



Director's Report (2nd Quarter)

DATE: August 11, 2025

Administrative

Most of my office time this past quarter involved traveling to various branches to observe their Summer Reading Programs, writing grants, researching unattended children policies at other libraries, as well as resolving air conditioning issues at Headquarters and the Monticello Branch. During the days with heat advisories, the air conditioner units throughout the building struggled, with all units stopping at one point. Issues continued throughout July with calls being made to both Mizzell and Northwest Controls to determine the issues. It was up to over 80 degrees throughout the entire building at one point.

For the first time, SEARL hosted a summer workshop for all branch managers in June. This gave Headquarters staff the chance to update branch managers, and branch staff had a chance to step away from their busy Summer Reading Programs for a day. Workshopping through Apollo and programming were the big topics. All branches must have at least one program per month.

Technology & Branch Updates

The trees have been removed at the Monticello Branch. The new StoryWalk will be installed soon now that the trees are gone. Monticello Branch Manager Shannon Rodriguez wanted to "reopen" the checkout station in the Children's area of the library, but all of the technology was obsolete or inoperable. The station received a new computer, printer, and a checkout slip printer. Her children's programmer now has a dedicated area to assist our youngest patrons, as well as plan and prep programs. McGehee and Monticello branches were awarded a grant from Clearwater Paper to help purchase new AWE Early Literacy computers for children ages 3-12.

All branches have completed their 2025 Summer Reading Program; this year's theme was "Color Our World." I continued Mrs. Judy's tradition of visiting the branches to observe their programs. Branches explored the different ways color impacts our lives, with guest presenters from county extension offices, state parks, and other community members. The branches had phenomenal turnouts this year, and I am so impressed with their programs this year.

Community Engagement & Outreach

The Region was selected by the Arkansas State Library as one of three library systems to pilot a new service to our patrons. This new service is access to Candid, a nonprofit grants portal/directory to help nonprofits within the Region find and apply for grants to support their missions. The only way patrons can access this database will be by physically being within the libraries. Candid is not available to our patrons yet; the State Library hopes to launch this service in August.

Star City Branch Manager Simone Kirk and I attended the Arkansas Library Association's Paraprofessional InfoBits Workshop in May at the Hillary Clinton Children's Library and Learning Center. Arkansas State Library Director Jennifer Chilcoat opened the workshop by giving a broad overview of what the State Library offers to libraries. Session topics ranged from AI in the library, strategic planning, cataloging information, and more. Former director Judy Calhoun was the guest speaker during the luncheon.

The Southeast Arkansas Regional Library was also awarded a grant from the American Heart Association, which will place eight (8) new blood pressure tabletop monitors in all branches, as well as 335 blood pressure monitors. More details will be announced once the grant is processed through the American Heart Association.

Meetings & Workshops Attended

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

Arkansas Library Paraprofessionals Workshop – Little Rock, AR (05.16.2025)

SEARL Workshop – Monticello, AR (06.27.2025)