**Problem Statement**

**Organization Name:** Salisbury University

**Dataset Name:** Naval Officer Shipping Lists (NOSLs)

**Difficulty:** 

Level 1: Participants with little to no knowledge in data science. The problem statement is straightforward about what the final product may look like. The dataset contains enough information to answer the questions in the problem statement. Start from the basics and create an interesting story.

# Background

Far from being isolated backwaters, the Chesapeake colonies (Maryland and Virginia) were a vibrant part of the world economy, trading extensively within the British empire and with some foreign ports. Tax officials documented that trade in Naval Officer Shipping Lists (NOSLs) that recorded all the ships entering or clearing from Chesapeake ports along with detailed lists of their cargoes. Manuscript NOSLs survive for X number of ports of entry, mostly for the years 1725-1771. For his research for a doctoral dissertation at UMCP, the late Stephen Hardy transcribed the NOSLs into a relational database. There are separate datasets for each Chesapeake port with surviving NOSLs. The datasets are summaries of entrances (that is, imports) or summaries of clearances (that is, exports) for a particular port. Within each dataset, there are separate tabs for each year for which records survive. The data include the type of good (tobacco, wheat, wine, etc.), the quantity and type of measurement (this varied by the type of good, but it could be pounds, barrels, pipes, etc.), and the destination (for clearances) or the port of origin (for entrances). Some of the datasets also include probable prices for the goods. The ports for which datasets exist are Accomack (Virginia’s Eastern Shore), Annapolis (from the Patuxent around the north end of the Bay to the Choptank), James River Lower (the 35 easternmost miles of the James, including Norfolk/Hampton), James River Upper (the rest of the James), Oxford (Maryland’s Eastern Shore south of the Choptank), Rappahannock, South Potomac (south side of the Potomac—no records survive for the north side), and York.

# Questions

These data could be used in a variety of ways. For example:

* The quantities of goods exported and imported from one or more ports could be matched by year to **measure the ups and downs of the economy of those areas over time and to note any shifts in what was being produced in those areas**.
* For the datasets with prices, a “balance of trade” could be determined. Another area to explore could be the variations in trading partners among different Chesapeake ports; which ports traded more with other American colonies, which with the West Indies, and which with European destinations, and how did that change over time?
  + **What goods were shipped where?**
  + **What goods were imported and from where?**
  + **How much did this vary by Chesapeake port and over time?**
* Any additional insights.