



PLAN OF SERVICE 2007-2011

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Introduction

Welcome to the Westchester Library System's Plan of Service for the five year period 2007-2011. This Plan of Service builds upon the many accomplishments of the past five years. It includes a set of objectives, short-range strategies to achieve them and suggested methodologies for cooperation with member libraries, the staff of the Westchester Library System, its Trustees and other members of our community.

In this era of rapid change, the Westchester Library System seeks to be a quality consulting organization offering strategic advice and services to its many constituencies. Our goal is to make WLS a major contributor to the educational and intellectual life of all Westchester residents.

In 2011 our success will be measured by how well we have achieved the following goals:

- Continued access to the full collections and other resources of all 38 member libraries for patrons with a valid system borrower's card
- Enhancements to collections and programs to better meet the needs of Westchester's diverse communities
- Alliances to establish learning communities designed to improve the reading and academic skills of students of all ages
- Continual staff development to promote knowledgeable, customer-oriented staff and services for our diverse communities
- Proactive investigation and implementation of the latest enhancements to technologies to increase access points
- Stable funding for the System's programmatic and technological services
- Engaged leadership that uses its authority and relationships to advocate on behalf of the Westchester Library System and its member libraries

Achieving this vision will require extraordinary leadership, calculated risk-taking and a firm commitment by all who want to help. As we begin implementing this new Plan of Service, staff, supporters and the public must be assured that we will remain foremost a library-centered organization. Our core purpose is to continue to support member libraries in their efforts to collect, organize and make accessible recorded knowledge, regardless of format. Our vision relies upon access to new knowledge sources and use of technology to increase the avenues of accessibility and distribution of information and resources to those who need them anytime, anywhere.

Background

History

Westchester Library System (WLS) is one of New York State's 23 public library systems established in 1958 by State Education Law. WLS's major function is to enhance and help improve the County's library services, to reduce libraries' costs through economies of scale, to ensure that all residents have excellent library service whether on-site at any of the 44 locations in the WLS network or virtually 24/7. WLS also provides outreach services and consulting services to enhance lifelong learning and improve literacy skills in our communities, staff development opportunities for member libraries and advocacy services to improve awareness of and funding for libraries.

Who We Serve

According to the latest update to the 2000 census, the total population of Westchester is 940,807 up nearly 2% from the original 2000 census figures. Of that population 6.7% is under 5 years of age and 13.8% is 65 years or older. Over 22% of the County's residents are foreign born. More than 28% of Westchester's residents speak a language other than English at home. The top five languages spoken in the County after English are Spanish (14.4%); Italian (3.5%); Portuguese (1.1%); French (1%) and Japanese (>1%). The median household income is \$61,835, yet 8.8% or 79,881 individuals live in poverty throughout the County. High school graduates constitute 83.6% of the population while 40.9 % of the population has a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Governance

WLS's governing Board of Trustees consists of fifteen members elected by the trustees of the 38 member libraries. They represent every Westchester public library via district:

- District 1 Croton, Montrose and Yorktown
- District 2 Briarcliff Manor, Ossining and Tarrytown
- District 3. Bedford Hills, Chappaqua, Katonah and Mount Kisco
- District 4 North Salem, Somers and South Salem
- District 5 Armonk, Bedford Village, Mount Pleasant and Pound Ridge
- District 6 Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Greenburgh, Hastings and Irvington
- District 7 Harrison and Purchase
- District 8 Larchmont, Mamaroneck and Scarsdale
- District 9 Bronxville, Eastchester, Pelham and Tuckahoe
- District 10 Port Chester, Rye Brook, Rye City and Rye Town
- District 11 White Plains
- District 12 Peekskill
- District 13 Mount Vernon
- District 14 New Rochelle
- District 15 Yonkers

Funding

The funding for the WLS comes from several sources. Principal funding is provided by the State of New York through legislated appropriations. The remaining support comes from member library fees to support technology services and the County of Westchester which provides support for cataloging and delivery services. WLS also receives important funding through various grant programs and fund-raising events.

Mission, Vision and Core Values

Mission

The mission of the Westchester Library System is to ensure that all residents have seamless access to excellent library service throughout Westchester County.

Vision

The Westchester Library System will serve as a center of innovation for the Westchester County library community. We will provide model programs, affordable and easy-to-use information technology, and support services that enable libraries to continuously improve service to their communities.

Core Values

Westchester Library System will base its policy and operating decisions on the following set of core values:

- Advocacy
- Diversity
- Value (economies of scale)
- Innovation
- Cooperation (resource sharing)
- Education

Goal Statements and Intended Results

Resource Sharing

Through economies of scale, WLS helps local libraries operate more effectively and less expensively. WLS coordinates the sharing of resources among the 38 member libraries in several ways. We operate a delivery system that distributes over 2 million items annually through intra-library loans, provide cataloging services to maintain consistency and quality control over the information in the WLS catalog, and support an expansive inter-library loan program among local, regional and international sources to find items not found in WLS libraries. Other shared resources include collection development support, systemwide purchasing of technologies, and electronic media for reference purposes.

Goal: WLS will facilitate and encourage member libraries to make their full collections and other resources available to all patrons throughout Westchester County.

- ✚ Seek funding to provide delivery services 6 days per week countywide
- ✚ Upgrade the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service for items not found in Westchester public libraries to a comprehensive ILL management system which enables electronic patron generated requests and permits online tracking of transactions
- ✚ Expedite the document delivery service electronically between WLS and other institutions, or directly to requesting patrons, eliminating the need for costly and time-consuming mediation procedures of photocopying and faxing
- ✚ Provide for comprehensive online access from the WLS website to Westchester libraries' periodicals holding in the Union List of Serials
- ✚ Continue to provide a centralized cataloging function that is responsive to the needs of member library collections and time-sensitive to acquisition of new materials, with emphasis on quality control and adherence to bibliographic standards that results in a catalog "we can trust"
- ✚ Participate in online union catalog initiatives developed by bibliographic utilities such as OCLC's WorldCat in an effort to make the collections of Westchester's public libraries more accessible on the World Wide Web
- ✚ Develop a marketing plan to broadcast the depth and breadth of collections offered to County residents through their local library
- ✚ Develop innovative approaches to providing 24x7 real-time reference services
- ✚ Provide "Recommended Lists" covering many areas and media to local libraries' collection development staffs
- ✚ Create consolidated resource lists of publishers, suppliers, architects, program consultants and other vendors

Technology Services

The Westchester Library System manages and operates an online library and Internet access system for the county's libraries. This system constitutes the largest telecommunications network in Westchester County with nearly 500 terminals at the county's 44 public library sites. All online services are available to WLS cardholders from the convenience of their homes or from elsewhere 24 hours a day. WLS technology enables individuals who are physically challenged, elderly, or otherwise homebound to explore and research from home by accessing a myriad of resources to meet their personal and professional needs. The challenge for WLS is to sustain innovative programming and system upgrades that keep pace with technological advancements.

Goal: WLS will provide technology to enhance library services, improve library efficiency, and expand the reach of our libraries geographically and temporally.

- ✚ Complete installation and implementation of a new Integrated Library System
- ✚ Evaluate and improve the technology competencies of library staff to effectively use the SirsiDynix ILS
- ✚ Establish the means by which vendor-supplied catalog records for new materials to be circulated at member libraries may be added expeditiously to the ILS and upgraded WLS catalogs
- ✚ Develop a digitization plan to preserve, catalog and encourage access to the many special collections located in local libraries around the County
- ✚ Employ new technologies to promote and enhance WLS services for education, programs and communication including, RFID and RSS technologies, library vending machines and multilingual remote-site kiosks
- ✚ Keep pace with the ever-changing world of virtual reference through staff instruction evaluation, and value appraisal
- ✚ Upgrade the WLS website to better represent the service and offerings provided by the system, thus better serving Westchester's diverse communities
- ✚ Initiate technology partnerships with other Westchester-based agencies and organizations to encourage collaboration, innovation and resource sharing

Special Client Groups

Youth Services, Outreach Services, Prison Services, Youth Connections, Educational and Career Counseling, and Adult Services are among the Special Client Groups serviced by the Westchester Library System. We will continue to work closely with external partners such as social service and cultural organizations as well as education providers to serve these and other special client groups and provide effective consulting on services, collections, and programs to member libraries. In this way, WLS will continue to build upon its services to traditionally underserved populations including the unemployed, the educationally disadvantaged, ethnic or minority groups, foreign-born residents, the disabled, seniors and those served by institutions including correctional facilities, hospitals and youth facilities.

Goal: WLS will assist member libraries and external partners in designing and providing services which expand skills and knowledge better to serve diverse constituencies.

- ✚ Conduct field visits to each member library twice per year
- ✚ Roll out revamped Teen Services program to the traditional teen user and encourage library use by teen non-users
- ✚ Establish a Teen Advisory Board which includes member library personnel as well as representation from the teen communities
- ✚ Integrate latest research in child development and early learning into programs for young children and caregivers
- ✚ Continue the “Growing a Reader” initiative and expand to include school-age children
- ✚ Increase the reach of the summer reading program by establishing on-line program registration
- ✚ Establish an annual/biannual event and publication honoring local authors and illustrators of books for young people
- ✚ Hold Interagency forums on a quarterly basis to advise and inform WLS staff on issues affecting disenfranchised populations
- ✚ Work with member libraries and social service agencies to provide library services to Westchester residents who are unable to fully utilize library services – traditional or online – because of language, educational, economic or physical barriers
- ✚ Continue to provide and enhance access to Spanish-language materials in the WLS online catalog with Spanish subject terminology and the development of a Spanish-language user interface
- ✚ Expand the services provided for by WEBS (WLS’s Educational and Career Counseling Services) to all libraries
- ✚ Explore the potential for a consultant position to provide services to older adults, disabled Westchesterites and New Americans
- ✚ Establish a marketing committee comprised of PLDA members and WLS staff to strategize on priorities and events which promote library service to special client groups throughout the County

Continuing Education

Four major initiatives comprise the WLS the continuing education program. Program consultants work with directors in providing orientation and career development and advancement opportunities for staff in the local libraries. The impact of the technology evolution on library services is a constant reminder of the need to provide for electronic resources training not only on databases and internet searching but on social networks, blogging, text messaging and the like. Given the immense diversity of Westchester’s population, WLS staff development programs must train staff to work more effectively with new Americans, early literates, and speakers of languages other than English. Finally, WLS must proactively provide trustees of all WLS member libraries with strategies for successfully governing public institution in an ever-changing, highly-competitive world.

Goal: WLS will present a continuum of learning opportunities for member library staffs, trustees and the general public.

- ✚ Continue to provide training on customer service, including working with disenfranchised constituents, etc.
- ✚ Regularly conduct “40 Developmental Assets” training, in partnership with the County Youth Bureau, for teen librarians and all WLS member staffs who work with teen populations in local libraries
- ✚ Continue to provide training for children’s librarians and expand offerings of special skills workshops in technology, storytelling and visual literacy
- ✚ Capitalize on personal strengths by identifying staff with leadership potential and provide them with leadership training
- ✚ Work with technology staff and ILS vendor to design training which effectively communicates the nuances of the new ILS system
- ✚ Expand the reach of WLS training sessions by offering online learning through a variety of formants
- ✚ Conduct training needs assessments of WLS and member library staffs on a regular basis
- ✚ Provide ongoing training and networking support for both WLS trustees and those of member libraries
- ✚ Extend technology and online search skills training to social service organizations
- ✚ Add financial literacy training to public training programs

Consulting, Coordination, Construction and Technical Assistance Services

As service patterns for libraries keep changing and the constant pressure on library budgets keeps increasing, the Westchester Library System will continue to provide consulting and technical assistance designed to improve the capabilities of member libraries. Advice on program content, sound budget/fiscal practices, fundraising, grant writing and administration, legal issues, compliance with Commissioner’s Regulations, building programs and technology are among the consultancies provided. The system office will also coordinate efforts on behalf of the member libraries to promote economies of scale such as negotiation for licensed electronic collections, cataloging services, and technology.

Goal: WLS will serve as a repository of specialized knowledge and clearing-house of ideas to enhance local library operations.

- ✚ Regularly advise and update PLDA members on statewide regulatory procedures
- ✚ Provide advice and consultation on construction projects including a directory of recommended architects, moving companies, construction management consultants, etc.
- ✚ Keep abreast of service innovations by attending conferences, visiting libraries known for innovative service practices and inviting speakers/professionals to speak with staff and member library personnel

- ✦ Consult with member libraries on establishment of special library districts, compliance with commissioner's regulations, fundraising and special event opportunities
- ✦ Provide educational opportunities to improve fundraising expertise
- ✦ Advise on proper housing, cataloging and access to the many special collections in local libraries
- ✦ Negotiate group discounts for databases and other library services on behalf of member libraries
- ✦ Establish a Cataloging Advisory Committee among member libraries as a forum to review and determine the bibliographic standards by which centralized cataloging services are delivered

Awareness and Advocacy

Maintaining support for libraries and increasing awareness of what libraries can do for the people of Westchester County is a primary role of the Westchester Library System. Westchester's libraries have enjoyed popular support which cannot be taken for granted. The task for WLS is continually to raise the awareness of libraries and market them to the public they serve. WLS calls upon the support of friends, advocates, board members, and strategic partners to assist in the process of awareness and advocacy.

Goal: WLS will maintain support for and increase awareness of the important role libraries play in Westchester County.

- ✦ Increase Board members' participation in advocacy for public funding through aggressive city, state and federal legislative agendas
- ✦ Encourage and empower all WLS board members and staff to advance the System's strategic objectives by forging strong external relationships
- ✦ Encourage and empower the Advocates of the Westchester Library System to advance the System's strategic objectives through regular visits to elected officials and participation in WLS events and public hearings
- ✦ Raise the profile of WLS advocacy work on the website
- ✦ Optimize a marketing segmentation analysis to inform strategic outreach
- ✦ Develop a marketing plan based on results of the analysis in order to establish unique and creative new ways to promote library services
- ✦ Build strategic alliances with education communities to raise awareness of libraries with students, caregivers, parents, teachers and administrators
- ✦ Expand upon strategic partnerships with cultural institutions and other not-for-profit entities to maximize the impact of a marketing campaign
- ✦ Provide more social and networking opportunities and special events to raise awareness of and advocate for library services in Westchester
- ✦ Set up *e-blasts* to inform advocates of all initiatives and activities in libraries throughout Westchester

Communication and Cooperative Efforts with Member Libraries and Other Library Systems

As a coordinator of library services for 38 member libraries, WLS is committed to maintaining, implementing and improving communication practices with member libraries and their staffs. It is critical that they have a reliable mechanism in place whereby learning about library issues and services in Westchester and elsewhere can be discussed, debated and promoted. Establishing stronger cooperative alliances with library systems such as METRO, WALDO and other downstate public library systems will also provide avenues for awareness and application of best-practice cooperation and communication methodologies.

Goal: WLS will encourage learning about library issues and services in Westchester and elsewhere.

- ✚ Develop a communications program which effectively communicates WLS activities and updates on advocacy initiatives and trustee actions through regular newsletters, monthly Director's Report, notifications on the WLS website and email
- ✚ Better use of the WLS website as the most direct and cost-effective means of reach constituents, promote library services and motivate advocacy
- ✚ Put into place the use of listservs, blogs and other types of discussion lists to promote library service, keep on top of library innovations and encourage discussion with other library systems
- ✚ Improve/expand upon the relationship with the WALDO community and other learning organizations to establish a countywide learning community

Evaluation Methodologies

The Board of Trustees of the Westchester Library System will evaluate the Plan of Service as a part of the Board's annual budget process and performance evaluation process of the system director as follows:

- During the budget process each fiscal year –
 - Assess progress in accomplishing goals established during prior fiscal year;
 - Establish goals and objectives to be accomplished during the coming fiscal year;
 - Maintain a dynamic planning process by adjusting the Plan to reflect objectives/projects that were accomplished; add new, or eliminate projects as necessary
- Conduct mid-term review of accomplishments toward established goals and make adjustments accordingly.

Feedback on the Plan and its intended results will be provided to the Board of Trustees through a network of groups such as the Public Library Director's Association, the Advocates of WLS, the Teen Advisory Board, Outreach Advisory Board, Children's Librarians Advisory Board, as well as input derived from trustee institutes.

Updates to the Plan of Service will be posted to the WLS website.