

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

**Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director**

December felt like it went by in a flash. Between illnesses, holidays, and heating issues, it was certainly an eventful month. I was out of commission with a respiratory illness for a week -- a huge thank you to our team for making it possible for me to take time off to recover. A huge thank you is also due to our Buildings and Grounds team, who stepped in to facilitate the repair and work on our heating system. We have a wonderful group.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers once again gave the Ossining Public Library a generous gift of \$5,000, for which we are so grateful. Their collaboration and support over the years is so appreciated.

**Board and Committee Work**

The Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee met to discuss the bylaws, in particular the role of the Treasurer. We also discussed and moved through a further revision to the Circulation Policy. The Committee will be meeting again on January 10<sup>th</sup> to further discuss the bylaws.

**Budget and Finance**

The members of the Finance Committee met with our Treasurer during month to discuss the role of the Treasurer.

The 2023/2024 Audit has been completed, reviewed by our Treasurer, distributed to the Finance Committee, and is ready for Board review as the Special Meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>. A big thank you to Bob Majernik for all of his diligence and work with the auditors. Thank you, too, for the support of Steve Hamilton and Terrie Keppler during the audit process. The Business Office benefits for a great team!

Bob Majernik and I will tackle the 2025/2026 budget planning soon – as has been the case the last couple of years, I'm a little further behind than I like in the budget planning process, but we inevitably complete it. So I need to take a breath!

**Building and Grounds**

A big thank you to the Board of Trustees for approving the next phases of work with Lothrop and SGH. It feels great that we are moving ahead with our projects. Molly Robbins set a meeting for the full group (architects, project managers, engineers, fiscal advisors, attorneys, etc.) for Tuesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>. Amanda, Phil, Molly, and I are also meeting with Mary Fox and Alita Zuber on Friday, January 10<sup>th</sup> to provide them with an update on our bond project. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

I connected Calgi with our building project attorney so that they can move forward on a contract with us.

Matthew Duffy from Utica Insurance came for a site visit on January 7. We reviewed our building contractor practices and building safety practices and Molly Robbins brought Matthew on a walkthrough of our building. This was a periodic update/walkthrough for insurance purposes.

## **Foundation**

Amanda Curley, Meghan Huppuch, Molly Robbins, Mallory Marinaro, and I will be meeting with the Foundation Board on Friday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, to present them with fundraising opportunities within our building project. We look forward to facilitating the beginning of this good work. (Goal 1.1)

I'm very excited for the screening of *SingSing*, on Saturday, February 22, at 2:00 at the OPL, sponsored by the Ossining Library Foundation. We've already been getting calls and are looking forward to the opening of ticketing (free!). A big thank you to the Foundation for making this happen! (Goal 1.1)

## **Personnel**

Steve Hamilton and I are scheduled to review our requested changes to the Employee Handbook draft with Public Sector HR on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

We are working on moving ahead with several

## **Projects and Other Things**

Allison Robbins and I are moving ahead with Quipu/PITS, the online security incident reporting software that will make our building-wide communication about security incidents more seamless and much easier.

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

While the PLDA did not meet in December, I had the pleasure of joining my colleagues for a holiday lunch.

### **Some Meetings, Trainings, Etc:**

- December 11: Meeting with Donimic Calgi, David Chen (Calgi), Phil Rice, Molly Robbins
- December 12: Meeting with Manny Rodriguez (next door), Molly Robbins (driveway repaving next door)
- December 12: PLDA Holiday Lunch
- December 13: Meet the Trustees
- December 13: Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee Meeting
- December 17: Community Outreach Committee Meeting

December 17: OPL Finance Committee Meeting with Treasurer  
January 6: Swope Fund Meeting (staff)  
January 7: Utica Meeting (building insurance)  
January 9: Leadership Team Meeting  
January 9: Board of Trustees Special Meeting  
January 10: Foundation Board Meeting  
January 10: Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee Meeting  
January 10: Meeting with Mary Fox, Alita Zuber, Amanda Curley, Phil Rice, Molly Robbins (bond)

Attached please find our Department Reports.

Respectfully submitted,

**Marie Trapasso, Circulation/Technical Services**

As I sit here humming U2's *New Year's Day* I am reminded of the multitude of accomplishments this department was responsible for in 2024. I am looking forward to all we have planned for 2025.

**"New" Hire**

I was thrilled to welcome back Andres Mayo this month! Andres was a valued member of our staff for many years. We recently had hours that were available and Andres was able to take those hours. He has seamlessly stepped right back into his role here and I am grateful to have him back on the team.

**New Museum Pass**

Thanks to the generosity of our Friends Group and suggestions made by a few our staff, we now have a pass to the Dia Museum in Beacon. This pass offers free admission to the museum for up to 6 people and 10% off of purchases in their café and bookstore. I know this pass will enhance our already popular museum pass collection.

**Favorite Books of 2024 in Aspen**

I love the end of the year because I look forward to seeing what our staff's favorite books of the past year were. I was able to create a highlight in Aspen of the favorite books. Check it out on our OPAC's homepage. [Catalog Home | Ossining Public Library](#)

**WLS App**

WLS let us know that their app will no longer be functioning starting January 1, 2025. The new app will be through Aspen which will hopefully be an easy transition as we already use Aspen for our OPAC. They are aiming for a mid-January launch for the new app.

**Promotional Materials**

I created 13 screen graphics for promotion of January programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 2 placards for program promotion in Aspen.

**Circ Statistics:**

**Patrons added: 91**

**Interlibrary Loans: (received at Ossining): 1,660**  
**(supplied to other libraries): 1,023**  
**Total Circulation (including eBooks): 15,468**

There were 115 checkouts from the Mobile App.

**There were 5,427 total checkouts from Overdrive.**  
**There were 744 checkouts on just Ossining Advantage titles.**

Our museum passes circulated 42 times and our explorer bags circulated twice.

**Tech Statistics:**  
**Items Added: 699**  
**Items Deleted: 291**

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

While it's disconcerting, if not frankly terrifying, to be writing the year as 2025, there's something to be said for the endorphin hit that comes when the new year comes and you write in a brand new planner with a brand new set of pens. Can office supplies change lives? For at least a few weeks in January, I truly believe they can, so this is a report written with rose-colored glasses and tremendous optimism.

It is also a short report, because December was—thanks to time off, holidays, unanticipated library closures, and supremely tight staffing levels—a fragmented month (some might also call it a hot mess of a month, but my newly optimistic self will not do so). Many thanks to the Patron Services staff who volunteered for extra desk shifts to cover people's time off!

### ***Best Books of 2024***

As ever, one of my favorite projects of the year is compiling a list of the staff's favorite reads, not least because I always wind up reading a handful of truly excellent books recommended by my colleagues! Thank you to all the staff and Trustees who offered such thoughtful recommendations; I'm including the final roundup here as well in case you missed it.

### ***Squishmallow Party***

The week between Christmas and New Year's is, by nature, one of complete lawlessness, so I figured I'd add to the chaos with a fun program. Many thanks to the Children's Room for once again indulging my programming ideas and allowing me to go full-throttle with party planning, including cutting out photos by hand to make a photo backdrop (my hands still hurt, but I am very proud of this).

For those of you unfamiliar with the cottage industry that is Squishmallows, they are a line of plush toys that have exploded in popularity and are available at every store, in every size, with offshoot toys, accessories, clothing lines, and games. Based on the amount of Squishmallows present in my home, I had a feeling that it would be a fun program for our community and was it ever—150 people attended and we had so many people appreciative for a fun—and adorable!—way to spend a day during winter break. We had a variety of

stations set up in the theater with crafts, coloring, Tic Tac Toe and slime (yes—after swearing that I would never again do slime at the library after a particularly traumatizing teen program in 2016, I brought it back and it went well). Allison set up a great kids playlist for kids and their Squishmallows to have a dance party, Alexandra did the one-two punch of overseeing cupcakes AND slime, and Ignayra took great photos and, most importantly, announced our raffle winners. Let's bring this level of joy into all things we do in 2025!

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

**Session Management:** I met with Logically and worked on finding a server solution that would support one of the choices of session management and printing software that I favor at the moment. In doing so, we found that an on-site server option is too expensive to add to our technology bill. I am currently exploring a cloud option that may be possible to use and would be more cost effective. (Goal 5.2)

**Erate:** I submitted our Erate application for hotspot service reimbursement and have started receiving bids/proposals. I will begin evaluating them in January. Hopefully, there will be a good option and we will receive funding. I am also working on the proposals evaluation and paperwork for our internet reimbursement through Erate, as our three year contract with FirstLight is ending this year and we need to go through the process of selecting a service provider, anew. (Goals 5.1, 1.2. 1.3)

**Quipu PITS:** We are proceeding with a subscription to Quipu's Patron Incident Tracking System (PITS). This software and database will be a big help for the library in tracking patron incidents, staff incidents, etc., ensuring that information is securely stored and properly shared within the library. (Goal 5.2)

**Granite/POTS Lines Conversion:** At long last, Molly and I have been able to truly get the ball rolling with moving our emergency systems off the POTS/copper lines that Verizon is retiring. We have engaged with [Granite Telecommunications](#) to implement their EPIK solution. The project is underway and will likely be complete in January. (Goal 5.1)

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

I am sure I ask this every December, but how is it that another year has gone by?

In Adult Services we looked back at our "Best of 2024" and revisited these highlights:  
--Kindhearted patrons acknowledged our hard work and our challenges by telling us how grateful they are for the library; speaking with us about family losses this year; and showing kindness and patience more frequently than frustration and stress.  
(Goal 3.3)

--We appreciated nature with outdoor Library Walks, and Birds in the Library programs, which were in line with a programming direction we want to develop. Mark led a tour of the Weir Chamber; Scott spoke about the Hudson and our area; Vicenta and I staffed the OPL table at the Ossining Farmers Market in summer. (Goal 2.1)

--Deep reference questions were put forth by patrons and answered efficiently by staff. Some days the questions are easier than others when at a service desk... After we were challenged to locate a copy of an out-of-print book in French, a patron could not thank us enough. (Goals 2.2 and 3.3)

--We made excellent progress in our Nonfiction Collection Audit, while also accepting that it would take still more time. We worked to diversify our acquisitions and fill in collection gaps that we noted while working on this project. (Goal 2.2)

--We made new connections with organizations and individuals which we hope will lead to new programs and services. We also strengthened some existing partnerships by deepening our work with the Ossining Microfund; working with the Saw Mill River Audubon Society; and once again benefiting from a generous Mary Knoll financial donation. (Goals 4.1, 4.3, 1.1)

--We looked closely at our programming budget this year and made appropriate adjustments for greater financial responsibility. (Goal 1.1)

--We added new programs and tweaked others, such as my Bibliotherapy book group and Cristella's Bodies in the Library Book Club. Guillermo started a staff Spanish class too, which Mark and Marci attended. We worked with the indigenous Ecuadorian community and plan to continue this relationship. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, 3.2)

--Many of us took well-deserved time off to enjoy holidays, to rejuvenate and find inspiration for 2025! (Goal 3.2)

Now we are looking forward to the new year and what it will hold in store for us as a department, and for the library and Ossining community. As Lao Tzu wrote, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." We are stepping into 2025 with gratitude and high expectations!

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

As we close the chapter on another year in the children's department, we reflect on the joy, growth, and creativity that has flourished within our walls. This year has been one of continued learning, community engagement, and a deepened love for reading. From exciting storytimes to crafts and gaming, we've worked hard to create an environment where young minds can explore, dream, and discover the magic of books.

We've reached many milestones, brought our community together, and we've supported our youngest readers in many ways. Through collaboration with families, schools, and local organizations, we've strived to make the library a vibrant and welcoming space for children to learn and grow.

We're excited and look forward to another year of inspiring curiosity and fostering a lifelong love of reading!

Our Holiday break programs were a big hit including the Squishmallow Party (hosted by Patron Services), Gingerbread Man cookie Decorating, a Kwanzaa celebration (hosted by

NAACP Ossining Branch) (Goal 4.1) and Noon Year's Eve. We had a lot of children and families attend.

Our Winter programming session begins on January 6 with all our regular weekly programs back and some new programs as well. I'm most excited for our visit from Ecuadorian artist and musician, Danny Galan. Danny Galan is from the town of Cuenca, and he just wrote a children's book, *El Senor de las Aguas y el Tesoro Escondido*, set in his hometown. Danny will be here on Saturday March 1 at 1pm in the Budarz Theatre where he will read a portion of the book, sing a song related to the book and talk with children about the process of making a book. I am hoping to also give free books to attendees. I am also looking forward to our 4-week mini-series with a Bilingual doula from Birth a Mi Manera. Each week our doula will lead a conversation on new parenting/ caregiver topics. They will also be available to answer specific questions for families. This series begins on Thursday, January 16 in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor meeting room at 12:30pm. (Goal 2.1)

Our littlest readers from Park school will begin visiting us in the children's room beginning on Tuesday, January 7th. I've had the chance to visit their classrooms this fall and now they will be visiting me for a Storytime, a tour of the children's room and their own library cards! (Goal 4.1)

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

It's hard to believe the year has come to an end. December was a fantastic month with filled with a variety of fun and engaging programs. Celebrating the Battle of the Books team members is always a highlight for both them and me.

Decorating the Teen Room was a lot of fun, and it was great to see some new faces join in. The participants showed interesting creativity with the supplies we had available, and I'm especially grateful to the mom who strung the lights exactly as I envisioned. The interactive Polar Express movie night was truly a lot of fun - attendees were fully engaged, making it our best one yet. Louis and James really went above and beyond, hosting two laser tag events in December. I'm not sure Louis' voice will ever recover! Tiffany did a fantastic job leading the participants as they created beautiful winter-scented candles. The ornaments created in the DIY ornament program were equally impressive that could have easily been sold at a holiday craft fair. Both programs were fun and rewarding for all involved. Teens gathered for a cozy, warm treat during our Mexican Hot Chocolate program. With a variety of toppings and a rich, flavorful twist on traditional hot chocolate, giving participants the perfect treat to enjoy during the chilly season. (Goal 2.1)

Our annual DIY Gingerbread House program was well attended as usual. Each teen crafted their own gingerbread house using graham crackers and melted white chocolate for "glue", decorating them with icing, candy, and a lot of imagination.

We teamed up with the school district to host their Explore and Learn program – baking memories. I must admit, I was a little nervous due to the large number of expected attendees, but everything went off without a hitch. Megan and her team were fantastic, and the teen volunteers were outstanding. They worked effortlessly to help families create memorable baking experiences. (Goal 4.1)

Looking ahead, I'm excited for the first Teen Advisory Board meeting in January. We're trying a new day and time as requested by some of our regular participants. Additionally, I'll be meeting with ENU Builds during the first week of January and am hopeful that the teen summit will take place in February. (Goal 4.1)

**Molly Robbins, Assistant Director**

It is hard to believe that this is the final monthly report for 2024. It was a difficult year, and I hope that 2025 brings peace, good health, and progress on scales both large and small. December certainly ended with a challenge. On Sunday, December 22 it became clear that our heating system was struggling to keep up with winter temperatures. As New York entered a long cold snap, we ultimately faced 5 days during which portions of the building remained in the upper 50s and others struggled to stay in the low to mid 60s. This meant the building could not be open for use. It can be looked at as lucky that this occurred at a time when we traditionally see less traffic and Wednesday, December 25 was already a holiday closure. The system struggled on multiple fronts including overall capacity and aging equipment. Replacement of parts that failed, an increase in the routine maintenance schedule, and holding the building at a constant temperature, do seem to be keeping us going as we head into typical January weather.

A thank you to Steve Garrett for remaining on site while clean Air Quality services worked on the system. And thanks to all staff who contributed on site when we were forced to close early. The cooperative work of assisting patrons, making announcements, updating our social media, and posting signage went smoothly and quickly.

December also included Canopy Roofing addressing the roof maintenance needs identified in their November inspection, the installation of new flooring in the children's program room, new storage cabinets in the Teen Room and the first floor conference room, a detailed cleaning of the gas fireplace components, sexual harassment prevention training, and Allison Robbins and I working with Granite EPIK to switch out our last few analog lines.