

## **Executive Director's Report March-April 2020**

### *CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19*

Since March 17, the Westchester Library System (WLS) Headquarters have been closed due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, following the directives given from NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo. WLS staff have been working remotely from their homes, with a few staff members reporting to our Headquarters for brief periods of time to complete tasks that need to be done at the office. Weekly manager and staff meetings were scheduled using Google Hangouts and continue to be a good way to connect with each other. I want to thank the incredible flexibility and creativity that the WLS staff and the library community have demonstrated in their efforts to quickly transition to the virtual services model. It has not been easy, but we continue to plan and strategize for the ever-changing "reopen" date.

**Re-Opening Survey:** In mid-April, a [brief survey](#) was emailed to the member library directors to help WLS understand individual and coordinated activities anticipated to be implemented, such as curbside pickup and home delivery services as well as extension of the range of virtual services. A total of 26 member libraries(68%) responded. The results of the survey helped WLS to facilitate online discussions among small, medium and large libraries about reopening/restarting services and to share ideas about necessary immediate (now to 2 weeks), short-term (next 2-4 weeks) and long-term (6 weeks to end of year) strategies. The following topics were considered: length of time to quarantine returned materials, fine free amnesty; creating pick-up and return services that support social distancing, best way to support vulnerable populations, and best strategies for maintaining physical distance and sanitary conditions for staff and public computer workstations.

Notes from these three sessions have been compiled and along with related resources have been shared with the member library directors and will be posted on the [WLS IT Wiki](#). Other states and regions within New York State will be opening up their public libraries before our region is able to do so and we will be monitoring their strategies and progress as we work with the member libraries to develop a strategy of reusing their physical spaces that best meets their communities' needs.

**COVID-19 Minigrants:** Every member library was invited to submit a request for up to \$2,000 to support a library solution that will meet the needs of patrons and/or staff during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic. The grants are not limited to patron engagement programs and can be used to purchase additional equipment to help staff address the new workflows or attend professional development programs as well as for strategic planning consultations for re-opening and adjusting to the "new normal" in providing services to the public. The following Minigrants have been approved:

<i>Library</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Description</i>
Briarcliff Manor	\$1,200	6 Chromebook laptops for remote working staff
Port Chester-Rye Brook	\$2,000	Digital content and virtual programming
Eastchester	\$2,000	Public safety tools for reopening
Hendrick Hudson	\$1,200	Acorn TV subscription and titles
Warner (Tarrytown)	\$915	Zoom subscription and programming
Mamaroneck	\$2,000	additional e-titles for youth

<i>Library</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Description</i>
Ossining	\$2,000	Consulting for outreach to patrons/new patrons without digital access
Greenburgh	\$1,200	LibAnswers
White Plains	\$2,000	10 Laptops specifically for staff
Mount Pleasant	\$2,000	To insure virtual programming and staff connectivity
Harrison	\$1,895	Virtual programming
Bedford Village	\$2,000	Additional e-titles for youth
Lewisboro	\$2,000	Additional e-titles for youth

## *Cataloging Services*

During the closure, WLS Cataloging Services have been using weekly lists of brief vendor-provided MARC records to overlay those records with full ones, which contain additional metadata useful to patrons (subject headings, author headings, call numbers, summaries, etc.). The weekly number of brief records has dropped dramatically, from hundreds to as few as five. Due to this drop, the WLS catalogers have been able to catch up and eliminate a backlog of these brief records.

Immediately prior to the migration to the Evergreen integrated library system (ILS) in March 2019, former Systems Librarian Melanie Carnes generated a list of approximately 4,000 titles in the catalog which represented unlinked materials. (They showed no holdings.) These titles have been distributed to the WLS catalogers and the catalogers are going through the lists one title at a time, finding titles which are still unlinked, and deleting them from the catalog. This project will aid library patrons and staff by ensuring that the catalog more accurately reflects the member libraries' holdings.

Mr. Wray has been communicating with Equinox Open Library Initiative to explore options for using Evergreen to create a dynamic union list of serials without requiring that every member library take on the additional tasks associated with maintaining a serials checkin module for their serials. The goal is to develop and integrated listing within the online catalog that would display all periodical titles in the system and which libraries own which titles and which issues.

With input from Director of Transformation and Strategic Operations Rob Caluori, Mr. Wray has been in the process of updating OCLC's WLS authorizations. The list of authorizations is being updated to reflect recent retirements and reassignment of duties.

An in-house manual is currently being created to cover how WLS Cataloging Services imports files of vendor-provided MARC records into the catalog, including the use of the free software program MarcEdit for removing duplicates and editing the records before they are imported. Mr. Wray has been the sole cataloger importing these MARC records into Evergreen because of many technical issues which needed to be analyzed and addressed during the past year, and because of new practices which required changes for member libraries' technical services staff members as well as for their vendors. Recently, Ms. Kilsdonk and the Equinox team created a patch for Evergreen which appears to have solved the last remaining technical issue. The new manual will be implemented after the reopening, when Mr. Wray will begin sharing importing duties with Mr. Ren and Ms. Glazer.

Some vendor-provided MARC records have continued to become available; they represent materials ordered by member libraries before or during the closure. Mr. Wray has been encouraging all libraries to continue placing orders during this time, even though the physical materials will not arrive until later. The advantage would be that when the member libraries reopen and are ready to receive materials and begin linking them, the MARC records would already be in the catalog, saving time (and preventing a huge and

sudden workload for WLS Cataloging Services). In actuality, only a handful of libraries are following this advice; the majority of them prefer to postpone ordering until after reopening.

## Development

Grant opportunities are being monitored In light of COVID-19 and the following activities have taken place:

- Prepared and sent grant requests to Entergy and NY Census Equity Fund;
- Responded to Field Hall Foundation with a program update and impact of COVID-19;
- Reviewed and researched NY State Department of Homeland Security Grant;
- Outlined requirements and criteria to and discussed needs with IT staff regarding cyber security and outlined preliminary project with funder—however, program was not a qualified fit for WLS needs.

Reduced rates were negotiated for a targeted email blast with Westchester County Business Journal (WCBJ) to promote library online resources, which was sent on Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> and was delivered to approximately 15,000 subscribers. The goal was to increase awareness among business owners in the region of the many digital resources and services available through the member libraries. The design and content was coordinated with Full Deck Design.

Along with all other large gatherings, the Celebrating Westchester Libraries event was cancelled for the April 17<sup>th</sup> date and rescheduled to November 15<sup>th</sup> to correspond with the WLS Annual Meeting. Ms. Brigham notified all about the change of date and secured the Doubletree Hotel venue for November and verified the availability of the guest speaker as well as the sponsors.

Ms. Brigham attended a 3-day training session in March for Level 1 of teacher training in the Breath Body Mind (BBM) method along with a follow-up practice session in April. She is also working with the Public Innovation & Engagement department to explore the use of the ELEO database to enter Volunteer information. In addition, she participated in the following webinars: *Navigating Impact During Challenging Times* – Presented by Carl Bloom and Associates/ International Public Fundraising Forum; *#Librarygivingday and COVID-19: Why you should continue to fundraise in challenging times* – Presented by Carl Bloom and Associates/ International Public Fundraising Forum; and *Fundraising in Challenging Times - A Virtual Conversation for Westchester NonProfits* – Presented by CCS Fundraising.

After training with Joe Maurantonio on how to navigate and use Zoom as a host, Ms. Brigham prepared a Zoom meeting for libraries on fundraising in difficult times, emphasizing #librarygivingday, and created a Powerpoint and resource guide reflecting current crisis fundraising

## Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

In 2019 WLS had temporarily suspended lending materials to outside institutions through ILL to focus on meeting the borrowing needs of the member libraries while additional staff was brought into the department to add capacity. Lending resumed in Fall 2019 and the first quarter of 2020 was due to be the first quarter with lending. January and February saw strong activity in both borrowing over 1,000 books and articles and lending more than 300 items in total. Due to the closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, both services saw a steep decline in March. In addition to WLS, many of the institutions with which ILL materials are exchanged are closed. Similarly, no activity is expected in April and possibly May. However, preparations are already being explored for how ILL will be adapted to work within the "new normal" so that WLS can continue to safely provide this core service to the member libraries and their patrons. In addition, the ILL department is preparing for a "catch-up" period where large numbers of returns are expected to be processed when services resume.

## Information Technology (IT)

WLS is working with the IT audit teams on all three audits—Operations, Virtual Desk Infrastructure (VDI) and Network services. The audit processes did get delayed, but they are still moving forward. The operation services audit is the furthest along, and hopefully by mid-May at the latest, the final report will be in hand. The VDI and network services reports are expected by the end of May.

The IT staff has been engaged in ongoing efforts with VMware and Nutanix to maintain and support the network environment and support helpdesk requests for assistance as follows:

**VDI:** Profile modifications are being performed on a library-by-library basis during the closures. These changes should help address some of the slow login concerns of the last few months. In the past 30 days, IT has completed over 140 work orders resolving library staff requests for remote access to VDI.

**ILS:** Internal discussions have begun about upgrading Evergreen from version 3.2 to version 3.4. There are many features in the newer version which would help resolve some of the problems that currently frustrate staff. WLS IT has been responding to patrons' library card access requests during the current closure. Capira Mobile is working on an update to the WLS App. A notification about the COVID-19 library status was included on a recent update.

**Network:** WLS IT has been whitelisting to allow member library staff access to VDI. The acquisition and installation of the SonicWALL firewall will allow for better security measures and improve the access to VDI for member library and WLS staff.

Microsoft Office 365 is being tested by IT staff, with the goal of upgrading all member library and WLS staff to this platform in the near future.

**Help Desk:** WLS IT responded to a higher-than-usual number of requests and completed over 700 in the last 30 days. All support is currently being provided through email and phone communication.

## NYS Budget Update

Governor Cuomo and NYS Legislators finalized the FY2020-21 State budget. Fortunately, \$3 million was added back to Library Aid, bringing it to a total of \$94.5 million). However, Public Library Construction Aid remained at \$14 million. These amounts will be subject to review in light of the current pandemic and the uncertainty of when everything will be re-opened. At this point, there is no anticipated date for when the first payments of Library Aid will be made.

The New York State Library Division of Library Development (DLD) has notified us that the WLS allocation for the 2020-2023 Public Library Construction Aid cycle will be \$654,899. As with many aspects of Library Aid allocations, the Public Library Construction Aid is based on the 2010 Census populations for the chartered service area of each public library system.

## Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE)

The COVID-19 pandemic has added many layers of additional stress to individuals' lives and there has been an increased interest in programming that helps relieve this stress. WLS Director of PIE Elena Falcone has tapped into this interest and has been working with member libraries to provide virtual Breath-Body-Mind (BBM) programming to the public and to work with member library staff to build in BBM practices into their professional activities.

WLS is further building capacity for local BBM instruction across County service sectors, including the member public libraries, by offering a BBM two-day Introductory Workshop in May and a 5-day Level 1 Teacher Training that will take place in June and July. All programs are delivered via Zoom.

Additionally, **BBM practice sessions**, that are only 45 minutes in duration, are available Tuesday through Thursday for those with prior BBM instruction, those interested in getting a sense of what BBM is all about—or those who just might want to take a breath in the midst of today's challenges. More information about BBM activities can be found on the [WLS Breath-Body-Mind resource page](#).

WLS is a partner in the **Senior Law Day Collaborative**. Traditionally a venue that focused on in-person, one-on-one engagement with subject experts, Senior Law Day has transformed their service platform and is now offering live webinars almost weekly and will be doing so in the months to come. The programs are recorded and posted to the [Senior Law Day Collaborative website](#), which also offers the opportunity to ask a question of the team of more than 150 professionals supporting the collaborative—attorneys, financial planners, geriatric care managers, and more.

Upcoming programs cover a wide range of topics: Selling your home in the midst of COVID-19; Medicaid redesign; Being aware of scammers; Essential online health information for older adults. The website is maintained and updated by WLS staff and is a great first resource for issues that affect today's senior citizens. Check out the [newest video clip](#) that will help you to correctly wear and remove your face mask and gloves when you make your next trip to the grocery store.

## ***Special Projects***

**2020 Census:** The efforts to promote and support the 2020 Census in the virtual world through the library community have proven successful. The response rates in every community have been on the rise. There are still many households who have not responded yet to the survey, but there are fewer with each passing day. The Census timeline for self-reporting activities has been extended to October 31, 2020 and this provides WLS and member libraries with even more opportunities to educate communities about the 2020 Census and to encourage households to respond. The [Westchester Counts](#) website will continue to provide Census updates and new promotional materials to support libraries' Census-related activities.

Dana Hysell-Alongi and Joe Maurantonio have offered online meetings (using Zoom software) for library directors and staff and have shared updated timeline information, videos, images, county response rates and innovative ways of connecting with patrons. Additionally, Ms. Hysell-Alongi has been monitoring library and community social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to ensure Census-related conversations are happening. Several meetings have been attended of the Westchester County Complete Count Committee and with local non-profit leaders to offer support and ideas toward encouraging community completion of the 2020 Census. Although this pandemic has presented a significant challenge, the positive response rates in many Westchester areas is encouraging.

Updates to 2020 Census materials (video and images) have been made to the Westchester Counts website; and area response rates can be reviewed at: <https://www.westchestercounts.org/county-response-rates/>. The self-response rates as of April 27, 2020 are at 53.4% for the USA as a whole, 47.6% for New York State and 54.1% for Westchester County. Within Westchester County, the community self-response rates range from 39.6% to 70.2% of households.

**Data Dashboard:** One of the strategic initiatives of the WLS Board, the dashboard is meant to be a data collection and visualization tool to assist WLS and member libraries in the use of monthly information reports from Evergreen. During the past few months, the Special Projects department has cultivated a partnership with the Nassau Library System to build a first generation for this ILS dashboard. An initial beta version has been created and is still under development.

**GIS Library Service Area Map:** This month the member library GIS Library Service Area Map was corrected and updated with information provided by several libraries. This map is located on the WLS website and used for individuals to look up what library would service a particular address and determine where to get a

library card. The updated version of the map can be viewed at <https://www.westchesterlibraries.org/about-wls/member-libraries/>.

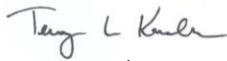
**Burbio Calendar for Virtual Programming and Events:** A new and timely project for April is the development of a member library calendar for Virtual Programming and Events. Initially planned as a WLS-developed site, instead WLS was able to partner with Burbio (a Pelham-based tech company specializing in aggregating school, library and community event information). The [new calendar](#) is a single pane that shows all Westchester member library virtual programs.

## WEBS

The counselors and the WEBS director continue to reach out to seminar clients, who for the most part, are staying engaged. Some of them are expressing feelings of loneliness and anxiety in view of the current situation. They are being encouraged to stay in touch with us and each other by email, phone or video conference. Another suggestion is to access online library resources, learn how to use Zoom, and initiate new activities in place of ones that are no longer available, e.g. exercising with an instructional video on YouTube or taking an online cooking class. Those who are particularly isolated and depressed have been identified and will continue to be contacted on a regular basis.

The WEBS director Elaine Sozzi and the WEBS counselors have also been discussing strategies for restarting the career seminars, workshops and individual counseling. Clearly, flexibility is key, since we do not know when or how the libraries will be staging their re-openings and what their new policies will be in place for group programs. Several different plans are being developed for scheduling, publicity and program presentation.

Respectfully submitted,



Terry L. Kirchner  
*Executive Director*