



Director's Report (1st Quarter)

DATE: May 12, 2025

Administrative

This is my first report as the Director. The annual Public Library Survey was completed and submitted. All branches completed their annual inventory lists.

We hired a new Collection Developer/Cataloger for the Region: Mrs. Tabatha Jenkins. Tabatha has worked at the Monticello Branch since 2018, first as a sub and then became the Library Assistant in 2023. Tabatha is an avid reader, quick to learn, on-trend with the latest books, and is already familiar with our ILS system. Welcome Tabatha!

There have been several bills this past legislative session that involved libraries. SB536 wanted to dissolve the Arkansas State Library and its board, moving them directly under the Arkansas Department of Education. HB1977 was to create the "Protecting Childhood Innocence in Libraries" act. Neither became an Act. Two bills did pass and become Acts this session. Act 242 amended the requirements for the state librarian and the requirements for regional library system directors in which work experience may be substituted in place of having an MLIS degree. The other Act is Act 903 which will reconstitute the Arkansas State Library Board.

Technology & Branch Updates

I implemented a shared Google Drive for the entire Region, and it was introduced at the Spring Workshop on March 7. This Drive is a cloud-based storage that all managers and Headquarters staff can access. The Drive contains the most current versions of forms for branch and patron use, the Regional logos for each branch and their Friends of the Library groups for uniformity across the system, manuals/quick guides, and a programming folder. The driving force behind creating the Google Drive was so branches can share programming ideas and not reinvent the wheel. All branch managers are required to upload at least one complete program to the folder, and they will upload more as the year progresses.

We're moving on up! Four branches (Star City, Warren, Dumas, and Lake Village) are now equipped to accept card payments. Monticello Branch has had the capabilities to accept card payments for a few years.

Monticello Branch has a few trees that are causing issues or may cause property damage around the property, and Drew County Judge Jessie Griffin has accepted a bid for \$3,500. More information on this subject will be presented later on in the agenda. Monticello Branch also has exciting news: the Storywalk panels have arrived at the branch, and they will be installed once the contractors finalize a plan with Drew County and any trees are removed.

Several branches are applying for a grant from Clearwater Paper; the scope of the grants include new AWE Early Literacy computers and programming. The branches will know within the next few weeks if they are awarded the grants.

A few branch managers also attended an ArLA Youth Community of Interest workshop in Hot Springs on April 11, titled "Becoming Better Library Grownups: Here Come the Joy Rebels!"

Community Engagement & Outreach

In March we held our annual Summer Reading workshop for branch managers and library assistants. Revamped and new and exciting things were introduced. The talking book collection is once again being rotated between branches after two branches (Star City and Dumas) noticed an uptick in

checkouts once the display format changed. The four other branches with talking books received a set of 4 brightly colored tubs to display the talking books, and we have seen a slight upward checkout trend since implementation. We are monitoring the progress. As stated earlier, the branches had the opportunity to sign up to receive Square and learn about the benefits of having it at their branch.

After lunch participants enjoyed a Clue-themed escape room in which they had to solve an art museum heist; managers can request the information and handouts to create their own escape room for Summer Reading. To wrap up the workshop, branch managers shared their awesome Summer Reading programming ideas with each other. I can't wait to see everyone's programs this summer.

Something new for branch managers are mini workshops. These workshops are intended to be twice a year, to bring the total of Regional workshops up to four per year. The hope of these mini workshops is to have a more cohesive Region, boost programming, and take care of housekeeping items that cannot be discussed effectively via Zoom but cannot wait until a workshop four to six months later. The first workshop will be in late June or early July.

Meetings & Workshops Attended

Arkansas State Library Board Meeting – Little Rock, AR (02.14.2025)

SEARL Workshop (New & Summer Reading Program) – Monticello, AR (03.07.2025)

Public Library Survey Training with the Arkansas State Library – Zoom Meeting (03.20.2025)

Arkansas State Library Board Meeting – Little Rock, AR (05.09.2025)