

# Openers

by Beth DeFrancis Sun

Are readers willing to download e-poetry to their Nooks and Kindles? Or is there a certain “essence” to the poetry reader’s experience that inevitably gets lost in the translation from ink on paper to bytes and pixels? These were the questions I found myself pondering while attending a recent panel discussion among e-book experts—publishers, designers, and authors—during the Virginia Festival of the Book (<http://www.vabook.org>). Held annually in Charlottesville, this event always attracts a large cross-section of book lovers from across the Commonwealth, and this particular session—held in the Omni Hotel on Saturday, March 24th—was standing room only.

The questions related to e-poetry arose when the woman sitting next to me—clearly a bit agitated and no doubt tired from pumping her arm up and down during the Q&A session—wanted to tell the e-book panelists that her attempts to distribute downloadable poetry had failed miserably since this particular subset of readers prefers viewing “verse” in print format.

The panelists—all pretty jazzed about the recent upturn in the e-book industry (and the newfound salability of books that had long languished in storage boxes)—were a bit tongue-tied as they attempted to address the woman’s assertion. After all, why would they want to lend credence to the possibility that certain readers wouldn’t want to buy e-books that were suddenly selling like lot-

tery tickets? One panelist seemed to sum up what many of us in the audience were thinking when he said... “It’s an emerging industry. We don’t yet know what the answers are.”

I raise these questions as a counterpoint to the beautifully choreographed “swan song” compiled by outgoing *Virginia Libraries* co-editors, Cy Dillon and Lyn Gardner. In the form of the special issue

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focusing on electronic collections and digital developments in the library world (vol. 58, no. 1), their last production together speaks to the expressed interests and needs of VLA members and their library-loving colleagues for timely information on cutting-edge technologies. They pack insightful articles into the pages of the expanded volume on the many ways that Virginia’s libraries are taking advantage of state-of-the-art hardware and software opportunities.

And yet, there remain so many avid readers, librarians, library patrons, and lovers of poetry (and prose) who insist they still need to hold the physical copy of a printed book in their hands in order to feel the magic.

Rebecca Kamen—the inter-

nationally acclaimed artist and scientist who presented during VLA’s 2011 Conference in October—summed up the significance that a single print copy of a book can hold by sharing her personal experiences traveling through Europe in search of the exact *copy* of *Natural Science for Practical Use in Every Household* (Aaron Bernstein) cited as having influenced Albert Einstein. Kamen, who has routinely turned to rare library and manuscript collections to inspire her artwork, eventually tracked down and read that precise volume, which in turn helped her envision the 16 sculptures in her series “Invisible Sightings” (for more information on Kamen, see <http://rebeccakamen.com>).

In an effort to further explore the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between e-publications and tangible print volumes, John Connolly and I will be pulling together our own special issue of *Virginia Libraries* that focuses on “The Book as Art.” (Here, we use the term “art” loosely to refer to any aspect of the book that resides outside of any digitized intellectual property—for example, the texture, scent, paper, size, covers, bindings, color, weight, or age.) What *are* the differences between e-books, audiovisual materials, and print formats? Does the meat and bone boil down to the underlying plot? Do collections need tangible formats? Does a digital collection meet the needs of most library patrons? Or are we cutting out “the poetry,” so to speak, in our push for new technologies?

Any insights you have to offer or article suggestions for our special issue will be most appreciated. The submissions deadline for “The Book as Art” is August 1. In the meantime, however, we welcome any submission queries and invite all of our readers to consider reviewing one of the books listed in “Virginia Publications” (page 39). We’d also love to learn about any special libraries in Virginia that we might feature in the new “Focus on Special Libraries” column (John’s idea).

Please send your thoughts and suggestions to the two of us (Beth DeFrancis Sun (defrancb@georgetown.edu) and John Connolly (jpconnolly@crimson.ua.edu)). We’re excited about the opportunity to serve as the new co-editors of *Virginia Libraries* and look forward to learning more about Virginia’s wonderful libraries and the people who work and play in them. **VI**

## Guidelines for Submissions to *Virginia Libraries*

1. *Virginia Libraries* seeks to publish articles and reviews of interest to the library community in Virginia. Articles and interviews reporting research, library programs and events, information of particular interest to libraries in Virginia, and opinion pieces are all considered for publication. Queries are encouraged. Brief announcements and press releases should be distributed via the VLA listservs and blog ([www.vla.org](http://www.vla.org)).
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. Work published in *Virginia Libraries* conforms to the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. Accepted pieces are subject to editing for style and clarity. Authors will be consulted on points of fact.
4. Articles should generally fall within the range of 750–3,000 words. Please query the editors before submitting any work of greater length.
5. Reviews should consider works produced by Virginia creators or concerning Virginia subjects that have been published within the last two years. The reviewed works can appeal to any age or audience or appear in any format or area of the arts, sciences, and humanities. Reviews generally fall within the range of 500–1,500 words and must include a bibliographic citation in *Chicago* style and an evaluative statement supported by evidence from the text. Please query the editors before writing or submitting a review.
6. All work submitted for consideration will be reviewed by the editors and may be refereed by the editorial board. Material not selected for publication will be returned within three months.
7. VLA holds the copyright on all material published in *Virginia Libraries*. Contributors receive one copy of the issue in which their work appears.
8. 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.
9. 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 contributors’ copies.
10. Email manuscripts and queries to both Beth DeFrancis Sun, [defrancb@georgetown.edu](mailto:defrancb@georgetown.edu), and John Connolly, [jpconnolly@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:jpconnolly@crimson.ua.edu). Please be sure to include both editors.
11. *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. **VI**