



# LIBRARY NEWS

Sharing stories of Georgia's libraries changing lives and communities  
Spring 2024

## Blind volunteer showcases inclusivity at the library

Public library leaders  
and champions honored

Discover family history  
with Ancestry Library  
Edition





Get more  
from GALILEO  
at the library:

# Explore family history with Ancestry Library Edition

LEARN MORE



**This series explores practical ways to use GALILEO, which you can access freely with a public library card. GALILEO offers many useful tools for lifelong learners, from language learning to job skills to genealogy resources.**

Did you know that with your Georgia public library card, you have access to genealogy research programs like Ancestry Library Edition, which you can use to explore your family's history?

Ancestry Library Edition lets you search through historical documents like birth, marriage, and death records; census records; immigration and travel records; military and school records; photos and maps; and more. Ancestry Library Edition is very similar to Ancestry.com, the largest online genealogy database in the world, but differs in some important ways.

Ancestry Library Edition is only available using a public access computer at the library. At some libraries, you can access it through a mobile device. Typically, you will find the link under "digital resources" on the library's website, but ask your librarian to be sure.

You can use Ancestry Library Edition without having to create an account. This version makes searching through your family's history simple without having to pay to see historical documents.

## **DO A QUICK SEARCH FOR YOUR ANCESTORS**

If you want to do a quick search for a relative, use the StoryScout feature.

To use StoryScout, look for the section titled "Family history search simplified." Then enter the name of a grandparent or any relative and a place they may have lived. After submitting your relative's information, click the "Find your stories" button.

You will be shown a list of people who match the relative you searched for. If you click "This is my grandparent" on one of the matches, you'll be given facts about their life.

You can also see the names of the historical documents the information was pulled from by clicking "Why am I getting this story?" If you'd like to save the results, click the share button to email your relative's overview.

## **DIVE DEEPER INTO YOUR FAMILY'S PAST**

From the homepage, click on the button labeled "Begin

Searching." Enter your relative's information and click "Search." The more information you include, the smaller and more specific your results list will be; however, filling out every line is rarely beneficial. Likewise, if you're having trouble finding your ancestor, consider searching for different combinations of criteria, such as spelling variations of a last name or the year of a major life event

You can also use wild cards such as asterisks or question marks to improve your search. Use an asterisk (\*) to help you search for different spellings of a name or a question mark (?) in place of a letter when you're not sure how something is spelled.

Ancestry Library Edition will look through all the historical documents in its database and provide a list of relevant sources.

On the search results page, you can use the sliders to control how broad or narrow you would like the search results to be. You also can select a document for more details.

On the right-side panel on a document's detail page, you'll also find suggested documents you may find useful as you look deeper into your family's history.

To examine a document, click on the image or image placeholder for the document.

## **SAVE AND PRINT YOUR RESEARCH**

When examining a document, click "Save" on the top right of the page to download the document to your computer or to send it to your email if you are using one of the library's public access computers.

From a document's detail page, you can also click the button "Send document" and enter your email address to save it for later even when you're not at the library. From this page, you can also print documents by clicking "Print" on the upper right-hand side of the page.

All the documents you send to your email from Ancestry Library Edition can be accessed from the same page. Go to your email and look for an email from "Ancestry." Click "View your discoveries" on the email that was sent. This page will have a list of all the documents you selected to send to your email. Bookmark this page on your web browser so you can quickly access it. ■

**Discover more GALILEO tips:**  
**[georgialibraries.org/use-galileo](http://georgialibraries.org/use-galileo).**

# Blind volunteer showcases inclusivity at the library

“The kids have learned that having a disability doesn’t mean you can’t do something. You just have to do it a little differently.”

Shay Casey is a volunteer at the Roddenbery Memorial Library in Cairo, Georgia, where she recently led a paint-pouring class as part of the teen craft cafe program.

Ahead of the class, Casey tested the paint and made samples for participants. Her preparation looks different than that of many other volunteers, because she was born with optic nerve hypoplasia.

The optic nerve connects the eyes to the brain and sends light signals, which allows you to see. Casey’s condition means this nerve is underdeveloped, causing her to have severely low vision.

“For little kids, I say I just can’t see very well. For adults, basically the same thing, but I tell them my optic nerves are underdeveloped and after about eight feet it’s like looking through cheap wax paper,” said Casey.

To read the labels on the small paint bottles, Casey holds each bottle roughly three inches from her face and uses a handheld digital magnifier.

Casey poured paint onto her canvas, scraped it with wooden popsicle sticks, and then tilted the canvas. Carefully, she held it up to her face to get a glimpse of the pattern she made.

After carefully examining her paint-poured canvas, Casey walks without her cane to a nearby counter and places the canvas on it to dry.

She usually uses a cane when walking, but she has become very familiar with the layout of the library and rarely uses it there.

Being legally blind does not stop her from doing what she loves, including making art and crafts, reading manga, or enjoying anime. It was her interest in anime and manga that led her to become a volunteer at the library.

When the library hosted an anime club geared toward teens, Casey, who was 28 years old at the time, ex-

pressed her interest and the library decided she would make a great volunteer.

“Back when I first moved down here, my dad handed me a flier for the anime club. I don’t think he read the fine print that said it was for teenagers,” recalled Casey.

She has been volunteering at the library since 2021 and works closely with Michelle Semones, the teen coordinator. While she primarily volunteers for teen programming, she also helps out with family programming and shelving.

Casey’s ability to overcome the challenges of her disability is very helpful to the teens who regularly attend library programs, several of whom also have disabilities or medical conditions, said Semones.

“The kids have learned that having a disability doesn’t mean you can’t do something. You just have to do it a little differently,” said Semones. “You’re not a victim of your disability. Shay shows you can be a victor by doing it differently.”

Casey said volunteering has boosted her confidence.

“I’ve come out of my shell quite a bit. I love working with the people here,” said Casey. “I’ve found that I’m more capable of doing more than I realized.”

Even though her vision can present challenges when creating art or doing other tasks, she is known for her positive attitude. The teens she works with have appreciated Casey’s help and presence at the library.

“If I think of the library, I think of her,” said Jordan, 17. “Shay just lights up the room and motivates me to push past my own struggles and live my best life.”

Janet Boudet, the library’s director, recognizes that Casey and other patrons with disabilities have influenced how the library approaches accessibility. This includes making sure there is enough room between furniture so individuals can easily navigate through the building,







"Tools and devices from Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, as well as Georgia Public Library Service tech grants, assist us in making the library accessible to everyone. Many of these devices would be more than we could afford," said Boudet.

Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled supports libraries in providing accessible resources to ensure every patron can enjoy and participate in what their local libraries have to offer.

"Our team engages with communities that may benefit from our offerings, ensuring that no one is left behind due to barriers to access," said Brandi Robertson, Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled outreach librarian. "Shay's story shows that libraries are for everyone at every phase of their lives."

"Shay is just so positive and her attitude is contagious! And you think 'If she can do this, I certainly can do whatever it is that's challenging me at the moment,'" said Boudet.

In the future, Casey hopes to pursue her passion for art and become a graphic designer. She is currently working with Semones to plan the library's teen Summer Reading Program. ■



*Top image: "If I think of the library, I think of her," said Jordan, 17. "Shay just lights up the room and motivates me to push past my own struggles and live my best life."*

*Bottom image: Casey guides Danica, a library teen, through the paint-pouring process and teaches her about the different tools and techniques used to make designs.*

as well as making sure the library provides tools to improve access to its materials and services.

"It opens your eyes, literally opens your eyes, to what someone may not be able to see or do and that a library has to be accessible," said Boudet.

The handheld digital magnifier that Casey uses is one of the tools at the library to help patrons easily access materials.

Other items include high-contrast keyboards, large print rulers, and page readers.

Learn more about Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled at [gls.georgialibraries.org](https://gls.georgialibraries.org).

Do you have a talent to share? Libraries are often in need of volunteers who can give their time or talent.

Reach out to your local library to see how you may be able to assist.



# Digitized Augusta Fire Department ledgers help tell the story of the Great Fire of 1916



*By Tina Monaco, Historian, Georgia Heritage Room, Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System*

In 2023, the Digital Library of Georgia, with support from Georgia Public Library Service, digitized two oversized, handwritten, bound ledgers that were donated to the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System by the Augusta Fire Department. The ledgers document fire history in Augusta, Georgia, from 1906-1937 and detail several of the most significant and destructive fires in the city's history, making them an important resource for understanding how catastrophic fires shaped the cityscape and local history.

Since the Augusta Fire Department is the second oldest in the state, behind Savannah, the ledgers are important to understanding fire fighting methods during the early



20th century, when mechanization and new technology were altering the way fires were fought.

Both ledgers document the daily fire alarm box alerts that came into the fire department headquarters. The fire alarm boxes were numbered and spread throughout the city on street corners, telephone poles, and commercial buildings, connected by a telegraph system.

When a box was pulled, a pulse was transmitted along a network of low-voltage wiring, alerting the fire department. Whether the fire turned out to be small and insubstantial or a major conflagration, it was recorded in the ledger.

Along with the time and the box number, information including the date, fire district, street location, building





### Archival Resources Detail Local History

Used in conjunction with additional Augusta resources, the fire ledgers paint a more complete picture of the city's historical landscape, particularly in terms of its people and places. They also help people search for ancestors and places they may have lived.

For example, when searching through the 1905 Augusta City Directory to learn more about A. J. Tweedy, whose curtains started a small house fire, one will learn that he and his wife Emma lived at the Greene Street residence, and that Albert was the manager of the Tweedy Loan Company at 738 Ellis Street.

The Sanborn maps for Augusta reveal how the city worked to prevent large-scale fires following the Great Fire of 1916. An image taken from the 1917 Sanborn Map a year after the destruction shows the 700 block of Broad Street, including buildings that were destroyed in the Great Fire, along with those being rebuilt using what was referred to as "fire proof construction."

"Almost immediately after the fire, a new building code was adopted which called for a better class of construction throughout," according to the Augusta City Council Yearbook for 1916. This is evident in an image from



the Digital Library of Georgia that shows steel frames replaced the outdated and potentially hazardous use of wood frames.

The threat of catastrophic fires plagued U. S. cities until strict building codes, technological changes, and loosely organized volunteer fire departments were implemented under the administration of city governments, much of which occurred during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Augusta Fire Department ledgers are a window into this time period of major changes, and are a helpful resource for exploring fire history not only in the city of Augusta, Georgia but throughout the United States.

### View the ledgers and more through the DLG


The digitized ledgers, as well as many other important documents from Georgia's history, are freely available to view through the Digital Library of Georgia. To view them, visit [dlg.usg.edu](http://dlg.usg.edu) and search for "Augusta Fire Department Ledgers." The collection allows you to view each ledger separately. The first ledger covers the period from January 1906 – December 1923, and the second ledger covers the period from January 1924 – December 1937. ■



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## 2023 GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY AWARDS



Lifetime Achievement



Library Champion of the Year



Library Director of the Year



Library Employee of the Year



Library of the Year

# Georgia Public Library Service honors public library leaders, staff, and champions

Georgia Public Library Service is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2023 Georgia Public Library Awards.

“Strong public libraries are essential to a prosperous state, and our honorees showcase the vital role that public libraries play in post-pandemic recovery, competitiveness, and resilience throughout Georgia,” said Vice Chancellor for Archives and Libraries and State Librarian Julie Walker. “Our public libraries are a model of collaboration, innovation, and excellence.”

Winners are selected from nominations submitted by library patrons, trustees, Friends of Libraries groups, and staff, showcasing the best and brightest who serve in public libraries.

Cobb County Public Library has been awarded Library of the Year; Alan Harkness of Chattahoochee Valley Libraries is Director of the Year; Lydia Hahne, business manager at Hall County Library System, is Library Employee of the Year; Michael L. Thurmond, chief executive officer of DeKalb County, is Library Champion of the Year; and Kathryn Ames, former director of Athens Regional Library System, has posthumously received this year’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

“These award winners, along with so many others who received nominations, exemplify creativity, vision, and flexibility in adapting to the needs of a rapidly-changing world,” said Walker.





# 2023 Georgia Public Library Awards

## **LIBRARY OF THE YEAR**

Cobb County Public Library has been recognized for its commitment to serving its community by partnering with numerous organizations within its county and statewide, and for efforts to expand access to materials and essential services. The library serves a population of over 750,000 across 15 branches and is dedicated to being a resource center in the community by providing equal access to information, materials, and services.

"The Cobb County Public Library prides itself with providing excellent, responsive service to enrich people's lives, support lifelong learning, build and enhance our communities," said Georgia State Senator Michael Rhett. "The library meets the needs of patrons across school systems, the county, and beyond by providing high quality services for early and adult learning literacy, hotspot and internet access, digital skills training, continuing education, health and wellness offerings, and cultural awareness."

## **LIBRARY DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR**

Alan Harkness has been named Georgia Public Library Director of the Year. Under his leadership, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, based in Columbus, became the first library system in Georgia to eliminate fines for overdue materials in 2019, and he continues to be a strong advocate for fines-free programs.

Since going fines free, the library has seen an increase in cardholder sign-ups and activity among lapsed users. In the first year after going fines free, the library saw a 34% increase in new card sign-ups and an 11% increase in circulations over a four-month period compared to the previous year.

Harkness has served public libraries for more than 30 years including as regional director of Piedmont Regional Library System and assistant state librarian for library development at Georgia Public Library Service.

In 2013, he became the director of Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, where he oversees the regional library system that serves a population of 250,000 through seven facilities, two bookmobiles, and two automated 24-hour library kiosks spread across Chattahoochee, Marion, Muscogee, and Stewart counties.

## **PUBLIC LIBRARY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

Lydia Hahne, business manager at Hall County Library System, has been recognized for her years of service and ensuring the library can serve its community by managing budgets, mentoring fellow staff, and taking on challenges beyond what is expected.

"It is rare to meet an individual who has devoted their entire working life to one organization. It is even more rare to get the opportunity to work with someone who has demonstrated such devotion along with leadership, commitment, a passion for service, and an exceptional work ethic," said Lisa MacKinney, director of Hall County Library System.

Hahne began working for the library as a shelver when she was 15 years old in 1979. Over 44 years, she has held several positions including administrative assistant, circulation assistant, and bookkeeper.

## **PUBLIC LIBRARY CHAMPION OF THE YEAR**

Michael L. Thurmond, chief executive officer of DeKalb County, was essential to DeKalb County Public Library's recovery after the pandemic.

"Thurmond's multifaceted support, from recognizing the unique, hard work of staff; securing vital funding and resources; and advocating for employee wellbeing, truly sets him apart as a Georgia Public Library Champion of the Year. His influence is not only felt today but will leave a lasting legacy for years to come," said Alison Weissinger, director of DeKalb County Public Library.

During the pandemic, Thurmond recognized the library as an essential department by enacting frontline pay for all library employees. He also helped to secure funding and resources to support the shift to curbside services including the extension of Wi-Fi to the library parking lot.

## **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT**

Kathryn Ames has been honored posthumously with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her dedication to the Athens Regional Library System and her impact on Georgia public libraries over 40 years of service. Her reputation as a library leader is immense and renowned. Many library employees who worked and trained under Ames currently hold leadership positions at libraries in Georgia.

She made many contributions that have a lasting impact, including supporting the development of Public Information Network for Electronic Services (PINES) that today connects 300 libraries and affiliated service outlets in 51 library systems covering 146 counties.

During her tenure as director of Athens Regional Library System, the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded the library two National Leadership grants to design and share original service programs. When Ames retired in 2015, the plaza in front of the library was named after her in recognition of her legacy. ■



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*Need a laptop for work or school? Check one out from your local library! Georgia Public Library Service has provided laptops and Launchpad learning tablets to all public libraries in Georgia. To check one out, visit in person or search the online catalog. This project was assisted with federal pandemic funding from the State of Georgia Governor's Office.*