



APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT
MAY 2026

Administration

The staff training day in April was a success. We had two presentations: Mental Health by Tuesday Sigmon of Appalachian State University and an update on NC Cardinal by Samantha O'Conner of the State Library. The staff also played the game Monikers and met together in their departments for some very productive meetings. Special thanks go to all of our Friend's groups at the libraries and branches. They provided some very beautiful baskets that were given away as prizes. We also gratefully acknowledge and thank our local sponsors who contributed a number of prizes for the staff day. Our appreciation also goes to Havana Café for the excellent lunch.

A big congratulations and thank you to the Friends of the Watauga County Public Library on their successful campaign to raise the money for the Watauga renovation. As of this date they have in-hand 1.2 million dollars and still have outstanding pledges to come in over the next five years. Additionally, they have been selected by the Cannon Foundation in the second round of their application process to apply for a grant from the Foundation. We continue to work with the county and the architect to establish the framework for the design, bidding and construction phases of the renovation. John Arnaud, architect of the project, will give a progress report to the Regional Board on May 21st.

The search committee to hire a new county librarian for Wilkes County Public Library has been formed. The committee consists of two local board members, Becky Ball and Camilla Lovette-Day, a member of the Friends Board, Laurie Love, a member of the Endowment Committee, Nicole de Bruijn and me as chair.

Digital Watauga has completed their move out of the Watauga County Public Library to a space on the upper floor of the old post office. ARL will continue being responsible for paying the Digital Watauga interns through the end of June and then the responsibility will be assumed by the Town of Boone. Any remaining salary monies will be returned to the Watauga County Historical Society.

Evaluations for all employees have been completed for the 2025 calendar year. We will be looking into a different way to do work-and-development plans and evaluations for the next calendar year.

Finance

A grant for \$40,000 has been awarded to the Ashe County Public Library by the A.J. Fletcher Foundation for landscape beautification project.

All 2025-2026 fiscal year spending will be wrapping up during May and early June.

Budget request review meeting was held with the Watauga County Manager on April 1st. Currently waiting on dates to meet with Ashe and Wilkes county managers / commissioners.

Technology

We have received our official E-Rate approval letter for funding year 2026-27. The application was approved and fully funded. Our discounted and improved broadband and WAN speeds will begin on July 1st.

Our app usage for myLibro continues to grow, nearing 1,600 users. We'd like to see that number hit 3,000 by January.

We've rolled out a few new desktops and laptops across the region in the last month. On the whole, we're in good shape with our computer hardware due to refresh cycle planning and access to the Digital Champion Grant program.

Policy Updates

Committees have been formed to review the User Code of Conduct policy and the Collection Development policy. Suzanne is the county librarian organizing the User Code of Conduct committee meetings and Laura is organizing the Collection Development committee meetings. I will chair both committees but special thanks goes to both of them for helping to organize the meetings and help keep me on track.

Strategic Planning

There are no updates to report on the strategic planning process at this time. We will hear in early June whether we've been awarded the LSTA strategic planning grant.