



THE ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL & SMALL LIBRARIES

2024 Annual Report



OUR MISSION

ARSL builds strong communities through advocacy, professional development, and elevating the impact of rural and small libraries.

OUR VISION

As the premier organization representing rural and small libraries, ARSL recognizes the uniqueness of small and rural libraries and is committed to providing an environment that encourages excellence within this community of practice, supporting their goals of service and speaking on behalf of this important constituency.

OUR VALUES

Accessibility, Responsive Service, Intellectual Freedom, Professionalism, Collaboration, and Accountability.



READ MORE





ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

2024 ARSL Conference

Increase Operational Capacity

- ARSL Office is open and available to members 50 hours per week (7 am - 5 pm PT, M-F).
- ARSL Supporters Alliance initiative allows businesses to sponsor our organization year-round. Thorndike Press joined the Supporters Alliance this year at the Ally+ tier!
- More than 250 volunteers gave over 1,000 hours of their time and talents across our Board, Regional Forums, Committees, and as in-person Conference Volunteers in 2024.
- As recommended in 2023, ARSL established an investments portfolio this year to diversify operational revenue.
- IMLS awarded ARSL funding for a second pilot of the ARSL Leadership Institute. 30 applicants were accepted into the 2024-25 cohort.
- The ARSL Office expanded to include two new staff roles, the Fund Development Coordinator and Community Relations Coordinator.

Increase Member Support

- The ARSL Advocacy Center steadily gained traction throughout 2024. Through this tool the Advocacy Committee is able to connect directly with library workers seeking assistance with emerging community advocacy needs.
- Through our collaboration with generous funding private partners, ARSL has distributed more than \$2.0M in cash grants to small and rural libraries nationwide.

Increase ARSL Visibility

- ARSL collaborates directly with organizations like the Urban Libraries Council (ULC), Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to ensure our community's needs and perspectives are well-represented in broader national conversations around library service
- ARSL staff and board members represented ARSL at national and regional events across the continental US.
- The new Community Relations Coordinator will allow ARSL to expand awareness through social media.

Expand Organizational Infrastructure

- ARSL has nine professional networking groups, facilitated by ARSL members, that meet regularly to provide a space for the important connections and conversations that are the heart of ARSL.
- Regional Focus Groups have generated a number of actionable ideas for our committees, including the development of Benefit Guides to help members make the most of their memberships.
- Governance Committee has completed a first review of all existing policies that were adopted more than 5 years ago, and updated the Scholarship Policy.
- Partnership Committee implemented a formal Partnership Request process to make establishing, tracking, and following through on our commitments to our partner organizations more efficient.



2024-27 STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted in 2024, ARSL's strategic plan is a living document that serves as a roadmap that the staff, board, and membership use to keep ARSL's work focused and effective. ARSL reviews our strategic goals regularly to be sure they align with the evolving needs of the organization and its constituents. Our current plan will guide ARSL into 2027 and beyond.

Goals



Increase Operational & Environmental Sustainability



Increase Membership Growth & Retention



Expand Advocacy Efforts

Objectives

- Diversify revenue streams to ensure operational sustainability.
- Incorporate environmental sustainability as a core component of organizational activities.

- Enhance the value of ARSL membership.
- Foster community through meaningful and inclusive networking opportunities.

- Empower our community to advocate on behalf of libraries.
- Establish organizational advocacy priorities that reflect community needs.

Organizational Values

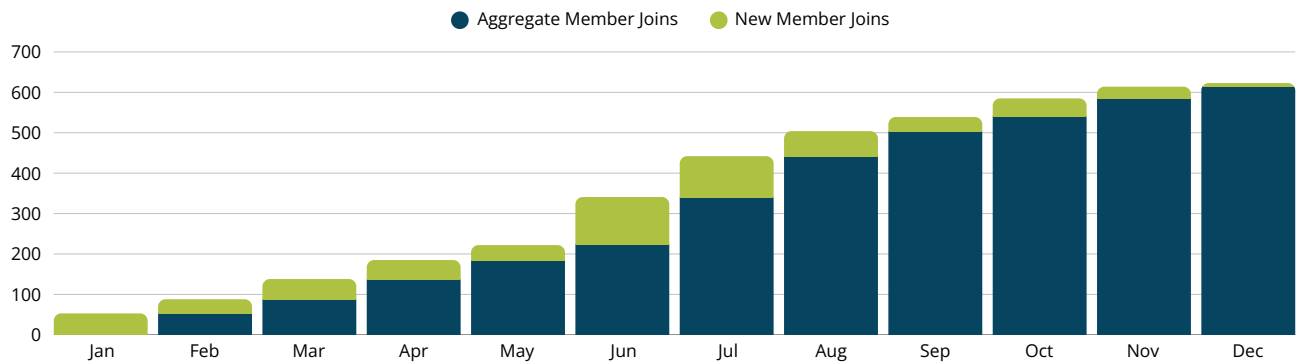
ARSL's Strategic Plan is guided by six core values: **Accessibility** ensures our services, events, and information are equitable and inclusive of all. **Responsive Service** drives us to act with initiative and creativity, utilizing technology to meet member needs. **Intellectual Freedom** commits us to defending unhindered access to information and users' right to privacy. **Professionalism** supports skilled practitioners at every level while fostering an environment where all feel welcome. **Collaboration** enables us to partner with agencies and organizations to advance shared goals. **Accountability** ensures effective stewardship of resources through transparent communication and ethical leadership.



ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

2024 ARSL Conference

Membership Joins

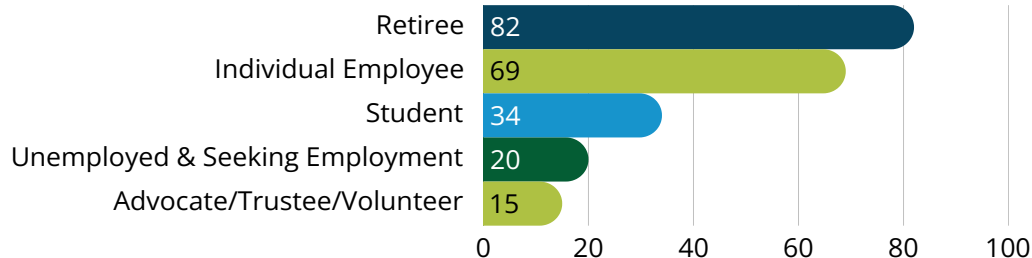


Membership joins are cyclical, with annual peaks in the summer driven by those excited to attend our September Conference.

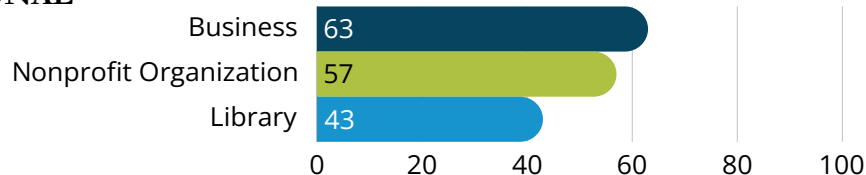
Membership Renewal Percentage by Type

Overall, 58% of Members Renewed

INDIVIDUAL



ORGANIZATIONAL





SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



Orwell Free Library Food & Farm Fest

Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries Grant

- In 2024, ARSL provided a record amount of grant funding for rural & small libraries in New England, awarding a total of **\$590,000 to 49 libraries**.
- ARSL published the [2022-2024 Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries Grant Impact Report](#), showcasing the transformative effect these grants have had on local communities. **Over 1 million people have been impacted**, with **338 projects funded across 136 libraries**, impacting approximately **20% of all rural libraries in New England**.

IMLS Leadership Institute

- 2024 saw the beginning of the second Leadership Institute, with **30 new cohort members** accepted. This program is focused on **elevating staff in rural & small libraries to step confidently into leadership roles in their libraries and beyond**.
- Beginning in June, cohort members met monthly for directed classes and meetings with their mentors.
- In September 2024, cohort members attended the 2024 ARSL Conference, spending two days at the Leadership Institute Retreat, followed by a full ARSL Conference experience with social meet-ups.

Hurricane Relief: John Henry Eldred Jr. Foundation

- Following Hurricanes Helene and Milton, ARSL partnered with the John Henry Eldred Jr. Foundation to identify **10 rural libraries in North Carolina and Georgia** most in need of support.
- **\$130,000 in grant funds** went directly to library workers on the ground to restore their collections and enable them to continue serving their communities during recovery.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



ARSL TRAIN *Training, Roundtables, and Informational Networking*

- ARSL's Continuing Education Committee led **12 TRAINs** in 2024, including **8 workshops and 4 roundtables**. *Topics ranged from Community Asset Mapping to Empowering Library Workers to be Advocates to Social Media Tips & Tricks*
- A total of **291 library professionals attended** these TRAIN sessions. *Roundtables were restricted to ARSL members, while workshops were available to members and nonmembers for a nominal fee.*

Professional Networking Groups

- Our **9 Professional Networking groups**, facilitated by ARSL members, that meet regularly to provide a space for the important connections and conversations that are the heart of ARSL.
- These groups focus on topics and groups such as Readers' Advisory, Solo-ish Librarians, and Neurodivergent Library Workers. Most are open only to ARSL members, but several are open to nonmembers as well, to provide important spaces for all rural & small library workers to meet and share knowledge.
- In 2024, these nine groups **met 51 times, with a total of 503 total participants**.

Professional Resource Discussion Group

- The Continuing Education Committee led the spring 2024 Professional Resource Discussion Group, "Relationships in the Workplace."
- **32 people attended** this informal, member-only discussion.

Regional Forums

- Over **100 participants** joined the **16 quarterly** Regional Forums (West, South, Midwest, Northeast).

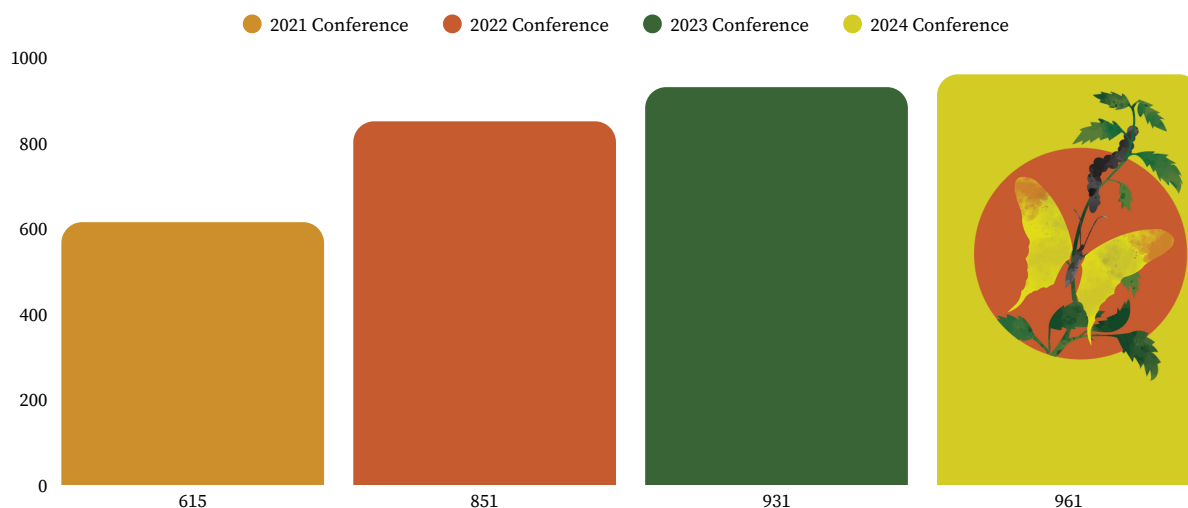


2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

HIGHLIGHTS

Largest In-Person ARSL Conference Ever

Every pandemic-era conference (2020–2023) has been larger than our largest pre-pandemic conference (Burlington, 2019)



Keynote Testimonials

Celeste was a joy to listen to and was very motivational for aspiring authors.

Welcome Breakfast & Keynote with Celeste Ng

Emily Nagoski really was wonderful and made me think about my work and life in a new way. I'd dare say her talk was life-changing.

Breakfast & Keynote with Emily Nagoski – Burnout & the Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle

The final author panel with the children's authors was my favorite. All four (facilitator included) authors have such passion for their writing and voice.

KidLit Panel: Fostering Empathy & Empowering Young Minds



2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BY-THE-NUMBERS

961 Total Attendees*

**including all attendee formats, speakers, and sponsor & exhibitor representatives*

660

In-Person Attendees

120

Virtual Attendees

250+

Presenters

71

Exhibitors

15+

Scheduled Meetups &
Extracurriculars

14

Sponsors

86

General Sessions &
Pop-Up Programs

40+

Volunteers

Whova Connections

Whova is our all-in-one event management platform accessible via mobile app or desktop

288

Discussion Topics

7,016

Community Posts

673

Photos Shared

5,358

Private Messages Sent

70

Meet-ups Created



THANK YOU

As a member-led organization, ARSL could not exist without the numerous volunteers who dedicate their time, effort, and focus to running and improving ARSL and thereby the entire rural & small library community. We are so grateful for your hard work and effort throughout 2024!

Below are a list of the 2024 members of the ARSL Board, Committees, and Professional Networking Group leads. Many thanks to the innumerable additional members who volunteered at conference or for professional networking events, who donated to our scholarship fund, or who joined ARSL or renewed their memberships this year!

ARSL 2024 BOARD

Patrick Bodily - *President*
John Clextton - *Vice-President/ President-Elect*
Jennie Garner - *Past-President*
Erin Busbea - *Treasurer*
Amanda Doherty - *Secretary*
Sarah Vantrease - *Regional Representative (W)*
Tyler Hahn - *Regional Representative (MW)*
Amy Stone - *Regional Representative (NE)*
Phillip Carter - *Regional Representative (S)*
Michelle Underhill - *COSLA Representative (ex-officio)*
Kate Laughlin - *Executive Director (ex-officio)*



ARSL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Advocacy Committee

Beth Anderson*
 Sara Koehn*
 John Clextton†
 Lea Chisum‡
 Amy Stone‡
 Sarah Vantrease‡
 Jenny White‡
 Rebecca Feightner
 Sarah Sellon
 Jana Slisher
 Drew Wichtermann
 Natasja Williams

Conference Committee

Lucretia Calonder*
 Bree Drapa*
 Amy Stone†
 Chris Batscha‡
 Kristi Chadwick‡
 Ali Iserman‡
 Kelley Nordberg‡
 Sherry Scheline‡
 Debbie Winlock‡
 Tanner Ames
 Karen Ball
 Merideth Johnson

Continuing Education Committee

Melissa Little*
 Annice Sevett*
 Tyler Hahn†
 Kathy Atchley‡
 Kara Bauman‡
 Erin Coughlin‡
 Tiffany Hayes‡
 Allison MacKenzie‡
 Kip Roberson‡
 Christinna Swearingen‡
 Margaret Woodruff‡
 CL Quillen

*Committee Chair
 †Board Liaison
 ‡Continuing Member



THANK YOU

ARSL COMMITTEE MEMBERS CONT.

Finance Committee

Erin Busbea*†
Patrick Bodily‡
Sarah Crisler-Ruskey‡
Megan Dazey‡
Paulina Popolawska‡
John Clexton
Nick Shimmin

Governance Committee

Shannon Schultz*
Kristy Smith*
Patrick Bodily†
Emilie Braunel‡
Mandy Walters‡
Annie Bowers
Rachel Ballenger

Grants, Awards & Scholarships Committee

Drea Douglas*
Kip Roberson*
Erin Busbea†
Jennifer Ball‡
Alicia Mangin‡
Laura McWilliams‡
Aimee Adams
Carrie Bushman
Elizabeth Miller
Shakera Stanley

Marketing & Communications Committee

Callie Cortner*
Erica Testani*
Phillip Carter†
Alyson Hayes Blankenship‡
Sarah Jones‡
Courtney Sogard‡
DeAnna Dillon
Lynette Heiden
Joy Stevenson
Claire Williams

Membership Committee

Caitlyn Haley*
Anne Osborne*
Amanda Dougherty†
Jessica Brents‡
Cayde Copeland
Cynthia Hughes
Bailee Hutchinson
Erin Sehorn
Meghan Sullivan
Lisa Thompson

Partnership Committee

Noah Lenstra*
Shannon Terry*
Sarah Vantrease†
Deborah Dutcher‡
Meredith Janet Fletcher‡
Brad Powell‡
Shannon Putney
Elizabeth Suchanic
Kimberlee Wheeler
Joy Worland

ARSL NETWORKING GROUP LEADS

Adult Services

Deborah Dutcher
Bailee Hutchinson

Directors, Managers & Administrators

Cicely Douglas
Wendy Moulton
Lisa Thompson

LGBTQ+ Library Workers

Casey Copeland
Ali Iserman

Librarians with Disabilities

Lucretia Calonder
Jennifer Stevenson

Library Workers of Color

Jamie Kurumaji
Janine Miller
Maggie Moore

Neurodivergent Library Workers

Carla Huston
Sara Moesel

Readers' Advisory

Michelle Baker
C. L. Quillen

Youth & Teen Services

Jana Slisher
Erica Testani

Solo Librarian Happy Hour

Bree Drapa
Chelsea Price

*Committee Chair

†Board Liaison

‡Continuing Member



THANK YOU

TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

ARSL's advocacy efforts, conference, and professional development all rely on the generous support of sponsors and donations from members. We'd like to thank our Supporters Alliance Members, 2024 Conference Sponsors, and individuals who made large donations to ARSL in 2024. All your donations go directly to support ARSL and rural & small libraries across North America!

ARSL SUPPORTERS ALLIANCE



CONFERENCE SPONSORS



VIRCO®



MANTON
FOUNDATION

Diamond Tier

Manton Foundation and Virco

Silver/Scholarship Tier

Library Journal & Junior Library Guild, Library Reads, and Partners for Rural Impact

Bronze

Advantage Archives, American Library Association, EBSCO, Hachette, iRead Reading Programs, Libraries without Borders, Library Strategies, Meescan, and San Jose State University

LARGE DONORS

\$1,000+

One anonymous

\$500+

Regina Washington

One anonymous

\$250+

Maddie Cummings

Susan Ostrowski