

**OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**Director's Report**

**Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director**

Every year, the end of summer takes me by surprise and makes me a little sad, but fall is my favorite time of year and that's some consolation. I was fortunate enough to have two weeks off in August and I am ever thankful to the Leadership Team and our Business Office staff who keep things running smoothly, whether I am at the library or away.

Library Card Sign Up Month is upon us! While our staff work hard all year long to encourage folks to register for library cards, we like to remind our community in September that they should get a library card if they don't have one already.

Banned Books Week is the annual reminder that the right to read, while protected by the United States Constitution, is unfortunately always under attack. If you haven't already, check out [Unite Against Book Bans](#). It contains resources and ideas for things you can do to support the right to read.

Suzy Zavarella, Diana Lennon, Cristella Bond and I attended a program called "The ABC's of Book Banning" at Greenburgh Library. We watched the film by that name, which was followed by a panel discussion. We were excited to hear American Library Association Past President Emily Drabinski, Executive Director of the New York Library Association AnnaLee Dragon, Westchester Library System's Outreach Services Specialist Dana Hysell, Cristina Ryan-Linder, Director of Greenburgh Public Library, and Dr. Cynthia Palmer, Director of Library Services in Yonkers Public Schools discuss various aspects of book bans and challenges. If you would like to watch a recording of the discussion, [here you go!](#)

The Teen Services Department is screening "The ABC's of Book Banning" and is following it up with a discussion among the teens.

### **Board and Committee Work**

I'll discuss the Building and Grounds Committee work in the Building and Ground section below.

I am working with the library's building attorney, Lindsey Crocker, on setting another meeting with the school district officials, our financial advisor, and Finance Committee members to discuss further our bond planning. We are hoping to meet in early October if possible.

As stated in my last report and as discussed at the August meeting, I am asking that the Board consider amending the Circulation Policy to allow us to assess fines on Museum Passes that are returned late.

A big "thank you" to Meghan Huppuch and Steve Hamilton, both of whom have worked to rectify the issue we had this year with our oaths. While there are still a couple more to do, we are getting this resolved and it will be good to have a better process in place going forward.

### **Budget and Finance**

Bob Majernik worked with the Business Office team and the auditor to compile the information needed for this year's audit of fiscal year 2023/2024. The auditors will be on site in October to do their work.

## **Building and Grounds**

Bob Gabaliski from Lothrop submitted our project management RFP to another firm for us and we received a proposal from that firm – Calgi. Molly Robbins has an extensive conversation with Calgi and provided them with the information about our project. Phil Rice, Molly, and I reviewed the results of our RFP with the Buildings and Grounds Committee at their September meeting and we will bring a recommendation to the Board of their meeting on September 16. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

Also at the Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting, we solidified the scope of the work that we will ask Lothrop to do for us, which includes interior renovations, HVAC overhaul, and building envelope and code compliance work. We will ask the Board to approve the scope of work at the September 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. We are recommending that SGH oversee all of the site work, including the wall remediation, under a separate scope of work and contract. Both Lothrop and SGH will prepare proposals for the next phase of work based on these scope. We anticipate being able to bring these contract for approval at the October 21<sup>st</sup> board meeting so that both firms can commence the next phase of design work. Lothrop will also work with SGH on all SED building permit approvals, as they have experience in this area. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

After many years of consulting for the Ossining Public Library, John Tortoso has retired. Molly and I met with John to go over outstanding HVAC repairs and to discuss any lingering issues that John might know of. We wish him the best in his retirement.

We continue to follow up with Westchester County Department of Human Resources on the status of our request for a staff facilities management position. We requested this position in the fall of 2023 and were told unofficially that it would be approved in the winter of 2024. We have had no official word since then and have continue to follow up.

## **Grants**

With the help of Lothrop, we wrote and submitted a CREST grant application for the Teen Services and program space renovations on the lower level. A big thank you to Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg and her team for encouraging us to apply for this grant again (we applied last year). We look forward to hearing the results. (Goals 1.2 and 1.3)

## **Outreach**

For the past several years, OPL staff are invited to a lunch with the new educators who are going through their orientation at the Ossining Union Free School District. We set up a table with information and library swag and issue library cards to teachers who are eligible for them. This year (and the last few years) Suzy Zavarella and Ignayra Lopez oversaw this. Last year and this year I was lucky enough to join them and was able to say a few words to the educators about the library and our partnership role with the school district. We are very lucky that our

school district views the public library as a critical educational partner. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many school districts. (Goals 4.1 and 4.3)

I had a lovely meeting with the new Director of the Briarcliff Public Library, Kim Naples. I'm very excited for Kim and look forward to working with her and our neighboring library. (Goal 4.1)

## **Personnel**

I'm happy to report that the union approved the union contract MOA. It now will come to the Board of Trustees for approval at the September meeting. The Business Office has started their preparations for the changes that will need to be implemented once the board approves the union contract. This is not a small amount of work and the amount of time and care they put in is crucial in order to implement the changes correctly. A big thank you to Bob Majernik, Steve Hamilton, and Terrie Keppler for making this happen smoothly.

Steve Hamilton and I are working on reviewing the Employee Handbook draft that was prepared for us by Public Sector HR. Steve has finished his review – I'm working on it. Once we are ready, we'll meet with Ian Loehner for a review with him to make any changes and then will submit it to the attorney for his review. Then, it will go to the Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee for review. I'll also be providing it to the union for their review to make sure that it is clear and, from their perspective, doesn't conflict with the union contract in any way. It's a long and time-consuming process, but I'd prefer to take the time and get it right than to rush it.

Steve Hamilton and Diana Lennon are working with the American Red Cross to schedule CPR/AED/First Aid training for library staff. We will be doing two training sessions, likely to be scheduled in mid- to late-fall. (Goal 3.2)

Guillermo Rodriguez is gearing up to provide another round of Spanish language classes for library staff. Guillermo will provide eight sessions of training and will be focusing on language that is relevant in our library work. Staff are excited to have this opportunity, which will be starting in late October. (Goals 2.3 and 3.2)

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

The PLDA did not have a meeting over the summer.

I am waiting on the new Service Level Agreement for 2025 that the board will need to approve.

Some initial discussion took place about levels of Overdrive. Overdrive (patrons know it as Libby) is our largest vendor for ebooks and e-audiobooks. Many libraries devote large portions of their book purchasing budgets to Overdrive and others do not. The E-Contact Committee and/or the Finance Committee of the PLDA will be discussing recommended levels of purchasing.

WLS is looking into third party vendors that can work with us to provide patrons with self-service online library card renewal. Currently OPL will renew library cards by phone or email as well as in person, but an automated service could streamline the process for patrons. More to come.

August 13: The ABCs of Book Banning, Greenburgh Public Library  
August 15: Business Office Department Meeting  
August 20: Meeting with Kim Naples, new Director of Briarcliff Public Library  
August 22: New Educators at OUFSD  
September 5: Board of Trustees Work Session  
September 9: Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting  
September 13: Meeting with Kim Clifford (OUFSD Project Thrive) and Molly Robbins

Attached please find our Department Reports.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen LaRocca-Fels*

***Diana Lennon, Adult Services***

August brought the end of summer activities and the start of a new Fall calendar. We are looking forward to movies, classes, concerts, workshops and a lot more! One program I have been developing is a Bibliotherapy Book Club which I will run this fall with our previous ESOL teacher. She and I have been researching and discussing how best to coordinate this group which will offer a reading and discussion group to patrons who are interested in navigating life's everyday challenges with the help of literature. This pilot program will meet monthly for five months starting in October. Also, Cristella Bond is looking forward to taking over the Bodies in the Library Book Club in October when it will return to an in-person program. (Goal 2.1)

We also are pleased that Mark Sacha will lead a tour of the Ossining Weir Chamber on Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> which Scott Craven facilitated with the Friends of Croton Aqueduct and the Community Center. Mark's past experience working for the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection gave him a deep knowledge of the water supply system and we are excited to offer another outdoor "Library Walks" program! If you haven't toured the Weir Chamber yet, I encourage you to attend Mark's talk! (Goals 2.1, 3.2 and 4.1)

Our ESOL class will begin on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, and the English Conversation Group continues every Thursday night. Guillermo's Spanish classes will continue, and we are excited to have monthly concerts returning, as well as a movie every month. James Trapasso has coordinated the upgrade of the theater AV equipment which will enhance many library programs. (Goals 2.3 and 5.1)

On Friday, August 30<sup>th</sup> James toured the Sunshine Children's Home & Rehab Center on Spring Valley Road. They invited Dennis Neuberger and James to see the current art exhibit and for a tour of the beautiful new facility and amazing grounds which opened last year. The Sunshine Home is similar to a nursing home for children; they have several classrooms and follow the Ossining School calendar. They had invited James because his family donated several games and activities in his mother's name after she passed. James was pleased and honored to be there for that reason, and to offer the library's services and foster another great

community partnership. He will follow up with Ignayra and the Children's Room to discuss how both departments could serve them. (Goal 4.1)

In other outreach efforts, Scott Craven will do a fall program at Mary Knoll; I am working with the Ossining Micro Fund on some family programming; and I will have a health program in Spanish presented by the Alzheimer's Association. This month I also met with the outreach coordinator from DOROT, and added some of their resources, as well as information from the Alz. Assoc., to our Health & Wellness LibGuide. We also will be at our last Ossining Farmer's Market this season in late September. I am grateful to Molly Robbins for buying us a new tent for our outside activities as the one we were using was falling apart! (Goals 2.3 and 4.1)

This month I attended two events about books banning. On August 13, Karen, Cristella, Suzy and I went to "The ABCs of Book Banning" at the Greenburgh Library. I also attended the Univ. of Chicago webinar "Confronting Book Bans" and both events were excellent. Emily Drabinski, former ALA President, spoke at both and she is well-versed in this area.

Something one of the speakers, Emily Knox, from the Univ. of IL, said that resonated with me is "people's fears are revealed by these challenges." With Banned Book Week set for Sept. 22-28, we are again motivated to continue our mission to enrich, connect, and inspire our community by providing access to all types of materials in a diverse collection for a diverse community. (Goals 2.2 and 3.2)

### ***Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services***

Here's our Summer Reading 2024 Wrap Up:



We had 25% increase of participants from last year's program. Of our 214 total participants 40 children were in our Read to Me program, ages 0-5. This is low compared to previous years. I believe the reason behind this low number is participants in the 0-5 program received the same log as the Read on my Own program. Usually, we keep track of the 0-5 participants progress on a bulletin board in the children's room, which is a more visual method. Next year the children's team goals include trying get more children ages 0-5 to participate with their caregivers. We are also bringing back the bulletin board! Another goal is to get more school district participation. Possibly a contest among schools?!? Overall, we are happy children read and had fun while doing so.

We ended our summer programming with a Dog Man party. Dog Man is a book loved and favored by children of all ages. Children we able to make a dog man hat, take a quiz to see

what Dog Man character they were, learn to draw dog man and play Dog Man bingo. It was lots of fun. We also gave away some big prizes to our top readers, Justin, Alexander and his brother, Jonathan. Lastly, we did some raffle prizes that included the names of all the participants.



Suzy, Karen and I attended the OUFSD New Educator orientation on August 22<sup>nd</sup> during their lunch to welcome all the new teachers and staff. We offered educator library cards and a swag bag for all to take with information about our library resources. Suzy and I also attended the Back-to-School Block Party sponsored by OUFSD and OPD on August 28<sup>th</sup>. I must say our table was a hit! We had pencil cases that students could design themselves. We also gave away lots of flyers that included all our fall programming information. (Goal 4.1)

We now have some new shelving at the entrance of the children's room. These new shelves have inspired us to create a New Book corner making it easier for patrons to browse our new books. They don't even have to step fully into the children's room to grab the latest and check out. (Goal 5.6)

This fall I'm looking forward to getting out into the community to share our *Welcome to our World* baby box initiative. I am also excited for our new Spanish Club held on Mondays at 5pm where children learning Spanish can practice with other children through fun games and activities. Lastly, I look forward to welcoming the students into the library as well as meeting them at their schools and/or around the community.

### ***Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services***

I think we were all anticipating this monthly report opening with this particular lyric, and who am I to deny the world—or at least readers of this report—a moment to ruefully chuckle over how incredibly predictable as a person? August slipped away into a moment in time...in the span of what felt like four minutes.

Between vacations, fluke summer illnesses, and personnel issues, the majority of my time this month was spent playing a very elaborate game of Jenga with scheduling the Front Desk, which often meant that I took extra desk shifts and filled gaps in coverage as needed. I never mind the opportunity to have more time at the Front Desk—it's so important to me to see in real-time what books and topics are popular, and what programs people are interested

in—but it certainly dashed my hopes for intentional and purposeful September planning and kept me from tackling any projects that aren't time-sensitive. Here's to a smooth autumn, free of scheduling concerns!

## **Summer Reading**

I will take a moment to celebrate the success of this year's Summer Reading program for adults. We had a group of engaged and enthusiastic readers who participated in every week's reading challenge, usually averaging 16 weekly readers, and I loved seeing the books they recommended, which varied widely in genre. I'm already looking forward to working with Diana on next year's program!

## ***Allison Robbins, Technology and Training***

**Teen Services and Children's Services Computers:** Molly has ordered the new tables for the Children's Room and I put in the order for the Teen Room tables. All the equipment has been purchased and I look forward to when I can install and upgrade those spaces! (Goals 2.3, 5.2, and 6.3)

**Ossininglibrary.org:** I have been putting in a lot of time into the website lately, although if I'm doing things right, no one has noticed! There is a lot of back-end cleanup and adjustments to do to reduce storage, improve load times, improve findability on the web, and ultimately improve the overall quality of our website. As a part of this, I am also migrating the past minutes of the BOT meetings to a purpose-built SharePoint site that will serve as a repository for past minutes and historic documents that are open to the public. Minutes and documents will have links from the website for public access. This will be a more secure and efficient way of storing the files and will remove a lot of material from the actual website. (Goal 4.2)

**Children's Room Mystery Night:** I enjoyed the opportunity to participate as a mysterious figure in the Case of the Looted Lexicon! The kids were all so engaged and everyone participating seemed to have a great time, myself included, and I look forward to next year.

**Logically:** Our Logically account manager, Tyrus, was in town in August and I had a chance to meet with him. It was nice to sit down with him in-person and we were also able to resolve a couple of items, including cleaning up a billing issue related to a Roblox ticket—only in a public library.

**Hotspots:** Our hotspots are flying off the shelves, again. I'm not sure if it is the return to school or something else but we've been consistently low or out of stock for a while now. I'm very thankful for this valuable resource that we can continue to provide to our patrons, particularly with the discontinuation of the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#) this year, that provided an internet service discount to eligible families who applied. (Goals 2.3 and 5.1)

## ***Marie Trapasso, Circulation/Technical Services***

August sure did slip away into a moment in time. I was away for two weeks in August which may be why the month is such a blur but here are a few highlights.

## **Video Game Program**

Jeff Quituisaca had the amazing idea of having a MarioKart Video Game program. We had it in the new First Floor Meeting Room. On one television, he had the most recent version of MarioKart for the Nintendo Switch and on the other, he had the version of MarioKart that is near and dear to my heart which was the version I remember playing as a kid. Unfortunately, everyone who attended the program wanted to play the recent version so he put that version on both televisions and a great time was had by all. I, myself enjoyed watching Jeff and another staff person, Arthur racing against each other. It was a definite highlight. Jenny and I helped out with crafts in the Activity Room. Our patrons could decorate water bottles or paint a canvas that had Toad, Mario or Yoshi on it. I thought it ended up being a very successful program and a fun time was had by all who attended.

## **WLS Technology Committee Meeting**

I attended this meeting on August 14 where the main topic was a new WLS app. The app we currently use for mobile checkout, etc is getting painfully outdated so WLS has researched a few options for a new app that they hope to roll out by January 2025. I was impressed with the two options they presented. Stay tuned.

## **Promotional Materials**

I created 15 screen graphics for promotion of September programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 3 placards for program promotion in Aspen.

## **Circ Statistics:**

**Patrons added: 141**

**Interlibrary Loans: (received at Ossining): 1,588  
(supplied to other libraries): 1,290**

**Total Circulation (including eBooks): 15,486**

There were 165 checkouts from the Mobile App.

**There were 5,153 total checkouts from Overdrive.**

**There were 1,238 checkouts on just Ossining Advantage titles.**

Our museum passes circulated 70 times.

## **Tech Statistics:**

**Items Added: 663**

**Items Deleted: 467**

## ***Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services***

**Summer Interns from OYB:** Our summer interns wrapped up their time in the second week of August. Their absence is felt, and we hope the Youth Bureau can secure funding to continue their positions through the school year. (Goal 4.1)

**College Admissions Workshop:** This workshop provided high school students with essential information about college admissions, including application tips, essay writing, and scholarship opportunities. The interactive nature of the workshop, including a Q&A session with local



college financial advisors, was highly appreciated. Teens left with a clearer understanding of the college application process and next steps. (Goals 2.3 and 4.1)

**Taste of India Food Program:** Neera led a hands-on cooking demonstration where participants learned how to prepare healthy veggie cutlets. Participants enjoyed the delicious cutlets but also valuable tips on incorporating more nutritious ingredients into their diets. (Goal 2.1)

**Maker Monday Programs:** This month, Tiffany and the participants had a fantastic time crafting unique art using puzzle pieces and painted canvases inspired by beautiful vases of flowers. We are continually amazed by the incredible talent of our students.

**Wacky Wednesdays:** Louis has been organizing a fantastic range of activities for our Wacky Wednesdays. This month's highlights included an escape room challenge, trivia contests, and a thrilling treasure hunt. The diversity of activities has kept the teens excited and entertained.

**Friday Night Flix:** "If" (Imaginary Friends) was the movie of the month, we had 35 attendees for the screening.

**Foodie Fun:** This month's Foodie Fun was a delightful experience! Participants had a great time making ice cream in a bag, a fun and hands-on activity that allowed them to create their own frozen treats with a variety of mix-ins. They also enjoyed crafting a creative twist on traditional tiramisu, experimenting with different flavors and presentation styles.

**Dungeons and Dragons:** Our ongoing Dungeons and Dragons, led by James, campaign continued this month with new quests and adventures. Teens gathered to role-play, strategize, and immerse themselves in fantasy worlds.

**Magic the Gathering:** This month's Magic: The Gathering events included casual play sessions and a small tournament, allowing teens to build decks, strategize, and compete.

**End of Summer Reading Party:** For the first time, we had our end of summer reading program before the end of the summer. Participation was a little lower than usual but the participants had fun choosing books, stickers, playing ping pong and of course, the raffle prizes.

Coming up in September: SAT prep, Foodie Fun, Escape Room, Friday Night Flix, and Hispanic Heritage Month and Banned Books programming.