

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

**Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director**

One of the highlights of this month for me was attending the New York Library Association Conference in Syracuse. Spending several days with colleagues from around the state – and with trustees from my own backyard! – was refreshing and reinvigorating. Meghan Huppuch, Althema Goodson, and I enjoyed our time on the panel for the workshop that Meghan and Althema designed and learned lots from the other trustee/director teams who were our co-panelists. The many other workshops were excellent, too. I'll prepare and share my notes in a separate document for trustees and staff.

The other highlight, of course, was helping out with the annual Battle of the Books event. While I missed volunteering with our OPL trustees (we had such a blast last year!), I was with a great team in my room and had a wonderful time. I was a question reader again this year – so much pressure, but so fun! I also got to be scorekeeper in the final round, which was nail-biting! I cannot stress enough how impressed I am with the kids who participate in this event. It is rare in our culture to celebrate young readers and this event (and so many other library events and initiatives) exemplifies what we should be doing to encourage folks of all ages to be proud of their love of reading. I am so proud of the work that our Battle of the Books coaches and volunteers do to make this event a success every year.

### **Board and Committee Work**

Buildings and Grounds Committee work is detailed below in the Buildings and Grounds section of this report.

The Community Outreach Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. (Goals 4.1 and 4.3)

The Finance Committee will be met on October 25<sup>th</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup>, and November 12<sup>th</sup>. The Long Range Strategic Plan Committee met on October 30<sup>th</sup>. We worked through the cost estimate that was provided to us by Cagli, the tax impact information that was provided to us by Noah Nadelson, the two proposals (SGH and Lothrop), and also discussed the role of the treasurer and recommendations for financial processes in the library. We have asked Lothrop for further information about their proposal for next steps before moving forward.

### **Budget and Finance**

Lindsay Crocker, the library's buildings attorney, and I touched base this month regarding the building project. She is gathering some information for us regarding bond timelines. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

### **Building and Grounds**

The Buildings and Grounds Committee canceled their November meeting, as the Finance Committee has been working on their piece of the building project related material. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

As part of our efforts to plan for the continuation of library services while our building is under construction, a small group of us met with Reverend Hal from Grace Church (St. Paul's on the Hill and Trinity Episcopal) to look at both sites as possible alternate sites for library service should our building on 53 Croton be inaccessible for a period of time. We are also working to set up a meeting with folks at HORAC at Washington School to see that site. While there are still many unknowns right now, it is good that we are starting these inquiries.

## **Grants**

I submitted another grant application – this one through Senator Pete Harkham's office – for a library van. I'll keep the board posted on the progress of this request. (Goals 1.2, 1.3, 4.1, and 4.3)

## **Outreach**

I mentioned the NYLA workshop that Meghan Huppuch and Althema Goodson put together for the NYLA Conference above – it went so well. Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Director of the Mid Hudson Library System and co-author of the Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State moderated. Rebekkah is incredibly skilled at facilitating conversation and led us in a wonderful panel discussion that was appreciated by those who attended. We filled the entire workshop time slot, between the panel discussion and questions (it went so fast) and participants had even more questions for us afterwards (as Rebekkah kindly reset the room for the next group). How nice it was to be in a room full of mostly trustees who give so much to their libraries!

Congratulations to the Friends of Ossining Public Library on their very successful National Friends of Libraries Week efforts! I very much enjoyed visiting our Friends at their very first ever "Meet the Friends" event. I learned from them that they signed up so new members (hooray!) and met a good number of patrons. I do hope that they do other Meet the Friends events in the future. (Goal 1.1)

Suzy Zavarella and I met with Megan Mastrogiacomo from the school district to discuss our partnership and the Saturday Learn and Explore program. Megan has always been incredibly supportive of the library's efforts and we are so appreciative of her and her work on behalf of the partnership between the library and the school district.

## **Personnel**

Steve Hamilton and I are working our way through the review of the Employee Handbook draft that was prepared for us by Public Sector HR.

The American Red Cross CPR/AED/First Aid training for library staff has been postponed until the spring. While there was a good deal of interest from our staff when we put it out there, only a few folks were able to commit to attending the training. We'll give more lead time next time around and see how we do. (Goal 3.2)

Steve Hamilton, Molly Robbins, and I met with Jenny Hodge and \_\_\_\_\_ from the Westchester County Department of Human Resources for a brief overview of civil service in Westchester County. Jenny explained some transactions and processes to us and answered our questions about civil service. We are still waiting for them to move forward on several necessary transaction and we mentioned these to them.

## **Projects and Other Things**

Allison Robbins and Molly Robbins have been working with Verizon and our fire system, burglar system, and elevator vendors to plan for moving those systems off of the copper telephone lines and on to alternate lines – either FIOS or cellular, potentially. I was able to facilitate the “ownership” of the Verizon account from the school district and to the library so that we can have control over our account going forward. All in all, this has been an unexpected and time-consuming project, but I think we are on a path towards resolving it.

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

Many thanks to Molly for attending the October PLDA meeting in my place. The PLDA will vote in November to allow automatic library card renewals using a third party authentication vendor. This has been in discussion for many months, with many questions asked and answered. Library card expiration is a barrier to seamless service and, if a secure and reliable automatic verification process can be implemented, I believe it would be appreciated by our patrons.

Many library directors have moved from one library to another recently, and director turnover has been significantly higher than in all the years I’ve been in the field. Keeping track of who works where has been an amusing challenge – I wish all of the new directors, and new-to-their-library directors, all the best in their positions and communities.

October 22: Civil Service training with Jenny Hodge, Steve Hamilton, and Molly Robbins

October 24: Meeting with Lothrop

October 25: Finance Committee Meeting

October 30: Long Range Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

November 1: Grace Church sites tour

November 1: Finance Committee Meeting

November 4: Meeting with Meghan Mastrogiacomo and Suzy Zavarella

November 6-8: New York Library Association Conference

November 12: Finance Committee Meeting

Attached please find our Department Reports.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen LaRocca-Fels*

**Molly Robbins, Assistant Director**

## Assistant Director Work –

October is traditionally one of the busiest months for public libraries (along with March). School is in full swing for students, the holiday season is starting to appear on the horizon, and typically cooler weather draws people indoors. This October was so warm and sunny that some of our programs and patrons spent more time than usual outside. Our two new outdoor tables were delivered and placed out in the back. It was great to see them getting heavy use despite the lateness of the year. Thanks are due to the B&G staff for putting the tables together and dealing with the considerable packaging they arrived in. Our total outdoor table count is now at four. One is on the upper level. The other three are on the lower level. One of the tables is designed to be wheelchair accessible. (Goals 5.6 and 6.3)

The Friends of OPL had a successful book sale in October. Kim Clifford (a special education teacher at Ossining High School) and her Project Thrive class had a great turnout for their first monthly thrift shop pop-up at the library. We are looking forward to the next pop-up thrift sale on Tuesday, November 19. There is also an ETSY sale coming up on November 23 and a portion of the proceeds will go to Friends of OPL. (Goals 1.1, 2.1, 2.3, 4.1, and 4.3)

The Board of Trustees B&G Committee had their October meeting on Monday, 10/7. Calgi Construction Management Services was present at the meeting and their expertise and assistance are most welcome. Additional meetings related to our building projects were held on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>. We are moving forward with SGH on the repair to the failing areas of sidewalk and ramp at the rear of the building. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

My monthly meetings included –

A Civil Service training and information meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, two meetings with Alarm Specialists to review security camera functionality and placements, Leadership Team Meetings, bi-weekly meetings with Karen, the Friends of the Library BOT meeting, and attending PLDA for Karen on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

## B&G Department News -

October is when our annual fire safety inspection occurs. We passed without any problems. Our fire extinguishers are also checked and inspected annually in October by an outside party. Steve Garrett conducts our multiple fire drills throughout the year. We have a minimum of three but sometimes plan more. I request that one is on a weekday before 4:00 pm, one is in the evening after 5:00 pm, and one occurs on a weekend. Steve selects the date and time and keeps it a secret. This means Karen and I are surprised as well and take the same planned action as if it were an actual fire or emergency. Our most recent fire drill took place on a Sunday and Steve reports that the staff did an excellent job clearing the building promptly and safely.

As our building ages, the upkeep gets a bit more challenging. Our B&G team continues their dedicated attention to keeping our facility in excellent condition, and to providing superior service to staff and outside groups with any set-up and program assistance they need. As darkness falls earlier, we check and change all exterior lights to make sure that the outside of the building is well-lit. This is especially important with our exterior stairs and busy parking lot.

### **Diana Lennon, Adult Services**

The Adult Services Dept. packed a lot of activities into the month of October! We celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with Guillermo's Spanish Film Series, showing *El Buen Patron/The Good Boss*, directed by Fernando León de Aranoa. On October 5th, we hosted the *Live Jazz Trio* concert featuring a fusion of traditional jazz with diverse rhythms and melodies from Hispanic cultures. Our art exhibits also celebrated Hispanic Culture with "River Bliss" paintings by Carol Herd-Rodriguez; and "Portraits of Indigenous Elders" in collaboration with the [Wichana Foundation](#). We then had an art reception with information about Ecuadorian culture; a Kichwa Language Circle where participants learned some Kichwa; presented a documentary film "Sapikuna" about the struggle for indigenous rights in Ecuador; and we hosted a textile workshop. This was a hands on experience as we cleaned and carded sheep wool while three yarn spinners and weavers explained the complex and lengthy process of making authentic textiles. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, and 4.1)

Mark Sacha hosted the "Birds of Prey" program with the Saw Mill River Audobon Society on Oct. 5, and took some amazing photos at a great family program. I was excited to begin the Bibliotherapy Book Group in mid-October and we had a wonderful conversation while setting up participation guidelines and discussing reading selections. Please see the attached photos from all of these incredible programs. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, and 4.1)

I also worked with the Ossining Micro Fund to host their workshop to educate parents about the NYS 529 College Savings Plan. They had a great workshop and have a second one planned for early November. Also in November, we're looking forward to the Spanish film *The German Doctor*, directed by Lucía Puenzo from Argentina; the Westchester Photographic Society's Annual Show; another collaboration with the Sing Sing Prison Museum on Nov. 14; and a "Native Americans in Film" virtual two-part program in collaboration with other Westchester libraries. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, and 4.1)

Library staff also attended training sessions on Alzheimer's and Dementia, presented by the Alzheimer's Assoc. of Hudson Valley. As many staff have experiences with patrons and/or family/friends with dementia/Alzheimer's, their information and resources were helpful in educating us further about this disease. I also hosted an Alzheimer's program in Spanish, and although it was unfortunately not well attended, I think it is important to offer this information to our community. (Goal 3.2 and 2.1)

This month I also gave a library tour to the Neighbors Link ESOL class and Patron Services staff created new cards for students who did not yet have theirs. This has become an annual event and their enthusiasm and excitement for the library both amazes me and gives me hope for their and our future success. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, and 4.1)

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

With the end of October comes the conclusion of Battle of the Books—and a collective sigh of relief. BoB in October is always an exciting, busy time so it's nice at the end to take a moment to reflect on all the hard work and great memories created along the way. The competition wouldn't be possible without the incredible support of the 70+ volunteers who make it all happen. As always, Ossining leads the way with the most volunteers from any

library, and I am so grateful to all the dedicated OPL folks who give their time and energy to make this event a success. I am happy to report that everything went smoothly, and AMD proved to be the best venue yet. Thank you for your continued commitment and support! Alas, neither of the Ossining teams made it to the semi-finals, but fun was had by everyone! It was a great experience, full of excitement and team spirit, and we're proud of all the hard work and enthusiasm our teams brought to the competition. (Goals 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3)

Unfortunately, it looks like the podcast with ENU Builds will be pushed back due to challenges in gathering enough interested participants, which is disappointing. However, we're excited to share that plans for a *Teen Summit* are underway! We remain hopeful that this will spark interest and provide a great opportunity for teens to get involved.

Both *Cooking Classics: Empanadas* and *DIY Crafts - Day of the Dead* were huge hits and filled to capacity. In the empanada session, everyone had a blast stuffing and sealing their own empanadas, while Neera wowed us all by frying up 30 empanadas in just one hour—quite the impressive feat! The Day of the Dead craft session allowed participants to tap into their creativity and learn about this beautiful tradition. Both events were a success, and we're so glad to see everyone enjoying themselves!

I wasn't sure what to expect from the Tarot Card program, especially since I had never seen Ron Cain in action before and it was being held virtually. However, despite a few minor technology glitches during the session, it turned out to be a fantastic experience! The participants and I thoroughly enjoyed learning the basics of fortune telling, and everyone left eager for a second session. It was a fun and engaging program, and we're excited to plan another one soon!

We wrapped up the month with a *Terrifying Teen Halloween Party*, and it was a spooktacular success! After a long time without a party, we were thrilled to see 21 kids join in the fun. Many of our regulars came out to celebrate, along with a few new faces who were joining us for the first time. It was a great night we can't wait to host more events like this in the future!

The increased number of school-aged visitors in the building has certainly kept James, Julian, and Tiffany on their toes! Thankfully, most of the kids are respectful and responsive when spoken to. While we've had a few who needed to be asked to leave, James, Julian and Tiffany have been doing an excellent job of building connections. They're working hard to keep everyone engaged with our programs and ensure that they feel welcome, helping to maintain a positive environment in the library.

Coming up in December: DIY winter scented candles, DIY Ornament Extravaganza, two nights of Lazer Tag, Foodie Fun: Mexican Hot Chocolate, DIY Reuseable Tumblers, Teen Gingerbread House Decorating Contest, Teen Escape Room: Home for the Holidays, Friday Night Flix: Interactive *Polar Express* and The Elf on the Shelf Murder Mystery

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

Thank you for advance for indulging me in a brief moment of nostalgia—October marked my 14<sup>th</sup> (!) anniversary at the Library (!!) and with it came some misty watercolor memories, not least because I had some major throwback moments over the course of the month.

As our longer-tenured Trustees remembers, I started my time at OPL as a Teen Services Librarian and loved it; I loved developing a collection, creating bulletin boards and book displays, hosting programs, and bonding with our patrons. Suzy Zavarella and I at one point comprised the entirety of the department and worked together really diligently to make our space an environment that was inclusive, welcoming, and made people happy. When kids suggested program ideas, we did everything in our power to make them a reality, even if this meant watching YouTube tutorials for complicated crafts, and when a teen pulled up a chair to vent about their day, we listened happily to their recap of Byzantine teen drama. It was not all sunshine and roses—we had to break up many fights, call the police multiple times, and both had threats of violence made against us—but the bad moments really were overshadowed by the good ones, and I always hoped that we had a real impact on people and provided a space for them to be who they were at a very fraught time in their lives.

This month, I was thrilled to receive a visit from two of our patrons from many years ago, both of whom are approaching 30 (!) and thriving, and who were filled with genuine fondness and appreciation for the library and the Teen Room in particular. Both of them remembered so many anecdotes from their time in the Teen Room and were truly thrilled to be back and talking with me, and it frankly made me melt a bit. What a wonderful reminder of how vital our institution is for people and how lasting an impact you could have on someone without realizing it. (*LRSP Goal 2.1*)

(And what a sobering reminder of the passage of time that I wrote a college letter of recommendation for someone who is now a professor himself!)

That was my favorite moment of the month, narrowly edging out the runner-up, and considering that the runner-up is a baby kangaroo (you read that correctly), that's saying something about how emotional it made me!

Okay, so baby kangaroo, which also kind of ties into my librarian past: this month, we hosted a Pop-Up Petting Zoo with Two by Two Animal Haven. I don't program as regularly as I once did, but I absolutely jumped at the chance to work this event, which was advertised as a program for all ages and wow, did it deliver. We had about 200 people stop by over the course of the day, ranging from weeks old to adulthood, many of whom came without kids, to meet an assortment of reptiles, amphibians, goats, and bunnies—and my buddy Mickey the kangaroo, an adorable joey who was born prematurely and needs to be swaddled in three blankets and carried around. When I found out that was my job for the day, my heart was truly overwhelmed and Mickey became my entire personality. What a joy! The look of delight on people's faces, kids and adults alike, when they got to meet him was absolutely spectacular and it was truly the best time mingling with patrons, talking up our programs and services, and happily accepting compliments about how much people love their library (*LRSP Goal 2.1*).

So...my moment of nostalgia wound up being the exact *opposite* of brief, but I thank you all giving me the grace to provide you with paragraphs of emotion with too many parenthetical asides.

The rest of the month was a jumble of staffing problems, personnel issues, desk coverage, and juggling the above with two weeks of solo-parenting and two children's illnesses was a

lot—although the spooky and uneasy feeling of it all was on-theme for the month of October, so what I lost in free time I gained in my ability to be on brand!

### ***Personnel***

Our personnel hell continued for October with issues interspersed with short-staffed periods, but there's light at the end of the tunnel--Marie Trapasso and I were able to interview a stellar candidate for a library clerk position (LRSP Goal 3.1) and hope to be making a formal announcement in the near future. This would increase the number of hours a Spanish-speaking staff member is at the Front Desk and would provide continuity of staffing in the evenings, which has been problematic for us the past few weeks.

### ***The Friends of the Library***

The Friends of the Library celebrated Friends of Libraries week with two meet-and-greet sessions on the first floor and have adorable cell phone holders and car magnets available. They've also started to solicit donors and sponsors for their mini-golf event in March, and I was happy to send an email newsletter to the community spotlighting their hard work and future plans. A huge thank you goes to the board of the Friends, who have really gone above and beyond for the community and who are coming up with new and innovative ways to engage with the public and to seek funding—all on a volunteer basis!

### **Allison Robbins, Technology & Training**

**Volunteer from Pace University:** In October, I coordinated with a professor at Pace who was seeking volunteer opportunities for their students to provide technology assistance. One of the students agreed to volunteer here at OPL and we have enjoyed having the assistance. The student is also an Ossining resident and got their first library card as a result. The volunteer has assisted patrons with walk-in tech. assistance and has taken a couple of our usual Tech. Tutoring appointments to fulfill the course requirements. It has also been wonderful to have our Technology room on the first floor to accommodate this.

**Alzheimer's Awareness Training:** Jenny and I attended this training, coordinated by Adult Services, and took advantage of some of the mentioned resources to help us plan our course of action with a patron who we believe may be experiencing some symptoms of dementia. The position we are in at the library, not friends, family, or medical care providers, is a difficult one in dealing with such situations. I know that some Patron Services staff are working towards strengthening the library's knowledge base and awareness of social services and related resources and I think it will be invaluable. (Goal 2.3)

**E-Waste Recycling:** We took advantage of United Way's e-waste recycling event to responsibly dispose of e-waste we had on site at OPL. I'm always collecting dead and damaged electronics to keep for opportunities such as this. Jenny and I filled my vehicle to the brim with hundreds of items from throughout the building for recycling. After speaking with staff at the event, I learned that they do this annually. We will keep an eye out for word of the event next year.

**Verizon:** Karen got word this month that Verizon was seeking to quickly disconnect all copper/POTS lines in our building. Thankfully, Karen was able to communicate with Verizon



and have them officially hold off, although we've had visits from technicians, since. I'm now working with Molly and Karen to expediently seek and implement alternative solutions to POTS lines. We have some good leads and hope to have it resolved soon. Thankfully, our phone system is long ago converted and stable so our lift is lighter than it would have been if we had not made the move to VOIP from POTS lines last year. (Goal 5.2)

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

I thought, for a considerable amount of time, how best to summarize October. While we were busy with our everyday tasks, Mallory and I were also consumed with scheduling challenges, time consuming personnel issues, and additional Front Desk shifts.

**WLS Technology Committee Meeting:** I attended the WLS Technology Committee meeting on October 16. During this meeting, Wilson showed us Patron Point which is software that would allow patrons to renew their library cards online. This would free up staff and be more of a convenience for our patrons. I and the others in attendance thought this would be a great opportunity to respond to the needs of our communities. However, when it was presented at PLDA, they did not vote on it and wanted to discuss it further. I was then also on an email thread from a few Heads of Circ at other libraries and they also had concerns that I did not share. Needless to say, this project seems stalled at the moment.

**Promotional Materials:** I created 15 screen graphics for promotion of November programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 5 placards for program promotion in Aspen. I also put up a new bulletin board display on Mezzanine.

### **Circ Statistics:**

Patrons added: 169

Interlibrary Loans: (received at Ossining): 1,684  
(supplied to other libraries): 1,270

Total Circulation (including eBooks): 15,779

There were 122 checkouts from the Mobile App.

There were 4,956 total checkouts from Overdrive.

There were 624 checkouts on just Ossining Advantage titles.

Our museum passes circulated 62 times.

### **Tech Statistics:**

Items Added: 898

Items Deleted: 365

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

Early this October I was able to make some headway on getting our *Welcome to Our World* baby boxes into the community. Tricia and I met with representatives from Open Door to discuss the baby boxes and ways we could partner to get the boxes in the hands of new caregivers in the community. The meeting went great and Open Door is happy to help us

spread the word. They agreed to include our program flyer as well as a baby box flyer in their own baby bundles. Gina Devito, WIC Program Director, was happy to pass along our fliers to all the WIC staff and share them with any clients. In addition, I was invited to present at a Prenatal Support Group that is run by Open Door. I attended the meeting on Wednesday, October 16 where I presented our programs for children and adults. I also introduced the baby boxes and encouraged caregivers to visit us to receive one. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, and 4.1)

After almost 2 years searching for a bilingual doula, I not only found someone, but I had a wonderful meeting to discuss a collaboration. Estefany Angeles, birth/postpartum doula, childbirth educator and founder of Birth a Mi Manera, and I met on Monday, October 28. Estefany will be hosting a bilingual 4-week miniseries for new parents and caregivers. My hope is the series will take place after our Baby time program beginning mid-January through February. Topics would include feeding, sleep, and transitioning back to work. Estefany and I are still sorting out dates and details but I'm very excited about this opportunity. (Goal 2.1)

I met with Julia Schonberg, Community Engagement & Outreach Coordinator at Bethany Arts Center, on October 8<sup>th</sup>. This past summer Julia and I hosted a Storytime at BAC. It was very successful. We met again this time to brainstorm other ideas in which we may collaborate. Lots of ideas came up in our discussion. We decided to partner once again in April during Poetry Month. The details haven't been ironed out, but the idea is to host a kids and/or teen poetry workshops with a BAC resident Poet. Ending the workshops with an Open Mic night for kids and/or teens. (Goal 4.1)

Battle of the Books Tournament took place on Saturday, October 26 at AMD. Allyson Maci, librarian at Henry Hudson Library, and I held a joint meeting to gear up for the main event on Tuesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. It's a great way for the teams to get a feel for the real tournament. Our children's team the Mane Characters did amazing at the tournament! Although they did not make it to the semifinals, they did very well against other teams in our division. Most importantly they all had fun! A big thank you to Kevin for being my sub coach at the tournament. Each year the team gets stronger so I'm looking forward to next year and hopefully making it further along. I'll be hosting a celebration for the team on Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in the Sally Dow program room. (Goals 2.1 and 2.2)

We hosted our Annual Haunted House on October 30. As in years past kids had fun getting spooked by OHS volunteers. Some even turned around mid-way unable to make it to the end. We had 50 children attempt to conquer the haunted house this year. We also celebrated Halloween with a Zombie Doll program and a Baby Time Costume Party! There were several programs to honor Hispanic Heritage Month, Selena: The Queen of Tejano Music Party, Raise Your Flag, and our special Storytime about Puerto Rico! (Goal 2.1)