

WILKES ** ASHE ** WATAUGA

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

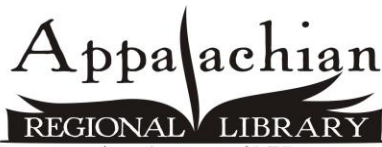
July 2025

Administration & Personnel

- Ashe
 - Fully staffed as of June 30. Will hire a PT Outreach Specialist for 2025-2026 to be funded from remaining 2024-2025 salary funds.
 - Ashe County approved a 3% increase for FY 2025-2026. Employees will receive a 3% cost of living increase.
- Watauga
 - New Youth Services manager Colleen Pepper is scheduled to start Aug. 4.
 - Watauga County approved a 3.25% increase for FY 2025-2026. Employees will receive a 4.5% cost of living increase.
- Wilkes
 - Adult Services Manager, Mara Lynn Tugman, is set to retire on July 23.
 - Wilkes County approved a 2025-2026 budget that decreased funding to the library by 9% (\$73,404) vs 2024-2025. Due to this budget reduction, we propose a reduction to library operations of 5 hours per week. We will cut full-time employees by 4 hours per week and part-time employees by 2 hours per week.
 - Ryan Church, Resource Sharing Assistant, tendered his resignation effective 07/23/2025.
- Regional
 - Cost of Living increases of 4.5% were approved in May 2025 Budget submission.
- Director of Libraries search update: Russell Taylor, candidate for ARL Director of Libraries, toured the 3 county libraries and met with the Regional Board on July 7 & 8.
- Nearly all 2024 Evaluations and 2025-26 Work and Development Plans were submitted by the June 30 deadline.

Grant Updates

- NCDIT Digital Champion Grant
 - The full Grant amount of \$402,656 has been received. \$377K of those funds have been spent and financial reports have been filed. The first quarter progress report has been submitted.
 - Over 100 laptops have been distributed throughout the region. We will start a second round of distributions in late July or early August.
- LSTA 2025-26 Grants
 - Ashe received a LSTA grant for \$37,500 with a required match of \$12,500 for a new outreach vehicle and outreach supplies.



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- Watauga received a LSTA grant for \$44,492 with a required match of \$4,944 for 3 mini conference room pods.
- Wilkes was not awarded a grant for a Mamava lactation pod.
- NC Commerce Grant
 - The annual activity report is due July 31st. A representative from the NC Department of Commerce, Lisa Rueh, will do a site inspection on August 4, 2025
- 2025-26 IMLS Funding, State Aid, and NC Cardinal
 - Cost of NC Cardinal for FY 2024-25: \$1,829,956 (Resource Sharing Cost: \$1,089,190)
 - Revenue for FY 2024-25: LSTA: \$1,345,869 / Member Contributions: \$468,486
 - ARL Usage of Resource Sharing in FY 2023-24: 3,641 unique users borrowed 32,465 items; this is the fifth highest usage in NC Cardinal out of 53 systems
 - Options presented by NC Cardinal and SLNC

Policy

- No updates

Technology Updates

- We successfully rolled out the new wireless system for all 5 buildings. We saved money on the analytics component with the new system. Our wireless usage reached an all-time high in June.
- The Supreme Court ruled against making any changes to the Universal Service Fund, which we rely on to pay 90% of our network costs. This is excellent news.
- We'll be replacing our servers and disaster recovery system in the coming months.