

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Director's Report
September 28, 2026

Karen LaRocca, Library Director

With September comes Library Card Sign Up Month. This year, we rolled out newly designed library cards that are visually celebratory and featured them in our display at the front desk. Back to school events abound and the Children's and Teen departments are busy representing the library at various events around our community.

We are also getting ready for Banned Books Week (October 4-10). For more information about the state of banned and challenged books in our country, please visit [Banned Books Week](#) and [ALA Banned Books Week](#).

Board and Committee Work

The Buildings and Grounds Committee continues their work, discussed below.

The Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee will be updating our policy tracking sheet, many thanks to Amanda Marsh and Alice Joselow. They also recommended a Programming Policy for approval at the September 28th meeting and will be working on other policies such as a Public Relations Policy, more extensive financial controls policies (with the assistance of the Finance Committee and Betsy Tomic, our new Treasurer), and a disaster preparedness policy.

The Finance Committee welcomed our new Treasurer, Betsy Tomic, on board at their August meeting. Betsy comes to us with a world of experience and expertise and we look forward to benefiting from her guidance. Betsy has met with our Bookkeeper Bob Majernik, our Staff Assistant Steve Hamilton, and me to get a better sense of the workflows in the Business Office.

Building and Grounds

We were finally able to settle a use agreement with Moose Lodge and are currently working on settling an agreement with 50 North Highland. We have a court date on the calendar should we not be able to settle with 50 North Highland in a timely manner. We are actively negotiating with them.

The third round of bidding wrapped up for the retaining wall and parking lot work. Four companies submitted bids and two were close to our budget. David Chen and Dominic Calgi from Calgi Construction, our Building Committee Chair Phil Rice, SGH Engineers Nate Smith and Rachel Croke, Mallory Marinaro, Molly Robbins, and I were present for the interviews with the two lowest bidders. Calgi prepared a bid award recommendation for the Board of Trustees and the award of the bid is on the agenda for Monday, September 28. We are relieved to finally be moving ahead with this work.

RTU-6 work is mostly complete. Jonathan Katz from OLA is working with Clean Air to finish up required documentation.

Architectural plans were submitted to the Building Department for review and a permit for the renovations needed at 127 Main Street. We look forward to that approval coming through so that work can be completed and a move-in-date set.

Molly is working with our realtor to finalize a lease with Maryknoll Brothers and Fathers for the rental of the St. Joseph and St. Therea buildings.

Lothrop continues to track the progress at SED for the permitting for phase two.

Mallory and I submitted the grant application for the Public Library Construction Grant for first floor renovations. We were unofficially notified that our application is being recommended for a \$545,000 grant. We await the SED permit to finalize our grant application for SED and DASNY review.

Finance

Betsy Tomic has been reviewing our various financial policies. She and I discussed the need for a more robust credit card policy and she provided me with a draft for review. I will be sharing this with both the Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee and the Finance Committee for review.

Bob Majernik is currently working with the auditor to continue preparations for our 2025/2026 financial audit. The auditors will be on site in October.

Foundation

Amanda Curley, Rachel Murphy, and I met with Leslie Allen and the Board of the Ossining Library Foundation in September. The Foundation has agreed to use the remaining funds from the Swope Fund donation to support the renovations on the second floor, in particular, the move of the Adult Services Department that will allow the creation of multiple meeting spaces. We are very thankful for their support. We also discussed ways in which the Foundation and the Library can work together to support one another for the benefit of the community.

Outreach

I was pleased to join Suzy Zavarella and Ignayra Lopez in August for the New Educators Meet and Greet at Ossining High School. It is wonderful to introduce (and in many cases, reintroduce) our school district's new teachers and education professionals to the public library and to offer our support in their teaching journey.

Personnel

Molly, Mallory, Steve Hamilton, and I worked together to manage and proceed with the interview process for the Superintendent of Building position. We had numerous candidates and are currently down to the final two. Both candidates' qualifications are currently under review with Westchester County Department of Human Resources. We hope to make a final decision and offer as soon as possible.

Diana Lennon and Cristella Bond are working on wrapping up interviews for a part time Library Assistant for Adult Services. We are hiring specifically for Sundays and Saturdays.

Between vacations and emergency leaves, we had some leanly staffed days in August. Our OPL team is extraordinary, however. As I walked our building at the end of August, checking in on our departments to make sure no one needed me for anything (usually, no one did!), I was reminded once again that our staff is professional, cooperative, and community minded. On one of the ghost-town days, I was ready to jump in to arrange for covering a call-out in Patron Services. When I got down to the Circ/Tech office, Sheena Glanville, Jenny Meudt, and Sumbul Faridi had already figured it out and spent a few minutes reassuring me that all was well and handled.

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

Library system funding will likely face significant decreases in the future. In preparation, WLS is looking carefully at their budget to determine where cuts might be made.

The PLDA is actively discussing changes that WLS is planning in regard to e-resources. WLS has determined that Hoopla is no longer financially sustainable and will likely cut WLS financial support for this resource starting in 2027. Some libraries opted to offer additional borrows for their patrons and their experience has been poor, expensive, and frustrating for the libraries and for patrons. OPL chose not to go this route at the time. We will need to assess whether or not we would want to support access to Hoopla in the future.

WLS is also looking to WLS financial support for Kanopy and are in discussions with Kanopy representatives to determine if individual libraries could supplement the “free” content with additional downloads for our patrons. More to come.

The upgraded WLS mobile app launch is planned for October 10th for Android devices. The version for Apple devices will also be ready around the same time, but will likely not be an automatic update. WLS will distribute information that we can share with our patrons. The mobile app will include mobile checkout (!!!). Allison Robbins has reached out to WLS to let them know that we’d like that available to our patrons (it is “opt-in” by library).

There is a fun Westchester Library System road trip going on right now. OPL had expressed interest in being a part of it, but unfortunately, we are not this year. We are happy, however, to share information about the program with our patrons and are planning to be a part of it next year.

Some Meetings, Trainings, Programs I attended (Leadership Team Meetings are every few weeks, meetings with the Board President/Vice President are mostly weekly):

August 14: Rotary Club of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor

August 17: Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

August 18: Meeting with Leslie Allen, Amanda Curley, Rachel Murphy and me (Foundation)

August 18: Ossining Union Free School District New Educators Meet and Greet

August 19: RTU-6 and Project Meetings

August 19: Building Superintendent Interviews

August 21: Finance Committee Meeting

August 25: Bid Opening
August 26: RTU-6 and Project Meetings
August 28: Rotary Club of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor
September 8: Building Superintendent Interview
September 9: Project Meeting
September 9: Building Superintendent Interview
September 10: Meeting with Betsy Tomic
September 11: Rotary Club of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor
September 16: Project Meeting
September 17: Public Library Directors Association Meeting
September 22: Meeting with the Ossining Library Foundation Board
September 23: RTU-6 and Progress Meeting
September 24: Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee Meeting

Molly Robbins, Assistant Director

Mallory Marinaro, Head of Patron Services, Project and Operations Coordinator

August was my first full month in my capacity as Project & Operations Coordinator, and it's been very pleasing to say that when I introduce myself in meetings. Coordinating the operations has been...less pleasing.

I'm trying to think of the right analogy. It was like a marathon, but a marathon run at only maximum speeds, and if you're thinking to yourself, "Wouldn't that kill a person like it did Pheidippides?"...yes, it might and maybe that's mildly dramatic, but there was a point one afternoon that Molly and I just stared at each other in silence because the confluence of tight deadlines, big projects, and the general weirdness that comes with summer (please see my previous report re: summer bizarro status) was just too much.

MSE Wall

As you all know, the infamous wall was the big story in August, as we went out for a rebid (successful!), tried to finalize access agreements with the neighbors (less so!), and interviewed the two low bidders (successful!). It feels so exciting to finally have progress in the air and while I know that there are going to be some...feelings when the parking lot closes for construction, it's truly great that it's finally happening.

I also know more about tiebacks than anyone in my life does and I wish I had more opportunities, or even a single opportunity, to show that off to people.

Building Superintendent

I have had the pleasure of doing the Building Superintendent interviews with Molly and as of writing this report, we've completed 11. We've met a truly diverse group of candidates who have a wide range of experiences—and we've heard some truly wild stories about workplace emergencies. I look forward to filling this position and I know the final candidate will do so well at OPL.

Construction Grant

Karen and I have worked together on a lot of projects with very tight deadlines, and we've become very comfortable threading the proverbial needle. Too comfortable? That's a question that sounds kind of judgmental and I'm not going to answer it. But when it came time to apply for this year's construction grant with a very quick turnaround, we didn't panic, even though the work period for the grant included time off for both of us. Karen is, of course, a total pro at the construction grant portal, and could likely do this in her sleep, but we spent a few afternoons typing, printing, signing, and scanning in her office in near silence, and submitted the grant ahead of our own internal deadline.

Part of our ability to pull this off does come down to the amazing talents of David Chen, whose turnaround time for any and all requests is borderline immediate. His ability to get us precisely what we need, and quickly, was a lifesaver and another reason I am so thankful we are working with Calgi Construction on this project.

Staffing

I know that I brag about my department in every report I write, but they are just that wonderful and deserve repeated accolades: I was away the last week in August, at the same time as Allison, who steps in as the acting department head when I'm out. And in the absence of both supervisors, our staff—the largest in the building—was...completely fine. Desk shifts were covered when people were out sick, supplies were ordered, people stepped in when projects were too cumbersome for one person to do; everything was handled and everyone was happy to handle it. As a supervisor, I am so proud of how this team works together, steps up for each other, and has become empowered to make decisions on the fly and, especially, to feel comfortable in that empowerment.

Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services

With August comes the end of Summer Reading and the beginning of Back-to-School season. In addition to wrapping up our weekly programs, we hosted an end of summer finale party with special guest Jumpin Jamie on Friday, August 14. It was a party filled with dancing, singing, a puppet show, bubbles, cupcakes, and party bags. We celebrated all our summer readers with 4 raffle prizes consisting of a gift card, books, and learning games. This year we had a total of 146 children participate in the summer reading challenge with 83,400 minutes read for children reading on their own and 2,400 books read by children reading with someone. Each year we work hard to get as many children as possible to participate. We do wish there were more children participating considering the number of children who live in Ossining. The children's team and I are already brainstorming ideas for next year to engage more children and families.

MBK Camp visited us at OPL on August 3 to hear author, Gerald L. Hoover, speak about his Hero Book series and his experience as a black author. The group also browsed the children's room and checked out books. Once again, they came back on August 10 to return books and check out new books.

Karen, Suzy, and I attended the OUFSD New Educator Academy on August 18. We shared with the new Ossining educators our role as collaborators with the school district. We also provided OPL swag, resources, and new library cards.

Trish and I attended the Ossining Early Childhood PTA community playdate at Nelson Sitting Park on August 19. We provided a scavenger hunt activity with a raffle prize if completed. We also shared our Fall programming schedule, OPL resources, and had our jumbo games out for playing. We also provided giveaways such as OPL bags and bubbles for the kids. I attended OUFSD Back-to-School event hosted by OPrime on August 25 along with Diego, Neera, and Akeyla. We provided a decorating your pencil case activity, pencils, and OPL resources.

On the collection front, Kevin is currently working on reducing our inventory of Fiction, discarding dead items (books not being checked out) and shifting books to maximize space on the shelves. Our goal this upcoming year is to expand our Spanish collection especially the Spanish early readers and graphic novels as well as our English graphic novels collection. With current trends, this seems to be the best direction for our community.

Allison Robbins, Technology and Training

I was away for a couple of weeks in August and was great knowing that Jenny and Diego were still at OPL and available to keep things going and take care of surprises as they emerged. I'm ever thankful for their "just get it done" attitude and consistent willingness to help and I know that OPL staff members are too!

Programming and Training

Sheena and Raquel have continued their Poetry Club program each month since starting it earlier this year. They have continued to have a good turnout and have welcomed new patrons, throughout. In August, the theme included lyrics, resulting in live performances from some of the club attendees! It is always a joy to discuss details about the club with them and I'm thankful they can continue doing something they enjoy so much.

A follow-up to Jeff's video game programming in July: something we had hoped but had not been able to gauge was an overall increase in video game circulation. We saw an increase in video game checkouts in July, which was to be expected as circulating was a part of the program, but we also saw a sustained increase in August. One of our big goals is to increase awareness and consequent utilization of our various collections, both physical and digital, and although it is still early on, it is great to see positive outcomes in this area. More programs and events are set for September!

Technology

Diego and I have continued our discussions and work with Logically to both resolve the disruptive issue with our patron computers, which is nearly fully resolved, as well as address previously mentioned aspects of our service that have been a bit challenging. Diego has been a consistent communicator to Logically, helping us ensure we move things along and I remain optimistic about a lasting improvement in our experiences and resolutions to issues. Our next steps include a team effort with Logically to ensure that documentation about our organization and its needs is both thorough and correct.

Patron Computer session management and patron printing have been a continuous pain point for staff for the last few years. Despite my desire to more quickly address this, the software solutions that were on the market and something we could implement were not appealing and I decided it was better to deal with “the devil we know” instead of settling for an alternative but also problematic software. I have not forgotten about it, though! I have been anxiously awaiting a cloud-based version of a software solution that does look good and it has, at long last, arrived earlier this year. Diego and I have had demos, discussed implementation, and reviewed quotes. Things are looking hopeful and I plan to have information prepared for board review next month.

Quick Updates:

- Recommendations for our new copier contract will be provided to the board along with the proposal and quote for new session management and patron printing.

Circulation Statistics:

- Patrons Added: 167
- Interlibrary Loans
 - Received at Ossining: 1,684
 - Supplied to Other WLS Libraries: 1,077
- Total Checkouts (including eBooks): 15,506
- Mobile App Checkouts: 0 (Mobile checkout currently inoperable)
- OverDrive Total Checkouts (including shared, consortium items): 5,975
- Ossining Advantage Title Checkouts: 857
- Museum Pass Checkouts:
- Explorer Bags Checkouts: 0

Tech Statistics:

- Items Added: 531
- Items Deleted: 8,608 (Looking into this number as it unusually high and may be incorrect for the month)

Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services

OYES Youth Assistants

The OYES program wrapped up in August. During their final week, the youth assistants led a Fidget Keychain Program. The keychains were used as prizes for the Summer Reading Celebration. The program gave the assistants an opportunity to take on a leadership role and contribute directly to Teen Services programming.

Battle of the Books (BoB)

We welcomed several new members who moved up from the Children’s Battle of the Books team. The team now has 10 members and is excited for the upcoming competition.

Programs

August featured a variety of successful programs, including Foodie Fun, Minute to Win It, Book Nooks, Paint & Sip, Line Dancing, College Prep, and the Teen Murder Mystery. Minute to Win It was brought back for the first time in quite a while and the participants asked for more programs like it. Paint & Sip, led by Tiffany, attracted both teens and adults, while both Line Dancing programs were very well attended, so we added another session in September. The Teen Murder Mystery was also a highlight, with participants having fun getting into character and dressing the part. Although the College Prep attendance was smaller than in previous years, the smaller group allowed for a more personalized and conversational experience, with students having more opportunities to ask questions and receive individual attention.

Summer Reading Celebration

Teens wrapped up the summer with a fun celebration featuring tie-dye T-shirts, Taco Bell, prizes, and giveaways, including the keychains created by the OYES youth assistants.

Outreach & Community Engagement

August provided several opportunities to connect with students, families, educators, and community members. Neera and I attended the Kindle Back to School Festival, Neera participated in the school district back to school event with Ignayra, Akeyla, and Diego, and Tiffany and I attended the OUFSD First Day Back Staff Event.

Community Partnerships – CTC

Meetings continued regarding the possible return of CTC. While traditional funding is no longer available, partners remain interested in exploring alternative funding sources and other ways to make the program possible.

Due to the upcoming library parking lot closure, future meetings will take place at the Elks Club. John also offered to explore the possibility of holding teen programming at the Elks Club, which could provide additional community space while the library construction project continues.

