions of volumes, the project will inform preservation strategies for years to come.

BY WENDI A. MALONEY

Everyone knows the Library of Congress has a lot of books – about 25.5 million and growing. When you have that many books, shelved on dozens of floors over hundreds of thousands of square feet, how, exactly, do you assess their condition?

If you're Beatriz Haspo, you pair portable e-tablets with an all-hands-on-deck effort. Haspo is the Preservation Directorate's collections officer, and she designed the Library's first-ever comprehensive survey of the General Collections at the request of Jacob Nadal, the Library's Preservation Director.

Now underway, the survey will provide critical information to help the directorate carry out its mission to ensure long-term access to the Library's holdings.

"Good doctors listen to their patients, and good preservation programs listen to the books," Nadal said. "I've done condition surveys for every collection I've worked with, and it never fails that some myths get busted and we see some better ways to manage the collections come to light."

The general collections consist of books, pamphlets, bound periodicals and other printed materials acquired since 1801. The survey focuses on the millions of them

COLLECTIONS, CONTINUED ON 4

NOTICES

DONATED TIME

The following employees have satisfied eligibility requirements to receive leave donations from other staff members. Contact Amy McAllister at amcallister@loc.gov.

Christina Arabia
Beverly Banks
Robert Crews
Virginia Crofford

Chenille Lowrance
Geraldine Robinson
Adam Rosenberg

JUNIOR FELLOWS DISPLAY DAY

July 19, 1 p.m.
[Online](#)

All Library staff members are invited to join the Library's 2023 junior fellows for a 90-minute display and overview of the diverse projects they worked on this summer. The fellows will also share their extraordinary experiences with the Library community.

This is an internal Library event. Staff members are therefore asked not to share the link with external parties.

Questions? Contact the display day team at juniorfellows@loc.gov.

AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

July 19
8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mumford Room

Blood donations help save lives. So far this year, Library employees have donated over 100 units of blood, potentially saving over 300 lives. Sign up [here](#) to donate on July 19.

Questions? Contact HSD at healthservices@loc.gov.

JOIN CCDI SUMMER FUSE WEBINAR

All Library staff members are invited to attend the second annual [Connecting Communities Digital Initiative](#) (CCDI) Summer Fuse webinar on July 18 from noon to 4 p.m.

This year's event, "Celebrating the Nexus," will feature a full afternoon of new awardee presentations, a spotlight on CCDI Scholar in Residence Maya Cade's *Tenderness in Black Film* effort and a panel on Asian American and Pacific Islander digital humanities.

CCDI is part of the Librarywide Of the People: Widening the Path program. Explore the speaker schedule and register to attend on [Zoom](#). For questions, please contact ccdi@loc.gov.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS

July 19
West Dining Room, 11 a.m.

The Health Services Division is hosting an introduction to the issue of human trafficking. It will focus on defining, recognizing and reporting human trafficking and its impact on communities.

Human trafficking affects not only those directly involved, but also the mental and social well-being of communities. Attendees will learn about community resources and the Department of Homeland Security's [Blue Campaign](#) to raise national public awareness of human trafficking.

Questions? Send an email to healthservices@loc.gov.

GAZETTE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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.

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 July 28 Gazette is Wednesday, July 19.

Email editorial copy and letters to the editor to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

To promote events through the Library's online calendar (www.loc.gov/loc/events) and the Gazette Calendar, email event and contact information to 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 and wmal@loc.gov.

Saunders to Receive Prize for American Fiction

He wrote bestselling books such as ‘Liberation Day’ and ‘Lincoln in the Bardo.’

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden announced last week that the 2023 Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction will be awarded to George Saunders, the best-selling author of books such as “Liberation Day,” “Lincoln in the Bardo” and “Tenth of December.”

“George Saunders has an uncanny ability to reveal the complexities of life and death in his writing; in doing so, he points to the truth of our shared human condition,” Hayden said. “I am pleased to recognize his literary achievements with this honor.”

One of the Library’s most prestigious awards, the annual prize honors an American literary writer whose body of work is distinguished not only for its mastery of the art but also for its originality of thought and imagination.

The award seeks to commend strong, unique, enduring voices that – throughout consistently accomplished careers – have told us something essential about the American experience. More information about the prize, including previous winners, is available [here](#).

Hayden selected Saunders as this year’s winner based on nominations from more than 88 distinguished literary figures, including former winners of the prize, acclaimed authors and literary critics from across the United States.

“I’m honored to join the wonderful list of writers selected in the past by the Library of Congress for this prize,” Saunders said. “I look forward to this year’s National Book Festival and to working with the Library to further the art of fiction, an art form that can do so much to bring us together and deepen our empathy for,



Zach Kraemer

George Saunders

and interest in, one another.”

Saunders is the New York Times bestselling author of 12 books, including “A Swim in a Pond in the Rain”; “Lincoln in the Bardo,” which won the Man Booker Prize; “Congratulations, by the Way”; “Tenth of December,” a finalist for the

National Book Award and winner of the inaugural Folio Award; “The Braindead Megaphone”; and the story collections “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline,” “Pastoralia” and “In Persuasion Nation.”

He also is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and Guggenheim Fellowship. Saunders is a professor of creative writing at Syracuse University.

Saunders will be presented with the honor at the National Book Festival on Aug. 12 prior to a conversation about his body of work.

The [2023 Library of Congress National Book Festival](#) will take place from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. The event is free and open to the public.

Attendees will hear conversations that reflect their lived experiences and stories, with presentations for every type of reader. A selection of programs will be livestreamed, and recordings of all presentations can be viewed online following the festival. ■

MUSIC IN THE AIR



David McMaster

Musical instrument curator Carol Lynn Ward Bamford (right) gave Rep. Laurel Lee (R-Florida) a tour of the Music Division’s instrument holdings last month. Here, Lee holds a flute from the collection.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Courtesy of Destiny Abercrombie

Destiny Abercrombie

Destiny Abercrombie received a master's degree in library and information science from North Carolina Central University in December. She is a junior fellows intern in the Office of Communications this summer.

Tell us about your project.

I am working on a project titled “The Legacy of Daniel A.P. Murray: Mapping the Stories.”

Murray was a pioneering bibliographer, historian and librarian who worked at the Library for 52 years. His mission was to dispel myths about Black people and to stimulate public appreciation and awareness of Black culture and history. Upon his death, he

bequeathed 1,448 books and pamphlets that documented the accomplishments and lives of African Americans to the Library. His collection resides in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

For my project, I'll be creating a visual presentation that will map opinions of early U.S. presidents about slavery and African Americans as men and soldiers.

Describe a typical day.

I start my day by checking my emails to see if there's anything that I need to respond to. Then, I look over the calendar to see if I have any meetings – professional development sessions, one-on-one meetings, team meetings or online events I want to attend.

Usually, I start my research on Murray by exploring his collection to find information about him, his efforts to tell stories about African American contributions or any other subjects that stand out to me.

If I have some time, I explore Library exhibits focusing on African American history or movements, such as “The African-American Mosaic: African-American Culture and History” and “The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship.”

I also like to look at Library blog posts to see if there are any topics that catch my eye.

What have you discovered of special interest?

I have appreciated learning more about my history, African American

history. The Rare Book and Special Collections Division has been one of my favorite places to search for new items on African American perspectives, such as authentic anecdotes of American slavery. Exploring the exhibits also opened my eyes to a lot of things that happened in the United States that aren't taught in school and give different perspectives on major events like slavery.

What attracted you to the Junior Fellows program?

I came across the posting for the Junior Fellows program in one of the weekly emails my master's degree program sent out. I had wanted to do some type of work for the Library of Congress since learning about it during my undergrad years. I was drawn to the many projects on offer and couldn't wait to explore the Library's vast collections.

What has your experience been like so far?

My experience has been positive. I've been loving everything that I have learned about the Library from the different divisions, and I have appreciated learning skills I can use for my personal and professional development.

I've also enjoyed improving my research skills, finding new topics of interest during my research and gaining more confidence in my goal-setting skills. I can't wait to see how my project turns out. ■

NEWS

COLLECTIONS, CONTINUED FROM 1

housed in the Library's two oldest buildings, the Jefferson and the Adams.

When Nadal started at the Library in 2017, he convened staff members for collection-survey working groups to identify the most valuable data that could be gained in

the least amount of time. When he assigned the general collections survey to Haspo in 2019, he asked her to develop those ideas into an innovative survey tool that would yield a high-level assessment within months, not years. That necessarily translates into not removing a single volume from the shelves.

“If we assessed the condition of each book,” Haspo said, “it would take decades. This survey will generate standardized data that will guide our preservation actions to the places they can have the most benefit.”

A trained conservator, Haspo also specializes in space management.

She designed the storage space in the Library's vast facility in Fort Meade, Maryland (known as planograph). And she has organized many projects involving the general collections, including an enormous endeavor that paved the way for the general collections survey.

In 2015 and 2016, she oversaw the numbering of the main aisles on each deck, or floor, of the stacks in the Jefferson and Adams buildings, then she labeled each section updating the floorplans accordingly. A section is an upright, much like a bookcase, that has up to six or seven shelves.

It turns out, Haspo said, that the two buildings together have almost 95,000 sections spread over 3,500 aisles within nearly 800,000 square feet.

"That stacks numbering project alone was a breakthrough for the Library," Haspo said.

Previously, when a problem arose in the stacks, it was reported by deck number – the most precise location detail then available. Now, emergency response teams can quickly go to specific sections to repair leaks, and the Architect of the Capitol can easily find where lightbulbs need changing.

"We can better manage the space for all kinds of purposes," Haspo said, "including surveying the condition of collections."

For the past three months, Preservation Directorate staff members – 96 in total – have been spending an hour and a half each week in assigned sections in the stacks of six different decks simultaneously. Using preprogrammed e-tablets, they're responding to pop-up questions about books in each section and taking pictures.

"This will be the Library's first image database for the general collections – section by section," Haspo said.

She worked with staffers in the Business Operations Support Section of the Preservation Services Division to program the tablets with questions in four categories: inventory control, condition,

environmental risks and space management. Questions address if the section has oversize books, miniatures, serials; damaged items, books that have been treated previously; sprinklers in close proximity to the books or corroded; if shelves have space available or if there are books on the floor, among others.

As questions come up, staff members respond yes or no or report a percentage – for example, 25% of the section holds items with visible damage. If they are unsure how to respond, they can click on a question mark programmed into each of the categories to access the response protocol, definitions and illustrative pictures.

"I wanted to design a survey anyone could do," Haspo said. "Not only the folks trained in preservation, but anyone."

During the pandemic, she conducted a pilot to optimize the survey questions with Preservation Directorate interns and managers. "I gave him a complicated aisle," Haspo joked of Nadal's assignment.

She then fine-tuned the questions to enable staff members to complete them within a couple of minutes (up to three minutes per section) and made sure the project was ready to launch as staff returned to on-site work.

"One of the most exciting steps for me was to identify the minimum number of questions needed to get the most possible data in key areas in a very short time," Haspo said.

Next came implementation logistics and training, equally complicated tasks.

Haspo devised a system in which the stacks survey members were divided into six teams distributed in 90-minute shifts. There are four each day, Monday through Friday, at 8 a.m., 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. Each team member selected the weekly shift using SignUpGenius.

Inside the Collections Management Division's (CMD) main office in LJ G-49, Haspo equipped six work-

stations with e-tablets, notepads, pencils, miniature templates, barcode devices – for scanning the first and last books in each section surveyed – and durable brown aprons to hold all the supplies. Then, she held training sessions – 40 over two weeks.

Romeo Johnson, a materials handler in CMD, does his shift on Fridays. "The training was extremely detailed," he said. "And the way Beatriz formatted the tablet was spot on. Any question that you have, you don't have to ask her, you can just click."

Katie Daughtry, a digital conversion specialist in the Preservation Services Division, began working with Haspo on the survey when she was a 2020-21 librarian in residence.

"It's great to see it come to fruition," she said. She finds assessing the books informative given her current position – she's the lead on a project to digitize brittle books.

"I'm observing preservation needs and seeing what might come my way," she said.

Olivia Fuller, a newly hired digital library technician in PSD, entered the stacks for the first time thanks to this project: "It's exciting to be part of such a big, long-term project that will have a lasting impact."

Once the teams complete all the sections of a deck, a separate team double-checks discrepancies. "You have to make sure the data is accurate," Haspo said.

She estimates it will take about a year to finalize the survey.

"Our preservation staff do high-quality work, but it's all too easy for that to get lost in a collection of this scope," Nadal said. "This survey program helps us direct their good work to the places it will make the biggest difference, and since this survey is lean enough for us to regularly repeat, it will help us show the contributions staff are making to keeping the national collection ready for its users." ■

Library to Conduct Survey of Employees in July

Survey Gathers Data on Experiences in the Workplace.

BY PORSHA PERRY

The Library of Congress plans to administer an all-staff survey later this month that will allow employees to share opinions and perceptions about their work experiences at the Library. The survey will launch July 24.

This 46-question survey follows a similar one conducted last summer, when the Human Capital Directorate (HCD) partnered with the Office of Personnel Management to launch the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) at the Library.

The 2022 survey contained roughly 89 core questions along with additional questions related to the pandemic, paid parental leave and employee demographics (grade, tenure, age and gender, for example).

Based on the FEVS scores, the Library made its inaugural appearance on the index of the [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](#). The Library ranked 15th out of 27 in the 2022 index among midsized agencies (between 1,000 and 14,999 employees).

Since the [results](#) were released in January, HCD has been collaborating with service units to understand the feedback and prioritize plans to address areas of concern.

Efforts to explore the data are

ongoing, and many offices already have participated in or scheduled focus groups and webinars to review them.

In order to create a continuous feedback and improvement loop, the Library encourages staff members to share opinions and perceptions regarding their work experiences.

Staff members will have the opportunity to make their voices heard again this month, when the Library administers the 46-question all-staff survey – including 28 core questions and 18 employee demographic questions.

The survey questions are a subset of FEVS questions that make up the Employee Engagement Index, the Best Places to Work questions and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) questions needed for ongoing barrier analysis.

As with previous surveys, data will be available down to the division level (for units with more than 10 responses).

We want to hear from you. How are things going? What's working? What can be better? Don't miss this opportunity to have your voice heard and shape the Library's future. Be on the lookout for the survey on July 24. If you have any questions, reach out!

Contact Porsha Perry in HCD's Employee Engagement Section at pope@loc.gov or via AskHCD (category: employee engagement; category details: other). ■

18 TUESDAY

Webinar: The 2023 CCDI Summer Fuse features awardee presentations, a spotlight on CCDI Scholar in Residence Maya Cade and a panel on Asian American and Pacific Islander digital humanities. Noon, [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

Webinar: Business reference services librarians discuss print and electronic sources. 1 p.m., [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

19 WEDNESDAY

Webinar: The Prints and Photographs Division offers an overview of its poster holdings. 3 p.m., [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

20 THURSDAY

Webinar: An introduction to business resources that aid in finding financials and ownership and investment reports. 1 p.m., [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

Webinar: An orientation to Law Library collections and services. 1 p.m., [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

Webinar: An overview of the Library's Community Collections Grants program. 6 p.m., [online](#). Contact: 7-8000.

Book Talk: Robert Putnam and Shaylyn Romney Garrett discuss their book, "The Upswing." 6:30 p.m., LJ 119. Contact: 7-8000.

Film: "The Fortune Cookie" (1966). 7 p.m., Pickford Theater. Contact: 7-8000.

Film: "Shrek" (2001). Preceded by a live performance by Nen Daiko. Music at 7 p.m., film at 8:30 p.m., Jefferson Building southeast lawn. Contact: 7-8000.

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](#).

To make a report, contact OIG via the online form [here](#) or report by mail to 101 Independence Ave., S.E., LM 630, Washington, D.C., 20540-1060.

Request ADA accommodations for events five business days in advance at 7-6362 or ADA@loc.gov.

See www.loc.gov/events