
Executive Director's Report June 2020

CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19

Reopening of Member Library Buildings and Expanded Range of Physical Services

Over the past few weeks, most of the member libraries have started to provide contactless services (often curbside delivery) that allow patrons to place holds on and pick up items at their home library. To support the contactless services, WLS restarted the delivery service operations on June 1st. Since many of the member libraries had kept their bookdrops open during the March through May time period, the initial focus of the delivery operation was to get materials back to their home libraries to be checked in and made available for holds and pick up as part of the contactless services. WLS provided all member libraries with access to the curbside delivery module on the WLS app. This module allows patrons to easily schedule their curbside delivery transaction at a library. The company that supports the WLS app, Capiratech, provides a quick overview of the curbside delivery features [on their website](#).

WLS also purchased additional delivery totes and dollies to assist the member libraries in the movement and temporary storage of materials in support of the new safety protocols and quarantine practices developed by each library as part of their reopening safety plan. The scheduled date to return the holds requesting process back to its normal setting that allows patrons to place a hold for an item at any library and pick up at another library is July 1st.

Providing access to the inside of the library for a limited range of services has already occurred at several of the libraries, with most libraries preparing to do so soon (assuming that a low COVID-19 infection rate continues in our region). In addition to taking extra precautions to ensure public safety, the library directors have had to rethink their staff activities and schedules to maximize staff safety as well. To help keep library directors and staff informed about what contactless service and onsite access options are available at each member library, a [Library Services at Physical Locations chart](#) has been created and is hosted on the IT Wiki along with [other materials related to the reopening of physical spaces](#).

Reopening of WLS Headquarters

The WLS office space is scheduled to reopen on Monday, July 6th. A reopening safety plan outlining new procedures and protocols has been shared with all staff in preparation of our transition to a hybrid environment with most staff working from home two or three days a week to minimize the number of individuals in the office at any given time. Visitor access to the office will be limited, and no onsite public programming activities are scheduled for the summer.

As already noted, the intralibrary delivery service that moves materials between the member libraries and WLS is up and running. The interlibrary loan (ILL) service that fills patron requests for materials not available at a member library and also loans items to libraries outside of the system is scheduled to restart on July 6th. Many of the ILL transactions are with colleges and universities, and our timing of the restart is in alignment with their timelines for accepting materials from and shipping materials to WLS and their other reciprocal sharing partners.

Cataloging services have been ongoing throughout the pandemic with most vendors and member libraries providing the cataloging staff with electronic records that are updated or enhanced before they are added to the online catalog. As member library staff have started to report to their libraries for work, we are starting to receive shipments of physical materials that require more in-depth review and processing by the WLS cataloging staff.

Like the member libraries, WLS will build in a three-day (72-hour) quarantine period for the handling of materials to minimize potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The use of a three-day quarantine period for library materials was supported by a [recent study by the Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums \(REALM\) Project](#), a partnership between OCLC, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and Battelle, that researched how long the COVID-19 virus survives on materials that are prevalent in libraries, archives, and museums.

Black Lives Matter and Anti-Racism

In collaboration with the Public Library Directors Association (PLDA), WLS created and [posted a statement](#) condemning the ongoing violence and systemic racism against Black people and all people of color, which reads as follows:

The Westchester Library System condemns both the recent violence and the systemic injustice against Black people and people of color in the United States. We are committed to anti-racist practice and will use our skills and resources to advance the production of knowledge for social justice. We stand in solidarity with the New York Black Librarians Caucus (NYBLC) and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA). Read the [NYBLC statement](#) and [BCALA statement](#) to learn more.

To develop and provide resources and services that support and promote racial equity, WLS continues to be actively engaged with partner organizations. One vital partner is Nonprofit Westchester (NPW), an organization that was launched in 2012 to provide the nonprofit sector with a single unified voice for the role it plays in the economic vitality and sustainability of the county through the sharing of resources, connections, and information.

In partnership with the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester, NPW will soon launch the Westchester Center for Racial Equity. This center will work to promote racial justice and equity on personal, institutional and system levels and through public policy. Anticipated services of the Center include consultation, training, education, coaching, professional development and public programs that further racial and social justice goals and objectives. An upcoming NPW event that I encourage trustees and staff to attend is [Racial Equity – it's a Matter of Life and Death](#). This virtual panel discussion is scheduled for July 30th from 10-11:15 a.m. WLS is a founding member of NPW and all WLS and member library staff, trustees and volunteers are eligible to attend NPW events at the member rate.

The Westchester Library Association (WLA), a professional organization for academic, public, school and special library staff, also provides professional development workshops and platforms to support libraries in their efforts to develop more diverse, inclusive and equitable organizational infrastructures and public programming and services. On July 27th from 2-3:30 p.m., WLA is hosting an [Understanding Implicit Biases workshop](#).

The WLS Board has committed itself to being a more diverse, inclusive and equitable organization. Now more than ever it is imperative that we look inward at our own infrastructure, policies and practices to find ways to continuously improve the organization as we support our mission to ensure that all residents have seamless access to excellent library service throughout Westchester County.

Finances

The County provided the 1st and 2nd quarter 2020 payments. There has been no confirmation as yet about the State funding allocation for their FY 2020/2021. At a minimum, we anticipate a 20% cut which could mean a loss of approximately \$400,000 to WLS's allocation.

An adjustment was approved at the May Board Meeting for the July-December 2020 invoices for WLS Information Technology (IT) services. Details are being finalized for this upcoming billing cycle and will be provided along with requested information on past due accounts prior to the Board Meeting.

New York State Construction Aid Program

Lauren Moore, Assistant Commissioner for Libraries and New York State Librarian, announced that *Chapter 120 of the Laws of 2020* was signed into law by the Governor on June 17, 2020. This new law amends [Education Law 273-a](#) *State Aid for Library Construction* to extend the statutory project deadlines for certain projects for twelve months. We would like to thank our Westchester Representatives for their role in sponsoring and supporting this legislation: Senators Shelley Mayer [37th District] and David Carlucci [38th District] as well as NYS Assembly Members Amy Paulin [88th District]; Tom Abinanti [92nd District]; David Buchwald [93rd District]; Sandy Galef [95th District]; and Steve Otis [91st District].

Normally, NYS Public Library Construction Aid projects have a three-year cycle. Those funded in the State's FY 2017/2018 [Project numbers starting 0386-18-XXXX] had a statutory project completion date of June 30, 2020—with no access to any extension by law. Due to the unanticipated delays caused by COVID-19, many libraries could not complete all of their project activities by that date. In addition, libraries with projects funded in the State's FY 2018/2019 [Projects numbers starting 0386-19-XXXX] were also experiencing delays in their completion timelines. While this program cycle had an option to extend the completion date to June 30, 2022, this amendment will now provide an additional twelve months to complete all construction project activities.

The awards for the Construction Aid program cycle for the State's FY 2019/2020 have not yet been announced. However, the second review of the applications by the Dormitory Authority of NYS (DASNY) is now being completed. After that, NYS Library Division of Library Development (DLD) staff will be notifying library applicants of their awards. Being that the DLD and many library offices are in the process of reopening, at this time, it is unsure when this will take place.

For those thinking ahead, the cycle for this year's Construction Aid begins July 1st. The portal to the online application software has just been opened, and login and password information created in the past will remain the same. The overall money budgeted for FY 2020/2021 for NYS is \$14 million, with an allocation of \$654,899 for Westchester. The deadline for submission of applications to WLS is Wednesday, August 26th. More specific information will be sent out by early July.

Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE)

Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE), funded in part by a Coordinated Outreach Grant from NYS, is required to meet twice a year with an Outreach Advisory Group (OAG) to inform outreach programming efforts. The group, invited by the Director of PIE, is comprised of organizations that directly serve the audiences for whom programming is offered. The state law requires a minimum of six members, including a member library director (a role which is taken by the current PLDA President).

Our most recent meeting, held on June 9, 2020, took place via Zoom. OAG members included:

Wendy Armstrong, Volunteer New York

Dr. Andrew Bell, Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health

Gina Bell, Yonkers Public Schools

Janet Donat, Family Services of Westchester

Miriam Kerness, WestCOP (Westchester Community Opportunity Program)
Barbara Lambros, Westchester County Reentry Task Force
Karen LaRocca-Fels, Ossining Public Library
Steven A. Schurkman, Keane & Beane

The information that follows was presented to the OAG. The meeting proved a valuable opportunity to bring agencies up-to-date on WLS and PIE activities, especially in light of the COVID-19 closures and reopening plans. It was also an opportunity to hear about changes in programs from partner agencies; while these groups are consulted throughout the year, time to do a thorough service review addressing program specifics (such as target audience, service activities, and metrics for success) always bears fruit. For all programs named, hyperlinks are provided to the web pages that describe current activities.

Westchester Library System's outreach supports access to library services through efforts to build awareness, content creation, collaboration, and direct service. We work with member libraries and service agencies locally and nationally to serve the evolving needs of Westchester County residents.

Our responsibility under the annual Coordinated Outreach Grant received from the NY State Department of Library Development is to place a special emphasis on the needs of under- and un-served audiences. Specifically, this directs us to support our member libraries in service to those who:

"...are educationally disadvantaged or who are members of ethnic or minority groups in need of special library services, or who are unemployed and in need of job placement assistance, or who live in areas underserved by a library, or who are blind, physically disabled, have developmental or learning disabilities, or who are aged or confined in institutions,..."

In addition to creating resources and services for the public, we provide training for library professionals, and act as a resource for member libraries.

The programs highlighted on the next page reflect our most significant current investments in outreach programming. Each is regularly assessed in terms of effort required, reach, and impact (for the community and to WLS). Note that these programs can also be viewed along a spectrum of service types, from traditional library services that tell and answer to more contemporary models in which we teach, engage and create.

The success of our work is measured by the impact on the lives of the most challenged in our communities - those with less money, education, and mobility. A common theme is a lack of awareness of the services available through their community's public library and the library system.

Key questions for the Outreach Advisory Group:

1. Who are partners with whom we could work to expand awareness?
2. Who are partners with whom we could work to enrich these offerings?
3. Are there needs in the community that could be addressed at the system level that you can suggest for future work?

ADULT-DIRECTED PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES

Westchester Seniors Out Speaking

[Senior Benefits Individual Counseling Services](#) (helpline, recordings, remote presentations)

Educational programming: Medicare Minute / [Demystifying Medicare](#)

[Senior Law Day Collaborative](#)

2020 Webinars / New event formats / White Plains next?

[Music & Memory at the Library](#)

[VisionLabs: Reading for a Lifetime](#) (upcoming presentations)

[Join our June 18 \(10am\) presentation/Q&A](#)

[High School Equivalency support](#)

[Join our June 25 \(4pm\) Information Session!](#)

Multiple platforms for tutoring

[Read Better](#)

Multiple platforms for tutoring

[Reentry Information Service](#) / [Westchester Reentry Task Force Resource Guide](#)

Community Conversations: [Westchester Resilience Coalition/Breath-Body-Mind](#) (theme since 2018: trauma, individual & community resilience)

Spring/Summer 2020 Program

Possible Fall 2020-Fall 2021 Program, includes early childhood providers and at-risk youth

[Job Search Assistance](#)

Update to Job Search Toolkit (JSTK) - English and Spanish

JSTK videos

New program for individuals with developmental disabilities

New service to provide Zoom-based mock interviews and job search coaching

YOUTH-DIRECTED PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES

[Early Literacy Resources](#)

New bi-lingual Early Literacy brochure, Early Literacy Videos - English and Spanish

Early Childhood Center library card outreach

[Youth Workforce development](#)

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Outreach programs (as of June 2020)		SERVICE TYPES					
CONTENT	Jobs	Education	Referral to local agencies & services	Digital Literacy	Counseling	Topical / Other	
Community Conversations (audience varies)			✓			Trauma/Resilience	
Correctional Services Support	✓	✓	✓			InterLibrary Loan	
Early Literacy Outreach	✓	✓	✓	✓			
HSE Connect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Job Search Assistance	✓			✓	✓		
Music & Memory			✓	✓	✓	engagement	
Read Better		✓	✓	✓		engagement	
Senior Law Day Collaborative		✓	✓	✓	✓	engagement	
Vision Labs			✓	✓	✓	engagement	
Westchester Connections	✓	✓	✓	✓		engagement	
Westchester Seniors Out Speaking		✓	✓	✓	✓	engagement	
Youth Workforce Readiness	✓	✓			✓		

Outreach programs (as of June 2020)		TARGET AUDIENCE						
PROGRAM	Un/Under employed	Adult learners	Spanish-speakers	Individual with Disabilities	Seniors / Caregivers	Re-entry	Corrections	At-risk Youth
Community Conversations (audience varies)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Correctional Services Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Literacy Outreach		✓	✓					
HSE Connect	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Job Search Assistance	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
Music & Memory			✓	✓	✓			
Read Better	✓	✓				✓		
Senior Law Day Collaborative		✓	✓		✓			
Vision Labs				✓	✓			
Westchester Connections	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Westchester Seniors Out Speaking		✓	*	✓	✓			
Youth Workforce Readiness	✓							✓

Special Projects

Joe Maurantonio worked closely with WLS Director of Development Pat Brigham to offer two 3-session Zoom Workshops presented by Robert Kissner of the Digital Arts Experience (DAE). Both events were filled to capacity within an hour of being offered to the member libraries. Attendees have sent in positive feedback and, due to high demand, WLS has scheduled a third series to begin in July.

Work has begun on a new pilot project tentatively called, *Westchester 2020: An Oral History*, which will focus on gathering library and community stories centering on the unfolding events of this year (COVID-19 pandemic, Census challenges, library and business closings, protests, upcoming election, etc.). The team has participated in webinars, training and oral history meetings to prepare for this challenging task. Additionally, Joe has connected with members of the Queens Memory Project (Queens Public Library) and Columbia University's Oral History Archives to get an understanding of best practices for their organizations. In capturing and preserving our local history, this project aims to showcase the broad range of experiences, interests and concerns of residents throughout Westchester County, who would be willing to share their story. In the spirit of the Harwood Institute approach highlighted at our 2019 Annual Meeting, these stories can be used as tools to help WLS evaluate the services, programs and resources provided by WLS and the member libraries to create forward movement towards fulfilling these captured aspirations.

Two Census Chat & Connect sessions hosted by Dana Hysell Alongi and Mr. Maurantonio discussed the Census response rates and the changing needs of Census activities for libraries as the County begins its phased reopening. Ms. Hysell Alongi spoke at the June 4th PLDA Meeting to share the WLS launch of a week-long social media awareness campaign and encouraged the member libraries to participate. This campaign consisted of daily posts, images and/or video links in English and Spanish to continue increased

awareness of the Census. A blog post about Ms. Hysell Alongi's tenure as the WLS Census Coordinator was shared on Twitter and caught the attention of the US Census Bureau and was retweeted by the [2020 Census Maps](#) as follows:

"Westchester County counts! Westchester Co (NY) library system @WestLibSys continues to promote the #2020Census. Here's their latest blog post blog.westchesterlibraries.org/census-and-wes... and their website with the latest response rates westchestercounts.org/county-respons... @NYcounts2020"

Ms. Hysell Alongi was also a presenter in a library panel entitled, *How Libraries Are Updating their Complete Count Efforts During a Pandemic*, hosted by Metropolitan New York Library Council, alongside representatives from the US Census Bureau, New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, and Queens Public Library.

The Special Projects team has been working with Westchester County to coordinate the delivery of Census tablets to WLS for distribution to the member libraries, who will be using them for curbside pickup, local Farmers Markets, etc. The County has scheduled a press event in which County Executive George Latimer is expected to present the tablets to Terry Kirchner, WLS staff and a few member library representatives in an effort to show that the County recognizes the intense commitment of WLS and the member libraries to the 2020 Census complete count efforts.

WEBS

Planned programs for June and July will focus on job search and resume development will be held via Zoom at the Lewisboro Library and the Harrison Public Library. A training for the Westchester Library Association (WLA) on how to assist patrons who have questions on virtual job search and networking during these uncertain times is scheduled for June 25th.

The WEBS director is working with one of the counselors to develop a new workshop on the importance of self-assessment in the career development process for later in the summer.

Respectfully submitted,



Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director