

Director's Report for July 25, 2024

Main Remodeling: We have encountered our first complication, which is inevitable in any project of this size and the reason for a budget line to cover anticipated but unknown contingencies. This surprise will add several weeks to the work schedule and a substantial amount of money to the cost. In June construction workers were trying to cap an existing sixteen-inch water main so it could be rerouted to make way for the foundation to support the extension on the east side of the library. The contractor knew that they had to cap and move the line but when they closed Rock Street and started digging underneath it they found a network of utility lines. There was not enough room in the spot planned for the cap because of the proximity of other existing utility lines. Moving the cap away from that bottleneck required CDI Contractors, Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects, and McClelland Consulting Engineers to work directly with Central Arkansas Water and the subcontractors to find a better place. They had to hire a subcontractor to do extensive hydro excavation to remove soil with pressurized water to minimize the risk of breaking nearby lines. All of this unplanned excavating and rerouting of the water line in a tight space to make room for the new entrance to the library will cost an additional \$233K. That will be drawn from our contingency funds in the project budget which CDI set at 5% of the total cost. We will have \$739K remaining in that fund and CDI says the date of substantial completion will now be pushed back approximately one month, to mid-June 2025.

While CDI has been working on this utility snag, they have continued making progress on their work with interior framing, and mechanical, electrical and plumbing rough in. If you're looking up at the building from outside now you can see the steel to support the raised ceiling structure in the new 5th floor Darragh Center.

New Parking Equipment at Main Campus: We are working with Flash Parking, a vendor recommended by UAMS, to install new parking equipment in our parking deck. The new system will have a kiosk on the second floor where people can pay or validate their ticket. Or they can validate their ticket with the help of a librarian inside. The new parking gates should be installed sometime in August and our staff will be trained on the ticket validation process which they do at a computer terminal by coding the particular ticket appropriately so that when the scanner at the gate reads that particular ticket and opens the gate. We should be up and running with our new equipment by late August/early September.

Branch Improvements: We have completed repainting Terry Library. Starting July 31, work will begin on installing new flooring. We anticipate this will take about two weeks. The library will remain open until the end of that period when the flooring in the entranceway is replaced. McMath Library will begin its renovation with a fresh coat of paint beginning this week. Our maintenance team expects this to be done before July 31 and they will install new flooring there. We have ordered a new circulation desk and a new security desk for McMath. Dee Brown has a new roof that the company that replaced the Maumelle roof has installed.

Summer @ CALS: Our annual summer reading/learning program (renamed Summer @ CALS last year) will conclude this week. We had almost 11,000 participants this year, up from 9,500 last summer. Amanda Orgel, who is in her first year as Youth Services Coordinator and touted Summer @ CALS at our May board meeting, led this summer's successful program.

Strategic Planning: Our public survey to help guide the planning went online July 15 and will be available through August 5. The survey is only accessible digitally, but it is available in English and Spanish. There is also a children's survey. Please help us encourage people in your circles to respond by going to this strategic survey [link](#). It will take 5-10 minutes to complete. Karama Neal, the board's liaison to the planning committee, will give a report at the meeting.

Communications: We're excited to unveil finally the new bookmobile next month. After many supply chain delays, the CALS Cruiser will soon be on the road searching for places to meet new and existing library users. We have hired Katherine Blake who was our teen programmer at Main to be the bookmobile manager. To introduce Katherine and promote the Cruiser's services, we're developing a dedicated landing page on our website, along with a series of social media posts. We're also continuing to post photos and videos documenting the progress at Main, with updates available at cals.org/main2025.

In September, we're celebrating Library Card Sign-up Month. Last year, we launched the Bookworm Bargains discount program with the North Little Rock Public Library System. We're planning to run this promotion again and are currently seeking partners. If you have any suggestions, we'd love to hear them to ensure the entire service area is represented. You can [view the page from last year](#) to see who has participated. With the Six Bridges Book Festival happening at the end of September, it will also be a priority for the next couple of months. We are developing materials, securing interviews, and planning both paid and social media promotions.

All of us at CALS are basking in Tameka's media celebrity status. She was featured in [Soiree Women to Watch](#) in June, and in this month's [Arkansas Money and Politics Top Ten](#). Congratulations to Tameka for this deserved recognition!

Development: The CALS Used Book Sale was held July 11-13. Over the ten hours the sales floor was open, we netted more than \$22,000 and counted about 1,650 shoppers. We added an outreach table near the checkout at this sale; staff members accepted 172 Summer @ CALS registrations and signed up new volunteers. The next sale is scheduled for November 14-16.

In the last month, the Six Bridges Book Festival has surpassed its goal of \$120,000 in contributed income supporting the 2024 event. CALS was awarded \$9,000 from the Arkansas Arts Council Community Arts Project grant program to support the festival. The festival also received a \$15,000 sponsorship from the Brown Chair in English Literacy at the University of Arkansas and the Community Literacies Collaboratory. To date we have sold tickets totaling more than \$15,000 for the festival fundraising event on Sunday, September 29, headlined by Ann Patchett and Robin Preiss Glasser. Approximately 100 tickets remain; we expect to sell out. You can purchase your tickets here:

https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/CentralArkansasLibrarySystemF/patchett_glasser.html

We continue to work with the capital campaign steering committee to secure pledges in support of the Main Library renovation project. To date we have \$631,000 in pledges toward our goal of \$2M.

Circulation and Traffic: We did not see many big changes or trends in the metrics we usually track, but there was one number that we do want to make note of: **attendance at library programs of all types was higher in June 2024 than it was in June 2018 or June 2019, marking the first time that has happened since the pandemic.** The success of Summer@CALs and the meals programs is likely responsible for a lot of that growth. Otherwise, physical circulation continues to trend down while digital circulation continues to trend up. The June total for uses of digital research tools should be considerably higher than it is. Due to a technical issue with NewsBank, rumored to have been caused by a cyberattack although that has not been officially confirmed, we are unable to retrieve the usage statistics for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette's* Historical Archive. Since we added the historical files to our collection at the beginning of 2024, that resource has been one of our most heavily used research tools and has helped the usage of those resources rise by 16% year-to-date. As an example of the popularity of this new tool, recently an old friend of mine who is a historian living in Alabama contacted me about his interest in researching a book he is writing on the 1966 gubernatorial election in Arkansas. He was happy to learn that by becoming a non-resident CALs cardholder (for \$54/year) he could get access in Birmingham to the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* archives. Thanks to Carol, Sarah Mallory, and Jo Spencer for bringing this powerful research tool to our patrons this year!

Digital Navigators: Earlier this month I received this glowing letter (screenshot below) from a very happy patron who had found help from Jakeob, one of our two digital literacy coaches whose salaries are funded by the Wingate grant. The letter was accompanied by a \$200 check which we have deposited in the Morris Fund for the benefit of the digital programming department that included Jakeob and Camille, the other navigator. Feel free to share this endorsement with your friends who, like Mr. Van Dover, might be searching for reliable help and do not yet know that their library offers better service in this area than anyone else. When I telephoned Mr. Van Dover to thank him for taking time to write and for his donation, I secured his permission to use his letter as a testimonial to the power of the library to make life better.

JAMES R. VAN DOVER
5215 HAWTHORNE ROD
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72207

Telephone: 501.804.0466

E-Mail: jrvan Dover@icloud.com

July 5, 2024

Mr. Nate Coulter
Central Arkansas Library System
100 Rock Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Nate:

Knowing how much you must have on your plate, I'll immediately get to the point of this letter: It's to compliment, praise, and commend the services of Digital Literary Guide Jakeob T. Ward.

While I have in the past had access to personal computers in my work, I have always had trained, knowable technical staff available to help me when problems arose. Upon retiring, I continue to use a computer but have regrettably found that such technical help is not so readily available in the public market, such as Best Buy and others. Seemingly, these technicians and I were never on the same page...I was never able to identify to them the issue I was experiencing. Usually, their remedies worsen or complicated the problem and never, in my mind, worth the resulting charges.

In frustration, I recently turned for help from CALS, where I was introduced to Jakeob. He understood my problem immediately, recommended solutions and, more importantly, helped me implement them. (Now, all I have to do is learn and remember the functions of many icons that software writers continue to substitute for grouping of words of the English language.) While his technical knowledge is obvious, it's secondary to his innate ability to communicate with me, a typical user, right off the street. I congratulate you and CALS for making Jakeob's services available.

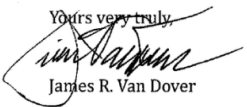
Letter to CALS

Re: Jakeob T. Ward

July 5, 2024

Jakeob would not accept my offer of a nominal gratuity; therefore, my enclosed check to CAL should be accepted as an honorarium to him personally and for his professional services.

Yours very truly,


James R. Van Dover

s/

Update on Joyce: In our special virtual meeting earlier this month to address an anonymous donor's request, I reported on Joyce's slow progress and long road to rehabilitation from the stroke she suffered in June. Last week the family issued a statement which the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* reported in a July 18 [article](#). This article indicates that Joyce is making "continued progress, but it is a journey." The story quoted Joyce's former colleague and friend, State Senator Linda Chesterfield: "I am just so delighted that people are praying for her and that they love her." Senator Chesterfield's sentiments are mine as well.

Next Board Meeting: Noon on August 22 (there are five Thursdays in the month) at Roberts Library, Room 204.