

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Director's Report

Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director

So many things required our attention this month, but the most unexpected (and perhaps we should have expected it) was the imminent closure of a long-time library book supplier and processor, Baker and Taylor. Our team has been working hard to put plans in place for moving forward and have made good progress. In the meantime, Hudson Valley Books for Humanity has been amazing and are helping us by filling orders of needed, popular books weekly. We Mallory Marinaro moved quickly and set up an account for us with Ingram, other large library book jobber, and she was able to get us established before they cut off new customers. Our first orders were placed and we await shipment. We'll be doing in-house processing for the foreseeable future, but we are lucky to have capable, dedicated staff who are committed to making sure that our public have access to a regular supply of new titles. Molly Robbins found the following summary of the situation: [Liblime Publisher Fiscal Issues Impacting Libraries: The Baker & Taylor Collapse and Beyond - Liblime](#)

I'm looking forward to our Annual Meeting and Report to the Community on December 9th at 7:00 in the Budarz Theater. Nate Hill, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Library Resources Council will be our keynote speaker and we will be recognizing the Riley Elmore Saper Voracious Reader of the Year, our Volunteer of the Year, and our Employee of the Year. We'll hear reports from our Friends and Foundation and we'll share library highlights from this year. We will also honor our Battle of the Book participants. We have so much to celebrate and it's nice to have the opportunity to do so!

Board and Committee Work

Our Long Range Strategic Plan wraps up at the end of December! These last four years have been productive, busy, interesting, and eventful. I feel that we met many of the goals of our plan and still have much work to do – and that's the nature of any good long range plan! I look forward to discussing ideas for our next plan.

Building and Grounds

We have been working on finalizing contract amendments with our building professionals so that we can move ahead in our planning work. The Lothrop amendment is finalized and fully executed. The Calgi contract is finalized and signed by the library – expect full execution shortly. I am following up on the SGH contract. We are moving head as best we can to get bonding in place. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

The project to replace AC5 with RTU6 so that we can provide heating and cooling to the 2nd floor and mezzanine has gone out to bid and a bid was received and recommended to the Board of Trustees. Once the bid is approved, we will move into the construction phase of the project. In the meantime, we have been in discussion with our professionals about getting through the winter, though we are still hopeful that the contractor will be able to expedite the heating portion of the project. Molly Robbins has purchased additional heaters for staff to use in the meantime. (Goal 5.5)

Foundation & Friends

The Foundation Board met on November 13th. Mallory Marinaro and I attended and updated the group on the progress of our bond project and the progress of our HVAC installation project and we discussed communications and possible projects for the Foundation to support. We also updated the Foundation Board on the progress of our Swope-funded programming and provided an update on future programming.

Grants and Donations

We were notified by the Carnegie Corporation of New York that, as a Carnegie Library, we will be receiving a grant of \$10,000 in 2026 in honor of the country's 250th anniversary. I hope to discuss with the Board some ideas for the funding. (Goal 1.3)

Outreach

Meghan Huppuch, Althema Goodson, Rachel Murphy, and I attended the New York Library Association Conference in Saratoga Springs earlier this month. We presented a program for trustees called "Trustee Advocacy: A Strategy Sharing Session" during which we broke up into groups and discuss three topics:

- Partners in Advocacy – Identifying and Collaborating
- Bonds and Budgets
- Trustees' Role in Advocacy

The session was well attended and well-received. Participants were excited to share ideas and many asked to be included in an email group after the program to continue the discussions. (Goal 3.2 and 4.1)

Nate Hill, Executive Director of METRO (Metropolitan New York Library Resources Council) visited with several guests for a tour of our library. His guests were library professionals from near and far (Brooklyn, South Korea, Denmark, Oregon...) and it was fun to show them our building and especially to discuss our future plans with them. (Goal 4.1)

We have a variety of Museum Passes available for our patrons to borrow and these are very popular (thank you, Friends of the Ossining Public Library!). What we didn't know until recently was that some of the organization that we purchase passes from offer library partner orientation programs that allow our staff to be better aware of the offerings available to our community through these museums. Mallory Marinaro and I attended a library partner orientation with at the Dia earlier this month and learned about some of their programs. They offer these orientations twice a year and we intend to send other staff in the future. Mallory is reaching out to the other museums and organizations whose passes we have to find out about similar opportunities for our staff. (Goals 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3)

Personnel

We continue to move forward with filling some of the budgeted positions we had planned for this year. The first two on the list will be Library Assistant (Spanish Speaking) Part Time Plus

for the Children's Department and Library Clerk, Part Time Plus for the Patron Services Department. We have promoted Vicenta Mauri, previously a Page, to Library Clerk.

Tricia Sabini, Librarian II in the Children's Department, is moving forward on implementing a long-standing goal of moving the supervision of all pages who shelve or do collection maintenance from Patron Services to the Children's Department. While our pages shelve throughout the building, we believe that having them report to one supervisor in the Children's Department will be beneficial to both the Pages and the organization. (Goals 3.1 and 3.2)

As stated above, I attended the New York Library Association Conference earlier this month. I'll provide a written report when I have a chance, but I will share that it was invigorating and instructive. I was so happy to share the time with Meghan, Althema, and Rachel – it'd good to share the learning in the moment so that we can bring it back to the library to share with the rest of the trustees and our library staff.

Projects, etc.

I am happy to report my work on the Public Library Association Conference Program Review Subcommittee has been completed. I reviewed and rated about 49 program submissions for the American Library Association Annual Conference in June 2026. I was really excited by many of the program submissions that I reviewed and am very much looking forward to possibly attending them at the annual conference.

In response to the sudden increase in food insecurity in our community, the library agreed to be part of the Bags of Hope program with the school district. Bags can be picked up at the library and filled by community members to benefit other community members. We are also reaching out to Feeding Westchester and the Ossining Food Pantry to determine how we can support them in their efforts to respond to our community's needs. More to come.

News from the Public Library Directors Association and the Westchester Library System Some Meetings, Trainings, Programs I attended:

I reported on the October PLDA in my last report. The November meeting falls after the Board Meeting, so that report will be included next month.

October 17: Visit by Nate Hill and library delegates

October 20: Library Partners Event at Dia

October 20: Board of Trustees Meeting

October 21: Community Engagement Committee Meeting

October 22: Board of Education Meeting (Bond Resolution for Library)

October 23: Rotary Club of Ossining Meeting

October 24: Finance Committee Meeting

October 27: Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting

October 20: Leadership Team Meeting

November 5-November 7: New York Library Association Conference

November 12: Meeting about Book Vendors with Leadership Team

November 14: Finance Committee Meeting

Diana Lennon, Adult Services

October felt like a roller coaster month! It is usually one of our department's busiest months, and this year was no exception. In addition to our numerous ongoing programs, we celebrated both Hispanic Heritage and Italian Heritage Months. We presented the "Argentine Duo" concert sponsored by The Friends; a Spanish Film Series; an Italian Tenor concert; Gelato Night; and a talk about Italian Americans in Music. In collaboration with the Sing Sing Prison Museum and other organizations, we hosted two unique events: *The Tragedy of True Crime* author John J. Lennon and a panel of speakers discussed the book in a unique call-in from Sing Sing; and "Unsung" which was a multimedia community conversation on stories from the carceral system. Both of these programs reflect the relationship we have developed with the Sing Sing Prison Museum and other local groups. (Goals 2.1; 4.3)

I was honored to be invited (along with 24 other librarians) by the Embassy of Spain to attend the LIBER Book Fair in Madrid, and it was an intense and fruitful event. I met with twelve publishers of books in Spanish who presented their newest products as well as explaining their area of focus. This included adult, teen, and children fiction and nonfiction books which ranged from popular works to history to travel to cooking and so much more. I brought back lists of titles to recommend to Ignayra and Suzy for children and teens; and have adult lists to order. Learning about all the materials is beneficial, but you need a U.S. based distributor to be able to acquire the books. I have since set up an account with Miami-based Spanish Publishers, and Bob Majernik and their Sales Manager took care of the necessary paperwork. I'm excited to order more books in Spanish that reflect the wide range of needs and interests of our patrons. Additionally, I did a tour of Spain's National Library/Biblioteca Nacional; and we all enjoyed an incredible meal at Lhardy, Madrid's oldest restaurant. In sharp contrast with this highlight was the ordeal with Baker & Taylor closing. While the Dept. Heads worked together and have implemented solutions, the country-wide panic in libraries was almost palpable as libraries struggled to find new vendors. (Goals 2.2; 3.2)

In outreach efforts, we continued our work with the Maryknoll Sisters through community discussions about helping our immigrant neighbors; this work continues as we develop a plan of action. I met with "Release Recovery" which is a service for those experiencing substance abuse and co-occurring mental health issues. They are another resource in our toolkit to help our community face challenges in today's world. (Goals 4.1; 4.3)

Unfortunately, many of us were ill in October—I hope that's over—but everyone in Adult Services stepped up and filled programming and public services gaps in a team effort, which is so important in a public library. We cannot do this work alone!

Be sure to check out the attached photos of all our October activities!

Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services

October brought festive fun and fall energy to the Children's Department! Families enjoyed our spooky themed programs as well as our Hispanic Heritage month celebrations. Alexandra hosted a pumpkin decorating program on Friday, October 10, where we ran out of pumpkins. The staff felt terrible, but the size of the crowd was not what we expected. You never know about these things. Next year we will have a plethora of pumpkins for

decorating! I hosted a Story Art program with For the People and Kids Inc. on October 11. We read *Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos* by Monica Brown, *What Can You Do with a Paleta?* by Carmen Tafolla and *Roberto Clemente: Pride of the Pittsburgh Pirates* by Jonah Winter. Each book had a corresponding art activity. Our Little Critics book club met on October 20th to read books for Hispanic Heritage month. The critics decided their favorite book for the month was *Sundust* by Zeke Peña.

OHS engineering club hosted another program, Bone Bridge STEM, for children interested in engineering on October 26. We always have a wonderful turnout when they are here. And the OHS young ladies are always enthusiastic and prepared to work with the kids. Kevin hosted his Annual Haunted House on October 29, which is always a big event. We had about 70 participants pass through the house. We also had staff from Teen Services and teen volunteers to help put on a spooky but fun show! Alexandra and I put on a Halloween bilingual Storytime on October 31 followed by a Halloween parade throughout the building. It was our first time doing something like this and I think everyone enjoyed themselves, patrons and staff.

Our First Steps Little Readers program began this month. We partner with First Steps Little School to offer bilingual programming on Friday afternoons. The educators from Little School host the program, and it's open to all to participate. They also invite their students to the library to participate. I visited the Ossining Children's Center twice this month. On October 20th I provided Storytime to 3 toddler classes. Then on October 22 I hosted Storytime for their 2 PreK classes.

This month, much of my time was spent preparing our children's team for the Battle of the Books Tournament. We met weekly on Mondays and Wednesdays. The tournament was held on October 25 at AMD. It was such a fun day! We placed 3rd in our division and missed going to the semifinals by just 1 win. It was a very bittersweet year as my team is moving up to the teen division after 3 years together. I'm looking forward to my next group of kids to mold and shape into another great team.

Alexandra and I had another 2 webinars for our Building Community-Based Summer cohort. This month the theme was letting go of traditions. Anyone who has planned and implemented a summer reading program knows that tradition is at the heart of it. So, this idea may be a hard one to grasp for some. However, to truly engage the community and start developing an equitable summer program, many of our traditions need to be changed.

Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services

As many of you know, I was raised on soap operas (this is why I have very little patience for people complaining about the writing of primetime shows going off the rails. Come back to me when a character is brought back from the dead three times and we can talk about ludicrous) and, for a time, had popular blog and monthly column in *Soap Opera Digest* writing about them, with a mild sarcastic streak that once led the head writer of *One Life to Live* to tweet that my "bad cop routine is getting old".

I'm not saying that the Ossining Public Library is a soap opera, per se, but I AM saying that the face I made when I read about the closure of Baker & Taylor probably should have been

accompanied by dramatic string music and a slow motion zoom in, because that was a surprise fitting for a Friday cliffhanger!

Baker & Taylor

So...what does it mean for a book distributor to go out of business? It means collection development becomes kind of a hot mess, to be honest. Baker & Taylor had been slowly fading for several months, as they struggled with maintain inventory and, in turn, struggled to get us books. There were periods over the summer where our New Books shelves were startlingly barren. The departments supplemented to the best of their abilities with other book vendors—many thanks to Sarath Nair, Michelle Thomas, and Diana Lennon for suggesting that we partner with Hudson Valley Books for Humanity in the interim to ensure that we have popular titles on the shelves. I love a creative solution to a problem!

It's important to note that the books from HVBH and Amazon are not library bound, which necessitates putting on book covers as part of the processing, well...process. This has added an extra step to the work in tech services but Sheena Glanville, Sumbul Faridi, Jenny Meudt, and Tricia Sabini (who does the processing and cataloging for the Children's Room) have been great sports about it and have made sure that, despite this extra hurdle, books are getting on the shelves as quickly as possible.

I worked on setting the library up with Ingram and we've put through a few orders. We'll see what their delivery timeframes are like, as I have to imagine for the time being that they are overloaded with new customers. Hopefully, next month I have a glowing review to include in my report!

Museum Passes

One of my new responsibilities is managing the museum passes, which has quite fun. It was perfect timing to be invited to Dia: Beacon and their semiannual event for libraries to learn about their programming and history, and tour their museum with a docent. Karen and I really enjoyed our morning of modern art!

Personnel

As our department reorganizes after some major staffing changes, I've become the direct supervisor for an additional fifteen people. While that was daunting at face value, the staff I've inherited is excellent and they have risen to the occasion of changes and twists with optimism and an ability to roll with it. I am so grateful for this whole group.

This transitional period would have been difficult without Allison Robbins, who has helped me navigate change, absorbed a lot of new responsibilities, and answers every request with "Sure, we can figure that out". I have leaned on Allison a lot this year (and, foreshadowing alert, will continue to do so)—I'm lucky to have her.

We welcomed our newest employee, Christina Marie Mariani, during this time of flux and she has hit the ground running. I'm so thankful to Michelle Thomas, Sheila Vereen-Massengale, and Aimee Gutierrez, whose schedules overlap with Christina's often and who have all stepped up with such kindness and wisdom to help her learn the ropes.

I am thrilled that we were able to promote Vicenta Mauri and officially welcome her to the Patron Services department. Anyone who has attended tabling at the farmers market knows that Vicenta's outgoing and positive spirit makes her an absolute dynamo at outreach and I am so excited that we're going to be able to have her as a presence at the Front Desk as well as even more community events.

We also welcomed back Lisa Eickler this month, and she returned to her (many!) tasks and reader's advisory moments with aplomb. Raquel Avila has been tremendously helpful in taking on new projects, including sending out lost notices, monitoring the Circulation email, and processing online library card applications. Barbara Williams has taken on an additional morning pulling and processing all of the holds, and Arthur Rylands has been an excellent set of eyes reviewing library card applications. Jefferson Quituisaca continues to build a fantastic video game collection from Binghamton. The department as a whole is really meeting this particular OPL moment with such a tremendous positivity and a sense of being a cohesive team and I am so excited about what this means for the future.

Allison Robbins, Technology and Training

October flew by, as most months seem to, lately! I had to go out of town for a family matter this month and I am very thankful for the support and flexibility provided by everyone at OPL.

Bibliotheca Pickup Lockers: Locker use has been slow but steady! We had our ribbon cutting in October with many of the staff involved with getting the lockers working and filling them with holds. (Goals 2.3, 5.1, 5.2)

Windows 10: Microsoft is discontinuing support for Windows 10 this year, which means OPL needs to upgrade existing devices to Windows 11 and/or replace devices that cannot support Windows 11. I am working with Logically to gather information and formulate a game plan that will be financially feasible. Thankfully, our annual technology budget includes a percentage of anticipated lifecycle costs to replace all our devices. **--November update:** I have identified which devices need to be replaced and which we can upgrade. Purchased for the replacements are underway and I should be scheduling upgrades with Logically to take place by the end of the year.

Videogame Collection: I've started working with Jefferson Quituisaca on the Video Games collection. Jeff is very organized and active with this collection, and I am looking forward to supporting his efforts. We are currently collaborating on revamping the way that the games are displayed in the building to draw more attention and make it easier to browse. We will also be working on some videogame-oriented programming, as well.

Concise progress updates/statuses on some other projects:

- New session management and patron print software: Awaiting the conclusion of some developments with a company that appears very promising. I should have more answers within the next few months as some software development for specific features is completed. Preliminary quote should be forthcoming in October. **November update:** Still awaiting the quote. In the meantime, our current mobile printing provider

updated the method by which mobile printing is provided. It is going “okay,” with some Android-related issues to be resolved on their end.

- Copiers: I’ve started working with different vendors and service providers to get quotes ahead of next year’s contract expiration.
- Cat 2 ERate funding: Working on applying for funding with e2e in anticipation of needed work as a part of our building project. **November Update:** I am awaiting a few model numbers from Logically to complete our paperwork but this should be filed very soon. Our funding, if approved, will be available to use in FY 2026 with a potential extension through FY 2027.
- Phones and related systems: Some functional issues are being/have been resolved and work is reportedly still underway towards enabling SMS text messaging for the library.

Circulation Statistics:

- Patrons Added: 138
- Interlibrary Loans
 - Received at Ossining: 1,846
 - Supplied to Other WLS Libraries: 973
- Total Checkouts (including eBooks): 18,044
- Mobile App Checkouts: 0 (Mobile checkout currently inoperable)
- OverDrive Total Checkouts (including shared, consortium items): 5,709
- Ossining Advantage Title Checkouts: 704
- Museum Pass Checkouts: 93
- Explorer Bags Checkouts: 1

Tech Statistics:

- Items Added: 427
- Items Deleted: 570

Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services

October 2025

Halloween is such a great holiday, and this year we had a month filled with Halloween-themed programs that celebrated the Halloween season.

The Project Lit Book Club hosted its first fundraiser, we raffled mini-Halloween totes filled with candy and sold goodie bags of snacks. It never ceases to amaze me how much teens love snacks and how much money they have to spend on them! The funds we’re raising will go toward a Broadway show trip — hopefully one based on a book, like *The Outsiders*. To mark the end of our first read of the school year, rather than a traditional book discussion, we had a

scavenger hunt designed by Project Lit Club President Amanda—a creative and engaging alternative. (Goal 4.1)

The murder mystery program, *A Killer Reunion*, was another big hit! Louis stepped away from our traditional format and selected a mystery in which everyone played a role—including the teens—and we discovered quite a few budding thespians among them. We also had our first laser tag night of the season, which was filled! Amanda returned with her popular Cricut program, where participants made custom Halloween tote bags. Tiffany led creative sessions, making Haunted Gingerbread Houses and Spooky Cupcake Wars, and pumpkin painting. Neera ran a vegetable cutlet cooking class — an Indian-style recipe that's a favorite among both staff and participants! (Goal 2.1)

I am happy to have another Battle of the Books event completed. While I stepped back slightly from the planning process this year, I remained happy to host the event at AMD. Significant coordination took place both the day before and the day of the event. Tiffany and James were instrumental in making sure the day ran seamlessly; their dedication and efforts are essential to the success of the program. We could not have accomplished it without their support. (Goal 4.1)

Our BoB team stepped up their efforts, adding an extra practice day each week and extending their sessions. They were especially motivated to win for Myra, as this is her final year. While we didn't take home the win this year, everyone had a fantastic time and is already strategizing for next year.

Math tutoring continues to grow, with increasing attendance and a new volunteer, Joe Faltin — a retired HS math teacher and Field Supervisor for student teachers — who helps every other week. It's great to see the room full of students engaged and getting the help they need. (Goal 2.3)

I also connected with a local business professional interested in offering college preparation seminars in both English and Spanish, further expanding our college-readiness initiatives. We hope to have the first workshop in November. (Goal 4.1)

Ignayra and I met with Megan Mastrogiacomo for our regular monthly update to discuss ongoing collaboration and ways to support each other's programs. We continue to explore the possibility of a community read, with hopes of implementing it over the summer. Additionally, I will be working with Megan to host the December Explore and Learn program at OPL.

Incidents involving teens returned to typical levels this month, consisting primarily of occasional reminders to maintain appropriate noise levels during busy after-school hours. Overall, behavior remained positive and cooperative.

A total of 34 students have registered for community service so far this school year, representing participants from the OHS National Honor Society, AMD Junior National Honor Society, and CCD programs at both St. Ann's and St. Augustine's.

The **Ossining Youth Bureau** successfully secured funding to support **year-round youth employment opportunities**. I am pleased that we will be able to host two youth employees

as part of this initiative and look forward to their contributions as they begin their assignments. (Goal 4.1)

September 2025*

September was a busy and fun month for Teen Services. We intentionally offered a lighter lineup of programs this month to get a feel for the teens returning to the library after the summer and to better understand their interests and schedules. This approach allowed us to reconnect with regulars, welcome new faces, and begin planning for future programming.

Our Teen Team Battle of the Books practices have been going very well. While the team has decreased from the ten that originally signed up to seven, the remaining group has proven to be incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic. We have five returning participants who bring valuable experience, along with two new members who have quickly shown strong commitment and energy.

We had to postpone our End of Summer Reading Party due to a building closure caused by high temperatures. Fortunately, we were able to reschedule the event for the following Friday evening. While not everyone who originally signed up could attend the new date, those who did had a great time. The group enjoyed classic games like musical chairs and participated in a lively pie-eating contest. The highlight of the evening was the grand prize giveaway, which brought an extra layer of excitement—Stephanie, one of our Summer Youth Bureau interns, was the lucky winner of a PlayStation 5.

Stephanie is also an avid gamer, and she worked with James to introduce a new RPG to our teen gaming group: *Blood on the Clocktower*. The game was a big hit, and we're hoping to schedule a few more sessions before the end of the year.

Project Lit had a strong start this month, and we were excited to welcome several new members to the group. It was great to see fresh faces joining our returning participants, and there's already growing enthusiasm around this year's reading selections, upcoming projects, and planned trips. Thanks to Liz Blye, an author visit with Rex Ogle has been scheduled for AMD students in October—and our group was invited to attend. The teens are thrilled for the opportunity to meet him in person and are just as excited about visiting AMD for the event.

Neera, Tiffany, and I attended the Back to School Nights at both OHS and AMD. I was surprised by the low turnout at AMD, particularly since the event covered three grades. This year, AMD split their Back to School Nights into two sessions—one for 6th grade parents and one for 7th and 8th grade parents. Despite the smaller crowd, we had meaningful conversations with families. Many parents showed interest in our math tutoring program, and we're hopeful this will lead to increased participation in the coming weeks.

Ignayra and I had our first meeting of the school year with Megan Mastrogiacomo, Community Schools Leader, to discuss the summer reading program and set goals for the upcoming year. Our conversation focused on ways to increase engagement and promotion of summer reading, encourage broader student participation, explore the possibility of bringing

back a community-wide read, and strengthen our collaboration by aligning more closely with school initiatives.

*The September Teen Services Report was inadvertently left off of the Director's Report in October.