

Staff and Volunteers:

Head of Adult Services Brian Jennings and Librarian II Matthew Aull are in the latest cohort training to become ***Digital Navigators***. Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley launched in January 2022 and is supported with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to the New York State Library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by Southeastern NY Library Resources Council in partnership with Mid-Hudson Library system and Ramapo Catskill Library System. Digital Navigators are trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support. Adult Services Librarian II Karen Ostertag, who has completed the training, is serving as mentor to Brian and Matthew. The library receives a \$700 grant for each staff member trained.

Brian Jennings attended a talk on the latest offerings of the ***New York State Talking Books and Braille Library***.

Children's Librarian II Kathy Bachor spearheaded a drive to ***collect plastic bags*** (500 lbs. worth!) to submit to Trex in exchange for a park bench made of the composite lumber. The bench will be installed in the bird-watching area by the lower lot when the weather becomes agreeable. She plans to begin another drive in the spring to add more seating to this outdoor spot.

Collections:

A small amount of ***juvenile non-fiction*** and parenting titles have been added to the New City Library Express collections. We continually evaluate demand and collection content to do our best to meet patron needs in our minimized location. Until now, only fiction titles were displayed in the children's area at NCLE.

Playaways (pre-loaded MP3 players containing one audiobook title) that were no longer circulating are enjoying a second life at the Wallkill Correctional Facility.

Programs:

The ***Build a Gingerbread House*** children’s program was attended by over 90 people at the Street School Community Center. Scores of children and their families got into the holiday spirit by decorating graham cracker houses while a digital fireside scene crackled on the big TV.

A new program for teens was launched, built on the subscription service model so popular currently. A ***Surprise Book Box*** is packed with a book, a craft, and a snack and readily picked up at the front desk.

Seven libraries teamed up with New City to Zoom host a program on the book ***American Shtetl***. The authors presented to a sizable audience and allowed the recording to be posted on our YouTube account for a limited time.

Rescheduled from November, the ***More Musical Gems from the Yiddish Theater*** on December 3 drew 52 attendees at the Clarkstown Learning Center in Congers. On December 10, 35 patrons showed to enjoy a performance of the ***Hudson Lyric Opera***.

Building and Facilities:

The director and Head of Community Relations Veronica Reynolds have been meeting with an ***environmental graphics*** designer for a study of proposed signage for the renovated library.

Construction continues apace. Exterior brick is being installed on the Park walls, the new front terrace is taking shape, sheetrocking of office space nears completion, and ethernet cabling of the building is almost complete.

Technology:

Beginning December 29, ***payroll and time management services*** were transferred from ADP to Paylocity, resulting in an approximate 33% annual savings. The data migration was not painless, but the new system appears to be a significant improvement in terms of usability. Finance & Facilities manager Shibu Abraham oversaw the project.

Staff is adjusting to the new web-based ILS, ***Symphony Web***. It is essentially a screenscape of the server/client-based Symphony Workflows, a product of

Sirsi/Dynix. It is slow, unstable, and unacceptable. It does not integrate with our RFID system. The only bright spot is that patrons online will not experience any change in ILS performance, only when they come to the service desk for live help. RCLS has started the process of researching other ILS products with an eye on an early exit of the current system in the fall of 2024.

Miscellaneous:

The combined ***New City/West Nyack Library Budget hearing*** was held on Dec. 6 at the West Nyack Library. There was one patron in attendance.

The ***budget vote*** was held on Wednesday, December 14, from 9am – 9pm. Residents of Areas 1, 2, and 3 of the Clarkstown Central School District voted at the Street Community Center on Zukor Road. This temporary location was selected due to the ongoing construction at the library. The budget, representing a 2% tax levy increase, passed easily with 406 yeas to 126 nos.

Some noteworthy patron comments:

“I miss the big library. Can we go to the big library?” – remarks of a young child to their parent at NCLE

“Karen Ostertag has been extraordinary, working with me tirelessly and unselfishly. ” – voicemail of self-described senior citizen with a phobia of electronics whom Karen has been working with as a Digital Navigator

“Brian is always extremely courteous, very pleasant....his knowledge is abundant....he’s very efficient and expedient....I commend the library for having him as reference director because he merits it and he adds dignity to the position” – voicemail of patron who frequently avails himself of telephone reference services

“What else can I learn here?” - patron overhearing a Digital Navigator session

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Gallagher, Director
NEW CITY LIBRARY
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