

Executive Director's Report September 2019

WLS Services Recap

As we head into the Fall and the budget planning process for 2020 begins, below is a recap of the current status thus far in 2019 and anticipated progress for various WLS services.

Cataloging

In keeping with the WLS vision of working to enable the member libraries to continuously improve services to their communities, Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray has endeavored to collaborate with the Equinox team, and with fellow WLS staff, to make the Evergreen ILS an efficient and powerful tool for cataloging materials and making them easily findable in the catalog.

Evergreen has features which make it preferable to SirsiDynix, for catalogers. Among them are:

- The ability to add bibliographic records to the catalog without requiring that the associated libraries be identified. This allows files of similar types to be joined into one big file to load, which is much more efficient.
- A more cataloger-friendly "flat text" editing format.
- The ability to instantly switch to "OPAC view", the display which a patron would see.
- "Record buckets"—separate folders into which a cataloger can place groups of records for various kinds of data manipulation. This is valuable for organizing the work flow.
- A good batch editing tool, for upgrading very large groups of bibliographic records simultaneously.
- The constant availability of advanced searching parameters, which allow more precise searching by limiting to type of format, language, audience level, literary form, and more.

The WLS catalogers have also found the Equinox team very helpful and easy to communicate with. All indications are that their good customer service will continue, as staff and patrons become increasingly familiar with the Evergreen ILS. WLS Cataloging Services will also be present to help the member libraries' staff make the transition.

Melissa Glazer joined WLS Cataloging Services as a full-time cataloger in January. She had previously worked part-time in the department, before an intervening stint at the Yonkers Public Library Crestwood and Grinton I. Will branches. She has also worked at Mount Vernon Public Library, Bronxville Public Library and White Plains Public Library. Her dedication, attention to detail, and talent for collaboration make Ms. Glazer an outstanding addition to the cataloging team, and we are fortunate to have her.

The member libraries continue to circulate interesting, non-traditional materials, and the WLS catalogers enjoy providing the original cataloging which makes these materials visible in the catalog, and able to circulate. Some of the recent items have been: sets of crochet hooks for West Harrison Public Library; two electric guitars and an electric bass for Katonah Village Library; a children's STEM "nature kit", with gardening tools, magnifying glasses and miniature baskets (for collecting) for Yonkers Public Library; and a blood pressure monitor also for Yonkers Public Library.

Public Innovation and Engagement (PIE)

New staff: Krishna Horrigan joined WLS at the end of April as a full-time Outreach Services Programmer. Krishna recently graduated from Brown University with a Master's Degree in Public Health, bringing to this position good analytical and communication skills as well as a strong commitment to outreach. Megan Brown started in May, joining Paul Gunther-Mohr, as a part-time Outreach Services Assistant. Jade Lew and Betsy Prokop, both active volunteers with the Westchester Seniors Out Speaking (WSOS) program, have stepped into roles as part-time Program Coordinators replacing Beth Casso and Phyllis Rosen who have stepped out of these roles for personal/family obligations.

SERVICES FOR ADULTS

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

2018/2019 Theme-RESILIENCE: Nine public screenings, as well as an array of private (agency) screenings, have taken place so far in 2019.

Body-Breath-Mind Training: In response to the community conversation series on trauma and the persistent call for tools to address stress, WLS is making available training for Resilience Coalition participants (and the public) in a simple-to-learn, evidence-based technique of stress reduction (voluntary regulated breathing). The training started this fall; free programs for public libraries led by Elena Falcone, now a trained Breath-Body-Mind instructor, are also available.

Related Initiative-Homeless Training Institute / Empathy Driven Problem Solving: Looking ahead to a future Community Conversations topic, WLS has made available a year-long subscription to the Homeless Training Institutes online training. During the summer, WLS hosted a pilot series of screenings with member library staff to determine the best way to disseminate the instructional content. The pilot included homeless advocates and service providers in Westchester County. So far, six libraries have enrolled staff in training and/or have asked PIE to kick-off training at staff professional development events.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION SERVICES: HSE CONNECT AND READ BETTER

Our Helpline continues to receive inquiries from the public for direction to TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion used for high school equivalency diploma) classes and an understanding of ways in which core literacy can be improved. HSE Connect! operates in conjunction with our adult literacy tutoring effort, Read Better.

An inquiry from a substance abuse inpatient clinic (St. Christopher's Inn at Greymoor) has resulted in the launch of a computer lab at St. Christopher's at which PIE staff offer periodic guidance in how to use resources identified on FirstFind, e.g., Learning Upgrade and Learning Express. Concurrently, we have delivered staff training on library services and resources related to reentry.

In the beginning of 2019, WLS applied for and won funds in Phase 1 of the XPrize Adult Literacy Communities Competition. Active promotion for download and trial of Learning Upgrade began in May. Marketing materials were created for Learning Upgrade (bilingual flyer, table tents, ads, content on FirstFind) and for related learning tools (Online Learning Resources Brochure, Tutor.com promotional cards). Outreach was conducted to TASC and ESL (English as Second Language) classes and selected school districts (Yonkers, Greenburgh 11 school district, Carver Center). Information was also distributed at libraries, department of social services offices, and area events (LOFT Pride, NonProfit Westchester Conference, Youth Services Section of Westchester Library Association Conference).

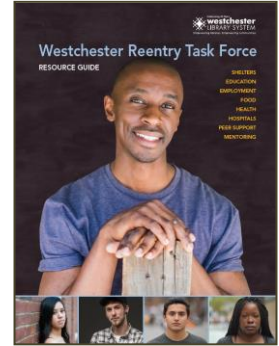
REENTRY SERVICES

Jail Services: Discussions have begun with corrections staff regarding resuming some form of library service at the County jail. No service has been available for at least 30 years. This effort is in coordination with

BOCES staff providing educational services at the facility. Acceptance of book donations has begun, as well as support of a new monthly book group.

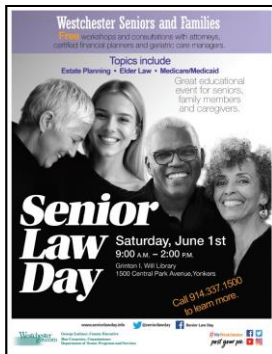
Reentry Chronicles: WLS contributes both book review and job search content to this reentry focused newspaper launched in February 2019. The paper is made available at the jail and to those in reentry in the tri-state area.

Westchester Reentry Task Force Resource Guide: In partnership with the Westchester Reentry Task Force, which serves those returning to the County from State correctional facilities, WLS has produced a print resource guide. This print resource, which will be distributed to State facilities, is intended as a companion to our web-based information resource and service—*Westchester Connections*. Concurrent with this effort, our “Welcome Back” brochure has been updated and offers a six-month library card to those lacking a permanent residence and is the promotional piece for the online guide.



Reentry Outreach: As part of our ongoing outreach to those in reentry, and the agencies that serve them, PIE participates in area “reentry resource fairs” including Fishkill Correctional Facility Resource Fair (May), Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (September) and the Mount Vernon/Grace Baptist Church event (October). Ongoing participation in the Westchester County Reentry Task Force and Grace Baptist’s Reentry Meetup continues to help keep WLS visible among clients and agencies. Outreach includes pointers towards education, job, and digital literacy opportunities via library services.

SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS



Yonkers Senior Law Day: On June 1st, the Yonkers Public Library Grinton I. Will Branch Library hosted a full senior law day program, drawing over 125 attendees for workshops and free consultations with attorneys, financial planners, and geriatric care managers.

White Plains Senior Law Day: On September 10th, the Westchester County Center hosted its 20th Annual Senior Law Day, drawing more than 300 attendees. Elena Falcone, co-chair of this Westchester Public Private Partnership project, presented *Essential Online Health Resources for Older Adults*. (This program was also delivered at six libraries during 2019.) Rob Calouri presented *Protecting Your Privacy: Staying Safe While Navigating the Internet*.

Westchester Seniors Out Speaking (WSOS):

WSOS services continue year-round. In April WLS hosted a large training class for new volunteers (15 participants). Promotional efforts during the year included outreach at local events (Livable Communities sessions) and print ads in local press such as *The Examiner* and *Senior Voice*.

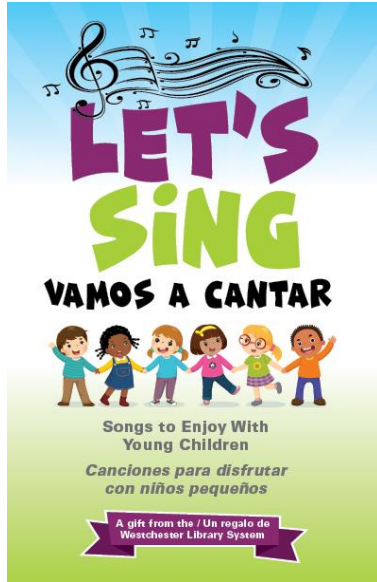


SERVICES FOR YOUTH

EARLY LITERACY

Presentations were made at 12 Head Start Policy Council meetings. Attendees were parents representing 40 early childhood centers. Topics addressed included: things parents can do to support their young children’s learning (read together, talk together, play together, write together and sing together); introductions to library resources and programming for families (children and adults); special programming in recognition of holidays and month-long celebrations (Black History and Women’s History Months); an overview of summer programming at libraries, as well as an introduction to selected health literacy related

resources and tips on the United States Department of Agriculture's website (ChooseMyPlate.gov). Handouts on presentation themes were prepared and distributed for Council representatives to take back to their respective Centers for other parents. Lists of examples of story books to share with young children were also included in the handouts.



Presentations about libraries and the benefits of having a library card were also made for parents at three Head Start Center based meetings and five Family Nights at library based programs. The presentations at the centers resulted in 79 applications for library cards.

Head Start Center visits were also arranged for nine Head Start classes, providing 150 children with an opportunity to experience library programming.

A popular element of our outreach was the opportunity to feature the use of song in early literacy instruction. WLS received grant funds from Con Edison to produce and publish a bilingual early literacy songbook. *Let's Sing / Vamos a Cantar* is being distributed to member libraries and early childhood centers as part of an ongoing effort to connect families to libraries.

YOUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Assisted SUNY Great Potentials program in the development and implementation of a *College for a Day* event for 84 students from the high schools of Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Peekskill and White Plains. This event focused on setting post-secondary goals and included interactive exercises, a motivational speaker, and remarks from an undergraduate Purchase College student who spoke on her decision to go to college, why she chose her major and what college life is like.

Designed and delivered after school job search workshops (6 sessions) for 30 Great Potentials students at Thornton High School in Mount Vernon. Topics addressed included self-discovery, how to prepare to search for work experience and the preparation of tools needed. Clinics were also provided for those students requesting additional assistance with preparing their resumes and practicing being interviewed.

DSS KID ZONES

In April, we made available to all four offices of the Department of Social Services "Kid Zone" book carts. The carts, filled with donated books, are made available to families applying for benefits at Peekskill, Mount Vernon, White Plains and Yonkers offices. DSS staff immediately noted the delight of children in being able to leave with a book of their own, and the relief of the parents in having this support during a difficult time. Carts will be replenished via donations and grant funds. Note that the idea for the carts emerged from discussions with DSS staff in the context of the Resilience and strategies for mitigating trauma experienced by young children.



WEBS

WEBS helps the member libraries engage their communities and improve customer service by offering career counseling services for unemployed or underemployed patrons. As digital and technological advancements in the workplace continue to displace workers, WEBS programs provide assessment, up-to-date career and educational information and the latest tools and strategies to advance their careers. A

combined approach using both technology and people-based solutions helps clients cope with frequent job transitions, engage in lifelong learning and learn about future directions for different fields.

During the first six months of the year WEBS provided five 10-session career seminars at the libraries in Yonkers, Pelham, White Plains, Somers and Chappaqua. Evaluation surveys completed after the seminars indicated an overall rating of *excellent or good* by 100% of clients.

In addition to helping people assess themselves and learn practical strategies for transitioning to new career paths, it is important to note that these programs promote "community" and a sense of connectedness that provide meaning and support. For many people, the seminar is a life-changing experience. They have a unique opportunity to focus on themselves in a confidential setting, engage in dynamic group activities and discussions and determine how they can make vital changes in their career goals and outlook. The group counseling process enables people to listen to each other, compare experiences and develop broader perspectives. Knowing that they are not alone is a powerful dynamic. After the seminars end, many groups continue to meet on their own or stay in touch online.

Eleven workshops were held at libraries throughout the county on topics including: *Latest Trends in Resumes; Create a LinkedIn Profile with Impact; Creative Approaches to Networking (2); Ace the Interview and Get the Job You Want; Thinking about a Career Change?; What's Next in My Life & Career? (2); Positioning Your Professional Image; Careers in Healthcare; Get LinkedIn to Your Job Search.*

Bi-weekly individual career counseling at Yonkers Public Library continues to be a well-utilized service. The Career Links section of the WEBS homepage has been updated and will be accessible online soon.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

The Interlibrary Loan (ILL) department of WLS faced many challenges since the beginning of 2019. The retirement of Hui Sheng in June left the department with one full-time staff person, down from three full-time staff in 2017, to process all requests for materials. The ILL department now borrows print materials for WLS patrons only, but it has not been able to lend WLS print materials to external resource sharing partners.

The ILS migration to Evergreen also presented a challenge in terms of the circulation of loaned materials. Because of the Evergreen system design, ILL circulation did not allow an item to be checked out twice—once from WLS to member libraries and then from member libraries to the requesting patrons. Molly Tobin of ILL worked with Allison Midgley and Allison Pryor of Information Technology to develop a new ILL workflow that was implemented over the summer and resolved the issue.

These challenges require technical and strategic rethinking of the direction of the department and the services it provides. Rob Caluori is working to identify operational efficiencies, ensure service continuity, develop an on-boarding plan for new staff to the department and determine the feasibility of restoring external lending services.

Information Technology (IT)

The IT Department has initiated the first phase of the new Helpdesk platform, TechnologyEssentials. All library directors are being added to the online portal; and once that is completed, WLS will register two additional contacts for each library. Limiting users at the outset will allow for testing and refining of the portal's workflows. All staff will continue to have access to the Helpdesk via phone and email. As of September 11th, all emails and calls to the helpdesk created new work orders under the new system. The same phone number (914-674-3616) and email address (helpdesk@wlsmail.org) will remain in use for support. Login instructions are provided on the IT Wiki and training will be scheduled as needed. This product will be fully evaluated to ensure that it fulfills all the needs of system and library staff.

The PLDA IT Audit Committee met on August 16th to review the request for proposal (RFP) for an audit of the WLS IT Department. The purpose of the audit is to evaluate the range of services provided, with a focus on network security, VDI, customer service procedures and staffing. The finalized version was issued and made available on the [WLS website](#).

The timeline in the RFP called for the submission of proposals by Friday, September 13th, with a service begin date of October 1st and a target report delivery date of November 15, 2019. An update will be provided at the September Board Meeting.

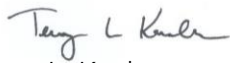
A number of staffing changes were made at WLS. Wilson Arana is now the Manager of Information Technology and is the primary contact for the department and its day-to-day operations. Joe Maurantonio is now the Manager of Data, Analytics and Special Projects and is already working on the development of the Library Data Dashboard, a project that will help member libraries access the statistics that they need to inform and support their activities. As the Director of Transformation and Strategic Operations, Rob Caluori will focus on WLS's business continuity and operational efficiencies with an initial focus on three areas: human resources, finance and ILL services.

The hiring process is underway for two additional positions for the IT Department: 1) a new Support Technician who will respond to helpdesk tickets and provide onsite support for member libraries and 2) the Systems Librarian position that will serve as the primary contact for the Evergreen ILS. Both positions are expected to be filled by the end of September or early October.

Future Events

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| October 19 | WLS Battle of the Books – Hommocks Middle School, Larchmont, NY |
| November 13-16 | New York Library Association (NYLA) Annual Conference –
Saratoga Springs, NY |
| November 21 | WLS 60 th Annual Meeting – WLS Headquarters, Elmsford – 8:30-10:30 AM
<i>Guest Speaker:</i> Rich Harwood, President & Founder of The Harwood
Institute |

Respectfully submitted,



Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director