

# MAKING A FUTURE FOR THE PAST IN THE VIRTUAL CURATION LABORATORY

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## BY BERNARD K. MEANS, DIRECTOR

Today was a busy one for the [Virtual Curation Laboratory](#). I worked to finalize our move of the lab from its old, crowded location to a new, not quite as crowded location. I also set up two of our 3D printers to print artifact replicas for an exhibit opening at the [Virginia Museum of Natural History](#) (VMNH) in less than two months. The artifact replicas will add an interactive component to their new archaeology exhibit entitled *Exploring Virginia*, which is not confined to displaying artifacts just from Virginia. For this exhibit I printed today a Japanese porcelain hand grenade, which dates to World War II, two copies of a scarab bead from Egypt, one copy of bomb fragment from Nathaniel Bacon's attack on [Jamestown](#), and an 1861 gun lock from a Springfield rifle dating to the Union Army's occupation of George [Washington's Boyhood home](#) in Fredericksburg, Virginia, during the American Civil War. All of these objects were 3D scanned by the Virtual Curation Laboratory.



*World War II porcelain hand grenade from Japan. 3D scanned at the [Virginia War](#)*

## Memorial

These objects will be shipped to the VMNH on Monday for painting and inclusion in the aforementioned archaeology exhibit. Brenna Geraghty, a Virginia Commonwealth University student, details this process and her role as a summer intern at VMNH in her [Day of Archaeology](#) post. A few artifacts were also printed at VMNH yesterday and the day before when I met with VMNH's Curator of Archaeology Elizabeth Moore to talk about final exhibit needs.



*Newly printed Aztec dog figurine replicas  
“watch” a panel of rock art.*

I also prepared the lab today for a visit from the Urban Archaeology Corps, a group of Richmond-area high school students who are spending the summer learning about all aspects of archaeology, from field to laboratory, and helping make their community aware of the archaeological resources that exist below their feet.



*I hold up a wig hair curler replica from George Washington's Ferry Farm. It was used by an enslaved servant to style a wig worn by one of George Washington's brothers.*

This visit was arranged by the incomparable Courtney Bowles, who was one of the original staff hired when the Virtual Curation Laboratory was established in August 2011.



*The Urban Archaeology Corps. Courtney Bowles is in the first row of standing individuals, second from the left.*

I was able to discuss with these budding archaeologists why and how we 3D scan artifacts and how I incorporate them into various public programs, such as the July 18, 2015 Day of Archaeology event hosted in Washington, D.C. by [Archaeology in the Community](#), which is directed by Dr. Alexandra Jones.



*A young visitor plays chess at the Day of Archaeology event hosted by Archaeology in the Community.*

Just days before, I also had a display for the [Germann Foundation's](#) Day of Archaeology celebration, thanks to the invite of their archaeologist, Dr. Eric Larsen.





*Inviting visitors to see 3D printed artifact replicas at the Germanna Day of Archaeology.*

In the upcoming months, I will expose a new generation of students to the cultural heritage the world offers through 3D scanned artifacts made by cultural heritage institutions across the globe (including India, where I will travel to next week on a 3D scanning mission).