



Director's Report

DATE: July 19, 2021

Administrative

Most of my time this quarter has involved the funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The Arkansas State Library received \$2,660,308 as part of the ARPA. These funds were disbursed to the Arkansas State Library through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Grants to States program. Public libraries in the state will be awarded an amount based on a formula devised by the Arkansas ARPA committee. Based on that formula, the Region is eligible for \$64,945. The process for the funding is a *noncompetitive* grant application. The purpose of the grant is to help communities respond directly and immediately to the pandemic, and to address related economic and community needs through equitable approaches. There are four areas project areas: Information Access, Institutional Capacity, Targeted Audiences, and Enhanced Technology. Unfortunately, building improvement is not one of them. SEARL is seeking funding in three of those areas. Under Institutional Capacity, we intend to acquire a new Integrated Library System (ILS) and host our own website. We also plan on purchasing hand sanitizer stations and atomizer guns. Under Targeted Audiences we will provide employment and career assistance for those living in our service area by implementing a mobile unit. Under Enhanced Technology the Region intends to replace its current circulation computers, barcode scanners and printers. We have received our reward notification and our first grant installment in be mailed by mid-July. We must spend our first installment before requesting the second installment.

The Arkansas Advocates for All Libraries is working with our lobbyists to request funds from the State's ARPA fund. AAAL is requesting \$10 million. If awarded the AAAL voted to use the State's ARPA formula for distribution to public libraries with 15% being given to the Overdrive Consortiums.

Technology

We have repurposed the iPads we received from the Arkansas State Library for the 2020 census. They are now being used as Public Access Catalogs (PAC) stations. The iPads came with metal stands and are small and compact so they take up less space.

Branch Updates

All branches are still operating under Covid restrictions, vaccinated patrons & staff are not required to wear a mask while all unvaccinated persons must wear mask. The Summer Reading Programs "Tales & Tails" are in full swing. It is great to have children back in the libraries. Our Summer Reading Adventure packets are a hit. In fact, I shared it with other librarians across the country and I know they are being used in Oklahoma & Vermont. We had sponsorships to cover the cost of printing. The printing was done by the Arkansas Correctional Industries facility at Wrightsville.

We have a new manager at the McGehee Branch Library. Autumn Robbins started with us in June and has jumped into summer reading and other activities with both feet. We believe she will be a tremendous influence in McGehee for the library.

During the recent flooding event, Eudora Branch Library experienced water entering the building again. This makes about the tenth episode in 12 years. I do not feel that we can continue to stay in a building that floods. We removed the carpet in 2019 that was installed in 2009. Because of the old glue left behind we installed interlocking rubber mats that could be removed if flooded. However, this does not solve the problem of dampness, mold, and other contaminants entering the building. I visited with Stephanie Vetrano, Executive Director of the J. Austin White Cultural Center & Tommy Marshall Curiosity Center. She suggested that I speak with David Jones who might have a building for sale. She also suggested contacting Mayor Tomeka Butler for possibilities. I spoke with David Jones and he suggested the old Beauty Supply Store or the old Drug store. He believes they are owned by Ramona Miles. He would find out if they were available. On June 29th, I met with the Chicot County Board members, Vertie Staples, Bettye Presley, Ruth O'Loughlin, and Debby Bland. Main Street Eudora is seeing some revitalization. The group toured a building located by City Hall, owned by David Jones. The location is good; however, the building would require a complete remodel (ceiling, floors, wiring, plumbing, etc. there is nothing usable). One corner of the foundation is broken and the roof leaks. The building had a large population of bees located in outer wall. The old Drug store is empty and owned by the Krause family. The Drug store moved down the street to another location 4 months ago. The interior is in fairly decent condition by what could be seen through the window. We will attempt to contact owners for a tour. There is also space located inside the Curiosity Museum. We will schedule a tour of that space as well. The group also met with Mayor Butler and her assistant Mr. Jackson, and discussed the reason for moving the library and requested any help the city may be willing to give in finding a new location. There is another building on Main Street that the city owns, but they are unable to locate a key at this time. In other Chicot County news, the Dermott library had an AC unit replaced.

Part of the ceiling, including a light fixture, fell in the Dumas Branch Library. Dumas has experienced condensation problems in the past around ceiling vents. No one is really sure why a large portion fell. It is believed that when light fixtures were replaced, the new ones were not correctly attached to the support beams. We are still waiting for estimates on repair costs. In the meanwhile, visqueen is covering the hole so we can keep the heat out of the building. Because of the danger of another light fixture coming down, part of the adult fiction is off limits to patrons and some collections relocated.

The Monticello Branch Library recently purchased a storage building to house metal shelving. The Region has paid for a storage unit for many years and most of its contents is metal shelving. Once the weather is cooler, we will clean out the storage unit and move everything to the building onsite.

Meetings & Workshops Attended

- Arkansas America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Committee meeting, April 13 – via Zoom
- Apollo by Biblionix demonstration, April 22 – Monticello
- Employment & Career Advancement mobile unit planning meeting, April 27 - Monticello
- Library Market demonstration, April 28 – Monticello
- ARPA grant training – June – via Zoom
- Library Market weekly meetings – via Zoom
- Arkansas Advocates for All Libraries, June 30 – via Zoom