

What we do

The Ventriloquism Institute is the Voice of Ventriloquism: a Florida 501(c)(3), founded in 2014, that does four things. We give people access to the history of ventriloquism. We bring together the people who do it today, the working pros and everyone who loves it. We inspire the next generation of ventriloquists. And we teach anyone who wants to learn. That's the whole job.

Why it matters

Ventriloquism is the art of giving a voice to something that doesn't have one. Right now, the art itself needs one. Its history is scattered across old programs, letters, photographs, newsletters and boxes that too often get thrown away when the people who made that history are gone. The dummy survives. The story doesn't. And what does exist is hard to access. Here's why ventriloquism's story is worth saving. A ventriloquist's dummy, Stooky Bill, became one of the first recognizable images ever seen on television. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy became radio superstars when nobody could even see the dummy. And nearly a century later, ventriloquists are still winning Got Talent competitions around the world, reaching finals, earning Golden Buzzers and proving the art is anything but dead. This isn't some dusty little sideshow. It's a living, worldwide entertainment art with a remarkable past, working professionals carrying it forward today, and kids out there who haven't discovered it yet. So we preserve the history before it disappears, give today's ventriloquists a place to call home and hand the next generation a book, the puppet and the possibility.

The Archive

VENTRIL^QUISM.ORG ventriloquism.org is the world-wide hub of ventriloquism and its community online. Free, sourced, and open to everyone. As of September 7, 2026: **540,909 sourced facts; 84,513 entities**, including 56,081 people and 5,986 ventriloquial figures; **48,707 distinct sources**. Every fact carries the source it came from. The base includes **26,420 Library of Congress newspaper pages**, period trade newsletters, club journals, convention programs, and video transcripts. And we document the figure makers as carefully as the performers. That's the half of the record nobody kept.



Two figures with jobs. Yes, really.

Freddy Fiddlesticks, the Institute's spokes-dummy, carved by Alan Semok. He handles public statements and most complaints. **Dusty Backlog**, historian, a Mack figure with half a million facts to look after. Both do interviews, on camera, with the founder.

Programs

The Archive and preservation
Pop-up exhibitions and educational events
Free live public performances
Read, Laugh & Learn, a children's literacy program built on live shows and books written to be read out loud
Youth grants for kids with real talent and a real obstacle

Track record

Under earlier names, the same corporation paid for a young Irish dancer's lessons, a martial artist's tuition and competition fees, and a youth orchestra's trip to Europe. It ran the Same Is Lame Jazz Ambassadors as a free public performance program for years. It put on literacy programs in schools and libraries. That's twelve years of doing, not planning.

Board of Advisors

Terry Fator · Ronn Lucas · Bob Abdou · Jeff Goltz · Chance Wolf · Mike Palma · Trish Dunn · Steve Hewlett · Jacki Manna

Founder and president

Jimmy Vee: interested in ventriloquism since 1984 and a working ventriloquist for more than thirty years. Magician. Children's author. Co-founder of an Orlando marketing agency. Former executive director of the Vent Haven International Ventriloquist ConVENTion (2024 to 2025). Founder of the Florida Ventriloquist Association.

Six facts you can build a story on

Edgar Bergen went from vaudeville headliner to the biggest thing on radio. His 1938 rating of 41.2 is still the highest ever recorded for a weekly series, and nobody could see the dummy. The most famous censorship fight in radio history started because a starlet flirted with a dummy: Mae West, Charlie McCarthy, 1937, an FCC finding and an NBC ban that lasted more than a decade. Paul Winchell patented an artificial heart. Farfel sold Nestlé chocolate for ten years. Charlie McCarthy, Jerry Mahoney, and Knucklehead Smiff are all in the Smithsonian. Frank Marshall carved both Mahoney and Farfel, and the deepest record of him anywhere is in this archive.