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## News - Valdosta State University

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*People, Libraries  
and Agencies* **IN THE NEWS**

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## Valdosta State University

### Deborah Davis Honored with VSU Presidential Excellence Award for Service

Deborah Davis, professor and director of Valdosta State University's (VSU) Archives and Special Collections, is the recipient of the Presidential Excellence Award for Service. Davis was chosen for her extensive service at the university, community, state, national, and international level over the last 25 years.

"Deborah's service has not been episodic but rather sustained at a very high level for several decades at VSU," said Dr. James LaPlant, dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. "[She] is genuinely a role model for service at a regional comprehensive university and a tremendous asset to VSU."

Davis's most notable service to VSU is her work in the last 20 years to make the VSU Archives and Special Collections what it is today. She transformed the office from a few hundred boxes in a basement room to the current mid-size archives with 4,000 linear feet of processed materials and five terabytes of electronic files, in a big area with two climate-controlled vaults, a special collections room that doubles as a classroom, and exhibits across five buildings on campus.

A certified archivist, Davis received more than 15 grants to develop the archives and has worked intently to attract student workers and staff of high quality. The History Volunteer Program, in place for 15 years, allows students who are performing poorly in history classes to acquire extra credit by working in the Archives and Special Collections. This work has resulted in three databases—ranging from births and deaths in the Valdosta area to scrapbook

clippings and newspaper articles from VSU's earliest decades—that are used by researchers around the country who are seeking information on South Georgia's history.

"The professors who participate in this program swear by its effectiveness and its importance to retention," said Davis, who received the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Award for Excellence in the Educational Use of Historical Records in 2004 for the program.

Davis led the creation of a permanent museum in Odum Library in 2006 to celebrate VSU's centennial year. The museum includes 21 panels, nine presidential portraits, and multiple display cases showcasing VSU's history. She was also a member of the VSU Centennial Steering Committee from 2005 to 2008 and helped to plan a large campus-wide event to mark the centennial.

In 2011, Davis established the VSU Archives and Special Collections Art Program through her role as chairwoman of the Library Art Committee, which she first joined as a member in 2004. The program has resulted in seven art galleries within Odum Library as well as art installations in four other buildings throughout campus.

Davis was also instrumental in creating the Vtext Institutional Repository, an open access digital storeroom that contains more than 2,500 files on VSU's past and present. The initiative, coordinated by VSU Archives and Special Collections and the Department of Library and Information Studies, is meant to collect, preserve, and distribute the university's intellectual capital.

Davis has served and currently serves on numerous library and university committees, including the Faculty Senate (2016-present); 50

Years of Integration Planning Committee (2012–2015); Library Strategic Planning Committee (2012–present); Art Collection Committee (2009–present); University Promotion and Tenure Committee (2009–2012); Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Quality Enhancement Plan Committee (2009–2010); Faculty Scholarship Committee (2008–2010); Library Web Committee (2004–present); House in the Woods Alumni Luncheon Planning Committee (2002–2006); and Presidential Inauguration Steering Committee (2002).

“Service is one of the big opportunities that you have when you’re a faculty member,” Davis said. “To find service that you love and that you can throw yourself into and be engaged with is a gift.”

Davis has also expanded her service efforts to the community. Through multiple grants from the Georgia Humanities Council and the Georgia Council for the Arts, she has traveled to high schools in surrounding counties and explored various written works with students; archived local materials pertaining to South Georgia’s folk life and coordinated folk music performances; and coordinated discussions between VSU and community scholars on the Civil War and the South’s connection to it.

She also served as vice president of the Valdosta Asian Culture Association from 2000 to 2015. In that role she helped to coordinate a yearly exposition showcasing Asian and African culture that attracted thousands of middle school students from across Georgia.

She has taken her work to the international level by working with the Consortium of Belize Educational Cooperation, which seeks to further tertiary education and professional development in Belize. Davis, a member of the consortium since 2006 and its treasurer from 2013 to 2017, has traveled to Belize and facilitated workshops with librarians on cataloging, archives, advanced preservation, and digital preservation.

Davis is a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists, Georgia Library Association, and Society of Georgia Archivists. She has published numerous professional articles and given more than 70 professional presentations at local, state, and national conferences and events.

Because of her work and service, Davis has received the Collegiate Women of Valdosta State University Award for Outstanding Staff Member (2014); African American Studies Program Community Servant of the Year Award (2014); Lowndes County Historical Society Keeper of History Award (2002 and 2008); Brenda McCallum Award from the American Folklore Society (2007, along with her colleagues); and four VSU “I Caught You Caring” Awards (2004, 2011, 2016, 2017).

Davis holds a Bachelor of Arts in economics and a Master of Arts in Teaching in English from the University of Georgia, as well as a Master of Library Science from the University of Maryland. She joined VSU in 1993 as an instructor of library science. She became an assistant professor in 1997, an associate professor in 2002, and a professor in 2013.