Our Mission: The Fontana Regional Library system provides the public of Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties with excellent service and convenient access to resources for their educational, informational, and recreational needs.

**Jackson County**
- **Jackson County Public Library** - Sylva, NC
- **Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library** - Cashiers, NC

**Macon County**
- **Macon County Public Library** - Franklin, NC
- **Hudson Library** - Highlands, NC
- **Nantahala Community Library** - Topton, NC

**Swain County**
- **Marianna Black Library** - Bryson City, NC
- **FRL Headquarters**
- **Reading Rover Bookmobile** - serving Jackson, Macon, & Swain counties and the Qualla Boundary
Fontana Regional Library was created in July 1944. For 73 years, it has been our mission to provide the public of Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties with excellent service and convenient access to resources for their educational, informational, and recreational needs.

Regional Libraries are established by Article 14, Chapter 153A of the North Carolina General Statutes and the North Carolina Administrative Code 07 NCAC 02I. We are governed by a Library Board with representatives from each of our counties in accordance with the Regional Agreement signed by all three counties and the State Library.

Funding for the libraries comes primarily from our counties, towns, and the state, supplemented by donations, grants, and our Friends of the Library groups. The funding provided by our counties stays in our counties, providing employment for 70 well-trained staff members.

In 2017 we received grants from:
- local Community Foundations,
- the American Library Association,
- NASA,
- American Astronomical Society,
- Region A Partnership for Children, and
- the federal government through the Library Services and Technology Act.

We utilize the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program (e-rate) to receive 80% discounts amounting to $160,000 for broadband connectivity service and infrastructure.

Our annual audit is available for review.
Fontana Regional Library has a long history of connecting with the communities it serves. Our staff, our Library Boards, and our Friends of the Library work together to align library services with the aspirations of the people of Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties. We turn outward, with an eye towards engaging individuals, businesses, and organizations in meaningful conversations. We’ve built strong partnerships with schools, local civic agencies, non-profits, local and state government departments, business, and funders to create opportunities for exploration and change. These relationships yield positive impacts in the critical areas of connectivity, diversity, education, employment and economy, health and mental health.

The libraries’ most powerful asset is the conversation they provide—between books and readers, between children and parents, between individuals and the collective world. Take them away and those voices turn inwards or vanish. Turns out that libraries have nothing at all to do with silence. —Bella Bathurst

Library spaces, books, technology, and programs are all tools that connect us with community members of all ages, backgrounds, education and income levels, and interests. Library staff is dedicated to using these tools to create a welcoming way to put knowledge at your fingertips. We hope this annual report shows you more about what is available at your local library and what you can accomplish by using your library card.

Karen Wallace,
Director
During 2016, we created a long-range plan to provide direction and inspiration for our next five years. Funded by a grant from the State Library, we compiled goals and objectives to guide our efforts in enhancing the services we offer our patrons. This Annual Report highlights how we worked to meet these objectives in 2017 as well as providing statistics on the number of books and materials checked out, the number of programs and participants, and the sources of funding from various governments and organizations. There are two particular events I want to call to your attention:

The year 2017 will be remembered as the “Year of the Total Eclipse” with most of our three-county area in the path of “totality”. Funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (under the provisions of the federal Library Services and Technology Act administered by the State Library of North Carolina), enabled FRL to purchase Orion Starblast Telescopes and a Portable Planetarium. Individuals can check out the telescopes for seven days and planetarium programs continue to be offered in our libraries and at other locations within our communities.

The StudentAccess Project was implemented throughout the FRL region to provide public school students easy access to books, informational, and educational resources using their Student ID rather than an individual library card. Library staff are working with school faculty to promote the use of StudentAccess by their students.

So, if you’re looking for the newest book release, another volume by a favorite author, a classic “blast from the past”, a place to read newspapers and magazine, a place for your small group meeting, information on an area of interest, or just a place to relax and unwind; you’ll find it in your community’s living room, one of the Fontana Regional Libraries.

John Gaston,
Chairman
Making Connections

In 2016 Fontana Regional Library surveyed staff, board members, library supporters, community agencies, and over 1,000 members of the public to develop a new Long Range Plan for years 2016-2020 that focuses on needs identified by our communities. We are joining with other community organizations and agencies to address these focus areas:

CONNECTIVITY
Affordable broadband service to every home and business.

EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMY
People who want resources relating to employment and economy will find what they want, and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

DIVERSITY
The community will recognize the library as a safe, inclusive place to access information and services that meet the needs of a diverse community.

HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH
People will be able to identify and access the resources and information they and their families need to live healthy lives.

EDUCATION
All community members will have the educational support and opportunities they need.

While we are working to address issues that we share with our community, we will not neglect the core library services you have come to expect:

RECREATION/LEISURE SERVICES
Community members will be able to explore trends and pursue interests that improve their quality of life.

To ensure that we have the means to achieve these goals, we will continue to strive for:

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE
The Library will have the infrastructure and resources to provide excellent service and convenient access for the community.
Connecting People with Information

Service Hours in 2017 decreased by 5.35% from 2016. Despite this decrease in the hours that services are available to patrons, numerous indicators in library usage & demand remain steady or are growing.

Due in part to the decrease in operating hours, many library users are increasingly utilizing the electronic and online resources offered by the Library.

Despite the decrease in availability, demand for the physical collections in the Library remains, with door counts per service hour holding steady from 2016 to 2017 at 32 users per hour.

Our electronic collections offer eBooks, eAudiobooks, streaming video, and more, which library patrons can access from home or wherever they may have internet access.
A reduction in library operating hours and staff due to funding issues has resulted in fewer programs and lower door counts. However, an increase in the average attendance at programs demonstrates that even if we are doing what we can to reach people electronically to make up for the fewer hours, people still want and need to come for our in-house services. Our staff is our greatest asset and their availability is one of the most valuable services we provide to our communities.

Though the number of offered programs decreased by 16.34% from 2016 to 2017, average program attendance increased by 23.51% from 20.83 to 27.24 library users per program.
Connecting Our Communities to the World Wide Web

Fontana Regional Library has a long history of working to bridge the digital divide by providing free public computers, fast Internet access, and Wi-Fi hotspots. However, our community surveys told us that our citizens want and need more. Broadband access to homes and businesses is a major concern for our communities. So, we are working with our communities to find access solutions.

Everyone is welcome to use our resources for all their online needs: whether writing a resume, applying for a job, researching a health condition, filing taxes, keeping in touch with family and friends through social media, or playing a video game, the library is the place to go.
In 2017, we began a series of community forums in our libraries, bringing together stakeholders, vendors, and community members to discuss initiatives and next steps.

Library staff are participating in community groups and county broadband committees to bring broadband to our service area.

We have featured broadband surveys from local, regional, and state agencies on our website to help gather information for decision-makers. And we have created an online guide on our website with information and resources about broadband.

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I wanted to bring to your attention the fine work being performed by your employee, Charles Diede. I have been involved in organizing community broadband in Appalachian North Carolina since 2007 and have had an interesting perspective on the subject. Mr. Diede’s infectious interest and passion for broadband and his organization skills in bringing this most important concept to the rural communities has caused more light to be shed on the subject and more forward motion in the shortest period of time that I have seen in many years. For this you both are to be congratulated.

Thank you for allowing him to serve the communities in what I consider, for rural life as we know it today, an essential matter.

-Timothy Will, Catalpa Partners
Connecting to Jobs for Economic Security

The Library has traditionally helped people with resumes, job searches, interview training, and small business resources. As more and more jobs require online applications, people use library computers and Internet access to find and apply for jobs. Beyond that, the Library hosts AARP tax assistance programs, free notary services, and financial planning and entrepreneurship programs. Our planning surveys showed us that our communities are deeply concerned about jobs and the economy, so to be good neighbors, the Library needs to do more.

In 2017 the Library continued its annual Read Local Book Fair, connecting local authors with readers and customers for their works. Our libraries teamed with the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce to present a job fair and collaborated with Southwestern Community College to host a Career Café. These successful events served as models that will be repeated throughout the library system.

Meet Wanda Mills. Ms. Mills is a local entrepreneur, poet, speaker, faith-leader, and incidentally was born with cerebral palsy and is wheelchair bound. The Jackson County Public Library teamed with Disability Partners and Southwestern Community College to help Ms. Mills set up her business “Rolling Into The Future”, create a website, and obtain an artist’s grant.
Connecting to Our Diverse Community

Libraries pride themselves on being safe, welcoming, and accessible places for everyone. Our planning surveys indicated that some members of our communities feel isolated. Therefore, the Library is committed to reaching out to those who are unserved or underserved in our area, and to developing connections within our deep and diverse communities.

In 2017 we collaborated with the American Library Association, the National Library of Medicine, and Western Carolina University to present the national traveling exhibit Native Voices: Native Peoples’ Concepts of Health and Illness.

The libraries also presented bilingual and sign language storytimes for children, and English as a Second Language classes for adults. Library staff are learning American Sign Language and Spanish to be able to better communicate.

Foreign language book collections are being expanded, including books in Spanish and Cherokee. We have increased Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility in the library facilities.
Healthy Connections

Libraries are often the place where the public turns when seeking information about health issues. We provide medical dictionaries, prescription medicine references, information about local health resources, and most recently, Internet access to health information and medical services. Our surveys led us to understand that more was needed. Therefore, we have focused many of our activities on the Community Health Priorities of each of our County Health Departments.

**Jackson County 2015 Community Health Assessment**
1. Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
2. Injury and Substance Abuse Prevention
3. Chronic Disease Management/Prevention

**Macon County 2015 Community Health Assessment**
1. Chronic Disease Reduction, especially Cardio Vascular/Heart Disease
2. Domestic Violence
3. Healthy Lifestyle Choices

**Swain County 2015 Community Health Assessment**
1. Heart Disease, Stroke, Diabetes Prevention, with focus on
   - Nutrition
   - Obesity
   - Physical Activity
2. Substance Abuse Reduction, linking to
   - Mental Health
   - Infectious Disease
   - STDs
3. Promote Healthy Environment, with focus on
   - Tobacco Cessation for pregnant women and youth
In 2017, the Library continued hosting health fairs throughout our communities, partnering with Southwestern Community College and other local agencies and hosting ACA/SHIIP navigators for those needing health insurance.

Recognizing the need for mental health information, the Library has teamed with the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and with Vaya Health to host a mental health screening kiosk.

Library staff are part of the Healthy Carolinians Board and the Healthy for Life Action Team, focusing on the prevention of chronic disease and the promotion of physical activity and healthy eating choices. Programs throughout the system have included healthy eating, Alzheimer’s awareness, diabetes information, and physical activity such as yoga, folk dance, and clogging.
Learning, Connecting, Building the Future

Libraries have always been deeply involved with education. Offering preschool storytimes that teach literacy skills, summer reading programs, homework assistance, test preparation and proctoring, personal enrichment and job training classes, new languages, or helping grandparents discover social media, lifelong learning is a fundamental library experience. Our surveys showed us that our public recognizes this library-education connection and expects libraries and schools to work together for our communities.

The libraries all offer computer and technology training, either one-on-one assistance or group classes. In 2017 the Library forged a new partnership with the Department On Aging in Jackson County to bring technology training to seniors.
The Library sought and received a grant to bring a portable planetarium, telescopes, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) resources to the people of Western North Carolina. The planetarium has traveled to schools, festivals, and special events throughout our three counties, providing over 197 shows to more than 3,900 people in its first year.

For the 2017 Solar Eclipse, our Libraries played an integral role in preparing & educating our communities. Our Libraries:

- distributed over 9,900 Eclipse Glasses
- coordinated over 27 activities & more than 35 eclipse related events
- served & educated over 2,000 community members
The Reading Rover Bookmobile serves daycare centers throughout the three-county area and Qualla Boundary providing storytimes, library materials, and teaching resources.

**StudentAccess**

In another new initiative, StudentAccess, the Library, working with the North Carolina State Library, is partnering with the local school districts to provide free access to library materials and electronic resources to children from kindergarten to 12th grade using their school IDs.
Connect at your Leisure

The library is always a good place to find something to do. Crafts, hobbies, pop culture, gardening, films, games, puzzles, pets, poetry, music, cooking, genealogy, travel, or a good book (or e-book) to read or listen to; you can connect to it all at the library.

In 2017 Fontana Regional Library offered programs on philosophy, cooking, gardening, pitbulls, theater, and art. Kanopy, a streaming video service, was added to the resources available.

We partnered with the Nantahala Hiking Club and the Franklin Appalachian Trail Community to present “Walking with Spring”, a series of movies and workshops about the outdoors.

Taking the library to where people are, the Library has created a “pop-up” library at programs in the park, and has placed “Little Libraries”, kiosks with donated books, throughout the three counties.

Programs have explored current trends such as rock painting and adult coloring, and old favorites like native plants and the ever-popular chocolate cook-off.
Connecting it all Together

The Library strives to support all these efforts and deliver excellent service by providing outstanding facilities, up-to-date technology and infrastructure, online access through our website and social media, current collections in multiple formats, partnerships throughout the communities, and a motivated well-trained staff.

Infrastructure improvements in 2017:
- upgraded public and staff computers throughout the region,
- replaced network switches,
- participated in the Edge Initiative to improve public technology services,
- rearranged shelving to make access more convenient,
- installed ADA compliant automatic doors at the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library and the Hudson Library.

We are currently working with the Swain County Commissioners to envision a new library in Swain County. Here is the architect's initial rendering:

The Library continues to form partnerships throughout our communities to address the needs of our communities.

Staff training in 2017:
- library association conferences,
- training from State Library,
- vendor training on new products,
- in-house training on:
  - first aid and CPR,
  - active shooter response,
  - communication, and
  - mental health.
The heart of the community — enriching lives & inspiring the future.

providing the communities of Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties with excellent service and convenient access to resources for their educational, informational, and recreational needs.

Fontana Regional Library

Headquarters
(828) 488-2382
Director: Karen Wallace
33 Fryemont Street
Bryson City, NC 28713

Reading Rover Bookmobile
(828) 488-2382
Outreach Services: Mindy Ledford
33 Fryemont Street
Bryson City, NC 28713

JACKSON COUNTY

Jackson County Public Library
(828) 586-2016
County Librarian: Tracy Fitzmaurice
310 Keener Street
Sylva, NC 28779

Albert Carlton - Cashiers Community Library
(828) 734-0215
Branch Librarian: Serenity Richards
249 Frank Allen Road | PO Box 2127
Cashiers, NC 28717

MACON COUNTY

Macon County Public Library
(828) 524-3600
County Librarian: Karen Wallace
149 Siler Farm Road
Franklin, NC 28734

Hudson Library
(828) 526-3031
Branch Librarian: Carlyn Morenus
554 Main Street | PO Box 430
Highlands, NC 28741

Nantahala Community Library
(828) 321-3020
Branch Manager: Sharon Crosby
128 Nantahala School Road
Topton, NC 28781

SWAIN COUNTY

Marianna Black Library
(828) 488-3030
County Librarian: Jeff Delfield
33 Fryemont Street
Bryson City, NC 28713

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