



**Sandra Gioia Treadway**  
*Librarian of Virginia*

December 1, 2022

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin  
Governor of Virginia  
Office of the Governor  
Patrick Henry Building  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable C. Todd Gilbert  
Speaker, Virginia House of Delegates  
Pocahontas Building  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas  
President Pro Tempore  
Senate of Virginia  
P.O. Box 396  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Per § 1-68, item 238 C of the Appropriations Act, the Library of Virginia and the Virginia circuit court clerks are pleased to send you the attached report on the historical records treated with cellulose acetate lamination between the 1930s and the 1990s that are housed within the Circuit Court Clerks' offices across the Commonwealth and at the Library of Virginia.

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please feel free to contact me or to reach out to Greg Crawford, Local Records Program Manager, at [Gregory.Crawford@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:Gregory.Crawford@lva.virginia.gov) or 692-3505.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra G. Treadway".

Sandra G. Treadway

cc: Greg Crawford, State Archivist and  
Director of Government Services,  
Library of Virginia

Cellulose acetate lamination was a common treatment and considered a safe and advisable measure for document conservation between the 1930s and the 1990s. The earliest records of the commonwealth stored in Virginia's circuit court clerks' offices and at the Library of Virginia were identified to undergo this process. In time, however, archivists and conservators began to notice and acknowledge its destructive effects and finally put an end to the practice. By then, however, the damage was done.

The most prevalent forms of cellulose acetate lamination deterioration are present visually in the laminate film attached the pages. These include tearing, bubbling, discoloration, clouding, and warping. A vinegar odor also often indicates that the laminate film is degrading. These perceptible effects over time often translate into damages to the records that are not as perceptible to the naked eye. These include permanent damage to the cellulose fiber of the paper, causing darkening and embrittlement, and possible permanent adhesion of the laminate to the paper, resulting in the laminate becoming impossible to remove.

The Library of Virginia is responsible for administering the Circuit Court Records Preservation (CCRP) program to assist circuit courts with preserving their historical records through consultation and annual grants. To carry out this mandate, Library of Virginia staff regularly visit circuit court clerks' offices to identify and examine historical court records in need of conservation. A primary component of the examination process has been to identify cellulose acetate volumes should they be found in a clerk's office. Also, the Library of Virginia staff identified cellulose acetate volumes housed at the Library of Virginia that circuit courts transferred for preservation.

Currently, Library of Virginia staff have examined records of 112 of the 120 Virginia circuit courts housed at the circuit court and the Library of Virginia. A total of 1502 cellulose acetate volumes were identified in 53 of the 113 localities examined. 57% of the total cellulose acetate volumes are housed in 11 localities. Nearly 10% of the total were identified in one locality - Richmond County. Cellulose acetate volumes are most prevalent in the circuit court offices located in the eastern part of the commonwealth. This is not surprising given the oldest records in Virginia are located in this part of the commonwealth. See **Appendix A** for a list of localities and number of cellulose acetate volumes identified.

The cost to repair and preserve a cellulose acetate volume is dependent upon the total number of pages and the extent of deterioration. Also, the conservation process required to remove the cellulose acetate has an impact on the cost. The removal of cellulose acetate is meticulous and time consuming, taking anywhere between three months to a year to remove cellulose acetate from one volume. The process inherently requires the services of experienced and highly skilled conservators. Conservation vendors have few staff members capable of performing such work. Taking all this into consideration, the estimated cost to conserve 1500 volumes is currently \$15,000,000-\$20,000,000 and would potentially take ten to fifteen years to complete.

The Library of Virginia and the circuit court clerks make the following recommendations:

- 1) Once a year, the Library of Virginia offers preservation grants through the CCRP program. The Library of Virginia will continue to encourage clerks to include cellulose

acetate volumes in their grant submissions. During the most recent grant cycle (FY 2022), CCRP preservation grants funded conservation of 158 cellulose acetate volumes. Should the preservation grants be able to fund a similar amount of volumes each year, the cellulose acetate issue could be adequately addressed in ten to fifteen years. The ability to fund this amount of volumes will be dependent upon incoming revenue that funds the CCRP grants program and the capability of conservation vendors to conserve such a high volume of records.

- 2) Encourage circuit court clerks to pursue private funding to conserve cellulose acetate volumes. Organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution fund local conservation projects. Their members regularly contact circuit court clerks' offices offering to fund conservation of early Virginia records. Circuit court clerks can prioritize cellulose acetate volumes for such funding.

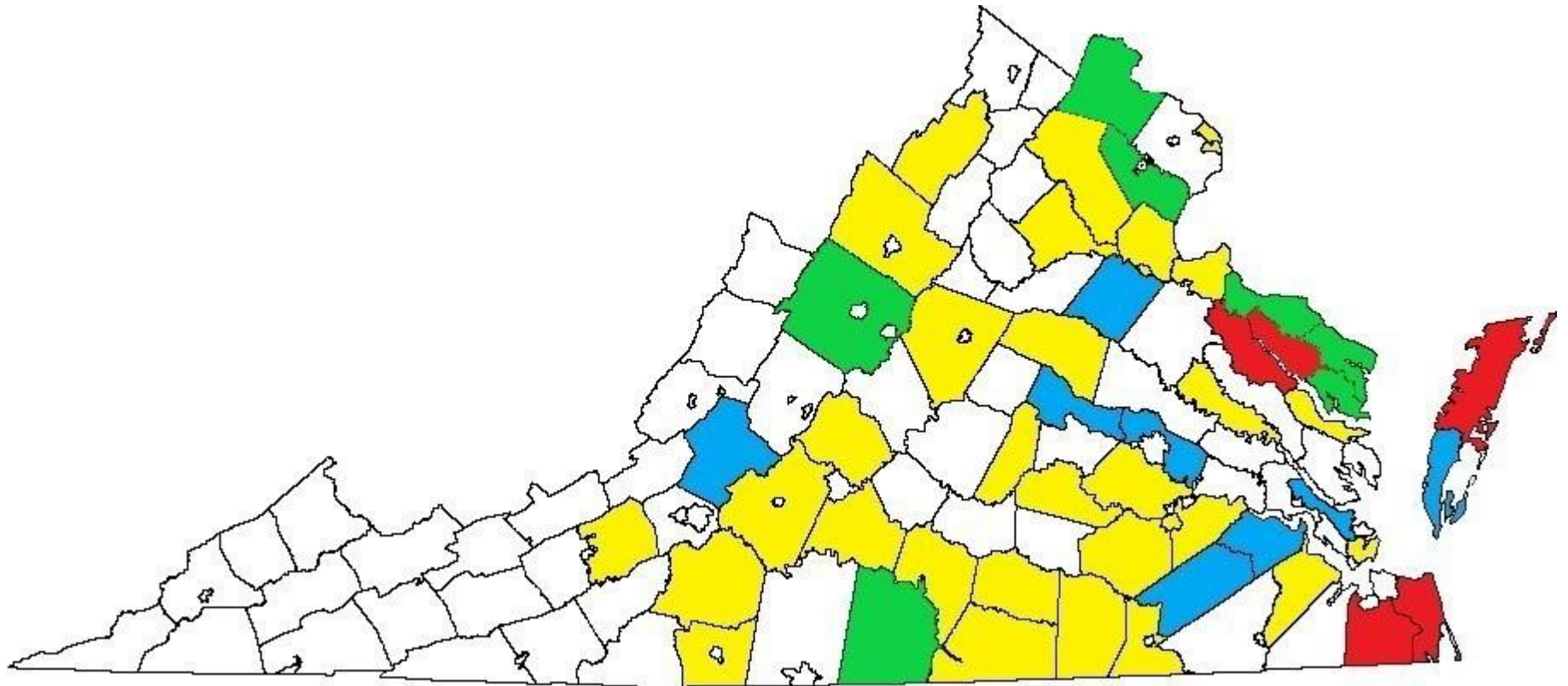
If not addressed now, records that managed to survive three centuries of wars, courthouse fires, and natural disasters, will not survive another three centuries. Through public and private funding, the conservation of cellulose acetate records can be accomplished in an acceptable time frame. The Library of Virginia will inform the Governor and General Assembly on the progress of this project each year in our annual CCRP report to the Secretary of Education.

#### APPENDIX A

<b>Name of locality</b>	<b>Total no. of cellulose acetate vols.</b>
Accomack County	75
Albemarle County	4
Alexandria	6
Amelia County	15
Amherst County	3
Arlington County	6
Augusta County	71
Bedford County	3
Botetourt County	30
Brunswick County	18
Campbell County	2
Caroline County	9
Charlotte County	2
Chesapeake/Norfolk County	80
Chesterfield County	4
Culpeper County	13
Cumberland County	12
Dinwiddie County	4
Essex County	91
Fauquier County	14

Franklin County	5
Fredericksburg	4
Goochland County	40
Greensville County	9
Halifax County	58
Hampton/Elizabeth City County	17
Henrico County	31
Henry County	12
Isle of Wight County	16
King George County	11
King William County	11
Lancaster County	73
Loudoun County	51
Louisa County	19
Lunenburg County	16
Mecklenburg County	8
Middlesex County	18
Montgomery County	22
Northampton County	48
Northumberland County	62
Petersburg	1
Prince George County	4
Prince William County	66
Richmond County	142
Rockingham County	1
Shenandoah County	6
Spotsylvania County	36
Stafford County	6
Surry County	29
Sussex County	30
Virginia Beach/Princess Anne County	81
Westmoreland County	58
York County	49

# Cellulose Acetate Volumes



Red > 75 volumes

Green 50-74 volumes

Blue 25-49 volumes

Yellow < 25 volumes