

## Director's Report for October 24, 2024

**Main Remodeling:** CDI has completed the new, rerouted water line and water service to Main has been restored. They are currently drilling the piers for the staircase on the front of the building. The interior is going smoothly, and they are installing drywall on some of the floors already. We will meet with Polk Stanley later this month to make final furniture selections. We plan to offer to take the board on a tour of Main after our meeting, for anyone who would like to see the progress so far. We will provide the hard hats!

A component of the Main remodeling and enhancement of the outdoor space around the library is the addition of new public art. CALS announced this project in early 2023. The committee has been reviewing various proposed designs for a monument to African Americans who fought in the Civil War. Once it is completed the sculpture will be placed between Main and the Bobby L. Roberts Library of Arkansas History and Art on Library Square. Former CALS Director Bobby Roberts, who chaired the committee, will be at the meeting to give us this art project.

**Other Branches:** The Terry and McMath facelifts are complete. Next week, our maintenance team will start on Dee Brown. Dee Brown is getting new interior paint, flooring and some new furniture. Also, Ron Robinson Theater is getting some new equipment, including a new projector in November.

**Strategic Planning:** Our lead consultant on this project, Stephanie Chase of Constructive Disruption, will appear virtually at the board meeting to provide an update on the progress of their work. Stephanie and Karama's steering committee will have a recommendation with regard to the adoption of new mission, vision, and values statements for CALS.

**Program Updates:** In the wake of the pandemic Nixon Library in Jacksonville has seen an increase in patrons struggling with a lack of health and housing resources. CALS Community Resource Department has supported the Nixon branch in Jacksonville to assist these patrons when we can. With a \$5,000 grant from The Windgate Foundation, CALS hosted a Health & Wellness Fair last Saturday, October 19. The City of Jacksonville and the First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville joined us in sponsoring this Fair. It drew 104 community members, and 27 vendors and agencies participated. Rebecca Beadle will be available at the meeting to answer any questions. Here are a few photos our folks took.



**Update on Homelessness Task Force:** In August I reported to you that CALS was working to highlight what more could be done by local government to support CALS, community providers,

businesses, and our homeless patrons. Wednesday of next week we will host officials from Dallas and Nashville who will present their best practices for creating unified strategies for addressing homelessness in these other cities. After working on this with Matthew DeSalvo, the Chief Homeless Officer for Little Rock, and other agency leaders for several months, I'm confident that there are humanitarian and practical measures we can pursue in Little Rock to benefit CALS, our downtown neighborhood, and all of our patrons at all of our libraries. For the library this is particularly important if we are going to realize the full potential for our remodeled and vibrant modern library next year when it reopens. These guests from Texas and Tennessee have a lot to share. They will start at 9am on October 30, in the Robinson Theater. Anyone interested in understanding this seemingly intractable challenge for cities and their libraries is welcome to attend. Here's the announcement we have shared with leaders and providers:

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATION: Bridging Efforts to Address Homelessness

With the **Nashville Office of Homeless Services**  
and the **Dallas Office of Homeless Solutions**.

Join local leaders and service providers for a  
discussion on best practices for creating a unified  
strategy for addressing homelessness.

**Wednesday, October 30th**

**Ron Robinson Theater - 100 River Market Avenue**

9 a.m. Panel Discussion

11 a.m. Q&A Session

**Rock It! Lab - 120 River Market Avenue**

12 p.m. Lunch + Breakout Sessions

Please scan  
to RSVP!



**Development:** The Capital Campaign Committee continues to make progress. To date we have received gifts and pledges totaling \$826,000 (41% of the way toward our goal of \$2M). In addition to working on the capital campaign, the development staff is focused on preparing for Giving Tuesday, year-end giving, and the next CALS Used Book Sale.

Our sold-out fundraising event on September 29 headlined by Ann Patchett and Robin Preiss Glasser was a success in terms of the crowd, the programming, and the dollars raised for the Six

Bridges Book Festival. Between tickets sold to that event and sponsorships and grants committed to Six Bridges, we raised more than \$135,000 in support of the festival this year.

**Six Bridges Book Festival:** By all accounts, this year's Six Bridges was a success. We arranged 20+ Writers in the Schools visits; welcomed 5,660+ audience members and students; gave away 600+ books; and hosted 50+ authors and illustrators, including three winners of the Pulitzer Prize and one winner of the National Book Award. [Here's a link to photos from An Evening with Ann Patchett and Robin Preiss Glasser.](#)

**CALS Used Book Sale:** The next sale will be held November 14-16 at our Port location (7773 Sloane Drive in Little Rock). All three days of the November sale are open to the public:

**Thursday, November 14: 2-5pm**

**Friday, November 15: 10am-2pm**

**Saturday, November 16: 10am-2pm**

Proceeds from the CALS Used Book Sales (CUBS) support branch grants and many other library programs. Through September, total CUBS income for the year is \$53,478.46. Stop by November 14-16 to help us finish the year strong, support library programs, find great deals on books, and hang out with fellow booklovers!

**Communications:** The next major event is the Day of the Dead/Día de Muertos Festival, led by Maria Aguilar, and hosted in partnership with the Downtown Little Rock Partnership, Mexican Consulate, and Plaza Frida. We hope you'll join us on November 1 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Library Square. The festival will feature music, food trucks, art, face painting, a pedestrian parade, and more. We have media scheduled throughout the next couple of weeks, including appearances on Univision, KARK, KATV, and the Broadway Joe Talk Show. We also have a display at Park Plaza Mall. [View this Facebook post to see photos of the display.](#) Maria and Tameka filmed a video in Spanish to promote the event. [You can view that here.](#)

From August 1 to October 6, 2024, Six Bridges garnered a total of 193 media exposures, with an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) of \$1.58M. AVE estimates the monetary value of earned media by comparing it to the cost of placing equivalent advertisements, offering insights into the potential monetary value of our PR efforts. We received coverage across a range of media outlets and formats, including television, print, radio, social media, and various digital platforms. Additionally, we utilized paid media in these formats, excluding television, thanks in part to a grant from the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau. The artwork and media coverage were well-received, earning us numerous compliments.

The kickoff party was a resounding success, with 200 attendees enjoying the opportunity to meet the authors, listen to Bijoux's musical performance, and join in karaoke. Karama and her daughter were a big hit with the karaoke fans!

**Circulation and Traffic:** Digital circulation took a big leap in September, up 23% over September 2023. We are sure that some of that growth was driven by the issuing of new Tech Cards to students at the beginning of the school year. OverDrive and Freegal are responsible for most digital circulation and they are also the most popular with Tech Card users. In September, there were 1,425 new cards registered in OverDrive, which was the second highest monthly

count of new users since the inception of OverDrive at CALS. We have no way to know how many of those new users were Tech Card patrons, but the timing suggests a link. The eight highest monthly counts of new users of all time happened in either September or October.

We have been monitoring the growth in the number of unique users for OverDrive as well. In September there were 14,023 unique OverDrive users, which was the highest we have seen so far. Since the number of unique users can have direct bearing on how much we spend to license OverDrive materials, that number is closely watched. We cannot see a similar metric in Freegal, but usage goes up considerably there in the fall, as well. Fortunately, Freegal is based on a yearly subscription model, so more usage does not necessarily mean a larger cost.

As noted on the monthly statistical report, physical circulation is down 11% year-to-date from last year, while digital circulation is up 19%. So far, digital circulation accounts for about 50% of overall circulation in 2024. Assuming these longstanding trends continue, 2024 may be the first year in which digital circulation accounts for the majority of total circulation. If not, that milestone will occur next year.

**Executive Leadership Development:** Matt Kouri has been interviewing the executive leadership this week to help us assess our efficiency and accountability at the top of the organization. He will attend the board meeting to observe some of the leadership roles executives play in board meetings.

**Staff Update:** This will be the last board meeting for two long time, faithful employees: Candace White and Mark Christ. Candace came to CALS in early 2017, to be our first full time HR manager. She is leaving for greener pastures. Mark started in the fall of 2018 as our Adult Program Manager. Mark is retiring. We will miss both of them and want to thank them for their dedication to the public library mission for the last 6-7 years.

**No November Board Meeting:** There will be no meeting in November. Our next board meeting will be our year end meeting on either December 12, or December 19. This will be the meeting when we consider the 2025 budget. The Board will need to decide, in consultation with Jo, on which date to schedule this year end meeting.