

Executive Director's Report March 2022

NYS Budget FY 2022-2023

On February 23rd, a virtual advocacy workshop was held for library trustees and directors interested in participating in this year's Library Advocacy Day activities. A review was provided of New York Library Association's (NYLA) key financial "asks" for New York State's FY 2022-2023 Budget and other non-financial legislative issues including updating Civil Service regulations and Open Meetings Law. This was followed by our virtual advocacy event with the Westchester Delegation of the New York State Legislators on March 2nd.

Both the Senate and the Assembly have proposed increases for library funding over the amounts included in Governor Kathy Hochul's Executive Budget for FY 2022-2023 of \$96.1 Million for Library Aid and \$14 Million for Public Library Construction Aid. The exact amounts are as follows:

	ASSEMBLY	SENATE
Library Aid	\$106.1M	\$123.1M
Public Library Construction Aid	\$34M	\$45M
DEI Funding for Libraries	\$1.2M	\$1.2M
Love Your Library Fund	\$150,000 Release	\$150,000 Release
Digital Inclusion Grant	\$30M Total	\$30M Total

All library Trustees are encouraged to contact their legislators via [NYLA's Online Advocacy Center](#) to support an increase in funding.

Central Library/Maintenance of Effort Update

As noted in last month's report, WLS received official notification from DLD that the System's Central Library, the Mount Vernon Public Library, failed to meet the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements. The failure of a Central Library to meet the MOE requirements in Education Law triggers a 25% reduction of 2022 formula State Aid for Central Library Services (State FY 2022-2023) as defined under the Provisions of [Education Law 272 \(1\)\(j\)\(2\)](#). The anticipated reduction for WLS Central Library Services Aid for this year is anticipated to be approximately \$85,500. The final amount will be determined by total funding allocations that are currently under discussion as part of the NYS budget process.

Under the Provisions of [Education Law 272 \(1\)\(j\)\(3\)](#), a public library system may request a waiver from the Commissioner of Education. Upon receipt and review of legal documentation from the system, the Commissioner is authorized to waive the MOE requirement for a period of up to three calendar years.

The MOE waiver process, which WLS needs to complete, requires an explanation of why the triggering event occurred and what steps have been taken to address the cause of the MOE triggering event. The failure to meet the MOE requirement was triggered because the Mount Vernon Public Library's 2020 Annual Report has not yet been accepted and approved by DLD.

Three documents need to be successfully submitted to and approved by DLD to strengthen WLS's chances of having the MOE waiver approved if Mount Vernon Public Library is to remain as the System's Central Library:

- 2020 Annual Report – the deadline for submission has passed, but approval by DLD is still required.
- Registration application – the deadline for the completed application's review and approval by DLD is March 31, 2022. Final approval requires that the library's 2020 Annual Report be approved by DLD first so that the financial data from the 2020 Annual Report can be incorporated into the library's registration application.
- 2021 Annual Report – the deadline for the submission was Tuesday, March 15, 2022. DLD approval of the 2021 Annual Report is contingent on approval of the 2020 Annual Report.

Dr. Kirchner and Executive Assistant Elise Burke have been working with Timur Davis, Director of the Mount Vernon Public Library, and his staff to move the 2020 Annual Report and the registration application forward so that the documents can be reviewed and approved by the Mount Vernon Public Library Board of Trustees and then forwarded to DLD for review and approval.

The Field Library in Peekskill has volunteered to serve as the Interim Central Library for the system during the time period of the waiver if necessary. The Field Library meets the requirements for a central library as defined in [Commissioner's Regulation 90.4](#). If the MOE waiver were to be filed with the Field Library as the Central Library, the 2022-2026 WLS Plan of Service would need to be updated to reflect this change.

Cataloging Services

Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray attended the January meeting of the Public Library Directors Association (PLDA) Integrated Library System (ILS) Committee to discuss their idea of changing certain subject headings in the catalog. The project would have been similar in nature to last year's "aliens" and "illegal aliens" project. The latest headings in question contain the phrase "foreign language(s)", and the idea was to change them to "world language(s)." It was decided that the member libraries are content to leave the "foreign language(s)" subject headings as they are, and focus instead on signage in their buildings.

The OCLC data reclamation project is progressing. This will update OCLC's accounting of the WLS member libraries' holdings in the huge WorldCat bibliographic database, making more of our materials discoverable and available for interlibrary loan. In the latest phase, Systems Librarian Lindsay Stratton uploaded the WLS catalog to OCLC.

Mr. Wray and Ms. Stratton have been assisting several member libraries with the process of ordering their materials. The Evergreen ILS and the various vendors used by the libraries have

exacting requirements for ordering, and help is sometimes needed, especially with correctly and thoroughly completing online order forms.

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:

Significant Habitats in the Town of Pound Ridge, Westchester County, New York: Report to the Town of Pound Ridge, the Hudson River Estuary Program, and the Westchester Community Foundation / by Christopher Graham, Elise Heffernan, and Gretchen Stevens

This scientific study was previously conducted in 2018; cataloged for Pound Ridge Library.

The Laughing Brain: a Hierarchy of Humor by Mental and Neural Levels / David V. Forrest, M.D.

This is another scientific work—an unusual and interesting one which explores the relationship between brain structure and function and different types of humor; cataloged for Rye Free Reading Room.

A Spiritual Erotic Expression of Love / Faith Walters

This music CD consists of a hymn composed and performed by Faith Walters, Founder and CEO of Women and Men of Excellence Outreach Ministries in Mount Vernon. The hymn thanks God for the gift of human sexuality; cataloged for Mount Vernon Public Library.

Digital Equity Initiatives

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (WCF) PROJECT

Joe Maurantonio, Director of Special Projects, and Dana Hysell Alongi, Project Relations Specialist, have worked to complete the training and distribution efforts for the Westchester Community Foundation's (WCF) grant with emphasis on Digital Equity Initiatives (\$158,000).

Chromebooks and Hotspots were ordered, received and prepared for families as part of this grant. Prior to each distribution, devices were charged and WLS informational materials were added to the carry bags provided. During the Summer and Fall months, the WLS team worked to connect directly with family recipients who had previously been engaged in Head Start programs and locations operated by Westchester Community Opportunity Program (WestCOP). During this phase of the program, 160 eligible families were contacted.

As the WestCOP phase was ending, WLS connected with Family Services of Westchester (FSW) who were slowly taking over and renovating the WestCOP Head Start programs and locations. During the last weeks of November and first weeks of December, a strong partnership was formed and distribution and training occurred. Unfortunately, the holidays and facility closings due to the Covid Omicron variant slowed the progress a bit.

Mid-January through the last week of February, distribution and training for Chromebooks and Hotspots was facilitated for an additional 115 families in the communities of Mamaroneck, Mount

Vernon, Port Chester, White Plains and Yonkers. Total distributions in this phase of the project included:

WestCOP Families	30 Chromebooks
Yonkers Reentry	15 Chromebooks
FSW Families	146 Chromebooks and Hotspots

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) GRANT

While continuing the WCF grant work, Mr. Maurantonio began working with Nate Hill, Director of the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO) on the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. For approximately eight weeks Mr. Hill, Mr. Maurantonio and representatives from Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Public Library and New York Public Library met to discuss the grant parameters and refine opportunities. With the assistance of Pat Brigham, WLS Director of Development, and Dr. Kirchner, a grant request was submitted to METRO for approximately \$240,000.

The funds awarded (\$199,856) to the Westchester Library System (WLS) are to support digital inclusion efforts to reach and assist residents with Internet connectivity through hotspots, accessible Wi-Fi, and digital content and related resources, particularly in support of education, health, and workforce development needs. The funding is to cover costs associated with library services including personnel, technology, training, materials, supplies and equipment.

WLS crafted a grant around a core team of four to five staff members who would travel into several Westchester areas (as identified by recent census information) with plans to reach underserved populations including those with high poverty, limited internet access, historically marginalized and systemically oppressed communities, people for whom English is a new language, immigrants, homeless individuals, the unemployed, individuals with learning disabilities, older adults (65+), and/or other underserved populations.

WLS will use space in locations identified as reliable non-profit community partners. Additionally, WLS is working with a sub-contractor to provide a "Digital Equity Van" (eVan) and driver/facilitator who will assist with staff transportation and community training. Through consistent branding and an engaged public relations team, the eVan will allow for greater promotion of the project. To quickly connect with our patrons, WLS is currently seeking to hire two bilingual trainers to support the project objectives. As a drop-in service, community patrons will have access to devices, support, information and training inside and outside of the eVan.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mr. Maurantonio and Ms. Hysell Alongi recently attended several training opportunities including the School, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition meetings, WLS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Focus Groups, WLS Library Advocacy Day and Net Inclusion 2022.

Additionally, Ms. Hysell Alongi coordinated and hosted the WLS Library Advocacy Day activities and continues to host the Youth Services Check-In.

Information Technology (IT)

Over the past month, the WLS Information Technology (IT) Department has moved forward on multiple major projects including wireless upgrades and the rebuild of the Local Area Network (LAN). The wireless project is near completion. All libraries who use WLS IT services have been upgraded with new wireless network equipment. Library internet circuits for the wireless service have either been installed or boosted to the minimum speed of 300Mb.

With the rebuilding of the LAN, WLS IT is in the final stage of deciding on a new Internet Service Provider (ISP). The new service will offer 1000Mb per location, a drastic upgrade from the current 100Mb that is available at each participating member library location. Several information sessions have been held with the PLDA Technology Committee, with an open invitation for any interested library director to attend, to help explain the changes that are involved with the new LAN, ISP provider and new network equipment which will be installed at the participating member libraries. Libraries have been asked to provide information about their future networking goals to assist WLS IT in the LAN rollout process.

A new publication, the WLS IT Newsletter, was emailed to all member library staff and individuals with a wlsmail.org email earlier this month. All WLS Trustees should have received a copy in their email – if you did not, please check the Spam folder! The goal is to publish this newsletter on a quarterly basis to provide updates on WLS IT activities, increase awareness of resources and services available, and to highlight trends and best practices. The first newsletter consisted of a re-introduction of the entire IT department which included a small bio and photo for each IT staff member.

Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE)

An update on *Westchester Breathes*

Simple + effective + free from your library = MAGIC!

[Westchester Breathes](#) is an ongoing program initiated in 2018 that offers an experience of gentle movement, breathing and relaxation exercises that reduce stress and anxiety and increase a sense of calm and well-being. These exercises are simple and evidence-based – which is to say they are accessible to multiple audiences and they work!

Westchester Breathes is grounded in the work of Dr. Richard Brown and Dr. Patricia Gerbarg and their Breath-Body-Mind Foundation. Elena Falcone came across their work as a direct result of WLS's work to support the [Westchester Resilience Coalition](#). As the discussion of adverse childhood experiences and trauma was brought into organizations and communities, there was a clear call for tools that individuals could use immediately - and at no cost - to address the discomfort of both past trauma and current stressors.



In early 2018, Ms. Falcone began the work to become a Breath-Body-Mind (BBM) instructor. In the fall of 2019, WLS obtained funding to sponsor a 12-hour *Introductory Workshop* delivered by the two creators of the BBM practices at the Edith Macy Conference Center in Pleasantville, NY. This was followed in April 2020 (right amidst the pandemic) with the first-ever, fully Zoom-based *Level 1 Teacher Training* offered by the BBM Foundation. Throughout, we worked to recruit library staff and Resilience agency partners who could be instrumental in bringing these practices into the community as part of overall health and wellness offerings. Many participants were drawn from those who had attended Resilience Coalition events held in 2018 and 2019. In total, more than 100 participants were engaged in these events.

In support of the growing Westchester-based BBM community, we created a web resource to direct interested individuals and groups to practice resources, including videos, live online classes and printed materials such as the book written by the two doctors and available for loan from WLS - [The Healing Power of the Breath](#).

Westchester Breathes continues to be an important offering to our communities. A librarian who participated in the teacher training began to offer classes at her library (Kudos Linda Ahern at Tuckahoe!) and several organizations invited Ms. Falcone to bring in custom program experiences to their staff and clients. A key focus was to help in addressing current stress due to the pandemic as well as exploring staff/client desire for ongoing wellness programming. This has been an especially rich exploration among reentry support groups (e.g., Coming Home Program, Probation), seniors (e.g., the County's Virtual Senior Center exploration), and those servicing individuals with disabilities (e.g., the ARC Westchester), as well as service agencies such as Southern and Northern BOCES and the Rockland Office for Disabilities.

Thanks to funding from the Hope for Youth Foundation, during the summer of 2021, several teens and young adults from ARC Westchester were sponsored to attend an *Introductory Workshop*. Three of those teens went on to obtain Level 1 Teacher Certification and can now lead their own workshops. Opportunities for bringing this program to youth continue to be explored.

Several libraries have been active supporters of *Westchester Breathes* classes throughout 2021 and 2022. The collaborative hosting and sponsorship has meant a reduced cost for the libraries and broad based promotion. We thank the following libraries: Bedford Hills, Croton-on-Hudson, John C. Hart Memorial/Yorktown, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Somers, and Yonkers. Just in 2021, attendance at library-hosted events was close to 900. Additionally, White Plains Public Library invited Dr. Gerbarg and Dr. Brown to lecture in 2021; a return appearance is scheduled for March 28, 2022.

WLS continues to leverage private donations to offer classes and scholarships for training with two aims: 1) to provide yet another example of how libraries are there when you need them and 2) to support the health and wellness of the Westchester community. Additionally, we are featuring an approach to health and wellness that is particularly empowering—we can explain simply how and why these actions work, and individuals can provide the free guidance that individuals need to carry them forward on their own.

On April 21st, *Westchester Breathes* will be among the honorees of the Dr. Harold Keltz Distinguished Public Health Service award. We were nominated by Dr. Andrew Bell from the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health. Generously, he noted in the nomination that "*Westchester Breathes* has reinvigorated our system of care at a time when it is most needed." Yet again, libraries come through for our communities!

NonProfit Leadership Summit

WLS is a sponsor of the 2022 NonProfit Leadership Summit that will take place at Pace University on March 25th. Sponsoring organizations were also invited to customize web content for the summit's "virtual" presence. PIE's Megan Brown designed the content below that focuses on WLS outreach services.

The Summit, an annual event organized by the United Way of Westchester and Putnam, has as its theme collaboration and innovation for community building. In addition to the keynote speakers noted below, the event will feature TED-styled talks related to the theme from local leaders. There will also be a vendor expo and collaboration activities to engage the participants. Krishna Horrigan, Elena Falcone, and Dana Hysell Alongi will be staffing WLS's table.

The keynote speakers are Angela F. Williams, CEO of United Way Worldwide; Cristina Alesci, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer of Chobani and former CNN correspondent; and Areva Martin, a Harvard-trained civil rights attorney, advocate, nonprofit founder, television host, CNN legal and social issues commentator, and author.

This year's summit is a hybrid event, a strategy that is designed to widely expand access. Summit sponsors were invited to customize web content for the summit's "virtual" presence. PIE's Megan Brown designed the content below, which focuses on WLS's outreach services.

A sample of resources we offer!

JOB SEARCH TOOLKIT
Our Toolkit can help with every step of your job search: be sure you are work-ready, know how to apply for the jobs you want, and make the best impression on an interview.
[Click Here](#)

Open Doors
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY
FREE RESOURCES
firstfind.org

VISIONLABS
READING FOR A LIFETIME
People with vision loss can stay active, engaged, and connected!

Westchester Reentry Task Force
RESOURCE GUIDE

Did you know Westchester Library System produces and updates 7 websites?

- westchester LIBRARY SYSTEM**
Empowering libraries. Empowering communities.
- FirstFind.org**
- SENIOR LAW DAY COLLABORATIVE**
- Westchester Connections**
An initiative of the Westchester Library System
- WLS Seniors**
- Community Conversations**
Brought to you by Westchester Library System
- Digital Equity**

Upcoming Events

TRUSTEE HANDBOOK BOOK CLUB: Thanks to the success of this series, it will be continued in 2022. All sessions will be held on Tuesdays from 5-6:30 p.m. Below is the schedule and the registration links:

April 19 | Topic: Ethics & Conflicts of Interest + Intellectual Freedom, Censorship and Privacy

Registration link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TFxfAFS9Rz-OSk--iswhQw

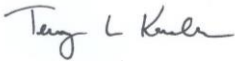
May 3 | Topic: Planning & Evaluation

Registration link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1JWbEj6VTdehLvoal6sd7w

June 14 | Topic: PR & Advocacy

Registration link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0EUGOkzIQ3uDPK-qjyOXFA

Respectfully submitted,



Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director