

BLACKWATER REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Franklin Branch

Wednesday

March 18, 2026

Board of Trustees Meeting—3:00 pm

Budget & Finance Committee *will not* meet



**Blackwater Regional Library
Franklin Branch**

**280 N. College Dr.
Franklin, Virginia 23851**



Franklin, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Surry, and Sussex
www.blackwaterlib.org

Please notify Amy at 757-653-0298 x 304 if you are unable to attend or need directions.

Board Packet Contents

March 18, 2026

- Agenda – March 2026
- Minutes – February 2026
- Letter from Dr. Cramer (IWCS)
- Library Director's Report
- Recommendation for Investment of Reserve Account
- Items for Closed Session Recommendation
- Personnel and Policy Meeting Notes – March 2026
- 2026-2031 Strategic Plan Draft
- Library Bills
- Monthly Statistics Report – February 2026
- Staffing Report

**Blackwater Regional Library
Board Meeting
March 18, 2026**

Agenda

Franklin Branch

Call to Order

Adoption of Agenda – March 2026

Approval of Minutes – February 2026

Public Comment

Correspondence

- Letter from Dr. Cramer (IWCS)

Director's Report

Committee Reports

- Budget and Finance
 - A. Recommendation for Investment of Reserve Account
- Personnel and Policy
 - A. Items for Closed Session
- Long Range Planning
 - A. Approval of 2026-2031 Strategic Plan

Review of Approval of Accounts Payable and File for Annual Audit

Unfinished Business

New Business

- Closed Session to Discuss Personnel Matters
- Nominating and Search Committee Announcement

Board Member Comments/Announcements

Announcement of Next Meeting

- April 15, 2026

Adjournment

**BLACKWATER REGIONAL LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
February 18, 2026**

Present

MeChelle Blunt – Southampton County
Ora Briggs – Sussex County
Sylvia Claggett – Isle of Wight County
Deborah Dawson – Surry County
Charlene Herrala – Isle of Wight County
Pam Lease – City of Franklin
Kathy Lippard – Isle of Wight County
Margie McClenny – Southampton County
Karen Richardson – Sussex County
Judge Alfreda Talton-Harris – City of Franklin
Kisha Watford – Southampton County
Johanna Wiggins – Isle of Wight County
Ben Neal – Library Director
Bonnie Lauver – Assistant Library Director
Debbie Carter – Budget & Finance Manager

Remote (via Zoom)

Absent

Chair, Deborah Dawson called the meeting of the Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees to order at 3:05 p.m. at the Franklin Branch.

Consideration of Remote Meeting Participation Requests

None

Agenda

Ms. Lease moved, and Ms. Watford seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Minutes

Ms. Blunt moved, and Ms. Lease seconded the minutes be approved as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Public Comment

None

Correspondence

None

Library Director's Report

One PT vacancy as of 2.8.2026

Winter Reading Program is off to a strong start with Beanstack

Fiscal Year, YOY through January 31st shows increases in circulation, meeting room usage, and new users

Mr. Neal explained that House Bill 236 has been pulled until next session. The Representative will work with VLA to make the bill stronger for everyone.

HB1 & SB1 – minimum wage legislation passed House and Senate, will increase minimum wage to \$15.00/hour by 2028

Delegate Wachsmann introduced HR48, commending the Smithfield Branch on 100 years!

Committee Reports

Budget & Finance – Ms. Lease – The committee met prior to the Board meeting. They voted to direct staff to research investing \$100,000 of reserve fund. BRL receives .12% on the current money market account. Options will be presented to the Board at the March meeting.

Personnel & Policy – Ms. Briggs – no report

Long Range Planning – Mr. Neal – There are three versions of the strategic plan in today's handouts. Please send Mr. Neal and Ms. Dawson your preference by March 1st. The Board will vote at the March meeting.

Accounts Payable

Ms. Richardson moved, and Ms. Herrala seconded that the accounts payable be filed for the Annual Audit. The vote was unanimous.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

None

Board Member Comments/Announcements

Ms. Watford – attended Author's Meet & Greet at Rawls and enjoyed it!

Ms. Blunt – The Links, Incorporated (Suffolk VA Chapter) will hold a Black Family Wellness Expo at the Workforce Development Center on March 21, 2026. Please contact her for more information.

Ms. Wiggins – attended a great meeting on women's health at Smithfield!

Ms. Lippard – excited about the new shelving/renovations at Smithfield!

Ms. Briggs – Sussex Community Coalition is working on the building. Hopes to have daycare operational by September 2027.

Ms. Richardson – book club kits are great!

Ms. McClenny – attended Paws to Read at Rawls and loved it!

Announcement of Next Meeting

The next Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees meeting will be on March 18, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. at the Franklin Branch.

Adjournment

Ms. Blunt moved, and Judge Harris seconded the meeting be adjourned. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Carter for
Ora Briggs, Secretary



January 15, 2026

Blackwater Regional Library
255 James Street
Smithfield, VA 23430

Dear Blackwater Regional Library:

The School Board joins me in thanking you for your generous donation of supplies for Isle of Wight County Schools. The Board in session recently formally accepted your contribution and directed that a letter expressing their pleasure and appreciation be sent.

Your continued support of our instructional program is an encouragement to all of us. With us working together for our children, we can make our schools the very best! Again, thank you all for your generosity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Theo Cramer", is written over a faint, illegible stamp.

Dr. Theo Cramer
Superintendent



Franklin, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Surry, and Sussex
www.blackwaterlib.org

Director's Report

February 2025

Winter Reading Program Success and other updates



- Introduced community to Beanstack App for easier use and accessibility
- About 150 participants of all ages
- Total of 6800+ children's books checked out as part of program (+19% over last year's WRP)
- Ages 12 and under logged over 11,000 minutes of reading, with each participant averaging over 3 hours of logged reading as part of the program
- Highest circulating February in nine years

City of Franklin

- On February 3rd, we had local author, Roze Worrell as she shared her unique life journey and her book *Hearts: Finding Unexpected Signs of Hope, Comfort and Joy!*
- Franklin branch had strong turnout for their recurring programming including Pokemon Club & Full Steam Ahead for families, and St. Patrick's themed craft program for adults
- Continued Deposit Collections and activities to the residents of East Pavilion and The Village
- Storytimes at Storehouse Coffee will transition to a collaboration with Franklin Parks & Rec in the Spring



Isle of Wight County

- Carrollton branch held a variety of programs, including a fun Be Your Own Valentine Party for teens and hosted their popular book club at a local restaurant
- Smithfield branch hosted a special public health program to raise awareness of health issues that disproportionately effect members of the African-American community with the help of Phi Beta Sigma and Delta Sigma Theta
- Windsor branch continued to provide a wide array of programming, including hosting local bestselling author Nancy Naigle and hosting the popular PAWS to Read program for families



44 In-House or Outreach Programs in Isle of Wight County reaching over 600 people

Southampton County

- Courtland branch had programs for all ages including K-Pop After School program for families, Beginner Line Dancing, and Heat Press Aprons for adults
- Courtland branch had a special visit from SCPS Pre-K students for a storytime!
- Outreach staff brought the Bookmobile to Rawls Museum Arts Wellness Fair



Surry County

- Surry patrons learned about two Spiritual Folklorists, Becky Ely & Alberta Bradford, and their catalog of songs as part of our Black History Month celebration thanks to resources from the Library of Congress
- Special programs were held at both branches for all ages, celebrating Valentines' Day



Sussex County

- For adults, various craft programs that were all well-attended and a lot of fun for participants
- The libraries hosted various school groups for storytime visits, which were a great outing



Recommendation for Investment of Reserve Account

At the February Budget and Finance meeting, the committee directed Staff to investigate CD options at financial institutions that BRL already does business with and to make a recommendation.

Upon staff research, staff is **recommending** investing \$100,000 of current reserve fund in CDs with Carr Investment Group at the best available rates when the motion is approved Budget and Finance came to consensus to recommend this option as well.

Items for Closed Session

- A motion is required to go into closed session for the following purposes: accordance with Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) Personnel matter regarding the Library Director's tenure and for appointment of an interim director
- A motion is required to return to open session
- A motion is required to certify that only business matters lawfully exempted open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed and considered by the Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees **(roll call vote required)**
- Any additional motions the board may wish to consider

Recommendation:

At the March 4th meeting of the Personnel and Policy committee voted unanimously to recommend the following motions:

- **A motion to accept, with regret, the Library Director's resignation effective April 15, 2026**
- **A motion to Bonnie Lauver Interim Director, effective 4/16/26, at an annualized salary of \$74,000. If interim status lasts more than six months, the Board shall re-consider the interim salary at a higher rate**

Blackwater Regional Library
Personnel and Policy Committee Meeting Notes
Franklin Branch
March 4 2025

Present

Alfreda Talton-Harris – City of Franklin
Charlene Herrala – Isle of Wight
Mechelle Blunt – Southampton County
Ora Briggs – Sussex County
Kisha Watford - Southampton County
Deborah Dawson-Surry County (Ex-Officio)
Ben Neal, Library Director
Bonnie Lauver, Assistant Library Director

Remote (via Zoom)

Absent

Sylvia Claggett—Isle of Wight County
Johanna Wiggins – Isle of Wight

Committee Chair Briggs called the meeting of the Personnel and Policy committee to order at 3:07 p.m.

The committee voted unanimously to go into closed session pursuant to subdivision (A) (1) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia to discuss personnel matters associated with the performance review of the Director at 3:09 p.m.

At 3:57, the committee voted to go back into Open Session unanimously. Ms. Briggs made a motion to certify that to each member’s knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed. A roll call vote followed:

Blunt: Yes
Briggs: Yes
Dawson (ex officio): Yes
Harris: Yes
Herrala: Yes
Watford: Yes

Following the certification, a motion was made by Ms. Herrala to recommend to the full board to accept the Director’s resignation with regret effective April 15, 2026. Dr. Blunt seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Dawson read another motion to recommend to the Board “to appoint Bonnie Lauver Interim Director, effective 4/16/26, at an annualized salary of \$74,000. If interim status lasts more than six months, the Board shall re-consider the interim salary at a higher rate”. Ms. Watford seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The committee adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

STRATEGIC PLAN



MISSION

We connect people with resources to enrich their lives

VALUES

Inclusive, Responsive, Adaptive

VISION

Our area thrives with opportunity for all



A Hub for Lifelong Learning

Goals

Provide relevant programs, resources, and services to our community

Strategies

- Raise awareness of library resources, particularly digital and non-traditional collections
- Promote literacy and learning of all kinds through library services and resources, including technology programs
- Explore ways to enhance the library's place in the community to be a Third Place between school/work and home
- Strive towards more consistent and varied library resources and programs in order to provide a more consistent user experience



A Library for the Entire Community

Goals

Serve more of our community through continually more relevant services and resources

Strategies

- Ensure that all resources and services provided reflect the entire community, and support its freedom to read
- Continue to diversify Outreach Services offerings to reach more users, particularly communities not utilizing the library at higher levels
- Strive for balance in collections, programs, and ideas that serve the entire community and allow room for learning and exploration



Responsive to the Community

Goals

Respond nimbly to changing customer needs, including having a well-trained staff

Strategies

- Audit procedures and policies regularly to ensure best practices and a customer-first mindset
- Align services with needs of customers on a regular basis. Always be nimble and proactive to serve the community
- Govern proactively to ensure looking towards future needs and issues
- Support and retain a well-trained staff

Blackwater Regional Library

Library Bills

February 2026

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	MEMO/DESCRIPTION	NUM	AMOUNT
AFLAC				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0CPZ4 2.28.2026	-809.51
02/28/2026	Bill		205865	809.51
Amazon Capital Services				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11832	-366.07
02/28/2026	Bill		1KR9-GX7K-MT61	366.07
Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		13307562	-9,280.00
02/18/2026	Bill		000922701F	9,280.00
Cengage Learning, Inc.				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		7108015127908629710	-98.37
02/18/2026	Bill		999102337296	98.37
Dataprise LLC				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11833	-3,872.50
02/28/2026	Bill		DP-76582	3,872.50
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		7103013227908731280	-196.00
02/18/2026	Bill		CW75798	196.00
Dominion Energy Virginia				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		4822999230	-1,124.12
02/28/2026	Bill		3233130008 2.28.2026	1,124.12
Ingram Library Services				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0060261802	-6,189.03
02/18/2026	Bill		20AZ032 2.18.2026	6,189.03
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0062261802	-1,072.50
02/18/2026	Bill		20BB962 2.18.2026	1,072.50
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0063261802	-999.47
02/18/2026	Bill		20BB494 2.18.2026	999.47
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0165260303	-4,843.43
02/28/2026	Bill		20AZ032 2.28.2026	4,843.43
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0169260303	-2,220.67
02/28/2026	Bill		20BB962 2.28.2026	2,220.67
Midwest Tape				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11834	-2,329.20
02/28/2026	Bill		508453812	2,329.20
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		0109017727902335030	-1,047.48
02/18/2026	Bill		508396672	1,047.48

Blackwater Regional Library

Library Bills

February 2026

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	MEMO/DESCRIPTION	NUM	AMOUNT
Midwest Tape (Hoopla)				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		8107015727901636440	-100,000.00
02/18/2026	Bill		508398197	100,000.00
OrangeBoy, LLC				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		5726 2.18.2026	-9,000.00
02/18/2026	Bill		5726	9,000.00
Overdrive, Inc				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		9jwazhmb	-3,944.67
02/18/2026	Bill		03100CO26043959	3,897.17
02/18/2026	Bill		03100DA26038222	47.50
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		03f8tn72	-1,780.85
02/28/2026	Bill		03100DA26057277	18.99
02/28/2026	Bill		03100DA260525551	658.60
02/28/2026	Bill		03100DA26058776	406.99
02/28/2026	Bill		03100CO26051488	696.27
PEAC Solutions				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		200457629991	-1,587.92
02/18/2026	Bill		41575771	1,587.92
PermaCard				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11825	-1,080.75
02/18/2026	Bill		235826	1,080.75
Petty Cash				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11835	-592.15
02/28/2026	Bill		Feb 2026 petty cash	592.15
Queen B's Cleaning Service				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11836	-877.20
02/28/2026	Bill		1999	877.20
Sally Acker				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11826	-300.00
02/18/2026	Bill		122	300.00
Selective Insurance Company				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		1335039233	-260.00
02/18/2026	Bill		120-487-730 Xerox	260.00

Blackwater Regional Library

Library Bills

February 2026

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	MEMO/DESCRIPTION	NUM	AMOUNT
Sentara Health Plans				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		3140555412	-16,574.00
02/28/2026	Bill		10997248	16,574.00
Sheena Graham				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11827	-100.00
02/18/2026	Bill		RL 2.28.2026	100.00
Southampton County				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		43049	-65.00
02/28/2026	Bill		Acct 46 2.19.2026	65.00
Southside Gas Service, Inc.				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11828	-1,314.81
02/18/2026	Bill		25200	1,314.81
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11837	-577.51
02/28/2026	Bill		25284	577.51
Spectrum Enterprise				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		O542571847	-23.99
02/18/2026	Bill		089740301020126	23.99
T & A Repairs, LLC.				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11829	-138.62
02/18/2026	Bill		40538	138.62
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11838	-153.32
02/28/2026	Bill		40499	153.32
The Library Corporation				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11839	-5,680.75
02/28/2026	Bill		INV11004979	5,680.75
The Tidewater News				
02/28/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		11840	-49.00
02/28/2026	Bill		21237 2.28.2026	49.00
TowneBank/Card Services				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		CF8C4DAD06	-13,026.71
02/18/2026	Bill		6457 0001 2.18.2026	13,026.71
Unique Management Services, Inc.				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		9104010227902334190	-314.55
02/18/2026	Bill		6150331	314.55

Blackwater Regional Library

Library Bills

February 2026

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	MEMO/DESCRIPTION	NUM	AMOUNT
Verizon Wireless				
02/18/2026	Bill Payment (Check)		4604017811	-2,840.71
02/18/2026	Bill		6135566910	2,840.71

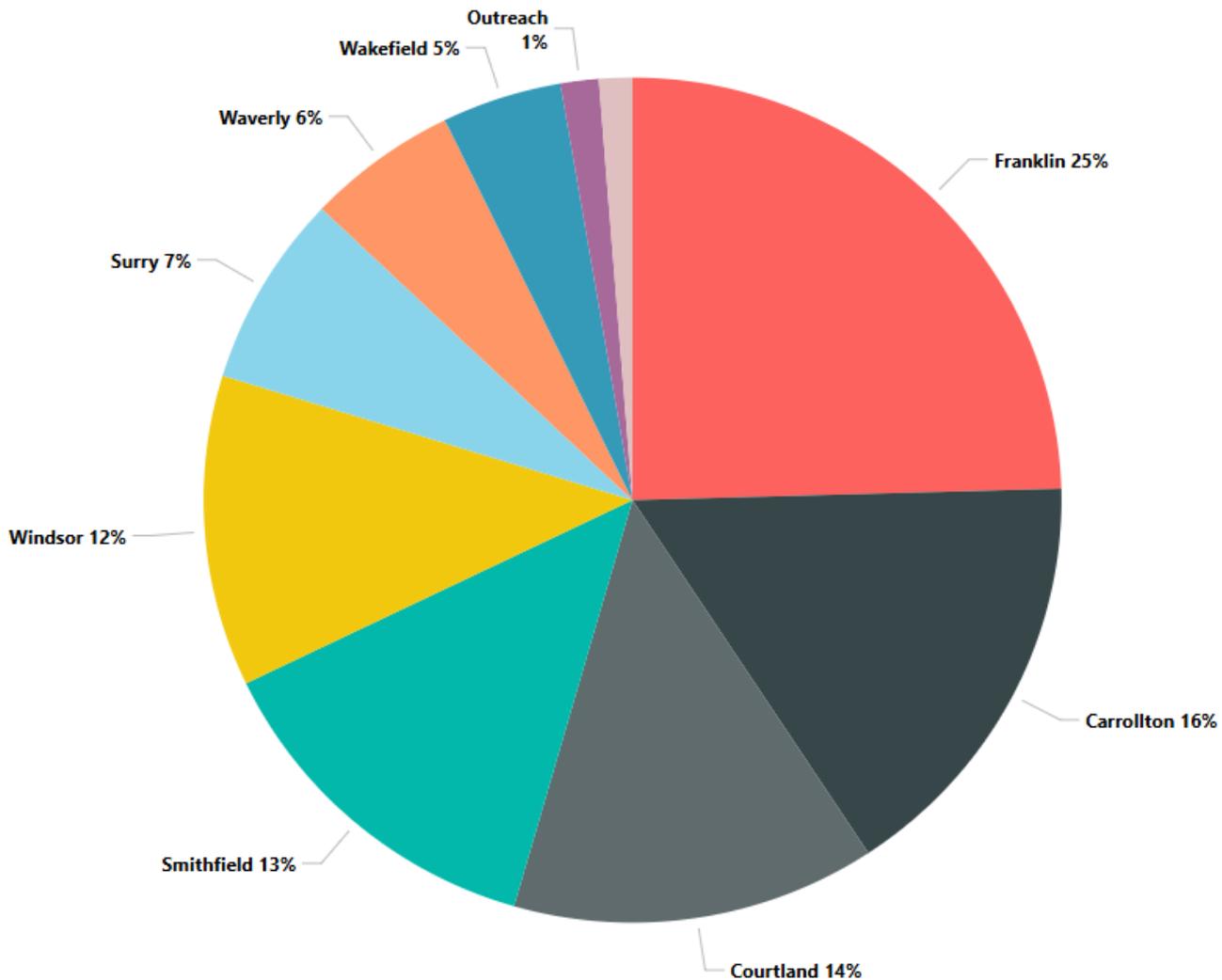


Franklin, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Surry, and Sussex
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February 2026

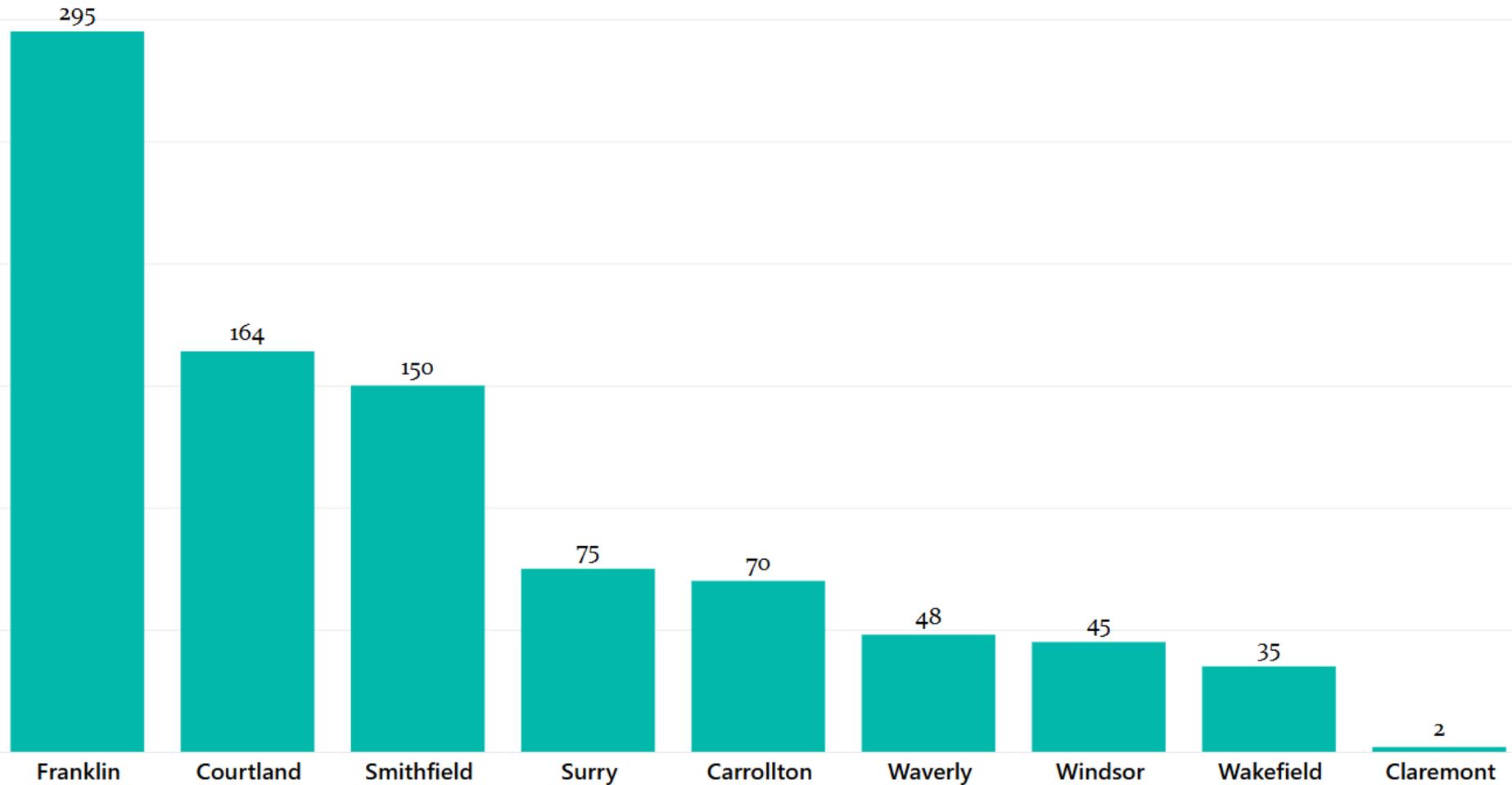
Statistics

Monthly Report: Patron Count

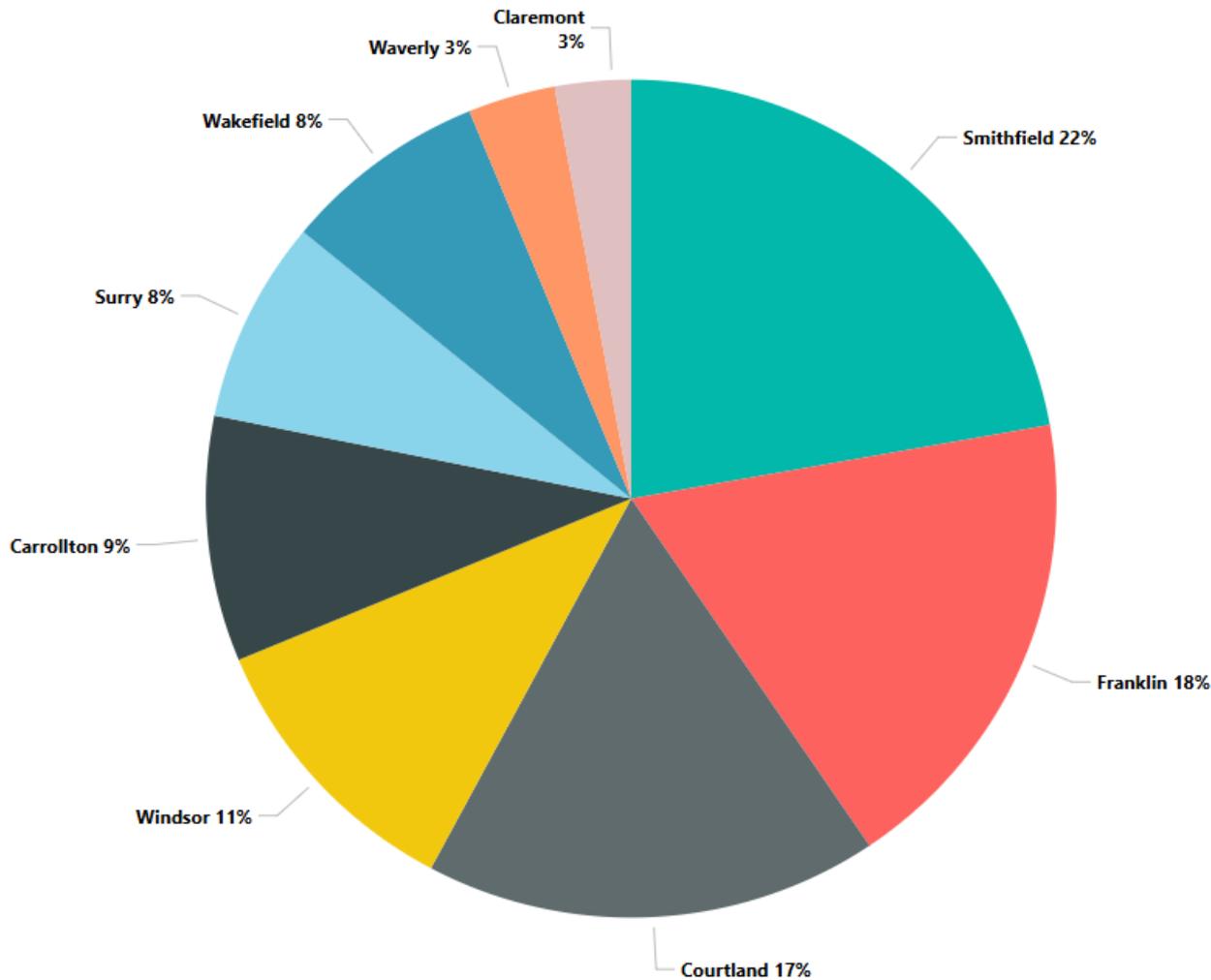


Branch	Patron Count
Carrollton	1736
Claremont	135
Courtland	1474
Franklin	2639
Outreach	154
Smithfield	1440
Surry	789
Wakefield	485
Waverly	611
Windsor	1278
Total	10741

Monthly Report: In-House Internet



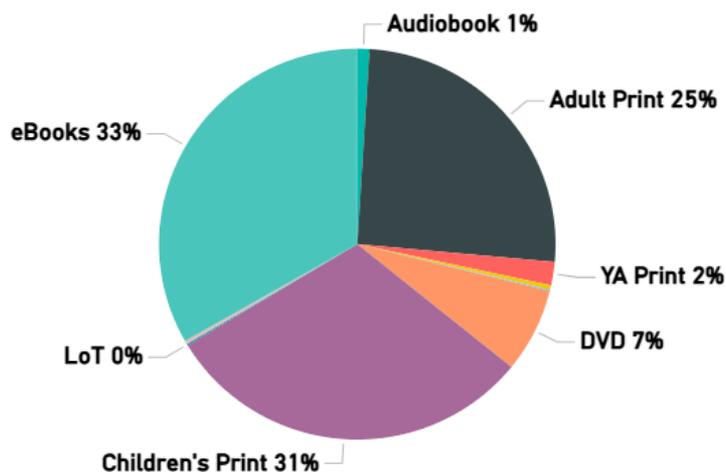
Monthly Report: WiFi Use



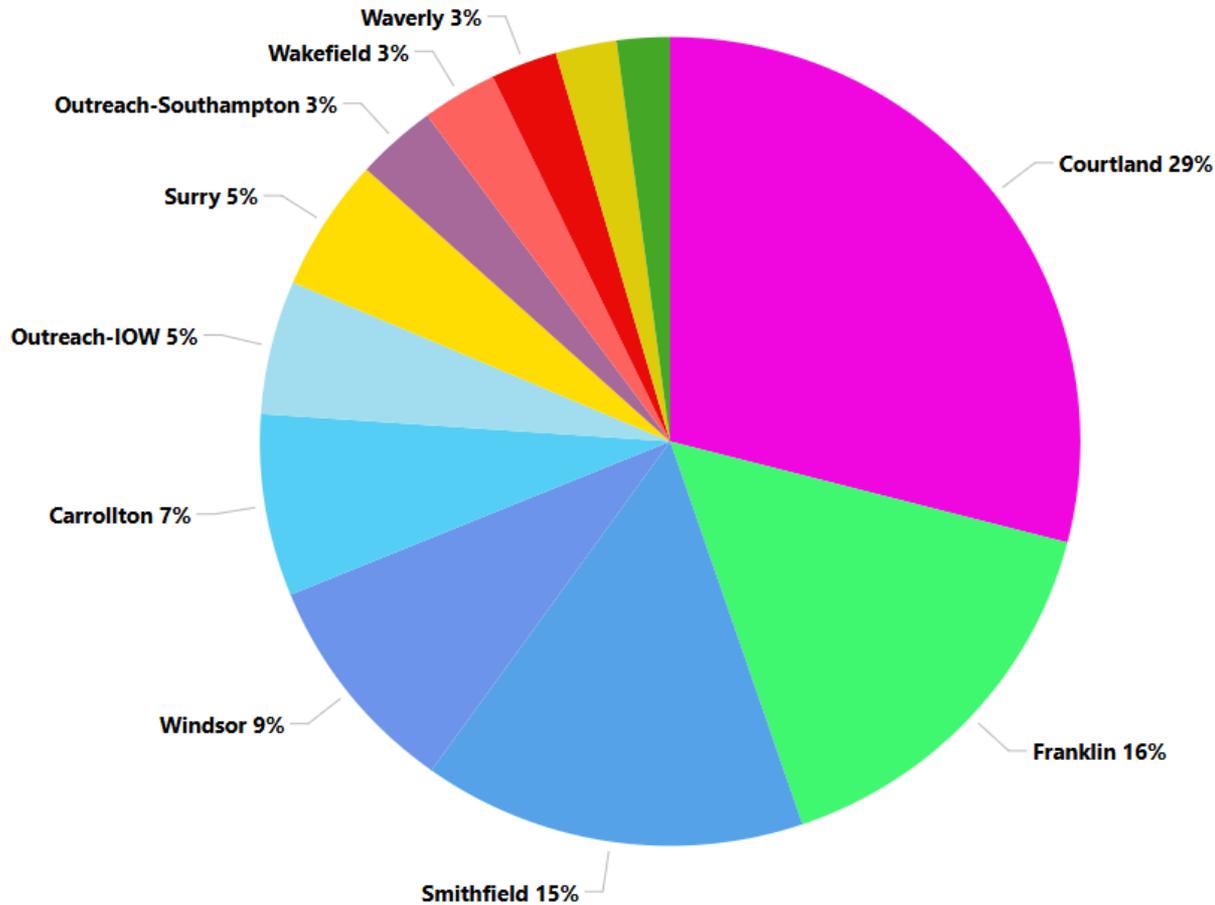
Branch	Wireless Internet Usage
Carrollton	131
Claremont	40
Courtland	239
Franklin	254
Smithfield	307
Surry	108
Wakefield	108
Waverly	46
Windsor	151
Total	1384

Circulation Report: Type by Branch

Location	Adult Print	Children's Print	DVD	Audiobook	Kits	YA Print	Music	LoT	Magazines	eBooks	Streaming Devices/ Hotspots
Carrollton	1356	1818	223	41	4	159	0	2	0	1938	17
Claremont	216	114	56	1	1	1	0	0	1	74	1
Courtland	1019	965	249	96	1	58	0	6	1	1654	20
Franklin	1345	1394	429	96	4	77	0	7	43	1654	10
Outreach	63	60	11	0	0	7	0	0	0	149	0
Smithfield	1872	2661	362	27	4	151	0	7	40	2648	12
Surry	461	483	284	3	2	39	0	12	0	638	28
Wakefield	232	214	41	3	2	28	0	1	0	247	1
Waverly	376	192	63	6	5	4	0	1	0	228	8
Windsor	671	1220	365	25	10	51	0	2	0	711	13
Total	7611	9121	2083	298	33	575	0	38	85	9941	110

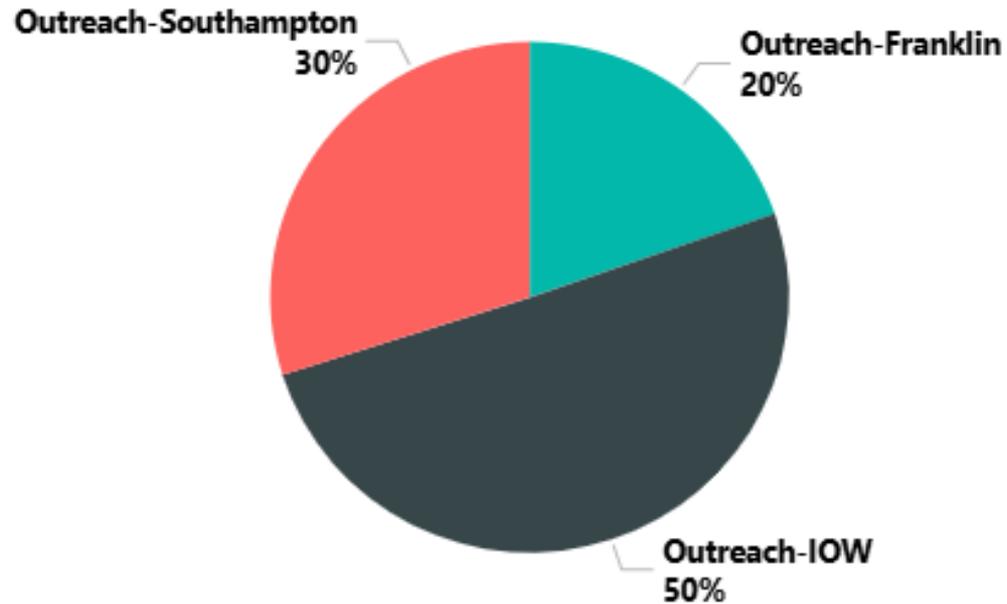


Program Report: Total Participation



Location/Branch	Count
Carrollton	181
Claremont	60
Courtland	722
Franklin	392
Outreach-Franklin	52
Outreach-IOW	133
Outreach-Southampton	79
Smithfield	376
Surry	132
Wakefield	74
Waverly	65
Windsor	222
Total	2488

Outreach Report: Programs



Location/Branch	Outreach Programs	Attendance
Outreach-Franklin	2	52
Outreach-IOW	6	133
Outreach-Southampton	2	79
Total	10	264

STAFFING AND WORKSHOP REPORT

Staffing Update March 2026 Blackwater Regional Library

New Hires

Promotions

- Oliver Kish – Branch Manager, Windsor branch
- Jennifer Hulick – Senior Library Assistant, Claremont branch

Transfers

- Laurie Ross – Substitute Library Assistant

Separations

- Owen Kelsey – Senior Library Assistant, Claremont branch
- Lauren Lombard – Branch Manager, Windsor branch

Vacancies

- Senior Library Assistant – Sussex branches
- Senior Library Assistant – Windsor branch
- Library Assistant – Sussex branches

STAFFING AND WORKSHOP REPORT

Training Sessions – February 2026

Southampton County staff completed a total of 1 training

Surry County staff completed a total of 1 training

Sussex County staff completed a total of 1 training

2/12/2026 – Amazing Audiobooks - The host of the training was Heather Booth, Editor of Audiobooks at Booklist. The call consisted of four (4) panelists from: Penguin Random House, Harper Collins Publishers, Hoopla, and Sourcebooks.

It was noted that the use of audiobooks is on the rise and the discussion was how to meet the needs of the reader by finding the best audiobooks out there so every listeners needs were met.

Penguin Random House- discussed the new releases that included Unforgettable Memoirs, Gonna be golden/popular animated stories, the expansion of Spanish audio collection for kids and adults. She reviewed the Penguin Random House audio app and encouraged us to check out the seasonal catalog on their web site- over 600 spring audiobooks.

Harper Collis Publisher – reviewed audio books that the authors themselves narrate. Her slides were colorful and she discussed info about the authors.

Hoopla- provided statistics such as number of patron (13.5 million), unique titles available (3 million), 4 territories and 125 languages. She noted they had 7 formats: Audiobooks, ebooks, Comics and Manga, Movies Music, TV and Binge pass. Her main point was that hoopla bridges the gaps: expands access without expanding the shelves.

Sourcebooks- introductions to the Audiobook narrator and Director of Audio Production. Showed colorful slides on the now available adult and kids & teen audio books. They also provided coming soon selections.

Overall the hour went by fast and it provided a lot of good information to share with others.

2/21/2026 – Nat Turner Trail Bus Tour - I attended the tour led by Rick Francis, historian, Clerk of Southampton Courts and a descendent of the Francis family that was involved in the insurrection. We visited the locations via bus that were targeted by Nat Turner and his followers in 1831. It was very informative and gave me a new perspective of this historical event. I made a copy of the handouts given to put in the library file cabinet.

2/28/2026 – Digital Safety and Privacy for Librarians - How do we help patrons in this area and what guidance should and can we offer them in protecting themselves online? What are the best tools and resources? What privacy and digital safety issues might we be overlooking in our own library? Melody discusses these issues, as well as how AI and social media complicate these already challenging issues.