

Foundations & Perspectives

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Gardener Clive Atyeo takes great pride in caring for the orchids that grow in the U.S. Botanic Garden Production Facility.

Photo by: Chuck Badal

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Warren Campbell, a mason with the Senate Office Buildings, applies grout to newly installed bathroom tile during the congressional office moves.

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Front Cover: Photo by Chuck Badal

Renee Lyons and Bert Rude are part of the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center team that provides welcoming hospitality to the millions of visitors who tour the Capitol each year.

Letter from the Architect



Dear Colleagues,

The legendary football coach Vince Lombardi once said, “Individual commitment to a group effort — this is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” The AOC is the perfect example of dedicated individuals committed to making an organization work. There may be 2,600 of us, but we work as one. One unit with one mission: providing excellent service to Congress by maintaining and preserving our national treasures. We have been extremely successful in fulfilling this mission because of the knowledge, skills, and experience each one of us brings to our jobs.

In this edition of *Foundations and Perspectives*, you will meet some of the fascinating and talented people who are part of our team. You’ll meet our remarkable Capitol Visitor Center employees who provide outstanding hospitality for what is often a once-in-a-lifetime experience for millions of visitors to the nation’s Capitol (see page 8). They share their passion for the Capitol and the work performed by Congress through a variety of special tours available to visitors and employees like you.

You’ll also get to go behind the scenes at the Supreme Court of the United States, where Wayne Veney, a 35-year AOC veteran, works tirelessly to keep the marble throughout the interior and exterior of the building in tip-top shape (see page 12). At the U.S. Botanic Garden Production Facility, you’ll meet gardener Michael Spelta, who turned a childhood fascination with orchids into a career that includes caring for these delicate plants, allowing the public to enjoy them year-round (see page 2).

“There may be 2,600
of us, but we work
as one.”

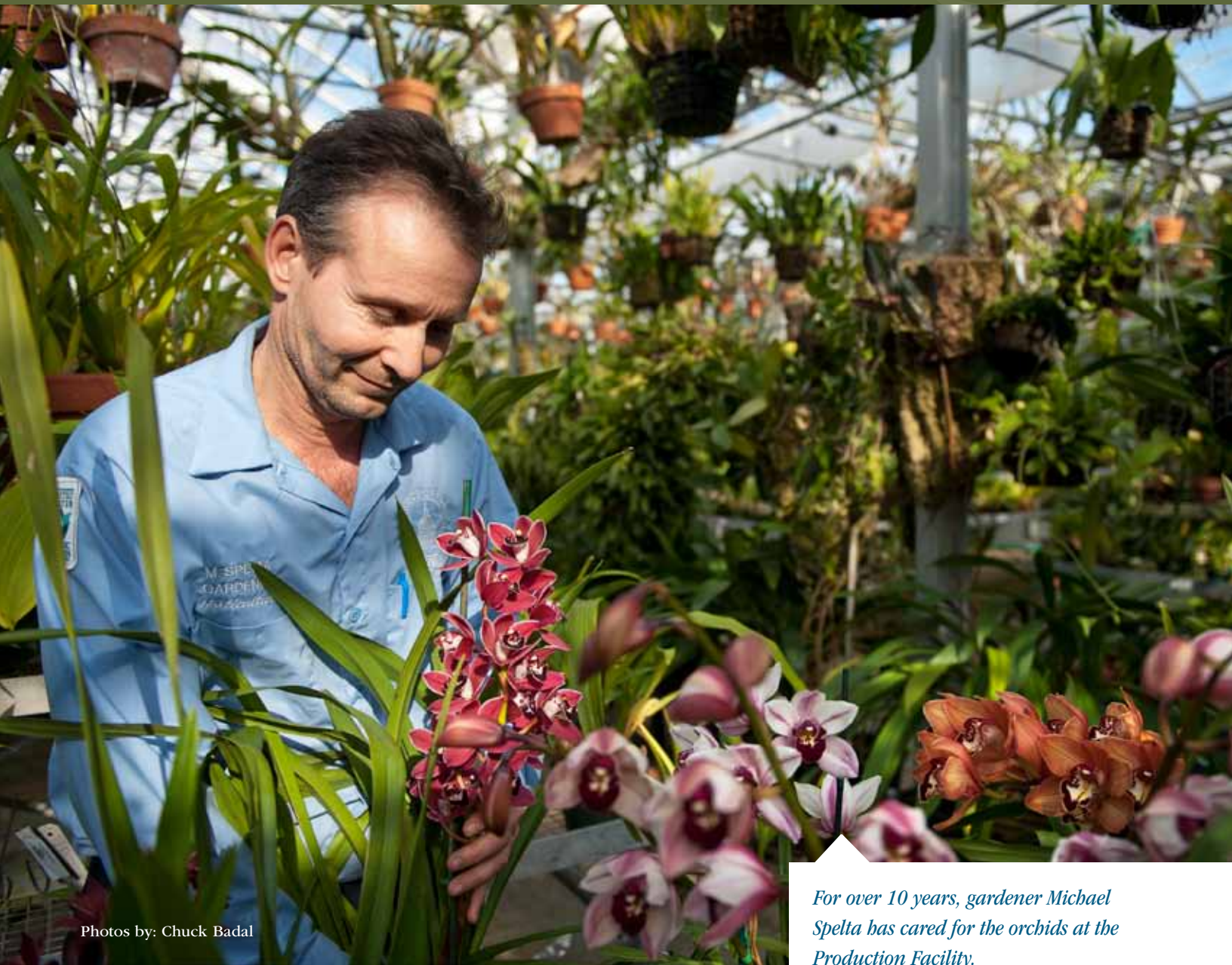
These are just a few examples of the hundreds of AOC employees who take immense pride in their work — and it shows in the energy and enthusiasm coursing through a tour group, the shine of a marble statue base, and the brilliance of a blooming orchid.

I truly enjoy reading these fascinating stories in *Foundations and Perspectives*. Working together as a team, we achieve great things every day — and that’s an accomplishment we can all take great pride in.

Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, LEED AP
Architect of the Capitol

USBG Production Facility: *A Breath of Fresh Air*

Adjacent to Interstate 295, in DC's Anacostia neighborhood, hides a labyrinth of greenhouses that are home to some of the world's most exotic and beautiful plants. The greenhouses form their own world with 17 unique environmental zones where the orchids radiate vibrant colors, the herbs emit a delicious aroma and the holiday spirit is alive year-round among the poinsettias.



Photos by: Chuck Badal

For over 10 years, gardener Michael Spelta has cared for the orchids at the Production Facility.

“The Production Facility is the place to watch the entire plant life cycle, from seed or cuttings to specimen size.”



At the U.S. Botanic Garden’s Production Facility, approximately 30,000 plants are either waiting their turn in the spotlight or retiring for rest and relaxation after their time on display at the Conservatory. Plants at the Production Facility are constantly under the watchful eyes of 25 U.S. Botanic Garden employees and 15 volunteers who work night and day to fulfill each species’ unique needs.

“Our gardeners bring a personal interest and passion for plants to their work,” said Bill McLaughlin, curator of plants. “They are personally invested in seeing the plants under their care thrive.”

Opened in 1994, the Production Facility is the largest greenhouse complex supporting a public garden in the United States. It houses 85,000 square feet under glass and is divided into 34 greenhouse bays. Each bay is adjusted to precise light, temperature and humidity settings to provide optimal conditions for its leafy residents.

“The Production Facility is the place to watch the entire plant life cycle, from seed or cuttings to specimen size,” said McLaughlin.

The staff and volunteers at the Facility are dedicated to ensuring the preservation of ecological treasures — those with historic value for the nation, and rare and endangered species from across the world. Still found at the Botanic Garden’s Conservatory and Production Facility are some of the original Wilkes plants, brought back in 1842 from the United States Exploring Expedition to the South Seas (also known as the Wilkes Expedition) funded by Congress.

This expedition set sail on August 18, 1838, from Hampton Roads, Virginia, under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes. During the expedition, more than 50,000 specimens of plants were pressed and 250 live plants were brought back. These living plants became the founding collection of the

Botanic Garden in 1850. Four of these species are still under the care of the Botanic Garden: *Angiopteris evecta* (vessel fern), *Cycas circinalis* (sago palm), *Encephalartos horridus* (ferocious blue cycad), and *Ziziphus jujube* ‘Admiral Wilkes’ (jujube tree).

The Cycas circinalis is one of the plant species from the Wilkes Expedition that is still cared for by the Botanic Garden.



The CITES program aims to ensure that the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.



Johanna Zinn volunteers her time to care for the plants in the Production Facility's propagation house.

At the Production Facility, some of the world's rarest plants are kept under safekeeping through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The CITES program, first established in 1963, aims to ensure that the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Through this program, many rare or endangered orchids, cycads,

cacti and carnivorous plants being transported illegally are seized at U.S. borders and given to the Botanic Garden for care in perpetuity.

"You never know what condition a CITES plant will be in when we receive it," said McLaughlin. "They have often been mistreated after being smuggled across the border and then quarantined."

Employees and volunteers nurture these plants, striving to bring them to a point where they are able to propagate and assist with the survival of the species.

With 28 years combined experience at the Botanic Garden, gardeners Clive Atyeo and Michael Spelta are most at home in the orchid house. Each day they work to identify incoming plants, water and feed the orchids, and help prepare them for the annual orchid exhibit. The exhibit is held from February through April and is cosponsored by the Botanic Garden and Smithsonian Institution.

"My mom bought me my first orchid when I was nine," said Spelta, "and I became fascinated by this angelic plant, from the fragrance, to the shape, to the way they grow."



The orchids they love haven't always thrived here the way they do today. When the city tap water converted from chlorine to chloramine disinfection, orchid roots started burning at the tips, and the plants began declining.

The solution came from the installation of a new reverse osmosis water filtration system for the orchids in 2003, and expanded to the entire Facility in 2006. This innovative system clears out chloramine, bacteria and other minerals from the water and helps the Garden's collection flourish. Since the



“The water system has been a saving grace for the garden.”



introduction of this filtration system, the Botanic Garden added new species to the collection that could never survive before.

“The new filters also remove magnesium and calcium that binds to acidic soil, raising the pH and fueling microbes that then break it down too quickly,” said McLaughlin. “Plants that need very acidic soil, like the carnivorous plants, can literally rot when this goes on too long.”

Rudy West, maintenance assistant foreman, works on the Production Facility water filtration system.

“The water system has been a saving grace for the garden,” said McLaughlin. “It has improved the overall health of our plants and allows us to grow new plants like club mosses that were essential to making our primitive house work.”

Each March, the public is invited to visit the Botanic Garden’s Production Facility through an Open House event. During this event, visitors can meet the gardeners and see orchids, carnivorous plants, medicinal plants, and rare and endangered species not always on display at the Conservatory.

— Lori Westley

Closing the Gap:

Safeguarding the Library's Collections

As the steward of the buildings and grounds of the Library of Congress, the Architect of the Capitol recently completed a major project to ensure the safety of the Library's collections, which include the papers of 23 presidents; the first existing book printed in North America, "The Bay Psalm Book" (1640); and many other items that are essential threads in the fabric of American history. The threats to the collections are many, but perhaps the most notorious is fire, which has nearly destroyed the Library on three occasions.

The last of these fires, in 1851, destroyed two-thirds of the 6,500 volumes that Thomas Jefferson had provided to rebuild the collections following the British burning of the Capitol in 1814, where the Library was then housed. After these fires, the collections grew so large that they had to be moved out of the Capitol.

This happened with the completion of the Thomas Jefferson Building in 1897, which was hailed as the safest library in the world. Since then, understanding of how to house books safely has evolved significantly.



Photos by: Susanne Bledsoe

Originally, a gap at the bottom of each bookshelf in the Jefferson Building allowed air circulation, which helped maintain the temperature of the stacks and prevent mildew. These gaps, however, would potentially allow for fire to travel quickly between floors, or decks, rather than be contained in one location where it could be extinguished using sprinklers, or in some cases, chemical fire suppression systems.

Dan Reap was part of the AOC team that worked to ensure the safety of the Library's collections.

To protect the national treasures contained in the Jefferson Building as well as modernize the building to meet current fire codes, the AOC's Library Building and Grounds Sheet Metal Division, led by Rick Barrick, went to work to close these gaps.

Barrick's crew cut and bent 60 sheets of galvanized steel into hundreds of custom pieces to precisely fit each gap, and then adhered the pieces in place before applying a final sealant of fireproof caulking or foam.

The threats to the collections are many, but perhaps the most notorious is fire, which has nearly destroyed the Library on three occasions.

The AOC sheet metal crew found a unique way to ensure that each deck was sealed: they turned out all the lights on the deck to be inspected, but left the lights on in the deck below so they could see any remaining gaps.

The challenges were many, including the Library's need to carry on its business without interruption during the project. The AOC's Library Buildings and Grounds staff coordinated closely with Library of Congress staff, who had to displace portions of the collections as work progressed.

Another challenge came from the fact that the decks were originally added to the outside of the Jefferson Building and their edges trace around the outside curves of the circular staircases and architectural elements, creating very tight spaces that are almost inaccessible.

The Library Buildings and Grounds Sheet Metal Division developed creative, cutting-edge solutions for each of these circumstances. The

Every inch of the over 21 miles of gaps that were sealed had to be inspected to ensure that no gaps remained.

AOC's skilled craftsmen employed an array of techniques and a variety of technologies, such as fire resistant foam bricks and a newly developed foam spray that can fill hard-to-reach spaces.

By the end of the project, a total of 45 decks and approximately 21 miles of bookshelves were sealed, requiring — in addition to the galvanized steel — over 4,400 tubes of fire resistant caulk and 144 firebricks.

Installing the latest fire suppression technology will prevent the spread of fire and smoke while protecting the irreplaceable items entrusted to the Library of Congress. These improvements to life safety systems is one element in the



AOC employees expertly applied multiple cutting-edge solutions to seal the wide variety of gaps, often in conjunction with each other.

AOC's multifaceted approach to its stewardship of America's Capitol, preserving our national treasures for future generations.

— Franklin Bradley

U.S. CAPITOL Visitor Center:

A Welcoming Guide to the Capitol

When it opened its doors on December 2, 2008, the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center was hailed as a fitting addition to the U.S. Capitol, the ninth expansion in the Capitol's more than 200-year history. Known for its grand architecture, priceless works of art, and iconic silhouette, the Capitol is one of the top tourist sites in the world. The dedicated AOC employees working in the Capitol Visitor Center are critical to its success as a welcoming destination for visitors, as well as a working office building.



Photos by: Chuck Badal

As a part of his many responsibilities, visitor assistant Terry Restivo provides a tour of Exhibition Hall for school children visiting the Capitol.

In the Capitol Rotunda, visitor guide Emily Milot Lamarche explains points of interest during the special tour, Capitol and Congress During the Civil War.

The men and women who meet, greet, and guide visitors on a daily basis provide a wide range of services and assistance. Visitor guides, wearing red jackets, provide more than 40,000 tours of the Capitol for visitors every year. Visitor assistants, wearing red vests, interact with visitors in a variety of ways, including greeting them at the front doors, checking their coats, and assisting them with booking tours of the Capitol.

Visitor assistants and guides are professionals from all walks of life, who are eager to share their passion and knowledge of the Capitol and Congress with visitors.

Renee Lyons, a visitor assistant at the Visitor Center for a little more than two years, is one of those smiling faces that greet visitors. “Interacting with visitors is the best part of the job,” says Lyons. “Some visitors can just make your day!”

Visitor assistants also provide tours of the Visitor Center’s Exhibition Hall, the only exhibit in the world dedicated to telling the story of the U.S. Capitol and Congress. Lyons enjoys the opportunity to share her knowledge of the building and its occupants during these tours, especially with families with small children. “I love to have the children participate in learning



about the Capitol. And with all of the interactive activities available, Exhibition Hall really helps kids relate to the building and its history.”

Tailoring tours to the audience is part of a guide’s many responsibilities. Ronn Jackson, a visitor guide for eight years, is one of several guides who lead a special tour entitled *Capitol and the Congress During the Civil War*. For those tours, Jackson strives to “create moments on the tour that inform, involve, and inspire our visitors.” At the beginning of the tour, Jackson assesses the tour participants, and based on their ages and prior knowledge of the Civil War, works to educate them in ways that complement their awareness of the period. For Jackson, “it is truly a privilege to give this tour to visitors.”

Visitor Center staff also provide special tours of the Brumidi Corridors, which are located in the Senate wing of the Capitol’s first floor. AOC Curator Dr. Barbara Wolanin, an expert on Brumidi and author of *Constantino Brumidi: Artist of the Capitol*, created a training manual for the tour and provided extensive training sessions for the guides. Visitors are often surprised to find such elaborate work by Brumidi, beyond his famous painting on the ceiling of the Capitol Rotunda, *The Apotheosis of Washington*.

The elaborately painted corridors, primarily painted in the late 1850s and completed in the late 1870s, feature detailed scenes of dozens of varieties of birds, small animals and reptiles, and flowers and fruit.

Visitor assistants and guides are professionals from all walks of life, who are eager to share their passion and knowledge of the Capitol and Congress with visitors.



Brumidi also included famed American heroes of the eighteenth century and historical scenes and portraits.

Barbara Sirota, a visitor guide for the past eight years, provides tours of the Brumidi Corridors. She enjoys the chance to discuss the corridors in depth and “to share such an important national treasure with the public.”

The corridors have been undergoing extensive restoration for the past 25 years, and according to Sirota, the work “has revealed Brumidi’s true brilliance and the beauty of the corridors.” It is obvious from talking to Sirota that she is, in her own words, “wildly enthusiastic about the Brumidi Corridors tour.” Her infectious energy certainly rubs off on the visitors who tour the area with her, as they learn about the man who designed and painted the corridors as well as the historical significance of their existence.

Another guide who provides dynamic tours of the Brumidi Corridors is Bert Rude.

Eleven years ago while walking around the U.S. Capitol as a visitor, Rude was intrigued by all of the men

and women wearing red jackets, and he stopped one and asked what his job entailed. After learning about the guides who gave tours of the building, he pursued the profession and was eventually hired, first as a temporary guide, then permanently in spring 2001.

In fact, this wasn’t Rude’s first time working in the Capitol. During college, he worked as an intern in the office of a Minnesota congressman and had fallen in love with the place. It took him more than 30 years to find his way back, and he relishes the opportunity to live history every day. “If you are interested in politics and history, this really is the place to be.”

Providing tours of the Brumidi Corridors allows Rude the opportunity to continue to study and explore, and share what he learns with visitors. In addition to the thousands of American citizens he has given tours to over the years, by his own estimation, Rude has provided tours to visitors representing more than 75 countries.

To complete her Masters thesis in Museum Studies from Harvard University Extension School, visitor guide Emily Milot Lamarche has extensively studied how the Capitol Visitor Center provides a rich visitor experience that sets it apart from similar government buildings worldwide.

In her role as a guide for more than two years, Lamarche enjoys meeting

visitors from all over the world and sharing the “living” history of the Capitol. She notes, “I could be talking about the role of the Speaker of the House during a tour, and he could just happen to be walking by at that moment.”

As a part of her duties, Lamarche also provides the special tour, *Capitol and Congress During the Civil War*, like fellow guide Ronn Jackson. With these tours limited to 15 people, Lamarche enjoys that visitors “ask a lot more specific questions, which is a good challenge for me.”

Jackson and Lamarche were on a committee of guides that proposed the topic for the tour and then conducted three months of extensive research in order to create an engaging tour for visitors. Lamarche adds, “Giving this tour allows me to talk about specific events in the



Barbara Sirota (above) and Ronn Jackson, both visitor guides, take great pride in providing engaging Capitol tours for visitors.



During tours of Exhibition Hall, visitor assistant Tom Corbit points out his great-grandfather's vote for the confirmation of Louis Brandeis to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Capitol that took place in these historic rooms.”

Visitor assistant Tom Corbit has a very personal connection to the Capitol. While giving tours of Exhibition Hall, he likes to point out a specific item that has special meaning for him. Nestled in the Senate case of the 1913-1945 historical alcove is a facsimile of the “Roll Call Vote on the Confirmation of Louis Brandeis, 1916.” The 26th Senator, Robert Latham Owen, voted

“yes” on this particular vote; he also happens to be Corbit’s great-grandfather. Senator Owen was one of the first two U.S. senators from the newly-formed state of Oklahoma, serving from 1907-1925.

Just as Corbit enjoys talking with visitors and meeting people from all over the world, he also enjoys discovering the stories behind the objects within Exhibition Hall. Sharing the anecdote of his great-grandfather is one way that Corbit

is able to “make inanimate objects come alive for visitors by telling stories about them.”

Giving tours of Exhibition Hall and describing the history of the Capitol and Congress allows Corbit to share his passion for American history with visitors. He adds, “I look forward to coming to work everyday.”

The smiles and accommodating nature embodied in the visitor guides and assistants have made them successful in achieving the Architect of the Capitol’s goal to provide world-class service, all day, every day at the Capitol Visitor Center.

— Kristen Wandell

“If you are interested in politics and history, this really is the place to be.”



Photos by: Steve Payne

Supremely *Dedicated*

In the portfolio of buildings and grounds under the care of the Architect of the Capitol, perhaps no other facility is less known — both within and outside the AOC — than the Supreme Court of the United States.

“Despite whatever anyone may think, we are just like the rest of the agency,” said Louis Burrell, Supreme Court Building and Grounds supervisor. Whether removing an errant bird, tackling blizzards or planting flower bulbs, the crew of the grounds division takes pride in its work.

The U.S. Capitol was home to the Supreme Court from 1801 until the current building was occupied in 1935. The architect behind the design of the Supreme Court, Cass Gilbert of New York City, drew upon the classical Roman temple form as the basis for the Court’s new building. The building was built under the supervision of Chief Justice Howard Taft and Architect of the Capitol David Lynn.

Today, the care and maintenance of this temple of justice falls to the smallest of AOC’s jurisdictions — the 48 men and women of the AOC Supreme Court Building and Grounds. Because of its size, the crew is focused more on getting the job done than on their job titles. This is true of big jobs, like during last year’s blizzards when nearly everyone worked on snow removal, and small jobs, like a pipefitter helping the heating and air conditioning crew and vice-versa.

Sometimes referred to as a “marble temple,” the building is clad in a marble exterior and marble is found in the interior Great Hall and throughout the building. Much of the day-to-day care of the building’s

Sometimes referred to as a “marble temple,” the building is clad in a marble exterior.



marble is the responsibility of AOC stonemason Wayne Veney, who has served the Supreme Court since 1975.

Among Veney’s proudest achievements was the creation of the marble base for the statue of John Marshall (the fourth and longest serving Chief Justice of the United States). The statue was first unveiled on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol on May 10, 1884. On November 17, 1981, the restored statue was placed on the ground floor of the Supreme

Wayne Veney, AOC stonemason, has served the Supreme Court for over 35 years, working on projects such as building the Marshall statue base.

Court, on the base created by Veney and his colleagues.

There is a good reason that many longtime Capitol Hill employees have not heard much about the Supreme Court — it is by design. Beyond the quiet nature of the Court, like many other AOC jurisdictions, the Supreme Court Building and Grounds crew



AOC electrician Mike Wilcher helps ensure that the powerful are powered.

works behind the scenes, including an overnight crew led by Richard Seiss, who commutes from near the Pennsylvania border every evening.

“We are the A-Team,” said a laughing Veney. “We take care of it all — we are the spokes on the wheel.”

“The best part of the job is the people. This is one of the best places in the world to work.”

On the day shift, Louis Burrell along with fellow Warsaw, Virginia, resident Veney, may surpass Seiss for the longest daily commute (more than 100 miles). This 23-year AOC veteran has worked with the Court most of his career, starting as a grounds laborer with the Library of Congress. Soon after he moved to the Supreme Court Building and Grounds, he began working up the ladder to become the supervisor.

Burrell and his grounds team handle all the day-to-day grounds work around the Supreme Court, including the plantings, snow removal and barrier setups for special events. The team also works on the four courtyards nestled within the building and cares for the plants within the building. They also oversee the maintenance of the vehicles and grounds equipment.

“The best part of the job is the people,” said Burrell. “This is one of the best places in the world to work. There is a good diversity, a lot of trade knowledge to be learned. There are not too many other agencies where you learn grounds, pipefitting, and electrical skills all in one place.”

Another veteran AOC employee is the understated pipefitter Grant

Wallace. He has worked with the Supreme Court for 11 years, following 22 years with the Capitol Grounds. Wallace knows every nook and cranny of the Supreme Court, especially what is behind the scenes and inside the walls.

“I am getting kind of big to fit into some of these tight spaces,” said Wallace with a chuckle.

Wallace, along with many of his colleagues, is currently working on outfitting a number of spaces as part of a series of moves within the Court (as new justices have replaced retiring ones, it sets off a chain reaction of office relocations). Wallace shows off his handiwork in outfitting a new bathroom and kitchenette in one such space.

One employee also working on the project is electrician Mike Wilcher. “I have been here a long time. I have seen a lot of people leave and come back. The Chief Justice and Justice Kagan were both clerks here earlier in my tenure. The justices are nice to us — if they ask to have something done, we do it.”

The small size and longevity of many of the AOC teams responsible for the Court, coupled with the longevity and private nature of the justices,



AOC plasterer Frankie Adams ensures the walls of the Supreme Court are level and smooth.

has created a tight-knit community. Some AOC employees have even developed personal friendships with the justices.

“I remember when my daughter had to do a report for Black History Month. Justice [Thurgood] Marshall allowed my daughter to interview him personally,” said Veney. “She got triple A’s.”

In addition to the day-to-day support for the Court, the AOC has also been overseeing a multi-year modernization effort. The project’s main goals were to build an annex to the Supreme Court building and to replace virtually all the building systems, including electrical,

plumbing, heating, ventilating and air conditioning. This complete overhaul, led by outside contractors, is nearing completion and the responsibility for the ongoing operations rests with the AOC.

In addition, AOC employees continue to make improvements to the operations of the building. This includes the installation of modern and more energy-efficient lighting systems. For one such effort, Wilcher and his shop pulled more than 13 miles of wire in four days in a single room.

Led by James Yellman, facilities manager of the Supreme Court

Building and Grounds, the men and women of the AOC continue to ensure that in this quiet corner of Capitol Hill, the daily needs of the justices and their staffs are met in a responsive and can-do manner.

— *Matt Guilfoyle*

AOC has been overseeing a multi-year modernization effort.



Photo by: Susanne Bledsoe

The Right *Moves*

The 112th Congress has ushered in 16 new senators and 93 new representatives.

Anyone who has ever moved from one office location to another can testify that it takes foresight and detailed planning to ensure a smooth transition. Imagine, then, the degree of planning that is required after every election, when members of Congress and member-elects have to move into their new offices. In addition to members' offices, committee and leadership offices occasionally move as well.

The 112th Congress has ushered in 16 new senators and 93 new representatives, which requires additional preparation to accomplish

so many moves. Executing the daunting task with little hoopla, the talented employees of the Architect of the Capitol carry out this behind-the-scenes service after every election. While the actual moves may occur within a short time frame, the entire process begins more than a year in advance of the elections.

The process is now more complex than that of the early years of Congress. Until the early 1900s, most members of Congress used their desks in the House and Senate Chambers as their only workspace. Therefore, moving office space

AOC employees worked around the clock to move offices for the new 112th Congress.

was a matter of moving between desks. As Congress grew larger and services rendered to constituents expanded, the need for more space became unavoidable. Consequently, the Cannon House Office Building opened in 1908 and the Russell Senate Office Building opened in 1909. Additional buildings were built later for both the House and Senate as Congress grew. With the added buildings, arranging permanent workspaces became more complicated.

Today, hundreds of Architect of the Capitol employees are involved in facilitating congressional office moves. The AOC has a wide range of responsibilities during this transition period. The hard-working staff is responsible for moving boxes from the old office to the new office, drafting architectural layouts, laying cables, hanging shelves, painting walls, refinishing historic woodwork and making plaster repairs. The Senate jurisdiction has the added responsibility of installing furniture and carpet.

The moves consist of transporting everything from file cabinets to personal items. Occasionally, unique



Photo by: Chuck Badal

and unexpected items will be spotted during a move. As Riff Lanier, building inspector for the House Superintendent, says, “I’ve moved a lot of different things. I’ve moved animal heads. I’ve moved a cello for a Member.”

One particular move involved an 11-foot-tall totem pole that weighed more than 500 pounds. AOC employees had to find a creative solution to transport the huge pole from the Senate side of the campus to the Rayburn House Office Building.

According to Capitol Building staff, some of the biggest challenges they face are getting their jobs done in a safe and well-organized manner so that members and staff may continue their work without disruption.

“Although it may be physically and mentally draining, we’re here to get the job done,” says Lanier.

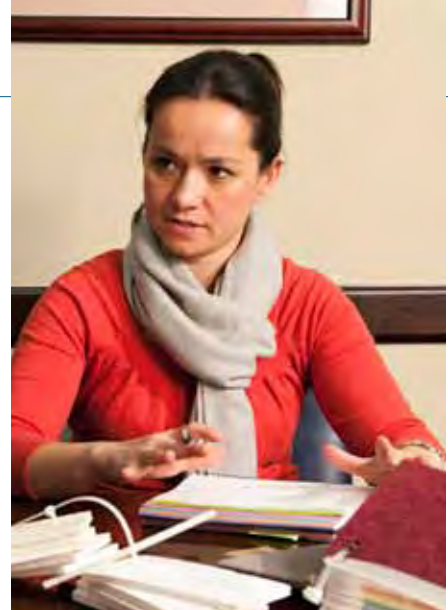


Photo by: Susanne Bledsoe

Though the office moves may vary between the Senate, House and Capitol, in each case a successful completion relies on the same time-honored method of research, planning, hard work and coordination. The AOC accomplishes the monumental task of congressional office moves by working together as a team to ensure a smooth transition for all involved.

— *Shalley Kim*



Photo by: Dewitt Roseborough

Hundreds of AOC employees are involved in facilitating congressional office moves.

Teamwork

Spotlight on the Business Transformation Division

Equals Success



Photo by: Susanne Bledsoe

What is BTD?

- A: Building Team Dynamics
- B: Balancing Tough Decision points
- C: Benchmarking Topnotch Deliverables

The answer is “D” — all of the above. At the Architect of the Capitol, BTD stands for Business Transformation Division, and the eight people that staff this small but mighty division provide all of the above services to the rest of the AOC.

Established by Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers in 2010, the Business Transformation Division applies best practices across the agency, helping to bring about innovation and prioritizing initiatives to be implemented AOC-wide.

“Quite simply,” says Christa Kuhl, Business Transformation Division director, “we work to help improve the AOC by making sure our co-workers are successful in what they do.”

Business Transformation Division staff have experience in information technology, safety, workforce planning, facilities maintenance, strategic planning, facilitation and

The BTD Team (from left): Christian Kessler, Linda Chester, Eric Swanson, Trish Fritz, Mary Jean Pajak, John Kelly, Marina Kittel, and Christa Kuhl.

quality management. They also have extensive expertise in developing metrics and measures to gauge success, and significant training in Lean Six Sigma and other quality improvement methods. They will collaborate with groups as large as an entire jurisdiction or meet with a single individual to develop the tools and policies to make our processes better.

The Business Transformation Division reports to Chief Operating

Officer Christine Merdon and assists her in focusing the AOC on supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

“The BTD team is playing an important role in helping me in our efforts to improve operations and reduce costs; enable process improvement; identify risks; and facilitate risk management,” noted Merdon.

“Our business is getting to know your business,” said Kuhl. “We are here to help explore ideas, examine options, prepare materials or presentations, and implement new and innovative practices. Most importantly, we serve as a neutral party or sounding board. We don’t take sides or audit or judge. We just meet with you, gather your ideas, and help you move forward with your plans, goals and priorities.”

Some of the services the Business Transformation Division provides include:

- Facilitating meetings, working groups and brainstorming sessions, as well as conducting research to promote innovation.
- Assessing and documenting current processes and helping to develop and model new processes to improve operations.

“Our business is getting to know your business.”



Photo by: Chuck Badal

Trish Fritz leads a session with some of the AOC's Critical Thinkers Strategy Development Team.

- Providing guidance and assisting in drafting and implementing strategic business plans and related performance metrics.
- Partnering and collaborating between organizational units to facilitate a team approach to problem solving.
- Surveying employees and customers, including survey design, administration and evaluation.

One of the group’s biggest undertakings is facilitating the development of the AOC’s next five-year Strategic Plan. AOC employees are writing the Strategic Plan and BTD staff are helping to facilitate discussions. They are holding more than 40 workshops to gather ideas and capture what matters most to AOC employees. These workshops will also help develop a new mission statement, a set of core values, and

most importantly, determine the strategic direction of the AOC.

So, whether you’re looking to Build Team Dynamics or Balance Tough Decisions, the Business Transformation Division is ready, willing and able to help. BTD staff will assist you with making positive changes — whether in small, incremental steps or through long-term strategic improvements. “I invite everyone to come and sit down with us and explore all of the great possibilities you’ve been thinking about,” said Kuhl.

— *Eva Malecki*

Have ideas on how to move the AOC forward?

Call: 202.226.5005

E-mail: btd@aoc.gov

Come see us in the Ford House Office Building, Rooms 360 and 569.

Doing Good:

A Call to Service



Photo: Courtesy of Eric Swanson

Eric Swanson (left) stands on the steps of the Ziggurat of Ur in Dhi Qar Province, Iraq, while deployed in 2006.

For United States servicemen and women, the decision to contribute to their country by joining the armed services is profoundly life changing. Many feel a call to duty at a young age; others are established in their careers when they feel the pull to join a cause larger than themselves. For a number of Architect of the Capitol employees, the call to serve in the National Guard or Ready Reserves is a decision that is mutually beneficial for the AOC and the military, and an opportunity for employees to enhance their careers.

Air Force Staff Sergeant David Poitras, a project manager for the Senate Office Buildings, answered

the call to enlist in the National Guard two weeks before his 35th birthday, the cutoff age to join the service. “Serving my country was always something I wanted to do,” said Poitras.

As a member of the DC Air National Guard, he was deployed with his unit for two weeks last May to San Luis Obispo, California. The unit also includes another AOC employee, Air Force Major Eric Swanson, a general engineer in the Business Transformation Division. Their task was to transform a World War II-era army base building into a usable high-tech classroom for officer training sessions.

With a limited amount of time and space to complete the project, Poitras and Swanson relied on their skills they had developed and refined while working for the AOC in order to complete the classroom renovation.

“As an AOC project manager, I’m usually the one supervising the work and providing direction,” says Poitras. “For this project, I both supervised the work and performed the physical labor alongside members of my team.”

Swanson noted that working on projects for the Guard, such as the undertaking in California, “helps you understand scheduling, limitations, planning and setting realistic goals.” Nineteen years ago when he was a high school junior, Swanson enlisted in the North Dakota Army National Guard, and since receiving his commission after college, has served as a construction engineering officer. The leadership skills he has developed while serving in the Guard have positively impacted his job with the AOC, giving him the opportunity to further his career.

“Guard and Reserve members like Major Swanson and Staff Sergeant Poitras are true citizen soldiers,” said Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Robin Morey, commander of the 113th Civil Engineer Squadron and superintendent of the Senate Office Buildings. He adds, “The old military



Photo: Courtesy of Darryl Whited



Photo: Courtesy of Robert Petruska



Photo: Courtesy of Eric Swanson

recruiting adage that it's just one weekend a month and two weeks a year all changed after 9-11. Guard and Reserve members must balance a civilian career, a military career and family commitments. Major Swanson and Staff Sergeant Poitras selflessly perform a delicate balancing act."

Retired Air Force Technical Sergeant Darryl Whited, a journeyman electrician in the Capitol Building Electrical Shop, retired a year ago from the Air Force Ready Reserve, following stints as an active duty member of the Marines and in the Marine Corps Ready Reserve. He has found that he can apply skills he learned in the military to jobs he performs throughout the Capitol.

"I see projects as a lump of clay and we work together to mold it into a usable space for Congress," says Whited. He added, "There is always something to do here at the Capitol — and I love what I do."

At times, serving in the National Guard or Ready Reserves can require an overseas deployment, and one that can take an AOC employee

away from their job and family for an extended period of time.

Consider Retired Navy Second Class Petty Officer Robert Petruska, pipefitter for the Capitol Building Plumbing Shop. For three years in the 1980s, Petruska served active duty in the Navy, and then joined the Ready Reserves until he retired in 2007. While employed with the AOC, he was recalled by the Reserves in 2005 and deployed to Kuwait and Iraq, where he served as a steel worker.

"The AOC was very supportive of my deployment," said Petruska. "My friend, Matt Shepherd, and other coworkers even sent me a care package."

Swanson encountered the same supportive attitude from the AOC when he was deployed to Kuwait for 15 months starting in 2005. While serving as the company commander of a Baltimore-based engineering unit that escorted transport personnel conducting logistics resupply missions throughout Iraq, he also received care packages from his AOC

AOC employees serving on deployments (from left): Darryl Whited, Robert Petruska and David Poitras.

coworkers. "Serving both the Guard and the AOC has never conflicted," noted Swanson.

Architect of the Capitol employees who are also members of the National Guard or Ready Reserve serve our country on two levels: they preserve and protect the Capitol for Congress and defend the nation when called upon. By harnessing the skills they have acquired from both organizations, these employees are benefiting our country and embodying the values of service and sacrifice, deserving of our grateful appreciation.

"I am proud of the AOC employees that have and continue to serve our country in the armed services," said Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers. "As a former active duty Air Force officer, I know from personal experience what an enriching experience it is to serve the nation as a member of the military. I support their efforts and thank them for their service."

— Kristen Wandell

“Serving my country was always something I wanted to do.”



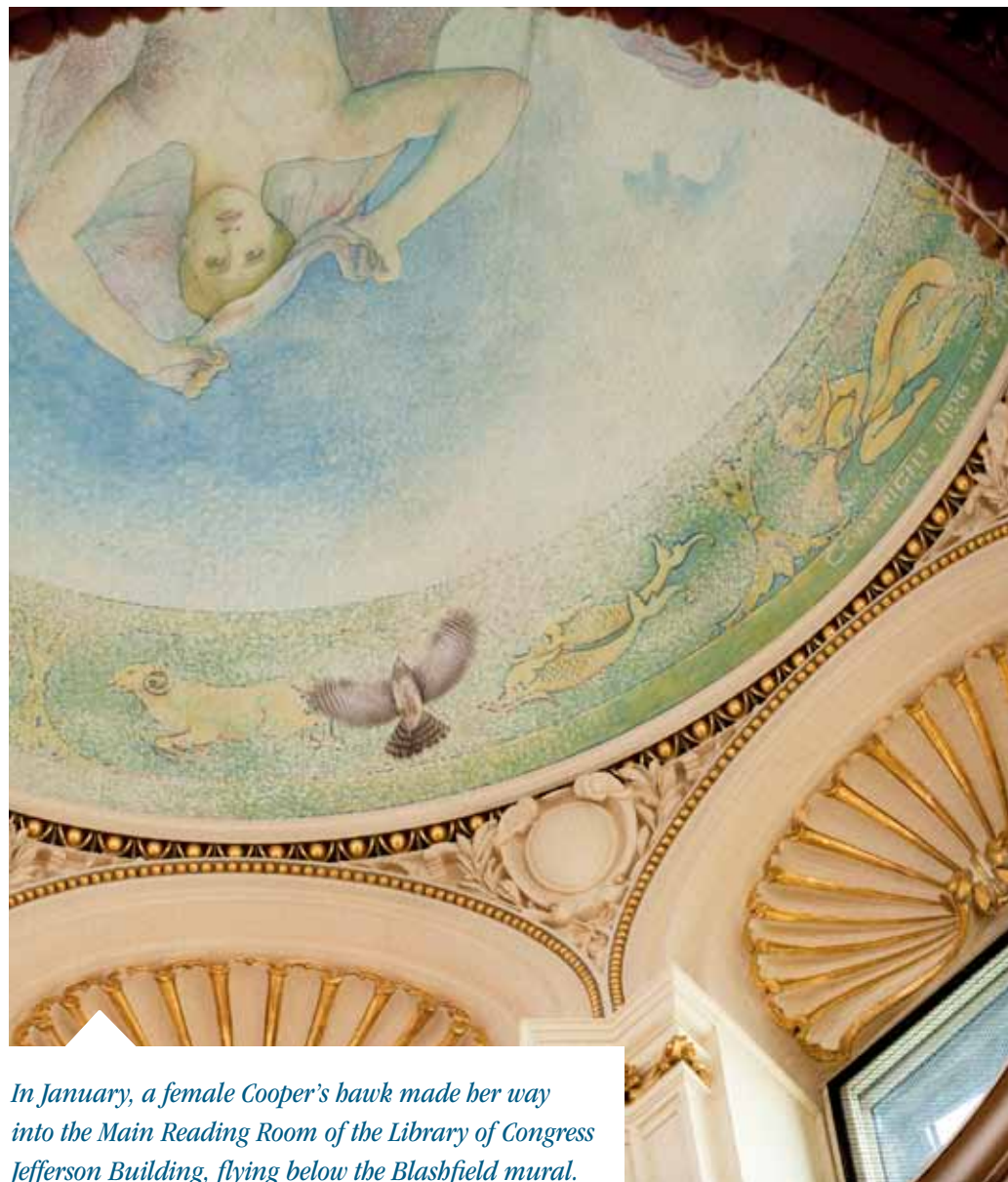
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In January, a female Cooper's hawk made her way into the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress Jefferson Building, flying below the Blasfield mural.

Photo by: Chuck Badal