



Libraries

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Libraries

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VCU Libraries Advisory Committee Minutes

Thursday, November 20, 2025, 2:00-3:00 pm

Zoom

[Slides](#)

Attending

Jean Bailey, Jason Burkett, Becky Carmel, Nicole Corley, Stephen Day, Allison Gregory, Frank Gulla, Anika Hines, Kimberly Matthews, Daniel Morales, Valerie Robnolt (Chair), Sarah Steele, Ihsan Topaloglu, Anusha Vaddi, Dayanjan (Shanaka) Wijesinghe, Isaac Yeboah

Absent

Karen Kopryanski, Ryan Jackson, Christy Tyndall

VCU Libraries Staff

Kathy Bradshaw, Abbey Childs, Laura Gariepy, Irene Herold, Hannah King (recording secretary), Teresa L. Knott, Tammy Sugarman; Absent: Jimmy Ghaphery.

Business

Review and Approval of Agenda (Valerie Robnolt)

The meeting opened at 2:00 pm. The meeting agenda was approved as presented.

Review and approval of minutes from September 25, 2025 (Valerie Robnolt)

The minutes from September were reviewed and approved as presented.

Reports & Discussion

Welcome

Dean Irene Herold welcomed the committee members and thanked those in attendance.

Technology Planning Updates (Gariepy)

HEETF and STF

Laura Gariepy presented on the Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (HEETF) and Student Technology Fee (STF) technology funding. VCU Libraries is seeking stakeholder feedback for technology funding requests through the HEETF and STF. [Resources from last year's feedback](#) will be available in the coming months. We encourage faculty to submit technology-related ideas for this year's funding cycle.

AI Research Tools Trial

VIVA (Virginia's Academic Library Consortium) is conducting a statewide trial of two AI-powered research tools from November 12, 2025, through February 2026:

- Consensus: An AI-powered academic search engine that ranks the top 20 papers for literature searches, provides snapshots of individual studies, and lists key insights from articles. It is built on the Semantic Scholar dataset containing 200 million peer-reviewed documents.
- Scite: An AI-powered tool for discovering and evaluating scholarly articles based on research literature (both open access and paywalled). Allows users to search by citation statement and filter by supporting, contrasting, or mentoring citations.

Additional information and a feedback survey will be distributed to departments through library liaisons after Thanksgiving, which will provide an opportunity for faculty and students to use and evaluate these tools.

Virginia Course Materials Survey plus VCU Libraries Open & Affordable Course Content (Childs)

Abbey Childs presented on the VIVA course materials survey results for VCU. They highlighted the work that the library has done to combat high-cost course materials and how faculty can get involved in combating this issue.

Survey Overview

VCU participated in the second round of the VIVA course materials survey, with 452 VCU respondents (out of approximately 10,000 respondents statewide). The survey examines the impact that the cost of course materials has on our students.

Key Findings

The survey revealed that 75% of VCU students expressed concern about meeting course material costs. While this represents a decrease from the first round of survey results, it indicates that affordability remains an important consideration for much of the student body. The data showed that VCU students reported experiencing the financial impact of course materials somewhat more than their peers at similar Virginia institutions.

A majority of VCU students reported having delayed the purchase of required course materials at some point in their academic careers, with 42% of this group indicating that this happens frequently. Only 16% of students said that they never had to postpone buying materials. These delays mean students may not have materials available when they are needed for assignments and class participation.

The survey documented ways that the cost of course materials can influence academic decisions and success. Almost half of the respondents reported that they purposefully took fewer classes due to the cost of course materials. Course materials costs have also led to students dropping a course, avoiding certain courses, or delaying academic pursuits. VCU respondents also indicated that the cost of course materials caused them to withdraw from a course, earn a poor grade, or fail a course. These findings are continuing to inform the Libraries' ongoing efforts through the Open and Affordable Course Content Initiative.

Student voices were also captured through this survey. Students expressed how they struggle to afford textbooks, often choosing between necessities and required materials. Those on the MCV campus particularly noted the burden of expensive course materials combined with the limited time for paid work.

VCU Libraries' Open and Affordable Course Content Initiative

There is a comprehensive range of services available through the library to support affordable course content. There are one-on-one consultations for finding materials, both openly licensed and available through the library's collections, and evaluating ebook licenses, workshops, and publishing support for faculty interested in creating open educational resources. The initiative also includes the Affordable Course Content Awards grant program. The library also participates in the VIVA Circulation Driven Acquisitions program and the VIVA Open Grant program, expanding access to affordable resources across the consortium.

This initiative has generated over \$12 million in cost avoidance for students and positively affected more than 135,000 students. These results demonstrate the difference that adoption of open and affordable course materials can make in reducing financial barriers to students.

For faculty interested in supporting this work, there are many ways to get involved. Key actions include reporting textbook adoptions to the bookstore, incorporating more library resources into courses, and adopting, adapting, or creating open resources for classroom use. Faculty can also be an advocate for open and affordable resources by having conversations with their students and colleagues on the impact of course materials costs.

For assistance with any of these efforts or if you have an interest in this topic, we encourage you to **contact Abbey Childs, Open Educational Resources Librarian, at childsam@vcu.edu**. Abbey is also able to present on OER to faculty groups by request.

Read more about OER at:

<https://www.library.vcu.edu/research-teaching/open-and-affordable-course-content/affordable/>

Projects updates (Sugarman/Gariepy/Knott/Herold)

HSL Move and Cabell Renovation Updates

Dean Herold provided a major update on the health sciences library move and Cabell renovation. The MCV Board of Directors Finance and Facilities committee has indicated support for Cabell expansion and off-site storage. Final numbers are pending for the temporary move to Hunton Hall for the Health Sciences Library.

JBC Building Maintenance

Laura Gariepy provided smaller updates on renovations occurring around Cabell Library. Parts of the building will receive a new roof due to an increase in leaks in recent years, beginning in late spring/early summer of 2026. HVAC sensor failures have caused indoor condensation in the summer months, and will have to undergo significant repairs.

The Data Visualization wall has been installed, and a ribbon-cutting ceremony is expected to be scheduled for February 2026. Signage for alumni has been moved to a different wall.

Building Hours during Winter Intersession (Gariepy/Knott)

Laura Gariepy updated the council on a change in operating hours over winter break for the libraries from previous years. Both the Cabell Library and the Health Sciences Library will be **closed Saturday, December 20, 2025, to Sunday, January 4, 2026**, reopening with limited hours starting on Monday, January 5. Usage data showed low traffic and insufficient demand to justify keeping the libraries open. Services like chat (which is staffed by library employees -- as opposed to AI) and email support will be unavailable during the closure, but online collections remain accessible.

Upcoming Events

- **BHM Lecture**, [Reading a Dress: Fashioning Black Women's Histories](#), Elizabeth Way, February 5, 2026, 7:00 pm, JBC 303
- [Chris Burnside Book Launch](#), February 24, 2026, 5:00 pm
- **SCA Voices of Change**, February 26, 2026, 4:00 pm
- **Creative Inquiries**, March 25, 2026
- **Artistic Mansions**, Brownell, April 11, 2026
- **A Night in Mr. Cabell's Richmond**, (ticketed Friends of the Library scholarship fundraising event) April 16, 2026, 6:30 pm.

VCU Libraries Merch

Purchases of VCU Libraries merchandise support the Friends scholarship fund.

collegethread.com/collections/virginia-commonwealth-university-libraries

VLAC Meeting Schedule

Upcoming meetings scheduled for 2-3 pm via Zoom:

- January 22, 2026
- April 23, 2026

Discussion/Questions

Q: Have the technology items from last year's funding requests arrived?

A: The Library is currently waiting for university approval, but resources are expected to be available in the coming months.

Q: Did the survey capture which courses have the highest cost of course materials?

A: This specific information was not included in this survey, but this question could be used for future research.

Q: Are demographic breakdowns available from the survey?

A: VIVA shared as much demographic data as possible without compromising respondent anonymity. Some gender and area of concern data were provided. The statewide report will include more comprehensive demographic information.

Q: What are some of the reasons that faculty are not adopting OER?

A: Several factors contribute to this challenge. Some disciplines don't have suitable open content yet. Proprietary homework software bundled with textbooks, time constraints, and limited recognition of faculty that develop these resources all contribute to faculty not adopting open and affordable course materials.

Q: Can AI be used in OER creation?

A: The libraries do not drive content creation directly, but welcome conversations about any innovative approaches. Other institutions, such as UVA, have conducted research in this area. Abbey Childs is happy to discuss any ideas that faculty have.

Q: How is the winter closure being communicated to students?

A: The library is using multiple communication channels, including social media, traditional library communications, and an announcement in the VCU Telegram.

Q: How can faculty find out about open course materials in their fields?

A: Faculty have several excellent resources available. Abbey Childs, the Open Educational Resources Librarian, is always willing to help. The departmental liaison librarians, Academic Outreach, and Student Success are also available to direct faculty toward resources.

Information Links

[VLAC Charge](#) | [Generative AI](#)

tlk, akb, jsg, lwg