

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Director's Report

Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director

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 met on Tuesday, November 19th and is planning an open house event for late winter, early spring 2025. (Goals 4.1 and 4.3)

The Finance Committee is working on setting a meeting with the Treasurer.

Budget and Finance

Bob Majernik and I will be working on budget projects and figures for the 2025/2026 budget proposal.

Building and Grounds

A very small group (Alice Joselow and myself) met with Twudian Wallace from HORAC to tour the Washington School building to assess it as a possible alternative location for library services during our construction project. Both Alice and I felt the space was very promising and look forward to discussing it future with the OPL board, the staff, and our building professionals. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

Two proposals, one from SGH and one from Lothrop, will be on the board's agenda for approval on December 16th. These proposals will move us forward into the next phase of our building project. Mallory Marinaro, Amanda Curley, and I met with Ginnie Blake West to update her on our progress and bring her up to speed so that we can start moving heads with the communications piece of the project. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6).

Foundation

Meghan Huppuch and I attended the OPL Foundation board meeting in November. The Foundation has requested more details about the Swope-funded programs going forward. I suggested that we would provide attendance and session numbers for programs and asked the Foundation to suggest any other data that'd like to see. (Goal 1.1)

Personnel

Steve Hamilton and I finished our review of the Employee Handbook draft that was prepared for us by Public Sector HR. Steve will be working with Public Sector HR to revise the draft

handbook per our review and we'll move on to next steps, namely, reviewing it with the union, the leadership team, and our attorney.

We have rolled out this year's round of mandatory sexual harassment training for library staff and trustees. In addition to the basic "staff to staff" training, supervisors, Steve, and trustees also are to take the training for management and policy level folks.

We are changing up our Leadership Team meetings a bit. Since COVID times, the Leadership Team has been meeting every two to three weeks. We are moving our meetings to monthly meetings are making them more agenda-focused and topical. At the meeting in December, we focused on sharing tips and challenges for having difficult conversations with folks we supervise. Prior to our next meeting, we'll be sharing articles about how to build a culture of trust, which will be discussed at the meeting. I'm looking forward to this new focus and am curious about how our meetings take shape. (Goal 3.2)

Projects and Other Things

Allison Robbins and Molly Robbins are continuing to move ahead with an alternative communication system for our emergency systems, anticipating the demise of our copper Verizon lines. It has been a journey and I'm thankful that we have a path forward to manage these important systems.

As the board is aware, we have had an uptick in serious/time-consuming security issues over the past year. Luckily, we worked through them as a team and I am looking at possible procedural changes that can be put into place to help us going forward. We are also moving head with a new security incident report management system. Allison Robbins is working with me on moving ahead with implementing QUIPU's PITS web-based library security reporting system. We had looked into this system about six months to a year ago when we first started to notice an increase in incidents and I now feel that it is time to implement it. We current use a paper-based incident report "system" that is cumbersome and inefficient. A secure online system will allow us to distribute incident reports to staff in real time, allow us to update reports easily, allow us to attach things like photos, banning letters, and other documentation, and allow us to more easily search incidents and connect incidents. We hope to roll this out in the spring of 2025.

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

Many thanks to Mallory for attending the November PLDA meeting in my place. The PLDA moved to a secret ballot to vote on the third party vendor proposal that would have allowed us to implement and automated, self-service library card renewal process. Unfortunately, the vote did not pass, landing on 13 for and 13 against, with many not voting at all.

November 14: Board of Trustees Work Session
November 18: Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
November 19: BOT Community Outreach Committee Meeting
November 21: Foundation Board Meeting
November 22: Finance Committee Meeting
November 25: Meeting with Ginny Blake West
December 4: Tour of Washington School Building

December 5: Board of Trustees Work Session

Attached please find our Department Reports.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen LaRocca-Fels

Molly Robbins, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Work –

My meetings this month included –

Bi-weekly meetings with Karen, becoming part of the regular Finance Committee meetings, touring the Grace Church facilities, special and regular BOT meetings, the Friends of OPL Board of Trustees meeting, an online seminar on Project Communication and Collaboration for Librarians, and an online seminar on Centering Community at Your Library. I also met with Allison to review the options for moving the last of our old POTS lines to alternative technologies.

At the Friends of the Ossining Public Library Board of Trustees meeting, we discussed the upcoming Library Mini Golf Fundraiser. (Pillar 1, Goal 1.1)

Behind the scenes there was plenty of action in the 5000. I continue to assist Terri with file management. We have reviewed the contents of nearly one hundred file boxes. Additionally, seasonal supplies from multiple departments were consolidated, boxed, and labeled, obsolete and broken equipment was sorted for recycling and bulk pick up, and tools and related building supplies were reviewed for condition and stored by use. I also collaborated with Jenny Meudt to create better signage for stored equipment and supplies to make it easier for staff to locate what they need. It is tempting to see the space as a closet or garage for leaving and forgetting anything currently not needed, but the space is in constant use as we move supplies for different programs and events, make repairs, and store needed inventory. Keeping it clean, safe, and organized is always a priority.

Our security cameras proved helpful to Karen, me, Steve Garrett, and Ossining Police Detective Perillo as we worked to identify patterns of behavior related to unattended items throughout the library. While the privacy of our patrons is respected, viewing the recordings can be helpful in insuring safe operations.

Canopy Roofing performed their annual review and general maintenance of the roof on 11/14/2024. I have a copy of the full maintenance report with recommendations, and pictures. Both Steve Garrett and I were present while the work was being done. Steve then toured the roof after the Canopy team finished.

B&G Department News –

(Pillar 6, 6.3)

The library was a polling place for the November 5 Election Day. Special thanks are due to Steve Garrett and Emilie Dickson who continue to arrive early and stay late to assist with our election set-ups. We had three dates in 2024 where the library served as a polling place. Allison Robbins just informed me that our four small study rooms were used 219 times in November. It is a great feeling knowing that the challenging work that went into creating those spaces is so valued by our patrons. B&G staff provide maintenance of the rooms throughout the day to keep on top of any necessary cleaning and maintenance the rooms may need. Having so many spaces to reserve and use is part of what makes our building special, but it also requires continuous work to prepare for, and clean up after, changing groups and events. Notable programs and events this month included the Sing Sing Prison Museum event on November 14, the OSD pop-up shop on November 19, and the ESTY fair on November 23. As you read other staff reports you will see the varied setups B&G assists with.

As I reviewed our work orders this month, I was struck by all the small maintenance projects that are managed every day. Examples are tightening loose legs on chairs and tables, changing batteries, stopping leaks, clearing drains, putting away inventory, and replacing broken dispensers. It may not sound overly exciting, but we take considerable pride in the maintenance of our busy library.

Diana Lennon, Adult Services

In Adult Services we were still catching our breath from a busy October when suddenly November appeared, and we found ourselves almost as busy. We celebrated Native American Heritage Month with displays and a two-part “Native Americans in Film” program shared with three other libraries. The Spanish Film series ended, and the Multicultural Film Series begins in December, while the Tuesday Matinees also continued. (Goal 2.1)

In other programs, we hosted the Sing Sing Prison Museum again, in “A Conversation with Dan Slepian and JJ Velasquez” on Nov. 14. They spoke about the release of the new book, The Sing Sing Files: One Journalist, Six Innocent Men, and a Twenty-Year Fight for Justice. (Goals 2.1 and 4.1)

I attended another author event via webinar with Javier Zamora, author of Solito, in which he relates his story of traveling alone from El Salvador to the U.S. as a young immigrant. He presented his story in Spanish and was frank about the trauma he endured, but which also inspired him to tell his story. (Goal 3.2)

I attended a METRO webinar entitled “Leaving The Door Open: A People Centered Approach To Management” which reviewed some of the complexities of managing people and how to address various challenges. Two of our staff, Mark Sacha and Marci Dressler, have been attending Guillermo’s staff Spanish class. This will be helpful with their work on public service desks and will help to meet our community’s needs. The class will continue in January for eight weeks; we appreciate Guillermo’s commitment to teaching Spanish to staff! (Goal 3.2) We continued our work on the nonfiction audit and started to review what we need to do in Fiction to assess our collection. As I’ve noted previously, this task is detailed, complex, and takes a lot of time, so we greatly appreciate the Board extending the Long Range Strategic Plan, which gives us more time to make a thorough review and set our standards for going forward. (Goal 2.2)

We also welcomed Angela Carstensen as a substitute librarian who began training this month. Schedules and staffing around the holidays are very challenging, so I greatly appreciate those staff who offer to work on those days around the holidays. This year, kudos to Scott, Cristella, Aimee, and Neera for covering on the Friday and weekend after Thanksgiving!

Iqnayra Lopez, Children's Services

Programming

In addition to our regular weekly programs, we hosted various special programs to engage our community! We collaborated with Patron Services department to celebrate Dinovember. To go along with their Dinovember reading challenge, the children's team curated a Dinosaur book display and a scavenger hunt around the children's room, which is always a big hit! The culminating event being a Dino Party held on Saturday, November 9th. Children engaged in dinosaur trivia and crafts as well as a dinosaur dig. On Monday, November 11, I hosted a program celebrating one of our most popular series, *The Baby-Sitter's Club*. The many fans in attendance tested their baby-sitting skills during a relay race of putting on a diaper, dressing a baby, reading a book to baby and putting the baby to sleep. We ended the program with some crafts and snacks. Joy hosted a fleece blanket Make it and Take it program. This program posed to be tedious for many children but satisfying once they completed the project. During our monthly Little Critics Book Club, we read picture books honoring and celebrating Native stories. Our little critics chose their favorite book, *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom. (Goal 2.1)

Outreach

Suzy, Mallory and I met with Ann Dealy and her team of school librarians on November 5th to discuss an Equity Book Club or Community Read for the school district. A few options were discussed including *Mascot* by Traci Sorell which seems very relevant to the community right now. It was asked how the library would play a part, and the answer was the library is a common location for families. It was decided to start with celebrating Global Read Aloud Month in March with a read aloud to Park and Brookside Schools of the book *Roar for Reading* by Beth Ferry. I volunteered to display a Story Walk of the book for families to access in. (Goal 4.1)

Tricia met with the OEC PTA on November 26th to discuss collaboration with their 2nd Annual Read-a-Thon. We will be hosting a Reading celebration here on March 29th for the culmination of the Read-a-Thon. (Goal 4.1)

Collections

The team has been focused on making sure our books are shelved in a timely and efficient manner. We all have been taking 20 or 30 minutes between desk shifts and programs to shelve some books. With the amount of items that circulate from the children's room it is a big task and a very important one as books being in their correct location helps provide the best service for our patrons. I hope to pick back up on my project of expanding the children's

Spanish collection soon. This includes weeding some more middle grade fiction books, shifting, arranging and ordering more Spanish books. (Goal 2.2)

Professional Development

Alexandra, our library assistant, recently completed NYLA Library Skills Academy. Alexandra has shared that she gained a lot of insight from this 8-week program. [Library Skills Academy.docx](#) (Goal 3.2) Alexandra has been a wonderful asset to our department. She recently began posting on our Facebook page, [Unidos Comunidad Ossining](#), dedicated to our Spanish speaking community. She has been sharing the Museum pass information as well as early literacy tips for parents and caregivers. (Goal 2.3)

Coming Soon

I'm looking forward to the last month of the year, as we have some of my favorite yearly programs coming up such as Noon Years Eve. The past few years we've been providing only Noon Years Eve kits to go for families to celebrate at home. I am happy to announce that the program will resume in-person this year on December 31 at 11:30am in the Budarz Theatre. A new component to this celebration is honoring our 2024 1000 books project finishers. We also will be registering new participants for the program at this event! I am also looking forward to the last Little Critics Book Club meeting of the year where we will crown our Favorite Picture Book of 2024. We will meet on Friday, December 27 at 3pm.

For some fun pictures of our programs, displays and children's patrons visit our Flickr page.

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

Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services

A consummate party planner at heart (give me a theme and a Canva subscription, and I'm off to the races, always with a rigid color scheme and, usually, a pun), I've always enjoyed the programming aspect of librarianship and it's been a goal of mine to incorporate more programming into Patron Services and to empower our staff to harness their creative energy and design a program or collaborate with another department on something special. Why not lead by example, right? (*LRSP Goal 2.1*)

My six-year-old son is a budding paleontologist and asked if the library had any dinosaur programs coming up; when I realized that we didn't, I met with Ignayra Lopez and Trish Sabini about hosting a Dino-Vember celebration, and they jumped into planning with gusto.

(Let it never be said that there are no perks to having a librarian mother!)

Since dinosaurs are a well-loved topic for a huge swath of children, we wanted to have a party that would appeal to all age ranges and allow kids to explore and have fun at their own pace. Trish and I set up a variety of stations in the theater, including crafts, trivia, coloring, sensory bins, and a dinosaur dig. We also had an amazing teen volunteer dress in an inflatable costume, which was a hit beyond description. We had an amazing turnout and I loved seeing what everyone gravitated to—littler kids loved the coloring and crafts, and our older dino enthusiasts showed off their amazing trivia skills. The dinosaur dig was absolutely the hit of the day, with everyone getting the chance to play archaeologist and use a chisel to dig out a small dinosaur.

This, as you may imagine, created quite the mess to clean up. Trish and I were prepared to spend the rest of the afternoon cleaning and vacuuming but Brandon Fox of our Building and Grounds department observed the situation with great humor and insisted on taking over. He did an absolutely impeccable job—you'd never have known the theater had just seen over a hundred people and several large dust clouds—on top of his other custodial responsibilities.

I am excited about the prospect of programming more in the future, so please do watch this space!

PLDA

I attended PLDA in Karen's place last month, as she provided an overview of the building project for the Ossining Library Foundation. The major discussion at this meeting continued to be Patron Point, and directors for and against the online renewal platform had an often passionate debate about the matter. Karen had asked me to attend specifically to register Ossining's yes vote for the system; Marie Trapasso gave me an overview of the system and her take on it, and we agreed that it would be good for WLS to move forward with this. The PLDA opted not to hold an open vote at the meeting and instead put together a secret ballot to be conducted via email and, unfortunately, no majority was reached, so this will likely be backburnered until the new PLDA board takes office in 2025.

Homebound Delivery

We've been receiving more and more questions about whether or not we offer homebound delivery, specifically from our local nursing homes. While WLS has done early work conceptualizing Delivery By Mail at a system level, there's no timeline in place for it and I am not comfortable continuing to let our patrons wait for a system that may be months, if not years, away.

Diana Lennon and I spoke about doing a modified homebound delivery program as a pilot program, starting with the nursing homes. I have volunteered to make deliveries and pickup returns at Atria, Bethel, and Cedar Manor and to work with interested residents on reader's advisory. I plan to meet with staff from the nursing homes in January about implementing this with their residents and Diana and I will continue to work together on a framework for our program (i.e. making it clear that only Ossining items are eligible to be delivered). There's still work to be done, but Diana and I are so pleased to be able to offer a service to those in need. (*LRSP Goal 2.3*)

Building Project

Karen, Amanda and I met with Ginnie Blake-West, our marketing consultant, to provide some exciting updates for her. We gave her an overview of the project updates and shared with her documentation from our project managers and financial advisors to help her get started with crafting messaging. Ginnie has already gotten to work updating FAQs and informational literature and I am so excited/terrified to see this huge project really start to take shape. 2025 is going to be an absolute whirlwind of a year! (*LRSP Goal 5*)

Allison Robbins, Technology and Training

Announcement System

Our announcement system lost a connection that ran through our old phone system trunk and stopped working, briefly. Rudy from eCubed came on site to OPL and, despite typical OPL complications, was able to get everything off and out of our old equipment. I will be removing all of the old equipment now that it is officially and completely retired. (Goal 5.2)

Hotspots and Chromebooks

We spent some time this month updating our user agreements and guidelines—refining the parameters for borrowing eligibility with Karen’s guidance. Additionally, with the hotspots being so popular, we are filing for Erate funding to pay for the service on our existing devices. We hope that, in the future, we can also apply for and receive funding for additional hotspots to add to our holdings. This is the first year during which Erate funding is available for hotspots and we are excited about the prospect of receiving it. (Goal 5.1)

Session Management and Printing

I am still working on finding an alternative to our current printing and session management solution. I’ve reported this same task over many months this year! A challenge in this endeavor is finding that the best-looking solution at this time, as well as several other solutions, require an on-site server. Currently, all of OPL’s systems are cloud-based and we do not have an on-site server. A server will incur extra maintenance costs each month which is proving to be a financial challenge thus far. I am still working with Logically to find an affordable solution and I’m hopeful to have a way forward, soon. (Goal 5.2)

Evergreen Outage Incident

Early in November, there was a building-wide Evergreen outage on a Saturday, during which time Jenny stayed late on her shift and took the lead on troubleshooting, communicating, and implementing on-the spot remediation to get everyone up and running with zero notice. I’m so grateful to have had the help on site and the willingness to jump in and keep everyone working!

Marie Trapasso, Circulation/Technical Services

And so we have come to end of the year where the days go by in a blur and each day feels like it’s only 45 minutes long.

Patron Point

Wilson Arana presented answers to a few questions that were raised previously regarding Patron Point at the WLS Technology Committee Meeting. We all agreed it was fine to take to PLDA and hopefully have them vote on it the next day. That didn’t happen. Mallory can go into more detail about the PLDA meeting but I have a feeling this project is not going to happen and that is detrimental to our patrons in my opinion.

Message Bee

Evergreen's text messaging service, that notifies patrons when their holds are in, has slowly been becoming obsolete. Evergreen has decided they do not want to develop a new service so they recommended that WLS go with Message Bee which is provided through Unique Management. This would simplify things on our end and hopefully make text messaging more widely available to use for other notifications. Wilson stated that they hope to be up and running with Message Bee by January 2025. This would be amazing if that is the case.

New Pass

In news from the file marked, "EXCITING" we have a new pass to the Mohonk Preserve! The pass provides access for one vehicle with up to 4 visitors ages 16 and up. Children 15 years old and younger are free when accompanied by an adult pass holder.

The pass is **NOT** valid for parking or entry to the Mohonk Mountain House or Minnewaska State Park. I think this pass will be used much like our Empire Pass or the Teatown Pass which are largely for outdoor activities. This pass was free to us and I am excited for patrons to discover it.

Hotspot/Chromebook Agreements

Due to recent events, we had to modify our lending guidelines and the user agreements for our Chromebooks and hotspots. This also meant that patrons who had previously filled out these agreements, now had to fill out the new ones. I would like to specifically recognize Barbara Williams and Arthur Rylands for removing notes from patrons' Evergreen records that said they had previously filled out agreements. There were over 250 notes that had to be removed so that we could start fresh with the new agreements.

Promotional Materials

I created 16 screen graphics for promotion of December programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 8 placards for program promotion in Aspen.

Fun Fact

On Veterans Day we had 31 phone calls asking what our hours were that day.

Circ Statistics:

Patrons added: 107

Interlibrary Loans: (received at Ossining): 1,568

(supplied to other libraries): 1,219

Total Circulation (including eBooks): 16,097

There were checkouts 116 from the Mobile App.

There were 5,015 total checkouts from Overdrive.

There were 626 checkouts on just Ossining Advantage titles.

Our museum passes circulated 63 times.

Tech Statistics:

Items Added: N/A (WLS website is down)

Items Deleted: N/A (WLS website is down)

Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services

November is a time when many take a moment to reflect on what they're grateful for. I have so much to be thankful for, and one of those things is my team here at OPL. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to spend extended time in Texas this November, and I am incredibly grateful for Karen's support and the Teen Services team. It is reassuring to know with confidence that everything will run smoothly—and it certainly did.

Once again, most of our programs were filled this month, showing that our efforts to spread the word are paying off and that focusing on the activities teens are interested in tends to bring them in. Tiffany hosted a fantastic session where participants learned to create their own pumpkin-scented candles, which was a huge hit. Tamarah Bridgewater delivered an impactful and thought-provoking presentation on MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women), raising awareness about this critical issue. She also facilitated a creative activity where participants made Red Hand Art, a powerful symbol of the movement. Additionally, attendance at the DIY Beaded Earrings for a Cause event has been booming, with many students eager to participate and earn community service hours while supporting a great cause. Amanda led participants through a DIY Winter Mug project using the Cricut. The participants enjoyed every step of the process, from designing their own images to weeding the image and finally applying the design to the mugs. Neera's loaded mashed potatoes were another big hit. Participants enjoyed having the option to choose from a variety of toppings to personalize their dish. Tiffany had two Foodie Funs this month: pizza bagels, which were a big hit, and a Cake-Off competition where participants baked and decorated their own cakes. I love that we're making such great use of the fancy toaster ovens purchased with the CTC grant funds. (Goal 2.1)

Attendance at D&D and Magic: The Gathering continues to grow, and we're noticing more participants reaching out to James for advice on both games throughout the week. Chess attendance is also on the rise, and this has become one of my favorite programs. I especially enjoy seeing the younger participants seeking advice from the older ones, as it creates a wonderful multi-generational dynamic.

As of this writing, I have not received any additional information from ENU Builds regarding the Teen Summit. I have reached out to them and hope to have more information by mid-December. I am not a fan of last-minute programs, as they often leave little time for proper planning and preparation. This can lead to unnecessary stress, and it becomes more challenging to ensure everything runs smoothly. I believe that better planning and advanced notice allow for a more successful and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. (Goal 4.1)

Participation in *Empowering Success: Helping Your Special Education Student Navigate the College Process* was lower than expected, despite being a collaboration with four libraries. On the other hand, *Successfully Navigating College Admissions* involved 10 participating agencies and had an attendance of 105. Both sessions provided invaluable information, but I

must say that Ron Feuchs of Stand Out for College delivered a more polished and refined presentation. (Goals 2.3 and 4.1)