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## Executive Director's Report September 2020

### COVID-19 and Member Libraries

The member library directors have continued to host weekly chat sessions that focus on challenges faced by library staff and the innovative solutions implemented as the public libraries strive to best meet their communities' needs. A recent self-report survey completed by 26 of the 38 member libraries shows the following services being provided:

- 22 libraries allow the public into the library building
  - 15 libraries open by appointment only and 7 allowing for walk ins
  - 12 libraries provide limited seating; 10 libraries do not provide any public seating
  - 13 libraries offer public computing workstations; all offer Wi-Fi
  - 5 libraries allow patrons and organizations to reserve meeting spaces (with limited capacity and other COVID-19 restrictions in place)
  - 9 libraries allow volunteers to "work" onsite
- 24 libraries offer curbside delivery service (the 2 libraries not offering curbside delivery do allow patrons to enter the library building to pick up materials)

Library staff have been exploring options to help students who are starting their new school year, especially those experiencing a 100% virtual or a hybrid virtual/physical learning environment, with their educational support and social engagement needs. In addition, library staff have embraced outdoor programming and are discussing options to maximize outdoor options, especially as the weather turns colder.

### Cataloging Services

Part-time Cataloger Kate Finley's final day of working for WLS was May 31<sup>st</sup>. She began at WLS in 2011, and made vital contributions by fulfilling the member libraries' cataloging requests—and in more recent years, by replacing brief, vendor-supplied bibliographic records in the WLS catalog with superior ones from OCLC's WorldCat database. She is a full-time cataloger at Queens Library and decided to make more free time for herself, especially because she will soon be getting married. Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray has begun training Outreach/ILL Clerk Paul Gunther-Mohr to take over Ms. Finley's part in replacing the brief bibliographic records. (Mr. Wray and Catalogers Qingshe Ren and Melissa Glazer also share this task.) Mr. Gunther-Mohr is a library school student who also works with the WLS Interlibrary Loan and Public Innovation and Engagement Departments.

Bibliographic records supplied by vendors are helpful to patrons because they are delivered to WLS Cataloging Services at the same time, or earlier, than the corresponding physical materials are delivered to the purchasing libraries. This speeds up the process of making the materials visible in the catalog and able to circulate. Unfortunately, these records are often mere "placeholders" without sufficient information about the author, title, call number, subjects, synopses, etc. Their utility is greatly increased after they are upgraded by the WLS catalogers.

Mr. Wray recently cataloged Lenovo Chromebook laptop computers for Ossining Public Library; and with so many students using Chromebooks for distance learning during the pandemic, it is reasonable to think

that similar requests will follow. Having these items in the catalog facilitates their circulation to members of the community.

With help from the WLS IT Department, WLS Cataloging Services assisted New Rochelle Public Library by adding the new vendor, Ingram, to the acquisitions module of the Evergreen catalog and arranging for the delivery of their vendor supplied bibliographic records from their new vendor, Ingram. The library's orders from this vendor have been gradually increasing and it is anticipated that other member libraries will begin ordering materials from Ingram as well.

Mr. Wray, Ms. Glazer and Mr. Ren are also currently assisting New Rochelle Public Library by cataloging a significant backlog of books and audiovisual materials. Vendor bibliographic records were out of the question for this group of items, because they were either gifts or they were purchased from Amazon, Spanish language publishers and other vendors who do not supply records. Cataloging this backlog will clear up a large amount of floor space at the library and, more importantly, make the items available to the community for the first time.

### Development

Over the past several months, Development has pivoted its requests for support to reflect the literacy and system outreach needs due to COVID-19. Development responded to a Request for Proposal from the IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act and the TD Bank Community Challenge Grant for major funding to support enhanced outreach services, professional development, and targeted marketing to promote digital library services to vulnerable populations particularly affected by the pandemic—including seniors, students and parents. Funding decisions are expected late September and November respectively. Both RFPs are highly competitive national grants. These proposals total over \$500,000.

In addition, WLS submitted to its sustaining funders final reports on their 2019-2020 funding with proposals for an increase for continued support in 2020- 2021. To date the following funds have been received:

Entergy	\$25,000
Herman Goldman Foundation	12,000
Hope for Youth Foundation	5,000
H.W. Wilson Foundation	15,000

#### Sponsorship funds:

Regan Insurance Agency (new support)	\$3,000
TD Bank	5,000

#### Pending Requests (all sustaining funders):

The Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation	\$10,000
Con Edison	15,000
M&T Bank Foundation	3,000
TD Bank Charitable Foundation	20,000
(request is in addition to the Challenge Grant)	

Mini-grants to libraries who responded to an RFP to support services or materials needed to meet patron and staff needs during the pandemic's PAUSE restrictions were vetted and managed. A total of \$34,500 was awarded to 20 libraries. Grants covered the cost of laptops for staff work from home use; Zoom subscriptions for virtual programming; additional e-content, such as Acorn TV and Overdrive content; virtual program presenters; loaner hotspots; and planning consultants to assist in re-design of library layouts

to comply with social distancing. With an average award of \$1,720, these grants helped libraries better meet the needs of staff and their patrons during uncertain times. WLS received many grateful acknowledgements for this opportunity.

## *UPCOMING INITIATIVES*

### **Project HOPE**

The Office of Mental Health was awarded FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funding for the Project HOPE RSP Grant - Crisis Counseling Program. The goal is to provide reference services to social work agencies that can assist individuals with mental health issues of stress and anxiety, especially in light of the recent COVID pandemic. This project supports the role of libraries as information providers and will build upon the work of the Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE) Department to help vulnerable populations, such as the Breath Body Mind and Resilience Coalition. A budget is being developed within Office of Mental Health (OMH) guidelines, and more information will be shared when the contract is officially signed.

### **Access to Justice Project**

Along the same lines, Westchester County 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District is piloting a project for Westchester to engage libraries in helping with the distribution of information regarding civil court issues. The Chief Judge acknowledges the important roles libraries play in their communities as a trustworthy source for an honest answer by asking for our participation.

WLS is now listed in [Guidestar.org](https://www.guidestar.org) (also now known as CandidDotOrg), with a Silver Seal of Transparency. Information for the Gold Seal of Transparency is being submitted and updated. Now our community members as well as 10+ million GuideStar users can find in-depth financial information about our organization. Plus, this also provides fresh information to 200+ charitable websites and applications that use GuideStar data, such as AmazonSmile, Facebook, and Network for Good.

## ***Digital Content***

Even as member libraries are providing more access to their physical collections for browsing and checkouts, there has continued to be strong growth in the demand for digital content, especially downloadable audiobooks, e-books, magazines and movies/TV shows. The following chart represents data from Freading, hoopla, Kanopy, OverDrive, PressReader, RBdigital and Tumblebooks.

<b>Download Format:</b>	<b>January-August 2019</b>	<b>January-August 2020</b>	<b>Increase %</b>
Audiobooks	161,657	221,493	137%
E-books	324,967	590,306	182%
Magazines	18,890	35,018	185%
Movies/TV shows	31,583	68,308	216%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>537,097</b>	<b>915,125</b>	<b>170%</b>

As mentioned in the previous director's report, WLS is working with the member libraries to promote and provide training on education support resources such as Tutor.com, LearningExpress, Learning Upgrade and Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning.

## Information Technology (IT)

WLS IT Manager Wilson Arana has continued to work with the WLS IT Audit Working Group to move forward on the key recommendations of the IT audits and to draft service level agreements (SLAs) that will define the scope of services provided by WLS to the member libraries. A draft version of the SLA that incorporated recommendations from the IT audits was presented on August 20<sup>th</sup> to the Public Library Directors Association (PLDA) as a discussion document. Based on feedback received during the PLDA meeting and a letter expressing concerns about the first draft of the SLA that was submitted by 13 library directors, Mr. Arana has been working with the Working Group to draft new SLAs that would more directly address the desires and concerns raised.

At the September 17<sup>th</sup> regular meeting, the PLDA Finance Committee recommended and the full PLDA body approved that the 2021 IT funding model would be run using the 2019 metrics, excluding the wireless column that will be removed from the model, and each library is to be billed according to their individual approach to providing wireless/Wi-Fi services at their location. The billing will be for 6 months of service (January 1-June 30, 2020). Member libraries will have until October 15, 2020, to submit an IT change order request to add or remove WLS equipment and/or services that will be included in the 2021 IT funding model calculations. The PLDA Finance Committee will evaluate the progress of the SLA approval process after the first quarter of 2021 and will then provide recommendations for next steps concerning the service and billing structure for the last half of 2021.

The wireless/Wi-Fi equipment is approaching its end of life cycle and will need to be updated. In anticipation of this, Mr. Arana has hosted information sessions about the proposed changes to the wireless/Wi-Fi service that WLS would be able to offer to the member libraries. The new service would allow for each participating library to have a more robust and faster Wi-Fi service that could be available both inside and outside of the library building. There are different options available to each library in terms of the broadband speed, the number and location of access points to provide coverage and the starting date that a library can select to offer the new wireless/Wi-Fi service. Mr. Arana will be contacting every library director to review their wireless/Wi-Fi service options and costs.

The IT staff has been moving forward with numerous projects that were recommended by IT audits. The network that serves as the core infrastructure is being rebuilt to incorporate current best practices in network design and to allow for expanded redundancy options in the future. The network's aging firewall was replaced with a new, state of the art firewall device. Unfortunately, there was more downtime than anticipated during the replacement of this firewall, which left the member libraries and WLS offline for a day. No further network downtime is expected in relation to the newly installed firewall. The implementation of the Intrusion Detection System (IDS) will begin soon, and this will greatly improve overall security by enhancing the ability to detect potential malware, ransomware and other threats against the WLS network and to allow for immediate response to address the potential threats.

Much effort has been spent on addressing VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) performance issues, in particular the slow login times experienced by member library staff as well as addressing outstanding hardware issues at the member libraries, and in some cases, replacing older hardware. To further support the VDI enhancements, it is anticipated that new virtualized infrastructure servers will need to be purchased in the near future, and these costs will be shared with the WLS Budget Committee as it prepares the 2021 budget.

The vetting process for a new help desk system is underway, and several vendors have made numerous presentations to members of the IT staff involved in this process of identifying a potential replacement. The PLDA Technology Committee has been invited to attend a demonstration of the recommended help desk system to incorporate their feedback on service options and functionality available to support the member library staff.

## Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE)

**Selected activities:** Three core adult service outreach programs are being aggressively promoted in response to the economic challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. Adults with low literacy and/or no HS diploma are at a special disadvantage in securing a job, especially as our economy reels from this pandemic. WLS offers three services that Westchester residents can use to assist them. Concurrent with these services, counselors are being trained to connect participants to supportive services. All services are featured on FirstFind.org. If you have suggestions for channels in which we can promote these services, please contact PIE Director Elena Falcone at [elena@wlsmail.org](mailto:elena@wlsmail.org).

**Read Better:** Tutors are ready to assist low literate adults in improving their skills; they will work by phone and/or video/conference. At present, Read Better supports 27 students/tutor pairs.

**HSE Connect!:** Monthly information sessions - held via Zoom - are available to explain the steps to obtain a diploma and assist in navigating self study resources and supportive services. We also respond to inquiries to our email and phone Helpline.

**Job Search Assistance:** In addition to our printed Job Search Tool Kit, job coach Rebecca Mazin is available to provide phone/Zoom-based coaching on job search strategies, as well as offering experience through mock interviewing.

**JOB SEARCH HELP HAS GONE VIRTUAL**

Are you looking for a job?  
Do you apply for jobs online and never hear back?  
Do you feel stuck and think, "no one is hiring?"

**Virtual Job Search Help Can Move you Forward!**

SEE MORE RESOURCES YOU CAN USE TODAY AT [FirstFind.org](http://FirstFind.org)

westchester LIBRARY SYSTEM  
Empowering libraries. Empowering communities.

Email the Job Search Coach for an appointment  
[jobsearchcoach@wlsmail.org](mailto:jobsearchcoach@wlsmail.org)



**Learn with Chester:** Funds from the 2019/2020 NYS Family Literacy Grant were, in part, redirected from our original focus on assisting member libraries in building Launchpad collections for early literacy. Funds were instead used to do two things:

- 1) Create an early literacy brochure (in English and Spanish) that could be used for broad-based library promotion and
- 2) Produce companion early literacy how-to videos (in English and Spanish) that can bring that content to life. The brochure has been completed. Entitled, *Learn with Chester / Aprender con Chester*, the brochure contains welcoming notes to the public library and information on how to get a library card as well as tips on how to read to your child. The brochures will be distributed to member libraries, early childhood centers, hospitals and outreach partners. The lively videos, done by bilingual librarian and early literacy programming partner Nancy Coradin, are currently being edited and will be posted by the end of July, around the same time the printed brochures are expected in hand.

If you are connected to an organization that can provide an outlet for these materials, please contact Ms. Falcone at [elena@wlsmail.org](mailto:elena@wlsmail.org).

## Special Projects

### *Westchester 2020: An Oral History*

Work continues on *Westchester 2020: An Oral History*, the pilot project to gather library and community stories centering around the events of this year. Dana Hysell Alongi and Joe Maurantonio are coordinating volunteers through Volunteer NY for the interviewing, transcribing and editing a video series to capture the stories of how our library community adapted services and practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Census*

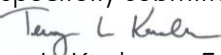
This is the last big push of Census efforts before the September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. A Census Chat & Connect session was held on September 17<sup>th</sup> to touch base and share resources. The team has continued to support connections made with the member libraries, nonprofits and community organizations through flyers, books and other available materials as well as through email and phone discussions.

Additionally, the Westchester County Complete Count Committee meetings have been attended and partnerships have been cultivated over the past nine months. A few libraries have shined by traveling out into their communities and connecting directly with partners to engage, support and encourage their Census efforts (see photos below). For instance, Yonkers Public Library scheduled to be at a variety of locations across Yonkers including houses of worship and food distribution sites through September. Mount Vernon Public Library has used their tablets at various events and distributed over 400 *We Count!* books to patrons. Eric Rios, Youth Specialist Aide at the White Plains Youth Bureau, has not only gone out into the community to help people with the Census, but scheduled times where families can meet privately in his office to fill out the Census. These strategies for continued engagement of our community efforts have led to higher self-response rates. For self-response rates can be found on the [Westchester Counts! page](#) on the WLS website.



Photos: **Above Top** shows a staff member from Yonkers Public Library helping a patron to complete the Census using the tablet provided by WLS. **Above bottom** shows a staff member from Port Chester-Rye Brook Public Library helping someone fill out their Census after a local church service. **Furthest left** is a staff member from Port Chester-Rye Brook Public Library giving away *We Count!* books provided by WLS at the Edison School food distribution site. **Center** is staff from YPL doing Census outreach with both *We Count!* books and tablets provided by WLS in hard-to-count neighborhoods in Yonkers.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Terry L. Kirchner, Executive Director