

Director's Report for April 25, 2024

Williams Reopening: The Family Dinner night was a huge success. We raised \$16,435 to provide programming at Williams and had an energetic turnout of over 200 people last Thursday night. There were six food vendors spread around the library. Two of those were graduates of the Rock It! Lab incubator program. My favorite items were the greens and yams from K. Hall serving in the new teaching kitchen. The next morning the mayor came and participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony along with two city directors. Williams Manager Latina Sheard spoke at both programs and related how excited the Dunbar Middle School kids were when they were given a sneak preview earlier in the week. Thanks to Dustin McDaniel for introducing the mayor. Use the following links to view media and photos: [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#), [Family Dinner Night](#), and [Ribbon Cutting](#).

Main Remodeling: The contractor is reporting that they are ahead of schedule with demolition. We will have some photos and videos from inside the building to show you ([you can also view the photos by clicking here](#)) what progress they have made. The actual construction will start soon. Our architects will attend the meeting in case anyone has any questions for them.

Other Upgrades from Bond Election of May 2022: The Terry branch has received fresh paint and will soon have new flooring and light fixtures. Dee Brown and McMath will receive painting and flooring upgrades this calendar year. Ron Robinson Theater will get new equipment including a new projector later this year. It will also undergo some cosmetic updates that will begin late 2024 or early 2025. The remaining upgrades to other branches will occur in 2025.

Deferred Maintenance Projects: In addition to the capital projects funded by the 2022 bonds, CALS has several projects this year that will be paid for out of the deferred maintenance budget. The HVAC replacement at Milam is almost complete (along with some new fresh paint). Later this year, we will replace the heat pumps at McMath and the roof at Dee Brown. We are currently replacing the roof at Maumelle with proceeds from an insurance claim for recent hail damage to the roof.

Strategic Planning: Carol and Stephanie are compiling a staff group of approximately 25 employees who have expressed an interest in helping. Thanks to Karama Neal, who has agreed to participate in the staff planning team as a representative of the CALS board. All members of the board are invited to participate in a focus group on Wednesday, May 22, at noon. That meeting will take place in Room 204 of the Roberts Library/Mini-Main.

CALS Cruiser: We are eyeing a mid-June arrival for the long-awaited bookmobile. We have posted the notice that we are looking to hire a Bookmobile Manager. Pam is researching safety procedures and best practices from other libraries and looking for locations where we might be planning trips. The Cruiser will involve a variety of CALS departments, from Outreach to Community Resources.

Communications: The Williams Library grand reopening has been a significant part of the Communications Department's April projects. We're thankful to everyone who contributed to its success, from housekeeping and maintenance to our board members. We have one more community event on May 4 to wrap up the celebration.

In addition to focusing on Williams Library, Comms has been working on the art and rollout for the CALS Cruiser and promoting Tim Alberta's and Tommy Orange's presentations at Ron Robinson Theater as well as El Día Del Niño (Children's Day) at Maumelle Library and Naturally Arkansas at Children's Library. They also host a small party for staff and patrons to enjoy the solar eclipse. The "No Sun Day Sundae Party" on the top of the Library Square parking deck was a way to break away from the crowds during the brief closure for totality and enjoy some ice cream, with special toppings made by our very own Kelli Marks.

Development: Library Giving Day was April 3, 2024. We received a total of \$28,730 in donations, \$21,409 of which were designated for CALS's Legal Fund (these donations made us eligible for a \$15,000 match for the legal fund from the Arkansas Public Law Center).

Other fundraising projects include the Main Library capital campaign and seeking sponsors for the Six Bridges Book Festival. The capital campaign committee – co-chaired by Rush Harding and Lisa Ferrell – has started taking meetings with donors and circulating the list of naming opportunities. Fundraising for the festival is going well; we're about 70% of the way to our goal.

On April 9, Lily Kauffman, coordinator of the CALS Used Book Sale, partnered with the outreach team to host a pop-up book sale at Lost Forty Brewing in celebration of National Library Week. Look for another pop-up sale on the evening of Thursday, May 2, at Control Records on Kavanaugh.

April 21-27 is Volunteer Appreciation Week. We are so grateful for all that our volunteers (including our board members!) contribute to CALS.

Mellon Grant: We are pleased to be able to share more details about the \$500,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation. This grant will enable CALS to significantly expand the library's personal archiving and digitization services: CALS will hire a full-time Memory Lab Coordinator; expand the hours of the DIY Memory Lab at Roberts Library to include Saturday hours; expand the formats of media that can be digitized at the DIY Memory Lab; create micro memory labs at nine of CALS's neighborhood branches; and extend outreach into Central Arkansas neighborhoods to share training and resources with community members so they may organize and digitize their own archives. Congratulations to Heather Zbinden, Glenn Whaley, and the rest of the team at Roberts on this achievement. You can find more information about the details of the grant [here](#). Heather will be at the board meeting to make a presentation about the Memory Lab and what all we will be able to do with this money. View media related to the announcement: [KATV](#), [Arkansas Business](#), and [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#).

Opioid Recovery Grant: We are currently developing a proposal for the Arkansas Opioid Recovery Partnership to expand the capacity of the community resources team. If we are successful, the grant will enable CALS to hire two peer support specialists, individuals with lived experience in recovery, who will provide resources to individuals, families, and community members about issues related to substance and opioid use disorder. The specialists will assist in referring individuals to treatment and providing support to help patrons get to those services.

They will also conduct broader outreach efforts to educate the public and reduce the stigma of opioid use disorder.

Searching for Funding for Additional Digital Navigators: Through the National Telecommunications & Information Administration, federal funds have been released to expand broadband networks and increase digital literacy. The development team is exploring grant opportunities within these funds with the goal of expanding our digital equity efforts by hiring additional digital literacy navigators. Currently, CALS employs two digital literacy navigators who travel throughout the whole system but are based at the Dee Brown and McMath branches.

Circulation and Traffic: We have good numbers to report for March. While physical circulation continued to drop, digital circulation grew again, contributing to the 3% growth in total circulation year to date. Programming attendance is up 35% so far in 2024, thanks in part to the 10% growth in the number of programs offered. After a long decline in the use of our digital research tools, we're seeing growth there again. A big contributor to that growth was the addition of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* Historical Archives to our collection. Most notably, our handout of eclipse glasses in March paid off in a large increase in the number of new library cards issued. That total, 1646, was only 16 fewer than the total number issued in January and February combined. We will monitor the use of those new cards to see how many of the cardholders continue to use the library.

Six Bridges Book Festival: Currently 18 authors are confirmed to participate in the festival; we expect to confirm more in the weeks ahead. CALS is currently seeking a temporary project manager to assist with the festival until we fill the full-time coordinator role. We expect this to be a six-month contract role with a scope that includes coordinating logistics leading up to the event that will run from September 23-29, 2024. If you know of someone who might be interested, please share their contact information with Eliza and/or Ellen. We plan to advertise for a permanent coordinator in the fall.

CALS Call Center: We are continuing to look at creating a call center inside main library to alleviate some of the phone answering in the neighborhood libraries. The distraction of the phone sometimes diminishes customer service at the branches. The idea is to have a small number of experts in all things CALS answering the phone from a central location. They would still have the capacity to patch the call through the neighborhood library when that was needed. We are patterning our efforts after what we observed in Tulsa and other libraries we visited a year ago during the planning phase of the Main remodel. The architects for Main have worked with us to design a space for housing the center. We are trying to decide how much it will cost to staff it properly with librarians who can answer calls from patrons coming in about programs and activities anywhere across the system.