



Westwood Public Library Update
Lizzy McGovern, Library Director
October, 2024

Library Updates

- The Financial Report for State Aid was submitted on October 3rd 2024. As with previous years, we met all requirements and will receive State Aid this year.
- New website procurement process was completed and we have engaged Bartlett Interactive to create our new library website! Bartlett Interactive is a Boston website design, development and Internet marketing firm focused on WordPress and Drupal located in West Concord, MA. They have completed many public library websites we loved the look and feel and usability of including [Reading Public Library](#) and [Wakefield Public Library](#).
- I am meeting with the Facilities Director and an architect next week to discuss refining the plans for study rooms/podcast suite where the AV collection is currently.
- Claire hosted acclaimed author Marjan Kamali (*The Stationery Teashop*) at the Main library to discuss her new novel *The Lion Women of Tehran*. We had a great turnout with over 45 attendees.
- Julia, our Readers Services Librarian, facilitated another very successful After Hours Library Event: Mocktails and Must Reads: Fall Favorites. We had a lovely evening with about 50 people in attendance who received early access to the FOL Book Store and listened to book recommendations from our librarians. We received such positive feedback, with many participants asking “when is the next one?”.
- Claire will be attending the New England Library Association annual conference October 21st and 22nd in Maine. We are looking forward to Claire bringing back new ideas to share with the wider staff.
- Class and Compensation Plan has been completed and will be presented to the Personnel Board for final approval in the next two weeks. The implementation plan has been provided to



the Select Board and they have indicated their support (with personnel board approval). Details on a timeline and outcome of the study is forthcoming from Human Resources.

- We had our Fall Staff Meeting on Friday October 18th. We reviewed the Strategic Plan and WPL Organizational chart, shared information on future projects, and did some team building activities.



Info Services:

- Vicki Andrienas, our Part Time Reference Librarian and Local History Expert, held a local history program “Hidden Gems: Discovering the History of Westwood” and over 50 people attended and stayed after to review the microfilm machine and share their own local lore!
- Molly MacDougald collaborated with the Dahlia Society to celebrate Discovering Dahlias installation at the library on Saturday October 5th. About 80 people attended this beautiful installation!
- Molly MacDougald as part of her Community Engagement and Outreach position is both the new point person for Gallery exhibits and Homebound Delivery (both of which Karen Gallagher had previously been the contact).
- Assessed passport appointment demand and volume and planned a new schedule to launch on November 1st that includes more weekday and evening availability.

Islington Branch Library

What's new at the Branch in September:

We held a Mah Jongg program for beginners at the Branch for the first time. Eleven patrons signed up. Five of them are going to continue to meet Monday mornings to practice. The Friends of the Library purchased two sets of tiles, provided for the lessons and the library purchased the card tables for playing. There is a running list of patrons who want to learn Mah Jongg so we are hoping to offer it again.

We held a beginner sourdough program in early September. Sourdough Brandon is a passionate baker, as seen in his quote "The joy of baking with sourdough is that it is a *lifelong learning journey*. You don't need fancy equipment or professional training to make delicious, wholesome baked goods at home." We had close to 60 people attend the program in the Dukeman Room downstairs.

The Sit N Knit has decided to knit for a couple of charities this season. One is Hats for Catholic Charities, which provides hats and scarves for immigrants, refugees and those in emergency shelters. We are knitting for adults and children. The other is Napping blankets for the Child Care Centers. Patrons have donated yarn over the years, so we have a good stash to work with. Some of the group work on this and others work on their own projects. We have close to 50 hats and scarves knitted already. We have always knitted for a charity but since the Branch reopened we worked on Warm Reads which was a giveaway to patrons by raffle. The group felt it was time to mix it up.

The library has been busy this month. The kids are back after school. The Recreation and Early Childhood program have started up again and are bringing more and more families in. We love to see the old friends and are always happy to greet new ones.

Youth Services

The Children's Department spent the last month and a half winding down from Summer Reading, planning new projects and kicking off a new season of storytimes and school year programming. We met as a team and talked about upcoming events. Children's has also been preparing for a change in management as Kristy moves to the new Reader Services role and Felicia has been promoted to Director of Youth Services.

In Circulation, everyone is missing Karen Gallagher but learning to adjust. Kristy recently moved in and is ready to learn everything there is to learn!

Bookmobile and Outreach

- Molly MacDougald, Julia Horwitz, Caitlyn Leopardi, Andy, and I braved the storms of Westwood Day with the new Bookmobile! The weather was a bit disappointing and kept the crowds hovering at the food tent but the visitors we did receive were delighted to come on board and check out books!
- Caitlyn and Julia next attended Westwood Young Women's Clubs annual Harvest Fest with the Bookmobile and we 68 visitors check it out and more importantly, check out books!
- Molly is taking over for Karen's outreach visiting Highland Glen bookclub and will be coordinating regular Bookmobile stops at the Glen and the COA.

- Molly and Felicia will also be taking the Bookmobile to the Trunk or Treat event at University Station. University Station is one area that was highlighted that has the least access to both the main and branch libraries and another spot we would like to visit regularly.
- Internally we are creating policies and documents that will help us streamline processes for taking the Bookmobile out on the road.
- Currently we are working with the staffing availability we have on hand but as we commit to regular stops and assess growing needs, more hours dedicated to the Bookmobile may be on the horizon.

Poet Laureate

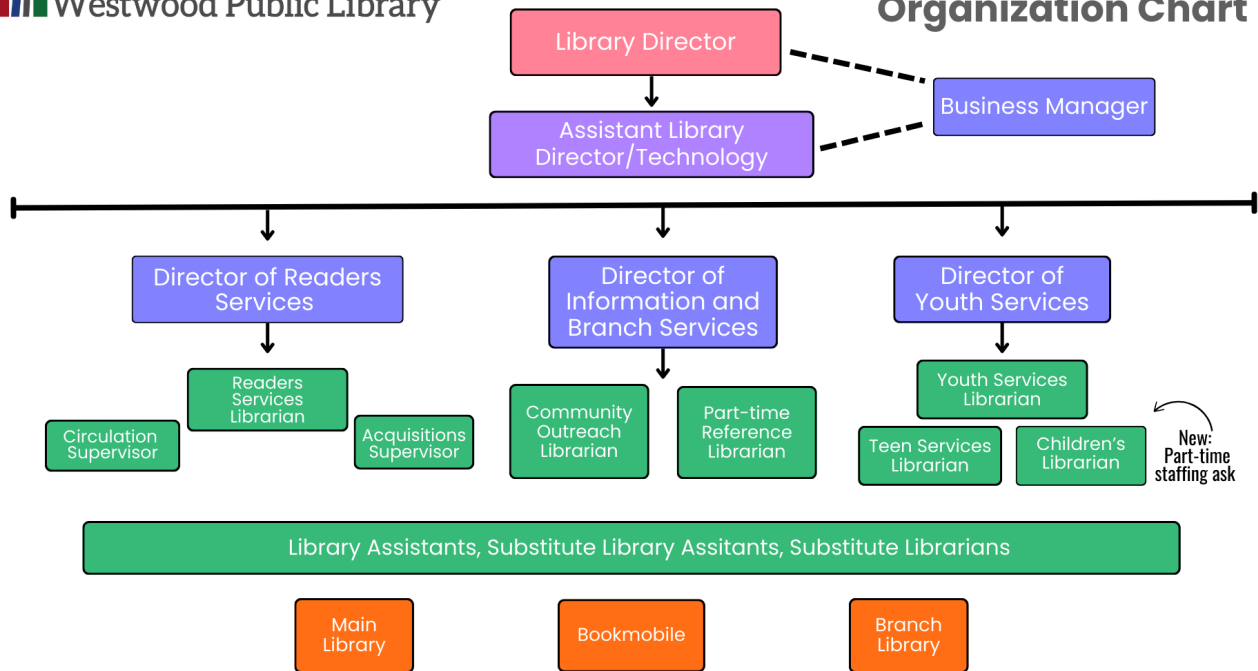
Projects completed: 2023 and 2024

- Poets in the schools: focus on elementary and high schools. mini workshops for students in 4 Westwood elementary schools, with poet/teacher Dr. Jenn Bogard, funded by 2022 and 2023 grants from the Westwood Cultural Council
- Poetry Slam at Westwood High school, finding three judges from the community, an emcee with slam /spoken word experience as a poet/performer
- Hosted and organized town-wide poetry reading and open mic, April 2023 and 2024
- Published two chapbooks, anthology of poems by participants in my Tuesday Evening Poetry Workshop, 2023 and 2024
- Read and recited occasional poems for the Town of Westwood: Memorial Day 2023, Founding Day 2024, and Westwood Day festival, 2023 and 2024
- Poetry cafe , Thurston Middle School, 2023, with a poet, two after school workshops for 7th and 8th graders
- Poetry and pie, interactive poetry reading, Westwood Senior Center, 2023
- Children's Festival of poetry, three days of workshops for children ages 7 -12, led by parent and high school volunteers and a poet/author culminated in an afternoon reading, Q & A and book signing with Richard Blanco. Partnered with the Westwood Public Library. Richard Blanco's reading is supported by a \$2500 festivals grant from the Mass. Cultural Council and matched by the Westwood Library's 21st Century Fund
- Wrote and presented a lesson for middle school students on how to write a dialogue poem, records by Westwood Media Center and used by middle school language arts teachers teaching a unit on *12 Angry Men*
- January 2022-present I facilitate a poetry workshop on alternate Tuesday evenings, Westwood Library
- Represented Westwood at the Brockton Library panel and reading by Poet Laureates of eastern and central Massachusetts towns,

Staffing Update

I am happy to share some great news regarding our recent staffing roles. In keeping with our Strategic Plan and the initiatives laid out there, we have done some reorganizing of our library departments. This restructure of the library organizational chart includes a more structured and vertical “chain of support” and clarifies roles within the organization to set the library up for success and meet the demands of patrons across the lifespan.

Organization Chart



We take each opportunity granted us to update and re-envision library departments/positions with the goal that they reflect both the today and the future of library services. When it came to posting the Head of Circulation position, I thought it was in the best interest of the library to take a look at the position to see if it is still meeting current needs of the department or if it had grown and needed to be resized. After thinking about the Head of Circulation/Materials Services, we realized that the position did not fully complement all that Karen did. There is a huge aspect of collection development involved and both processing the materials and circulating the materials are two main functions of maintaining a vibrant and beloved collection. We have decided to expand this position to incorporate all aspects of library materials (including being the main buyer of the collection) and how they interact with the community. I worked with the library leadership team and Human Resources Director to develop and reframe this position into the **Director of Readers Services**; both Circulation and Acquisitions (purchasing and processing library materials) under one umbrella of Readers Services. Julia as the Readers Services Librarian will now be under the direction of the new Department Head. Nothing changes day-to-day except she will have a new direct report (Director of Readers Services). Caroline Tighe and Liz Keefe remain as Senior Library Assistants but with new titles that fully reflect their job duties as leads in their aspects of the department: Caroline's new title will be Circulation Supervisor and Liz's new title will be Acquisitions Supervisor.

We are very excited about this new position and I feel it is the first step to updating and solidifying our services and removing silos that naturally occur when there are so many separate departments. We posted this position internally and I am delighted to announce that **Kristy Pasquariello** is our new **Director of Readers Services**! Kristy has been in Youth Services for over 15 years and was looking for the right opportunity for the next chapter in her library career. Before becoming a Children's Librarian, Kristy was a cataloger and collection development expert! Kristy has a great love and knowledge of collection development across all ages (in fact is often sought out by adults for her reading recommendations!).

After another internal search, Felicia O'Keefe has been promoted to **Director of Youth Services!** We have posted the Teen Services Position and are hoping to fill the position in the next couple of months if possible.

I am also happy to announce that as part of this restructure Claire Connors is now the **Director of Information and Branch Services.** We strive for the services and customer experience to be the same wherever and however someone decides to access the library (main, branch, bookmobile, and digitally). Claire's knowledge, expertise, and experience at Westwood library made her the natural choice to unite the two major service desks between main and branch. Claire already collaborates heavily with programming and services across locations and now will be formally recognized as the point person for the info services staff as well as library assistants at the branch. Claire will divide her time between the branch and main library. We are excited and looking forward to Claire continuing and expanding her leadership at the library and her influence will reach across Westwood!

As previously identified, we are also looking to expand our professional staffing in Youth Services with an additional Children's Librarian position. This additional position will help us to accommodate more family centered programming and outreach visits with the Bookmobile.

In the last few years, the library, like many other industries and institutions, has gone through its fair share of recruitment and retainment challenges. Since Covid, many aspects have changed how libraries are staffed. Newer librarians to the field do not necessarily stay in one place as long as they used to. Many younger employees move on for various reasons whether it's working at a different type of library, choosing to focus on different areas of librarianship, or due to more offers of flexibility, pay, or even commute. It's a fact that local governments/municipalities in general find it hard to compete with the offer of for-profit incentives as well. I wanted to share this framework with you to understand the challenges libraries are facing as we seek to recruit and maintain talent. Our library staffing setup has evolved over the years and will continue to do so as we seek to meet the growing and changing needs of our community. For instance, 25 years ago we did not have a dedicated technology librarian, 10 years ago we did not have a dedicated Teen librarian; in fact some libraries now have Social workers on staff! Due to the high cost of living and the fact that our part-time schedules are not favorable for working parents, most individuals are seeking full-time work where they can get it. Westwood Library has also become what I consider a "teaching library". We have been lucky enough to hire talented individuals in our Library Assistant roles, many of whom had never worked in a library before. After working with us for only a handful of months, they go on to pursue their own degree in Library Science and often move on to become full time professional librarians elsewhere. I love that we can be a place where many future librarians discover the joy and value of being a librarian and that Westwood gets to play a part in their professional journey.

Westwood Library has a very strong team with many legacy employees who give their heart and passion to making this a great library! I see new talent every year and love that we can mentor the next generation of library workers. Even if we are just a stop in the road, I value the time and effort every individual gives to the library.

The library is the heart of the community, but the staff are the heart of the library. When it comes to retaining talent, I see a growing need for more full time library assistant opportunities and will continue to advocate for the growth and development of the library as a whole.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lizzy McGovern, Library Director