

# MASON NOW

POWER THE POSSIBLE



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# UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Mason Now: Power the Possible. The Campaign for George Mason University.





# WHERE CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION HAPPEN.

It's where a first-generation college student discovers worlds she only imagined existed. It's where the graduate student finds the support and resources he needs to forge groundbreaking new scholarship. It's where the community gathers to exchange ideas, challenge preconceptions, and learn from one of the most diverse campus populations in the country—all together. It is the heartbeat of George Mason University.

**That's the University Libraries.**

## Why now?

The role that university libraries play in the intellectual life of their communities, both on and off campus, has changed dramatically. We need the ability to change with it. Libraries will always be a place for individual study, but they are also ever-evolving spaces and resources that enable teamwork, stimulate discussion, and propel the exchange of ideas that lead to breakthrough discoveries.





## FROM THE DEAN

It's an exciting time to work in academic libraries. The main reason we are here—to support the human need to learn and grow from information created by others—hasn't changed. But almost everything else about our work has.

Technology is continually transforming how we gather and manage information, elevating how we share the ideas that drive research and the data that informs decisions on a global scale. Digital resources provide access to extensive collections and reduce costs for students, and AI-powered research tools open up new avenues of discovery for scholars. Whatever the future holds, we'll be there at the forefront.

The exceptional George Mason University Libraries staff come here to educate, curate, and innovate. I couldn't be prouder of their dedication to providing a robust foundation for intellectual activity, research, and creative expression at our university.

We are committed to creating meaningful educational experiences that transform students' lives and—through their ideas, passion, and hard work—transform the world. The libraries are a place for quiet study and focus. They are a place for dynamic collaboration and deep conversations, where curiosity becomes growth. They are a place where technology builds a bridge to new approaches and better understandings.

**We would love for you to partner with us to achieve our vision  
—to serve as the very heart of the university.**

**Anne Osterman**  
*Dean, University Libraries*

## WE POWER

- | Learning
- | Distinctive Collections
- | Legacies
- | Ideas
- | The Future





# WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED TO **SUCCEED** IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD?

We focus on learning at University Libraries now.

Learning at George Mason is an active team sport, constantly enriched by our diversity of experiences and perspectives. We strive to graduate students who have mastered learning—a passion that will last a lifetime.





## ENGAGING CRITICALLY

Librarians and library staff throughout the **Learning, Research, and Engagement Division** focus on our diverse community's information literacy and research needs. This includes creating dynamic learning experiences that promote critical thinking and encourage students to ask questions and identify limitations in the information they encounter.

Here are some examples of the division's work.

- **The Teaching and Learning Team** engages students from their first moments on campus, meeting with hundreds of new Patriots, especially transfer and international students, during orientation.
- **SmartStart** engages first-year, returning, and transfer students who may lack previous library orientation experience. The outreach, conducted across the libraries at all three campuses, reduces anxiety by introducing students to valuable resources, services, and library personnel.
- **Librarian teams in Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science & Technology** offer discipline-specific library instruction, research support, and programming for the George Mason academic community.

Through course-based instruction, on-demand workshops, and campus and community outreach, the Learning, Research, and Engagement Division empowers students to succeed.

"SmartStart was fantastic! I learned about poster printing, the function of Special Collections as an archive, and workshops! Please, more events like this one!"

**Student participant in SmartStart**



## SUPPORTING DISCOVERY

We are thrilled to support students in creating impactful research, and equally thrilled to be able to honor this research. George Mason's **Student Research Endowment for the Libraries** supplies funding for:

- **The Undergraduate Student Research Prize**—a financial award for a paper selected through a competitive process.
- **The Graduate Student Research Fellowship**—funding that offsets research costs related to writing a dissertation or thesis.

Growing the endowment will allow us to provide additional awards to acknowledge, honor, and support exceptional research.

"The extensive research resources available at the University Libraries have been instrumental in shaping my paper, *Government Public Service Announcements: Honduras and Mexico Instagram Campaigns on Direct & Indirect Violence Against Women*. With aspirations to be in the diplomacy field working to address human rights violations, this scholarship has provided me with the opportunity to further explore and specialize in this area of study."

**Ella Jackson**

*2024 University Libraries Undergraduate Student Research Prize Recipient  
BA Global Affairs/Conflict Analysis and Resolution '24*







# DEVELOPING SKILLS

The **University Libraries Student Assistant Program** offers George Mason undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to work directly with library staff on a variety of projects across the library system. Students develop excellent research, teaching, and customer relations skills as they gain in-depth experience using current academic research resources and information technologies.

Student assistant duties include:

- **Developing** and maintaining library research guides
- **Providing** basic library orientations and introductory library instruction
- **Supporting** librarians on research projects
- **Assisting** in technology-based projects

These positions include compensation, a much-needed benefit for the students that George Mason serves.

“My ideal job would be to work for the National Archives or the Library of Congress with their film collections, and I hope my position at the George Mason University Libraries will help me to achieve that goal.”

**Nathan Brager**  
*Undergraduate Student Assistant; Film and Media Studies Major*

“[M]y role as a graduate assistant in the Arts and Humanities team at Fenwick Library... deepened my understanding of cultural diversity through media and theater, significantly shaping my approach to my upcoming Cultural Studies PhD program and its focus on globalization and culture.”

**Soo Paek**  
*PhD Candidate, Cultural Studies; Graduate Professional Assistant in Arts and Humanities*



## ENHANCING OPPORTUNITY

The **Student Assistant Endowed Scholarship** provides scholarship support for students who work for the University Libraries. Growing the endowment that supports this initiative would allow us to provide increased financial assistance to the exceptional student assistants who do so much to make George Mason University Libraries a welcoming research and study home for our students and faculty.

"Thank you once again for your generosity.  
I can now pursue one more year at the  
libraries with renewed energy and focus."

**Karthik Ramanujam**

*Student Assistant Program Scholarship Recipient*







# HOW CAN WE MAKE **INDISPENSABLE** SOURCES ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS—NOW AND IN THE FUTURE?

We focus on distinctive collections at University Libraries now.

To learn from the past, we must be able to access it. The expertise of our archivists not only brings history to life but also, through description and digitization, they make those stories and the lessons they provide available to an ever-widening audience.



## MAINTAINING TREASURES

The Appalachian Trail is a national treasure. The longest hiking-only footpath in the world, it measures roughly 2,190 miles in length and travels through 14 states along the crests and valleys of the Appalachian Mountain Range, from Maine to Georgia. More than three million people hike the trail every year.

The century-old history of this national treasure became the largest collection in the **University Libraries Special Collections Research Center (SCRC)** when the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives were relocated to George Mason in 2022. Under the SCRC's expert guidance, the collection will be professionally cataloged, preserved, and made widely available to the public.

The historical value of this collection is exceptional, as is the archival challenge it presents. It is a large collection consisting of more than 850 linear feet of unprocessed materials. University Libraries will need additional archivists and storage resources to employ state-of-the-art curatorial and archival practices for the processing, description, cataloging, selective digitization, and overall preservation of the collection.

Our goal is ambitious, but for good reason: we strongly believe that this collection is an outstanding component of our nation's cultural history. It chronicles the vision that made the Appalachian Trail a reality, a story that will serve as a catalyst and guide for future generations. We are up for the challenge.



*Harper's Ferry, WV, home to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy*

**1.5K+**

books about or include the Appalachian Trail, along with thousands of other documentary or creative works.

"To find something like this all these years later is truly special and amazing. It has brought tears to my eyes and that's not something I experience often. Thank you, thank you, thank you! I appreciate your work on this more than you know."

**Evan Pettrey**

*Appalachian Trail Conservancy Researcher*





*The Shakespeare Series is a collection of 24 miniature altered books created from a vintage book of plays of William Shakespeare.*

## INSPIRING CREATIVITY

Poetry, science, history, math. Beauty, biography, maps, love. Artists express these ideas through all manner of mediums. **The Special Collections Research Center (SCRC)** provides creators, historians, students, and performers from around the globe access to the past to inform their projects, research, and performances. Our archivists' skills make collections come alive.

- The University Libraries are poised to give scholars access to an extensive collection of **Gilbert and Sullivan papers**, theatrical documentation, and related objects, representing the duo's unique talents and reflecting the interests and sensibilities of their Victorian audiences.
- The **Mason Artists' Book Collection** houses and preserves artworks where the works depict new or dynamic approaches to the book form, incorporating a variety of printmaking, typography, and binding approaches. These artists' books are a vital resource for students and researchers seeking knowledge and inspiration for their own creations or the study of artistic expression and book arts. Summer camps and classes regularly visit the collection to touch, examine, question, and explore these repositories of creativity and art.

Through these and the many other unique resources held by the libraries, George Mason has become a destination for researchers from Virginia and around the world.



# HOW DO WE TELL AN AUTHENTIC, **INCLUSIVE** STORY OF OUR PAST?

We focus on our shared legacies at University Libraries now.

Libraries are a window into our past. With that comes a responsibility to ensure that what is reflected in that window is an accurate, authentic image—one that informs us of where we've been, how we've arrived at where we are now, and what we can learn to move into our shared future.





## DEEPENING NARRATIVES

The **Center for Mason Legacies (CML)** is an interdisciplinary, collaborative research center established by the University Libraries and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Its mission is to preserve and examine the legacy of George Mason, his ancestors and heirs, and the people he enslaved. CML engages student researchers in the study of past and present influences of our university's namesake in a process that combines scholarly research, public history, teaching innovation, and community outreach.

In 2021, CML launched **Black Lives Next Door**, an interdisciplinary project that re-examines the early years of George Mason College and its successor institution, George Mason University. This project advanced multiple years of faculty-student research and creative work, resulting in the **Enslaved People of George Mason Memorial**, located on five acres in the center of the main Fairfax Campus. Black Lives Next Door has fostered impactful community partnerships, among them an oral history project with local churchgoers about Black communities in Northern Virginia during the 1950s and 1960s.

The project has expanded from Fairfax County to Loudoun, Arlington, and Prince William counties, with the goal of connecting community history initiatives with ongoing university research. In 2023, Fairfax County sponsored CML graduate student research on the complex racial histories of Northern Virginia.

The work of the Center for Mason Legacies supports a core mission of the University Libraries: an honest exploration of the past to understand the present and enhance the future.



"Working with the Center for Mason Legacies was a significant part of my intellectual development. It not only helped my ability to research local court archives but also convinced me of the importance of using local narratives to tell national and global stories of historical development and change."

**Anthony Guidone**

*CML Graduate Research Assistant, PhD History '23*





# HOW WILL KNOWLEDGE BE **SHARED** AMONG FUTURE GENERATIONS OF RESEARCHERS?

We focus on ideas at University Libraries now.

Our libraries are living, learning laboratories where new ideas are created and shared—ideas that address the most pressing issues of our times.



# HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Recent advances in artificial intelligence have caused an upheaval in considering how information is created and what we can gain from previously unseen patterns in knowledge. To support a deeper understanding of these technologies, University Libraries formed the **Artificial Intelligence Tools Task Force** to create a plan for implementing education, training, and patron services regarding AI tools.

The libraries serve as the center of campus discussion about shared topics of scholarly interest and the most pressing intellectual and ethical matters of our time. We are at the heart of scholarly discourse and what it means to use current and future resources in a way that furthers human well-being and learning.

“Libraries must not only embrace AI, it is crucial for us to become leaders in and ambassadors for it. Doing so will enhance library services, expand our reach, and position us as future innovation hubs.”

**Trevor Watkins**

*Teaching and Outreach Librarian*







## EXPANDING ACCESS

George Mason's commitment to access and inclusion is boldly stated in the first core belief of the university's strategic plan: "We believe in inclusivity over exclusivity." So, it's no surprise that University Libraries is a leader in implementing **Open Access**, which allows students, faculty, researchers, and the community to access research freely—and free of charge—from anywhere in the world.

Giving our faculty and students no-cost publishing through Open Access ensures our vital work is right where it belongs—leading the world and available to all. The University Libraries have funded hundreds of George Mason University-authored Open Access articles, equating to hundreds of thousands of dollars in publishing support. The dissemination of this scholarly research is essential to a thriving research institution, especially one that is committed to access and equity.



## VISUALIZING DATA

Our **Data and Digital Scholarship Services (DDSS)** provide support in the dynamic areas of data analysis, management, and visualization. This collaborative, interdisciplinary area offers space, infrastructure, and expertise to students and faculty who are moving digital projects from idea to publication.

One example of DDSS's impactful collaborations is its partnership with the **Mason Living Labs Initiative**, which supports students, faculty, and staff to gather data and propose novel solutions to a range of sustainability challenges associated with George Mason's nearly 1,000 acres of land, waterways, forests, and buildings. As the scholarly communications ecosystem changes and there is an increased emphasis on data management and visualization, this is one of the most significant areas of opportunity for the libraries to expand resources and services to keep pace with modern scholarship.





# WHAT DOES THE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE AT THE STATE'S **LARGEST** PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY?

**We focus on the future at University Libraries now.**

A library was there from the very beginning, when George Mason was one college. We fostered the creation and support of 10 colleges and schools and now boast three libraries—Fenwick, Mason Square, and Mercer—serving three campuses and three research centers. As the state's largest and most diverse public R1 university—the highest research classification—continues to grow and evolve, so do we.



## MEETING NEEDS

As the way we access and share knowledge changes, our libraries' physical spaces must also change. **Fenwick Library**, George Mason's Fairfax Campus library, was renovated and expanded in 2016 to continue meeting the needs of new and future generations of learners and scholars. That means providing spaces for quiet, individual study and robust, interactive group work. It means recognizing and supporting the needs of a richly diverse population, including first-generation students, working adults, and students with children. It means an ongoing commitment to keep pace with emerging technologies.

Highlights of the Fenwick Library renovation include:

- The Fenwick Gallery, an exhibition space dedicated to presenting works by students, faculty, staff, and emerging and established artists that highlight aspects of the libraries' collections.
- Designated spaces for individual study and group work, currently booked 99 percent of the time. These spaces are especially important for undergraduate commuter students, Fenwick's largest in-person student population.
- A Mamava lactation pod, made possible by donor generosity, which provides nursing mothers a secure, clean space to feed their children.

**Mason Square and Mercer Libraries** serve patrons as varied and dynamic as the region itself. Both libraries have recently undergone refreshes to better serve students. With large construction projects on both campuses likely to increase library usage, teams are already planning how to engage with and welcome future growth.

With donor support, we will continue to adapt our spaces to keep pace with an ever-evolving learning environment.







## ENVISIONING WHAT'S NEXT

This is our dream: A **Visual and Performing Arts Library**, designed to accommodate dynamic research and events for students, faculty, librarians, and professionals. A venue to showcase and creatively collaborate around the university's extensive visual and performing arts resources.

Here's some of what that dream looks like:

- Special-format resources, including music, media, scripts, scores, zines, artist books, and folios, centralized and artfully displayed to promote ease of discovery and inspire interdisciplinary utilization.
- Studio, rehearsal, and listening/viewing rooms where students can interact with on-site resources without the physical and sound constraints of a traditional library setting—where “Belting Voices Welcomed” replaces “Quiet Please.”
- Flexible event space to bring our collection of resources to life via performance showcases, workshops, lectures, film screenings, galleries, and exhibitions.

With commitment and support, this dream can become a reality.



# HOW CAN WE POWER WHAT'S POSSIBLE FOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES?

**With your support.**

Just as George Mason is changing what it means to be a research university, we can change what it means to be a university library. That means expanding access to scholarly resources, ensuring academic freedom, addressing the challenges and possibilities of artificial intelligence, and much more. We are ready to make it happen.

**If you are ready too, we invite you to join us.**

