

Director's Report for September 26, 2024

Main Remodeling: Main Remodeling substantial completion date of late June and the project is still within budget with approximately \$260K remaining in contingency and allocations. The site utility delay was resolved last week and the substantial completion date is 6/20/2025. The interior work has been ongoing with much of the framing completed. The next big step is for the contractor to start digging the piers in the front of the building for the new east facing staircase. They are scheduled to begin that process on September 30. The October board meeting will be held in the Cox Building (Rock It! Lab) when we plan to take the board on a tour of Main so you can see the progress being made. We will provide the hard hats!

Other Branches Remodeling: The Terry Branch facelift is almost complete, with only the upgrades to light fixtures remaining. Those should be complete by year end. The McMath branch's interior has been painted and the maintenance crew has finished cutting the bookshelves down to 66 inches. New flooring has arrived, and the installation begins this week and take about a week. The next branch to receive a refreshed look in 2024 will be Dee Brown.

CALS Cruiser: Two days after the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reported that I had informed you in this space last month that our specialty outfitter for the bookmobile had once again blown through a delivery deadline, the CALS Cruiser was on a transport truck headed our way. I am happy to report that the CALS Cruiser is here and getting rave reviews from everyone, including Madeleine and Alex Borné-Williams and James Coulter who scoped it out at Fletcher's 50th Birthday Party two weeks ago. It will be on hand for you to tour after the board meeting.



Security Camera Policy Proposal: For nearly 20 years, some CALS locations have had security cameras in place. This year for the first time we have installed camera systems at all CALS locations. Now that we have security cameras at all locations it seemed like a good time to implement a policy reflecting clear guidelines for staff on when and with whom camera footage may be shared. We have never had a formal policy outlining the purpose of the cameras or providing general guidelines for their utilization. The primary concern in this context involves ensuring that we continue to comply with the state statute which protects the privacy of patrons' personal information. Arkansas law (A.C.A. 13-2-701 *et seq.*) regarding the Confidentiality of Patrons' Records generally prohibits us from releasing any information about what a patron may have used at the library or even whether they may have visited the library. The statute allows for release of this information only in response to a court issued subpoena.

Implementing this policy will not alter our day-to-day operations, but it will provide clarity, consistency, and a formal framework for our practices. Kate Matthews, the Director of Public Services, will be at the meeting to explain the proposed policy and ask for your adoption of this policy.

Strategic Planning: As part of the strategic planning process, staff members have been asked to give input on some of the topics and service opportunities that percolated to the top in the responses to the community survey. This survey will be open for approximately two weeks. Christina Fuller-Gregory from Constructive Disruption will join the meeting on Thursday via Zoom to update you on the status of their data gathering efforts and preview what lies ahead.

Program Updates: Our Community Engagement Coordinator Maria Aguilar will share info at the board meeting on the wonderful slate of Hispanic Heritage Month programming. Maria was recently named a Finalist for the Latino Trailblazer [Award](#) for 2024! There are a couple of system-wide events coming up in October to highlight. On Saturday, October 5 the Roberts Library will present the annual Genealogy Workshop at Ron Robinson Theater. This year's speaker is Bessida Cauthorne White, who will be presenting on preserving family memories and creating a family cookbook. This is the first fully in-person genealogy workshop since the pandemic. Lunch will be provided for anyone who registers by October 2. The link to register and learn more is [here](#) There is also a [facebook](#) event that can be shared to help spread the word. In years past, this has been a very popular program for us.

On Saturday, October 19, our Community Resource department will be hosting a Community Health Fair at the Jacksonville United Methodist Church. Our staff have participated in various health and wellness community events in the past, but this is our first time to host one of this size. Jacksonville seemed like the right location because of the need and transportation barriers that the community resource team and our library staff have witnessed at our Nixon branch. Rebecca Beadle, our Community Resource Manager, and her team have been connecting and inviting many community partners to provide health and wellness related information and services as well as various CALS resources that support health literacy. The event is made possible by funding from the Windgate Foundation.

Executive Leadership Development: Lisa Donovan left CALS after at the end of 2023. She took with her a ton of experience and wisdom that I had relied upon extensively. Her experience yielded benefits to the efficiency and effectiveness of the top leadership. As the person with overall responsibility for guiding the leadership, I need to find more time for helping both our relatively newer and more experienced administrative leadership circle learn how to work more efficiently and effectively.

Arguably preparing the organization for long-term healthy leadership is one of my most important functions. Yet, carving out space to think about helping all of us at the top of the organization be stronger leaders does not ascend to the top of my To Do list most days. To help the senior administrative team here grow as leaders and strengthen their team cohesion and effectiveness, I need an outside advisor. Ben Goodwin at Our House has worked extensively with Matt Kouri and highly recommends him to help our staff development. Matt spent 10 years with Deloitte Consulting and for the last 7 years has been operating Good Works Strategic Advisors out of Austin, TX which focuses on helping philanthropic and non-profit organizations.

Matt has agreed to consult with me on this staff leadership development over the next 4-6 months. He may end up visiting with some of you about your observations of CALS leadership. **Saving Birds and Electricity:** Earlier in the year I was contacted by two retired lawyers who are heavily involved with a national nonprofit group that encourages large public and private building owners to consider ways to turn off lights after hours to reduce the risks of disorienting migrating birds. Bruce McMath and Lynn Foster met with some of our staff and toured our properties before providing us with a branch-by-branch list of recommendations for saving electricity and birds without compromising security objectives. At a meeting on September 9 we reviewed that list with them. Since then our maintenance team has been able to get parking lot lights at all branches except for 3 (Children's, Jacksonville and Sherwood) on a timer and they are now going off every night at 10 P.M. and coming back on at 5 AM (to accommodate our housekeeping staff). Also, Gonzalo was able to turn off some unneeded lights on the side of the McMath. We do not own the library buildings in Jacksonville and Sherwood; those cities do. Jo is reaching out to them to get their permission to turn off their parking lot lights, too. Children's Library on Jonesboro has a more complicated lighting system that is going to require the assistance of a contractor. We are in the process of getting them out there to help us with that location.

We will also gauge how much electricity savings this realizes for the library and whether there are any foreseen consequences of going dark after 10pm. In the course of doing all this we also discussed our growing awareness from staff, Bruce, and Lynn that a number of birds are flying into our glass windows, often to their doom. This seems particularly true at three locations. This is a much more challenging issue to address. It is difficult to monitor and more difficult (and expensive!) to resolve. We will also need to be mindful of what might need to do to mitigate the impact on bird populations near Main once it is remodeled to include more glass. We'll report.

Six Bridges Book Festival: The festival began this past Sunday and has been building up to the full slate of Saturday sessions. Here is a link to the [schedule](#). Register and attend. And share with your circle of colleagues and friends.

Communications: The Six Bridges Book Festival has been featured heavily in promotions this September, with coverage in [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#), [Inviting Arkansas](#), [Soiree](#), and [Arkansas Money & Politics](#), as well as strong social media engagement. Two members of the communications team moderated sessions this week. On Monday, Jessica McDaniel moderated a session at the Fletcher Library with Danielle Bayard Jackson, author of *Fighting for Our Friendships: The Science and Art of Conflict and Connection in Women's Relationships*. They spoke to an enthusiastic crowd who asked thoughtful questions and engaged with each other. Garbo Hearne, owner of Pyramid Art, Books & Custom Framing, was pleased to sell out of books during the event. On Tuesday, Tameka Lee moderated a discussion with Ayana Gray, author of *Beasts of War*, at Rotary 99's meeting. Here they are:



The Kickoff party will be Friday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ron Robinson Theater. The free gathering will include food, drinks, karaoke, and live music from Bijoux. We're asking for registrations to help us know how many people to expect. If you would like to attend, register here: <https://events.cals.org/event/11764726>.

Looking ahead, the next major event is the Dead of the Day/Día de Muertos celebration, led by Maria Aguilar, who will present at the upcoming board meeting. Last year's event drew 3,000 attendees, and this year's celebration is set for November 1 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Library Square. The festival will feature music, food trucks, art, and more. Details will be available soon via a landing page on cals.org.

Development: The Capital Campaign Committee continues to make progress; to date we have received gifts and pledges totaling \$766,000 (38% of the way to our goal).

Our fundraising event on September 29 headlined by Ann Patchett and Robin Preiss Glasser is almost here! We have about 15 tickets left. Buy now if you would like to attend:
https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/CentralArkansasLibrarySystemF/patchett_glasser.html

Our big project over the past month was finalizing our components for the NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant proposal. We collaborated with UAMS's Institute for Digital Health & Innovation (IDHI) on a project – UAMS is the lead applicant, and CALS would be a subrecipient, if the proposal is successful. CALS's budget request totaled \$1,163,062.17 for the four-year project term. This would fund the salaries and benefits of CALS's two current digital literacy navigators and two additional navigators; the purchase of equipment to install telehealth access points at twelve library branches; and the purchase of 245 hotspots for circulation, as well as indirect costs. We feel that UAMS has a competitive proposal, and we were glad to be a part of it. Notification is sometime in "winter."

We have also been working to secure sponsors for the upcoming 4th annual Día de Muertos celebration on November 1, and we are preparing for our year-end direct mail and digital fundraising campaign. Giving Tuesday is December 3, 2024.

Circulation and Traffic: You may have noticed in the August statistical report that we have approximately 10,000 fewer library card accounts than we did last August. In the past few months, we have removed accounts that have not been active in at least five years. That active date is updated any time a patron logs into their account, checks out an item, or uses many of our digital resources. Accounts with more than \$100 in fines or fees were kept. There are a few reasons for conducting this sort of records removal on a regular basis. First, the national standard for libraries calls for inactive accounts to be purged at least once every three years, but each library determines the criteria for removing accounts. We are asked each year if we have done so, and it has been almost three years since the last time. Second, we have a financial incentive to not overstate our actual number of cardholders since some vendors use the number of library cards to determine how much we pay for their services or products. Of course, we want that number to reflect as accurately as possible the number of patrons who might use those tools we provide. And third, it is highly likely that many of those accounts represent people who no longer live in our service area or whose contact information has changed. Removing those records helps keep our patron database more accurate, meaning it is more useful. If a patron whose account was removed visits the library and wants to use our services again, it is a simple matter to give them a new card or set up an account if they still have their old card in their possession.

Act 372 Litigation Update: Judge Brooks has moved the trial date from October to December 16, 2024.

October's Board Meeting: This will occur at noon on October 24, in the Cox Building across the parking lot from the Main Library. You can enter the CALS parking deck by coming off Clinton Avenue onto Rock Street. If you want to park in the surface lot, much of which is taken up now by the construction project, you have to enter off Second Street.