



APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT
MARCH 2026

Administration

John Arnaud has been approved by the Watauga County Commissioners as the architect for the library renovation. He will act as liaison between the library, county and the contractors while the project is underway. At present, we are meeting to discuss details of the renovation and the timetable for the project. Additional drawings will be needed before the project can be let out to bid.

ARL Staff training day is scheduled for Thursday April 16th at the Ashe County Public Library. We have the NC Cardinal training specialist coming to do refresher training, we have representatives from Vaya health coming to present on helping patrons with mental disabilities and we have a fun staff activity. We will also have time for the library staff to meet in departmental meetings during the afternoon.

The admin team will hold an in-person meeting on Monday March 23rd to discuss a number of items including revision to several sections of the personnel policy, changes to job descriptions, strategic planning and other items.

Personnel & Finance

Budgets for next fiscal year have been set up by the Finance Director, Regional Director and County Librarians and will be presented to the Local Boards and the Regional Board for approval. The counties have different times that they require the library to submit their budget requests, but all should be submitted to their respective counties by the first of April. We also plan to ask the Towns of Boone, Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro for some funding for library services. County Librarians and the Regional Director will attend budget work sessions in each of the counties.

Ashe and Watauga County Libraries are currently fully staffed. Due to the uncertainty regarding the Wilkes County Budget, the two part-time positions at Wilkes are being held pending the county's budget allocations. We will reassess these positions in July.

Technology

Our federal funding request for 2026-2027 has been through the review process and is “wave ready”, which means we should receive an official notification in the next 2 months. We typically try to file on the first day of the window to receive our notification before the funding year begins. E-Rate funding covers 90% of our broadband and WAN bills when we file monthly reimbursements, in addition to providing funding for special projects like wireless systems and wiring. This funding is only available to public schools and libraries.

- This funding request is related to the newly signed 5-year contract for broadband and WAN services provided by Skyline/Skybest and River Street Networks. A reminder that all 5 libraries will see at least a doubling in the bandwidth available at a reduced monthly cost compared to recent years.

The number of users for our mobile app with myLibro has been growing at an improved rate over the last couple of months. We hope to see that continue as we review the numbers when it's time to renew our licensing in December.

Wireless usage continues to grow year-over-year.

We ended our license for PDQ Deploy, a tool that I used to automate some public lab tasks. The continued increase in licensing made it less appealing, even if it increases the time spent on some tasks.

Policy Updates

The updated circulation policy with additional information will be presented to the governance committee for their approval and then to the entire Board for their consideration and approval.

A committee of library managers and a county librarian will be formed in April to review the collection development policy. Depending on the depth of the revisions, the revised policy may come before the Board in July or September.

Strategic Planning

The LSTA grant to fund the strategic planning process for 2026-2027 was submitted to the State Library at the end of February. All LSTA proposals will be reviewed by a committee of librarians and those who are selected for funding will be notified by June 1st. We will be required to execute a contract with the State Library before any spending can take place.