
Executive Director's Report May 2020

CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19

Open Meeting Law during COVID-19 Pandemic

Governor Cuomo's [Executive Order 202.28](#) has extended the adjustments to Open Meetings Law (originally initiated through [Executive Order 202.1](#)) through June 6th.

A couple of reminders:

The original Order says: "...authorizing such meetings to be held remotely by conference call or similar service provided that the public has the ability to view or listen to such proceeding and that such meetings are recorded and later transcribed."

"...with regard to notice, which is at the heart of the member's question, the Order has waived none of law's requirements."

"And the method you select for sharing the meeting in real time (livestreaming, a broadcast) should be accessible to the general public."

Elections for Library Budgets and Trustees

[Executive Order 202.26](#) concerned library elections and funding propositions. School district public library board elections and budget votes have been delayed until June 9th. Additionally, all school district public library board elections and budget votes will be conducted by mail. Local special district elections and budget votes will be delayed until September 15, 2020.

School district public libraries and those association and municipal libraries with voter-approved school ballot funding from a prior year are only required to put a funding proposition before the voters if the library board is requesting an increase in funding. Per Education Law 259 (1), a school district public library or a library with a prior year voter-approved school ballot funding proposition will receive the same amount of funding for 2020/21 as was received in the prior year.

If you have questions about the new timelines, please reach out by email to Frank Rees, Public Library System Program Manager at Francis.Rees@nysed.gov. Frank will try to answer your questions to the best of his ability. Please note that the State Library does not have the authority to interpret the Governor's Executive Order and may not provide legal advice for libraries.

The [Western New York Library Resource Council's Ask a Lawyer service](#) provides an overview of the legal parameters of Executive Order 202.26 and its impact on the existing election related laws.

Reopening Library Buildings

The public library system directors have been working with New York Library Association (NYLA) to advocate for a clearly defined, statewide approach to reopening library buildings and starting up services such as curbside delivery. Recent discussions have been held with the [Empire State Development](#) and NYS Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul to advocate on behalf of public libraries. Karen LaRocca-Fels and I will

be attending a virtual meeting of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries that will focus on public library reopening plans and how the library community can work together to support successful reopening.

The [list of resources related to reopening library buildings](#) that is available on the IT wiki continues to grow. Please continue to share articles of interest, policy and procedure templates and other guidelines that you find helpful in your planning efforts.

OverDrive Sora app

The Harrison Central School District and the Chappaqua Central School District have made the OverDrive Sora app available to their students. Through Sora, students from participating school districts within the Southern Westchester BOCES School Library System can access and borrow from their school's OverDrive ebooks and audiobooks collection and the WLS member libraries' juvenile and young adult digital collections. Students can easily log into the WLS member libraries' digital collections using only their school credentials/student ID. Member libraries can view the monthly usage of materials through the Sora app in the OverDrive usage reports. The Northern Westchester/Putnam and Yonkers BOCES School Library Systems are currently not partners in this initiative.

Battle of the Books 2020

The Battle of the Books competition scheduled for October 24, 2020, has been cancelled with the intent of coming back stronger than ever in 2021. The decision was driven by the potential restrictions of hosting a large gathering of over 300 individuals. From a public health perspective the best option was to reschedule the event. The Battle of the Books planning board has invested a great deal of time and energy in preparing for the 2020 competition, and I thank them for these efforts and their willingness to make the difficult decision to cancel this year's event. A strong list of titles for the competition was created and these titles are available on OverDrive if libraries are interested in incorporating these materials into their upcoming activities.

4-6 Division	6-12 Division
<i>New Kid</i> by Jerry Craft	<i>Nyxia</i> by Scott Reintgen
<i>The Parker Inheritance</i> by Varian Johnson	<i>Cinder</i> by Marissa Meyer
<i>The Lightning Thief</i> by Rick Riordan	<i>Truly Devious</i> by Maureen Johnson
<i>Bob</i> by Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead	<i>The Secret Life of Prince Charming</i> by Deb Caletti
<i>The Next Great Paulie Fink</i> by Ali Benjamin	<i>Akata Witch</i> by Nnendi Okorafor

Cataloging Services

WLS Cataloging Services has continued to process vendor MARC records; they are still arriving, albeit in much smaller numbers. Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray has been encouraging the member libraries to continue placing orders with their vendors. Not all vendors are set up to send MARC records and ship the physical materials as two separate steps, but the ones who can are sending MARC records to WLS Cataloging Services now. Handling them presently will lessen the workload after reopening. When the libraries begin to receive shipments of physical items, the corresponding bib records will already be in the catalog.

Mr. Wray and Westchester Library System (WLS) Executive Director Terry Kirchner have been discussing WLS Cataloging Services' post-reopening workflow. This involves a new look at the scheduling of personnel and the quarantining of items which arrive in the office for cataloging.

Mr. Wray and catalogers Qingshe Ren and Melissa Glazer worked on deleting about 4,000 bibliographic records which were in the catalog even though they were not linked to holdings. The final remaining

category, serials, is currently being addressed by Mr. Wray. Not all of the serial records can be deleted because some contain links to online archives of issues.

Mr. Wray inspected approximately 1,900 bibliographic records representing sound recordings which bore the "parental advisory" sticker on their containers, to ensure that all of them had the edition statement "Explicit version" prominently displayed in the public catalog view. This was done partly to differentiate them from edited versions of the same works. No value judgments were involved, since the edition statements were based on descriptions on the items themselves.

With input from Director of Transformation and Strategic Operations Rob Caluori, Mr. Wray updated OCLC's WLS authorizations. The list of authorizations needed to be updated due to retirements and reorganization.

Mr. Wray finished the final draft of an in-house manual which covers all of the steps entailed in importing vendor-provided MARC records into the catalog.

Development

Entergy has continued their support of WLS with a \$25,000 grant. Our grant application for \$5,000 from the Hope for Youth Foundation is awaiting final approval. WLS remains very grateful to these to long-standing funders for their continued support.

The COVID-19 Mini-Grants pool of funds is fully expended. Twenty libraries submitted a request to strengthen their library's ability to serve patrons during the pandemic, assist remote working and prepare for reopening their buildings. Grants are reimbursable and the average grant amount is \$1,720. Requests included:

- the purchase of equipment for staff working remotely (laptops, Zoom subscriptions, marketing software);
- additional materials for patrons (hot spots, additional e-books in Overdrive, RB Digital (Recorded Books) subscriptions, virtual program presenter fees); and
- materials in preparation for reopening safely (sneeze guards, reconfiguration of floor plans to accommodate social distancing and other safety materials to comply with guidelines, and non-patron outreach consulting).

WLS corporate partner Digital Arts Experience is offering two 3-part series of workshops starting May 27th through June 12th on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The workshops, *Getting the Most out of Zoom!*, completely filled to their registration capacity of 50 participants within two hours of posting. The objective of these workshops is to help library staff learn best practices in using the Zoom platform, understand its capabilities and deficiencies, identify criteria to judge outside presenters using Zoom and to learn more about other available platforms for virtual communication.

#Librarygivingday was April 23rd. WLS participated in this national initiative with a soft launch raising a modest \$500. As of May 19th, WLS received an additional \$1,100 in donations from individuals. We are most grateful for all our supporters.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

The ILL staff continue to receive and process requests for items from outside libraries through InterLibrary Loan. Most of WLS' s ILL partners are closed and therefore requests will not be filled until onsite activities resume. However, this will ensure that materials begin flowing as soon as possible.

While unable to process traditional ILL, the department continues to help patrons access materials. Molly Tobin is contributing to the processing of system cards to help WLS provide a faster response for the programs where these cards are issued.

Rob Caluori is working with Terry Kirchner to plan a reconfiguration of the ILL area to accommodate a quarantine of materials coming into WLS from outside institutions before staff process the items.

Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE)

PIE staff continue to work with staff, volunteers, partners and patrons to migrate services and respond effectively in an online environment. Recent highlights include:

Volunteer New York's RSVP program encourages and supports volunteerism among those 55 and older. The Westchester Seniors Out Speaking (WSOS) program has, for several years, been an RSVP "Station," which supports their recruitment of volunteers with our (demanding) requirements—an interest in doing a deep dive on Medicare topics, an ability to listen and educate, some core tech savvy, and a passion for helping others. The lovely write up in the [Spring 2020 RSVP Newsletter](#) (v.1, no.3) is an outcome of that partnership and features two WLS staff: Outreach Services Programmer Krishna Horrigan and WSOS Program Coordinator Marna Schirmer.

PROGRAMMING FOR LIBRARY STAFF

All Staff: A three-session (4.5 hour) series was offered to support staff viewing and discussion of the Homeless Training Institutes Empathy-Driven Problem Solving program. The training reached 40 library staff in this round through individual access and a three-part virtual workshop. Participants learned how to steer interactions with difficult patrons in a positive direction through mindset, body language, and verbal tools. Participants in the three-part webinar were interested in pursuing further training on how to approach patrons with difficult topics such as odor. A total of 94 staff have participated since our one-year subscription to this training series started in June 2019. Access to the Empathy-Based Problem Solving training remains free through the remainder of May.

Youth Services: Two youth services meetings were held via Zoom, with the purpose of discussing strategies around summer reading and use of the READsquared website and app. Youth services librarians used these meetings to share their current activities and programming, discuss the merits of an online approach to summer reading, and troubleshoot issues they have had with READsquared.

WLS has contracted with READsquared to provide mobile app access for all member libraries. The contract will run through December 2021, and any library that has already purchased the app subscription will be covered by this contract when their annual subscription expires. READsquared is an online tool that supports patron participation in book groups and summer reading programming through features such as reviews, curated recommendations, quizzes, and challenges. In addition to the online program, WLS has funded the system-wide availability of the mobile READsquared app to enhance engagement that supports our community focus on social distancing.

PROGRAMMING FOR OUTREACH AUDIENCES

Job Seekers: The author of the popular Job Search Toolkit, Rebecca Mazin, has been engaged to update the Toolkit, which will include a recorded video review of the content and job search process. The updates will also address reentry challenges and online interviewing. Prompted by the new realities of the job market, Ms. Mazin will also provide mock interview practice via Zoom to support our reentry clients and other job seeking adults.

Seniors with Low-Vision - Vision Labs: The past two months have involved a shift in priority for the Vision Labs project. Prior to the PAUSE program, planning had centered around acquisition of hardware and space. Now we have made it a point to reconnect with our contacts in low vision services to strategize how the library system can boost the new remote services being offered. We will be working with the Westchester Council of the Blind, the Lighthouse Guild, and VISIONS to provide virtual programs for library staff and patrons alike.

PARTNER OUTREACH

- Working with the staff of Family Ties to facilitate their use of Zoom in serving their program for adults mandated to parenting programs, specifically looking at ways to continue to show the "Resilience" film and use Zoom's features to foster engagement.
- Presented to the County's 0-6 Team (coordinated services for early intervention) on the relevance of Breath Body Mind (BBM) to supporting both parents under stress and their children.
- Presented at a Southern Westchester BOCES professional development session on the impact of BBM for staff wellness and its use in classroom management.
- Reaching out to families through the Headstart/Early Childcare agencies to make parents aware of the availability of online resources to support early literacy and registering those parents without cards via a six-month temporary card for eResource access.
- Maintaining the partnership with the Great Potential Program of SUNY Purchase College on promoting positive youth development opportunities. With the aid of a professional job coach, prepared and delivered four 1 ½-hour workshops via Zoom for Great Potential 9th & 10th Grade students from the STEAM Academy High School in Mount Vernon. The workshops were designed to encourage students' self-awareness and to introduce them to the fundamentals of how to begin paid employment/volunteer work experience searches. Included in the topics addressed were how to complete job applications, develop a resume, and sell oneself during an interview.

Special Projects

While WLS member libraries have remained closed to the public, they continue to connect to their patrons via targeted 2020 Census social media engagements.

Dana Hysell Alongi and Joe Maurantonio continue to support the member library census teams via 2020 Census Chat video meetings. In the chats participants receive updated timelines, advertisements, county response rates and innovative ways of connecting with patrons.

In late April and May, we assisted several departments with training on Zoom meeting software and ideas on how to offer a dynamic program.

In collaboration with Pat Brigham, Mr. Maurantonio is working on exploring the potential of creating oral histories to document libraries' response to COVID-19 and funding this archive with Susanne Pandich, Executive Director of the Westchester Historical Society.

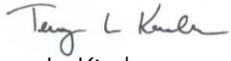
Lastly, the [Virtual Programming and Events Calendar](#) has been well received by the Westchester library community.

WEBS

Since the pandemic started, we have noticed that many participants from the WEBS career seminars have stayed in close contact with each other through Zoom and other conferencing applications. They had met when the programs were being conducted in-person at the libraries, and now they are continuing their

discussions online. Also, there have been requests for the counselors to host Zoom sessions so these job seekers could get more information on how to present themselves to prospective employers and how to understand what the future job market will look like.

Respectfully submitted,



Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director