Yesterday VLA President John Moorman called to invite me to participate in a VLA Annual Conference session this fall titled “A Day in the Life of a Library Director.” This attention from a distinguished colleague was most welcome, and, since I was in the process of moving out of an office I have occupied for twenty-five years, it is only natural that I stopped a while to think of some of the unusual things I have done at Ferrum over the decades.

At a small college library, directors have to fill many roles and respond to a wide variety of circumstances. I’ve had to arrange and supervise the removal of every square inch of carpet in the building in one day after a burst pipe flooded the building in 1990. I’ve had to drive all over the state and retrieve gift books from basements, attics, and storage lockers. I’ve had to serve as the judge for coon mule jumping contests, help football coaches break up fights, and take graduation speakers to the airport. I’ve even had the chance to help a family of ducklings make their way from a nest in the center of campus to the college pond. But I’ve never had a day quite like November 4, 1985, the date of the only parking ticket I ever got at Ferrum College.

Some readers will recognize the date as that of the worst flood in the Roanoke valley in the twentieth century. It was a long day for me: for hours I didn’t know where my wife and children were or if they were safe; it took a couple of hours to find a road open to get home when I finally left the library; we lost fences, trees, and about half of the soil in our vegetable garden. But I won’t dwell on these parts of the experience.

It all started when the late Wes Nelson, a fellow librarian and tireless volunteer for the fire and rescue squads, burst into my office at midmorning. He had to get to the rescue squad building, and Route 40 was flooded by three feet of rushing water between there and the library. Wes remembered that I had a pick-up outfitted for off-road driving, and asked if I thought I could get him to where the squad’s crash truck was garaged. An accident victim was trapped across a flooded creek on the road down near Prillaman Switch.

We dashed to the parking lot and got going straight away, but slowed down when we encountered a woman student stranded in a small car in the middle of the stream that had now almost completely blocked the highway. I maneuvered the truck as close as possible to her car, and she was able to climb into the bed in spite of the downpour. We rushed on to the squad building, dropped off Wes, and got the soaked student into the cab of the truck.

I was able to successfully ford the stream again, and we were soon outside the library. With the parking lot full and water from the pond almost up to the road, I simply drove the truck up on the sidewalk, and rushed the student into the dry building where she could warm up and call a tow truck. Mission, as someone said, accomplished.

When I was finally able to head for home that evening, I noticed a soggy paper under one of my wipers. I recognized it as a parking ticket, but it was too wet to read in bad light. I set it aside to dry, intending to take care of it the next day.

The rain had mercifully stopped by the next morning, though it was no easy thing finding a road open between our farm and the college. I opened the building as usual, made sure Wes had returned from his rescue work safely, and retreated to my office to make a call. Surely the ticket could be written off. The administrator who headed up parking and public safety at that time had been my assistant on a variety of campus projects, and I had taken a leading role in getting him promoted.

Perhaps when he had been a student, a librarian had required him to pay an unfair fine. I’ll never know. I do know that he insisted I pay the fee because, after all, I had parked on the sidewalk. The facts that I parked there during the worst natural disaster to hit our

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by Cy Dillon
area in my lifetime and that I had just returned from a daring white-water rescue were insufficient to warrant mercy in the case. I began to feel myself tremble with anger, and I drew in a deep breath ready to launch into a self-righteous tirade. Something, however, made me keep cool. I slowly realized that the cost was too small to warrant much emotion, just or not.

I hung up the telephone, stapled a five-dollar bill to the ticket, and dropped it in the campus mailbox. After all, five bucks is quite a deal for a story worth telling for the next twenty-five years.

This issue of Virginia Libraries is also a good deal, with articles on running a successful youth reading program in a public library, responding to staff discord in a library setting, and providing reference services for college students from a home office by using a variety of media. There are also book reviews and an inspiring president’s column. Keep reading, but don’t park on the sidewalk.

1. Virginia Libraries seeks to publish articles and reviews of interest to the library community in Virginia. Articles reporting research, library programs and events, and opinion pieces are all considered for publication. Queries are encouraged. Brief announcements and press releases should be directed to the VLA Newsletter.

2. Please submit manuscripts via email as attachments in Microsoft Word, rich text, or plain text format. Articles should be double-spaced with any bibliographic notes occurring at the end of the article. Please avoid using the automatic note creation function provided by some word processing programs.

3. Articles in Virginia Libraries conform to the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style and Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Accepted articles are subject to editing for style and clarity. Authors will be consulted on points of fact.

4. All articles submitted for consideration are reviewed by the editors and may be refereed by the editorial board. Articles that are not selected for publication will be returned within three months.

5. VLA holds the copyright on all articles published in Virginia Libraries. Contributors of articles receive one copy of the issue in which their work appears.

6. Illustrations are encouraged and should be submitted whenever appropriate to accompany a manuscript. Hard copy illustrations will be returned if requested in advance. Digital images should have a resolution of at least 300 dpi. Authors are responsible for securing legal permission to publish photographs and other illustrations.

7. Each contributor should provide a brief sketch of professional accomplishments of no more than fifty words that includes current title, affiliation, and email address. Unless specified otherwise, this information will be shared with readers of Virginia Libraries. Physical addresses should also be provided for the mailing of contributor’s copy.

8. Articles should generally fall within the range of 750–3,000 words. Please query the editors before submitting any work of greater length.

9. Email manuscripts and queries to Cy Dillon, cdillon@ferrum.edu, and Lyn C. A. Gardner, cgardner@hampton.gov. Please be sure to copy both editors.

10. Virginia Libraries is published quarterly. The deadlines for submission are: November 1 for Number 1, January/February/March; February 1 for Number 2, April/May/June; May 1 for Number 3, July/August/September; and August 1 for Number 4, October/November/December.