

**Call to Meeting  
March 31, 2026**

The next Regular Meeting of the Westchester Library System (WLS) is **Tuesday, March 31, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.** PLEASE NOTE: This meeting will take place at the WLS Headquarters, 570 Taxter Rd, Ste 400, Elmsford, NY 10523.

***Regular Meeting Agenda***

**Minutes:** February 24, 2026

**Finances**

**Action Items**

**Action Item #1: Designation of Depositories – Extension for TD Bank**

**President's Report**

**WLS Committee Reports**

**Executive Director's Report**

**NEXT MEETING:** The next Regular Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 28, at 6:00 p.m.

**WESTCHESTER LIBRARY SYSTEM**  
**Trustee Meeting**  
**February 24, 2026 – Approval Pending**

**REGULAR MEETING**

The Regular Meeting of the Westchester Library System was called to order by Nishat Hydari at 6:03 p.m.

The quorum requirement was met with the following people in attendance:

Board Members present: Robert Cartolano, Ralph Esposito, Nishat Hydari, Alice Joselow, Maureen LeBlanc, Susan Morduch, David Mener, Hudson Trader, Barbara Tepper, Diane Tabakman, Karen Zevin

Board Members absent: Andrea Bober, Wes Iwanski, Karen Kelley, Patricia Phelan

Also present from WLS were: Wilson Arana, Rob Caluori, Terry Kirchner, Kate Meyer

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the January 27, 2026, Board Meeting were approved on a motion by Ms. LeBlanc and seconded by Mr. Trader. The motion passed unanimously. [Ms. Joselow was not present for the vote.]

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Mr. Caluori presented the payment registers for January 2026. The financial reports for January 2026 were approved on a motion by Ms. LeBlanc and seconded by Ms. Morduch. The financial reports were accepted unanimously.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Ms. Hydari thanked Dr. Kirchner, WLS staff and all the trustees who attended Library Advocacy Day on February 3, 2026 for a very successful event. Mr. Cartolano noted that the event was very well coordinated and thanked the WLS staff for their hard work. He was able to meet with members of the Assembly and Senate.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Budget & Finance:** The committee met before the Board meeting, where there was extensive discussion surrounding digital content. There is a tentative date to reconvene in May prior to the WLS Board Meeting.

**Audit:** Mr. Caluori noted that the WLS financial audit was completed a week sooner than previously scheduled and is currently being finalized. Mr. Caluori will reach out to Chair, Wes Iwanski, to schedule meetings with the Audit Committee.

**Governance:** The Governance Committee will meet in March to discuss policy updates, change in by-laws, and capitalization of right of access as it applies to the WLS office lease.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

A copy of the Executive Director’s Report was mailed in advance of the meeting.

- WLS has two employee vacancies, one in the Outreach Department and the other in the Cataloging department.
- The WLS lease with 570 Taxter Road is up on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2027. In December a proposal was sent to the landlord to keep the lease at 570 Taxter Road, but we have not gotten a response. Next steps include looking at other properties to lease, with the opportunity to sub-lease.
- The next installment of the Trustee Handbook Book Club Series entitled “Hiring and Evaluating the Library Director” is April 16, 2026, and is presented by Brian Hildreth, Executive Director, Southern Tier Library System.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Having completed its agenda, the Board adjourned its meeting at 7:02 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Cartolano and seconded by Ms. Tepper that passed unanimously.

Respectively submitted,

Diane H. Tabakman  
Secretary

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# WESTCHESTER LIBRARY SYSTEM

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS WITH NOTES – FEBRUARY 2026

### REPORT NOTES

All of the figures in the accompanying notes are approximate to the nearest \$100 or 1% when practical. The figures in the financial statements are rounded to the nearest dollar and percentages are presented to two decimal places.

This month's report includes the following financial statements:

- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Revenues and Expenditures with Comparison to Budget

Please note that this report contains unaudited financial data for the year-end 2025. At the time of this report all closing and correcting entries for FY2025 have been posted. However, the data is considered unaudited until the Audit Committee and the Board have accepted the audit report.

### UPDATE ON CHANGE TO VALLEY NATIONAL BANK

Work continues to transition WLS's bank accounts from TD Bank to Valley National Bank (Valley Bank). As of the time of this report, most cash balances have been moved to Valley Bank. Due to a delay in updating systems with ADP, which processes WLS's payroll through the Payroll Account, there is a need to keep balances available with TD Bank for payroll cycles through April. After this is complete the TD Bank accounts will be brought to \$0 balances. Since balances will be in the accounts in April, they will also accrue interest. The accounts will be closed in May following the posting of interest earned in April. An action item to extend the use of these accounts through that period will be presented to the Board at the March 31, 2026 meeting. TD Bank has granted WLS a waiver on bank fees for two months as a courtesy while we finalize the transfers.

### PAYMENTS OVER \$50,000

The WLS Purchasing Policy (Policy #13) requires that purchases exceeding \$50,000 without prior budget approval be formally reported to the Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting. To meet and exceed the policy directive, all payments over \$50,000 in February 2026 are listed below:

- Amount: \$92,052
  - Vendor: OCLC
  - Purpose: Cataloging and Interlibrary loan software and database access for 2026 activities
- Amount: \$81,223
  - Vendor: NYS Employees Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP)
  - Purpose: Employee health insurance for March 2026
- Amount: \$60,421
  - Vendor: Midwest Tape (Hoopla)
  - Purpose: January 2026 Patron Pay-Per-Use Digital Content

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## BALANCE SHEET – JANUARY 2026

The Balance Sheet shows comparative figures for the period from month-ending (ME) January 2026 through ME February 2026. The key changes include decreases in *Accounts Receivable* and *Prepaid Expenses*, which were partially offset by decreases in *Accounts Payable* and *Deferred Revenue*, resulting in a 1% decrease in *Net Assets*. Details are discussed below.

### ASSETS:

This section indicates the organization's liquidity by showing what assets WLS holds in cash and other assets. The net result for the period is an overall increase in assets driven primarily by anticipated recording of receivables in *Unconditional Promises to Give* and *Accounts Receivable*.

*Operating Cash & Cash Equivalents* (This shows the cash in WLS's operating and payroll bank accounts and petty cash): WLS's operating cash increased slightly by \$1,400. With \$707,400 in receipts, activity included \$350,300 from member libraries for IT services and group purchases and \$335,800 from Westchester County for the fourth quarter of 2025. Notable expenditures aside from rent, payroll and benefits, Internet, and delivery to libraries included \$92,100 to OCLC for software and database subscriptions to support Cataloging and Interlibrary Loan activities in 2026 and \$60,400 to Hoopla for pay-per-use patron activity in January 2026.

*Reserve Cash & Cash Equivalents* (This shows the cash in WLS's reserve accounts and short-term investment holdings): This line increased by \$7,100, the result of earnings on reserve funds held with NYCLASS, TD Bank, Valley Bank and earnings on US Treasury investments.

*Unconditional Promises* (These are promises to give money to WLS such as governmental aid): This line increased by \$8,300, the result of recording \$344,100 receivable revenues from Westchester County, New York State and the Federal E-Rate program against the receipt of \$335,800 for the fourth quarter of 2025 from Westchester County.

### LIABILITIES:

This section shows WLS's near-term obligations. The net result for the period is an overall increase in liabilities, primarily driven by the recording of *Deferred Revenue*. Details are discussed below:

*Deferred Revenue* (Funds received which have not yet been earned): This figure decreased by \$215,900, the result recognizing \$244,500 in revenues from 6-month and 3-month invoices to member libraries for IT services and group purchases against the deferral of \$28,600 in revenues toward the Disconnect2Reconnect Conference and LIU tuition invoices.

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## STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

### COMPARISON TO BUDGET WITH PREVIOUS YEARS TO DATE – FEB. 2026

Revenues were \$69,600 more than expenses before depreciation for February which represents a \$110,400 positive variance from the budget, which had called for a \$40,800 deficit.

#### REVENUES:

Total revenue for February was 16,200 more than the budget with offsetting positive and negative variances in several lines. Details are discussed below.

*State Revenues without Restrictions* and *State Revenues with Restrictions* – These lines are flat against the budget. This is based on WLS's procedure to recognize NYS revenues in-line with the budget until NYS releases official aid figures which will not be known until after the State budget is passed and figures are released by the Division of Library Development later in the spring.

*Member Technology Fees* are higher than budgeted this month and was driven by two factors: (1) some libraries added supported PCs after their 2026 Service Level Agreements were signed, which generated more revenue than planned and (2) fines and fees collected through the online catalog, which will be paid out at the end of March. There will be a corresponding expense against the fines and fees collected in the following month as this revenue comes in monthly, but is paid out quarterly.

*Interest* outperformed the monthly budget by \$11,800 and was driven by the turnover of an investment of Treasury Bills. WLS maintains two active investments in 6-month Treasury Bills. The investments are timed so that there are maturity dates in the summer months should WLS need to access cash while awaiting funding from NYS.

#### EXPENSES:

Expenses before depreciation came in \$94,200 less than the budget and were \$69,600 more than revenues for the month. Lines with significant variances and/or noteworthy activity are discussed below:

*Fringe Benefits* – This line carried a \$21,172 surplus for the month. This can be attributed to several factors including: (1) health insurance premiums not increasing as much as planned, (2) health insurance contributions from retirees, and (3) there are currently three positions in the budget which are not currently filled. The three vacancies are also the primary driver of the \$27,500 surplus in the *Salaries* line. WLS had planned for a 15% increase in health insurance premiums, while the actual increase was 9.2%, which should drive an anticipated \$25,500 savings for the year.

*Contractual Services* – This line ended the month with a \$10,200 surplus and a \$4,000 surplus for the YTD. There are budgeted activities in this line that have larger milestone payments that will occur later in the year. This will cause some months to have notable positive and negative variances; however, it is expected that the line will run in-line with the budget for the year.

*Library Materials* expenses were \$4,700 less than budget. The revised service reductions in Hoopla and Kanopy implemented in February to meet the budget were successful in curbing spending in this line. The line is expected to carry a small surplus every month, which will bring the current YTD deficit of \$42,100 in line with the budget by the end of the year.

**Item:**                    **Designation of Depositories – Extension for TD Bank**

**Background:**            The WLS Investment of Funds policy provides comprehensive direction on the deposit and investment of cash assets. The WLS Purchasing policy additionally directs the prudent and economical use of revenues.

To that end, WLS engaged in a Request for Proposals (RFP) for banking services and selected Valley National Bank (Valley Bank) to replace TD Bank at the October 28, 2025 meeting of the Board.

At that meeting, the Board authorized TD Bank to be a designated depository for system funds through March 31, 2026.

**Status:**                    While most WLS funds in checking and savings accounts have been moved to Valley Bank, there have been some delays with transitioning payroll activities, which will require the accounts to stay open longer than originally planned.

In addition, the account for Treasury Bills has not yet been established, and therefore WLS’s holdings of these investments are still held with TD Wealth, the investment arm of TD Bank.

The Banking Services RFP was publicly posted to the WLS website on July 14, 2025. Any qualified institution was welcome to submit a proposal. In addition, nine institutions were invited to submit proposals, including WLS’s current bank.

**Recommended  
Action**

Management recommends that the Board approve an extension of TD Bank’s designation of deposits for checking and savings accounts through May 31, 2026 and an extension for TD Wealth for Treasury investments through August 31, 2026.

March 31, 2026

## WLS Executive Director Report March 31, 2026

### WLS Strategic Initiatives



Promoting equity and access



Expand Community/Member Library/Partner Engagement



Update and Improve Our Infrastructure

### Advocacy

#### ***Federal Legislation Concerning Freedom to Read***

There are currently two bills in Washington that will protect an individual's freedom to read. Senator Jack Reed (RI) and Representative Adelita Grijalva (AZ-07) have introduced the Right to Read Act ([H.R.6440](#) / [S.3365](#)). The "Fight Book Bans Act" [H.R.7691](#) (2026), was introduced by Rep. Maxwell Frost (FL-10) and co-sponsored by Rep. Frederica Wilson (FL-24) and Rep. Jamie Raskin (MD-8).

Reach out to your elected officials and ask them to support the [Right to Read Act](#) and the [Fight Book Bans Act](#)! Instead of restricting what students can read, these two acts encourage investment in literacy, support librarians, and protect access to books.

#### ***NYS Budget Update & Call to Action***

The NYS budget process for the upcoming April 1, 2026-March 31, 2027 fiscal year is still underway, and it is important for library supporters to remind their NYS elected officials that libraries are an important investment in every community throughout the state. You can learn more about the NYLA Budget and Legislative priorities at <https://www.nyla.org/2026-legislative-session>.

The New York Library Association (NYLA) requests your assistance in encouraging your library board members and your entire community to reach out to your state representatives by [using NYLA's Advocacy Alert to send an email to your legislators](#).

***Governor's Executive Budget, "1-House" Proposed Budgets & NYLA's Ask***

	<b>Governor</b>	<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>NYLA's Ask</b>	<b>Last Year's Allocation</b>
<b>Operating Aid</b>	\$104.7 M	\$109.3 M	\$114.67 M	\$181.3 M	\$106.325 M
<b>Construction Aid</b>	\$34 M	\$70 M	\$54 M	\$175 M	\$44 M
<b>Office of Cultural Education</b>	\$12 M	\$12 M	\$12 M	\$12 M	\$0
<b>Grants-in-Aid</b>	N/A	\$16.2 M	\$6 M	N/A	N/A

## Minimum Standard Updates

Earlier this month the NYS Board of Regents approved an amendment to Minimum Standard #4 that addresses board-approved written policies. The standard has been expanded to include specific policies which must be reviewed and/or updated at least once every 5 years on or before January 1, 2027:

- The selection of library materials and reconciliation of such selection
- Public usage of library space and meeting rooms
- Codes of conduct
- Confidentiality of library records
- Internal library policies related to:
  - Personnel policies that ensure consistent staff management and fair employment practices
  - Disaster preparedness
  - Financial control policies that fulfil the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the governing body and promote fiscal oversight, accountability, and sustainable management

The New York State Library's Division of Library Development (DLD) is working with PULISDO (Public Library System Directors Organization) to develop templates and policy development guidelines to help every public and association library meet this enhanced policy standard.

## E-rate Legal Challenge

The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition, Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), and MediaJustice filed a [joint brief](#) in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit defending the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Universal Service Fund (USF) against a renewed legal challenge brought by Consumers'

Research and other petitioners. The agencies that have filed this joint brief argue that the challenge brought by Consumers' Research fails because the statutory provisions at issue contain the same kinds of constraints the Supreme Court already upheld, including the requirement that the FCC's support mechanisms be "sufficient" and "economically reasonable." As the brief states: "Although Petitioners continue to press a nondelegation argument, they have learned none of the lessons from the Supreme Court's decision in their prior challenge." Should Consumers' Research be successful in this challenge, then it is possible that e-rate reimbursements would no longer be available. While this worst-case outcome is unlikely, it is a reminder that e-rate funding is not a guarantee and should not be viewed as a sustainable funding approach.

## Cataloging Services

Director of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray often acts as a liaison between the WLS member libraries and the vendors who sell books and audiovisual materials to the libraries. Most vendors also offer MARC records, which allow for easier and faster display of these titles in the online catalog and facilitate discovery and circulation. In the past few months, many libraries have been shopping for new vendors to replace the vendor Baker & Taylor, that ceased operations in December 2025. Because the vendors and the libraries often "speak different languages", particularly when it comes to technical matters, Mr. Wray tries to clarify and interpret things for both parties.

In the past month, Mr. Wray participated in a meeting with several people from the Ingram Content Group and Yonkers Public Library. Mount Pleasant Public Library, Ossining Public Library and Larchmont Public Library are also in talks with Ingram and reached out to Mr. Wray. Bronxville Public Library has been exploring Amazon, a company who has just recently begun expanding its collection-related sales to libraries.

The WLS libraries serve their communities by owning and lending materials in many different world languages. In the past month, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish works were cataloged, with Manager of Cataloging Services Melissa Glazer handling the Chinese and Japanese languages.

Mr. Wray and Ms. Glazer also cataloged several Braille books for White Plains Public Library. An organization called Seedlings Braille Books for Children takes existing books and attaches adhesive plastic strips with Braille characters onto the pages. These books all required original ("from scratch") cataloging.

Original cataloging was also employed by Mr. Wray for a Chinese checkers game (cataloged for the Pound Ridge Library) and for several Tonies and Tonieboxes (cataloged for the Greenburgh Public Library). Tonies are preloaded audiobooks or musical sound recordings for children. They are toy figurines which a child inserts into a Toniebox, which is essentially a speaker which produces the sound encoded in the figurine. For example, there is a Willy Wonka figurine which contains an unabridged version of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The company who manufactures them, Boinne USA, says, "Parents rest easy knowing that without screens or ads, kids can safely and independently play, while keeping an eye on things with the tonies app."



## ILS, Discovery, and ILL Services

### ***New WLS Mobile app***

Allison Pryor, ILS Discovery Specialist, has been working with the app developer, Solus, and Apple, to get the app ready for a planned early April 2026 release. Ms. Pryor also has test accounts ready for selected member libraries who have volunteered to test the new app and will provide materials to help patrons and staff with the transition. It is anticipated that the app will automatically update for patrons.

### ***Staff account ILS authentication change***

Lindsay Stratton, Integrated Library System (ILS) Administrator / System Librarian, with Wilson Arana, Director of IT, Ms. Pryor, and Michael Petrocelli, Junior Network/Help Desk Administrator, has been working toward updating staff accounts for libraries that are no longer on WLS managed networks and services to remove staff Evergreen password management from Active Directory to passwords managed directly within Evergreen. This is driven by changes in Microsoft (MS) licensing, and our ongoing efforts to maintain MS accounts.

### ***ILS upgrade***

Ms. Stratton has scheduled an ILS upgrade for May 13, 2026. Information and training for library staff will be rolled out in the coming weeks.



## Information Technology (IT) Services

Since last month, the IT department has completed the Request for Proposal for a new Internet Service Provider and will be performing a transition in service providers. Lightpath has offered services at a much better cost than our current contract, with additional security features that can be implemented if needed. This switchover will not impact service at the libraries.

Another ongoing project is the decommissioning of the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) environment. Over the next few months, all VDI terminals will be replaced with Windows desktop computers. One outcome of this process has been the acknowledgment that WLS IT will need to review the computer management service it has long provided to libraries.

The IT department has always provided computer hardware to libraries as part of the managed service, but this practice will need to be reviewed moving forward. As part of the VDI decommissioning project, new Windows desktop computers will need to be ordered. Based on

the current economic environment, prices are much higher than they were in the past. A quick price analysis has shown that the computer we purchased in 2020 was approximately \$675 per unit, while in November 2024, that identical computer was priced at \$810 — approximately a 20% increase. The real sticker shock is that the current device is listed at approximately \$1,200 as of March 2026, representing an approximate 45% increase in price.

These rising prices make it hard for the department to deliver the same level of service to the libraries without increasing fees each year. Discussions are underway with the libraries to provide a service model that will address their needs while keeping costs more predictable and consistent going forward. This change in the service model will not be immediate but rather will move forward in the upcoming years to allow libraries additional time to adjust to the anticipated higher costs that the libraries will need to incorporate into their annual budgets.



## Outreach Services

### ***Connecting with Port Chester Head Start***

Port Chester Head Start requested a Resource Review for its March parent meeting on Thursday, March 19. Fifteen family members attended, along with the Center Director and three Family Advocates who assisted with translation. Janet Donat, Outreach Specialist, facilitated the session. Attendees shared positive feedback about the resources and services provided by the [Port Chester-Rye Brook Public Library](#) and left with pamphlets, [Job Search Toolkit workbooks](#), and [GED information](#).

Family Advocates expressed interest in the [Westchester Breathes](#) program and requested a June return visit. During follow-up discussions, staff described significant trauma impacting families in the community, and Westchester Breathes was identified as a potential resource to support stress reduction and emotional well-being for both children and caregivers.

### ***Senior Law Day***

On March 12, Senior Law Day provided free one-on-one consultations with attorneys, financial planners, and care managers for 25 participants, helping seniors navigate legal, financial, and care-related questions. Participants shared positive feedback, including a testimonial highlighting the value of thoughtful, informed guidance. In addition to regular webinars, the program will offer in-person sessions at The Field Library on March 27 and White Plains Public Library on April 28, expanding opportunities for face-to-face access to resources. Megan Brown, Communications and Marketing Coordinator, has been named co-chair of the Senior Law Day Collaborative, supporting outreach, coordination, and continued expansion of services for seniors across Westchester County.

### ***Westchester Breathes***

The Westchester Breathes team delivered a successful mix of online and in-person programming in Q1, serving diverse audiences through two weekly online series and

customized sessions for Yonkers Will Library, ARC Westchester clients, and White Plains Youth Bureau staff. The six-member team is composed of local participants trained through the NYS Trauma Informed Network & Resource Center and is led by Elena Falcone, WLS Outreach Coordinator. Team members/instructors include WLS Outreach Specialist Janet Donat and Heather Buyers, Sonia Kleinman, Randy Mulder, and Keerti Parhar. Future programming will expand with additional online and in-person sessions, including targeted series for Westchester Department of Health WIC and reentry populations and advanced workshops supporting deeper practice and teacher training pathways.

### **Westchester Library Association (WLA) Midwinter Conference**

Terry Kirchner, Executive Director; Megan Brown, Communications and Marketing Coordinator; Melissa Glazer, Manager of Cataloging Services; and Janet Donat, Outreach Specialist, attended the WLA Midwinter Conference on February 27, where WLS sponsored breakfast. Keynote speaker Mark Aaron Polger, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Library Outreach at the College of Staten Island (CUNY) presented on intentional outreach, and Catherine Graybosch shared insights on the Portrait of a Graduate. Ms. Donat also presented on the D2R initiative, clarifying its purpose for librarians and highlighting opportunities for engagement. Her session emphasized the importance of play and introduced screening opportunities for *Playing for Keeps: The Upside of Downtime*, encouraging libraries to incorporate these themes into programming and outreach.



## **Small Business and Workforce Development**

[WLS Small Business and Workforce Development \(SBWD\)](#) continues to collaborate and partner with community organizations to advocate for small business start-ups and skilled trades careers ([BlueCareer](#)).

In late February, we conducted a “first” BlueCareer workshop in Spanish at a Westchester based community center. The workshop included 6 attendees and the participants ranged from early 20s to mid-30s Latino men (and a woman participant). The presentation slides were in Spanish and presented in English. For those with limited English skills, a WLS staff member translated the presentation content into Spanish. Overall, the attendees were engaged and provided positive feedback on the

A promotional poster for a workshop. At the top left is the City of Yonkers seal. To its right is the 'YONKERS mwbe' logo, with 'minority/women business enterprises' written below it. The main title is 'LOCAL TO LASTING' in large blue letters, followed by 'A MWBE Small Business Development Workshop'. The date and time are 'Tuesday, March 3, 2026' and '6:00 - 9:00 pm'. The location is 'Philipse Manor Hall • 29 Warburton Avenue'. A section titled 'KEYNOTE SPEAKER' features a photo of Kecia Palmer-Cousins, MBA, CEO, with her bio: 'Owner of Aero-Soul, Inc (NYC/NYS Certified)'. Below this are three smaller presentation slots: 'Presentation by Art Hunter, SCORE Volunteer', 'Presentation by Peter Riffel, Director of Small Business &amp; Workforce Development, Westchester Library System', and 'Presentation by Barnett Stokes, Business Relationship Manager, MWBE Team at Webster Bank and Community Capital Board Member'.

workshop.

WLS SBWD was invited to present at a City of Yonkers Minority/Women Business Enterprise (MBWE) small business development workshop. This event was sponsored by the City of Yonkers Mayor's office. The event was very well attended (over 60) and special guests included Mayor Mike Spano and State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. Workshop presenters included SCORE Westchester, Community Capital of New York, Webster Bank, and a local certified MWBE small business owner.

The keynote speaker, Kecia Palmer-Cousins, provided the attendees with extensive information on the MBWE certification and how to secure MWBE related funding. WLS presented on our [small business website](#) including market and industry research resources and how the library is a resource partner to small business owners. The feedback on our presentation was very positive.



## **Strategic Data Analysis and Member Library Support**

### ***2024 NYS annual reports***

The [WLS Member Library Statistics Report 2024](#) is available on the WLS website. Ms. Midgley, Manager of Strategic Data Analysis and Member Library Support, and Bijan Kimiagar of AEQUA Strategies shifted the focus of and expanded the report so that it features system-wide trends and community, collection, activity, and financial reporting analyses as well as detailed library profiles.

### ***2025 NYS annual reports***

Twenty-eight member libraries have submitted their 2025 Annual Reports for review. The Division of Library Development (DLD) has supplied a link and access to the DLD portal for online submission, but it is not yet open for libraries to enter responses. Ms. Midgley adapted the provided instruction guide for local use and clarity. Ms. Midgley anticipates that the majority of libraries will easily meet DLD's deadline, which has been extended to April 16. She is also working with New Rochelle Public Library staff to pilot a mechanism to more easily track programming statistics for the annual reports.

### ***hoopla updates***

Following the WLS-funded hoopla threshold reductions put in place due to budget restrictions, Ms. Midgley worked with Dr. Kirchner and hoopla representatives to help libraries understand their patrons' use and estimated costs of library-funded borrows. More than half of WLS member libraries have added or are in the process of adding borrows to meet their patron demand.

### ***Monthly statistics data dashboard in development***

Ms. Midgley and Mr. Kimiagar have begun research and development of a monthly statistics data dashboard that will replace the current Evolytix dashboard in 2027. The Library Online Calculated and Analyzed Local Statistics (LOCALS) dashboard is designed to centralize storage

and access to monthly statistics, simplify data maintenance processes, provide meaningful visualizations, and reduce costs by shifting to internal maintenance and management.



## Strategic Relations and Development

### ***ConnectAll Digital Equity Program Grant***

WLS is in the final contact stage for the most recent [ConnectAll Digital Equity Program Capacity grant](#) (Hudson Valley Connected) from [NYS Empire State Development \(ESD\)](#). WLS is one of 13 nonprofits from across the State to receive funding for projects that advance the capacity of increasing high-quality resources for digital skills, education and access to reach and engage more than 110,000 New Yorkers across the state.

WLS is the lead partner and project administrator for Hudson Valley Connected, which will include digital navigator training for library staff and community organizations, develop a Digital Navigator Training Hub, and offer public programs on digital literacy, cyber security and internet safety in partnership. This effort is a collaboration with the Mid-Hudson Library System, Ramapo Catskill Library System and the Southeastern NY Library Resource Council. Combined, these four library systems serve the nine counties in the [NYS ESD's Mid-Hudson region](#). A core component of the initiative is a region-wide marketing campaign to expand awareness of the project's activities and impact throughout the region. This marketing campaign will be led by Image PR and Communications. The 18-month project is expected to begin in early April.

### ***Library Sustainability and Resiliency***

As we move forward into Spring and upcoming Earth Day, WLS is preparing a number of programs that promote library sustainability and resiliency. A special **Strategic Partnership grant from Con Edison** will support Staff and Trustee education on library sustainability and environmental literacy. The grant will also fund public library programs, which will be delivered by environmental educators from [DIG Farm](#) and [Teatown Lake Reservation](#). These programs will be made available to member libraries through mini-grants.

### ***Disconnect 2 Reconnect Conference on April 27, 2026***

International keynote speaker Mia Sundstrom will lead off the day that includes a selection of ten interactive, innovative workshops presented by professionals in the fields of trauma informed social work, museum education, child development in the beautiful setting of Windrose on the Hudson in Ossining. Ms. Sundstrom's keynote will focus on the shifting role of play in modern society, including the impact of technology, screen culture, and accelerating work demands on play behavior and its consequences for individual and collective wellbeing.

Ms. Sundstrom will be joined by Benjamin Perks, Child Advocate at UNICEF for a conversation and audience Q&A. Workshop topics include:

- **More. Free. Play: Why Children Need it and How We Can Support It**, presented by Dr. Cynthia Parson Puccio, Sarah Lawrence College Psychology Faculty;
- **Supporting Adolescent Well-Being: How Connection, Play, Purpose, and Autonomy Protect Against Depression and Anxiety**, Presented by Andrea Fallick, Director, School Based Services, Student Assistance Services Corporation; Meredith Ohms, Student Assistance Counselor, Briarcliff High School; and
- **Serious Fun: How Play Sparks Real Learning** presented by Alyssa Martin, Manager of Education & Programs, Westchester Children’s Museum.

Learn more about the day’s events, purchase a ticket or make a donation to support the event at [Transformative Power of Play - D2R Conference](#).

### ***Legal Aid Society of Westchester – Informational Video***

This February, WLS partnered with Good For You Productions (GFYP) to produce a three-minute video highlighting the impact of WLS Outreach Services. Once all editing is completed, Legal Aid Society of Westchester will share the video on its waiting room television, helping clients see how library services can support them in achieving their goals.

GFYP CEO Jeff Cobelli and his film crew interviewed and filmed WLS Outreach program participants and staff. Through a thoughtful and engaging process, participants shared powerful personal stories that included the positive impact that libraries had in their lives. One individual described his reentry journey after incarceration. He told us that the WLS Outreach Reentry team was the first to connect with him—an experience he credits as a critical source of motivation, including eventually getting his GED. These personal stories illustrate how WLS services and personal connect empower individuals and strengthen the community. WLS plans to build on this effort by producing and sharing additional personal impact stories on our website and social media.



## **Trustee Education Opportunities**

The 2026 Trustee Handbook Book Club’s schedule includes 3 new sessions. All of these sessions are hosted online and run from 5 PM to 6:30 PM. Register for these sessions at <https://midhudson.org/trusteebookclub/>.

Thursday, April 16: Hiring and Evaluating the Library Director

Wednesday, June 17: Laws and Regulations

Thursday, October 29: Duties and Responsibilities of Key Officer Roles

*Archived recordings of earlier sessions are available on the Trustee Handbook Book Club Archive at <https://midhudson.org/trustee-handbook-book-club-archive/>.*

Nonprofit Westchester (NPW) provides numerous information and training sessions that qualify for trustee education credits. **All WLS member library trustees and staff are NPW members** through WLS' umbrella membership.

WLS has partnered with the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) to offer additional attorney led (Stephanie "Cole" Adams, Esq.) online education sessions on a range of topics in 2026. All library staff and trustees are welcome to attend these sessions and individuals who attend can self-affirm their attendance for their trustee education and public librarian certification requirements. These sessions will not be recorded. Registration is not required and the event link will be shared a day before the scheduled session. The tentative list of dates and topics for 2026 includes:

**April 30, 10 AM-12 PM: Collection Development and Procurement**

Recent court cases and legislative action are inspiring questions about collection development policy and procedure. What are the important considerations for 2026? How can you be ready if there are questions about collection development in your community?

**June 11, 10 AM-12 PM: Supporting Social Services at the Library**

Is your community turning to your library for needs related to well-being, food security, housing, supervised visits, and addiction?

This session will review the law, policy, procedure, and practical tips for providing library services while maintaining solid boundaries for those needing help from social service, health departments, and other helping agencies. We will also explore templates and language for developing partnerships with government and NGOs to meet community needs.

**August 13, 10 AM-12 PM: Grants and External Funding**

There are many kinds of grants, aid packages, and donations, and almost all of them come with strings (a.k.a. legal conditions).

This session will review the basic vocabulary, policies, and procedures for compliance, and discuss typical grant requirements. This session will be helpful for those just learning grant writing, and for experienced directors who want to see the latest.

**October 29, 10 AM-12 PM: Civil Service**

Civil Service compliance can be...a challenge. This session will review the basics, review sample policy and procedure language to coordinate compliance with local rules, review legal requirements that can help smooth the relationship, and discuss techniques for using your local Civil Service as either a trusted partner (or at least a baseline competent resource who does not get in the way of timely hiring and promotion).

***WLS Trustee Institute: Library Sustainability, Resiliency, and the Triple Bottom Line – It's more than just recycling!***

Tuesday, April 6, 2026, 6 PM-8 PM – Harrison Public Library  
Learn more about this Trustee Institute and register at  
<https://westchesterlibraries.libcal.com/event/16537417>

***Disconnect 2 Reconnect (D2R) Conference: The Transformative Power of Play: Combatting Depression, Anxiety, and Isolation in the Digital Age***

Monday, April 27, 2026, 8 AM-4 PM – [Windrose on Hudson](#) (Ossining)  
Learn more about the conference and register to attend at  
<https://conversations.westchesterlibraries.org/d2r/d2r-conference/>



Respectively Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry L Kirchner".

Terry L. Kirchner, PhD  
Executive Director