

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jones Memorial Library to launch Memory Lab and document oral histories of Lynchburg residents

Library receives significant grant to preserve history of marginalized communities

LYNCHBURG, VA – July 08, 2025 – Jones Memorial Library, a specialized genealogical and historical research institution in Lynchburg, Virginia, announces the launch of a grant funded project to collect and preserve the stories of area residents and establish a dedicated Memory Lab at the library.

The project is funded by a generous \$16,000 grant from the George Webster Reynolds Memorial Fund, a donor advised fund managed by the Greater Lynchburg Community Foundation. Grant funding will be used to equip a Memory and Digitization Lab. In addition to outfitting the new lab space, the grant will support collection and documentation of underrepresented histories. The Library specifically aims to document and preserve memories from people and groups who have been less represented in the written archival record. The Library plans to launch its effort through prioritized partnerships with organizations which have served and currently serve primarily African American, Native American, Hispanic American, and LGBTQ+ persons in the Lynchburg region.

Executive Director Deborah Smith and the library's Archivist, Gwen Wells, will lead the grant-funded initiative. Wells received training at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania earlier this year, in preparation for launching the oral history effort.

Following the initial collection phase, which is expected to last a year, the Memory and Digitization Lab will be open to the public by appointment. The lab will be a dedicated do-it-yourself space equipped for scanning and digitizing letters and photographs. The lab will have equipment to convert slides, cassette recordings, and video tapes into digital format. The lab will also have equipment to record oral histories and will be open to all users interested in preserving their family stories.

The library's Memory Lab will be housed in a re-purposed office space within the library and will accommodate 1 to 4 people at a time. Users will be able to book an appointment on the library's website and will be encouraged to donate a copy of their digitized materials and/or oral histories to the Library for long-term preservation while retaining the original documents, digital copies, and recordings. Equipment will also be available for short-term loan to community groups such as churches, service member organizations, and others.

For more information about Jones Memorial Library's collections and services, contact the library at (434) 846-0501 or refdesk@jmlibrary.org.

Media Contact:

Jones Memorial Library

2311 Memorial Avenue
Lynchburg, VA 24501
Phone: (434) 846-0501
Email: director@jmllibrary.org