



CENTRAL
ARKANSAS
LIBRARY
SYSTEM

STATE
OF THE
LIBRARY
2020-21

THE LIBRARY, REWRITTEN.

THE LIBRARY, RESPONSIVE.

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2019, we created a document that laid out the vision for the Library in the future via a strategic plan for 2019-2022. We set forth a number of goals, and each year we are working toward achieving them.

We were able to stay true to our mission: “The Central Arkansas Library System provides resources and services to help residents reach their full potential, and to inspire discovery, learning, and cultural expression.” And we prioritized our values as we worked through these massive challenges. We asked ourselves, *How does an organization whose main goal is to put books and resources in hands continue to serve the public when a contagious virus halts close contact and potential germ-spreading activities?* The answer is through tenacity and innovation.

While this year *looked* different, it was no different when it came to making progress on our strategic goals. Where our efforts originally would have featured more face-to-face engagement with patrons and events hosting large numbers of people, our team proved agile and seamlessly pivoted to online and digital programs. Instead of patrons browsing in branches, they could pick out books online and grab books curbside or download digital media. For programs that had been in the pipeline, we were able to lay the foundation so that we could hit the ground

running as soon as we were able. And our branches found new usefulness as voting locations and hubs for distributing food.

I am truly proud of what this team has been able to accomplish in the face of nearly insurmountable challenges that seemed to come in waves. And at every turn, we continued to prove that we are The Library, Rewritten. On the following pages, I invite you to explore the goals that we set forth and see how we were able to accomplish them this past year.



Nate Coulter
Executive Director



(from left) Pulaski County Judge Barry Hyde, Sammye Hicks, Tena Brooks, State Representative Denise Ennett, and Nate Coulter at the launch of the CALS Millie Brooks MicroLibrary



OUR MISSION

The Central Arkansas Library System provides resources and services to help residents reach their full potential, and to inspire discovery, learning, and cultural expression.

OUR VISION

The Central Arkansas Library System is recognized as a leading community institution improving literacy, the exchange of ideas, workforce development, and social engagement.

OUR CORE VALUES

We offer superior customer service.

We believe in the freedom to know.

We respect diverse perspectives and provide access to all.

We cultivate collaboration and innovation both internally and with external partners.

We provide an open and respectful workplace.

We are wise stewards of public resources.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Refocus institutional culture to more directly help residents fulfill their needs and potential.

Enhance core community-based services, and re-evaluate the scope and depth of collections, to attract new customers and expand audiences.

Revitalize existing spaces, and expand access options, to better serve varied customers and communities.

Integrate service approaches and management of the resources and facilities at Library Square (outside of the Main Library), and ensure the sustainability of these offerings, to advance the Library's mission and vision, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

Use advance marketing to expand use and awareness of the Library, especially by targeted audiences, and to support resource development efforts.

Increase private and public support of the Library.

Develop an organization that fully supports and deploys its resources, both human and material, to best serve our communities.



Let us show you what makes CALS an indispensable part of the community.

THE LIBRARY, REINVESTED.

ECONOMIC IMPACT EVALUATION & ANALYSIS

Last year, CALS engaged a local consulting firm, Boyette Strategic Advisors, to study the period of 2010-19 and report on the measurable economic impact CALS had on the Little Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Pulaski, Faulkner, Saline, Lonoke, Perry, and Grant counties. Relying on nationally normed statistical methods and CALS's employment, operational spending, capital investments, and retail sales data, Boyette Strategic has recently determined that the total economic impact of CALS over this ten-year period exceeded one billion dollars. **Get the full report at cals.org/cals-impact-analysis-report/.**



\$1 Billion



215,000
festival attendees



25 million
items loaned



\$30 million
state & local tax impact

1.3 million
meetings facilities users

3 million
logins on public computers

3,250
jobs CALS employment supported

2 million
educational event attendees

\$485 million
added to Little Rock economy

From 2010 to 2019, **\$159 million** of public funding generated **\$1 billion** of impact
or for every **\$1** of public money CALS returned **more than \$5** of economic impact.

“What we are doing at the Rock It! Lab is really a continuation of what the library has been doing for many years...We are democratizing access to resources, knowledge and tools to under-resourced entrepreneurs so they can start, grow, and scale their businesses.”

*Benito Lubazibwa, Founder,
Advancing Black Entrepreneurship*

ROCK IT! LAB

A big program that spent a lot of time germinating in 2020 so that it can see its full potential in 2021 is the Rock It! Lab, a partnership of the Central Arkansas Library System and nonprofit organization Advancing Black Entrepreneurship. This small business incubator is designed to promote entrepreneurship— particularly in under-resourced communities. Located in the Cox Building, it was created to provide both the space necessary to research as well as access to the information necessary to help people traverse the difficult path of business ownership. In February 2021, Leah Patterson was hired (through a grant from United Way) to help guide entrepreneurs on their journey from idea to ownership.



COUNT UP + BRAINFUSE

CALS received a grant for \$201,366 from the Walton Family Foundation to launch Count UP, an online tutoring program aimed at pairing students with tutors (both paid and volunteer) specifically working on the topic of math. Count UP sessions will be held at the Hillary Rodham Clinton Children’s Library & Learning Center. By the end of 2020, there were two tutors on staff working with 12 students. As of early 2021, more than 60 students have been paired with tutors.

The grant enabled the library to provide access to Brainfuse HelpNow and JobsNow, an online resource that provides on demand eLearning for math and a variety of subjects as well as interview tips and career resources.

CALS FOUNDATION

In March 2021, Eliza Borne was hired as the Foundation’s new Director of Development. The Foundation helps provide support for programs like the Rock It! Lab, Count UP, Summer Reading Club, and the Six Bridges Book Festival. Your support makes the difference. Find out how at [CALS.org/foundation](https://cals.org/foundation).

THE LIBRARY, RECONNECTED.

REACHING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

CALS began extending our community outreach by developing a small but mighty Community Outreach team. The team includes Courtney Frazier Jones, Community Outreach Coordinator; Maria Aguilar, Community Liaison for the Latinx community; and Jessica McDaniel, Community Liaison for the African American community. They utilized radio, virtual partnership programming, and socially distanced door-to-door outreach. Some of the organizations they were able to work with include Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Jack and Jill Inc., Arkansas Dream Center, the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, the UAMS Culinary Medicine Program, the Mexican Consulate, Little Rock School District's English for Speakers of Other Languages program, Arkansas Children's Hospital Southwest Little Rock Community Clinic, Mamás Unidas, AR Kids Read, and the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub.



“ This is our vision going forward, simply to help. ”

Courtney Frazier Jones

“Since the beginning of my duties, the CALS Community truck has helped put the CALS brand in front of the Latinx community. This vehicle has delivered hundreds of books at community events, at churches, and at Chicot Elementary School. I have also used it when I participated as a volunteer in the Be Mighty Program, and it was a fundamental tool in the 2020 census.”

Maria Aguilar



“One of my best experiences so far is doing outreach in an apartment complex. I was wearing my CALS t-shirt, jeans, and Ankara fabric headwrap, getting swarmed by a group of kids who had puzzled faces and asked me, ‘YOU work at a library?! What do you do? Can we come see you?’ Representation matters! I love talking with individuals, especially youth, in the black community and cultivating a sense of interest and ownership in their local library system.”

Jessica McDaniel





MILLIE BROOKS MICROLIBRARY

Could you have “just a little library” if it allows us to help in other ways? This question was posed to the community of Wrightsville, and the answer was a resounding, YES! Rather than a full-time space dedicated to books, we created an amalgam of services that have worked well across other locations, just on a smaller scale. Reduced service hours limited to Tuesdays and Thursdays keep overhead down while still being able to serve the community of Wrightsville in creative and meaningful ways.

“Just before Christmas, a patron handed me a note reading, ‘I need help. Please help me. Thank you.’ We did by bagging up food and clothes and removing old fines from her CALS account,” said Courtney Frazier Jones, Community Outreach Coordinator. “This is our vision going forward, simply to help.”

We added a food pantry and clothing closet, making clothes available as well as a space to make repairs and alterations. Patrons who initially stopped by for printing are now also checking out DVDs and books. We’re servicing three area elementary schools: Landmark, Harris, and Daisy Bates.

CELEBRATE FREEDOM

Juneteenth was added to the CALS holiday and closing calendar. All locations within CALS will be closed on June 18 and 19 to celebrate the emancipation of those who were enslaved in the United States. Recognizing this important date signifies to our staff and patrons that African Americans in our community are vital to our success.

CENSUS

We assisted more than 300 people in completing the 2020 U.S. census, resulting in over \$9 million to the community over the next 10 years.

MINORITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT WEEK

During Minority Enterprise Development Week, CALS hosted two bilingual workshops in partnership with Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce, Arkansas Women’s Business Center, Winrock International, and the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center.

YOUR VOTE COUNTS

Eight of our branches helped almost 60,000 citizens fulfill their civic duty and vote in our local and presidential election. We simply provided the space and adjusted our hours accordingly; the Pulaski County Election Commission was responsible for set up, providing all the necessary equipment and leading the operation of the voting process. Voting totals include early voting as well as election day votes.



THE LIBRARY, REENGAGED.

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE HERE

CALS has always been lucky to have enthusiastic volunteers who generously give their time. During the early months of 2020, volunteers were supporting efforts at all branch locations, the Ron Robinson Theater, and the Bookstore and Galleries at Library Square, and preparing for upcoming events. When the library shut down due to the pandemic in mid-March, we focused on keeping volunteers as engaged as possible while following COVID-19 safety protocols, including developing ways volunteers could assist virtually, outside the library doors or curbside, and off-site when possible. Even with the abbreviated calendar, our volunteers adapted to meet the needs of the library.

Volunteers were welcomed back to the branch locations in mid-October in limited numbers to assist with various projects, including new opportunities at the Roberts Library and the Galleries at Library Square. All volunteers working in library buildings followed the same COVID-19 protocol as staff.



IN 2020, OUR VOLUNTEERS

- provided virtual math tutoring for Count UP
- gave social media support and served as ambassadors for branch programs
- took projects home and returned them to the library to support virtual programs
- collected and boxed used books to accompany meals for those in need
- distributed holiday meals
- moderated talks, performed data entry, and picked up and delivered books for the virtual Six Bridges Book Festival

SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS

With support from a Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities grant and technical assistance from the Safe Routes Partnership, CALS and Little Rock Parks and Recreation teamed up to temporarily open two pedestrian lanes on Jonesboro Drive between the Children's Library, the Little Rock Zoo, and War Memorial Park.

Community members from neighborhoods around the city met monthly to create Little Rock's Safe Routes to Parks Action Plan. This group of neighbors helped identify barriers that prevent park access and implement solutions to address those barriers. The temporary "pop-up" lanes were not only an opportunity for people to experience a safer space for walking and biking, but also bridge the racial divide created by I-630. More than 1,000 trips were taken during the "road diet."

According to Kay Kay DeRossette, CALS Grants Coordinator, "By tracking the usage throughout the road diet, we not only provided a safer route but hope to use that information to create a more permanent solution along that path."

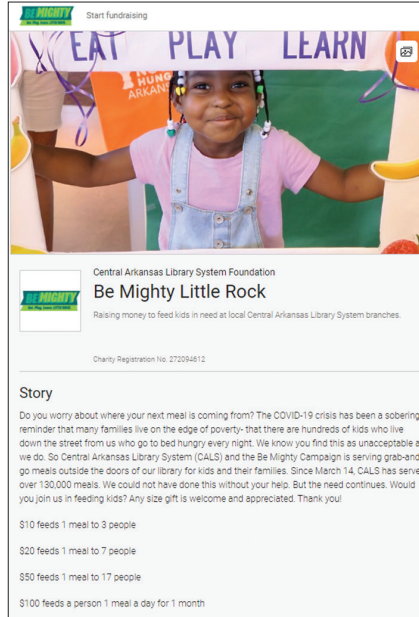
CALS will expand efforts to improve safety and increase accessibility to parks in the heart of the city. The Library will use remaining grant funds to engage Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects as well as work with the City and other partners to come up with possible permanent improvements to make the overpass more pedestrian and bike friendly.



BE MIGHTY LITTLE ROCK

Through partnerships with the City of Little Rock, Rock Region Metro, Food Research and Action Center, National League of Cities, Little Rock School District, World Central Kitchen, Pulaski County Special School District, Clinton Presidential Library, and Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, this citywide campaign aims to connect kids and teens 18 and under with free meals. Be Mighty already served afterschool meals and snacks, but meal service was expanded during the pandemic to include breakfast, lunch, dinner, and meals for adults.

Holiday meal boxes were distributed to families in need through the Roberts Nutritional Fund and CARES Act funding. Each household received a box containing 30 pounds of fresh ingredients as well as four recipes. In total, 20,900 pounds of healthy food in 550 boxes provided 9,625 meals and fed 1,925 people.



8,803

meals served to adults
and

175,367

meals served to children
at CALS branches

197%

increase in meals
served in 2020
over 2019



556

volunteers across the
system donated

8,212

hours for a value of

\$208,831.16

JERRY KLINE COMMUNITY IMPACT PRIZE

Developed in partnership between the Gerald M. Kline Family Foundation and *Library Journal*, this award recognizes the public library as a vital community asset and honors a library that has achieved this recognition to the highest degree through relationships with civic stakeholders and the community.

CALS was one of three libraries given Honorable Mention. Meredith Schwartz, editor of *Library Journal*, said the libraries selected for honorable mention “stood out as well for their imaginative and replicable focus on equity, social justice, and the health of their communities.”

THE LIBRARY, REIMAGINED.

PROGRAMMING PIVOT

CALS has always offered a variety of programming, and this past year was no different—despite some reimagining. We made the effort to create online programs, and our patrons made the effort to engage with them.

2,169

programs

59,036

curbside pickups

182,351

help sessions

10,326

grab & go activity bags

2,763,028

uses of database and research tools

82,985

essential services
(fax, notary, computer sessions)

8,148

new cardholders

343,456

wi-fi sessions

303,964

social media engagements



Children's Library Interim Manager Abby Kerby films a segment for the Arkansas PBS series *Blueberry's Clubhouse*.

SIX BRIDGES BOOK FESTIVAL

After delighting Festival goers for 16 years, the Arkansas Literary Festival was given a makeover and new name, Six Bridges Book Festival. A tribute to Little Rock's six structures spanning the Arkansas River, Six Bridges Book Festival is a varied cultural event with a focus on bridging communities and bringing people together to enjoy the diverse presentations of the written word.

Armed with a Zoom Squad, the Festival's coordinator, Brad Mooy, pivoted, adjusted, and rescheduled the in-person April event to a digital format held in October. The new moniker made its premiere with more than 70 authors from around the country providing over 50 sessions during the 11-day online event. Book lovers were able to participate and engage with their favorite authors and discover new ones from the safety and comfort of the venue of their choice.



11

day festival

14

ZOOM techs

52

virtual sessions

71

presenters

DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAM

In 2020, Digital Literacy programming was, like everything else, dramatically affected by COVID-19. However, we were able to pivot successfully to virtual programming, which attracted high numbers of attendees for individual classes, particularly Microsoft Excel and Word, WordPress, and Zoom. And our partnership with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center led to some great, well-attended programming.

To meet technology-education needs during the pandemic, we introduced several successful new classes about video production and work-from-home tools. Digital Literacy also created significant video content for the CALS YouTube channel in 2020. Recordings of virtual classes were, of course, a staple, but we also now have an ongoing series adapting and expanding on the content of the Rock Star Tech Tips class. Finally, the primary technology classroom is now outfitted for virtual programs, so it will be easy to transition to hybrid virtual and in-person programs when that is a viable option.



2020 BY THE NUMBERS

CALS has more than 215,000 cardholders; of those, more than 50,000 are Student Tech Cards. Digital items made up about 49% of our total circulation for the year.

1,953,012

unique items checked out

physical items

- 695,896 books
- 20,967 books on CD
- 273,337 DVDs
- 9,576 music CDs
- 3,029 library of things (toys, tools, fishing poles, telescopes, etc.)
- 2,414 MOBIUS (shared materials from a partnership of multistate libraries)

digital downloads

- 410,049 eBooks
- 294,418 audiobooks
- 217,415 songs
- 15,786 videos
- 8,619 magazines
- 1,506 comics

2,834

grab & go bags given during SRC



SUMMER READING CLUB

The theme for Summer Reading Club in 2020 was “Imagine Your Story”; at the program’s core was, of course, reading. With distancing in mind, our digital version took all the excitement of reading and rewards and put it online. Through a tracking system, participants could log books, movies, and activities to collect their prizes. Through the use of the CALS Kids YouTube channel, kids were able to watch and participate in virtual science sessions, cooking demos, puppet shows, and even rapping fairy tales!

Another favorite summer pastime—crafting—got an upgrade. Staff members packaged craft supplies with instructions so kids could still create at home on their own time. These grab & go crafts included everything kids need for a fun and educational experience.

THE LIBRARY, REDEFINED.



Looking south down Main Street Bridge into Little Rock, Ark., 1950.

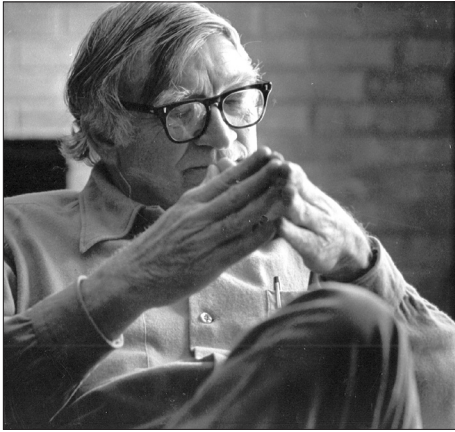
COMMUNITY HISTORY PROJECT

We are always taking care to update and improve our buildings, and we take the same care with online content. While there were several projects taken on by the CALS Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, one in particular stood out: more than 500 photographs from the Clifton Hull photograph collection were digitized to be more accessible to patrons. Clifton Hull was a draftsman with the U.S. Corps of Engineers; during that time, he took a number of photographs that documented Little Rock and North Little Rock spanning the '50s to the '80s.

TELL US YOUR STORY

Our community is in the midst of a historic event. Future generations will want to know how we lived through the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The CALS Butler Center encourages members of our Central Arkansas community to document their experiences during this time of crisis. We are looking for diaries, photographs, poetry, oral history interviews, artwork, video, etc. Find out more at robertslibrary.org/collections/covid19.





Dorris Alexander (Dee) Brown—librarian, historian, and bestselling author; circa 1978.

DEE BROWN CELEBRATION

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Arkansas author Dee Brown’s American classic *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, CALS offered a series of lectures and exhibitions to recognize the enduring importance and power of Brown’s groundbreaking volume. Through a Department of Arkansas Heritage grant, the Roberts Library of Arkansas History & Art mounted an exhibition of Native American art from the J. W. Wiggins Collection from UA Little Rock, offering a video version during closures in the spring. Additionally, we digitized 64 items from the Dee Brown Collection and established an online exhibition. The Dee Brown celebration also included three Legacies & Lunch programs as well as a partnership with the Six Bridges Book Festival for a program featuring David Treuer, author of *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*. The virtual nature of these events allowed them to be far more accessible than they would have been initially.

218
program attendees

3,799
exhibition attendees



Col. Nate Todd and members of the Writeous Poets.

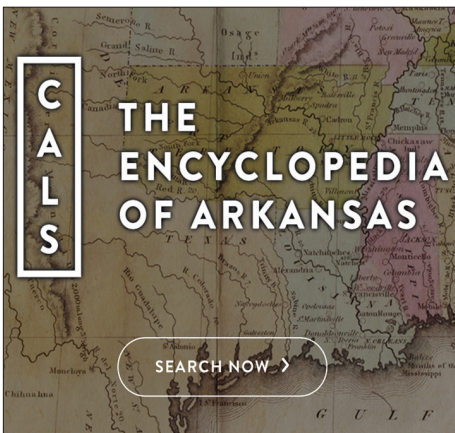
NEA BIG READ

CALS’s participation in the National Endowment for the Arts’ “Big Read,” focusing on Tim O’Brien’s classic *The Things They Carried*, got off to a good start in March 2020 (before COVID halted in-person events) with a kick-off event featuring the Writeous Poets and Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs Director Col. Nate Todd, a panel discussion of the book at the Amy Sanders Library, a series of Vietnam veteran oral history recordings by the CALS Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, and the first of a series of Vietnam movies at the CALS Ron Robinson Theater. When programming resumed in a virtual format in the fall, Tim O’Brien gave three talks, including a keynote address at the Six Bridges Book Festival. Our Ron Robinson Theater staff facilitated a virtual movie series, book clubs gathered online to discuss *The Things They Carried*, and several of the planned programs were presented in a virtual environment.

573
attendees

18
Big Read events

1,000
copies of *The Things They Carried* were given away to patrons



Visit at encyclopediaofarkansas.net.

CALS ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARKANSAS

The CALS Encyclopedia of Arkansas—a free, authoritative online source of information about the rich history, geography, and culture of Arkansas—hit a milestone in March 2020 with its 6,000th entry: about the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, written by ASU history professor Cherisse Jones-Branch. The CALS team behind this treasure trove of information estimates that they add between 400 and 500 entries per year, along with photographs and other media. With more than 5,000 additional entries seeking volunteer authors, there is much still to be added. History doesn’t stop, so recent events (including the state’s experience with the COVID-19 pandemic) are on that growing list.

1.3 million
website users

2.9 million
page views

THE LIBRARY, RENEWED.

2020 REVENUE

\$18,366,089

property tax

\$522,888

State of Arkansas

\$461,218

finer, fees, rental income

\$344,307

CALS Foundation, Friends of CALS, grants

\$382,118

other

\$20,076,620

total

2020 EXPENSES

\$11,917,288

salaries and benefits

\$1,540,733

library materials

\$4,412,120

operating expenses

\$338,663

capital expenses

\$18,008,804

total



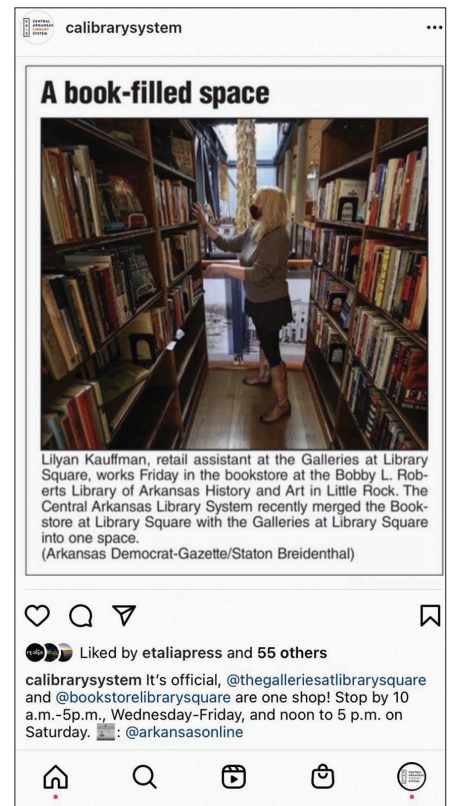
LET THERE BE...SOLAR ENERGY

The CALS Board approved in July 2020 the purchase from Entegrity of the solar power that will be generated from a new 1-megawatt capacity solar farm. This will save the library millions of dollars in electricity expenses over the 25-year life of the agreement.

Ideally, some of the panels would have been located on the roof of the Main Library, but that wasn't feasible. Instead, the array will be located near the Clinton Airport. Entegrity will own the facility. CALS will pay Entegrity for the electricity generated there and receive credit against CALS bills from the electric utility.

BOOKSTORE ON THE MOVE

While technically the big move didn't happen until the early days of 2021, the plans to merge the CALS Bookstore at Library Square (in the Cox Building since 2001) and the CALS Galleries at Library Square (in the Roberts Library) were hatched in 2020. This new combined retail space provides patrons and passersby the opportunity to browse books and art in one convenient shopping area: The Galleries at Library Square inside the Bobby L. Roberts Library of Arkansas History & Art.



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Nathan James
*Deputy Executive Director
of Technology and Collection Innovation*

Eliza Borné
Director of Development

Tameka Lee
Director of Communications

Jo Spencer
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Locations

Library Square | 100 Rock St.

Main Library
918-3000

**Bobby L. Roberts Library of
Arkansas History & Art**

320-5700
BUTLER CENTER FOR ARKANSAS STUDIES
RESEARCH ROOM
THE GALLERIES AT LIBRARY SQUARE | 320-5790

CALS Ron Robinson Theater
320-5715

Millie M. Brooks MicroLibrary
13024 HWY 365 S. | WRIGHTSVILLE | 537-3186

Dee Brown Library
6325 BASELINE RD. | LITTLE ROCK | 568-7494

**Hillary Rodham Clinton Children's
Library & Learning Center**
4800 W. 10TH ST. | LITTLE ROCK | 978-3870

John Gould Fletcher Library
823 N. BUCHANAN ST. | LITTLE ROCK | 663-5457

Maumelle Library
10 LAKE POINTE DR. | MAUMELLE | 851-2551

Sidney S. McMath Library
2100 JOHN BARROW RD. | LITTLE ROCK | 225-0066

Max Milam Library
609 APLIN AVE. | PERRYVILLE | 501-889-2554

Esther DeWitt Nixon Library
703 W. MAIN ST. | JACKSONVILLE | 457-5038

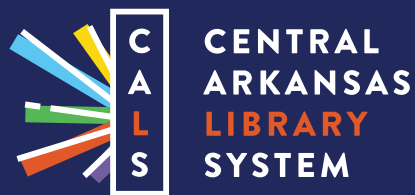
Oley E. Rooker Library
11 OTTER CREEK CT. | LITTLE ROCK | 907-5991

Amy Sanders Library
10200 JOHNSON DR. | SHERWOOD | 835-7756

Adolphine Fletcher Terry Library
2015 NAPA VALLEY DR. | LITTLE ROCK | 228-0129

Roosevelt Thompson Library
38 RAHLING CIR. | LITTLE ROCK | 821-3060

Sue Cowan Williams Library
1800 CHESTER ST. | LITTLE ROCK | 376-4282



THE LIBRARY, REWRITTEN.

CALS.ORG
100 Rock St. | Little Rock | Arkansas | 72201

