

# CALVERT LIBRARY

*★ a history through 2024 ★*



BY MOLLY WEEKS CRUMBLEY

# Calvert Library: A History Through 2024

Molly Weeks Crumbley

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## 65 Years of Calvert Library

INTRODUCTIONS BY PAT HOFMANN AND CARRIE WILLSON

What a delight to read Molly's history of Calvert Library. I enjoyed reading about the library from the beginning, through my time working there, and after I retired. Libraries are awesome places with so many services available to the public. Calvert Library is a great example of an awesome, modern library! Calvert Library has always been super welcoming to the public. When I started working there in 1985, it was obvious that customer service was so important. Staff were well trained so they could help customers effectively and with kindness. That continues today.

I feel so lucky to have spent most of my career at Calvert Library, always stating that I had the best job ever! Directing Calvert Library was a great joy in my life. I love libraries and these days I'm happy to serve as secretary of the Friends of Calvert Library, a group I had a hand in organizing many years ago. I'd like to give a shout out to all the staff from 1985 to 2013—I'm privileged to have worked with you! And now, it is over a decade since I retired and the library continues to progress.

Imagination, Information, Inspiration!

**Pat Hofmann**



It has been an honor to be entrusted with the leadership of Calvert Library since Pat Hofmann retired in 2013. Pat built on the successful operation of the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association and continued the emphasis on hiring staff who are vested in the success of the community in Calvert County. I have endeavored to continue that legacy of delivering modern library services in welcoming library locations with exceptional customer service.

We always say that we are a learning organization and it has been a pleasure to learn more about the history of Calvert Library from its inception through present day. We make decisions every day about how to use the limited resources entrusted to us by Calvert County Government and the State of Maryland to provide the best and most accessible classes, events, materials and services to boost the Imagination, provide trustworthy Information and encourage Inspiration in customers of all ages.

Please enjoy this volume and join us in writing the next 65 years of Calvert Library's service to the community!

Warmly,

**Carrie Willson**

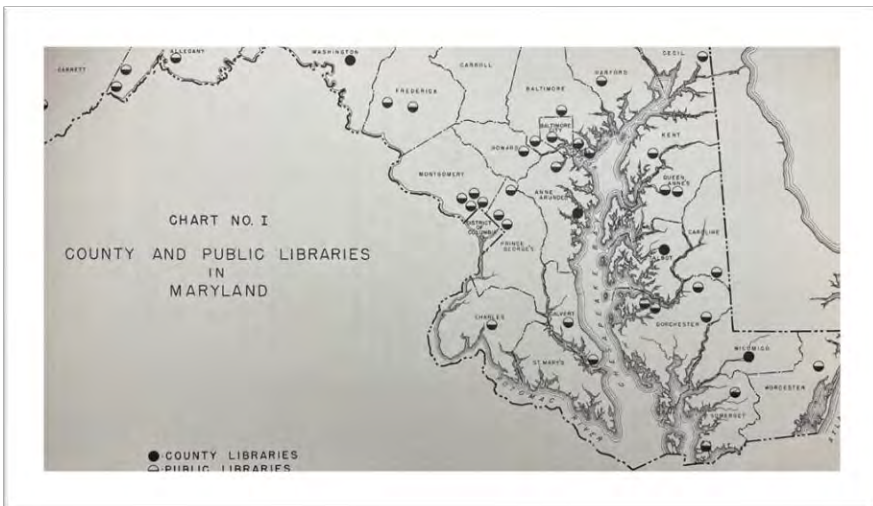
## Early Educational Opportunities in Calvert County

*"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."*

*Walter Cronkite*

65 years—a span of time long enough that several generations of Calvertonians have never known a life without public libraries, yet also short enough that there are still community members who remember the before times. The road to opening public libraries in the once very rural Calvert County was not a straight one.

Though Calvert County was established centuries ago in 1654, no true public library existed until 1959. Before Calvert Library officially opened its doors to provide service, there were several iterations of libraries throughout the county worth noting.



*Map showing the libraries of Maryland in 1944*

The first documented instance of a Calvert library of sorts comes from a brief mention in a 1902 edition of *Calvert Journal*: “Dr. William H. Marsh has organized a Booklovers Library, consisting of five members: Rev. L.A. Wye, Mr. D.F. Overton, Miss Nettie Crocket, Mrs. J.C. Webster and himself.”<sup>1</sup> For several years, the book club received 8 books every month from Philadelphia which they circulated amongst themselves. The Booklovers Library would inspire member Reverend Lionel Wye, rector of St. Peter’s Protestant Episcopal Church, to create his own brick and mortar lending library in Solomons.

After vigorous fundraising, Wye had accrued \$2,000 with which he was able to build the Episcopal Church Parish House, a two-story space that included a library.<sup>2</sup> The library was provided with books and furniture from the Enoch Pratt Free Library as well as a gift of 1,000 books from Mr. John Henry Keene of Baltimore. In a letter to Wye, Keene asserted, “The most powerful engine[s] for starting the mind of the tidewater communities are libraries.”<sup>3</sup>



*Episcopal Church Parish House*



By January 1907, *Calvert Journal* noted, “The public library at the Parish House is now open to subscribers for \$1.00 per year which fund will be used to purchase new books. A member may borrow a book for a week, but if it is kept out over two weeks an assessment of 1 cent per day will be charged until it is returned.”<sup>4</sup> After Wye moved on to a new position in Washington, DC, the Parish House library continued to operate on and off for many years thanks to the efforts of volunteers and the Solomons Public Library Association.

Operations of the Parish House library had slowed in the 1940s, only remaining open on Saturday evenings, and the building itself was torn down in the 1950s. Some of the books from the early Parish House collections can be viewed today in the Calvert Marine Museum Archives.



A decade later, Trial Magistrate William Duke would open his own version of a library facility in Prince Frederick. Ahead of the library’s January 1, 1912 grand opening, Duke hosted the first of many benefits, this one consisting of local musical entertainment at Town Hall. *The Baltimore Sun* detailed the event:

“A musical burlesque, ‘Pocahontas,’ was the chief feature. Those in the cast were Messrs. C. Gray Rawlings, William W. Duke, Arthur W. Dowel, Arthur Hall, W. Dorsey Gray, Samuel Bowen, Lloyd Johnson, Wilfred Cox, Earl Buck, James Buck, Milton Rawlings, Joseph W. Rawlings, Paul Bowen and Elmer Hall, Misses Anita S. Dowel, Mary Gray, Katharine Briscoe, Dolly Madison Hammett, Sadie Ogden, Nannie

Coster, Marguerite Gray, Grace Buck and Lily May Anderson. Mrs. George W. Dowel was accompanist, and Miss Katharine Briscoe sang a solo. Two negro farces, 'Stick to Your Word, Gal,' and 'Axin' Her Father,' [a] medley of plantation songs and a quintet, 'Me Honey Love,' were also features of the entertainment."<sup>5</sup>

Though it was referred to as Calvert County Public Library by its founder, the space was not intended for use by all residents. Calvert County was still very much a segregated community, and membership in the library association was not granted to any people of color. This lack of accessibility was reflected statewide. A 1944 the Maryland State Planning Commission report stated, "Of the 136,088 Negroes who live in the counties however, 93,688, or nearly 70 per cent, have no library service whatever."<sup>6</sup>



*Judge William Duke's library in Prince Frederick*

Further north and some years later, The Hayes Library was incorporated and purportedly open to the public. The Bayside History Museum reports the following: “In 1938, a small group of people led by Walter V. Harrison and John A. Sherman organized ‘The Hayes Library, Incorporated’ and opened the first library in Calvert County at 4106 3rd Street in North Beach. It was open to the public for ‘educational, recreational and other non-profitable purposes.’”<sup>7</sup> Not many details about the library or its funding are available, but it is believed to have been in operation until 1942.



Despite the community efforts to make libraries a reality in Calvert County, none could truly be considered free and available to all members of the public. Additionally, higher education opportunities were difficult to obtain. Calvert County was the last county in the state of Maryland to get a high school. Until the 1920s, there was “no high school in Calvert for either white or African American students.”<sup>8</sup> A bill to appropriate state funds to build a high school for Calvert was vetoed in 1912. Construction was approved to build a high school for white students on April 18, 1916, but construction was forced to halt during World War I.

Eventually, three white high schools were established in 1921: Prince Frederick High School, Solomons High School and Huntingtown High School. By all accounts, the African American population in Calvert County especially lacked the educational opportunities afforded to their white peers. In his book *Mulatto: The Black History of Calvert County Maryland*, local historian Michael Kent explained, “The Black community fought Calvert County for a Black high school starting in the

1880's. Several two and three room school houses were built in the 1920's but they only taught to the 7th grade."<sup>9</sup>

These segregated schools were typically located near churches to ensure they were within walking distance of established communities. Before travel by automobiles was a possibility, Black students in search of higher education would have to travel to Baltimore in the bottom of ferry boats along with livestock and cargo. "The one way trip would take 12 to 14 hours. A Black student would have to pay to stay in Baltimore if they wanted to get more than a 7th grade education."<sup>10</sup>

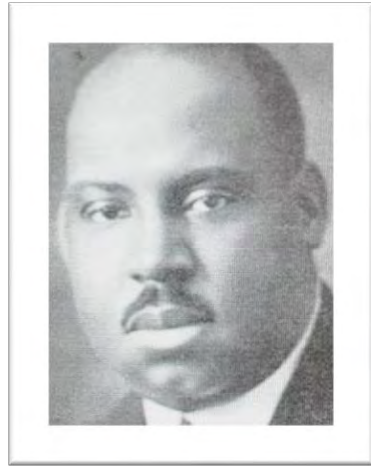
Education began to formalize within the county in 1916 upon the establishment of a County Board of Education. The original board was made up of a president, vice president and member at large. To oversee the operations of the board and act as de facto secretary and treasurer, a school superintendent role was also established.

The same year, "Maryland Act of 1916, Chapter 506, authorized the consolidation of Maryland one-room schools along with funding for the transportation of students to and from the consolidated schools," explains Mary Rockefeller in her book *Early Schools of Calvert County Maryland*. "In the mid-1920s, Calvert County began consolidating students from several one-room schools into graded elementary schools."<sup>11</sup>

As elementary and high schools were created, there was a noticeable deficit – no high school for Black students to attend. One was finally erected in 1939 thanks to a man named Albert Cassell. Cassell, born in 1895 in Towson, was a prominent Black architect and professor at Howard University.

He purchased 380 acres of property in Calvert in 1931 with the idea of creating a Black community center called Calvert Town, which would consist of businesses and amenities including schools for black students.

Through President Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives, funding was available to make Cassell's ideas into realities. However, as Kent said, "Calvert County residents panicked. Although White people had the majority of money, land, and all of the government power, they were the minority population."<sup>12</sup>



*Albert Cassell*

After residents protested Cassell's plan, negotiations occurred between the US Senators and the Secretary of the Interior. Cassell's Calvert Town plan was rejected, but a silver lining came in the form of Calvert County finally creating a Black high school. A Prince Frederick elementary school was converted into the Central Industrial School, which issued diplomas in 1937 and 1938. By October 1939, William Sampson Brooks High School opened and served as the sole high school for Black students until the desegregation of Calvert County schools in 1966.<sup>13</sup>

Even with increased access to educational facilities, the schools were limited in terms of their library materials. The state of Maryland didn't adopt a formal set of standards for school libraries and media centers until 1987,<sup>14</sup> and the National Center for Education Statistics reported that in the early 1950s only "36 percent of all public schools had library media centers."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Calvert Journal*, May 24, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Hurry, "Solomons Island's First Library: An Account of the First Lending Library in Calvert County, Maryland," *Bugeye Times*, 2024, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Calvert Journal*, 1907.

<sup>5</sup> "'Pocahontas' at Prince Frederick," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 29, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> Maryland State Planning Commission, *The Free Public Library in Maryland*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Grace Mary Brady, "First Public Library in Calvert County," Bayside History Museum, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Rockefeller, *Early Schools of Calvert County Maryland* (Odenton: Gasch Printing, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Kent, *Mulatto: The Black History of Calvert County Maryland* (2019), 46.

<sup>10</sup> Kent, *Mulatto*, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Rockefeller, *Early Schools of Calvert County*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Kent, *Mulatto*, 46.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> Maryland State Board of Education, *Standards for School Library Media Programs in Maryland* (Baltimore: 2000), ii.

<sup>15</sup> J.S. Michie and B.A. Holton, *America's Public School Libraries: 1953-2000* (Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, 2005), <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005324.pdf>, 2.

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## Controversy on Wheels

PROPOSED BOOKMOBILE SERVICE SOWS DISCORD

*"If this nation is to be wise as well as strong,  
if we are to achieve our destiny, then we need  
more new ideas for more wise men reading  
more good books in more public libraries."*

*—President John F. Kennedy*

In the early 1950s, there was a push by private citizens to fill the educational gaps in the county by establishing a bookmobile service. Mrs. Hilmer C. Nelson, of Scientists Cliffs, was the driving force of this campaign—a “sparkplug fired with enthusiasm for making a bookmobile roll throughout Calvert County with books available to one and all, regardless of their station or circumstance.”<sup>1</sup> With a county population of only 12,000, bringing library services on the road was a more financially viable option than establishing a brick-and-mortar location.

It was proposed that Calvert County would share the use of the St. Mary’s County Library bookmobile, an option backed by St. Mary’s librarian Eloise Pickrell, who drove her county’s vehicle over to Calvert County to show residents the benefits of a traveling library system. She and a volunteer visited every school in the area and invited students on board to tour the mobile collections and generate excitement for the possibility of receiving regular visits from the library on wheels.

An initial exploratory meeting for residents interested in receiving public library services was held at Calvert County High School in Prince Frederick on February 7, 1952.

Nelson and other organizers intended to rally public support for the bookmobile campaign as well as sort out logistics like operating budget and the creation of a board of library trustees. In an advertisement for the interest meeting posted in the *Calvert Independent*, supporters of the bookmobile asserted that “A Public Library is a practical demonstration of democracy’s faith in universal education as a life-long process.”<sup>2</sup>



*Mrs. Hilmer C. Nelson, bookmobile advocate*

In 1952, Calvert County residents were among just 20 percent of Marylanders who didn’t have access to a public library service of any kind. Eager to change this, there were many supporters of the bookmobile. State Superintendent of Schools T.C. Pullen, Jr. stated, “A reading people is an educated people and no people can long remain educated without accessibility to extensive and varied reading. It isn’t reasonable to spend twelve years teaching children to find information and appreciate good literature and then fail to provide them with facilities for continuing and developing their reading interests.”<sup>3</sup>



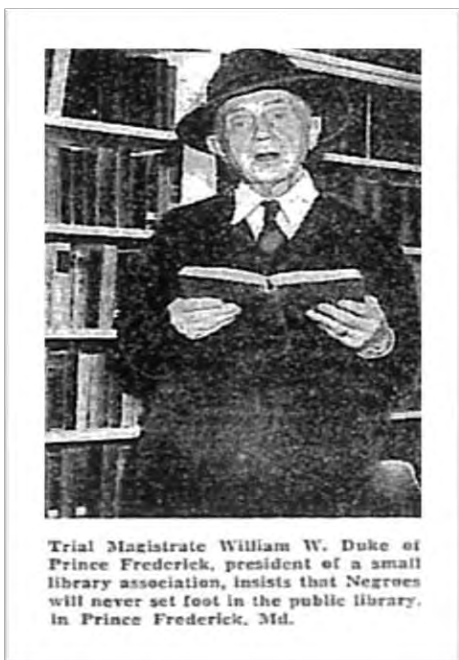
Without the means to establish a brick-and-mortar public library in the county, the bookmobile proposal marked a compromise that could bring materials to the remote populous.

Additionally, the bookmobile proposal would finally allow Black customers to have equal access to library materials.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the campaign for bookmobile service, 14 of Maryland's 23 counties were already making use of mobile library services, and many Calvert County readers were eager to join their number. As one resident quipped, "I'm worse off than Abe Lincoln—I have a log cabin but no books."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the support, however, there was also vocal and even threatening opposition to the plan. "There's a fear in Calvert County that I can't explain," Mrs. Nelson told the *Post*, relating that she herself had received threats due to her involvement with the bookmobile campaign.<sup>6</sup> A delivery man who brought wood to her home told her that the bookmobile would be burned down if it were approved for use. Detractors took to the local newspapers to speak out against the proposed library services. A.D. Neeld, in an op-ed in the *Calvert Independent*, outlined the following points of contention:

- "(1) Bookmobiles spread germs and disease—and even Blackshank [author's note: this refers to a fungus that damages tobacco crops];
- (2) Induce people to waste time reading novels that should be employed in more profitable pursuits;
- (3) Foster wrong standards among young people by spreading uncensored and lewd literature;
- (4) Will not be patronized as soon as the novelty wears off;
- (5) Is another step along the road to socialism."<sup>7</sup>

Many other detractors balked at the proposed price of operating the bookmobile service, which would cost the county five cents a mile and potentially raise taxes two cents per Calvert resident.



*Opposition to the bookmobile proposal*

Ben A. Sunderland, the chair of the three-person Board of Calvert County Commissioners, stated that all were opposed to raising the tax rate, which would have to change from \$1.96 to \$1.98 in order to fund the county's share of the bookmobile and qualify the service to receive funding from the State of Maryland. The commissioners explained that they had too many other financial obligations to support adding library services.

These reasons, the *Baltimore Afro-American* maintained in its coverage of the controversy, hid the true reasons behind the pushback. "There is other opposition in Calvert County to the proposed bookmobile which, if obtained, would have to serve all races. This opposition, however, hides behind the smokescreen of being against it because of economic reasons."<sup>8</sup>

Integration had not yet reached Calvert County, and many bookmobile detractors were unwilling to share library materials with people of color. Among these was Judge Duke, who continued to operate his private library in Prince Frederick. Duke said in the *Washington Post*, "Many of the Negroes in this county have a venereal disease, which can be spread by the exchange of books; and that a Negro is not above stealing a book from a library if he wants it bad enough."<sup>9</sup>

Duke didn't oppose forming separate services for people of color but was vocal in his opposition to an equitable bookmobile program. Unsurprisingly, his private 2,000-volume

library was available only for white subscribers with no plans to change policy. As he told the *Post*, “A Negro will never set foot in that library as long as I have anything to do with it.”<sup>10</sup> Judge Duke proved correct. He passed away in 1953—6 years before Calvert Library officially opened.



The service was revisited upon the passing of the 1956 Library Services Act, a public law which provided funding to extend “library services to rural areas without such services or with inadequate services.”<sup>11</sup> The bookmobile was at last acquired, right at the same time Calvert County Public Library was opening in Prince Frederick. Unfortunately, by this time Mrs. Nelson’s family had relocated and she was unable to see the fruition of her labor.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Morris, “Calvert Foes Threaten to Burn Bookmobile,” *Washington Post*, April 20, 1952, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, M17.

<sup>2</sup> “On the Subject of Library Service,” *Calvert Independent*, February 2, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Calvert Independent*, 1952.

<sup>4</sup> “Calvert County May Get Library Service,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 1952, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Morris, “Calvert Foes,” *Washington Post*, M17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> A.D. Neeld, “The Bookmobile,” *Calvert Independent*, April 12, 1952.

<sup>8</sup> “Bigoted White Judge Bans Library in Calvert County,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 24, 1952, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Morris, “Calvert Foes,” *Washington Post*, M17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> (H.R. 2840)

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## Open for Business

THE FIRST PUBLIC LIBRARY COMES TO PRINCE FREDERICK

*“All of the life-changing awesome words and pictures  
and ideas inside your library are useless without  
just one word outside your library: Open.”  
—Mo Willems*

1959 would prove to be a momentous year for Calvert Library. After Governor Theodore McKeldin appointed a Board of Library Trustees, the 7 members (Mrs. Earl Hicks, Mrs. Edwin Ward, Mrs. R.B. Smoot, Mr. T. H. Williams, Mr. Arthur Dowell, Mrs. Carl Breland and Mrs. Lola Parks) met with a representative of the Maryland State Department of Education and officially agreed to join a new cooperative library system. “On February 20, 1959, the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association was created and still exists today.”<sup>1</sup> The association, known as SMRLA, would serve as an umbrella for the Calvert, St. Mary’s and Charles County library systems. Originally, one librarian, Dee Holmes, would oversee operations for all three of the Southern Maryland county libraries.

Just a few months later, Calvert County Public Library would open in downtown Prince Frederick in the building that once housed Duke’s private library — a space which was donated by his family. The *Calvert Independent* covered the festivities: “An enthusiastic crowd of book lovers filled the small, but important Calvert County Library Sunday afternoon, April 5, when the Library and Bookmobile were dedicated to the service of the county.”<sup>2</sup>

Fortuitously, the opening of the library and commissioning of the bookmobile occurred just in time to celebrate the nation's second-ever National Library Week, the theme of which was "A better read, a better informed America."<sup>3</sup>



*The crowd at the grand opening of Calvert Library*

Located on Main Street, the new Calvert County Public Library was run by Librarian Mildred Hairston. It was initially open to the public every Friday from 1-9 pm. The remaining weekdays, Calvert Countians would be served by the new bookmobile, finally established years after the controversial proposal was introduced. The bookmobile had regular routes through the entire county, including scheduled stops at each of the county schools. Hairston was an incredibly busy librarian, juggling her time between the bookmobile route, collection management and customer service.

She soon became a well-known public figure as she made her rounds: "It was Mrs. Hairston's friendliness and warmth and

her efforts to make the public library a familiar, comfortable place that helped ease the library into the mainstream of Calvert County life.”<sup>4</sup>



*Mildred Hairston and the first Calvert Library bookmobile*

By the end of its first year open, the library and bookmobile had been put to good use by the citizens of Calvert County. In the Bookmobile Column published in the *Calvert Independent*, Hairston reported:

“With about 5500 volumes, your Library and Bookmobile have circulated in the fiscal year ending June 30, a total of 27,412 books in Calvert County. All people connected with library service in our county are pleased with the response of our people to the call of the wonderful world of good books. Of the total books circulated, 12,814 were borrowed from the Bookmobile, 5,830 directly from the Library, and 8,768 books were loaned to schools.”<sup>5</sup>

It soon became clear that the community wanted to be able to visit the library more than once a week. By 1961, the building would be open a second day during the week, and Marie Barrett

was hired as a part-time assistant librarian to make this possible. She and Hairston shared the bookmobile and library duties.



*Mildred Hairston and Marie Barrett*

Even so, demand for materials and hours outpaced the capacity of the library, which began to practically burst at the seams with bookshelves. By 1960, “it had become clear that the library was reaching its capacity. The bookcases moved closer and closer together as more were added, and the library’s floor became wavy under their weight.”<sup>6</sup> Eventually the shelving became so tightly compressed that it could be difficult for customers to browse or indeed even properly read the titles of the books.

A solution came in the form of relocation — quite literally. In 1961, the library building was lifted onto a flatbed truck and transported to a parcel of land on Fourth Street (now Duke Street) that had been donated by Grace and Shemwell Parran. With this move, the library gained a new basement, space to build and a third staff member — Assistant Bookmobile

Librarian Kitty Hurrey. The library also opened to the public an additional day, giving patrons three days that they could visit during the week.



*Historical marker on Duke Street*

After the move, plans were made to triple the space by constructing a new wing which would be completed on October 23, 1964. "At this time," the *Calvert Independent* reported, "the old building [...] became the Reading and Reference Room and the New Wing housed the book collection."<sup>7</sup> With more space to spread out, the library became busier still and was open to

the public five days a week. Services like newspaper and periodical subscriptions, children's storytimes and evening hours were added. In January 1966, the basement of the new wing was converted into a children's room and was officially dedicated during National Library Week on April 16.<sup>8</sup>

As had been the case in the 1960s, the next decade would also see the library outgrowing its space and needing to expand. When the three rooms housing the collections reached capacity, the County Commissioners bought additional land from the Parran family upon which another addition could be built. "By the time the wing was completed in 1973," recounted Bonnie Gardner, "shelf space had become so scarce that books were being stacked on the floor."<sup>9</sup>



After completion, Calvert County Public Library had space for separate reference, fiction, nonfiction and children's departments, as well as office and lounge space for the growing staff. The addition of staff and the new dedicated departments paved the way for Calvert County Public Library to serve more patrons and expand the services that could be offered. "The opening of the new wing heralded a new age in the library. The library experienced a whirlwind of increased use unrivaled by any previous move."<sup>10</sup>



*Calvert Library after its move to Duke Street*

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Mary Brady, "First Public Library in Calvert."

<sup>2</sup> "Library Dedicated," *Calvert Independent*, April 9, 1959, 1.

<sup>3</sup> "National Library Week," *Calvert Independent*, April 9, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner, *Calvert County Public Library*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> "Calvert County Library Bookmobile Column," *Calvert Independent*, March 31, 1960, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Gardner, *Calvert County Public Library*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> "Calvert County Public Library," *Calvert Independent*, February 2, 1965.

<sup>8</sup> Gardner, *Calvert County Public Library*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Gardner, *Calvert County Public Library*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Gardner, *Calvert County Public Library*, 11.

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## Branching Out

CALVERT LIBRARY OPENS NEW FACILITIES

*“The only thing that you absolutely  
have to know, is the location of the library.”  
— Albert Einstein*

As the library in Prince Frederick grew, so too did the surrounding community. From 1969 to 1979, the population of Calvert County rose from 20,358 to 33,609 people and growth showed no signs of slowing. Plans were made to open some smaller library branches to help meet the needs of residents. Both the Twin Beaches and Fairview Branches opened for business in rapid succession in 1981. “There was so much excitement in town when the first branch of Calvert Library was getting ready to open in North Beach. This was 1981, I was a young mother and was so happy that my children would have a library to go to,” recalled retired Twin Beaches Branch Manager Joanie Kilmon.<sup>1</sup>

The new Twin Beaches Branch of Calvert Library was located on Dayton Avenue in a historic building originally occupied by the Company 1 Fire Department — the present location of the Bayside History Museum. It shared the space with Calvert County Parks and Recreation, the Office on Aging and the Office on Substance Abuse. The library was on the upper floor of the building in what once served as living quarters for firefighters. As Kilmon, who worked as a substitute librarian at the time, said, “It was a very tiny space, but a lot happened there.”<sup>2</sup>

The northern-most library branch would remain in its North Beach location for ten years before shifting into the larger space

in Chesapeake Beach where it remained until the 2024 opening of the new Twin Beaches Branch in North Beach. “The library absolutely won my heart,” enthused Kilmon, who would go on to work there for the next 40 years.<sup>3</sup>



*North Beach Volunteer Fire Department, eventual site of the first Twin Beaches Branch*



Following the success of Twin Beaches, the Fairview Branch opened for business just a few months later in a whirlwind of renovation and moving trucks. In fact, according to Sheila Hejl, who was in charge of opening both of those branches, it opened sooner than expected. “All the books hadn’t come in when we opened, all the furniture hadn’t come in, but we were opening. And I was a little embarrassed and I was a little concerned that there were five books on each shelf and there weren’t any tables for the customers to sit down and read,” she recounted.

“But from the first day, everyone was so excited to have a library in their neighborhood that it was just a great experience, it was wonderful.”<sup>4</sup> The Fairview Branch would occupy the footprint of the old Fairview School, sharing the space with the Calvert County Tourism and Information Center and a County Sheriff’s substation. Fairview Branch still occupies the same building today, located at the intersection of Route 4 and Chaneyville Road.



*Fairview Elementary School, the eventual site of Calvert Library Fairview Branch*



Last to join the library family was Calvert Library Southern Branch in 1988, following the development of new housing and schools in the southern end of the county. When “the County Commissioners, recognizing the economic efficiency of a joint-use facility, commissioned the design of a new community

center in the southern end of the county,” the space for a third library branch was included in the plans.<sup>5</sup>

The Southern Branch, like its predecessors, would share space with other county services. In addition to the library, Lusby’s Southern Community Center would contain the Office on Aging, Parks and Recreation and Addiction Services. The Southern Branch remained there until its 2013 relocation to Solomons, by which time the collection and services had long outgrown the space.



*The Southern Branch at its original home in the Southern Community Center*

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<sup>1</sup> Joanie Kilmon, interview by Brenna Prestidge, Prince Frederick, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Sheila Hejl, “Community,” in *Changing Landscapes in Southern Maryland*, ed. Victoria Falcon and Andrew Bove (Charlotte Hall: Southern Maryland Library Association), 209.

<sup>5</sup> Gardner, *Calvert County Public Library*, 21.

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## Under New Direction

PAT HOFMANN TAKES THE HELM

*“When the going gets tough, the tough get a librarian.”*

*—Joan Bauer*

As time went on and the library stretched and grew, changes in personnel became necessary. For the first few decades of Calvert Library’s existence, operations were overseen by Kitty Hurrey, who had gone from part-time bookmobile librarian to director of the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA). She was responsible for overseeing the library systems in Calvert, St. Mary’s and Charles Counties. “She basically had one really big job—or four okay jobs—and by that time when she retired in ’95, the libraries had grown a great deal and there was too much work for one person,” explained Pat Hofmann, who had served as Hurrey’s assistant director in Calvert County.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the heavy lifting that Hurrey did managing the tricity library system, she was quite active in both the local and the greater library communities—serving as a leader in the Calvert County Republican Central Committee, sitting on the Board of Education, teaching library science 101 courses at the community college, serving as President of the Maryland Library Association (MLA), helping found the Arts Council of Calvert County, participating in committees for the American Library Association (ALA) and acting as Maryland’s representative for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services.<sup>2</sup>

In 1995, the board of SMRLA moved to allow each library system to have their own director. Pat Hofmann, who had been working at the library for ten years, was appointed Calvert Library's first official director. Sharan Marshall was hired to be SMRLA's new director. Mary Wood and Richard Trelevan, former Assistant Directors, became Directors of St. Mary's and Charles County Libraries.



*Kitty Hurrey and Pat Hofmann in 1995*

Hofmann had received her graduate degree in Library and Information Science from State University of New York at Albany and previously worked as special librarian to an engineering firm and then as director of the Mill Memorial Library in Pennsylvania before finding herself in Southern Maryland.<sup>3</sup> "I'm so lucky that I wound up in Calvert County because I just love it here," shared Hofmann, who had relocated for her husband John's job.<sup>4</sup> Though she initially wasn't planning to look for work immediately upon arriving in Calvert, an advertisement in the paper for a library reference supervisor was too good to pass up. She was offered the position and began in August 1985.



A few years later, in 1988, Hofmann would be promoted to the branch manager of Prince Frederick, a position she would hold for two years before being promoted again in 1990 to assistant director of Calvert Library under Hurrey.

“I think that the first thing I noticed about Calvert Library when I moved here and started working here was the strong emphasis on customer service,” she said. That tradition would continue under her leadership even as the profession underwent changes and technological advances.<sup>5</sup>

During Hofmann’s tenure as director, she would oversee two building projects, hire more staff and help usher in the digital age. Laura Holbrook, a former vice president of the Board of Library Trustees, perhaps summed up Hofmann’s tenure best: “She is the consummate librarian able to handle what I call the three P’s – people, programming, and politics – with equanimity and poise.”<sup>6</sup>



*Pat Hofmann with her staff in 2010*

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<sup>1</sup> Pat Hofmann, interview by Brenna Prestidge, Prince Frederick, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Pat Hofmann, "Tribute to Kitty Hurrey," *The Citizen* (42: 2014), 9, <https://www.citizensformarylandlibraries.org/resources/Documents/Newletters/spring14.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Sheila Hejl, *Calvert Library: History from 1999-2009* (Prince Frederick: Calvert Library, 2009), 44, <https://calvertlibrary.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Calvert-Library-50-sm.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Hofmann, interview.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hejl, *Calvert Library*, 47.

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## The Age of Automation

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET COME TO THE LIBRARY

*“A library could show you everything  
if you knew where to look.”*

— Pat Conroy

Technology would change the ways that information and library holdings could be accessed by librarians and customers alike, but it took a while to get there. “When I got here in 1985, we only had one computer in the entire library system. It was in the basement of the library in Duke Street,” remembered Hofmann.<sup>1</sup> In those days, circulation staff were responsible for hand typing and filing library cards, due date cards, hold requests and notices to customers.



*Card catalog drawer*

Maintaining the different cards and files was an undertaking that took up a lot of staff time and physical space. Each title in the collection had at least three cards which

were filed in a card catalog—at that time a series of wooden drawers that fit index-sized cards held with a metal rod

enabling users to flip forward and backward to find titles.

Cards for fiction books were filed alphabetically by title, author, and subject. Books, especially nonfiction, covering multiple topics would have multiple cards, one under each subject to make sure that users could figure out where to go in the collection. Kitty Hurrey estimated that creating a new library card took 15 minutes, checking a book out took 10 and placing a hold on an unavailable book could take 20 minutes. As Marcia Hammett, Hurrey's assistant director, would recall in her understated way, "It was all, you know, quite labor intensive."<sup>2</sup>

In 1989, Hurrey worked with the County Commissioners of the three counties to secure the necessary funding to establish a computerized library system. Many other Maryland libraries were beginning to automate, and Hurrey felt strongly that the tricounty libraries needed to be able to keep up. "We have all these people [...] doing tedious tasks. It's the 17<sup>th</sup> century, practically," she said.<sup>3</sup> After a good deal of advocacy, she got her wish and SMRLA was able to sign a lease with Computer Library Systems, Inc. (CLSI) to begin automating the card catalog and circulation systems. "For the first time, librarians and customers in each branch would be able to see the catalogs of all 11 libraries"<sup>4</sup> in Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert Counties.



This process took years as the collections were barcoded and imported into the computer system. After thorough training, materials began circulating with the new computer barcode system on November 23, 1992. After the learning curve, this would ultimately become a time saver for staff and would allow for infinitely more accurate circulation records.

That's to say nothing of the card catalog, the original search engine of library systems. Of the shift towards the computerized catalog, Joanie Kilmon remembered, "It was huge. It was the biggest change that had happened in libraries since Dewey created his decimal system. It changed the way everybody worked and learned and perfected how people used the library."<sup>5</sup>

For a while, the card catalog and digital catalog were used concurrently as records were updated and customers got used to the new computerized system. "Some people were resistant and really wanted the card catalog back," said Kilmon, "but if they really want to touch catalog cards again, they're at the Bayside History Museum."<sup>6</sup>



*The card catalog at its current home at Bayside History Museum*

Every aspect of Calvert Library was affected by the internet, perhaps none more so than the reference department. In the pre-internet days, reference librarians had to rely on print resources and referrals to outside organizations to answer

questions for customers. By the 1980s, the reference department consisted of two staff members who did research and answered questions for the community. As part of their duties at the time, reference librarians penned regular columns for the *Calvert Independent* that highlighted reference questions, library programs and slices of library life; Marie Barrett, Marcia Hammett, Pat Hofmann, Kathie Eichfeld and Eileen Mozingo Brock were regular contributors.

dent — January 13, 1988

## Dial 535-INFO And Ask Pat...

librarians who may be available to help with your questions.

We receive a variety of questions and requests. Following are some of the questions we recently received.

*What is a flying squirrel?*

A flying squirrel is a rodent that glides, rather than flies, by means of a thin, furry skin, or membrane, that extends out from the sides of the body and connects the front and hind legs. In North America, Europe, and Asia, these rodents

are members of the squirrel family, Sciuridae. In Africa, another rodent family, the Anomaluridae, contains squirrel-like animals with gliding membranes. Glides of 1,500 feet by one species, the giant

Pyrethrum, in its pure form or in a mixture, is the least poisonous insecticide to animals and people. It is used in liquids, powders, and sprays for insect control on animals, in the garden, and in the home. Kenya is the world's largest exporter of the pyrethrum extract used in making pesticides.

A pyrethrum known as feverfew is used, as a tonic. A sedative for neuralgia, toothache, and headaches is also called pyrethrum. It is made from the root of a different kind of plant. (World Book, 1967, v. 15, p.

fixing squirrel. *Peitaurista*, have

Other foods that round out meals and satisfy the appetite include, butter, margarine, other fats, oils, sugars and unenriched refined-grain products. These are often in baked goods and mixed dishes. (Academic American Encyclopedia, 1967, v. 14, p. 305-306)

*How are relations between the United States and the Dominican Republic?*

The United States has cordial relations with the Dominican Republic. U.S. policy is based on the principle of cooperation in interna-

*Excerpt from an Ask Pat column in the Calvert Independent*

Telephone reference was another popular service of the day — the phone number was promoted through community mailings and staff were kept busy answering calls. Reference librarians were practiced at using the resources at their disposal to help answer their customers' questions: books, three years of magazines, the *Guide to Periodical Literature* and a rolodex of phone numbers to helpful resources like the State Library Resource Center or local organizations.

Librarians also maintained vertical file drawers of clippings from newspapers, pamphlets and magazines containing information that they thought might be able to help answer future reference questions.



Hammett recalls one particularly memorable reference interaction that was answered by way of rolodex:

“One day a lady came in, [...] she handed me a brown paper bag and said, ‘Here, I have something for you.’ And I said, ‘Oh, thank you.’ And she said, ‘It’s a snake.’ It was a dead snake that she had found in her pool, and she wanted help identifying it.”<sup>7</sup>

Thankfully for Hammett, who is quite afraid of snakes, a phone call to nearby Cypress Swamp proved a quick and accurate way to identify the deceased reptile.



*Pat Hofmann and Marcia Hammett*

By the mid 1990s, the rise of technology significantly changed the way that librarians could access information. “Access to the Internet,” explained Sheila Hejl, “has leveled the playing field

for providing reference service and answering questions at the branches. It is no longer necessary to purchase as many costly reference materials and multivolume sets.”<sup>8</sup>

Technology began to move even faster from there. Maryland’s public libraries established the Sailor Network in 1994. The Network, which still operates out of the Maryland State Library Resource Center in Baltimore, made Maryland the first state to offer statewide internet access to its residents. Not only could residents sign up for free dial-up internet through Sailor, the Network also provided a telecommunications background that allowed public schools, public libraries and local governments to connect to the internet. Sailor originally “grew out of Maryland public libraries’ recognition that the future of meeting their customers’ needs for information was electronic access to materials within and beyond the walls of their buildings.”<sup>9</sup> Calvert Library staff received basic internet training in 1993 and all three of the Southern Maryland library systems were connected to the Sailor Network in 1995.

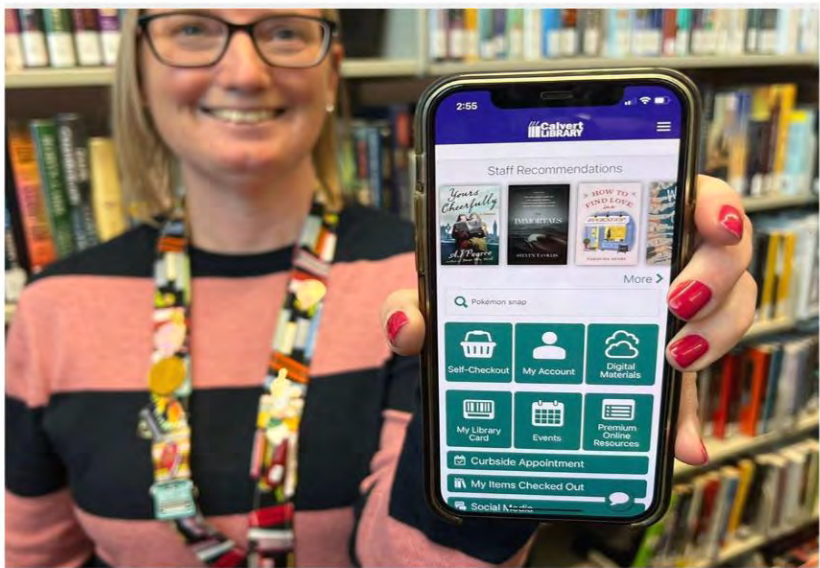


By 1996, the library computer system migrated to a web-based one that would allow those with internet access to browse the catalog and request to borrow books from the other libraries in Southern Maryland. These changes made it clear that there was a need for technology training for the community, which the library worked to provide. “As time moved on, we needed a lot of technical training because people didn’t even know how to use a computer, even our own staff,” said Hofmann, who worked with Hammett to write a grant – Today’s Information Made Easy (TIME) – allowing for the purchase of additional computers and hands-on workshops for customers.<sup>10</sup>



Computer Express training modules were developed to train the library staff, who were then empowered in turn to offer training to their customers. In small groups, says Hofmann, “we taught people how to use a keyboard, how to use a mouse, how to get an email. Starting from the very beginning when we got computers it was always a project.”<sup>11</sup> Even after the TIME grant goal of training 480 customers was reached, the classes were so popular that they continued for many years.

All Calvert Library locations still offer technology training on a variety of subjects, though now these sessions are more likely to be about downloading eBooks onto a smartphone, filling out online job applications, finding files to use on the 3D printer, or placing holds with the library’s free app.



*Missy DeCesaris, children’s supervisor at Prince Frederick, shows off the library’s app*

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<sup>1</sup> Hofmann, interview.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Bushweller, "Libraries Want Computer Network," *Maryland Independent*, May 31, 1989, A-1, <https://www.ccplonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/5-MAY-31-1989-Libraries-want-computer-network.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Marcia Hammett, *Calvert County Public Library 1989-1999: Serving a Growing Community* (Prince Frederick: Calvert Library, 1999), 3, <https://calvertlibrary.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Library-History-Booklet-1989-to-1999.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Kilmon, interview.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Hammett, interview.

<sup>8</sup> Hejl, *Calvert Library*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Sailor Operations Center, "About Sailor," 2020, <https://www.sailor.lib.md.us/about/>

<sup>10</sup> Hofmann, interview.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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## Growing Librarians

LATI, CONFERENCES AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF

*“Never argue with a librarian; they know too much.”  
– Carole Nelson Douglas*

Giving library staff regular continuing education opportunities has always been a priority for Calvert Library. Marcia Hammett credits librarian-turned-SMRLA Director Kitty Hurrey for this mindset. “Kitty was an absolute visionary. She made sure that the libraries in Southern Maryland were on the cutting edge of library services,” Hammett said. “She demanded that we have the same advantages and opportunities that the larger county systems had. She insisted on training for everyone.”<sup>1</sup>



*Martha Mackall*

Pat Hofmann also credits Martha Mackall, noting that for decades, circulation supervisor Mackall “trained all new staff in circulation and customer service, helping to set a positive tone for the library.”<sup>2</sup>

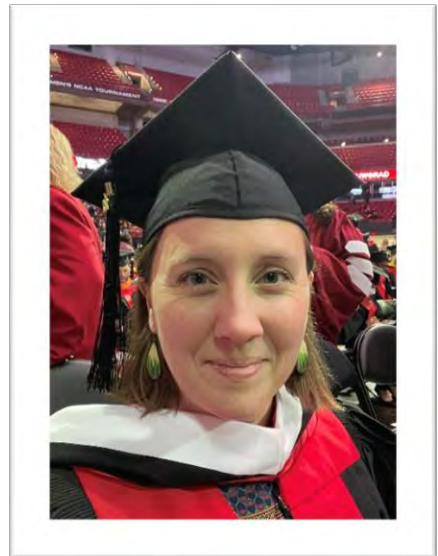
In 1996, the state Division of Library Development and Services created “an approved, statewide program to ensure consistent, quality customer service for all 24 public and 3 regional library systems” known as the Library Associate Training Institute (LATI).<sup>3</sup> The LATI program has evolved over the years,

changing to meet the needs of Maryland's public libraries.

Calvert County's librarians are all required to complete the LATI program within two years of being hired unless they already hold a Master's in Library Science from an accredited school. At LATI, staff join a cohort of other new librarians across the state for a "90-hour, competency-based program" which "meets the requirements of the law by providing face-to-face training; live, online learning sessions; independent work; and coaching sessions with their supervisor."<sup>4</sup>

After receiving their LATI certification or Master's Degree, Calvert librarians are responsible for earning continuing education credits. As dictated by Title 14.38.01.01 of the *Code of Maryland Regulations*, "Continuing education requirements help ensure that Maryland library customers receive the same level of quality customer service at any library in the state. Public library associates must acquire six (6) semester hours or 90 contact hours every five (5) years."<sup>5</sup>

To accomplish this goal, librarians have several digital and local options at their disposal. At monthly staff meetings, it isn't uncommon for time to be devoted to training for the entire library staff. In addition to library-hosted training, contact hours can be earned from attending webinars and workshops offered to library staff at the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association. Topics have included readers' advisory, situational awareness, customer service, mental health first-aid and government documents.



*Brenna Prestidge receiving a Masters degree*

Calvert Library’s staff development coordinator also curates an array of webinars, and each year there are opportunities to attend library conferences in Maryland and beyond.

Many Calvert Library staff members have taken the initiative to present at conferences to help provide continuing education to colleagues and highlight Calvert Library programming, social media initiatives, school partnership and more. Staff have presented at the Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association Joint Conference, Public Library Association Conference, American Library Association Conference and even internationally at the Qualitative & Quantitative Methods in Libraries Conferences in Greece and Ireland.



*Tif Sutherland speaking at LibLearnX in 2024, staff attending the MLA Conference in 2023*

For Calvert's librarians, every day is an opportunity to learn something new and help teach others along the way. As Joanie Kilmon put it, "If the staff is well trained, if they're appreciated, if they know everything they need to know to do their job, customers benefit every week from that."<sup>6</sup>



*Margie Rhoden and Molly Crumbley presenting at the 2012 QQML conference in Ireland*

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<sup>1</sup> Hammett, interview, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Pat Hofmann, interviewed by Molly Crumbley, Prince Frederick, July 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Merlin, "Library Associate Training Institute (LATI)," 2024, [http://www.merlincommunity.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=1312024](http://www.merlincommunity.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=1312024)

<sup>4</sup> State Library Resource Center, 2024, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Maryland State Library Agency, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Kilmon, interview, 2022.

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## Breaking Ground

### RENOVATION AND RELOCATION

*“Had I the power, I would scatter libraries over the whole land, as the sower sows his wheat-field.”*  
— Horace Mann

Moving forward into the 1990s and 2000s, Calvert County was the fastest growing county in the state. Many of the library buildings were feeling the impact, especially the smaller branches. In the 1990s, it became clear that both the Twin Beaches and Fairview Branches needed to stretch out to be able to accommodate their growing customer bases. “Let me just say from the start that every branch manager and their staff have done a wonderful job getting everything they need into a branch no matter what size it was, and good for them because it wasn’t easy sometimes,” said Hofmann.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the two northernmost branches had reached critical mass.

Kitty Hurrey’s last building project before her retirement was the relocation of the Twin Beaches Branch. Just after its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1991, the branch moved from North Beach to a new home in the Captain’s Quarters shopping center in Chesapeake Beach, where it would remain until 2024.

The move allowed for space to host storytimes and programs for children in an attached meeting room, as well as more room for collections. At long last, staff would even have access to their own restroom. A few years later, the branch underwent renovations to remove the interior walls and have a more open floor plan. Joanie Kilmon, who had worked her way



from substitute to librarian at Fairview Branch to branch manager at Twin Beaches Branch, has fond memories of the branch, lovingly recalling little touches that gave it personality.



*Joanie Kilmon, daughter Shannon Gibbons and Helen*

In addition to the enormous stuffed animal Mr. Bear that took up residence in the children's section, Kilmon was especially fond of her mannequin Helen. Kilmon acquired her favorite prop from JC Penney in 1989 and spent the subsequent decades dressing her in special outfits and costumes for holidays and library programs.

Even customers started bringing in ensembles for Helen to wear, like wedding dresses and scuba gear. "She became a community project," laughed Kilmon.<sup>2</sup> At Kilmon's retirement celebration, Mr. Bear and Helen both made special appearances.



Fairview was the next branch to undergo changes; it would remain in its existing space but expand to take up more of the building. The expansion and renovation project was led by



Hurrey with assistance from Hofmann and Hejl in 1995, and its new footprint was double the original size. The subsequent ribbon cutting ceremony was the first that Pat Hofmann attended as director, but it wouldn't be the last.



*Sheila Hejl, Nancy Fissel, Beth Emerson and Russell Costley at Fairview Branch*

Not long after the Twin Beaches and Fairview Branches celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2001, it was Calvert Library Prince Frederick's turn to feel the limitations of the physical space it inhabited. Pat Hofmann outlined the issues facing the central library: "The entry way is poorly designed and cannot be supervised easily, some areas are inaccessible to the disabled, mechanical systems are outdated, ceilings are lower than current standards and some of the heating and air conditioning units are designed for a house, not a library."<sup>3</sup>

A panel was put together to analyze the best way to expand space and services, and it was ultimately determined that it would be far costlier to renovate the existing space than to build an entirely new one.

To fund a new building, Hofmann and her team had their work cut out for them. “It takes a long time for a project of this size to come together, and it’s not only designing and building it,” explained Hofmann. “You have to start with the politics, and you have to get people used to the idea that we really need a new library. That takes sometimes years.”<sup>4</sup>

Overall, Calvert residents were publicly supportive of building a new facility. As County Commissioner Hagner R. Mister reported, “The citizens of Calvert County want, are almost demanding, a modern library. It’s a capital project that Calvert County needs and the citizens want.”<sup>5</sup> To secure the funds, though, at least three commissioners would need to be persuaded to support the proposal. The library team kept at it, and in October of 2004, the commissioners voted 4 to 1 in favor of funding the project.<sup>6</sup>



*Hofmann at the construction site in Prince Frederick*

It was decided that the new Calvert Library Prince Frederick would be erected in the Market Square shopping center that was being developed across the street from the county hospital. "It's one-stop shopping: you can go to the library and go out to lunch or to Nick's to take [food] home. There's a lot of wonderful synergy in this particular area," said Hofmann. "The library is a great complement to the shopping center and they are a great complement to the library."<sup>7</sup>

With the site secured, it was time to design the new building. Calvert County's government was ultimately in charge of the project, but librarians were part of the design meetings with architects, County Buildings and Grounds and funders to make sure that the library would have all of the components needed to be successful.

After signing with architectural firm Grimm & Parker, ground was broken on November 16, 2004. Of the occasion, outgoing BOLT President Russell Costley, quipped, "I know I have some idea how Moses felt to wander around the desert for 40 years. For my entire 10 year term, we have been involved in planning for a new library in Prince Frederick. We finally have stopped wandering and have a wonderful site."<sup>8</sup>



Calvert Library Prince Frederick would open to the public on October 31, 2006. Sheila Hejl, who by then had become the adult resources coordinator for the system, remembered, "Staff worked diligently to make everything perfect for opening day and even recruited spouses and children to assist. During this time staff had to learn a new phone system, a new security system, set up the work flow, learn to use new copiers and printers as well as learn self-checkout."<sup>9</sup>

When the new facility opened its doors, about 350 people gathered to be among the first to explore every part of its 28,000 square feet. “We had a wonderful dedication. We had so many people here; the excitement of this library was amazing,” recounted Hofmann. “When you have a library this big and beautiful and welcoming, it tells you something about your community. It says that your community is a place that values learning and values people coming together.”<sup>10</sup>



*The opening of Calvert Library Prince Frederick*

With bold design elements meant to honor Calvert County – the tobacco barn shape, spiraling lighthouse staircase, porthole workroom windows, fossil-encrusted fireplace, paint reminiscent of the striations of Calvert Cliffs, playful jellyfish lights in the children’s department – the library in Prince Frederick has space for AV-enabled meeting and study rooms, tables full of computers and charging outlets, a copy center, a café and patio, an ever-growing used book and gift shop and plenty of seating for customers to work and read.

Immediately upon opening, the new library brought in about 1,000 visitors a day and had all 27 public computers in continuous use. After seeing this positive reception, County Commissioner Gerald W. Clark said, “You have made a believer out of me. [Libraries are] a vital part of the community. They’re the heartbeat.”<sup>11</sup>



*Calvert Library Prince Frederick's new home in the Market Square shopping center*



Two years after the new Calvert Library Prince Frederick opened for business in 2008, the Fairview Branch gained an additional entrance point off of Chaneyville Road, a move that made the library much more accessible to customers coming from the south. The new entryway meant that drivers coming from the south would no longer have to make U-turns to be able to visit; they could instead make a safe left turn at the traffic light onto Chaneyville Road.

This was an amenity that customers had requested for some time and Fairview’s Branch Manager Lisa Tassa reported that many had expressed gratitude over the safer driving option.<sup>12</sup>



*Pat Hofmann, Sheila Hejl and Lisa Tassa celebrate Fairview’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary*



Next up for renovation would be the Southern Branch, which had celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. “This was one of my last projects before I retired,” noted Hofmann.<sup>13</sup> The southern end of the county particularly felt the strain of Calvert’s population growth, seeing an uptick in housing developments and increasingly overcrowded schools. In order to keep up with the growing customer base, Calvert Library Southern Branch



spent a decade straining at the seams of its community center home. When a pad-site for a new library branch in a Lusby shopping center was put on indefinite hold, the County Commissioners took an opportunity to acquire a ten-year lease for an interim Southern Branch in the former Woodburn's Grocery Store in nearby Solomons. The 2013 move tripled the size of the library branch.



*The ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Calvert Library Southern Branch*

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<sup>1</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Kilmon, interview, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Lyndsey Layton, "Panel Recommends Replacing Outdated Calvert Library," *The Washington Post*, October 1, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1998/10/01/panel-recommends-replacing-outdated-calvert-library/855002a9-dbb1-440f-947ce32295727cc8/>

<sup>4</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Layton, "Panel Recommends."

<sup>6</sup> Amit R. Paley, "With Calvert Board's Approval, Building of Library to Begin," *The Washington Post*, October 28, 2004, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/2004/10/28/with-calvert-boards-approval-building-of-library-to-begin/11954102-efbe-4c8a-a030-a84e64d2149c/>

<sup>7</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Hejl, *Calvert Library*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Hejl, *Calvert Library*, 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Meghan Russell, "Calvert's Southern Branch Library May Relocate Soon," *Southern Maryland News* (La Plata, MD), August 26, 2011. [https://www.somdnews.com/archive/news/calvert-8217-s-southern-branch-library-may-relocate-soon/article\\_cdb00f0f-1a00-5a30-9b9a-fd0c1487afc5.html](https://www.somdnews.com/archive/news/calvert-8217-s-southern-branch-library-may-relocate-soon/article_cdb00f0f-1a00-5a30-9b9a-fd0c1487afc5.html)

<sup>12</sup> Hejl, *Calvert Library*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.



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## One for the Books

LITERARY PROGRAMS AT CALVERT LIBRARY

*“There is more treasure in books  
than in all the pirate’s loot  
on Treasure Island.”  
—Walt Disney*

Though public libraries have stretched to fill many roles in the community, books and literacy have remained fundamental to Calvert Library’s mission and services. A glance at the library calendar of events any given month will yield a plethora of events in any library location: book clubs, author visits, finance classes, tech classes, hobby affinity groups, career help, local history, summer reading challenges and more.

Even the very youngest customers can join the fun thanks to the efforts of librarians like Nancy Fissel, who was hired in 1962 to take the lead in the children’s department. She went on to serve as the children’s coordinator for the library system, training and encouraging creativity from her team of children’s librarians as they developed events and the perennially popular Storytime — a lively and multifaceted program held at each library location consisting of readalouds, songs and beginning literacy tips for grown-ups accompanying children from birth through 5 years old.

Fissel recalls, “We had some really talented librarians and the children’s programs were a huge success.”<sup>1</sup> Progress continued through the years; for example, children’s librarians have just developed a new adaptive storytime program geared towards neurodivergent children that began in 2024.



*Storytime through the years*

As customers grow up and age out of storytime, they can still find book discussions and special events for whatever stage of life they are in. Preschoolers can take the 500 by Five challenge—if they read or listen to 500 or more books before kindergarten, they earn a special crown and certificate celebrating the accomplishment. Originated by Children’s Coordinator Beverly Izzi, the 500 by Five program was developed in 2012 by Calvert librarians to help families make reading a habit from birth. Per the press release announcing the launch of the program, reading with young children can have a lifelong impact:

“It builds a stronger relationship with your child and increases basic speech and communication skills. It also improves logical thinking, increases vocabulary, enhances concentration and discipline, helps ease transitions

to major milestones or other potentially stressful experiences; all of which promote school readiness and a love of learning.”<sup>2</sup>



*Celebrating the library's 500 by Five completers*

Children who are just starting to read independently might even find that they have an opportunity to get valuable practice reading aloud, perhaps to a teen mentor at a Reading Buddies gathering or even to a cuddly therapy dog at a Paws to Read program. Once they're of an age where they are independently reading, they have book discussions – a mainstay at the library for decades – to look forward to. Each branch hosts its own gatherings and there are discussions and clubs for readers of all ages: including some specifically tailored to teens (8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders), tweens (4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> graders), homeschool students, senior citizens and caregivers of young children.

“Book discussion groups have been the love of my life for so many years,” shared Joanie Kilmon,<sup>3</sup> who hosted a robust book

club at Twin Beaches Branch. That discussion group especially loved to dress up in costumes, which they did at least once a year, celebrating books and topics like *The Great Gatsby*, the Titanic voyage and the *Downton Abbey* television series. These festive themed gatherings also had the bonus of attracting new customers who otherwise hadn't been to the library before.



*Customers dressed up to enjoy a tea party and book discussion in 2014*

In 2008, Calvert Library took book discussions to the next level when they joined forces with the College of Southern Maryland to participate in The Big Read, a community reading initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. The community partnership centered around the novel *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest Gaines. "Calvert Library is always on board when there is a project to promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning. The Big Read is an especially exciting opportunity for collaboration among the three counties and various outstanding partners. Wouldn't it be wonderful for every citizen of Southern Maryland to have the same book in

common?” said Hofmann.<sup>4</sup>

The library’s participation in The Big Read was a natural segue into its participation in the new One Maryland One Book (OMOB) program devised by the Maryland Humanities Council the same year. Under the umbrella of OMOB, Calvert Library became part of a statewide initiative to distribute copies of the chosen book to the community and host discussions, special events and author visits. In 2012, Huntingtown High School’s Eye of the Storm Productions even put on a dramatic Readers’ Theater performance of Steven Galloway’s book *The Cellist of Sarajevo* featuring musician Zach Branch’s performance of a solo cello version of Albinoni’s *Adagio* featured in the book.



*Huntingtown High's performance of The Cellist of Sarajevo*

Other OMOB selections include *A Hope in the Unseen*, by Ron Suskind (2008); *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie (2011); *The Boys in the Boat*, by Daniel James Brown (2015); *All American Boys*, by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely; *The Island of Sea Women*, by Lisa See (2020); and *There, There*, by Tommy Orange (2023).<sup>5</sup>





*Author visits over the years*

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Fissel, interviewed by Pat Hofmann, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Calvert Library, 2012, *The Baynet*.

<sup>3</sup> Kilmon, interview, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> College of Southern Maryland, "Southern Maryland Prepares for The Big Read: CSM, Libraries, Schools, Organizations Encourage Community Conversation on *A Lesson Before Dying*," *CSM Newsroom* (La Plata, MD), January 23, 2008, <https://news-archive.csmd.edu/all-news/southern-maryland-prepares-for-the-big-read/>

<sup>5</sup> "About One Maryland One Book" Maryland Humanities Council, 2024, <https://www.mdhumanities.org/programs/one-maryland-one-book/>

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## Not Just Books

EVENTS, WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES AT CALVERT LIBRARY

*"A library is infinity under a roof."  
– Gail Carson Levine*

Of course, the library system isn't only about books. The staff of Calvert Library have kept customers as their top priority, growing and changing to meet the needs and desires of the community. "Our staff over the years has believed that it's the patron that counts," Calvert's first librarian Mildred Hairston once said. "We know the nitty-gritty has to be done. We know the books have to be put on the shelves. But whatever it is, the patron has to be first."<sup>1</sup> In rural Calvert County, the patrons were in need of gathering places and sources of entertainment. It wasn't long before the libraries stretched to become just that.

In 1976, local high school teacher Ben Williams partnered with the library to host a performance series known as Saturday Night Sing Outs, which became a very popular way for local talent to perform and for county residents to enjoy a night of music in the community. They were so well attended that furniture had to be moved to fit everyone inside and attendees sometimes stayed until midnight or later. The notion that libraries could be sources of



*Ben Williams and band at a Sing Out*



entertainment as well as education is one that is still embraced at Calvert Library. The Sing Out events paved the way for programming like Tuesday Tunes, Summer Fun shows and the Performing Arts Series. Marcia Hammett used to coordinate the Performing Arts Series, recalling, "That series was started to provide cultural and popular entertainment in the county at a reasonable price. At that time, we didn't have the venues that we do now."<sup>2</sup> Later, Shirley McCarthy continued to partner with the Calvert County Arts Council to put on the Performing Arts Series, treating Calvert County to musical, theatrical and even acrobatic performances. McCarthy's successor, Public Relations Coordinator Robyn Truslow, partnered with CCAC's Maricarol Cloak and Jennifer Moreland to bring in such luminaries as Cheryl Wheeler, Nikki Giovanni, Tom Wisner & Friends, Tom DeLuca, Barry Louis Polisar and the Shangri-La Chinese Acrobats.



*Shirley McCarthy and Robyn Truslow*

Even after the Performing Arts Series was retired, Calvert Library has continued to host performances such as the Navy

and Army Bands, Chesapeake Youth Symphony Orchestra and Acoustic Eidolon. Some residents even became part of the entertainment themselves – competing in Calvert Idol, jamming in a Battle of the Bands, singing along to Christmas carols or the *Hamilton* soundtrack, or joining in the Southern Song Circle.

Hosting events and workshops at the library attracted customers and gave them entertainment and educational opportunities that might otherwise be hard to come by in rural Calvert County. Pat Hofmann said, “We do love special events here, and I think from when I first started there was always something to look forward to: something different, something new, something exciting. Invite people in, have fun at the library.”<sup>3</sup>

With the formation of teams to create programming for children, teens, tweens and adults, each age group had something to look forward to every month and at every location. There were events for every kind of interest or hobby imaginable: video gamers, foodies, hikers, Dungeons and Dragons players, crafters, martial artists, cosplayers, anime enthusiasts, history buffs, gardeners, moviegoers and more. These activities made the libraries what author Ray Oldenburg called “the third place,”<sup>4</sup> the location where people wanted to be when they weren’t at the first two places – home and work/school.

In addition to the events for those targeted age groups, Calvert Library often put together special events and activities that multiple generations could enjoy. Over the years, they have hosted traveling exhibits from Jefferson Patterson Park, the public school system and the Smithsonian; showed film series; invited guest speakers and lecturers; built gingerbread houses; played video game tournaments; been invaded by Storm Troopers, wizards, Dr. Seuss characters, superheroes, Civil War soldiers and zombies; and with the Calvert Library Foundation and Friends even turned Calvert Library Prince Frederick into a mini golf course, pub quiz venue and art auction house.







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<sup>1</sup> Gardner, *Calvert Library*, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Hammett, interview, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1999).

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## Art in the Stacks

VISUAL ARTS INITIATIVES AT CALVERT LIBRARY

*"Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination.  
They open up windows to the world  
and inspire us to explore and achieve, and  
contribute to improving our quality of life."  
— Sidney Sheldon*

Music and theater weren't the only art forms to be highlighted at Calvert Library. In 2012, the new Art in the Stacks initiative was launched, first at Calvert Library Prince Frederick and subsequently at each of the branches. "Art in the Stacks is an exciting, dynamic display of art," said Robyn Truslow. Each library location has display areas designed to "showcase the artists of Southern Maryland and/or artwork which has Southern Maryland themes."<sup>1</sup>

Many different styles and mediums have been shown over the years, including photographs, paintings, textiles and mixed media pieces. Each art exhibit is displayed for a period of one to three months, giving artists the chance to get local visibility as well as beautifying the libraries for visitors. Carrie Willson remarked, "As a citizen in Calvert County who spends a lot of time in the library, I am delighted to be exposed to so many talented local artists!"<sup>2</sup>

Artwork also made its way to the exterior walls at some library locations. In 2018, Calvert Library Southern Branch was decorated with a large mural painted by the Arts Honor Society of Patuxent High School. The brightly colored mural, located near the exterior book drop, celebrates books, local wildlife, the

Patuxent River and the nearby Thomas Johnson Bridge which spans it.<sup>3</sup> The collaboration between the library and the schools perfectly illustrates what librarian Lynn Harlan has to say about community art: “Art is not a generational thing, it’s something that everyone can get into.”<sup>4</sup>

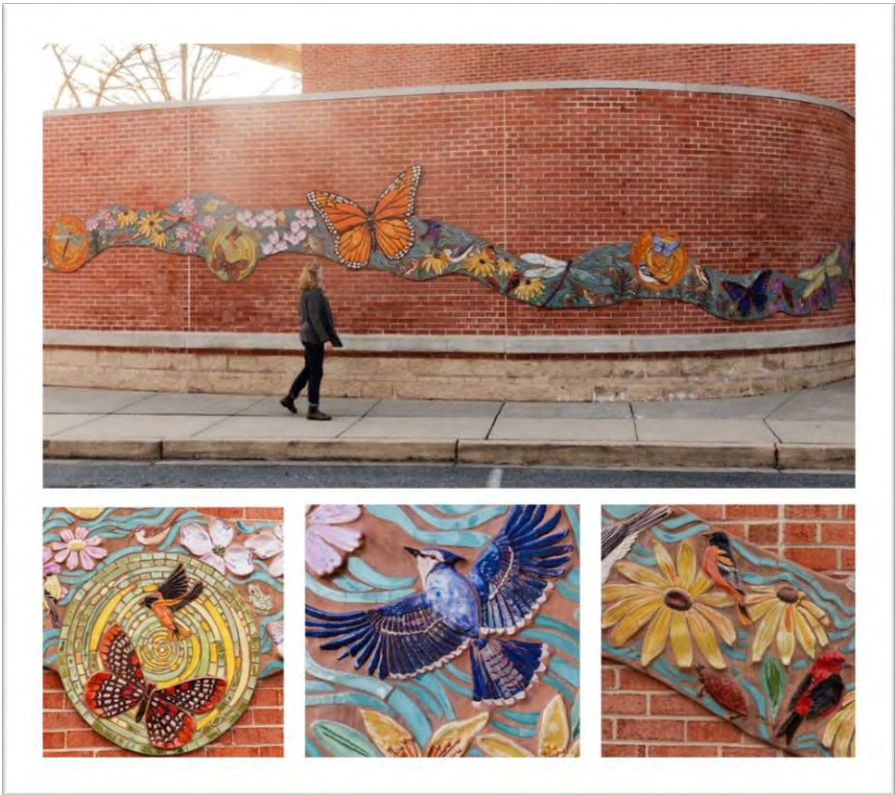


*The student-created mural at Calvert Library Southern Branch*

A few years later, Calvert Library Prince Frederick received its own exterior mural, this time created with colorful tiles made by local ceramic artist Parran Collery. Funded by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council and the Friends of Calvert Library, the piece was designed “using a relief sculpting process so there is dimension to the pieces” so that “seeing and low-vision visitors alike can enjoy the art with their hands.”<sup>5</sup> Collery’s intricate tiles highlight flora and fauna native to Calvert County. “Isn’t it wonderful when learning is beautiful and interactive! I suspect our new mural will inspire future scientists, conservationists, and artists,” said Willson.<sup>6</sup>

For customers who want to engage even more with the art, the

mural is accompanied by an educational activity book that was created by local students who participated in SEED Grant programming. The SEED (STEAM Ecosystem Expansion Demonstration) Grant is a Department of Education Arts in Education grant-funded project that provides high quality workshops to middle school students in Calvert County. These workshops are made possible by a partnership with Calvert County Public Schools, Bowie State University and Dramatic Results, a non-profit based in Long Beach, California.



*Details of the tile mural at Calvert Library Prince Frederick*

Plans are currently in place for Collery to create another mural



for Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch. Acting as a companion piece to Prince Frederick's, the new ceramic tile mural will also highlight local animals and plants. The Chesapeake Beach Oyster Cultivation Society plans to host an Oyster Celebration Day "to involve the community in arts and informational events to celebrate this mural, the bay and our Calvert County environment, with a tentative date in early 2025."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robyn Truslow, "Art in the Stacks," Calvert Library, <https://calvertlibrary.info/about-us/library-info/art-in-the-stacks/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Calvert Library, "Our Beautiful Outside Mural," September 18, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/2KSwnr2SY2WefwYu/>

<sup>4</sup> Michael Reid, "Finding Art in the Library," *Southern Maryland News*, [https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/news/briefs/finding-art-in-the-library/article\\_c5edcfd0-3b9c-5524-9df9-72705411366e.html](https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/news/briefs/finding-art-in-the-library/article_c5edcfd0-3b9c-5524-9df9-72705411366e.html)

<sup>5</sup> Robyn Truslow, "Calvert Library Prince Frederick Celebrates New Mural," September 23, 2023, <https://calvertlibrary.info/calvert-library-prince-frederick-announces-closing-for-new-carpet-the-celebration-of-a-new-mural/>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Chesapeake Beach Oyster Cultivation Society, "2024 CBOCS Annual Report," April 10, 2024, <https://www.chesapeakebeachmd.gov/chesapeake-beach-oyster-cultivation-society-cbocs/news/2024-cbocs-annual-report>

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## Out and About

ON THE GO WITH CALVERT LIBRARY

*"Oh! The places you'll go!  
You'll be on your way up!  
You'll be seeing great sights!  
You'll join the high fliers who soar to high heights."  
—Dr. Seuss*

Not all events and programs happen inside the libraries; Calvert's librarians have a long tradition of getting out into the community and beyond. What better way to engage people where they are? "We represent the library wherever we go," said Kilmon, recounting librarian involvement in community events like Patuxent River Appreciation Days, the County Fair, Children's Day on the Farm and the Pat Carpenter Holiday Parade.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, she was one of the champions of On the Go, a series of events that allowed library customers to sign up for field trips and transportation to different places of interest.

Over the years, librarians, customers and friends traveled to such destinations as Tilghman Island, performances at the Kennedy Center, a ride on the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the annual National Book Festival in DC and to the National Harbor at Christmas. "I worked with amazing people day to day and amazing supervisors who let me run with ideas. With their support we took the library outside of the four walls," said Joanie Kilmon.<sup>2</sup>



*Martha Grahame, Gordon Grahame and John Hofmann on a day cruise to Tilghman Island*

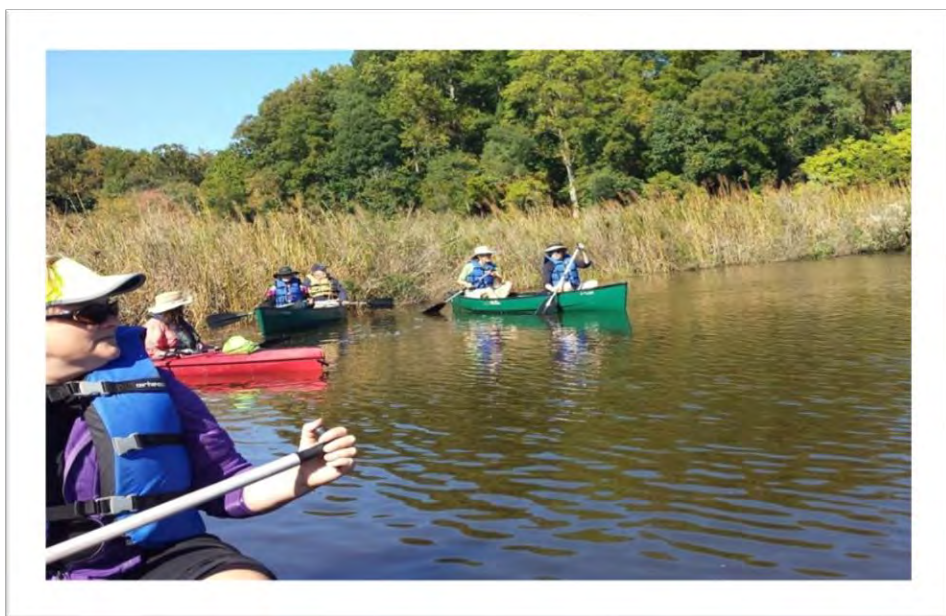


Beginning in 2016, Calvert Library began a new program: Check Out Your Community, an initiative that gave customers the opportunity to check out free or discounted passes to local businesses, parks, beaches and pools. This supported the library's commitment to "community-building and connecting Calvert citizens to enjoyable and intriguing experiences in our local area."<sup>3</sup>

Through Check Out Your Community, library customers had 25 options to choose from: Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Art Center, Barefoot Holistic Studio, Bayfront Park, Bayside History

Museum, Black Belt Academy, Breezy Point Beach and Campground, Calvert Marine Museum, Chesapeake Beach Boat Rentals, Chesapeake Beach Water Park, Chesapeake Hills Golf Course, Cove Point Park Pool, Cove Point Winery, DMV Jetskis, Edward T. Hall Aquatic Center, Flag Ponds Nature Park, Jefferson Patterson Park, Kings Landing Pool, Lord Calvert Bowling Center, Mully's Brewery, North Beach Public Beach, Paddle or Pedal, Scorpion Brewing, Solarium Studio, Solomons Island Winery and Twin Beach Players.

1,844 passes were circulated in the first year of the program, which continued until going on hiatus in 2020.<sup>4</sup>



*Library customers paddling on Parkers Creek after a book discussion*

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<sup>1</sup> Joanie Kilmon, interviewed by Brenna Prestidge, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Calvert Library, "Check Out Your Community," 2015, Pinterest board.

<sup>4</sup> Calvert Library, "Annual Report FY2016," 2017.

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# Lean On Me

## CALVERT LIBRARY'S PARTNERSHIPS

*“Bad libraries build collections,  
good libraries build services,  
great libraries build communities.”*  
—R. David Lankes

As a community resource, Calvert Library has relied upon many great partnerships. Three of the most valuable and lasting partnerships come from within: the Board of Library Trustees (BOLT), Friends of Calvert Library and the Calvert Library Foundation.



2024 Board of Library Trustees

“The trustees are basically set up by law,” explained Hofmann. “A public library in Maryland has to have a board of library trustees.”<sup>1</sup> By MD State Code, they are appointed by the County Commissioners from recommendations provided by the existing Library Board. Appointees volunteer to serve up to two consecutive 5-year terms and are responsible for approving budgets and policies for the library and for hiring and evaluating the Director. In essence, said Hofmann, “They’re really in charge of the library.”<sup>2</sup> The BOLT meets each month and oversees matters relating to policy, budget and advocacy. Three of the members were also required to sit on the Board for the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association<sup>3</sup> until regional library legislation by the General Assembly in 2024 led to a bylaws change adding a community member in place of a board member.



The Friends of Calvert Library originated in the 1980s as an organization dedicated to volunteering and raising funds to support library operations. Calvert Library’s Friends, an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, manages the popular used book sales at each library, an enormous undertaking considering the quantity of books and materials that are donated to them each day.

The Friends are also responsible for organizing and staffing festive fundraisers like the always well-attended Pub Quiz and Books and Bubbly nights, spreading the word about library events and programs throughout the community and lending a hand in the buildings as volunteers to support the staff.



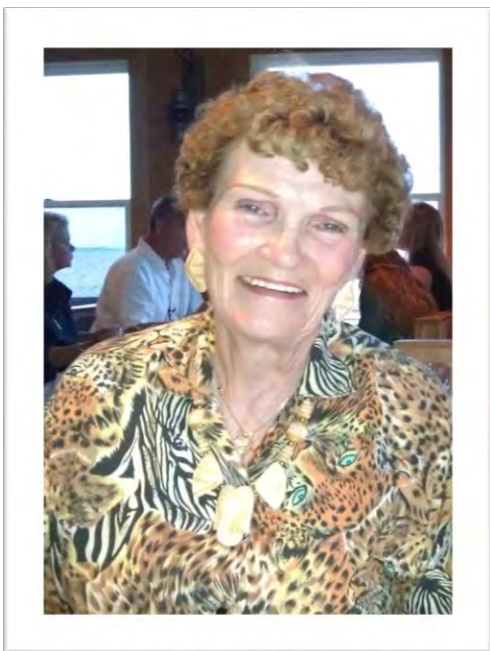


*JoAnn Larkin (left) organizing donations for the Friends of the Library Used Book Sale (right)*



Calvert Library Foundation was formed when a valuable stock gift was offered to the library. It was determined that a foundation was needed to properly steward large donations for future large-scale library projects. The Foundation exists, in its own words, “to receive charitable donations used to support Calvert Library, helping to make the difference between the library being good and being great.”<sup>4</sup>

The Foundation has achieved this through community outreach and events like live art auctions and awards banquets. In recent history, the Foundation was responsible for raising \$300,000 towards the construction of the new Calvert Library Prince Frederick building in Market Square; \$250,000 towards providing wiring, windows, furniture and computers for the new Calvert Library Southern Branch; and for running the capital campaign necessary to open the new Twin Beaches Branch.



*Martha Grahame, volunteer extraordinaire*

One particular volunteer has the distinction of having served on the boards of all three of the aforementioned organizations: Martha Grahame.

In fact, Grahame, who has volunteered at the library for over 30 years, was the 2008 recipient of the Maryland Library Association's annual Outstanding Volunteer Award<sup>5</sup> and the 2017 recipient of the Citizens for Maryland Libraries'

annual Marion Satterthwaite Award for Library Advocacy Award<sup>6</sup> (an award also received by former librarian Kitty Hurrey in 1995). Grahame describes herself as "a true believer in the power of public libraries to transform individuals and communities,"<sup>7</sup> and she has worked tirelessly to fundraise, advocate and support the library's mission.



Over the years, Calvert Library has made a point of forging strong partnerships with outside community groups as well. "One of our early partners was the Calvert County Literacy Council [which had] their office in the basement of the library on Duke Street. We found room for the Calvert County Arts Council to come in and start their work as well. It was a really



nice incubator to start those organizations,” shared Hofmann.<sup>8</sup> It wasn’t long before the library had partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and the Calvert County Economic Development Department; relationships that led to the creation of a small business reference collection and kept library staff connected to businesses in the county. Hofmann and Marcia Hammett were also appointed to the Heritage Committee, which held meetings in the library in Prince Frederick and piloted the first History Fair for Calvert County Public Schools, an event which still takes place annually for middle and high schoolers.



*Kitty Hurrey and WMJS station owner Ada Gollub at a Chamber of Commerce Trade Fair*



The county schools have long been a partner to Calvert Library as well, the relationship of which Hofmann is perhaps proudest. Of the beginning of that relationship, Hofmann remembered, “I went to visit the superintendent of schools [Ken Horsman] and offered a partnership for Calvert Library and Calvert

County Public Schools and I'll never forget what he said: 'Who wouldn't want a partnership with Calvert Library?'"<sup>9</sup> With that, the Calvert Library Assists School Success – CLASS – Team was born. Librarians visited each 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade class in the county to read aloud and share library news and events. Over time, visits to middle and high school classes were included.

In 2011, Calvert Librarians and school media specialists joined forces to create Lunch Bunch book clubs for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Each month, the school media specialist would set aside space for students to enjoy food, activities and good conversation. Often, middle and high school media specialists would invite Calvert Librarians in to lead research workshops for students working on History Fair. The librarians taught students how to access library databases, tell the difference between primary and secondary sources and cite information. The partnership between CCPS and Calvert Library also led to the 2016 formation of the CRAB Card, a digital library card granted to each student which provides access to databases and the ability to check out fine-free print materials from the library system.



*Mutual Elementary School students enjoying a Lunch Bunch session in 2012*

Other notable partners over the years have included Garden Clubs and Master Gardeners, who host workshops, organize seed swaps and beautify the libraries with their annual Books in Bloom displays; the Social Security Administration, who installed a kiosk for customers to conduct remote appointments; the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, who once hired the library to maintain their special collections; *The Calvert Independent*, which provided space for library columns; Garrett Music Academy, which sponsored years of musical events; Adult Education, who led weekly English as a Second Language classes; the local access Channel 6 station, for whom library staff used to input bulletins for community events and information; Annmarie Garden, the site of several library events; Maryland Legal Aid, which offers Lawyers in the Library sessions; and JobSource Mobile, which regularly parks at the libraries to help guide job seekers.<sup>10</sup>



*JobSource Mobile Career Center on site at Calvert Library Prince Frederick<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Calvert Library, "General Information and Criteria for Selection," 2019, <https://calvertlibrary.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/general-information-and-criteria-for-selection-2019.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Calvert Library Foundation, "What We Do," Calvert Library, <https://calvertlibrary.info/foundation-home/what-we-do/>

<sup>5</sup> "Maryland Library Association Award Recipients 1982-Present," Maryland Library Association, 2024, [https://www.mdlib.org/files/docs/about/mla\\_volunteer\\_award.pdf](https://www.mdlib.org/files/docs/about/mla_volunteer_award.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> "Marion Satterthwaite Award," Citizens for Maryland Libraries, 2024, <https://www.citizensformarylandlibraries.org/Satterthwaite>

<sup>7</sup> Calvert Library, "Martha Grahame Honored," 2017, <https://calvertlibrary.info/martha-grahame-honored/>.

<sup>8</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Tri-County Council's Southern Maryland Job Source, "Calvert County Library - Prince Frederick Branch Today," <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernMarylandJobsource>, June 12, 2024.



# Books in Bloom





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## We Think We Can

CALVERT LIBRARY CIRCULATES 1,000,000 ITEMS

*"We are the only species on the planet,  
so far as we know, to have invented  
a communal memory stored neither  
in our genes nor in our brains.  
The warehouse of this memory  
is called the library."  
— Carl Sagan*

Calvert Library's circulation had grown and grown over the years. In 1995, the library had circulated half a million items a year, and just over a decade later, that number had risen to 962,246 in 2007. Though the population of Calvert County was only about 80,000 at the time, Calvert Library set a lofty goal: to circulate one million items in 2008.

During the fiscal year that ran from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, library staff promoted the "Circ a Million" goal to their community, theming the campaign around Wally Piper's classic children's book *The Little Engine That Could*. That year, Calvert Library became The Little Library That Could thanks to banners that tracked the county circulation statistics using movable trains that chugged further up the track.

By June of 2008, the train had made it nearly to the end of the track, and the results would all come down to the final month of circulation statistics. When the final numbers came in, *The Baynet* reported, "The Little Library That Could Became the Little Library That Did."<sup>1</sup> Calvert Library had circulated 1,034,042 materials in a single fiscal year. Former Trustee



Russell Costley said, “This was something that we envisioned for so long, and what a marvelous thing that we were able to do that. It’s a thrill to be here to see it.”<sup>2</sup>



*Promotional signs at Calvert Library Prince Frederick*

<sup>1</sup> “The Little Library That Did,” *The Baynet*, September 2, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



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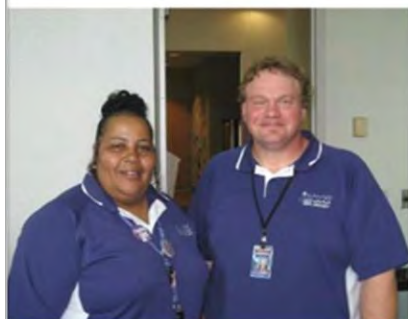
## Fit, Fun and Fifty

CALVERT LIBRARY SYSTEM CELEBRATES 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IN 2009

*“Everything you need for better future  
and success has already been written.  
And guess what? All you have  
To do is go to the library.”  
—Henri Frederic Amiel*

In 2009, Calvert Library turned 50 years old, and the system went all out to observe the milestone. “I guess we do tend to stretch out our celebrations sometimes,” said Pat Hofmann. “We celebrated the whole year!”<sup>1</sup>

2009 was dubbed the year of “Fit, Fun and Fifty” and it was indeed a year full of special events throughout the county, featuring local authors, door prizes, performances, and face painting. Oh, and cake. Lots and lots of cake.



*50th anniversary celebrations in 2009*

<sup>1</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

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## e-reader Revolution

DOWNLOADABLE BOOKS AND DEVICES COME TO CALVERT

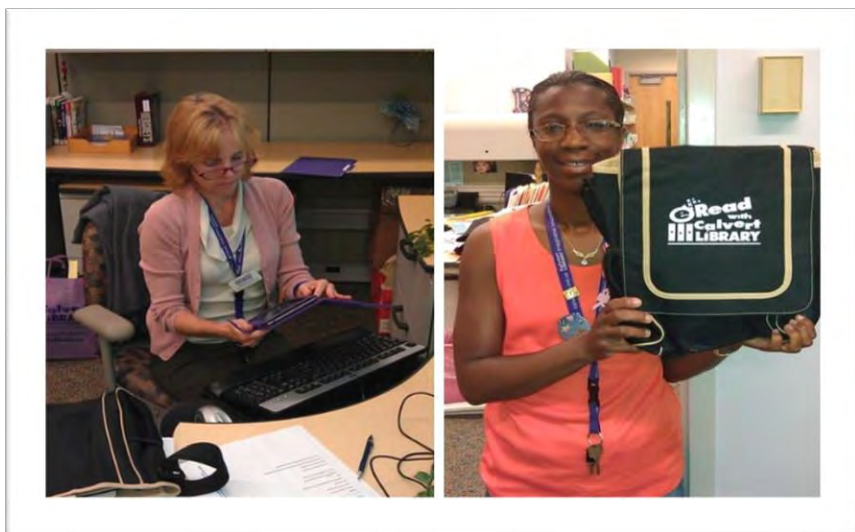
*"Books are a uniquely portable magic."  
– Stephen King*

The 2000s brought another technological shift for the library in the form of digital downloads. Thanks to the rise of smartphones and the invention of e-readers like Kindles and Nooks, there was a demand for the library to become part of that world. Pat Hofmann said, "When people have questions about books, they think of the library, even when the books are e-books."<sup>1</sup>

Just over 50 years after opening as a humble small-town establishment, Calvert Library would lead the way for other Maryland libraries as they entered the digital arena. In 2011, Calvert Library would be on the front lines of the e-reader revolution thanks to a grant from Maryland Division of Library Development and Services made possible in part by the Institute for Museum and Library Services. After lots of customer questions and interest in e-books and e-readers, the grant funding allowed for the library to purchase 72 e-reading devices to put into circulation.

Each Kindle, Nook, and NookColor was loaded with 40-100 themed e-books, games and content for adults, teens and children. They were immediately popular throughout the county. Within the first month, the e-readers had circulated over 100 times and there were regularly waitlists for the devices.

For customers who already had their own devices, the library was able to support them with apps and websites where they could find downloadable library materials to enjoy. Digital audiobooks and e-books remain a popular commodity in Calvert County as more and more customers use library-supplied services like Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy and Freegal.



*Bev Izzi and Paulita Gross working to get the e-readers ready for circulation in 2011*

Using these different tools, card holders have access to a large catalog of digital books, audiobooks, movies, music and magazines that they can download at no cost to them. As in the early days of computers and internet, librarians are always ready and able to provide training to help customers make use of these resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Erskine, "Hot Off the Shelf," *Bay Weekly*, 2011.

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## Changing of the Guard

### CALVERT LIBRARY'S FIRST DIRECTOR RETIRES

*"Librarians are committed to promoting  
lifelong learning in order to create  
a community of well-informed individuals.  
Librarians are catalysts to enlightenment  
for their communities."  
– Louise Capizzo*

After 28 years of work at Calvert Library, Director Pat Hofmann announced her plans to retire in 2013. The time was right, she felt, to step back and enjoy her other loves: travel, organic gardening and spending more time with her family.

To mark the occasion of her retirement, the County Commissioners presented Hofmann with a proclamation. "You have an enduring legacy," Commissioner Steven R. Weems told



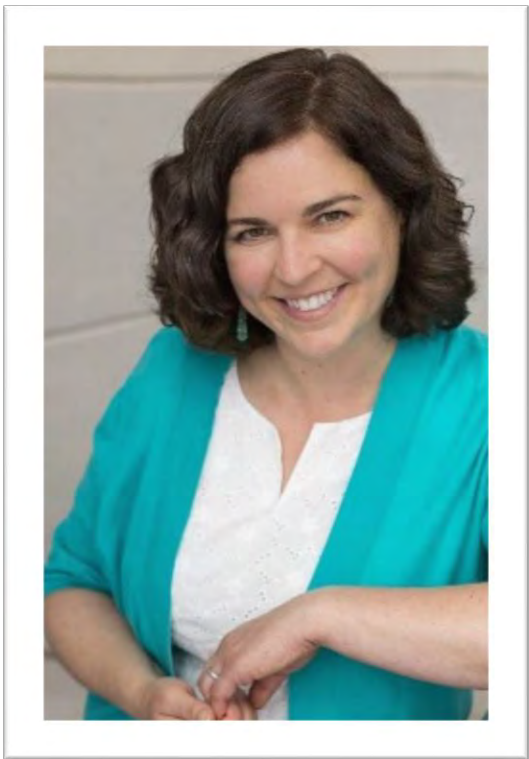
*Pat Hofmann at her retirement*

Hofmann, who received a standing ovation for her years of service.<sup>1</sup> Commissioner Evan K. Slaughenhoupt Jr. remarked, “I don’t anticipate you sitting on a rocking chair and fading away.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as Hofmann herself said, “I didn’t quit the library world, I just retired from my job.”<sup>3</sup>

After stepping out of the director role, Hofmann stayed incredibly active in library advocacy and volunteer work. She joined the Friends of the Library, served as president of Citizens for Maryland Libraries, worked with the American Library Association, served on the board of United for Libraries and still visited the Calvert Library branches regularly as a customer and volunteer.

Of her time at Calvert Library, Hofmann said, “I used to say that I had the best job of anybody in the country and it might be

a slight exaggeration, but I did love working here. There was very little that was not to love, that’s for sure.”<sup>4</sup>



*Calvert Library's Director Carrie Willson*

The Board of Library Trustees appointed Carrie Willson to serve as Calvert Library’s second director after a rigorous hiring process. Then-BOLT President Kip Hine explained, “We had a wide-reaching search and attracted applicants from around the country.



We were pleased to find that the best candidate is already well-connected in Maryland's active library community."<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, Willson had years of experience working for Washington County Free Library and the Western Maryland Regional Library system as well as serving as the vice president/president elect of the Maryland Library Association. She was hired in April 2013 and officially took up the reins in July after training with Hofmann. As Public Relations Coordinator Robyn Truslow said, "We are in very good hands."<sup>6</sup>



*Carrie Willson with her new staff in 2013*

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<sup>1</sup> Marty Madden, "Hofmann Saluted by Commissioners," *The Baynet*, June 19, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Hofmann, interview, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Vinci, "County Welcomes New Calvert Library Director," *Southern Maryland News*, July 19, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

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## #calvertREADS

### STEPPING UP THE SOCIAL MEDIA GAME

*"I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library."  
—Jane Austen*

A library's job is to engage their customers where they are, even if that's not necessarily a physical location. As the world turned more and more internet based, particularly with the rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter and TikTok, Calvert Librarians saw an opportunity to expand their digital customer base. Six diverse staff members serve on a team responsible for the library content that can be found on all the major social platforms. Librarians are able to share information and events, post book recommendations and have fun along the way. Followers of Calvert Library will no doubt be used to regular features like Sunday Punday, the Dog Days of Summer, Caturdays and the crowd-pleasing Book Face Friday photos.

To follow Calvert Library online, visit:

- [facebook.com/CalvertLibrary](https://facebook.com/CalvertLibrary)
- [instagram.com/calvertlibrary](https://instagram.com/calvertlibrary)
- [youtube.com/c/calvertlibrary](https://youtube.com/c/calvertlibrary)
- [tiktok.com/@calvertlibrary](https://tiktok.com/@calvertlibrary)



# Book Face Friday





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## We Just Want the Books Back

CALVERT LIBRARY GOES FINE FREE

*“The library helps you to see,  
not only that you are not alone,  
but that you’re not really any different  
from everyone else.”  
—Maya Angelou*

If Pat Hofmann’s tenure as director was defined by building and expanding library facilities, Carrie Willson’s is defined by removing barriers to get more people using those facilities. Willson steered the library system towards a major policy change that would level the playing field for many Calvert Countians: the elimination of overdue fees.

Willson explained, “Fines are a barrier to accomplishing the library’s mission to empower individuals by facilitating lifelong learning and strengthen our community by providing opportunities for connection to one another and the world. Eliminating that barrier opens doors to all in our community to utilize the resources the library offers.”<sup>1</sup>

Historically, overdue fees were a major source of revenue for public libraries, but that is no longer the case for libraries that receive public funding as Calvert does. Willson observed that overdue fees collected within the Calvert Library system accounted for less than 1 percent of its annual revenue and could be recouped by offering new services like passport applications.

Customers who lost or damaged library materials would still be responsible for replacement fees, but they would not be financially penalized as long as their checkouts came back in



good, usable condition. Willson posited that being fine free was the best way to achieve the real goal of the system: to get materials back so that they could be loaned to the next customer.



*Carrie Willson celebrating Library Card Sign-Up Month*

BOLT member Martha Grahame reported to the County on December 4, 2018, “We open our doors to all of our citizens. We want to open our doors wider so no one will let fines keep them from coming to our library for the necessary services that they need and that we provide.”<sup>2</sup>



Nonetheless, going fine free wasn’t something that the library system rushed into. The seed had been planted in 2016 when Calvert Library had a Welcome Back Fine Forgiveness Week, during which customers could come in-person to a library location to clear their records of fines and lost materials and learn about all the library had to offer.<sup>3</sup> Library staff treated

customer interactions that week like a time-share talk, “selling” library events, classes and services that community members who hadn’t been into the library in a few years might not have known about. During that week, 2,109 customers had a fine or fee waived on their account and 73 percent of them continued to use the library for the six months after the experimental week concluded.

Getting rid of late fees across the board would be a big move that would need the full support of the Board of Library Trustees and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). It took two more years of laying groundwork before the BOLT voted to allow Calvert Library to undertake a trial period to see if it would be sustainable to eliminate late fees entirely.

Willson and then-BOLT President Carolyn McHugh presented the outcome of the fine-free trial to the Board of County Commissioners at the end of July 2019, reporting that \$10,000 worth of overdue library materials had been returned back to the system within the first week of the trial, circulation went up 1.62 percent, and the number of active customers increased by 4,000 people. McHugh said, “We now feel confident that being fine free has not significantly impacted material availability and we are delighted to be able to remove barriers to information access for our community.”<sup>4</sup>

With the support of the BOCC, the Board of Library Trustees made the decision to continue operating without overdue fines, making Calvert Library the third library system in the state to go fine free for users.

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<sup>1</sup> Calvert Library, No Late Fees Trial FAQs, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Tamara Ward, "Calvert Library Goes Fine Free," *Southern Maryland News*, August 28, 2019, [https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/news/local/calvert-library-goes-fine-free/article\\_ab494fec-8afe-581e-a582-758f3ee5a254.html](https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/news/local/calvert-library-goes-fine-free/article_ab494fec-8afe-581e-a582-758f3ee5a254.html)

<sup>3</sup> Carrie Plymire, "Calvert Library Offers Summer Learning, Fun," *Southern Maryland News*, June 23, 2016. [https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/opinion/letters\\_to\\_the\\_editor/calvert-library-offers-summer-learning-fun/article\\_54c8202b-970e-54e2-b5dc-e251930dc46f.html](https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/opinion/letters_to_the_editor/calvert-library-offers-summer-learning-fun/article_54c8202b-970e-54e2-b5dc-e251930dc46f.html)

<sup>4</sup> Truslow, 2019.

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## Libraries in the Time of COVID

GLOBAL PANDEMIC CAUSES CLOSURES AND NEW PROCEDURES

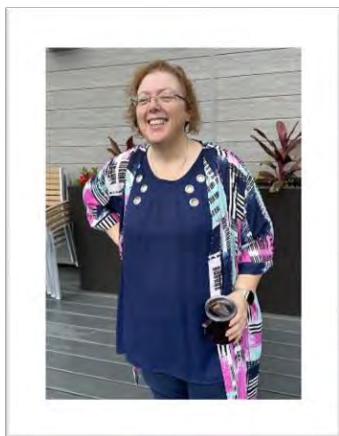
*“When trouble strikes, head to the library. You will either be able to solve the problem, or simply have something to read as the world crashes down around you.”*  
—Lemony Snicket

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 virus would rock the entire world, leading to widespread closures in efforts to stop the spread of disease. All Calvert Library locations closed to the public on Monday, March 16 with plans to reopen on March 30. Though staff originally thought that they would return to work in two weeks’ time, everyone had signed telework agreements before the closure. By March 30, the closure was extended for two more weeks and soon the reality of an extended closure sank in as the coronavirus took hold of the world.

It became clear that a great many people wouldn’t be returning to work or school in person for some time. “Institutions such as Calvert Library have, by their very nature of serving the public every day and handling thousands of items in the process, gone through a tsunami of adjustment.”<sup>1</sup> Calvert librarians immediately began shifting gears to figure out how to keep serving their community from a distance.

Library staff would need to be able to work from home. Maria Jolley, the network supervisor of Calvert Library, and her staff quickly found ways to get librarians the access they needed to necessary software and equipment. “Everyone had figured out video editing. Everybody was recording things on their phones at home and staff really just rose to the challenge in an incredible way,” said Executive Director Carrie Willson.





*Maria Jolley*

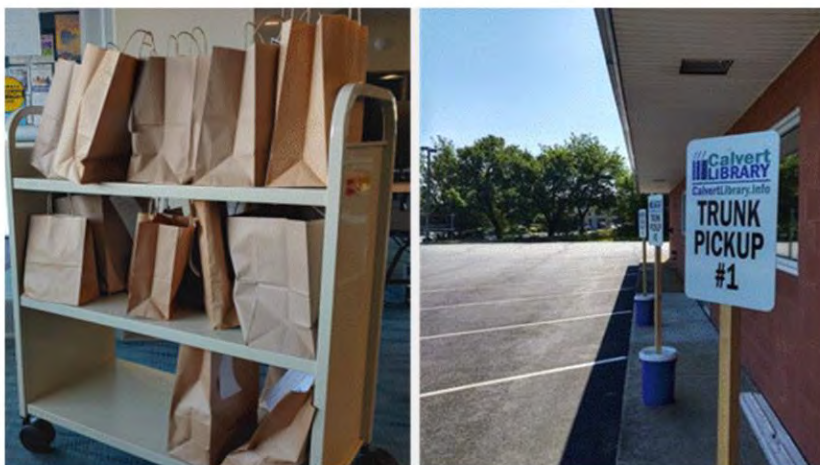
“I’m still a little choked up to think about how incredibly well everybody responded.”<sup>2</sup> While staff posted virtual Storytime snippets on the library YouTube channel, answered emails and phone calls routed through Zoom (paid for by the Maryland State Library Agency), coached customers virtually through online services and explored ways to bring programming to life digitally, plans were also in motion to allow customers to return and check out physical items again.



After several months of closures during the initial onset of the coronavirus pandemic, Willson announced that the book drops would once again be reopened for returns on June 10, 2020 and that staff would begin offering the ability to place holds and pick up library materials curbside on June 22, 2020. In her statement to the press, she said, “We don’t know when it will be recommended that we invite the public back in to the buildings but we’re busy making adjustments inside each space to be ready to invite users back in to browse, use computers and see our wonderful librarians face to face (or at least covered face to covered face)! We miss seeing you and we look forward to returning to more normal service in the library locations in the future.”<sup>3</sup>

She also noted the decision to cancel in-person #calvertREADS summer programming, opting to instead host online performances and events. From June 22 through September 8,

library services were limited to those that could be provided online, over the phone, or curbside. Through curbside pick-up of holds and librarian-assembled grab bags of materials, the library tried to serve the browsing and borrowing needs of customers. The other major area of need that the pandemic put into stark relief were the members of the community who relied on the library for internet access. To meet this need, Calvert Library used American Rescue Plan Act funds from Calvert County Government and SMRLA to purchase Chromebooks, hotspots and data plans to loan to users.



*Holds getting bagged up for curbside and trunk pickup*



On August 27, 2020, it was announced that the Prince Frederick location would open for in-person visits in a limited capacity, with the three branches to follow on September 8. For several months, the libraries were open to the public 12-5 pm Mondays

through Thursdays, 1-5 pm Fridays and 10 am-2 pm Saturdays, with customers required to wear masks and asked to observe social distancing and keep their visits to less than an hour.<sup>4</sup> Calvert Library was one of the first libraries in the state to reopen for in-person library use.

Willson said, “The two main services we haven’t been able to offer in some form during this pandemic are gathering space and computer use. While it is still not appropriate to be gathering, I believe that the customers who are desperate to use our computers will be self-policing so we don’t have to close our doors again. At the same time, our staff stand ready to remind or educate customers about safe practices. For those that cannot comply, we will continue to serve them outside the building.”<sup>5</sup>

By November 10, 2020, following a recommendation that the American Library Association was compiling from available scientific studies, the length of time that returned library materials spent in quarantine was reduced to two days instead of three. This allowed materials to become available more quickly and freed up additional space.



*Staff masking up to prevent the spread of COVID in 2020*

As the libraries began to welcome more employees and customers back into the buildings, the community likely got used to seeing library press releases announcing COVID-positive staff members. Often, a coworker testing positive would mean that an entire shift of staff members would have to quarantine, necessitating the use of substitute librarians who could fill in during their absences.

With social distancing and capacity limits in place, long-standing library programs like Storytime, book clubs and summer performances happened online. Children's librarians became used to recording and posting Storytime on YouTube while other staff contributed to podcasts, book recommendation videos, Instagram photos and Zoom events. On Zoom, the library partnered with outside groups to provide information, education and connection to others, offering such events as Getting Back to Business (With COVID Restrictions), Garden Smarter, vaccination information, book discussions and the Big Conversation. The 8th Big Conversation attracted 220 participants to discuss the role of health care inequities in September 2020, and Calvert Library was later presented with a plaque to acknowledge their role in providing "the technology resources needed to turn the annual Big Conversation into an online event" and "taking an active role in making the community stronger."<sup>6</sup>

As Southern Maryland Regional Library Association CEO Ashley Teagle noted in the organization's annual report for fiscal year 2021, "Southern Maryland's public libraries' response to the unprecedented pressures of the pandemic demonstrates how important they are to the community. Throughout the past year and beyond, our libraries served their communities despite closures and service disruptions that rocked many institutions. Southern Marylanders could still rely on their public libraries."<sup>7</sup>

During COVID-19, SMRLA did its part to support the tricity libraries. In fiscal year 2021, SMRLA distributed \$61,000 from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES)

Act between Charles, Calvert and St. Mary’s libraries and another \$18,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act.<sup>8</sup> SMRLA was also responsible for the deployment of radio frequency identification (RFID) on all tricounty library materials. Now all three counties are using this technology to assist in faster and more accurate checkouts and inventory. The addition of RFID tags to materials also revolutionized self-checkout in the libraries as a customer could pile multiple items on the checkout pad and see them scanned all at once with no barcode scanning required.



*Staff at the Southern Branch promoted social distancing after the libraries reopened*



Over time, the world gradually saw a return to normalcy. As infection rates dropped, so too did Calvert Library’s mask

requirements and plexiglass desk barriers. In a February 2023 update to the County Commissioners, Willson reported that fiscal year 2022 saw about 229,300 in-person visitors – though far fewer than pre-pandemic, it was a significant increase over the previous year.<sup>9</sup> Some programs that began during COVID-19 continue on today, like virtual Dungeons & Dragons sessions, curbside hold pickup and the circulation of Chromebooks and WiFi hotspots.

“I think back to the time of COVID, all the lessons that we all learned and the difficulties that we went through,” Joanie Kilmon mused. “This has been a time of transition for all of us, deciding what’s important in life, and COVID taught us that [...] people need their library. All of the ends that libraries went to to get material into people’s hands...I see people today who tell me, ‘The library saved my life during COVID.’”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dick Myers, “Calvert Library: A Year of Pivoting for the Pandemic,” *Calvert County Times*, Apr. 22, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Carrie Willson, “Calvert Library Reopening Book Returns Today, June 10, 2020, and Curbside Pickup Starting June 22, 2020,” *Southern Maryland News Net*, June 10, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Calvert Library, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> *County Times*, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Calvert Library, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> SMRLA, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Ashley Teagle, “2021 Annual Report,” Southern Maryland Regional Library Association, November 2021, [https://smrla.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Annual-Report\\_FY21.pdf](https://smrla.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Annual-Report_FY21.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Madden, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Kilmon, interview, 2022.

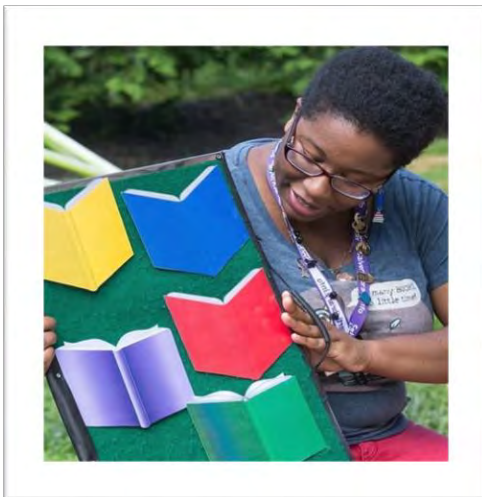
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## On the Road Again

### OUTREACH SERVICES EXPAND

*"If you can't bring the man to the books,  
bring the books to the man."  
— Sharlee Glenn*

In 2017, before the world had heard of COVID-19, plans to rebrand and expand outreach services were being hatched. Over the years, the department had segued from the traditional bookmobile to a conversion van and SUV that would "visit the homes of shut-ins, licensed daycare centers, nursing homes, retirement communities, adult day care services, Head Start locations and the county's detention center."<sup>1</sup>



*Britt Pressley visiting a daycare*

The two-person department was doing what they could to reach customers that didn't have library access, but they knew that there was an opportunity to do even more, to extend their reach and truly become enmeshed in the community. After attending the national Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

Conference, outreach librarians Lisa Wieland and Rachel Gordon started plotting to get a new bookmobile on the road.



Carrie Willson started advocating to include a bookmobile in the county's capital project budget and funding was secured in the FY19 county budget.

In preparation for the new vehicle, the Outreach Department underwent a structural change, rebranding itself Mobile Services, gaining a dedicated supervisor in Lisa Wieland, doubling the number of staff members, and commissioning a brand new bookmobile. The new bookmobile would be a true mobile library, complete with bookshelves, wireless internet access, a television screen, a generator supported by solar panels, an awning to protect visitors from weather and a handicap accessible lift. It would have the staff to support a schedule of regular stops throughout Calvert County at community centers, in underserved neighborhoods and at special events.

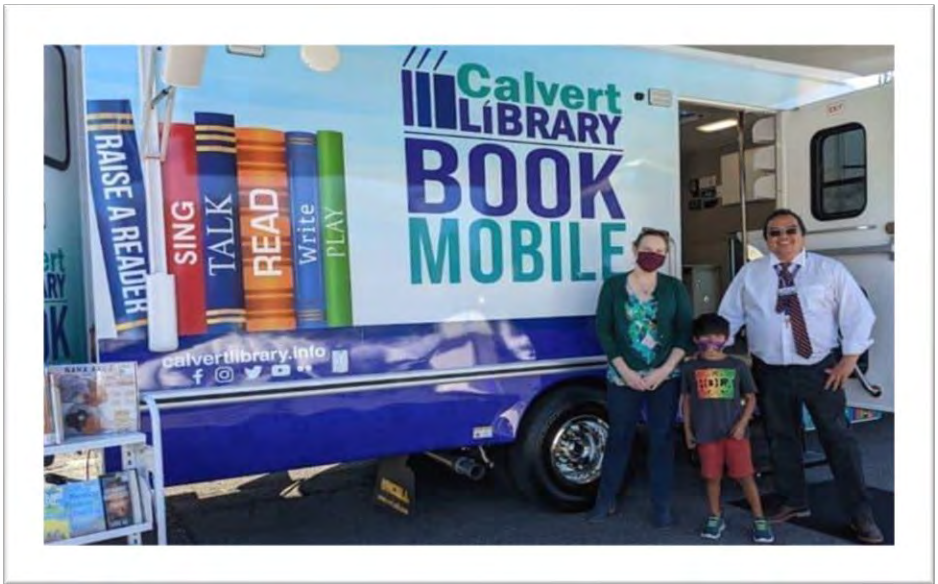


*Mobile Services Supervisor Lisa Wieland*

Customers who might not otherwise have had a way to get to the libraries in person would be able to return materials, browse for new ones, place and pick up holds and get reference and technical assistance from staff. Meanwhile, the SUV would still be used to make visits to shut-ins and daycares while the other staff, based out of the main library in Prince Frederick would process materials and prepare for stops.

Carrie Willson, whose first library job – at Washington County Free Library in western Maryland – was the site of the very first bookmobile in the United States, said, “It’s especially sweet to

me to be bringing a bookmobile to Calvert Library. It can bring magical experiences to children and adults alike.”<sup>2</sup>



*Mobile Services staff Maya Huchla and Reiner Angala with the first bookmobile customer*

The new bookmobile made its public debut November 2021, when staff, county government officials and members of the community came together to celebrate and get a first look. The first customer to check out on the bookmobile was 9-year-old Sebastian Crumbley, pictured above, who selected a book by Mo Willems. As Mobile Services Supervisor Lisa Wieland shared, “The greatest benefit of having a bookmobile in Calvert County is access. The library is all about giving access to people who don’t have it and we are going to bridge a lot of gaps with our library on wheels.”<sup>3</sup>



*The bookmobile on location at different community stops and events*

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<sup>1</sup> Hejl, *Calvert Library*, 2009, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Molly Crumbley, "A Library On Wheels," *Bay Weekly*, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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## Looking Ahead

65 YEARS AND COUNTING

*"The very existence of libraries affords the best evidence that we may yet have hope for the future of man."*

– T.S. Eliot

So what's next for a public library in a post-pandemic world? Plenty, according to Carrie Willson. "We continue to be very proud of the work that Calvert Library staff have done to make it through the pandemic and come out the other side with more services and accessibility for our users," she said, adding, "We have a lot of work to do to be the organization that we intend to be. We welcome community feedback and endeavor to be a public space and community resource that reflects the diversity of our community in Calvert County."<sup>1</sup>

For the past several years, Calvert Library staff have engaged in the work of studying anti-racism and working towards creating a public library that is as free and accessible as possible – worlds away from the original lending libraries that were once the gatekeepers of information in the county.

With grant funding from the Maryland State Library Agency, the library went through a comprehensive anti-racism audit that examined policies, programs and services and provided recommendations on how to move forward. As part of the process, work teams examined hiring and HR practices, library policies and materials selection and worked with the Board of Library Trustees to develop a new equity statement that can be viewed on every page of the library website:

“Public libraries welcome all people. All are entitled to respect and civility. All are invited to learn for themselves what is true and what is good. Honest discourse is welcome here. Calvert Library is making a long-term commitment to be an equity-focused and antiracist organization. This Equity Statement is a declaration of our intent and a commitment to creating a library that is inclusive in all facets including staff development, programming, policies and collection management. We acknowledge that throughout our history, Calvert Library has not always lived up to our ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion. We dedicate ourselves to learn from the past in this process of change and recognize that our work will be ongoing.”<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic proved that libraries are essential to communities, and it is Willson’s mission to make sure that everyone in the community feels welcome and finds the library services that they need at Calvert Library. “The library is a community hub, building connections for every age group. To do this right, we must ensure equitable access to the resources, information and entertainment we provide,” she said. “I think libraries as brick-and-mortar buildings will continue to be really critical resources for the community.”<sup>3</sup>



Now with the doors open at the newest library branch in North Beach, it seems clear that Calvert County is committed to investing in these brick-and-mortar libraries. On April 16, 2024, the new Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch opened one block



away from where Hayes Library sat 86 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

Both Chesapeake Beach and North Beach were given an opportunity to propose land parcels upon which to host the new branch, after which the BOLT made their recommendations to the County Commissioners. “We are confident that we have used a fair and appropriate site selection process,” shared then-BOLT President Martha Grahame. “It speaks volumes for the excellent service our library provides that both communities want the library within their town limits.”<sup>5</sup>

At the groundbreaking for Twin Beaches Branch on May 24, 2022, BOLT President Jeffrey Lewis explained to the gathered crowd, “The Twin Beaches Branch has been bursting at the seams for many, many, years. Thanks to a very creative staff, the community has had access to a very cozy but usable 4,800-square foot facility.” He shared that the new building would be quadruple the size, and, he added, “There will even be a break room for staff who have been washing their lunch dishes in the staff bathroom for the past 30 years.”<sup>6</sup> Less than two years later, after a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by a crowd 400 strong, the public was welcomed inside.



*Twin Beaches Branch staff breaking ground for their new workplace*



Branch Manager Melissa Gray recounted, “There is nothing better than seeing the community using the space that was intentionally designed with their input. All our study rooms were in use on the very first day and have been fully booked since! It truly was the best day!”



*Calvert Library's newest branch as viewed from the south on 5<sup>th</sup> Street*

Now that the newest Calvert Library location is open, customers can enjoy two floors of book collections for adults, teens and children; a makerspace and podcast recording booth; meeting rooms; a “Memory Lab” with digitization equipment; ground level parking; a porch and terrace overlooking the Chesapeake Bay; and the branch is just a short walk to the many local shops and restaurants surrounding it.

From the very first day, there have been customers galore. A June 5 infographic released by the library reported that the branch had welcomed 18,000 visitors in less than two months, had created 897 new library cards and circulated 18,031 items.

That pace has yet to slow.

Joanie Kilmon, longtime branch manager of Twin Beaches Branch, is no longer part of the staff, having made the decision to retire at the cozy spot in Chesapeake Beach that she had called home for so long. She shared, “I never thought I would retire. I thought I would die with my high heels up, but I gave up high heels a long time ago. I’m going to sit back and I’m going to watch all of Calvert Library just continue to grow.”<sup>7</sup>



*Calvert Library staff in 2024*



Whoever you are, wherever you're from and wherever you're going, Calvert Library hopes that you'll watch it grow too. Thank you for being part of its story, and cheers to 65 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Calvert Library, 2023, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Calvert Library, [calvertlibrary.info](http://calvertlibrary.info)

<sup>3</sup> Myers, 2021, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Grace Mary Brady, "First Public Library in Calvert County," Bayside History Museum, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Southern Maryland Chronicle News Desk, "Calvert Moves Forward on Time-Sensitive Twin Beaches Library Site Selection," *Southern Maryland Chronicle*, March 9, 2018. <https://southernmarylandchronicle.com/2018/03/09/calvert-moves-forward-on-time-sensitive-twin-beaches-library-site-selection/>

<sup>6</sup> Molly Crumbley, "Calvert Library Breaks Ground On New Branch," *Bay Weekly*, June 2, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Kilmon, interview, 2022.

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With gratitude,  
Molly Weeks Crumbley

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**Calvert Library Hours:**

**Monday-Thursday 9am-8pm**

**Friday 12-5pm**

**Saturday 9am-5pm**

**Calvert Library Mobile Services: 410-535-0291**

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850 Costley Way  
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(410) 535-0291  
(301) 855-1862

**Calvert Library Southern Branch**

13920 HG Trueman Rd  
PO Box 559  
Solomons, MD 20688  
(410) 326-5289

**Calvert Library Fairview Branch**

8120 Southern Maryland Blvd  
Owings, MD 20736  
(410) 257-2101

**Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch**

4100 5th St  
North Beach, MD 20714  
410-257-2411

