

Executive Director's Report October 2021

New Legislation

New York State Governor Hochel recently signed two new pieces of legislation into law—one regarding library trustees and the other regarding a change to Open Meetings Law.

Effective January 1, 2023, all association and public library trustees will be required to attend two hours of trustee training annually. Highlights of this new law include:

- Two (2) hours of training required annually;
- Acceptable training topics include: Financial oversight, accountability, fiduciary responsibilities, and the general powers and duties of a library trustee;
- Certificates of completion are to be filed with the president of the library board.

The full text of the bills signed into law, [A6121B / S4435B](#), is available online. The NYS Library and WLS will support workshops that will meet these trustee training requirements.

The other legislation regarding the Open Meetings Law, [A1228A/S1150A](#), will require that open meeting documents be available upon request or posted to the public body's website at least 24 hours prior to the open meeting at which the documents will be discussed.

Cataloging Services

On September 23rd, Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray discussed specifics of the upcoming data sync reclamation project with OCLC's Senior Database Specialist Angelica Delgado. The OCLC WorldCat database contains millions of bibliographic records which are contributed and shared by catalogers internationally. It also facilitates interlibrary loans (ILL). The project will ensure that all of the titles in the WLS catalog are represented in WorldCat, to increase record sharing and ILL requests. At the present time, some preparatory work is being done by Systems Librarian Lindsay Stratton.

In addition to books in English, WLS Cataloging Services catalogs a wide variety of materials for the member libraries. Here is a small sampling of the work:

Cataloger Qingshe Ren cataloged DVDs and Blu-rays for Chappaqua Public Library, Harrison Public Library, Irvington Public Library, North Castle Public Library, Mount Pleasant Public Library, Mount Vernon Public Library, Scarsdale Public Library, White Plains Public Library and Yonkers Public Library. He also cataloged Japanese books for Harrison Public Library and Yonkers Public Library, videogames for Yonkers Public Library, and audiobooks for Bedford Hills Free Library.

Cataloger Melissa Glazer cataloged French books for Mamaroneck Public Library, Spanish books for New Rochelle Public Library, Port Chester-Rye Brook Public Library, the Warner Library and Yonkers Public Library, and Italian and Russian books for Yonkers Public Library.

Mr. Wray cataloged a guitar for Yonkers Public Library, educational kits for Katonah Village Library and the Warner Library, board games for Harrison Public Library, a "concentration" game (created by children) for Purchase Free Library, music CDs for Bronxville Public Library, Mount Vernon Public Library and New Rochelle Public Library, magazines for Chappaqua Public Library, Korean books for Katonah Village Library and the Warner Library and Italian and Spanish books for Yonkers Public Library.

The WLS catalogers perform original cataloging when a request from a member library cannot be filled by a MARC record from a vendor or by a bibliographic record found in the OCLC database.

Here are three examples of original cataloging done recently by Mr. Wray:

Ten Tidal Tales: Starring Larry & the Sea Sprite / written and illustrated by Nick Vianna

In this children's book written by a Bronxville resident, a friendship is formed between a pizza-loving seagull and the little sea sprite who rescues him at sea. Using ocean symbols to communicate, the two share their unique stories from different corners of the world, above and below the surface. (Cataloged for Bronxville Public Library)

Cooking Blind

This is a two-volume cookbook produced in braille by New York's VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired organization. (Cataloged for Larchmont Public Library)

Macey Was a Honeybee / by Grace Terwilliger and Skye Volpicella

Two young authors from Lewisboro created this book for their Girl Scout Silver Award Project. After Macey's hive is destroyed by pesticides, she finds a wonderful new home: a pollinator zone created by two Girl Scouts. (Cataloged for Lewisboro Library)

Development

This month WLS was awarded a \$15,000 grant from Con Edision. The grant will support a series of STEM workshops in collaboration with The Digital Arts Experience (DAE). **STEM in The Library Project** is designed to assist libraries in planning and presenting theme-based STEM workshops for middle schoolers. The project will include model workshop presentations for up to ten libraries with professional technology trainers from Digital Arts Experience. WLS Technology Trainer Allison Midgley will offer pre- and post-workshop support to the participants in collaboration with DAE to help library staff build confidence in presenting and developing on-going STEM programs, utilizing WLS resources, including those of the WLS LEADER LAB. The goal is to encourage libraries to sustain out-of-school programs using local resources. Libraries will be encouraged to share workshop outcomes with their community via public presentations, newsletters, social media posts and You Tube videos. A full announcement offering the program to member libraries will be made shortly.

In addition to applying for private funding for Digital Equity and Inclusion projects, Ms. Brigham is working with Rob Caluori, Chief Financial Officer, and Elena Falcone, Director of Public Innovation & Engagement, to review the currently funded programs in preparation for final reporting required by funders. Concurrently during this review process, we are working together to identify 2022 funding requests required to meet the growing needs of WLS community outreach. This will lay the foundation for WLS's 2022 fundraising strategy, including identification of new funding sources for the final quarter of 2021.

WLS will be featured in the November/December Giving Guide published by Today's Media/Westchester Magazine. The intention is to promote the impact of WLS Outreach Services throughout the County and encourage end of the year giving. Readers are directed to WLS donation pages and website to learn more.

Digital Equity & Inclusion

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Joe Maurantonio is working on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Digital Equity grant with Nate Hill, Executive Director of Metropolitan New York Library Council, to deliver information, training and technical support. The anticipated timeframe for this project is six months; and more details will be provided, once certain elements have been clarified at the State level.

Digital Equity & Inclusion Projects

Dana Hysell Alongi and Joe Maurantonio have offered presentations of existing Digital Equity and Inclusion (DEI) projects such as the Library Chromebook Loaner Program (CLP) and the Head Start/Department of Social Services Training and Chromebook Program (HS/DSS).

The CLP has grown from an initial few to 11 locations in September and currently there are 19 member library partners (Chappaqua, Croton-on-Hudson, Harrison, West Harrison Branch, Larchmont, Lewisboro, Mamaroneck, Hendrick Hudson/Montrose, Mount Kisco, Mount Pleasant, Mount Pleasant-Valhalla Branch, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Ossining, Peekskill, Port Chester-Rye Brook, Somers, Warner/Tarrytown and Yonkers Riverfront).

The HS/DSS project faced two main challenges. The Head Start community's preferred location for training and distribution was the WestCOP (Westchester Community Opportunity Program) sites, which are currently closed. Instead the training and distributions took place at six member library locations (Ossining, Yonkers, Mamaroneck, Port Chester-Rye Brook and Peekskill). The DSS training and chromebook distributions took place at the Coachman, Mount Vernon Westhelp and Vernon Plaza. Also, many preferred training in Spanish, and TD Bank supported this project by volunteering staff time to provide awesome translators.

HEAD START	
<i>Sessions offered between August 16 – September 30, 2021</i>	
Number of one-hour distributions and training sessions	15
Number of participants signed up	46
Total number of people attended	21
Total number of people invited	80
TD Bank Spanish volunteer sessions	15

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES	
<i>Sessions offered between June 8 – September 14, 2021</i>	
Number of one-hour distributions and training sessions	12
Number of participants signed up	81
Total number of people attended	87
Number of temporary library cards issued	61

Below are comments received from HS/DSS Families:

- "I think this is a great program that will help families in our community with educational development for everyone in the household. It will help my family with homework, job search, finding fun family activities and resources available to us in our community."
- "This device will help my three children with their research, homework and study."
- "I would love to volunteer in this program if possible to support community growth especially where education is concerned."
- "I learned lots of great ideas to help me navigate my new chromebook for my family. I also feel this distribution and workshop is helpful for parents like me who need a home device and computer."
- "This Chromebook will allow for my family to be able to learn about the web and to do research and most important learning activities. I will also be able to use this device to continue my education so that I can be self-sufficient for myself and family."

Information Technology (IT)

The current Service Level Agreement (SLA) process is almost complete for the year 2021/2022. All but one of the member libraries have been returned to WLS. On a positive note, some libraries have requested additional services beyond those in the initial SLA submitted (e.g. additional public workstations). Feedback is still being gathered and will be taken into consideration for the FY 2023 SLA process.

The contract for the wireless hardware will soon be ending, and a new wireless system has been installed in two-thirds of the libraries who are subscribing to the WLS IT Managed Wireless Service in 2022. Although the pandemic caused supply shortages, this project should be completed by the end of 2021. In the next phase, Internet Service Providers will install or upgrade the wireless internet circuits to boost speeds to 300Mb and higher. This will standardize wireless internet speed at WLS libraries to meet NYS standards.

The process for hiring an IT Operations Manager is almost complete. There were over 100 applicants, and the final round of interviews has taken place. We are hoping to announce the final candidate at the November Board Meeting.

PUBLIC INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT (PIE)

In addition to the activities noted below, outreach websites were migrated to a new host (Inmotion), to allow for more independently-managed site development and attend to security needs without interrupting service to the member libraries. As a result, some of the web statistics are not complete for this period as the Google analytics are refined.

In addition to our direct services, PIE staff facilitates the monthly Adult Services and Youth Services Discussions, which provide an ongoing forum for professionals to share information on community service and programming. It is also an opportunity for PIE to flag new resources and potential community partners. Monthly sessions are well attended. These meetings take place on Microsoft TEAMS, providing a forum for all to gain familiarity with this new staff resource. Regular facilitators include Ms. Hysell Alongi, Elena Falcone, and Krishna Horrigan.

PIE has continued to offer support to the Digital Access project in the form of promotion and referrals since many of the clients we serve are in need of a computer and supportive education.

Adult Education - Activity for Quarters 1-3

- **93** students enrolled in EssentialEd since it became available in April; about half continue with a study coach.
- **634** hours of study conducted in [Tests of Adult Basic Education] TABE Academy (which focuses on pre-TASC level skills); **719** hours for [Test Assessing Secondary Completion] TASC Academy (which focuses on the actual test)
- **31** volunteers
- **5,760** FirstFind.org visitors with **16,445** page views
- **A win in Quarter 3:** A recent student who passed her test let Program Coordinator Pam Hoffman know the good news: *"Thank you so much for getting me in this program and finding me the right tutor. Laura was amazing, the online courses were so helpful. I am so grateful to you all."*

Key developments in Quarter 3:

- **From tutors to coaches:** As confidence in the usability of the online TASC Academy program grows, the role of our "tutors" has shifted to that of a study "coach." The coach is responsible for guiding the student in the use of TASC Academy, monitoring progress through a powerful backend learning management system, stepping in to assist student learning as needed, and to offer encouragement along the way. A majority of tutors have comfortably shifted to this model, while a few have remained as tutors—those supporting adults with low literacy and those who serve as math tutors. At present our tutor pool is fully active.
- **Support for Spanish speakers:** Concurrent with the return of a part-time bi-lingual coordinator, Amy Gonzalez, we have been able to offer Spanish speaking adults with core literacy in their native language and the opportunity to study for the TASC exam in Spanish using TASC Academy. Ms. Gonzalez started in September and already has seven students in her coaching pool.
- **From TASC to GED:** At the end of 2021, the provider of the TASC exam is exiting the field. The final opportunity to take a TASC exam is 12/21/2021. As a result, the NYS Education

Department had to quickly open an RFP for a replacement. Given the limited field of firms providing high school equivalency tests, It appears that the outcome will be an reinstatement of the GED exam. Many questions remain unanswered about how seamlessly this transition will take place and, most importantly, how prior GED and TASC scores will be applied. Fortunately, the provider of our online study resource - Essential Ed - already has a GED learning product in both English and Spanish. We are ready for the change.

Job Search Services – Activity for Quarters 1-3

- 16 clients
- 15.5 service hours
- 2 outreach events; 25 attendees

During Quarters 1 and 2, the *Job Search Toolkit* was redesigned with a focus on clean formatting and better readability and can be downloaded via FirstFind.org. Content was significantly updated to reflect current job market realities. Supplementary materials include four roadmaps for specific audiences, which serve a dual purpose as quick reference guides and marketing tools. Note that since its posting late in Quarter 2, the *Job Search Toolkit* has been downloaded in its entirety or by chapter more than 500 times.

The *Toolkit's* Spanish translation was completed and uploaded in Quarter 3. Printing for both has been covered by generous grants.

FirstFind
TOOLS THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

FREE RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT FIRSTFIND.ORG

<p>Jobs and Careers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master the job search process Prepare for online interviews Follow our customized job search roadmaps Connect with a personal job search coach 	<p>Adult Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get your high school equivalency diploma Improve your reading skills Connect to free online tutoring Discover your college options
<p>Digital Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the basics Master your devices Become social media savvy Protect your data and privacy 	<p>Family Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set your child up for success Learn about special education Find benefits and programs Discover tips to manage your money
<p>Español</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get your high school equivalency diploma Learn English and improve core reading skills Get your next job Become a citizen 	<p>About Us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with us by email or live chat—in English or Spanish Find out about library cards Discover "News You Can Use" Register for live demonstrations of resources

Brought to you by the Westchester Library System

First Time Job Seeker
A GUIDE TO THE JOB SEARCH TOOLKIT

FULL GUIDE AVAILABLE FREE AT FIRSTFIND.ORG

Start

- Write it down** (Chapter 1): Use a structure to keep track of your search. Finding a job is a job. Establish a job search routine to reach your goal.
- Where to now?** (Chapter 1): Review your skills, interests, and experiences; use tools to identify a dream job, then set if work is available, and in a growing field. Match your strengths, education, and experience to jobs and careers where there are employment opportunities.
- Check your social media** (Chapter 2): Make your online image work-ready. Take a critical look at your social media. That Instagram after-party post will not endear you to a potential employer. Follow companies and leaders that interest you. Post news about developments and trends in your chosen occupation. New professional content will rise above the party pics.
- Write down your work history** (Chapter 9): Use the Personal Data form to pull together names, addresses, and telephone numbers of places where you worked and volunteered.

You need a resume (Chapter 5): Get help writing a resume and make sure you can edit it and talk about all the content. Highlight any leadership and club membership or volunteering from school if your work experience is minimal. Save it in Google Docs, as a Word document and PDF.

Check your email (Chapters 2 & 5): Create a work-friendly, professional email address just for your job search. hottestbabe@gmail.com is not recommended. It's time to stop using .edu email. Keep job search emails separate so they don't get lost or buried in your inbox.

Tell people your story (Chapter 6): The #1-way people get jobs is through referrals. Tell everyone you know about your plans, including your relatives and their friends and colleagues. When you meet new people, tell them too. Write down names and contact information to follow up. Update or create a LinkedIn profile and grow your virtual network.

Establish a professional phone presence (Chapter 2): Answer every call politely and use a professional, clear message for callers when you can't pick up. Don't answer the phone with a suspicious, "who is this?" or, "What did you say the name of the company is?" don't remember applying for a job there.

Customize cover letters (Chapter 5): Generic cover letters won't get noticed. Customized cover letters that include specifics and keywords will.

Broaden your volunteer work (Chapter 3): Take on leadership roles, add new experiences. Volunteer work adds to a resume or application, and provides networking opportunities and references. You never know, volunteering can turn into a paid job.

Interview (Chapter 11): Describe your talent. Take your time answering questions. Get names and contact information from interviewers and send a thank you note. You may be nervous, but you won't be unprepared. Learn from every experience.

Prepare for interviews (Chapter 10): Know the process. Respond with confidence to every step, from setting appointments by email and text to interviews by phone, video, and face to face. For both in-person interviews and virtual, dress to impress, but don't overdress. Check out the organization's dress code.

Success!

Westchester LIBRARY SYSTEM
Empowering Literacy. Engineering Connections.

Reentry Information Services – Activity for Quarters 1-3

- 46 direct client inquiries
- 12,568 site visitors (connections.westchesterlibraries.org)
- 21,343 page views

WLS Reentry Information Services responds to inquiries from community members and those currently incarcerated regarding available community resources for re-entry. To deliver and maintain this service, PIE staff actively partner with community agencies and correctional facilities (county and state) and maintain information via our printed *Westchester Reentry Resource Guide* and our website Westchester Connections (connections.westchesterlibraries.org). Notably, our key partner, the Westchester County Re-entry Task Force, has—effective this spring—broadened its scope to include guiding reentry services for both state and county returnees, including a special focus on those with the highest risk of recidivism. This expansion fits well with our county-wide service.

Key developments in Quarter 3:

- **Comics:** As a result of WLS's work with Library Pass, producer of Comics Plus and American Prison Data Systems, provider of secure tablets to the Westchester County jail, inmates now have access to graphic literature via their library card—in English and Spanish. WLS provides card numbers. PIE staff provide staff training and will be commencing a Zoom-based book group in November.
- **Purchasing:** Two of the three state correctional facilities are without a librarian who usually orders library materials. To help these libraries, PIE is obtaining resources from member library donations and selective purchasing of reading and other materials using WLS State correctional funds.
- **Storytelling:** PIE is supporting the work of Family Services of Westchester's EMERGE program to integrate a storytelling component into their programming. Involvement includes materials curation, modeling of storytelling techniques and planning for integration of this content onto the new tablets.
- **RAP sheets:** Collaboration with the County Jail and the Legal Aid Society of Westchester has resulted in several new actions to educate current inmates, and those recently released, on the importance of and steps to obtain, review and repair RAP sheets (record of arrests in prosecution). This effort has expanded importance in light of revised drug laws and is critical to removing barriers to housing and employment. This also provides an opportunity to promote the WLS services available, such as Westchester Connections, Read Better and HSE Connect!



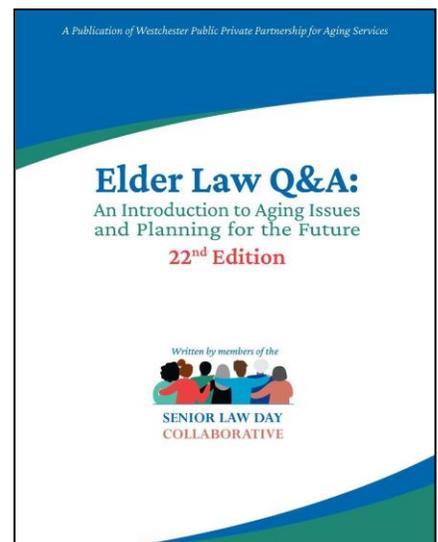
Senior Law Day Collaborative (SLDC) – Activity for Quarters 1-3

- 3,631 site visitors
- 15,983 page views
- 16 Webinars produced
- 644 webinar attendees and
- 413 subsequent webviews
- 129 individual consultations (in-person and online)
- 252 attendees at our sole in-person outreach event

WLS supports this important County initiative in several ways. Elena Falcone serves as co-chair, helping to direct the program. Megan Brown, Outreach Services Assistant, produces SLDC marketing and educational materials, does post production on all webinars and maintains the website.

Key developments in Quarter 3:

- **Webinars:** Four webinars were produced, promoted, and posted. Topics included “67 decisions that need to be made when a death occurs,” “Aging in place: options, choices and affordability,” “Making medical decisions for another,” “Special needs planning and guardianship for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.”
- **Consumer guidance:** Elena Falcone partnered with attorney and advocate Deborah Truhowsky to develop and deliver a webinar on Oct 6 - “Making Tough Choices: Using Public Data and Good Questions to Compare Nursing Homes, Rehabilitation Centers, and Hospitals.” In addition to the session's 23 attendees, the program has been added to the website's growing collection of webinars.
- **One-to-one assistance:** This was a strong quarter for one-to-one consultations thanks to our finally being able to schedule an in-person outdoor event on 9/30 at Ridge Hill Park. The event was attended by more than 250 people. Among the featured speakers at the event's start was Elena Falcone (on the subject of resilience) and Krishna Horrigan (on the subject of VisionLabs).
- **Elder Law Q&A 22nd edition:** Megan Brown provided a new, more readable, layout for the latest edition of this valuable consumer resource. The new English language edition is posted to the website; the Spanish edition will be similarly redesigned and posted before the end of the year. The new version will be available primarily online; a limited print run will be provided to WLS member libraries for reference and circulation.



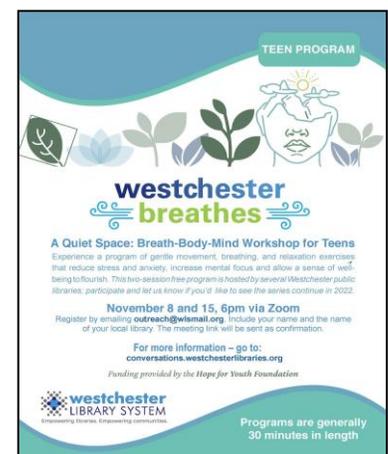
Westchester Breathes/Resilience Coalition – Activity for Quarters 1-3

[Note that visitors and page views were largely due to Project Hope and Westchester Breathes content.]

- **8,541** site visitors with **17,935** page views

Key developments in Quarter 3:

- **Project Hope:** WLS's participation with the NY Project Hope Program ended on August 20, 2021. The Westchester Crisis Counseling Team did an excellent job spreading the word about the program throughout Westchester communities and the member libraries. The team hosted many public education presentations, where they spoke to people about the program, the pandemic and managing their emotions during these unprecedented times. A lot was learned about working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the NYS Office of Mental Health. The program was successful in deepening the relationship of the System and the libraries with our other partners as well as strengthening the role of the library to the public as a trusted resource for helpful, non-biased information. Although the telephone helpline did not receive a lot of traffic, the web content did; and the people that we did connect with were extremely pleased with the help provided. Highlights include:
 - A woman suffering from the loss of her husband due to COVID was comforted by one of our counselors and referred to services in her community. This encounter also helped initiate the start of grief counseling groups in collaboration with other NY Project Hope Westchester agencies.
 - A student with a difficult home life was provided with internet access and a mobile hotspot for remote learning. This was in collaboration with WLS's Digital Equity program.
 - Working together with People USA, clinical help was found for a person suffering from PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder).
 - Educating library communities on the importance of caring for their mental health during a pandemic through presentations given during related library programs.
 - The content on the webpage will be maintained and will continue to provide guidance on COVID-19 resources as well as health resources available in the community.
- **Facilitators Guide:** The Mid Hudson Regional Youth Justice Initiative provided funds for a broad printing and distribution of the *Westchester Resilience Coalition Facilitators Guide* and a collection of suggested handouts. Printed materials will be shared among agencies supporting trauma/resilience education across the Mid-Hudson area. Materials are also posted to the Westchester Resilience Coalition.
- **BBM for Teens:** Several libraries are supporting "A Quiet Space: Breath-Body-Mind Workshop for Teens." This two-session workshop is a response to concerns raised about teen stress in the current school year and will assess opportunities for teen-directed programming in 2022. Funding was made possible by a dedicated grant for teen programming from Hope for Youth.



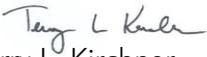
Upcoming Events

The [Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State](#) Bookclub will continue with co-authors Jerry Nichols and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich. Program details can be found at <https://midhudson.org/trusteebookclub/>. The next sessions are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, November 16, from 5:00-6:30pm: [Library Board Meetings](#) | [Register Here](#)

Tuesday, December 14, from 5:00-6:30pm: [Personnel](#) | [Register Here](#)

Respectfully submitted,


Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director