

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Director's Report
October 19, 2026

Karen LaRocca, Library Director

Banned Books week was celebrated in our library the first week of October. Throughout the month, we had programs, displays, and even banned book-themed puzzles for patrons to enjoy. I gave a presentation on the state of banned books and censorship in America's libraries to the Rotary Club of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor, which was well received. In my personal life, I went to a murder mystery costume dinner dressed as a librarian, sporting my banned books pins, a sign that said "Shhhhh!," and an armload of frequently banned books. I won first prize!

I was pleased to participate in the second 250th book club in early October. Eileen Cheng led an excellent discussion, and the participants expressed interest in continuing the series. Many thanks to Allison Robbins and the OPL 250th Committee for bringing this to fruition.

A weekend at West Point with 87 Sea Cadets landed me with an epic respiratory cold. I am ever thankful for my colleagues, who encouraged me to stay home or work half days and get better while they handled things for me at the library. I am fortunate to have a wonderful team.

Board and Committee Work

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

The Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee has updated the policy tracking sheet. It is truly a work of art! The new Programming Policy has been approved and put on the website. We reviewed at the Leadership Team and they will be implementing it in their departments. Allison Robbins and I are preparing to work on an AI policy. I have a draft Disaster Preparedness Policy and Plan that I am preparing for the committee to review.

The Finance Committee continues to meet and Betsy Tomic has started her work as Treasurer. She has hit the ground running and has already made numerous recommendations for policies and procedure changes. She is working with Bob Majernik to implement a tracking and warrant system for the bond bills and his helping me clean up some procedures regarding purchasing approvals and credit card use.

Building and Grounds

The necessary agreements with our neighbors have been secured. Many thanks to Molly Robbins for her work over the last year bringing this to fruition. It was often frustrating and time consuming. But it's done.

We are moving ahead with ADP to get Phase 1 Construction started. The contract is currently being handled through the attorney and Calgi. We will be setting a kick off meeting soon, at which we hope to receive the date for the closure of the parking lot. Mallory Marinaro has been

including this heads up in our communications to the public and as soon as we have a firm date, she will sent out notice.

The RTU-6 project has wrapped up. Many thanks to all who were involved.

Renovations will be started shortly on 127 Main St. We look forward to setting a move-in date.

Negotiations with Maryknoll broke down. Kyle Knapf is now working on setting showings for us in available properties. Molly and Mallory viewed St. Paul's on the Hill again and it looks promising. Molly, Mallory, and I viewed HORAC/Washington School again – also promising. Kyle is working on other properties for us as well. While the loss of Maryknoll is disappointing, I'm confident that the right fit will work out at just the right time.

I will reiterate what I send to the trustees with regard to the SED permit for phase two:

The SED permit was received yesterday afternoon (10/14) for phase 2. I want to recognize the efforts of the folks who worked to make this happen in time for our grant deadline:

- *Kathleen and Bob (Lothrop), who moved it along for all these months, responded to SED's questions promptly, and were in frequent communication with both SED and me.*
- *David Chen, who, on multiple occasions, provided us promptly with additional information that was requested by SED.*
- *Mary Fox and the team at the school district (in particular, Lisa Holmes) who have been on the watch for it and who turn things around for us with lightning speed (they manage the submission portal on our behalf)*
- *Terry Kirchner, who calmly and patiently waited for the permit in order to submit it to meet his deadline. (How he stays so calm is a mystery to me — I need to take a page from his book!).*
- *And of course, Mallory, who helped put together the grant application this year.*

As the board knows, the proposed grant amount is substantial and the efforts of all who made this happen are appreciated.

Additionally, because we were able to get expedited review from SED to meet a grant deadline, we did not have to pay for expedited review, nor did we need to rely on taking our changes without expedited review. So an even bigger “thank you” to everyone who was involved.

Finance

As stated above, Betsy Tomic has been reviewing our various financial policies.

Bob Majernik is currently working with the auditor to continue preparations for our 2025/2026 financial audit. The auditors were on site the second week of October. As I point out every year, Bob's efforts during the audit process are substantial and very appreciated.

Friends

October 18-24 is National Friends of Libraries Week: [National Friends of Libraries Week | United for Libraries](#). The Friends of the Ossining Public Library are, as the board knows, a tremendous group of individuals who work hard all year on behalf of the library. A great way to celebrate National Friends of Libraries Week is to make sure that you are a member of the Friends. Another fun idea is to buy a membership as a gift for a friend or family member. Membership applications can be found here: [The Friends - Ossining Public Library](#)

Personnel

We are pleased to welcome Stephen Vega as our new Superintendent of Building. Stephen comes to us with a strong background, relevant experience, and excellent references. We are thrilled that he is joining our team. His first day will be on October 19th.

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

The PLDA meeting is currently on the horizon. I will share an update in my next report.

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

September 25: Finance Committee Meeting
September 25: Rotary Club of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor
October 2: Rotary Club of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor (Banned Books Presentation)
October 7: Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting
October 14: Building Project Progress Meeting
October 14: HORAC showing
October 15: Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee Meeting

Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services, Project and Operations Coordinator

This month marks my sixteenth year at OPL (!) and I can't say that when I started out in Teen Services talking to (or, more accurately, being talked at by) enthusiastic readers of the *Twilight* series that I envisioned myself eventually spending an afternoon conferencing with a litigator about possible court action on behalf of the library. It's been a wild ride and September encapsulated that wildness quite neatly. Or messily, as it were, if my desk was anything to go by.

Poetry Club

When we formed Patron Services as a department, one of the benefits we were most excited for was the ability to utilize the many skills and talents of our circulation staff in other parts of library services—especially library programming. This staff is so engaged and invested in our community and full of creative ideas for programs, and it's been so special to watch them grow over the past year.

I wanted to share in particular the story of our Poetry Club, hosted by Raquel Avila and Sheena Glanville, which started as a one-off program over the winter and has become a popular and meaningful regular program. I asked them to share their thoughts with the Trustees:

The Poetry Club started out as a 3-session Poetry Games coinciding with Winter Olympics and Poetry Month. Since it was well attended, we decided to continue and grow the group of poetry lovers. What has been surprising is how much the poems open our hearts and minds, how the simple act of sharing broadens something within.

Each month is a new theme, and participants share poems within the themes.

Personally, I enjoy my partner Sheena and how much we laugh and our fun in planning the meetings. I always look forward to it.

I enjoy hearing why people choose the poems they bring and experiencing what it invokes within the group and individually. Every month is a surprise!

Sheena and I are proud of it and love hearing how much joy it brings to the community. We hope to have a celebration soon including everyone who has ever attended in the past. – Raquel

Since Poetry Club started with Raquel, I feel like I have grown a lot, especially when it comes to speaking in public. Before the club, I was much more comfortable staying behind the circulation desk. Now, I feel more confident speaking in front of a group and interacting with patrons.

Having Raquel there makes it even more fun. We started with around 9 participants, and sometimes we had 12 or 13. I've also shared a few of my own personal poems with the group, which is something I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing before.

One of my favorite moments was when Raquel and I sang while Bob played his guitar. I never would have done something like that before Poetry Club. It has really helped me come out of my comfort zone.

It's also great seeing patrons in the community and hearing them tell me how much they enjoy Poetry Club and how Raquel and I are doing a great job. Overall, I really enjoy being a part of Poetry Club with Raquel and am proud of how much we have grown together. --Sheena

Programming requires a definite leap of faith (is anyone going to come? What if people don't like it?) for even a seasoned librarian, and Raquel and Sheena had never done this before. They threw themselves completely into something new with enthusiasm and excitement, which isn't easy. And, clearly, they hit something the community was looking for, as their club continues to grow! I could not be prouder.

Communications

I don't like to admit defeat, but I have recently come to the realization that I have too much on my plate to continue to try and shoulder my entire workload. Luckily, I have two staff members who I trust fully to assist me with the marketing side of things because I am...particular about how things are done and delegating them is difficult for me and my...particularness.

Many thanks to Jefferson Quituisaca for doing a weekly programming newsletter, as well as daily social media posts, two hugely time-consuming tasks that he's excelling at. And Jenny Meudt is my right-hand with graphics, doing the bulk of the flyers, posters, and signage. They have made my life so much easier.

Building Communications

I'm excited that we hit the winning formula for communicating our building progress: I do my typical Mallory thing and supplement it with a very detailed take written by Phil and our engineers. It's the best of both worlds for our patrons—people have asked for things explained to them in simple terms AND granular detail AND engaging language AND technical jargon. I know they say you can't please everyone, but this comes close.

Our first newsletter with this partnership was a certified hit and it gives us a template to use for the many, many updates we'll have going forward.

127 Main

The allure of having a storefront window to decorate simply became too much for me to stand and Jenny, Allison, Molly and I spent a morning putting up a Coming Soon display on Main Street. I'm very pleased with how it came out and very excited to plan how we'll be utilizing that space.

Misc. Building Updates

- Interviews once again dominated the month. I am so grateful to Molly for her well-organized interview process, and excellent interview questions (although I do admit that I am relieved to never have to ask those questions again), because it all went very seamlessly. We are so happy to be welcoming Stephen Vega to our team and I am thrilled to see what he does with our building.
- Access agreements are officially signed but wow, was that dramatic down to the wire.
- Not to be dramatic, but I think we can safely use the word fiasco to describe some of the plans for relocating. Nothing takes the wind out of your sails like canceling a meeting to discuss how to pack for a move because the place to which you were planning on moving backed out.

Diana Lennon, Adult Services

I am going to backtrack to August because I was unable to write an August Report. Why? Because I had to have my burst appendix removed and spent six days in the hospital and almost another two weeks at home recovering! It was an ordeal, and I think, a rather good excuse for not writing my August Report. I would have much preferred writing the report, believe me! I am very grateful to the Adult Services Dept, and everyone at OPL, who pitched in during my absence. The flowers from the Library, and from my department when I returned, were so lovely and much appreciated.

We finished our Summer Reading program by giving Karla Dockery and Sara Powell (see photos) each a handy Gardening Kit including Gift Cards. They were both delighted and appreciative.

We also finished our tabling events at the Ossining Farmers' Market in August even though we had a September Saturday scheduled. That day was the nor'easter, and we cancelled due to the high winds and rain. We enjoyed three wonderful outings there where we met community members and promoted the library. I am grateful to Vicenta Mauri and Neera Dayal for being on the Farmers' Market team! (See photos)

Ignayra Lopez, Alexandra Pintado, Guillermo Rodriguez and I continue to help at the Ossining Food Pantry where our work is very much appreciated. In addition to doing intake interviews, we translate for other volunteers and occasionally help with the food distribution. We are able to promote library programs and services, give away a lot of books, process new library cards—the same info is required by the OFP as for an OPL card—and answer questions about resources in the community and library. We are truly reaching out and helping our neighbors and patrons.

Speaking of food, since sourdough bread is still popular these days, we wanted to present a bread making program. Danielle Colavito, a wellness educator at For the People and Kids, Inc., and founder of Soul Shining Wellness, taught the workshop which blended food, wellness, and creativity while building practical kitchen skills and confidence. All who attended thoroughly enjoyed the presentation, took a lot of notes, enjoyed the bread itself and looked forward to making their own bread at home with the kit they received. It was a very successful program that was fun, educational, and included food! (See photos)

September also marked the momentous occasion of the completion of our Adult Nonfiction Audit. While increasing our collections' diversity, weeding and purchasing materials never ends, I finished our Final Report which Karen will share. We learned a lot from this close look at every nonfiction book and overall analysis of its diversity. We now have a new Cataloging Handbook and a plan for the collection going forward. This was an enormous effort by the Adult Services staff, and their dedication to completing this aspect of our Long Range Strategic Plan was admirable. What a team accomplishment!

Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services

Usually, September in the children's room means Back to School Nights. The children's team took turns to attend back to school nights for all elementary schools in the district. It is a great opportunity to remind families about our homework help program as well as other resources at OPL. It's also a great way to introduce OPL to new administrators and new families to the district. My reoccurring visits to Park School and Ossining Children's Center have begun. I'll be providing Storytime to the PreK students as well as Babies and Toddler classrooms. As well as our weekly visits from Roosevelt School have commenced.

Our partnership with First Steps has grown this school year. In addition to hosting their Little Readers program here, now on Wednesday afternoons, First Step Fridays will begin on October 23rd at 1pm in the Budarz theatre. First Steps will partner with us to provide a variety of early childhood learning activities targeted to toddlers, preschoolers, and their families. First Step Fridays will be open to all in the community with children under 4 years old.

Once again, we've partnered with the Westchester Children's Museum. Their team of educators were here on Saturday, September 19 to kick off the school year with a STEAM Fair. The fair had some fun stations including sensory bins, and a build your own roller coaster experience. They will be back once a month for the rest of this year to host other STEAM workshops. The next one will be on Thursday, October 22 for Create Art with Math.

One of our top priorities in the children's room is to keep up with technology trends and somehow make them fun for kids to learn. Kevin is doing just that with his new 3D Creation Station program on Monday afternoons. Children will learn 3D design using Tinkercad, a free web app for 3D design, coding, and electronics. The first and second sessions filled up quickly, and we are continuing to get asked about other students joining the program. Our goal is for students who participate in beginner level and intermediate programs will eventually be able to book time outside of the program to use the 3D printer to create their own designs.

Our celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month took over our Creative Wednesday program this month. We had activities such as making Papel picado, creating our own Mexican folk art, Alebrijes, and using clay to learn about Central America's ceramics. Alexandra planned a Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration for Wednesday, October 14 in the Budarz Theatre. We have 2 dance troupes performing traditional Ecuadorian and Peruvian dances. As well as Colectivo Dance Co. sharing the history of Salsa dancing and performance. We'll conclude the end of the celebration with a tasting of Colombian empanadas.

One of my favorite times of the year is Battle of the Books time. Our children's team has been prepping and practicing. This year we are calling ourselves the Story Slayer Society. We visited Henry Hudson Library on Monday, October 5th to participate in a scrimmage match. I'm happy to say Ossining won the scrimmage. Our t-shirt designs are underway, and we are excited for the tournament on Saturday, October 24th.

Allison Robbins, Technology and Training

Programming and Training

National Voter Registration Day was on September 15th. Via funds from Carnegie Libraries 250 grant (what better way to celebrate the 250th than by registering voters!) we had a table with all the supplies and information needed for voter registration located by the front desk for the day. We had handful of people register, including some first-time registrants, and multiple people check their registration status using our kiosk-style Chromebooks. While we did not have a large number of registrants, we had a lot of good engagement with patrons overall.

We also had a great "surprise" outcome from this registration event: our puzzle table. I wanted to have something fun alongside registration so I set up a table with USA themed puzzles—one for kids and one for adults. The surprise was how popular these puzzles ended up being! We decided to leave the table up for a week and the feedback from patrons and staff during this time led us to make this a "permanent" fixture near the front desk. We have observed patrons of all ages sitting down to puzzle, kids are consistently drawn to them, and patrons have been regularly telling us how great it is. Sumbul Faridi will be taking the lead on picking out puzzles to follow different themes throughout the year and Patron Services staff, in general, is helping keep the puzzles and table in good order. It's been fun!

In September, Diego began his Spanish language technology class: Tecnología para la Vida Diaria: Aprendamos Juntos. This weekly class is intended to provide Spanish language instruction on basic digital and technological skills as well as foster a communal learning and mentoring environment. Thus far, he has had some regular, enthusiastic attendees. Aimee Gutierrez has also been assisting with this class, putting her own tech. tutoring and computer class skills to good use!

Scott Craven and Jenny Meudt have held two Local History Popup events on Main Street in front of First Village Coffee. This has been a great way to have conversations with community members, getting “out on the town” and sharing both local history and library knowledge. Jenny has been using these opportunities to start putting together our “outreach kit,” which includes everything we need to quickly get up and go out! The kit includes an iPad for access to our online catalog, website, calendar, etc. and the ability to register patrons with library cards on the spot. We have had a few people tell us that they learned about the library and/or were encouraged to come in because of seeing Jenny and Scott at these popups, which is very encouraging.

Technology

Our work with Logically continues and is going well. Logically has resolved our patron PC issues and has worked with us to better document our library’s needs and configurations to facilitate easier interactions in the future.

We are beginning to work with Logically and other vendors to scope out the work that will need to happen at our temporary locations. While we are not ready to move into the locations yet, we know that once we get the green light, we will be very busy. With advance preparation we should be able to give our vendors the go ahead and get things moving as quickly as possible once we have approval. I am also working with e2e, our ERate consultants, to get our new location(s) included in our organizational information so that we can request funding for internet connection in these locations while we are there.

Although I had hoped to have the information about new session management software ready for the board in October, some things weren’t ready. I will have the information available in November. I am also looking into alternative calendar software that can more easily handle multiple locations and various study rooms, etc. and accompanying website/content management systems that will more easily be adaptable to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that we will be required to be in compliance with by April 2028. More to come on these fronts.

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: 118
- Interlibrary Loans
 - Received at Ossining: 1,309
 - Supplied to Other WLS Libraries: 1,128

- Total Checkouts (including eBooks): 17,124
- Mobile App Checkouts: 0 (Mobile checkout currently inoperable)
- OverDrive Total Checkouts (including shared, consortium items): 5,733
- Ossining Advantage Title Checkouts: 643
- Museum Pass Checkouts: 41
- Explorer Bags Checkouts: 0

Tech Statistics:

- Items Added: 720
- Items Deleted: 683

Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services

September was a bit of a reset for Teen Services after an incredibly busy summer. We intentionally took it a little easier with programming this month and focused on getting everyone settled into the new school year, reconnecting with our teens, and getting some of our regular school-year programs back up and running.

One of the highlights of the month was welcoming AMD's Project Thrive class to Teen Services. This was our first class visit of the school year, and hopefully the first of many! We love having students visit the library and getting the opportunity to introduce them to Teen Services, our programs, and everything available to them here.

Our regular Math Tutoring program also began again with the ever-popular Brandon Knowles as our main tutor. We have a couple of HS students also joining to help out this year. We are also excited to be offering Weekly Drop-In College Application Support, led by Darren Myers of Myers Advising. Teens can receive help with college essays, applications, and navigating the college application process.

Project Lit was well represented at the 9th Grade Club Fair by four of our regular members. We had a great response and filled an entire page with the names of freshmen interested in joining the club. We're hopeful that this outreach will bring a few new members to Project Lit! Our Battle of the Books team has been putting a lot of time getting ready for this year's battle. They are reading, practicing, and working hard as a team. We have also scheduled a scrimmage with Hendrick Hudson in October, which should be great practice and a lot of fun for both teams.

Everyone enjoyed quesadillas in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, and teens also had the opportunity to enjoy Indian-style mac and cheese. Food continues to be a fun and welcoming way to bring teens together while introducing them to different cultures and flavors. Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: The Gathering continue to be popular programs, giving teens a fun and welcoming space to connect with friends, meet other teens, and enjoy some friendly competition.

Tiffany and Neera attended the Back-to-School Nights at both OHS and AMD, giving us a great opportunity to connect with students and families and promote Teen Services and upcoming programs.

We also welcomed two new volunteers from Clear View School this month. Both girls have been great additions to Teen Services. One is a big reader and true library lover, so it has been especially nice to see how excited she is to be here and involved with the library.

Our Community That Cares (CTC) group has an in-person meeting scheduled for October. We are also looking to bring some new community members into the group and get some new voices and perspectives involved. Both James Johndon and Tiffany will be joining us.

And, of course, the start of a new school year means a new group of teens finding their place in the Teen Room. We have a few ninth graders who are certainly giving all of us a run for our money! James, Julian, and Tiffany have handled them amazingly well. They have been patient, consistent, and supportive of one another while still making sure expectations and boundaries are clear. It isn't always easy, and I really appreciate the way they have worked together to manage some challenging situations while continuing to make the Teen Room a welcoming place for everyone.