



LIBRARY NEWS

Sharing stories of Georgia libraries transforming lives and communities

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Schools, libraries partner to give students access to books, online resources

Digitized oral histories share early 20th century African American experiences

Summer Reading Programs begin across Georgia public libraries



GEORGIA PUBLIC
LIBRARY SERVICE

Digitized oral histories from Cairo, Georgia, share early 20th century African American experiences

A newly digitized oral history collection held by the Roddenbery Memorial Library in Cairo, Georgia, offers a breadth of information and stories about the African American experience there during the early 20th century.

The interviews were originally recorded on cassette tapes and cover topics including rural agriculture, the local economy, education, midwifery, traditional medicine, and church life.

The collection, titled "They Endure: A Chronicle of Courage," includes over 80 interviews recorded in 1981-82 and 50 digitized slides of African American churches and cemeteries in Grady County. Digitized collection materials are available online through the Digital Library of Georgia at dlg.usg.edu.

In one interview, Mrs. Susie Scott discusses her role as a church historian and shares information on the historical beginnings of her congregation, located near Whigham, Georgia:

"During the latter days of slavery, they [the enslaved worshippers] would just meet out there, somewhere where they thought they could be safe, you know ... This land was purchased Dec. 20, 1878, and the first church was a log church," she said.

Each of the interviewees brings forth personal memories and recollections about life in Grady County.

Ms. Pinkie Simmons is a lifelong resident of Cairo, Georgia, who recently turned 95. She has always loved history, and so she jumped at the chance to contribute her interview to the collection in 1981. She is glad the interviews have been digitized.

"It's important for younger people to learn about history," she said. "For some, if the collection weren't available online, they wouldn't be able to experience it."

In her oral history interview, she talked about being a midwife for more than 30 years.

"So, I delivered one baby after another, sometimes five babies in 24 hours ... that was the most I delivered in one day." When asked how many babies she delivered in her career, Ms. Simmons replied, "Five hundred was the last count, but I've delivered a few since then," she said.

Ms. Simmons enjoyed midwifery because she could help women, most of whom were very young, separated, or widowed.

"A lot of women just needed someone to hold their hand and tell them it would be all right," she said. "What I got out of it most was helping women."

Other interviewees include prominent community figures, educators, domestic workers, church officials, and farmers. While each of these stories is different, together they portray the



Courtesy of the Family
of Ms. Pinkie Simmons

“A lot of women just needed someone to hold their hand and tell them it would be all right. What I got out of it most was helping women.” - Ms. Pinkie Simmons, 95, who was a midwife for more than 30 years.

community’s resilience and endurance through social support networks.

“I am so excited to have these voices heard again,” said Janet Boudet, director of the Roddenbery Memorial Library. “Most of the interviewees have been deceased for 15 to 35 years now. The release of these recordings is a wonderful opportunity to hear how a specific generation and group of community members endured hardships of their own.”

The interviews were recorded by Dr. Robert Hall and Frank Roebuck as a part of a grant from Georgia Humanities. The project emphasized community participation, and interviewees were encouraged to submit copies of photographs, documents, and

collectibles to Roddenbery Memorial Library.

“Oral histories are a great tool for students and educators,” said Project Director Angela Stanley. “Not only can students hear the voices of real people from their community, they also come to understand that ‘history happened here,’ and that that history often shares the same DNA as larger economic, cultural, and social movements.”

Georgia Public Library Service digitized the collection as part of its work to help public libraries preserve their local history and genealogy collections and to increase public access to free, online primary sources of local history. A list of GPLS digitization projects can be found here: georgialibraries.org/archival-services/projects. ■

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Learn and preserve history at your local library: here's how

Oral histories enable people to share their stories in their own words, and public libraries from Athens to Perry to Bainbridge to Augusta have digitized interviews with community members. You can access them at dlg.usg.edu.

Every year, Georgia's public libraries support the addition of tens of thousands of digitized newspaper pages to the Georgia Historic Newspapers portal. You can access them at gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu.

Did you know that Clayton, Georgia, was the site of the first maternity hospital for pregnant women? The Rabun County Maternity Home opened in 1942 and accepted all patients, regardless of race or ability to pay. Check out a scrapbook kept by the hospital's head nurse at dlg.usg.edu.

Many of Georgia's libraries are collecting community stories--such as oral histories, written narratives, photographs, artwork, and video recordings--about their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. You can view a listing of the projects at georgialibraries.org/coronavirus-chronicles.

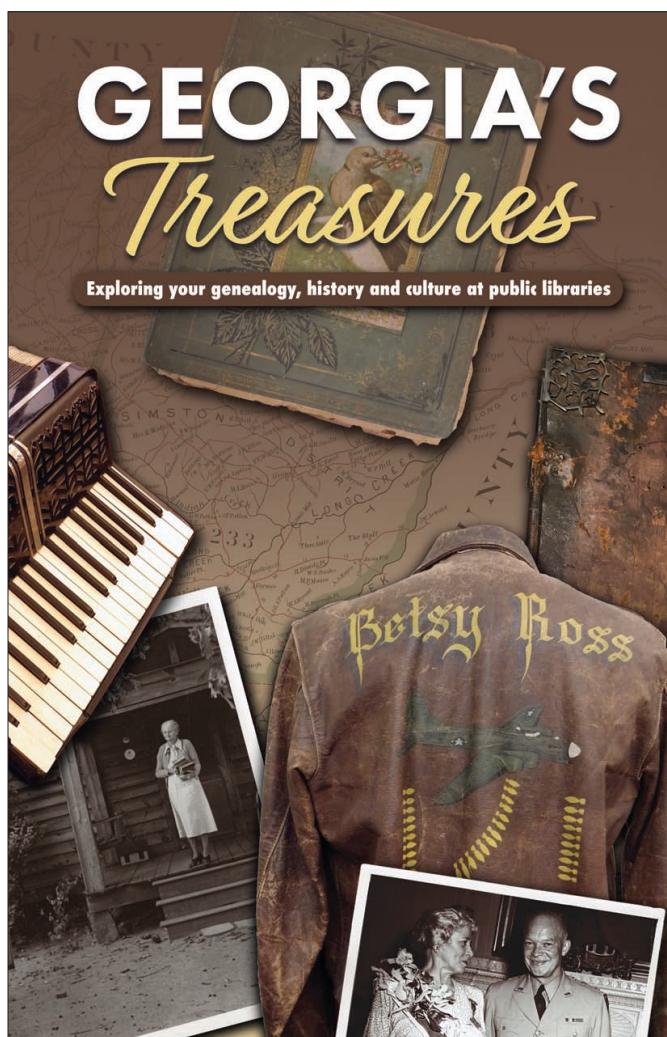
The Auburn Avenue Research Library of African American Culture and History is preserving the history of Atlanta, the civil rights movements, and Southern literature.

Ask a librarian for a copy of "Georgia's Treasures," which gives a thorough description of genealogy, history, and cultural collections at Georgia public libraries.

You can now digitize photo negatives, slides, or VHS tapes for free in Macon, Georgia, at the Washington Memorial Library's new Memory Lab. Many of Georgia's public libraries can provide expertise on how to preserve family heirlooms and collectibles. Contact your local library to find out how. ■



Digital Library of Georgia



It's summer reading time at your library!



Q&A with Elaine Black, director of youth services at Georgia Public Library Service

Prevent the summer learning slide, and help your child be ready for school in the fall, through the Summer Reading Program at your local library. Programs typically take place from late May to early August. Learn more at georgialibraries.org/summer-reading.

How does the Summer Reading Program benefit kids and families?

From fun, free learning opportunities like STEM programming or arts and crafts programming to storytelling events to early literacy activities like toddler and preschool story hours to earning badges online through Beanstack – summer reading has you covered with ways to stay engaged when school is not in session.

Georgia Public Library Service provides online access to Beanstack to all 411 public libraries in the state. Through Beanstack, you can track reading, participate in challenges, and engage with fun literacy activities. You can check with your local library to see their schedule and learn how

to sign up for Beanstack. Many of our public libraries also serve as meal or snack sites for the USDA's Summer Food Service Program, which makes free healthy meals and snacks available to young people in communities with high rates of poverty.

Will programs be in person, virtual, or both? What are some examples of programming taking place?

Some libraries will have limited in-person events; others will be strictly virtual; and some will offer self-directed programs that can be picked up at the library.

As an example, one library is coordinating with their local Boys and Girls Club to host performances at their gym. Kids can spread out, and everyone can simply have some fun. It's a win-win.

Other libraries will host outdoor events, such as storytimes on library grounds. Those with indoor events may host the same event multiple times to ensure that rooms are not overcrowded, or they may require advance registration.

For those not comfortable with

in-person programming, other libraries will give out take-home craft bags.

Are there adult Summer Reading Programs?

Yes! Some libraries do offer summer reading events for adults, which may include book clubs, virtual author visits, Beanstack reading challenges, or a speaker series. Adult summer reading programs benefit patrons of all ages. When kids see adults modeling the behavior, they are more likely to become avid readers themselves.

Why should my family participate in summer reading at the library?

Summer reading is a great way for the whole family to have fun and keep learning while school is out. Research shows that students who keep reading during the summer months return to school ready to learn, while students who aren't reading begin the school year behind those who have read. ■

Did you know that kids who don't practice reading during the summer can lose up to three months of reading ability?

Schools and libraries partner to give students access to books and more



“This is my first time at the library. There are so many books to choose from; I’m so happy!” - Lola, 9



Photos by Deborah Hakes

At the Morgan County Library, a group of third-graders from the nearby elementary school sat across the carpet, holding their newly checked out books. They were buzzing with excitement as they talked about what they were going to read first. A few kids already were engrossed in their stories.

"This is my first time at the library," said Lola, 9. She held a copy of "Twinkle: Think Pink." "There are so many books to choose from; I'm so happy!"

The students were touring the library to highlight a new partnership between their library and the local school system. Working through the Georgia Public Library Service, Azalea Regional Library System has given out 17,000 PINES Library Access for Youth

(PLAY) cards so far in Morgan and Walton counties. The Green County, Hancock County, and Social Circle City school systems will give PLAY cards to an additional 5,600 students on June 1.

The PLAY card provides students with access to both physical and digital materials, such as eRead Kids and GALILEO. Students will be able to check out as many as five items at a time and there are no late fees. They can request items from any PINES-affiliated library, and they'll be delivered free to their local library branch for pickup.

PLAY was developed by Georgia Public Library Service in order to give more youth access to their local public library and the tools they need to build literacy skills. While it's a statewide initiative, individual libraries and school systems forge local agreements

for how to implement the PLAY card in their community.

"The PLAY card partnership benefits both schools and libraries, but most of all it benefits students," said Stacy Brown, director of Azalea Regional Library System. "A school media center may have one book in a popular series, but the PLAY card gives students access to the entire set. Our hope is that a book discovered at school will spark a love for reading and bring that child into the library. We are so grateful for the opportunity to share the PLAY card with our schools and community."

Colby Hunter is manager of the Morgan County Library. He believes that the PLAY card eliminates a barrier for kids to use the library by signing them up automatically. "So many students who don't have



Photos by Deborah Hakes

access to their local libraries now have it through the PLAY card. They can use our digital resources at their school, and they can now visit the library with a parent or caregiver. Kids didn't know we had so much," he said.

Ashley Barnes, a third grade teacher at Morgan County Elementary School, was excited as she watched the third-graders reading and talking at the library. "I love being able to bring kids into the community again. Look right there," she said, pointing to one boy sitting cross-legged reading "Catherine the Great." "That's the most precious thing I've ever seen. We have all these resources right here at the library. Anything that sparks a love of reading has my heart."

Live Oak Public Libraries partnered with Savannah-Chatham County Public School System and PINES to pilot the PLAY card for 38,000 students in March 2020. In December 2020, they added an additional 13,000 students in partnership with Effingham County School System.

The library has seen a steady increase in materials checkouts by students, but one anecdote stands out as a measure of success. There was an elementary school boy who would regularly walk to the library after school, sit quietly in the corner and read "Diary of a Wimpy Kid." When it was time to go home, he would put back the book because he didn't have a parent present to sign in order to get a library card. Soon after the PLAY card launched, the librarian went to him and said, "I have something for you that will change your life. How would you like to take that book home today?" Excitedly the boy asked, "How?" She replied, "With your Student PLAY account!" The PLAY card reduces barriers to library access by automatically registering students. The young boy left the library that day happy, with the book in hand.

"We love that the PLAY card can help build a love of reading for kids across Georgia," said Elizabeth McKinney, director of PINES at Georgia Public Library Service. "The PLAY card is one way to make it easier for kids to access library materials, for them to be able to discover and learn year-round."

Twelve school systems across Georgia will launch PLAY cards by the end of the 2020-2021 school year, to coincide with summer reading programs and to help prevent summer learning loss. As of May 2021, over 89,000 Georgia students have received a PLAY card account, providing them free access to millions of PINES library resources. *(Cont. page 10)*

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Our hope is that a book discovered at school will spark a love for reading and bring that child into the library."

- Stacy Brown, director of Azalea Regional Library System



HOW THE PLAY CARD WORKS

Georgia Public Library Service will launch the PLAY card for all interested school systems in PINES counties over the next few years. PINES, which is part of Georgia Public Library Service, serves patrons in all 159 Georgia counties. Those with a PINES card have access to a shared collection of more than 11 million materials that can be delivered to their home libraries free of charge. Many students in the nine non-PINES library systems have access to student cards organized through their local libraries.

Each PLAY library account is created using a unique school number as a student's library access number. With a memorandum of understanding between the school and the library in place, the school shares limited directory information for each student with the library. Parents have the ability to opt their student out of the program at any time.

PLAY has rolled out or is in progress in Savannah-Chatham, Effingham, Morgan, Oconee, Glynn, Rockdale, Walton, Greene, Hancock, Barrow, and Elbert counties, and Social Circle and Dalton cities. ■

- ✓ The PLAY card provides students with access to both physical and digital materials, such as eRead Kids, Learning Express Library for practice tests, Mango Languages, and subscription-based newspapers.
- ✓ Students will be able to check out as many as five items at a time, and there are no late fees.
- ✓ Students also can request items from any PINES affiliated library, and they will be delivered free to their local library branch for pickup.



Photo by Deborah Hakes

Patron profile: Pam Johnson

Pam Johnson of Fayetteville recently completed Entrepreneurial Mindset Training at the Peachtree City Library. The free, self-paced program helps people understand what it takes to be an entrepreneur, and it is available at all Georgia public libraries. She hopes to start a decluttering business, and the tools she learned from the library will help her on her journey.

"I had just recently quit my job and wasn't sure what I wanted to do next," said Pam. "I thought about starting my own business, but I didn't know the first step. I go to my library weekly, and I learned from my friend, who is a librarian, about Entrepreneurial Mindset Training."

Participants are prompted to engage in exercises that connect their life experience to that of successful entrepreneurs, develop a personal vision, interview a local entrepreneur, identify a problem

they would like to solve, and complete an opportunity canvas that helps them refine and validate their solution.

For Pam, being able to access the training online, at her pace, was key.

"The training itself was easy to follow," she said. "I liked that each module could stand alone, and the follow-up exercises put me in the mindset of thinking: Do I want to pursue this type of experience? What would success look like for me?"

Now she is thinking through her ideas to determine her next step.

"One of the key things about being an entrepreneur is solving a problem," she said. "So I'm taking my ideas and considering, how will this solve a problem? Instead of just, will this make me money? Decluttering does solve a problem for people. The course exercises will help me decide if this is something I want to start as a business."

Learn more about Entrepreneurial Mindset Training at georgialibraries.org/eli. ■



Courtesy of Pam Johnson

Here Pam Johnson sorts through old photos and organizes them for a decluttering client. The goal is to keep one copy of a photo for an album and distribute the rest to the client's family members.

Tell us YOUR library story by emailing communications@georgialibraries.org or using #GeorgiaLibraries.



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Information presented in this newsletter will be provided in alternative formats on request. For more information about Georgia's libraries, visit [georgialibraries.org](http://www.georgialibraries.org)



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