



# Historically Speaking

*The Department of History Newsletter*  
*A University Exemplary Department*

*Winter 2009*  
*Volume 23*

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 **VirginiaTech**  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute  
and  
State University

## From the Chair

This was going to be a letter about how well things have been going in the department lately – earning our second exemplary department award, a third graduate student winning the William Preston Society’s Gold Watch Award for outstanding masters thesis of the year, Professor Ewing winning the college outreach award *and* the Alumni Award for Excellence in Outreach, our hiring two great new faculty members, and our graduating the largest class in our history. But then the budget blew up.

All of those good things are still true (plus several others I didn’t mention), and they still deserve recognition. They have all been overshadowed, though, by the fact that Virginia’s budget is in such dire straits that virtually every state entity has been ordered to cut its budget significantly. In our case, every department in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences has been asked to show how it might cut 5% from its annual budget. That wouldn’t be too bad if 5% really meant 5%, but it doesn’t. Just over 85% of the department’s budget is faculty salaries, and the department can only cut those in very unusual circumstances. That leaves just 15% of the budget to absorb the entire cut. That 15% includes the stipends for our graduate students, salaries for the office staff, and the cost of actually running the department – phones, mail, internet connections, copy machines, stationery, etc. It also pays the cost of this newsletter. We’re now trying to decide how we can cut those parts of our annual budget by nearly a third.

We’re determined to protect our core function – teaching graduate and undergraduate students. That means cutting a lot of other things,



**Daniel B. Thorp, Department Chair**

and one of the things that may be cut is this newsletter. All of this is still evolving. At this point we still don’t know how much of our total budget we will actually have to cut; it could be more than 5%. Nor have we yet decided exactly where the cuts will come. But it is clear that the department, the college, and the university are facing rough days ahead. It’s also clear that we have to think about new ways of doing what we do, ways that allow us to fulfill our duties without spending quite so much money. So you may be getting an e-newsletter next time. We already link a PDF version of the newsletter to our departmental homepage. So we should be able to send it out electronically too, which would save several thousand dollars on printing and mailing. Historians, too, can Invent the Future.... or adapt to it, anyway.



## Faculty News

**Retirement**

**Thomas C. Howard**, joined the history faculty in 1966, soon after the creation of a separate department in the newly established College of Arts and Sciences. His research and teaching have been principally in British and African history and the history of imperialism. His most recent publication, however, was an edited volume on the history of United States foreign policy and involvement in global affairs during the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt.

He introduced the first African history courses taught in the department, and helped to promote better understanding and appreciation of Africa and its peoples during years when the study of Africa was generally ignored or marginalized. He worked to expand the curriculum to include courses with comparative, global, approaches and for years taught a course on comparative world history. He taught graduate seminars in British and European history, and directed the thesis research, or served on the thesis committee, of over forty MA students; he also served on the committees of doctoral students in other academic programs.

Throughout his years in the department Tom emphasized the importance of faculty interaction with students, and regularly participated in academic advising. He long served as departmental career advisor, a role he considered especially valuable for history majors. He engaged in other service at all levels of the university, including membership on countless committees, the majority of which he considers to have been an immense waste of time. He has been active in numerous professional organizations, among them the Southeastern Regional Seminar in African Studies, the World History Association, the African Studies Association, and the North American Conference on British Studies.

Since his retirement in June 2008, Tom remains in Blacksburg where he continues to pursue various professional and volunteer activities—and at last to be able to travel for fun during the months of the academic year. On occasion he plays with the idea of writing, as a cautionary tale, his reflections on the history of the department. He now shares office space with other emeriti faculty in room 401 Major Williams Hall, and he welcomes visits and news from former students. His email address is [tchoward@vt.edu](mailto:tchoward@vt.edu).

**William Ochsenwald**, professor of history, received his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern History from the University of Chicago just before he came to Virginia Tech in 1971. He initially taught History of European Civilization and an introductory survey on the history of the Islamic Middle East. He later developed a new, highly popular course on the history of the Arab-Israeli

dispute. In addition, he helped develop courses on the history of the Twentieth Century World and the Balkan Peninsula, and has taught several advanced topics courses, independent studies, and, occasionally, Arabic language. Over the thirty-seven years he was employed at Virginia Tech, Bill taught about 7,000 students. He won certificates of teaching excellence in 1978 and 2004.

Ochsenwald is the author of *The Hijaz Railroad* (1980), *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia* (1984), and *Religion, Economy, and State in Ottoman Arab History* (1998). He also co-authored the most widely-used textbook on the history of the Middle East, *The Middle East: A History*, now in its sixth edition. Bill has published four chapters in books, sixteen journal articles, and numerous book reviews and encyclopedia articles. In the area of public service Ochsenwald has had more than forty television, radio, and newspaper interviews, including the Voice of America and ABC, NBC, and CBS national radio networks. He has delivered many public talks to a wide range of groups. After retiring in June 2008 Bill has remained in Blacksburg. He is now working on the seventh edition of *The Middle East: A History* and he continues to serve as a consultant and public speaker. He hopes to hear from former students. You may reach him at [ochsen@vt.edu](mailto:ochsen@vt.edu).

**New Faculty**

**Matthew M. Heaton** was born in west Texas in 1980, but grew up in the “heart of Cajun country,” in Lafayette, Louisiana. He returned to Texas in 1998 to attend the University of Texas at Austin, where he earned his BA (2002), MA (2004) and PhD (2008) degrees. Matt’s research focuses on the relationships between health, migration, and global politics in the history of Nigeria. Currently he is revising a manuscript on the repatriation of migrant Nigerian mental patients. Once this project is complete he will begin work on a history of the Nigerian pilgrimage to Mecca. Matt is the co-editor of several volumes including *HIV/AIDS: Illness and African Well-Being* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006) and *Health Knowledge and Belief Systems in Africa* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), and the co-author of *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). In his spare time, Matt enjoys baseball, poker, and a good cigar. He also enjoys a not-so-good cigar.

**Dennis R. Hidalgo** was born in Puerto Rico and raised in the Dominican Republic. However, he is officially a World Citizen. He comes to us most recently from Adelphi University in New York, where he had taught World and Atlantic History since 2001, with a hiatus in 2004-05 when he held a post-doctoral position at St. Olaf College (Northfield, MN). In a way he returns to Virginia because in 2000-2001 he was a

Scholar-in-Residence at Sweet Briar College (Amherst, VA) and in 1999-2000 had a pre-doctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution in DC. He received his Ph.D. in 2003 in Atlantic World History from the joint program in Transnational History from University of Strathclyde (Glasgow) and Central Michigan University. The topic of his current research project is the 1820s emigration of thousands of Blacks to Haiti. He has a pre-completion book contract with University of Alabama Press and expects to complete the book manuscript by next semester. Other topics, like Caribbean Slavery, Nationalism, and European Colonization and Imperialism, fall within his research and publishing areas. He is excited about the research and teaching possibilities at Virginia Tech, and look forward to help broaden the History Department's teaching field.

### Other Faculty News

**Michael Alexander** received his Ph.D. from University of Virginia on August 21, 2008. His dissertation was titled "Disputing Vows: Struggling for a Spouse in the Paduan Ecclesiastical Court (c.1400-1500)." Also, he just found out that he is giving a paper at the International Medieval Congress next May in exciting and cosmopolitan Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**Linda Arnold**, continuing her collaboration with archives in Mexico City, has developed and updated a series of electronic catalogs in searchable PDF format for the Mexican national archive, the Federal District archive, the archbishopric's historical archive, and the Federal District notarial archive. She also collaborated with the staff at the federal land court to prepare the monthly bulletin of judicial findings for web access. This past summer she gave talks at the University of Querétaro, the Federal District superior court, and the federal land court on the technical aspects of electronic catalogs and assisted the staff at the national archive in incorporating over a million records from the Federal District superior court into a searchable format.

**Gertrude Harrington Becker**, who has been teaching classes in Ancient History for the department for a number of years, defended her dissertation "Form, Intent and the Roman Fragmentary Historians, 240-63 BCE" at the University of Florida.

**William C. Davis** did two *Delta Queen* steamboat Civil War cruises this summer. He lectured for the Civil War Preservation Trust and in symposia at the Museum of the Confederacy, the Roanoke Bar Association, and for the Jefferson Davis Bicentennial Commemoration in Kentucky. Jack served on the National Advisory Board for the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, and also on the board of Virginia's Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Advisory Subcommittee of the

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Commission. He led a week-long tour of London and Stratford, England, for the Center for the Performing Arts at VT in April, and throughout the year, along with **James I. (Bud) Robertson**, has commenced filming for a 3-hour documentary on Virginia's Civil War experience for the legislature's Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission.

**Tom Ewing** made the following presentations related to his research on gender and education in modern Russian history: "Emotions, Gender, and Power in the Soviet Classroom," Roundtable Presentation, Annual Meeting of the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies, Atlanta, March 29, 2008: "Making Sense of *Childrens' World* in the Context of Soviet History," Roundtable Presentation, Annual Meeting of the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies, Atlanta, March 28, 2008: "Should Feminists Support Separate Girls' Schools? Equality and Difference in Single Sex Education," Virginia Tech Women's Month Public Lecture, March 10, 2008: "Women Teachers and Female Pupils: Materials and Strategies for Studying Gender in Soviet History," Presentation to the Women's History Discussion Group, US Library of Congress, March 6, 2008. He also received the Alumni Award for Outreach Excellence, Office of the Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs, in August 2008, and the Excellence in Outreach Award, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, in April 2008.

**Hayward Farrar** had a book chapter and an article published. The book chapter was "Prying the Door Farther Open: A Memoir of Black Student Protest at the University of Maryland, 1966-1970," in *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement*, Peter Wallenstein, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 137-165. The journal article was "Black Politics In Baltimore, 1945-2000," *International Journal of Black Studies* (2006): 224-241. This journal finally came out in May 2008, almost a year and a half late.

**Matthew Goodrum** was the Subject Area Editor responsible for the entries on paleoanthropology for the *New Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 8 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008) and authored three of the articles. He also has a paper titled "Questioning Thunderstones and Arrowheads: The Problem of Recognizing and Interpreting Stone Artifacts in the Seventeenth Century" that will be published in the December 2008 issue of the journal *Early Science and Medicine*. Also, Matthew has written an article titled "Human Origins" that will appear in James Ciment (ed.), *Discovery and Invention: A Historical Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Society*, 4 vols., published by M.E. Sharpe that will be published in the coming year.

**Heather Gumbert** is co-convening an international conference “Writing East German History,” to be held in Ann Arbor in December, with colleagues from Ann Arbor, Ohio and Western Michigan.

**Peter Wallenstein**, professor, chaired a lively session on higher education at the third annual Virginia Forum, at the University of Mary Washington, in April. During the spring semester he taught a graduate course on the history of Virginia, under one of Virginia Tech’s Teaching American History grants, for seventeen public school teachers in the Roanoke area. During the summer, he was the featured presenter in a Teaching American History symposium at President James Madison’s plantation estate, Montpelier, in Orange County, for teachers from the Hampton/Newport News area, and he also participated in the second annual Swiss International Teachers Program at Virginia Tech. He was quoted in the St. Petersburg (Fla.) *Times* on the interracial marriage of Barack Obama’s parents and in the *Los Angeles Times* on the death of Mildred Loving, who with her husband had brought the U.S. Supreme Court case that in 1967 ended enforcement of state laws against interracial marriage. Wallenstein’s 2007 book *Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History* was one of three finalists (among 79 submissions) for the Library of Virginia Literary Awards, nonfiction category, for 2008.



## Alumni News



**Treva Carter** (B.A.), a marketing manager with SFCS, has been designated as a certified professional services marketer by the Society for Marketing Professional Services.

**W. Kirk Wood** (M.A. ’69), currently in the Department of Humanities at Alabama State University, has published a book called *Nullification, A Constitutional History, 1776-1833, Volume One: James Madison, Not the Father of the Constitution* (University Press of America, Inc., 2008).

**Darrell Nolen** (’76) - After graduation from Va. Tech, Darrell was commissioned an intelligence officer in the US Navy and served in a variety to fighter squadrons, shore stations, aircraft carriers, and special operations staffs before retiring in 1997. For the past 10 years he has worked as the senior illegal maritime migration analyst and team chief for the US Coast Guard Atlantic Area HQ in Portsmouth VA. He completed the US Naval War College (College of Command and Staff) postgraduate education program in June 1994 and received a Master of Arts from Old Dominion University in History in May 1995. Darrell received a third masters (in Airpower) from American Military University in April 1996 and states that “the background

I received in the History and Political Science departments at Virginia Tech prepared me extremely well for my career in military intelligence and the civil service. I have a book in the process of being published on the history of my first squadron—VF-11 “The Red Rippers”. I am married to the former Mary Garbon of Cincinnati and we have a daughter Carly (age 11) who aspires to play soccer at Virginia Tech.”

**Carlton Hasle** (B.A. ’93) received the Alfred A. Cunningham Award for his contributions to Marine Corps aviation.

**Matthew Feret** (B.A. ’98) received a master’s in health administration from Washington University.

**April Cheek** (M.A. ’98) just started her seventh year at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia. She serves as the Director of Education and stays busy overseeing overall operations of the monument and planning all of the events, lectures, school programs, and outreach initiatives for the memorial. The monument receives around 80,000 visitors each year and they are busy preparing for the 65th anniversary of D-Day in 2009. April also spends time teaching Appalachian courses at a local community college and currently serves on several area tourism boards. On a personal level, she was married in August and will continue to reside in Bedford. April states that she is still extremely devoted to Tech. She has worked closely with the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets who raised over \$200,000 for the memorial and stays in contact with a number of professors. “Once a Hokie, always a Hokie and I’m very proud to be one,” says April.

**Adam Tabaka** (B.A. ’99) is working with the office of the Inspector General in the U.S. Department of Transportation. In 2007 he received his M.A. degree in International Commerce and Policy from George Mason University School of Public Policy.

**Jason Crosby** (B.A. ’04) received an M.A. in history from the University of Leeds.

**Bridget Devlin** (B.A. ’07) is currently teaching third grade in Clinton, Louisiana (about 30 minutes from Baton Rouge) for Teach for America. She has 28 kids in her class and is in charge of advancing them in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Bridget says “Every day is a challenge and brings something new and unexpected from amazingly brilliant answers to hidden frogs in pockets.”

**Jessica Schwartz** (B.A. ’08) is spending winter in Wellington, New Zealand and working as a research assistant in the Strategy and Analysis Group at the Environmental Risk Manage-

ment Authority. They are currently dealing with public comments on a potential new regulation on tracing genetically modified crops.

**Robert Murray** (M.A. '08) received the William Preston Society's Gold Watch Award for the best masters thesis in the humanities for his thesis "Reform in the Land of Serf and Slave, 1825-1861."



## Student News

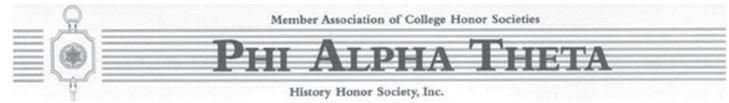


Congratulations to the scholarship winners for 2008-2009: **Elizabeth Lyons** and **Joseph Weatherman** (Moody, Pratt, Minor Scholarship); **Kelli Erk** (John Rathbone Scholarship); **Ashley Landers** (Robichaud Family Scholarship); and the History Freshman Scholarship was awarded to **Catherine Goins**.

**Jenny Geiger** and **Melissa Burgess** were selected for Who's Who Among Colleges and Universities.

The Fall 2007 Undergraduate Research Institute Grant Recipients were History majors **John Cassara** and **Marc Thomas** and their faculty mentor **Peter Wallenstein**.

Each year, through a competitive selection process, students apply and interview for Ambassador positions in the College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences. Ambassadors serve the College by volunteering two hours each week in a College or department office or with individual faculty members and work several events each semester ranging from admission open houses to alumni advisory board meetings. History majors who are serving as Ambassadors for 2008-2009 are: **Rachel Harris**, **Chris Midgley**, **Jennifer Noble**, and **John Steger**.



## The PI-Xi Chapter

**Phi Alpha Theta**, the **National History Honor Society**, had a busy year led by faculty advisor **Dr. Marian Mollin**. In addition to its regular social and business events, the group, in conjunction with the History Club, organized a series of "professional development" workshops on a range of topics including student internships, applying to graduate school, and undertaking undergraduate research projects. PAT and the History Club also took on a number of service projects, assisting the History Department in the Majors Fair, helping the graduate students with their annual Brian Bertoti Graduate History Conference, and fielding a team (for the first time) for Virginia Tech's "Big Event" community service day.

**Phi Alpha Theta** accepted and initiated thirty-five new student members and elected an engaged and energetic team of officers: President **Elizabeth Lyon**, Vice President **Kelly Engbersen**, Treasurer **Laura Harpe**, Secretary **Sarah Skrobialowski**, and Undergraduate Committee Representative **Lauren Russell**. The group already has a number of exciting events planned. They brought a guest speaker to campus on September 29th: **Dr. Kevin Boyle**, Humanities Distinguished Professor of History at Ohio State University and winner of the 2004 National Book Award. They also are planning a group trip to historic sites in the Charlottesville, Virginia, area, will be sending a delegation to this year's regional Phi Alpha Theta student conference, and will be continuing its tradition of departmental and community service as well as the "professional development" workshops that we initiated last year.

## Please Help the Department Evaluate Itself

Every decade or so, the University engages in Outcomes Assessment – an attempt to measure the impact it has on students passing through its doors. As part of that process, the History Department has posted an on-line questionnaire and would like as many of our graduates as possible to respond to it. It will only take a few minutes and will help the department tremendously. We have few other ways of soliciting feedback from our graduates, but such feedback is critical to the state's understanding of what it is we do and how well we do it.

So please go to <https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1132341816863> and take a few minutes to offer your assessment of the department and its program.

## Graduation

The History Department conferred diplomas to its largest class ever on May 10, 2008. One hundred and twenty eight students walked across the stage in War Memorial Gymnasium to receive their Bachelor of Arts diplomas and eleven graduate students received their Master of Arts diplomas.

The class valedictorian was **Ashton Hoff** and the salutatorian was **Brian Peters**.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Brian Bertoti “Innovative Perspectives in History” Graduate Student Conference

Last March, The History Graduate Student Association (HGSA) hosted its most successful conference to date. Nearly forty historians participated in the 11th Annual Innovative Perspectives in History Graduate Conference, which honors the memory of Brian Bertoti. The 2008 conference featured papers from graduate students at twelve different institutions, including NYU, UNC Greensboro, George Washington University, George Mason, and Florida International, as well as Virginia Tech. Faculty and participants both commented on the high quality of the papers and the lively discussions generated during the Q&A portions of the panels. On the eve of the paper sessions, a large and appreciative audience turned out for the keynote address by Professor Thomas Sugrue (Kahn Professor of History and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania) entitled, “Jim Crow’s Last Stand: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Suburban North.” Kudos to the HGSA and especially to the conference steering committee: Robert Murray, Lindsey Newman and Eliza Bourque Dandridge for putting together such a strong program and keeping track of all the logistical details. Mark your calendars now for the 12th Annual Bertoti Conference, March 20-21, 2009.

## Welcoming the new M.A. students



L-R Dr. Peter Wallenstein, Dr. Amy Nelson, Amy Coffman, Joseph Forte, Eric Vanover, and Matthew Sparacio.

## Generosity begins at your academic home. . .

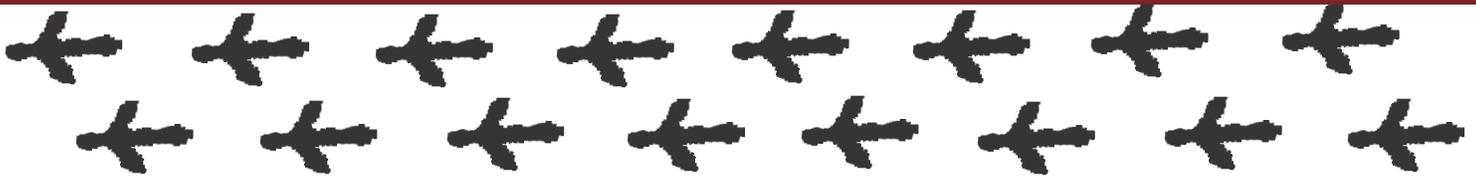
A gift to the History Department can be instrumental in supporting our undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly in these tight budget times. A modest contribution can fund student scholarships here and abroad, graduate student fellowships, and our exciting new program initiatives. Please contact our chair, Professor Dan Thorp (wachau@vt.edu), when you submit information about your gift.

If you are interested in contributing an even larger gift, you should speak with Ms. Jocelyn Sanders, Assistant Director of Development for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (540) 231-2893 or [jocelyn1@vt.edu](mailto:jocelyn1@vt.edu).

### Leslie Sherman Memorial Fund

Leslie Sherman, a double major in history and international studies, was one of the students killed in Norris Hall April 2007. In her honor, the Leslie Sherman Memorial Fund was established and endowed with a portion of the money raised by the Hokie Spirit Fund from thousands of Virginia Tech's friends and supporters around the world. The income from this endowment will provide a permanent remembrance of a wonderful young woman by providing financial support to other undergraduates majoring in Leslie's chosen fields — history or international studies.

If you would like to make a contribution to the fund, contact Ms. Jocelyn Sanders, Assistant Director of Development for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at (540) 231-2893 or [jocelyn1@vt.edu](mailto:jocelyn1@vt.edu)



### ★ Department News ★

We are happy to report that **History** is one of 2008's winners of the designation **University Exemplary Department**. This year's focus was "collaboration across departmental boundaries to fulfill common or complementary goals" and we won because of our conjunction with Teaching & Learning for the variety of collaborative projects we have undertaken with that department over the past eight years. The department receives a cash award, a plaque, an invitation to a nice reception, and the right to be called a University Exemplary Department for another five years.

Montgomery County Public Schools, in partnership with Virginia Tech's Department of History and School of Education, begins the second year of its Teaching American History grant project. Monthly seminars for fall 2008 were led by Professors **Craig Brians** of the Department of Political Science and **Daniel Thorp** of the Department of History. An all day workshop on November 4 featured several presentations by **James Loewen**, author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me, Sundown Towns*, and other studies of the intersection of history, education, and race.

A consortium of Roanoke schools, including Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Salem City, and Floyd County, is entering the final year of its Teacher American History grant, with Virginia Tech's Department of History and School of Education as higher education partners. Monthly workshops for the fall were led by **Stephanie Van Hover** and **Patrice Grimes** of the University of Virginia, **Craig Brians** of Virginia Tech, **Peter Coogan** of Hollins College, **John Selby** of Roanoke

College, and staff from the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. The TAH grant has also been supporting graduate courses offered at the Roanoke Higher Education taught by history department faculty **Professors Crandall Shifflett, Peter Wallenstein, and Daniel Thorp**. During the fall 2008 semester, **Professor Kathleen Jones** taught a course on modern America; in the spring of 2009, **Professor Tom Ewing** will teach a course on contemporary American foreign policy.

The September 2008 issue of the *Journal of Women's History* has an article co-authored by **E. Thomas Ewing, Heather Gumbert, Amy Nelson, Robert Stephens** (from the Department of History), **Jane Lehr** (PhD in Science and Technology Studies), and **David Hicks** (School of Education). This article, "Should Women Vote? Using Cartoons to Teach the Suffrage Campaign in European History," uses material from the Digital History Reader, an online resource for teaching European history.

The Organization of American Historians *Newsletter* for May 2008 has an article co-authored by **E. Thomas Ewing, Jane Lehr, David Hicks, and Melissa Lisanti**. This article, "Teaching about the Impact of the Great Depression," describes the five educational modules included in the Virginia Schools in the Great Depression digital history project: <http://www.vaschools.history.vt.edu>

The Department of History was awarded a College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Diversity Service Grant (\$10,000) for the project "Segregated Public Schools in Southwest Virginia." This grant will support a Graduate Research Assistant who will be contributing to the collaboration between the Christiansburg Institute and the Department of History, as well as preparing for a spring workshop for public school teachers in the region.

**We Want To Hear From You!**

Please send updates on your activities to [jafranci@vt.edu](mailto:jafranci@vt.edu) or to the Department of History  
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*Historically  
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Our newsletter will continue to feature articles and notes about our History Department alumni/ alumnae. We welcome information about what you have been doing since leaving Virginia Tech. Please send your name, degree, email, occupation, and other related information to the Department of History - 0117, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061.

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