

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Jones Memorial Library Launches New Catalog System and Memory Lab, Expanding Access to Community History

**Lynchburg, VA — March 2026** — Jones Memorial Library (JML), a specialized history and genealogy library, is proud to announce two major technology upgrades that will help researchers, families, and history enthusiasts discover, preserve, and share the stories of Central Virginia. In February, the research library opened a new Memory & Digitization Lab, and in March it is launching a new online catalog system — two investments that together modernize how the community connects with the library's special collections and its own history.

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### New Online Catalog Makes Collections Easier to Find

In March 2026, JML will launch a new online catalog, marking an important step forward for the library. As a research library specialized in genealogy and Central Virginia history, moving to an independent system allows JML to better serve researchers with tools designed for searching special collections.

One of the most significant improvements is unified search. Previously, physical materials and digital items had to be searched separately. Starting in March 2026, a single search at **catalog.jmlibrary.org** will find everything the library holds on a topic — manuscripts, architectural plans, maps, photos, and books, alongside items in its digital collections portal. The new system also connects JML's records with the Library of Congress and other special libraries across the country, increasing discoverability for researchers everywhere.

*“This new system will help people discover materials they might have missed before,” said Deborah Smith, JML’s Executive Director. “Whether you’re researching your family history or learning about Central Virginia, you’ll find it easier to locate the resources you need.”*

Researchers can begin using the new catalog when it launches in March at **catalog.jmlibrary.org** or through the search bar at **www.jmlibrary.org**. JML's materials will be removed from the shared system with the area's public libraries this spring, and users are encouraged to update their bookmarks. The new catalog system was developed in partnership with Bywater Solutions, a leading provider of open-source library technology.

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### New Memory & Digitization Lab Now Open

On February 28, 2026, JML opened its new Memory & Digitization Lab, available by appointment at no cost to the community. The lab is equipped with tools to scan and digitize old photographs, letters, slides, cassette tapes, home movies and video or audio

recordings, as well as professional recording equipment to capture oral histories or recorded interviews that preserve personal stories before they are lost.

The lab can accommodate 1 to 4 people at a time for sessions up to 3 hours. It is open to individuals, families, churches, veterans' groups, and other community organizations. Appointments can be booked at no charge through the library's website at [www.jmlibrary.org/lab](http://www.jmlibrary.org/lab).

Visitors are encouraged to donate copies of their digitized materials or oral history recordings to the library's permanent collection, helping build JML's archive of Central Virginia history, while keeping their originals and digital copies.

### **Special Project: Preserving Central Virginia Training Center Stories**

As a launch initiative for the Memory Lab, JML is collecting oral histories from people who worked at or lived at the Central Virginia Training Center (CVTC). This spring, the library will also use a specialized wide-format scanner to digitize the architectural plans for CVTC buildings, making them available to researchers and the public.

The Central Virginia Training Center was a major institution in local history. It opened in 1910 in Madison Heights as the Virginia State Epileptic Colony, began admitting patients in May 1911, and grew to serve people with both epilepsy and intellectual disabilities. Over the decades it was known by several names — Lynchburg State Colony (1940), Lynchburg Training School and Hospital (1954), and finally Central Virginia Training Center (1983). At its peak in 1972, CVTC housed 3,686 residents, making it the largest of Virginia's five state facilities for people with disabilities. The center closed permanently on April 2, 2020, and its 350-acre campus with over 90 buildings in Amherst County now stands vacant.

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### **Grant Support**

The Memory & Digitization Lab equipment, including the wide-format scanner for the CVTC architectural plans, was made possible by a \$16,000 grant from the George W. Reynolds Memorial Fund of the Greater Lynchburg Community Foundation.

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### **Learn More**

To schedule a Memory Lab appointment or learn more about the CVTC oral history project, visit [www.jmlibrary.org/lab](http://www.jmlibrary.org/lab). To explore the new catalog when it launches in March, visit [catalog.jmlibrary.org](http://catalog.jmlibrary.org). For questions about either initiative, contact Jones Memorial Library at **434-846-0501** or [refdesk@jmlibrary.org](mailto:refdesk@jmlibrary.org).

### **About Jones Memorial Library**

Jones Memorial Library, located at 2311 Memorial Avenue, Lynchburg, VA 24501, serves researchers and the public with specialized collections in genealogy and Central Virginia history.

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