



Director's Report

DATE: January 24, 2022

Administrative

This has been some of the busiest months I've had in a long time. With so many new and exciting changes, it is hard to know where to begin. With our first installment of the ARPA funds, we changed ILS systems from TLC to Apollo by Biblionix. We had in-house training for the entire Region at the end of October, two weeks before we launched. With just a few minor hiccups, the change-over went fairly smooth and I believe everyone is pretty happy with the new system. The Apollo support team has been great to work with and is quick to respond. Two weeks later, we launched our new website. I want to sing high praises to the website team: Simone Kirk, Sandy Doss, Hunter Bennett, and Jennifer Knight, for all their work on compiling the information for the site. And, very special kudos to Jennifer Knight and Hunter Bennett for building many of the pages of the new website. Library Market also commented on how impressed they learned to build website pages. We are seeing tremendous numbers for the website and social media pages. I filed our progress reports for the ARPA grant and we have received all funds. In October we were notified by the State Library concerning a second round of ARPA money that could be available and the building improvements could be included. In November we were told that only certain building improvements were eligible. In December we were notified that the grant was moved from ARPA to the state's CARE act fund and we were given a week and a half to apply for the funds and only those expenditures that we asked for in October, then revised in November, will be funded if they were judged have a high probability of arriving and being in place by December 31, 2021, barring any supply chain issues. The only items we were able to purchase and receive by December 31, 2021 were WIFI extenders and routers for all branches, CoVID supplies, and after-hour lockers. We were able to order book returns even though we would not receive them by the end of the year because they were not in stock and that was a supply issue.

Technology and Branch Updates

With the ARPA funds, each branch received new circulation computers, scanners, receipt printers, speakers and webcams. Headquarters was able to upgrade 3 computers for processing, digital projects and cataloging. With CARES funding, each branch received new WIFI routers and extenders. We also purchased afterhour lockers for the six primary branches from a company in Texas and the salesman delivered them personally so we would have them on time. This service gives people who cannot get to the library before closing time, the opportunity to pickup their material in a secure manner.

Between Sam's Club, Amazon, and South Arkansas Business Solutions, we were able to purchase plexiglass shields and Covid supplies before the end of the year.

With the launch of our new website, we were able to create a google workplace for the region and now have email addresses with our domain name, e.g. director@searlibrary.org.

Lake Village and Dermott both received Bob White Grants. Lake Village received \$5000 for repairs to the front columns, window replacement, outside lighting, and other minor repairs. Dermott received \$10,000 for a new roof and hopefully work will have begun by the board meeting.

With COVID-19 cases once again surging due to the highly contagious Omicron variant now circulating around the country, the demand for testing is outpacing supply in many areas. As a result, Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced the state has purchased 1.5 million at home tests to distribute around the state to help meet that demand. Public libraries were chosen to be one of the distribution centers. The tests were free, and limited to one two-pack of tests per individual or three two-packs per family. The distribution of the kits caused quite a bit of stress and chaos in our libraries, however our library staff handled the situation with patience and dignity.

Meetings & Workshops Attended

- Association for Rural & Small Libraries Conference – Sparks, NV – October
- Arkansas Library Association Conference – online – October
- Regional Workshop - Apollo Training – October
- Library Market – via Zoom - November
- Apollo Admin Training – via Zoom – November
- Mobile Employment Unit meeting – Headquarters – November
- SEARL Branch Improvement Committee – via Zoom - January
- Association for Rural & Small Libraries – Presenter – via Zoom - January