

# LGM

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS MAGAZINE  
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

## COLLECTING THE GLOBE

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### Inside

Saving Stories  
Of the Pandemic

Ancient Jewish Text  
Finds New Spotlight

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### Plus

La Biblioteca

Sketches of Justice

History in Fragments





## FEATURES

10

### Into the Spotlight

An ancient religious text finds a starring role in a White House ceremony.

12

### Collecting the Globe

Library offices overseas acquire material from around the world.

18

### Tales of the Pandemic

The Library is collecting audio diaries from health-care workers.

■ Library staffers Mahmudun Nahar (third from right) and M. Enayat Hossain (second from right) attend an international book fair in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

# LCM

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS MAGAZINE

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## Mission of the Library of Congress

The Library's mission is to engage, inspire and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

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■ On the cover: The Library maintains six offices overseas that facilitate the acquisition and cataloging of materials from countries around the globe.

## DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Trending
- 3 Technology
- 4 Page From the Past
- 5 Favorite Place
- 6 Off the Shelf
- 7 Online Offerings
- 8 Curator's Picks
- 24 My Job
- 25 News Briefs
- 26 Shop the Library
- 27 Support the Library
- 28 Last Word



### CONNECT ON

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■ This mural in the Mission District of San Francisco is discussed in an immigration episode of the *La Biblioteca* podcast. *Carol M. Highsmith Archive/ Prints and Photographs Division*

## LA BIBLIOTECA

Podcast connects Library collections to civil rights issues for the Latino community.

As part of Hispanic Heritage Month, season two of the *La Biblioteca* podcast takes a deep dive into issues related to civil rights cases and events in the United States that have left an indelible mark in the Latino community from the 1900s to the present.

The series, spanning six episodes and produced by Huntington Fellowship interns María Guadalupe Partida and Herman Luis Chávez, focuses on the Latinx Resource Guide, a first-of-its-kind online compendium of civil rights resources that currently ranks among the most used at the Library.

The episodes feature interviews with 13 prominent Latino political, academic and community leaders about issues like health care, voting rights, political identity and empowerment, education and immigration. There's also an episode on environmental activism on Vieques Island, in Puerto Rico.

"We're the biggest minority in the United States, and our voices matter," said Partida, a native Texan and the daughter of Mexican immigrants. "It's important to uplift

ourselves and others in the community and be more in solidarity, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit our community disproportionately."

For Partida, the podcast was a natural extension of the resource guide the Huntington fellows created last year and a tool to provide context to collection items at the Library.

A poster about forced sterilizations in California between 1909 and 1964 sparked the inaugural episode about *Madrigal v. Quilligan*, a case stemming from a 1975 class action lawsuit by 10 working-class Mexican American women against Los Angeles County-USC Medical Hospital for involuntary sterilization.

In another episode, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chair Joaquín Castro of Texas highlights the growth and challenges of the Hispanic electorate beyond traditional destinations like New York, Florida, California, Texas and Illinois.

As civil rights events continue to affect Latino communities, the wide range of references included in the research guide aim to connect the past with the present.

### MORE INFORMATION

Latinx Resource Guide  
[guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights](https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights)

## FRAGMENTS OF THE PAST

Initiative digitally reunites long-separated pieces of medieval manuscripts.

Otto Ege was best known in antiquarian circles as a book dealer and art professor, but he had a more colorful way of describing himself. “For more than 25 years,” Ege explained in the March 1938 issue of the hobby journal *Avocations*, “I have been one of those ‘strange, eccentric, book-tearers.’”

More directly put, Ege purchased medieval manuscripts, cut them apart, turned them into portfolio books and sold those to libraries across North America.

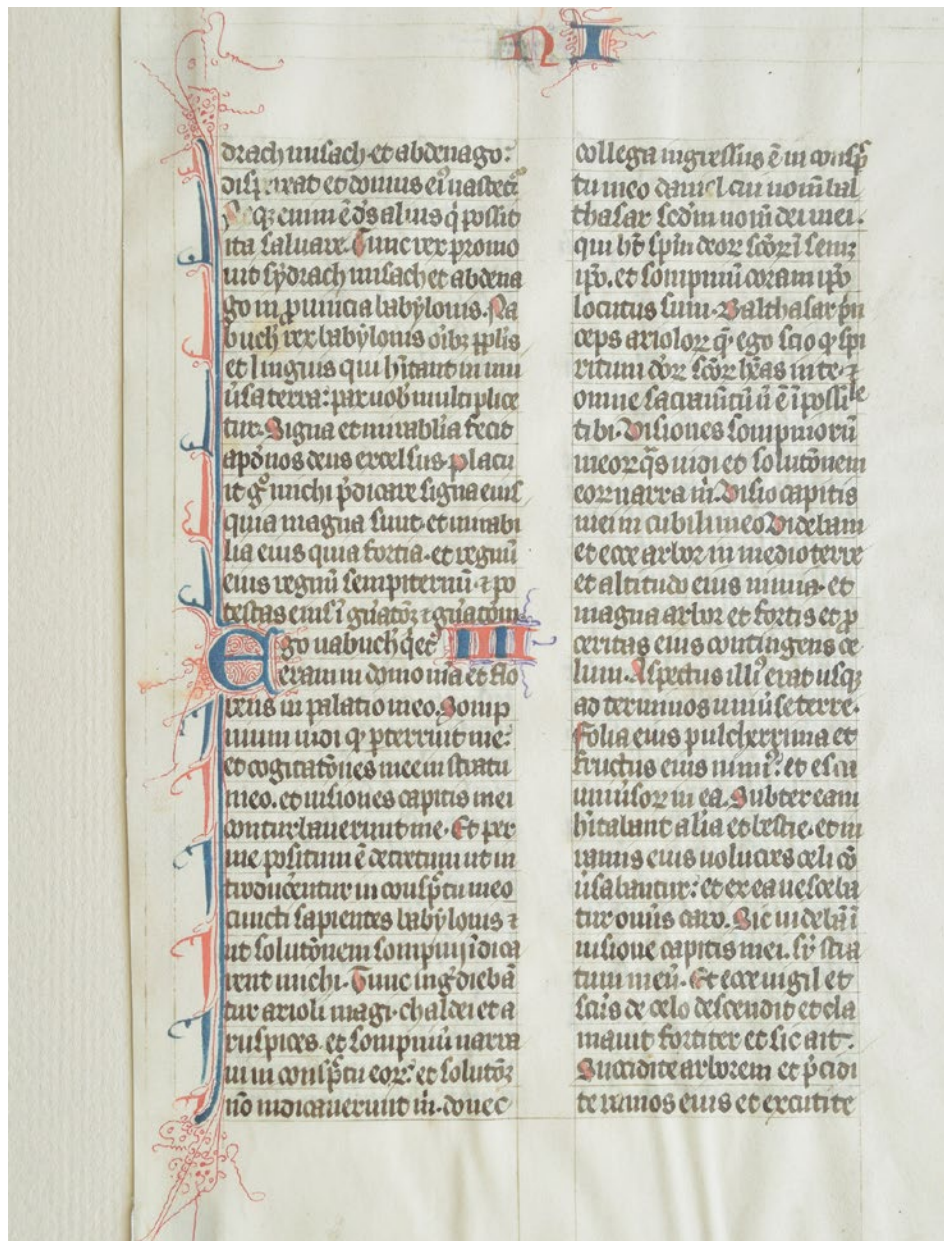
Ege justified his actions as being democratically motivated: Few university libraries and collectors could afford to buy complete medieval manuscripts, he reasoned, and breaking them apart and selling the pieces gave more people access to these fragments of history.

Then, as now, dealers had a clear financial motivation to break a manuscript: They make a lot more money by selling individual leaves to different buyers than by selling an entire manuscript to a single buyer. Today, circumspect curators and ethical book dealers rely on well-documented provenance records to prove that the purchase of an item does not support the dismembering of cultural artifacts.

A new field of digital humanities mitigates some of the damage that’s been done. The Library’s Rare Book and Special Collections Division is collaborating with an initiative called *Fragmentarium.ms* that pioneers what’s known as “digital fragmentology.”

*Fragmentarium* is building an international community to identify, search, compare and collect data on fragments of medieval manuscripts. The initiative allows libraries around the world to collaborate to create complete virtual reconstructions of manuscripts. One of the best such reconstructions, the *Beauvais Missal*, brought together leaves from over 60 locations.

The Rare Book division is bolstering identifications and descriptions of



fragments in its collections to help scholars reconstruct these little pieces of history that would otherwise remain locked in vaults or portfolios.

In making its fragments more accessible, the Rare Book division hopes to encourage a healthy appreciation of fragments and to discourage destructive collecting habits.

—Marianna Stell is a reference assistant in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

■ A detail of a fragment of a 1310 Bible from one of Otto Ege’s portfolio boxes. Rare Book and Special Collections Division

# PAGE FROM THE PAST



■ Rodney King testifies during courtroom proceedings of his civil suit against the city of Los Angeles in this sketch by Mary Chaney. *Prints and Photographs Division*

## SKETCHES OF HISTORY

Courtroom drawings capture the drama of the Rodney King trials.

In a hushed Los Angeles courtroom, Rodney King recalled in a faint voice the blows he took from four white police officers wielding metal batons on March 3, 1991. King, who was Black, told a prosecutor that he tried to flee because he was “just trying to stay alive.”

As jurors leaned forward to hear King’s riveting testimony during that 1993 trial, Mary Chaney took to her sketch pad. Chaney, then one of the nation’s top courtroom artists, created 269 sketches from King’s federal and civil trials between 1992 and 1994.

The beating of King was one of the most pivotal moments in recent American history and, this spring, the Library acquired the sketches from Chaney’s estate, adding them to the institution’s collection of artwork from landmark court trials.

The beating – caught on tape by a witness who saw it unfold from his apartment balcony – shocked the nation because it laid bare problems of police brutality and

racial bias in law enforcement.

The subsequent trials of officers Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind, Stacey Koon and Ted Briseno are considered a critical moment in legal history. The acquittal on state criminal charges in 1992 unleashed five days of looting and rioting in Los Angeles, leaving more than 60 dead, thousands injured and about \$1 billion in damages.

Chaney’s sketches from the King trial capture dozens of indelible moments. On the stand, King described the racial epithets the police officers hurled as they beat, tasered and taunted him. Others show King up close on the witness stand, pointing to a video clip or describing his arrest for drunken driving.

The various trials stretched out, in all, for more than three years. After the officers were acquitted of criminal charges in 1992, Chaney sketched the sentencing of officers Powell and Koon on federal civil rights charges in 1993, as well as the civil trial in which a jury awarded King \$3.8 million in damages in 1994.

Chaney died of cancer at 77 in 2005. Covering the King trial, she once told the Los Angeles Times, was “like walking a tightrope without a net.” But, under that pressure, she captured a pivotal moment in history with images that still resonate three decades later.

—*María Peña is a public affairs specialist in the Office of Communications.*



SHAWN MILLER

## JEFFERSON BUILDING WINDOWS

The interiors of the Jefferson Building offer visitors breathtaking glimpses of art and architecture, whichever way they turn.

Its magnificent murals, marble, stained glass and sculpture arguably make the Jefferson the most beautifully decorated building in the United States, a rival to the lavishly decorated palaces of Europe.

An equally inspiring attraction is the view of what lies outside the building's windows.

The Jefferson sits directly across from the U.S. Capitol, and a look out of its west-facing windows provides unobstructed and inspirational views of the Capitol, with its soaring dome and leafy, park-like grounds.

The windows at the south end of the mezzanine offer a bonus: views of the Washington Monument, just over a mile to the west, peeking over the Capitol. This favorite place is best seen at a favorite time – dusk, with a sunset turning the skies red and orange over the nation's capital city.

–Mark Hartsell



■ Jade Snow Wong's memoir has endured, in many editions and languages, across the decades. Shawn Miller

## A PORTRAIT OF CHINESE AMERICAN LIFE

Seven decades later, Wong's memoir still resonates.

Jade Snow Wong published “Fifth Chinese Daughter” in 1950, and it has been part of American literature ever since. The memoir of a young Chinese American woman coming of age in San Francisco’s Chinatown, torn between family traditions and her American ambitions, it has lived several lives in the intervening decades.

Lauded by critics, it became a bestseller in an era when the Chinese Exclusion Act had only recently been lifted. It was a feel-good story about a determined young Chinese woman who said that America was a land of opportunity, if only you worked hard for your dreams. The State Department soon sent Wong and her book on a four-month tour across Asia, touting American ideals against the growing spread of communism in the region.

By the late 1960s and 1970s, times had changed. A new generation of young Asian Americans dismissed the book as naïve, too accommodating of white readers’ stereotypes. She was using her individual success story in disregard of prevailing anti-Asian discrimination, they said.

And, finally, as it has fallen further into the past, the book has settled into the national narrative as a lasting portrait of Chinese American life at the mid-century.

Wong was, by any account, ambitious and multi-talented. She and her husband, Woodrow, ran a successful travel agency and import-export business, but she is perhaps best known today as a ceramic artist whose works have been shown by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.

Her family donated her papers and dozens of her ceramic pieces to the Library in 2009, three years after her death. It’s now part of the Asian Division.

—Neely Tucker is a writer-editor in the Office of Communications.





## ‘EYES ON THE PRIZE’

New exhibit features unedited interviews from the acclaimed PBS series.

Everything seemed quiet as Frederick Leonard’s bus pulled into the terminal in Montgomery, Alabama. “We didn’t see anybody. And we didn’t see any police, either,” he recalled. “And then all of a sudden, just like ... magic – white people, sticks and bricks.”

Leonard took part in the Freedom Rides, bus trips into the American South during 1961 to protest state-sanctioned segregation on buses and in bus terminals.

His account of a mob attack is one of 127 unedited interviews newly released as an online exhibition on the website of the American Archive of Public Broadcasting, a joint project of the Library and Boston public broadcaster GBH.

The interviews were recorded for the landmark PBS series “Eyes on the Prize,” which documents the civil rights movement through firsthand recollections. The online exhibition, “Freedom Song: Interviews from ‘Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights

Years, 1954–1965,’ ” covers part one of the PBS series, which debuted in 1987.

“Eyes on the Prize” is the lens through which many Americans learned about the people, stories and struggles of the civil rights movement. Yet, the accounts broadcast on television represent only a fraction of those recorded.

The unedited interviews found in “Freedom Song” recount the experiences of many well-known figures, such as John Lewis and Coretta Scott King. But they also highlight the experiences of grassroots activists like Leonard and Jo Ann Robinson, who helped lay the groundwork for the bus boycotts that followed the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus in 1955.

“To me, the value of the exhibit is really that the interviews give users insight into this period that they wouldn’t get from ‘Eyes on the Prize,’ ” says film and media studies scholar Michelle Kelley, who curated the exhibit. “They just give a different perspective. They tell different stories.”

—Wendi A. Maloney is a writer-editor in the Office of Communications.

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### MORE INFORMATION

‘Eyes on the Prize’ exhibition  
[americanarchive.org/exhibits/eotp](https://americanarchive.org/exhibits/eotp)

■ Frederick Leonard tells his story in an interview made for “Eyes on the Prize,” a piece included in a new online exhibition about the series.

# CURATOR'S PICKS

## PRESERVING ASIAN CULTURES

Asian Division librarians choose favorite items from the division's collections.



### LITERARY BAMBOO

The Asian Division's Mangyan bamboo collection from Mindoro, Philippines, is made up of 71 slats and six tubes of bamboo inscribed in the endangered Indic-derived Mangyan script. It was assembled by Maj. Fletcher Gardner – an American doctor stationed in the Philippines from 1904 to 1905 – with the help of two collectors, Ildfonso Maliwanag and Eusebio Maliwanag. Acquired by the Library in 1938, the collection preserves examples of literary traditions handed down over generations from the island of Mindoro.



### PAINTED TIBETAN SCROLL

In 1908, American diplomat and Tibetologist William Woodville Rockhill held a historic meeting with the 13th Dalai Lama at the sacred mountain Wutaishan, located in modern China. The Dalai Lama presented Rockhill with this thangka – a painted Tibetan scroll – depicting 14th-century Tibetan saint-scholar Rje Tsong-kha-pa. Rockhill's gifts to the Library marked the beginning of its Tibetan collection.



**GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIPS**

During the 19th century in Korea, “Oryun haengsilto” (“Illustrated guide to the five relationships”) was used to promote Confucian ethics among the general public. “Oryun haengsilto,” printed on woodblock in 1797, contains 105 biographies that describe exemplars of fundamental human relationships, such as the relationship between parents and children, kings and subjects, husband and wife, adults and children, and friends.

**18TH-CENTURY THYASAPHU**

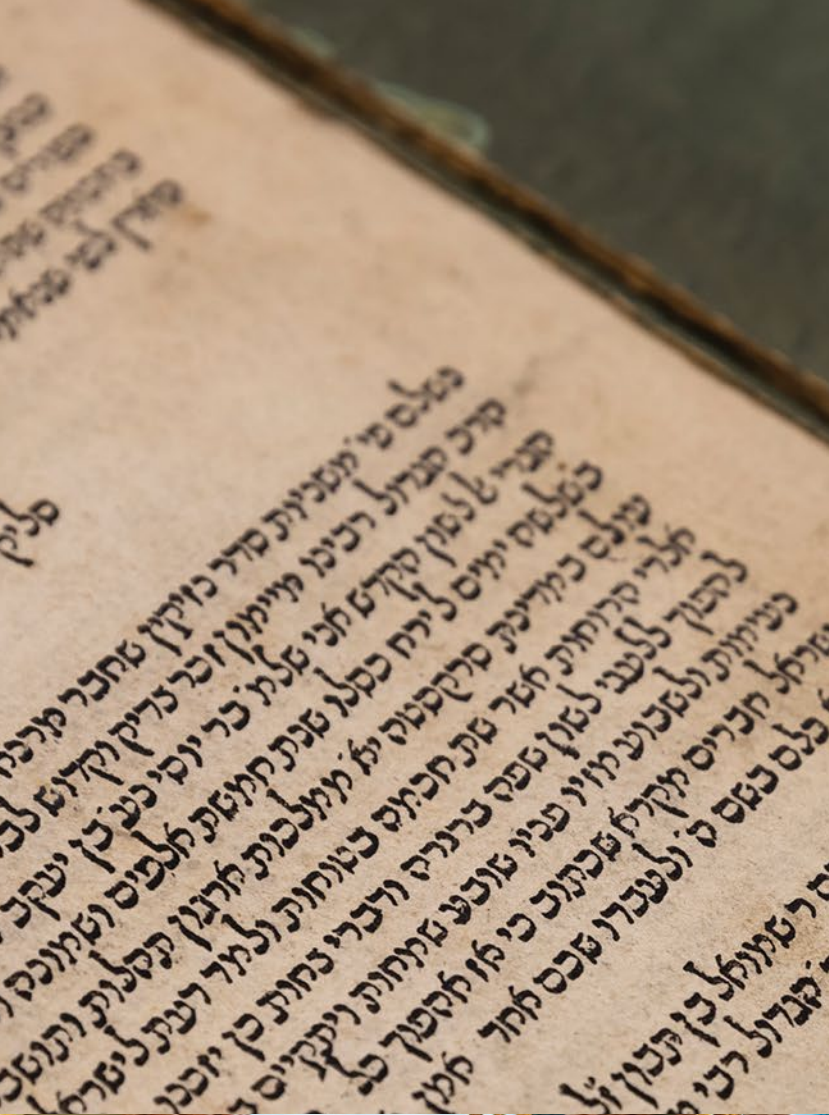
The word for planet in many South Asian languages is “graha,” literally “grabber,” a deity that can influence lives positively or negatively. This 18th-century thyasaphu, or manuscript folding book, is one tool used to ward off adverse planetary effects. The volume depicts the nine planets of Hindu astrology (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the sun, the moon and the moon’s ascending and descending nodes) along with powerful mantras in Newari and Sanskrit.



**MAPPING YANGZHOU**

The Illustrated Album of Yangzhou Prefecture is an album of hand-drawn Chinese maps created during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Painted on paper, the folding album contains 12 maps with corresponding descriptions of Yangzhou Prefecture and 11 of its constituent counties and cities. The Library holds the sole copy in the world.

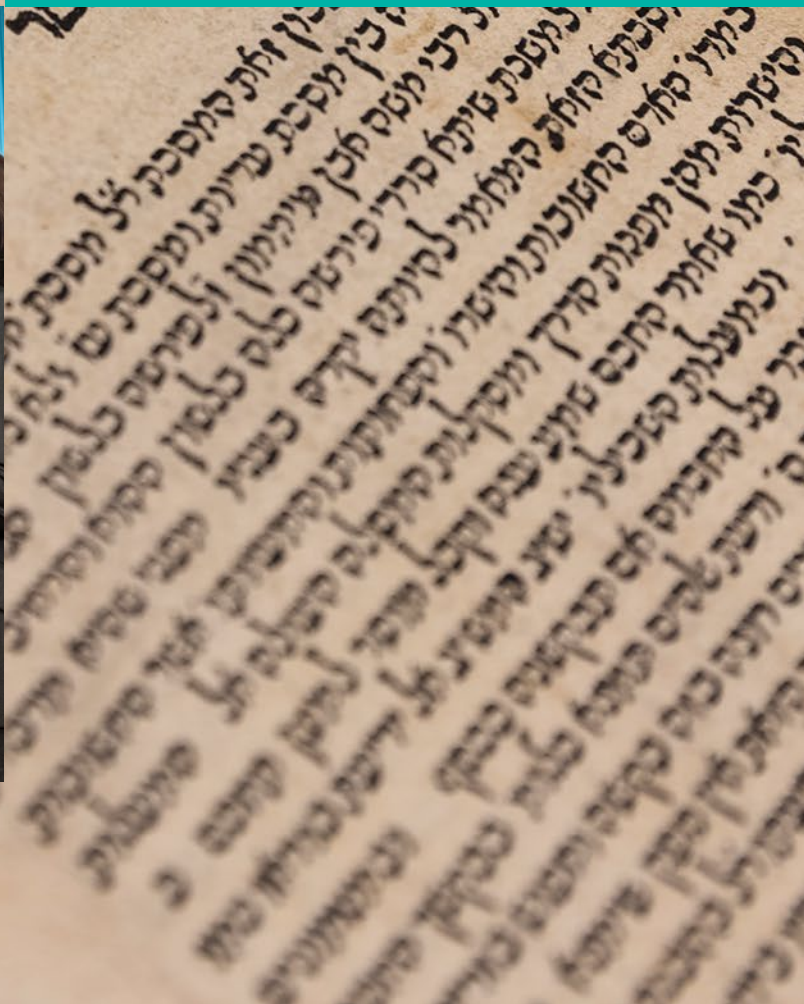
ALL IMAGES FROM ASIAN DIVISION COLLECTIONS



# AN ANCIENT TEXT, REDISCOVERED

A 529-YEAR-OLD JEWISH BOOK  
LANDS A STARRING ROLE IN A  
WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY.

BY NEELY TUCKER



Once upon a time – May 8, 1492, to be precise – a Jewish printer in Naples, Italy, made the first printed text of the Mishnah, the collection of Jewish laws, ethics and traditions that had been kept orally for centuries.

Centuries passed.

The New World was explored. Shakespeare came and went. Nations rose and fell.

And still, part of that 1492 Mishnah survived, in particular a 13-page fragment of the “Pirkei Avot,” or “Chapters of the Fathers,” a short, oft-quoted tract that sums up Jewish ethics and moral advice, often in easy-to-remember adages.

At some point, the fragment made its way across the Atlantic to the United States, bound in a bland Victorian-era-looking volume with a nondescript brown cover. It probably arrived at the Library in 1912, lost in a sea of about 10,000 volumes donated by Jacob H. Schiff, the railway magnate and Jewish philanthropist.

Another century passed.

And then this June, that 529-year-old book made a starring appearance under the hand of Eric Lander, a man who helped map the human genome, when he was sworn in by Vice President Kamala Harris as the director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Lander, 64, who is Jewish, used the book as the sacred text upon which he swore his oath to uphold the values of a nation that was not even a notion when the book was printed.

Lander zeroed in on chapter 2, verse 16 of “Pirkei Avot,” which speaks to the value of Tikkun Olam, or the endless task of repairing the world: “It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it.”

That espouses, Lander says, his family’s deepest values.

“We are [all] part of a continuous chain of people who are devoted to repairing the world,” he said. “That’s what keeps the world, you know, livable and good. And we make it better in this way.”

The book had survived half a millennium only to nearly be lost to the ages. Had it not been for Ann Brener, the specialist in the Hebraic Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division, neither Lander nor anyone else would have known the book still existed.

Brener found the book a decade ago, while sorting through about 40,000 rabbinic texts in the Library’s collections, nearly all from the 19th and early 20th centuries. As soon as she touched its paper, she knew this book was far older. It was rag paper – “strong, thick, a bit fibrous to the touch.” This was a gem.

It was a major find. Only about 160 copies of Hebrew “incunabula” – books printed before 1501 – are known to still exist; the Library has 37 of them. In her entry describing the work, Brener listed these among the “crown jewels” of the Hebraic Section.

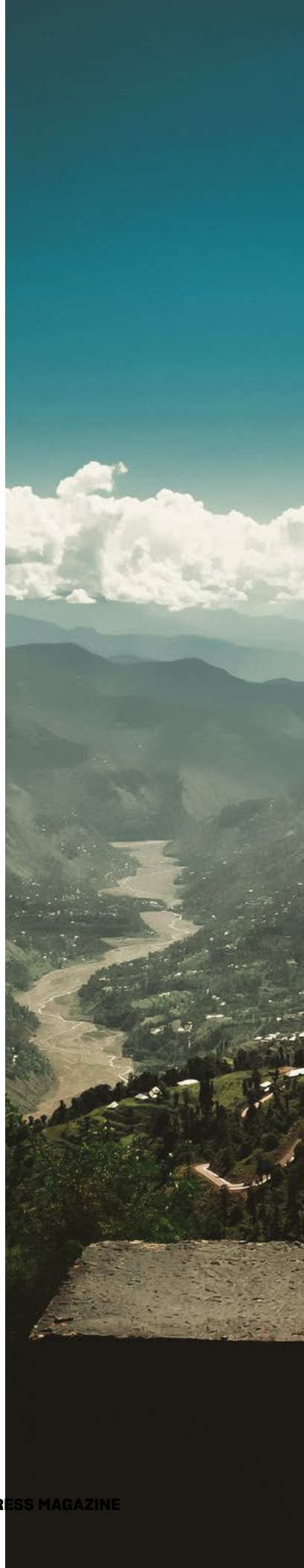
In 2019, the basic record of the book was uploaded to the Library’s online catalog, and a volume that had been lost to world view for five centuries suddenly was available to anyone who typed a few words on a computer.

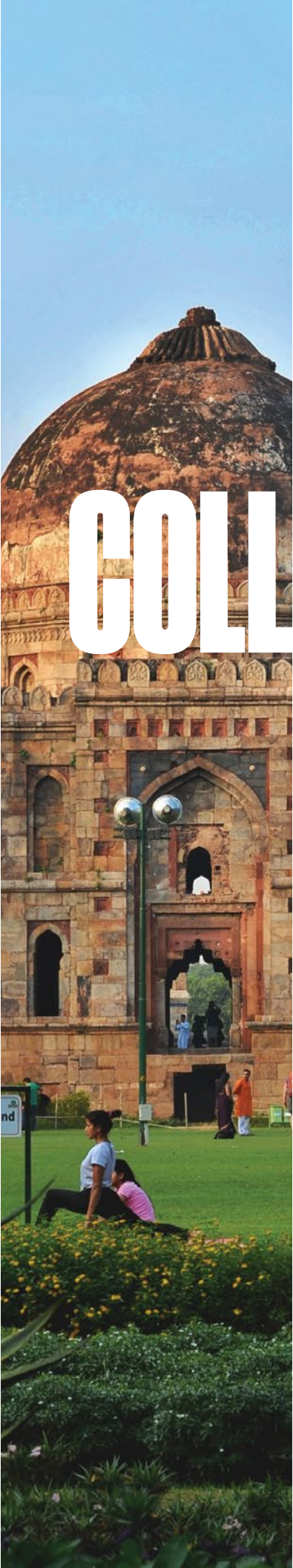
And so it was that a Harvard and MIT biologist and geneticist was able to go online and find a 13-page book from another age that spoke directly to him. Lander was so moved that he invited Brener to the swearing-in ceremony, bringing the “Pirkei Avot” with her. Lander’s wife, Lori, held it for him to place his hand upon while Harris administered the oath. It was really quite a moment.

“Although I chose a Jewish text, because it is my tradition and deeply meaningful to me,” he said, “it is also quite universal.”

■ **Opposite, background:** The 1492 “Pirkei Avot,” a short, oft-quoted tract that sums up Jewish ethics and moral advice, often in easy-to-remember adages. *Shawn Miller*

**Opposite, foreground:** Vice President Kamala Harris swears in Eric Lander as director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Lori Lander holds the “Pirkei Avot” for her husband. *Official White House photo by Cameron Smith*





■ The Library maintains offices in (from left) Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia, Kenya, India and Brazil. Photos by Spencer Davis, Hamzah Tariq, Eko Herwantoro, Michael Muli, Mohd Aram, Raphael Nogueira on Unsplash

# COLLECTING THE GLOBE

**Library offices abroad acquire and catalog hard-to-find material from around the world.**

## **BY MARK HARTSELL**

Collecting at the Library of Congress literally never stops.

The massive collections of the world's largest library are the product, in part, of a staff that acquires material around the world, around the clock.

To facilitate its acquisitions work, the Library operates six field offices abroad, stationed across 11 time zones from South America to Southeast Asia.

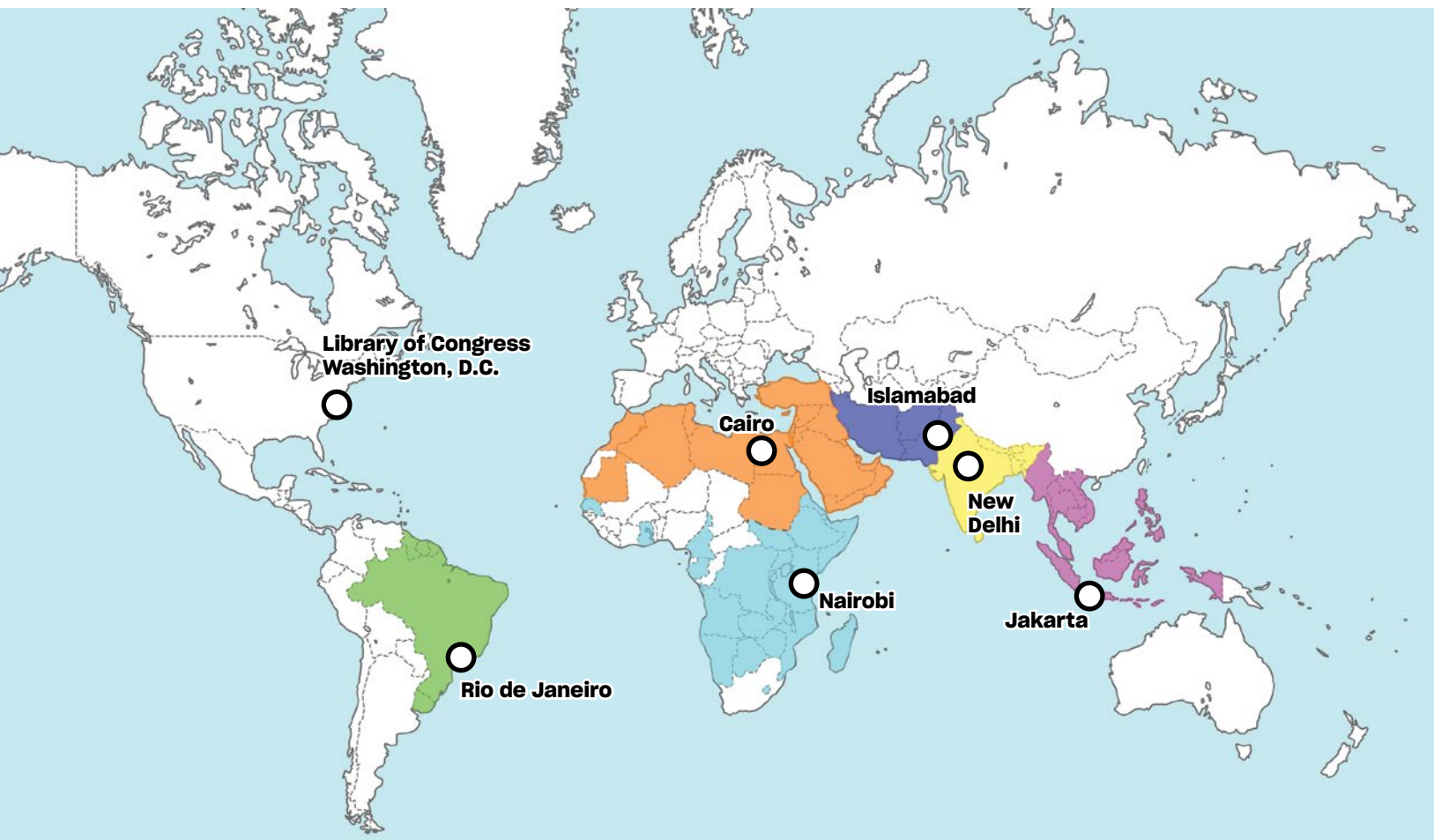
At any given moment somewhere on the globe – perhaps in Rio de Janeiro, maybe in New Delhi – employees are acquiring an item to add to the more than 171 million others already in the Library's collections.

They do so in the face of all manner of challenges: everyday hassles like bureaucratic red tape and unreliable transportation and extraordinary events such as violent social unrest, coups or natural disasters.

The hard-to-find material these offices acquire helps provide Congress, analysts and scholars critical information they need

# LIBRARY OF CONGRESS OVERSEAS OFFICES

## ACQUISITION AND CATALOGING AREAS



The Library maintains six overseas offices that support the acquisition and cataloging materials from countries and jurisdictions shown on the map above. Staff in Washington, D.C., acquire material from areas not highlighted here.

### RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname and Uruguay

### CAIRO

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Gaza, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Northern Cyprus, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, U.A.E., West Bank and Yemen

### NAIROBI

Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Namibia, Réunion, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

### ISLAMABAD

Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan

### NEW DELHI

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka

### JAKARTA

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam





**RIO DE JANEIRO**



**CAIRO**



**NAIROBI**



■ **Top:** Acquisitions librarian Hanne Kristoffersen (left) talks with a representative of Grupo Gay da Bahia in Salvador, Brazil. **Bottom:** Acquisitions librarians Margarida Dias (from left), Kristoffersen and Marli Soares talk at a publisher's office in São Paulo, Brazil.



■ **Top:** Binding clerk Hussein Hassan prepares a shipment for binding via telework during the early phase of the pandemic in Egypt. **Bottom:** Field Director William Kopycki (right) gives a State Department visitor a tour of the Cairo office.



■ **Top:** Bibliographic representatives Abebe Ashenafi (right) and Dejen Tibebe (left) attend a book fair in Ethiopia with acquisitions librarian John Gichuru. **Bottom:** Gichuru examines materials on an acquisitions trip in Djibouti.

to do their work, today and in the decades ahead. Their mission is unique: The Library of Congress is the only library in the world that operates such a network abroad.

“We are at the forefront of preserving today’s scholarly and cultural output for future access in one shape or form for the generations to come,” said William Kopycki, who for 12 years has served as field director for the Cairo office and currently also oversees the Nairobi office. “There is no other institution operating on the scale that the Library does, and that is what makes it the world’s greatest library and a name familiar to all people.”

In the early 1960s, the Library established nearly two dozen field offices around the world – a recognition of the importance that developing regions would play in post-World War II affairs and of the need to better

understand these places.

Six of those offices still exist today, set in cities across South America, Africa and Central and Southeast Asia: Rio, Cairo, Nairobi, Islamabad, New Delhi and Jakarta. The New Delhi office also operates suboffices in Colombo, Dhaka and Kathmandu, and the Jakarta office does the same in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and Yangon.

These offices confront significant challenges in carrying out their mission.

They cover vast geographic areas, deal with an enormous variety of languages, rely on underdeveloped infrastructure, negotiate bureaucratic processes across dozens of countries and even persevere through natural disasters – in 2015, the Kathmandu suboffice survived a magnitude 7.8 earthquake.



**ISLAMABAD**



**NEW DELHI**



**JAKARTA**



■ Top: Serials technician Nosheen Akhtar receives a 10-year length-of-service award. Bottom: Acquisitions librarian Abdus Salam (right) selects titles from a local bookshop in Peshawar, Pakistan.



■ Top: Freight forwarders pack boxes of materials into vans for sea freight bound for Baltimore. At bottom, a courier delivers library materials.



■ Top: Kittipong Soonprasert (right) of the Bangkok suboffice accepts a gift of books from Suree Churatcharoen of the Thai BJC “Big C” Foundation. Bottom: Ade Farida (left), head of acquisitions for the Jakarta Office, meets with representatives of Insist Press Book Stores.

The employees there, at times, face conditions that make just getting to work dangerous.

Massive, violent protests in 2011 and 2013 forced the closure of the Cairo office (located in the U.S. Embassy) for short periods and the evacuation of its director from Egypt. In 2012, protestors targeted the embassy and actually came over its walls; the Library’s staff was sent home just an hour beforehand. Pakistan is so risky for Americans that the field director of the Islamabad office oversees its operations from neighboring India.

Governments also can pose challenges.

Library staffers have been questioned by authorities. In the past year, the Kuala Lumpur suboffice went to great lengths to get books the government had banned. In some places, suppliers may face difficulties if it’s known

that they are acquiring for a “foreign entity”; suppliers sometimes risk their livelihoods for performing work for the Library.

But the offices persevere, no matter the circumstances – even through coups.

“Coups, whether in Myanmar or another country at a different time, do not stop our staff from seeking to find library resources that make our collections the best in the world,” said Carol Mitchell, who serves as the field director of the Jakarta office and previously held the same position at the Islamabad office. “When there is a regime change – whether Suharto or the next regime change – our staff with their incredible intellectual curiosity and contacts developed over decades will help the Library document those changes.”

Despite the challenges, the overseas offices

manage to collect a huge range and volume of material – in fiscal 2020, over 179,000 newspapers, magazines, government documents, academic journals, maps, books and other items that represented about 120 languages and 76 countries and jurisdictions.

As one might imagine, such work gets complicated.

Each office is responsible for a group of countries in its region – the Nairobi office alone covers 30 countries and jurisdictions in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Jakarta office, which covers Southeast Asia, processed material in 43 languages in fiscal 2020: English, Malay, Chinese, Tamil, Tetum, Portuguese, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Burmese, Khmer, Vietnamese and Lao in addition to many subnational or minority languages. The two dozen staffers in Islamabad collect in three countries that speak a combined 19 different languages.

Such an effort requires knowledgeable people at the source, wherever that may be.

Each office is led by an American field director and staffed by Library employees recruited from the local populations – 212 locally engaged staff across the six offices.

They serve as librarians, linguists, accountants, administrators, IT specialists, preservationists and shipping experts and use many of the same tools as their Capitol Hill counterparts – they perform, for example, real-time cataloging work in the Integrated Library System. In fiscal 2020, the offices created or upgraded nearly 31,000 bibliographic records.

Their knowledge and skill is the key to accomplishing work that requires negotiating so many different languages and cultures. They know what material to get and where to get it, how to navigate cultural nuances and often-tricky political terrain.

To gather material, field office staffs establish relationships with commercial vendors, who regularly acquire material on their behalf. They also work with individuals to find hard-to-get items – such as academic journals and government publications – not readily available in the marketplace.

They also make acquisition trips into the field: a literary festival in Singapore, say, or a local market six hours south of Yangon to get books in the Mon language.

For the offices, these trips are among the most rewarding and challenging work they do.

“Such acquisition trips are important so we can see for ourselves what the state of publishing in a given country is, make connections and contacts with government and other persons who can help facilitate our work, meet with our vendor or representative and otherwise get a front-line view of things,” Kopycki said. “The book publishing industry and distribution in most of our countries is still in dire need of development and modernization, and even if there is good distribution of books within one country, it does not mean that that distribution extends outside its borders.”

The offices select material in collaboration with collections divisions on Capitol Hill, choosing works for the importance of the subject matter, the quality of scholarship and the extent to which they add to the knowledge of a topic.

All that collecting requires a lot of something else: shipping, which sounds simple but often is anything but. Shipping out of country may require navigating a gantlet of bureaucracy: export permits, reviews by censors, payment of taxes.

Then there are the sheer logistics of moving large quantities of items from one far-away place to another.

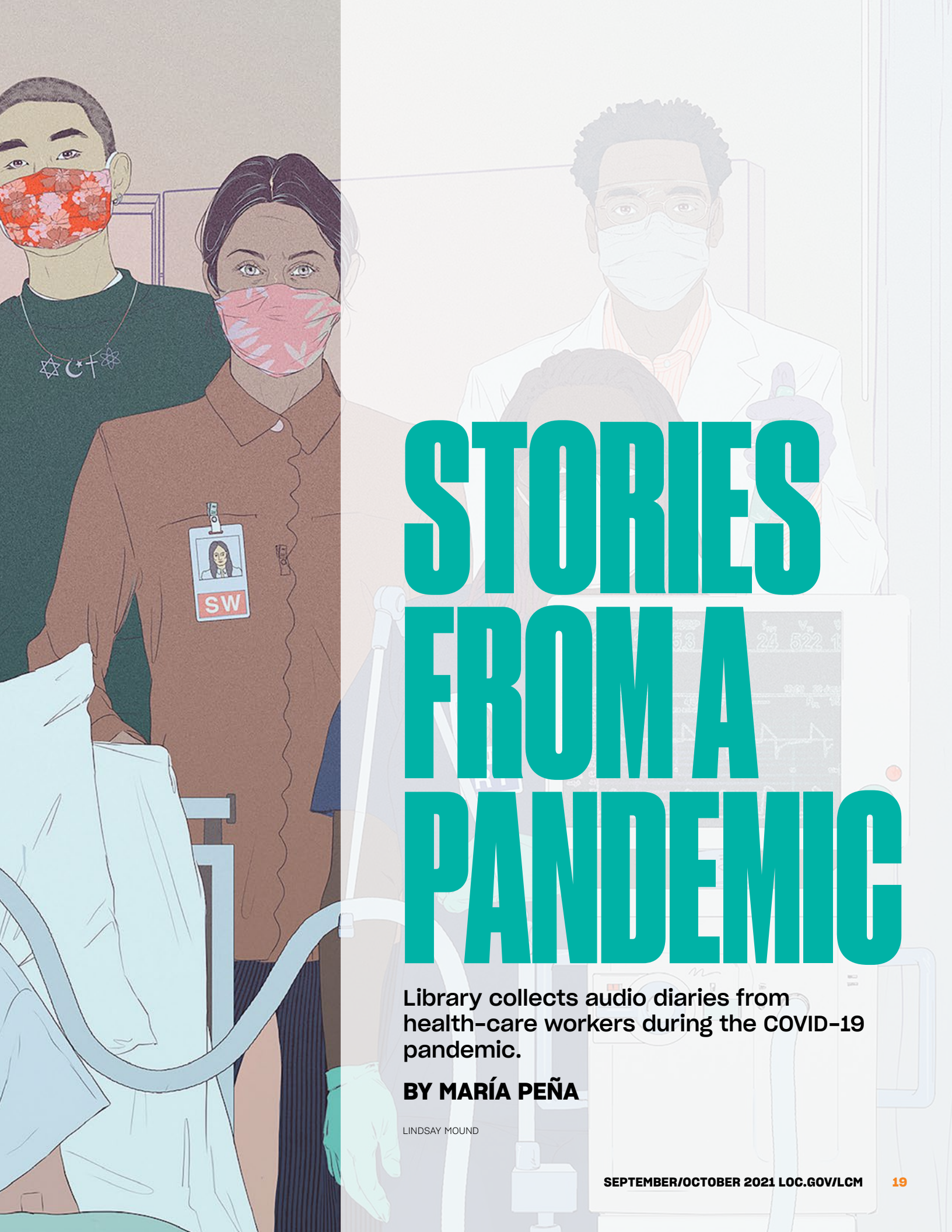
Books printed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, must be moved to the Library’s representative in Riyadh, where they are combined with other material and shipped to Cairo. At the Cairo airport, they must be cleared and moved to the Library’s offices at the U.S. Embassy. From there, staffers process the materials and then, after a sufficient quantity is ready, send them off to Washington.

The work of these offices benefits more than just the patrons of the Library of Congress; employees there, in effect, serve as the eyes and ears for other libraries via the Cooperative Acquisitions Program.

Through the program, the overseas offices provide material to 80 institutions in the U.S. and 26 in other countries. Those resources allow analysts and scholars everywhere to gain new perspective on the world – and will allow future generations of scholars to do the same.

“It is not just the Library’s collections that make what we do unique,” Mitchell said. “It is the concept behind those collections that is equally important. That concept remains. It is important that we as global citizens have the capacity to learn and understand.”





# STORIES FROM A PANDEMIC

Library collects audio diaries from health-care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**BY MARÍA PEÑA**

LINDSAY MOUND

The COVID-19 pandemic claimed the lives of more than 600,000 Americans by mid-June – mass casualties that exposed myriad problems in the national health-care system. But a first-of-its-kind collection of audio diaries newly acquired by the Library also reveals how the pandemic transformed the way health-care workers view their mission as healers.

Stories from a Pandemic, a collection of 700 audio files donated by The Nocturnists, a San Francisco-based independent medical storytelling community, documents the pandemic's impact on over 200 frontline health-care workers across the country who recorded their experiences in real time without the filter of news media.

Doctors, nurses, medical students, hospital chaplains and medical supply delivery drivers recorded themselves during breaks, between shifts or at home as a way to cope with the unfolding pandemic.

Lakshmi Krishnan, a Georgetown University Hospital doctor and medical historian, recounts how she had to change the way she treated patients, forgoing handshakes or hugs to console them. And, while doctors see death up close, this time she feared for her own life.

"I was worried I was not going to see my family again," Krishnan said in one recording. "They're not in this area; it was a very inward journey, I was focused on my survival, too."

Jenny Shadt, a medical student in a Philadelphia hospital, recalls the heartache

and loneliness COVID-19 patients felt while housed in isolation in windowless rooms sealed off with tarps. Due to visitation restrictions, families often said goodbye to loved ones via the screens of smartphones or computer monitors.

The pandemic showed "how dependent we all are on each other and that we need other people more than we thought. ... [When] we take each other away, we go a little crazy," Shadt said in another recording.

The collection, begun in March 2020, allows the Library to play a role in preserving and providing access to compelling first-person perspectives of health-care workers as the pandemic evolved.

"These are poignant stories from health-care workers navigating the emergent pandemic as professionals but also as people – individuals with their own fears, concerns, hopes and skills – who realized that taking time to speak their thoughts into a microphone was worth it," said Elizabeth Peterson, director of the American Folklife Center (AFC), which will house the collection.

The Library holds oral history collections about other tragedies, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and hurricanes Katrina and Rita. But, according to AFC archivist Jesse Hocking, "the self-documentation is what sets this collection apart – it's both intimate and non-intrusive."

Humans make sense of their world through stories and, as such, the collection provides an unfettered, behind-the-scenes view of hospitals and clinics in the early weeks



NAZILA JAMALIFARD



NAZILA JAMALIFARD



of the pandemic, when the initial wave of cases overwhelmed emergency rooms, ICUs and morgues.

Many contributors withheld their full names and other identifiers to provide a candid assessment of their working conditions, personal risks and all-consuming frustrations while tending to the sick and dying.

Arghavan Salles, an Iranian American bariatric surgeon in Stanford, California, volunteered at an intensive care unit in a New York City hospital, where she often felt she was on an emotional “roller coaster ride,” at times fearing that her ill-fitting personal protective equipment would not protect her from the virus.

“The first couple of nights I was here were worse than I thought they would be in terms of how the patients were doing,” she said. “I was very disappointed, I guess, really more upset about a couple of patients struggling to stay alive.”

Calvin Lambert, a first-year maternal-fetal medicine fellow in the Bronx, reflects on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on African Americans and other communities of color. Lambert remembers a pregnant African American patient who became “irate, scared and tearful” as she refused to get nose-swabbed for the coronavirus for fear of catching it.

“It’s up to us to be understanding, to understand where they’re coming from and to try to demystify and to rebuild that trust through education and empowerment,” Lambert said.

Shadt recalls one woman sobbing with relief as she tested negative for COVID and was transferred from a windowless room to one with windows. In another part of the hospital, Shadt said, nurses would play snippets of the “Rocky” theme to announce that day’s discharges.

The collection takes listeners on a turbulent journey paved with stories of despair, anger, fear, introspection and, finally, hope for a brighter future as vaccination campaigns got underway.

Suddenly, getting jabbed with a needle brought on tears of joy in what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called the country’s worst public health crisis in a century – more Americans have died after contracting COVID-19 than died in both world wars and the Vietnam War combined.

Krishnan predicts that, eventually, life will go back to something that resembles pre-COVID, although she cautions, “if we don’t take heed, we could be in this situation again sooner rather than later.”

Silverman founded The Nocturnists in 2016 to support the well-being of medical professionals through the healing power of storytelling. The Nocturnist’s gift includes pandemic-related material from its “Black Voices in Healthcare” series. The group also plans to donate recordings collected for a follow-up podcast series, “Stories from a Pandemic: Part 2”, launched in June.

## Lanisa Kitchiner directs the African and Middle Eastern Division.

### Describe your work at the library.

Serving as chief of the African and Middle Eastern Division (AMED) at the Library is an honor and a privilege. The division holds, collects, shares, exhibits, researches and provides expert reference services for over 1 million items covering 77 countries that span the whole of Africa and the Middle East.

The collections encompass material culture from extraordinarily dynamic parts of the world – regions in which humankind, written language, Abrahamic religion and ancient and modern civilization originated and evolved. By nature of its work and collections, AMED captures and reflects the beauty, richness, diversity and, perhaps above all, the interconnectedness of human culture.

As AMED chief, I am responsible for growing this remarkable repository of human knowledge and maximizing its reach, relevance and impact in multiple diverse communities.

### How did you prepare for your position?

I am a lifelong learner, a lover of literature and a consummate traveler. I like to blame it on Maurice Sendak's children's book "Where the Wild Things Are," which indelibly influenced my imagination when I first read it at age 5. The book tells the remarkable story of a little boy who dreams of traveling to a faraway place, encountering monstrous creatures and winning their favor by performing a special magic trick that forces the creatures to suspend fear of the unknown long enough to see the boy as friend instead of foe. I did not have the words to articulate it as a child, but it was that sense of creating new connections, of overcoming fear, of embracing the unknown and of having meaningful impact that I fell in love with when I first read the book. These aspirations continue to influence my engagement in the field.

Prior to joining the Library, I served as director of education and scholarly initiatives at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art, as associate director of international affairs at Howard University and as interim Afghanistan action officer at the Department of State. I also



SHAWN MILLER

held faculty positions at Howard University and American University. Literature was the disciplinary focus of my undergraduate and doctoral programs.

### What have been your most memorable experiences at the Library?

I on-boarded in a time of immense uncertainty. The global pandemic radically changed the division's normal operating procedures such that my first 10 months were largely achieved off-site and at significant remove from my team. The circumstances required us to be even more innovative in our approaches to providing acquisition, collection management and reference services.

Despite negotiating urgent data calls, technology glitches, unanticipated staff shortages and limited access to the collections, we were able, for example, to support library staff at the Supreme Court, digitize collection items, facilitate public discourse on key issues relevant to Africa and the Middle East, acquire new materials and provide expert reference services to researchers all over the world.

Transitioning to a new leadership role during a time of national crisis presents numerous challenges and opportunities. However, witnessing the commitment, flexibility and ingenuity of the staff has been exceptionally rewarding and inspiring. I am excited about the future, and I feel proud and fortunate to be part of such an amazing team.

## Williams Named Recipient Of American Fiction Prize

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden announced that the 2021 Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction will be awarded to Joy Williams, who is receiving the prize for a lifetime of outstanding work.

One of the Library's most prestigious awards, the annual Prize for American Fiction honors an American literary writer whose body of work is distinguished not only for its mastery of the art but also for its originality of thought and imagination. The award seeks to commend strong, unique, enduring voices that – throughout long, consistently accomplished careers – have told us something essential about the American experience.

Williams is the acclaimed author of four short story collections, two works of nonfiction and five novels, including the upcoming "Harrow." The prize ceremony will take place online during the 2021 National Book Festival, Sept. 17–26.

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-035](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-035)**

## Early Congressional Records Available on Mobile Devices

The Library announced that U.S. congressional records dating to the days of printing presses and the telegraph are now easily accessible on mobile devices.

With the latest update of Congress.gov – the official website for U.S. federal legislative information – the Library has transitioned over 33,000 bills and resolutions crafted by Congress between 1799 and 1873 to a modern, user-friendly web format.

The Library's Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation collection has been a premier source of historical legal documents since it was first published online in 1998, serving as an access point to the lawmaking of early America. The collection provides insight into events during the nation's most formative years, from the Louisiana Purchase to the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Congress.gov provides access to accurate, timely and complete legislative information for members of Congress, legislative agencies and the public.

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-037](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-037)**

## New AFC Grants Document U.S. Communities of Color

The Library is offering a new series of grants to individuals and organizations working to document cultures and traditions of Black, Indigenous and communities of color traditionally underrepresented in the United States.

The Community Collections grants from the Library's American Folklife Center will enable many to document their cultural life and experiences from their own perspectives. In total, up to 10 grant opportunities are being made available in fall 2021 for up to \$60,000 each.

The funding is part of a new initiative, called Of the People: Widening the Path, to connect more deeply with diverse, often underrepresented communities. This will be the first set of Community Collections grants totaling \$1.74 million over four years. The initiative is supported by a \$15 million investment from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-039](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-039)**

## New Project Allows Students To Interact with Collections

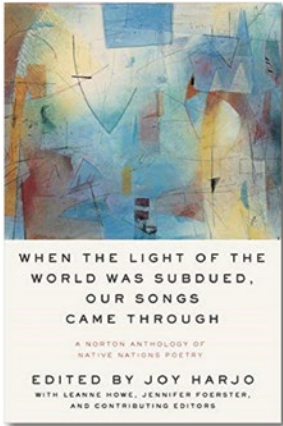
Students, educators and learners of all ages are invited to interact with select items in the Library's collections with the launch of Speculative Annotation, the latest experiment from LC Labs.

Created by artist and 2021 Innovator in Residence Courtney McClellan, Speculative Annotation is an open-source dynamic web application and public art project. The app presents a unique mini collection of free-to-use items from the Library for students, teachers and learners to annotate through captions, drawings and other types of mark-making. As a special feature for Speculative Annotation users, the app includes a collection of informative, engaging annotations from Library experts and resources on the Library's website.

Designed with students and educators in mind, the application is available to anyone with a web browser at [annotation.labs.gov](https://annotation.labs.gov).

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-040](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-040)**

# SHOP



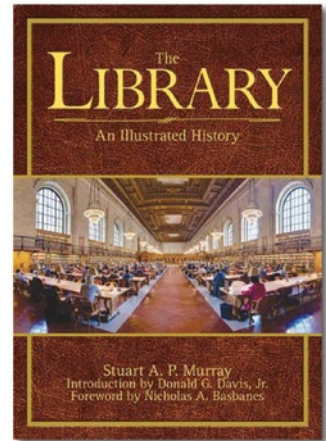
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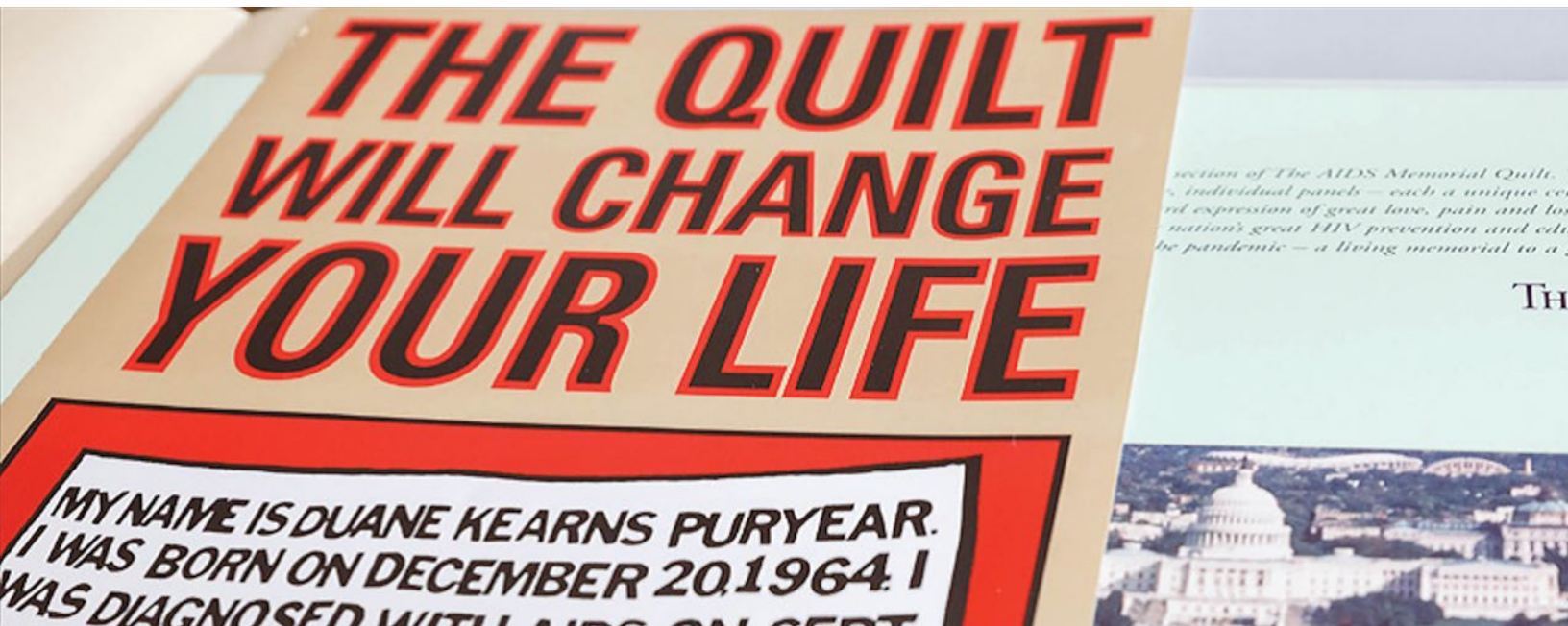
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## FOR THE PEOPLE

**Ford Foundation fund helps the Library chronicle important social movements.**

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln appointed the sixth Librarian of Congress, Ainsworth Rand Spofford. Spofford, widely credited with the launch of the modern Library era, quickly became a trailblazer in building partnerships to advance the Library's collections and the nation's access to them. Spofford notably worked with Susan B. Anthony to donate her books and materials to the Library, establishing the centerpiece for the Library's suffrage movement collections and exhibition.

From Lincoln's documents on the rights of the enslaved to the AIDS Memorial Quilt archival collections, the Library continues this charge of collecting and sharing information about social movements that shape our nation.

Through generous seed funding from the Ford Foundation and the leadership of its president, Darren Walker, the For the People Fund was established in May to strengthen the Library's ability to tell the stories of these critical moments in our nation's history.

The Library is guided by a primary goal to expand access, ensuring its collections, experts and services are available when, where and how users most need them. This mission requires the Library to not only serve as a resource to all Americans, but it also challenges the institution to continually advance its collections and services in order to reflect the diversity of those it serves.

The existence of the For the People: Fund for Powering Knowledge allows the Librarian of Congress to say yes to new opportunities for documenting and telling the critical stories around social movements.

With this nimbleness, the Library can quickly respond to acquisition opportunities, while simultaneously serving as a cultural knowledge partner for current efforts around existing social movements. The Library will research social movements, collect the personal stories of those involved and promote economic mobility and social justice through exhibits, staff development and events. Education on these movements helps to spark new ideas, allows groups to learn from the work of those before them and can create synergy between movements.

Early projects of this fund likely will include assessment and digitization of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund collection, as well as the digitization of the AIDS Memorial Quilt ephemera.

■ The new fund will help accomplish the digitization of ephemera from the AIDS Memorial Quilt collection, among other important projects. *Shawn Miller*

# LAST WORD

## DANIELLE ALLEN

In June 2020, four months into the COVID pandemic, having been throughout that time all but locked into a corner of my bedroom on a folding chair and TV-tray desk working almost without cease to accelerate public investment in testing and contact tracing, I received the most extraordinary news: I had won the Library of Congress Kluge Prize. I even got a call from Librarian Carla Hayden! I had to look up and take a breath. And say thank you. This is the rare honor that it never even occurs to one to imagine receiving – a true bolt from the blue and so an unusually pure kind of joy.

Then came the other extraordinary news. This wasn't just a prize. It was an opportunity to Kluge. But what does it mean to Kluge? In pre-pandemic times, the winner would "give an address ... remain in residence at the Library of Congress for a short time thereafter... and have some informal interaction with members of the United States Congress." But in pandemic times? The old rules were out; it was time for something new. Something virtual, clearly. And something public. Something to counteract the ailments of our time.

What ails us now? Above all, our inability to invoke any idea of a common good and expect to gain purchase on the moral imaginations of most people. We are riven. At odds. Perpetually infuriated with one another. Then COVID hit. A crisis of wartime proportions in its potential for death and destruction, the pandemic might have brought us together in this great country. Instead, as of June 2020, we were pulling farther apart.

To Kluge meant to bring into the public sphere the question of our times: Can we find common purpose? More accurately, what do we need to change about our world so that we can find paths toward a common purpose connecting all of us in this multitudinous, cacophonous, variegated society. A common purpose is something that many would say we have never yet had. To find the paths toward it is to reach beyond anything we have done before. It is a challenge of surpassing magnitude.

In a year of webinars, we asked what we could do about our civil society. Could we transform social media into "civic media" to support productive civic engagement?



LAURA ROSE

We asked about our political institutions. Are there paths of reform to embrace? We asked how to cultivate a culture of shared histories – where we know how to tell our many stories and histories in relation to one another. The best part of Kluge-ing in this pandemic year was an accompanying workshop series for K-12 educators. There for the first time I heard answers on the last question about shared history.

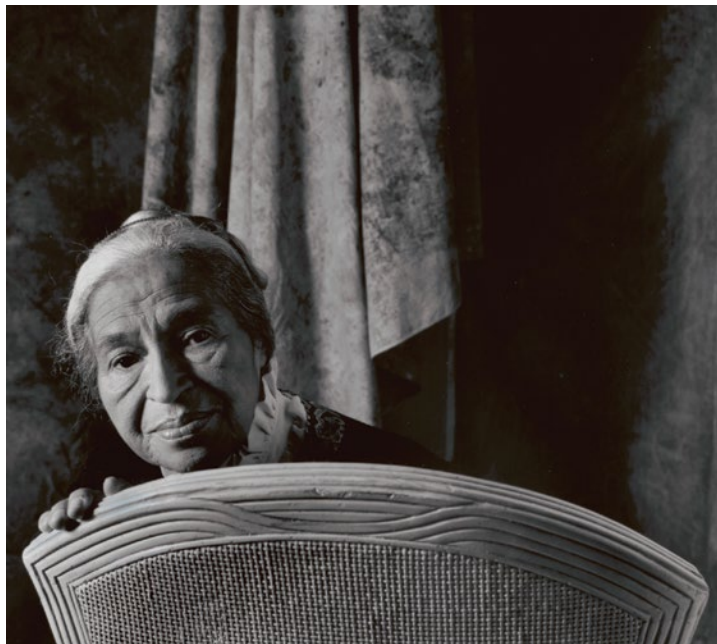
Teachers routinely ask students to share stories that are meaningful to them from their personal histories and from our shared history. Then groups of students find ways of presenting those stories together. When they do, they start a new shared narrative. It's like forging a charm bracelet where each student is contributing a charm to a chain that links the fates of all. Or you can think of it as a woven tapestry where many varying threads lock together in ever new patterns. My hunch is that the future of our common purpose resides in this storytelling work by rising generations. We should nourish it.

*–Danielle Allen is the recipient of the Library's John W. Kluge Prize for Achievement in the Study of Humanity and the James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University.*



■ Visitors explore the Jefferson Building in July, when the Library's facilities reopened to visitors. Shawn Miller

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