

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Director's Report

Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director

This was our busiest summer yet since the pandemic. A big “thank you” to all of our staff for keeping up with the increased library usage. Our Buildings and Grounds team were busy not only keeping the building clean and in good repair but they managed many program setups and quick room changes to support our programming staff and our community groups. Our Childrens, Teen, and Adult Services Departments managed a robust compliment of programs on top of increased general usage. Our Patrons Services team kept up with the busy flow with their usual grace and professionalism and also worked hard to support the other service departments by participating in tabling events, programs, and other outreach opportunities. We are fortunate to have a great team that makes is all happen.

September is Library Card Sign Up Month, but for the OPL, every month is library card sign up month! The work that our staff do out in our community all year seems to make the official Library Card Sign Up Month a bit anticlimactic for us, but I didn't want to let it go by without a mention. Speaking of library cards, Marie Trapasso has arranged for new library cards with the new OPL logo! We hope to receive these soon.

Budget and Finance

The Finance Committee had a meeting with Assistant Superintendent for Business Alita Zuber on August 23rd to discuss the school district's planned bond initiative on the library's project. I provided the details from the meeting to the OPL Trustees. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

Bob Majernik, Jaime Aguirre, and I met with representatives from Tompkins Bank about their Positive Pay program. Positive Pay is a fraud detection and prevention program that we can sign up for in order to keep our checks more secure. While it sounds like an excellent program, we would like to make sure that it wouldn't create problems for folks trying to negotiate legitimate checks. More to come.

Building and Grounds

We continue to work with the architects from Lothrop and Associates on the plans for our building renovation project. I was glad that all but one of the members of the Leadership Team were available to attend the Board of Trustees Work Session on September 7th to provide feedback about the architect's work thus far. We have arranged for the architects to be available to meet with the rest of the staff on Wednesday, September 13th. As a reminder, the staff have been providing feedback and ideas on our building since we started thinking about changes in 2019. Much of the staff feedback can already be seen in the preliminary schematics and we continue to work with the departments in order to make sure that we are being responsive and proactive in our attempts to make the building work better for our community. (Goal 5.5 and 5.6)

The investigatory work on our parking lot and retaining wall began at the end of August and continues into September. As I write this report, engineers are drilling borings and digging test pits in the lower level lot.

Grants and Fundraising

We received word from Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg's office that we will be receiving a \$30,000 New York State grant to support the installation of an outdoor before- and after-hours book and materials pickup locker and technology training programs for our public. The Assemblywoman will be at the library on Tuesday, September 9th, at 9:30 am for a visit.

Outreach

Alice Joselow, Amanda Curley, and I participated in a listening session with the Ossining Union Free School District Interim Superintendent Mary Fox on August 14th. While the meeting wasn't exactly what I expected, I was glad to be able to speak with the Interim Superintendent about the partnership between the library and the schools.

Suzy Zavarella, Ignayra Lopez, and I participated in the New Educator Orientation with the OUFSD on August 23rd. Ignayra and Suzy made sure each new teacher had a library card, either from the OPL or from their home library if they live in another Westchester community. They also provided a packet of information about the OPL and our resources. I spoke a little about the support that the library provides not only students, but teachers. (Goal 4.3)

Personnel

The Diversity Learning Circles with Hummingbird Humanity have been continuing along. I provided the Board of Trustees with the reading/watching/listening materials that we have been provided with – you can find this on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion section of the OPL Board of Trustees Sharepoint site here: [DEI Learning Circle - DLC Pre-Session Material - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (LRSP Goal 3.2)

We will be filling our vacant Staff Assistant position in the Business Office as soon as we can. The Staff Assistant exam was given in May and we were told that the exam would not be graded and a list would not be generated for about six months from the date the test was given. I am hoping that Westchester County Department of Human Resources will be able to at least provide me with a list of candidates who took the test so that I can hire someone sooner rather than later. The last thing I want to do is hire someone who did not take the test, as I would then need to let them go in favor of someone who is on the list. This is yet another example of how civil service ties our hands. In the meantime, I have brought in Rosa Villa, a business office employee from the Field Library in Peekskill, on a contractual basis. Rosa is working closely with Terri Keppler and Bob Majernik to help them get on top of the New York State and Local Retirement System reporting. Rosa has been a great help. Terrie and Bob also attending a NYSLRS training session in Briarcliff on September 7th. They said that it was very helpful and informative. A big "thank you" is due to Terrie and Bob. They have been wonderful at keeping the work of the Business Office moving during this transition.

With mixed emotions, we say "goodbye" to Debbie Fletcher, our veteran Children's Librarian. Debbie, who has been with the Ossining Public Library for sixteen years, will be retiring and

her last day with us will be on September 22nd. The Children's Services Department is arranging for a farewell event from about 5:15 to 6:00 pm on Thursday, September 21st (just after Debbie's last I Heart Art) in the Sally Read Dow Children's Program Room. Staff and public are encouraged to attend to wish Debbie all the best in her new adventures.

I'm pleased to announce that Tiffany Paovella, Library Monitor in our Teen Services Department, will be attending the New York Library Association Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY in November. Tiffany is excited to be attending and I know that she will bring back a ton of good information and exciting ideas. (Goal 3.2)

Projects

Mallory Marinaro and I have begun working with Ginnie Blake on our marketing efforts for the building project. I had created a public survey about our building and shared it with Ginnie for her input. We hope to put out the survey at the end of September, early October. This is the first of many efforts that we will be working on with her. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

Technology

Allison Robbins is working with Ecubed to move forward with the implementation of our new telephone system. Installation will begin the week of September 17th. (Goal 5.1)

Our recabling work for 2023 has been completed. A big "thank you" to Allison Robbins for managing this project. We will not be planning for another round of recabling for 2024, as we would like to save the rest of the ERate category 2 funds for the renovation project. (Goals 1.2 and 5.1)

News from the Public Library Directors Association and the Westchester Library System

The Public Library Director's Association Meeting did not meet in August.

I will be asking the Board of Trustees to approve the new WLS Service Level Agreement for 2024 at the September meeting. This SLA pertains to the automated library system and online catalog that WLS manages for us.

Some meetings and workshops that I attended this month (Leadership Team Meetings happen roughly every other week):

August 1: Meeting with SenSource (people counter company) and Allison Robbins

August 3: Meeting with Virginia Blake and Mallory Marinaro (marketing proposal)

August 9: Diversity Learning Circle

August 14: Meeting with Interim Superintendent Mary Fox, with Alice Joselow and Amanda Curley

August 14: Board of Trustees Special Meeting

August 18: Meeting with Lothrop and Associates

August 21: Board of Trustees Regular Monthly Meeting

August 23: Breakfast with new teachers

August 23: Finance Committee meeting with Assistant Superintendent for Business Alita Zuber

August 23: Diversity Learning Circle

August 24: Check in meeting with Hummingbird Humanity

September 6: Call with Tompkins Bank, Bob Majernik, and Jaime Aguirre about Positive Pay

September 6: Diversity Learning Circle

September 7: Board of Trustees Work Session

Attached please find our Department Reports.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen LaRocca-Fels

Diana Lennon, Adult Services

August brought the end of our summer events and started our Fall programming and activities. We were disappointed but not surprised that we did not receive any entries for our Adult Summer Reading Program. While this is not unusual, we are always left wondering why don't adults want to have more fun?! Maybe they didn't want contests but they did like our summer programs: movies, Spanish language classes, English Conversation Group, yoga classes, knitting and much more.

We are now looking forward to our fall lineup: concerts on Sept. 9 (Ravel), 24 (bebop and modern jazz), and 30 (Argentinian boleros). This last concert is part of my ArtsWestchester grant and our Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM) celebration. Ignayra, Suzy and I worked together on one HHM flyer for all adult/teen/children events, and Ignayra created a beautiful flyer. Guillermo is presenting a Spanish Film Series, and James is starting a counseling workshop. Mark is working with Maryknoll on a two-part Genealogy series, and Scott will give a talk on "Walks in our Community" which we are all looking forward to attending. I also have been working on the Fall Fest for Oct. 7 with other Dept. Heads—it is going to be a great day celebrating the library and the Ossining community!

We continued the steady work of weeding and auditing our collections, particularly nonfiction. Mark Sacha is almost through the 900s, and Guillermo Rodriguez is working on all Spanish materials. I started reviewing and reorganizing the gardening collection (DDC 635), and Marie Pierre was weeding, auditing, evaluating, and purchasing new titles in the 300s. She also is increasing our Job Info/Career titles, particularly review manuals related to upcoming Westchester County civil service exams. In the 600s she is concentrating on obtaining broad authoritative sources regarding nutrition, which has been challenging with the explosion of self-published monographs on this topic in addition to the crowded spaces on social media. We are moving forward, however, on ordering reliable and well-researched materials on this topic. Marie also purchases our audiobooks, which patrons seem to enjoy as we continue to search for the most interesting titles and authors.

I attended a virtual program on "The Culturally Competent Manager" through the Long Island Library Resource Council; and I also finished all of this year's Adult Services staff reviews. I also continue to work with the Ossining Micro Fund to plan a November Financial Literacy Forum.

We also have been diligently studying the architects' plans and trying to envision the changes on the second floor and mezzanine. We are mostly in agreement on what we would like to see in the adult areas, with a new Local History Room, and different office and Reference Desk configurations, being the standout changes. We very much appreciate being able to give our input on all the proposals.

On August 12, Vicenta and I staffed the OPL table at the Ossining Farmers Market. As always, it was busy and fun. We spoke with over 90 people about the library's programs and services, and Kevin Robinson led the Children's Story Time-- but was cut short by a sudden rainstorm! With the recent weather we've had, we were not surprised.... but we took it in stride like we often do when faced with interesting challenges!

Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services

With August comes the winding down of programs and summer reading. We did host programs until mid-August with a final bash on August 23. Pokémon has been such a big craze this summer for children of all ages. We decided to capitalize on that, so we hosted a party themed around Pokémon. Leading up to the party I brought back the ever so popular Pokémon scavenger hunt within the children's room which amped the excitement for the party. We had so many children and families come to the party, over 100 participants. They made a craft, danced, played games, ate cupcakes, and met with our special guest, Pikachu! We also raffled off the prize baskets which included all things Pokémon and Amazon gift cards for \$50. It was a great way to end Summer 2023 in the children's room.

The party was a great success, as was the Summer Reading Program. We had an increase in participation, in minutes read (103,920 minutes) by the *Read on your Own* participants and in books read (4,000 books) by *Read to Me* participants. In total 253 children took part in our Summer Reading Program 2023. Until next year when we do it all over again and try our hardest to get more children to read throughout the summer!

Flor Bromley held another children's concert on Tuesday, August 22. She debuted her new album, "Adventure Day" here at Ossining. It was her first time performing the album live. Children and families had a fantastic time, singing, dancing and learning Spanish. Flor will be back to host a full band concert in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month on Saturday, September 23. This program is part of the ArtsAlive Westchester Grant. We are currently doing lots of promotion for this event. We want the theater to be at capacity! Flor just recently did an interview for Westchester Family to help with promotion. Check it out here: [Meet Flor Bromley, Bilingual Family Music Performer – Westchester Family](#)

Our Annual Stuffed Animal Sleepover also happened. Another jam-packed event with children and families. Children enjoyed a PJ storytime and left their stuffed animals at the library for a sleepover. The next day they can pick them up and see all the adventures the stuffies got into at the library. So much fun! You can see the stuffies in action here: [Stuffed Animal Sleepover](#)

The school district is gearing up for Back to school, so we got in on the fun at the block party on August 21. Suzy, Vicenta and I bared the humidity and went out with some cool giveaways, our Fall informational materials and games. I absolutely love going to these events. We get to see our regular library users in a new environment and also meet others in

the community to encourage them to visit us at OPL! It's a win-win. Karen, Suzy and I attended the New Educator Orientation for OUFSD on August 23 bright and early for breakfast. We handed out premade folders with library information for the educators and their students. We also gave library cards too. We connected, chatted and promoted our OPL resources.

Fall will soon be here, and we are ready to get back into the swing of what fall brings. However, we are sad that our beloved colleague Debbie will be retiring but excited at the same time for her new adventure. Some of our favorite programs will be transitioning to other members of the team in our Fall programming session. Tricia will be taking over I Heart Art and putting her individual spin on it. I will be taking over Debbie's visits to Park school and OCC. I'm looking forward to some new programs that will be debuting Pokémon Club on Tuesday afternoons and Como Abuela Hizo (a cooking program for kids exploring Hispanic dishes) on Monday afternoons. We have a special read aloud by children's author Valerie Bolling happening on Sat. September 16 at 11am. Then we have some old favorites returning such as OPL's kids' Spanish class, Read to Emma, and Homework Help!

Our Battle of the Books team is gearing up for the tournament on October 21 at OHS. The children's team has met a few times this summer. We have 9 members on the team. They have been reading and analyzing the books. We began practicing with buzzers and will continue to do so weekly until the battle. As a first-time team coach, I am trying to get the team prepared but also keep it fun. Stay tuned for that!

To see all our wonderful pictures from throughout the summer please visit our Flickr page.

[Ossining Library's albums | Flickr](#)

Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services

This is probably unfair to say, as it *is* the month whose name inspired an all-time great album (*August and Everything After* holds up after all this time and is available to stream on hoopla, if you'd like to fact check that!) and an all-time great Taylor Swift song (I feel it necessary to point out that *folklore* is also streaming on hoopla, because marketing the library's programs and services never stops), but: August has the vibe of being a month of Sundays, doesn't it? Just me? Much of my month's to-do list was actually getting ready for all of the things that are coming next and there's a lot happening this fall, and beyond.

Front Desk

August was a busy month for staff outreach, vacations, and projects, so I had a lot of time on the front desk, which is always a highlight for me. As many of you know, I started my time at OPL in the Teen Room and I always said I liked it because I was never sure what to expect on any given day: I could hear about someone's crush, help someone with homework, break up an argument over who is the bigger Shawn Mendes fan, or spend an exorbitant amount of time cleaning slime off of the tables (true stories, all). The front desk is similar in its unpredictability (although there are fewer pop culture arguments...so far), and it makes the time fly by. From setting folks up with Libby and walking them through the process of faxing, to making book recommendations and helping with library card applications, it's incredibly

active and I'm fortunate to have so much patron interaction and the opportunity to garner feedback on the building, our collections, and library services in real time. I love watching kids light up when they receive their first library card, and the excitement people have when the museum pass they've been looking out for for months is finally available—I'm not exaggerating when I say it's a thrill.

Marketing

I'm so excited to be moving forward with Ginnie Blake West as our marketing consultant for the building project. As I mentioned at the August Board of Trustees meeting, Ginnie has a lot of expertise and a keen understanding of what we need as we embark on this project. We plan to have regular meetings throughout the fall and winter to start doing our preparatory work.

Best of Westchester Event

At the end of July, I attended the Best of Westchester celebration with Jefferson Quituisaca and Allison Robbins and, as ever, it was an incredible evening. What makes this event so different from our other outreach opportunities is that it's not Ossining-specific—people come from all over the county and tri-state area to attend--and, well...it's party, and you can see over the course of the night just how much guests are enjoying the copious drinks available! We had so many visitors, who loved our 90s themed "OPL Is All That" display and giveaways, and so *many* people spoke lovingly about libraries. A handful of patrons from Briarcliff confessed that they always drive the extra few miles to visit OPL, and a woman from Eastchester has never visited our library, but has heard that we do amazing things.

Allison Robbins, Technology and Training

Traffic Counters: Karen and I have begun looking into new traffic counters for the building. Our old counters are simple and not necessarily accurate. Some of the new technology available can give us more accurate counts, not just of simple traffic but of adults vs children, times of day that are busiest, etc. Jenny and I have been collecting some information to provide to the vendor and we look forward to hearing more about our options.

Cabling: The network and building cabling we received funding for through Erate for 2023 was completed in August. We went with a new-to-us company and, although the work got done, we had a lot of bumps and challenges along the way. Live and learn, this is part of the process. We won't be going with this company in the future, and we have learned some things to look out for and investigate in the future when selecting companies to do this kind of work. Thankfully, it all worked out in the end!

Outdoor, WiFi Access Points: Long awaited, we have at last gotten our outdoor, WiFi access points installed. Improving the strength of our WiFi network outside of the building is a goal that came out of the building disruption wrought by COVID shutting us down. It wasn't that long ago that people had to situate themselves in parking lots and other public places to get WiFi and get homework and work done. Although we thankfully aren't in this situation at the moment, the need for having a better WiFi network outside of our building, for access when the building is closed and for those who want to use it outside, became apparent. In

conjunction with the cabling work largely funded through Erate, we also purchased two access points with Erate funding and have expanded our WiFi signal throughout our parking lot, our lower-level area, and in a portion of the front of the building. We are so thankful for our Erate funding to get projects like these done!

General Tune-ups: I did a good number of “tune-ups” this month, ranging from working with ITC to figure out what was wrong with our announcement system volume, to wrapping up long-awaited public computer configurations, to troubleshooting circulating hotspots. A lot of the work we do in the Communications and Technology office (CAT office) doesn’t usually make the monthly report but we always have something happening!

Tech. Tutoring: Jenny, Aimee, and I had a total of 14 Tech. Tutoring appointments in August. Things are generally going well, and we are once again looking at ways in which we can expand our service. To that end, I am thankful to say that Aimee Gutierrez has agreed to swap out some of her desk hours for more appointments on Monday evenings. This is especially helpful as Aimee is our only fluent Spanish tutor and her help is invaluable to patrons who need their tutoring in Spanish.

Marie Trapasso, Circulation/Technical Services

I have the Taylor Swift lyric, “August slipped away into a moment in time” running through my head as I type out the happenings from August. I am also left wondering why we have come to the end of Summer.

Evergreen

It was brought to my attention that we seemed to have many extraneous Workstation Names floating around in Evergreen. Some of this was not our fault as they were staff members who left and WLS did not delete their Workstations. However, there are some that still need to be cleaned up. I asked the Department Heads to help me with this as it is a time-consuming project asking every staff person which workstation they are using. I am hoping to send a list of inactive workstations to WLS in September so they can delete the unnecessary workstations.

Aspen

On August 16, I attended another Aspen training session, which focused on highlighting certain collections on the home page of Aspen. The implementation of this is on the complicated side and I need a little more time to play around with this feature before I am comfortable with it being a highlight of our catalog.

Baker & Taylor

In unwelcome news, Baker & Taylor reached out to let us know that they were no longer offering the Paperback Parade Standing Order plan. This is the second Standing Order plan that they have canceled with nothing to replace it. So, Diana Lennon and I chatted about this and decided I will now order the paperbacks. We also talked about possibly starting to look at other book vendors. In recent years, Baker & Taylor has scaled back the services that they offer, sometimes with little to no notice. This then puts us in a tough position in terms of making sure the items continue to be ordered for our collection. I am going to make reviewing our vendors a long-term priority for me as we move forward.

Overdrive

Overdrive had a great list this month that was entitled *Back to School: Diverse Reads*. I was able to purchase a few titles that we did not already have from this list. Overdrive continues to make things simple for those of us building our Digital collections and it is much appreciated.

Promotional Materials

I created 25 screen graphics for promotion of September programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 9 placards for program promotion in Aspen.

Circ Statistics:

Patrons added: 122

Interlibrary Loans: (received at Ossining): 2,007
(supplied to other libraries): 1,409

Total Circulation (including eBooks): 15,860

There were 131 checkouts from the Mobile App.

There were 4,527 total checkouts from Overdrive.

There were 1,163 checkouts on just Ossining Advantage titles.

Our museum passes circulated 60 times.

Tech Statistics:

Items Added: 777

Items Deleted: 718