

Report on 2013 MHLS Annual Member Survey

The MHLS *Planning and Personnel Committee* conducts an annual survey of the member library Board Presidents and Directors. Over the years there have been changes in the survey. Prior to 2012 we asked a couple specific questions about our Executive Director's performance. We kept asking ourselves what the "right" approach should be and kept coming to the conclusion that, as MHLS Trustees, it is our role to evaluate the Executive Director but that it should include consideration of feedback from the member libraries about organizational performance and how the system is meeting their needs.

In 2012 (and 2013) the MHLS Executive Director ("System Director") and Assistant Director worked with an ad hoc committee of Directors to determine the best way to get that feedback. That committee agreed to collect specific feedback from the Directors in areas of the Mid Hudson Library System's Plan of Service. This feedback would be of an operational nature and be done by the directors through surveys and meetings during the year. The results would go directly to the MHLS staff for presentation to the MHLS Board. Unfortunately this has not happened.

In conjunction with that, the ad hoc committee designed a survey to be taken by the Board Presidents that focused on how the system is meeting the needs of the various Boards. The *Planning and Personnel Committee* studied that proposed survey and found it to be very focused and insightful and agreed to use that in 2012.

Prior to 2012 the annual survey was the same for both Directors and Board Presidents; in 2012 the committee took a different approach and asked the Directors only three open-ended questions, essentially: (1) what does the system do well, (2) what could it do better and (3) what else would you like to comment on? (The exact wording of the questions for both surveys is in the summary attachments.) This was endorsed by many Directors as the original questions caused the participant to focus on the areas of our questions and deflect them from providing their most insightful feedback which was often on other subjects.

We concluded this was the right approach after analyzing the results in 2012 and (with the agreement of the ad-hoc committee) utilized exactly the same surveys for 2013.

This year we had a slight increase in Board President participation and a slight decline on the part of the directors as shown here:

Year	Total Responses	Board Presidents	Directors
2013	87 (66%)	39 (59%)	48 (73%)
2012	91(69%)	34 (52%)	57 (86%)
2011	73 (55%)	29 (44%)	44 (67%)
2010	43 (33%)	9 (14%)	34 (52%)
2009	42 (32%)	7 (11%)	35 (53%)

Most importantly, especially from the directors, we have again received some **very valuable and actionable suggestions!** This is really the key information that we and the staff need in order to continually improve.

In the Appendices you will find (A – pg 6) a tabulation of the quantitative responses from the Board Presidents (and a comparison to the 2012 results), (B – pg 9) open responses (comments) from Board Presidents, and (C – pg 17) open responses from the Directors:

- *The comments have not been edited in ANY manner except to combine multiple identical responses (with a parenthetical annotation as to how many respondents it represents). They have been grouped where appropriate into categories based on the natural groupings. Within each category similar comments are generally together. Occasionally, comments that consisted of multiple sentences covering different topics have been broken up. Generally the groupings are the same as for the 2012 results with a few new ones -- indicated with an asterisk (*). (Copies of the 2012 results are available on request for comparison purposes.)*
- *Please note that the answers of the Board Presidents survey are outcome based indicators of the goals of the Library Directors' ad hoc committee.*

Summary of Board President Objective Responses

A comparison of the objective responses from the 2012 and 2013 Board Presidents Surveys is included as Appendix A. There are several key observations:

- 74% of the participants indicated a board member attended training in 2013
- 90% indicated board contact with MHLS staff that influenced a board decision
- 95% indicated that MHLS communications provided information that led to useful board discussions
- 90% indicated use of the website to get information of importance to the board
- Over half (59%) indicated they benefited in a manner not covered by the survey
- Less than a quarter (21%) of respondents noted consultations with an MHLS Trustee; 13% felt it influenced a board decision, 8% thought it did not. 69% had no consultations. *[JHB: it is hard to know if this is positive – that they are getting what they need from staff – or if increased board contact would be helpful. Looking at comments from both groups it appears that increased contact by MHLS Trustees would be desirable and helpful.]*

There were small numbers disagreed with most questions so there is still room for improvement; but it is encouraging that the board presidents indicated receiving such useful support from MHLS.

2013 Open Response Observations

There were many similarities to the 2012 results:

1. As in 2012, the respondents to each survey made it clear how important system services, and the accompanying support, are to their libraries. The majority of

responses (both groups) were positive and the corrections or changes suggested were in all cases informative. The majority of respondents recognized that the services provided by the system were strong in all areas.

2. And as in 2012 again, both Board Presidents and Directors placed high value and praise for our system's staff and their expertise. Their comments reinforced our knowledge that our staff is approachable, responsive, knowledgeable about the member libraries and focused on each library's success.
3. Technology, an area of concern in the past, again drew many positive comments and improvements in communication and support were specifically mentioned! The crucial ongoing need for tech support was again expressed as well as some comments about the need for "off hours" support for Millennium in the evenings and on Sunday.
4. Respondents continue to believe that the system keeps members generally well informed. Communications on political and legal issues were specifically noted as both timely and appreciated. The desire for increased communications about the system's finances was more frequently mentioned this year than in 2012. Proactive reach out by MHLS Board members to library boards and to legislators was again requested.
5. There was again recognition that system services were generally well provided and a number were mentioned or alluded to in particular, including (but not limited to) continuing education, marketing, and resource sharing.
6. As before, high value was especially placed on trustee education and the professional development opportunities provided to directors and staff. The breadth of continuing education offered by the system was seen as a strong asset by respondents. There was increased feedback that education/training should be more generally available, especially to remote locations, by adding other locations for sessions, conducting them as webinars (with on-demand playback of the recordings), allowing participation via conference calls or video conferencing, etc. While the primary focus was on more remote audiences, an underlying message is an increased participation of the very small libraries that cannot free up staff to attend scheduled sessions. These techniques would also apply to trustee education as on-demand availability of recorded sessions would allow working trustees to attend at their convenience.
7. There continue to be lingering doubts about the recruiting, hiring and the evaluation of the System Director. There were comments supportive of the use of a professional search firm in 2013 but there are still some who continue to reflect their unhappiness that an internal candidate was again not selected. *The board established a process that included two library directors on the selection committee; the selection of Tom Sloan was a unanimous decision supported by non-committee directors and board members who availed themselves of the opportunity to participate in the on-site visits. The selection and evaluation of the system director is solely the responsibility of the MHLS Board just as it is for the boards of all member libraries.*

Board Presidents (Appendix B – pg 9)

1. Meetings and training should be more convenient but increasing belief it makes a difference
2. MHLS consulting services are highly rated and very helpful

3. MHLS Trustees need to reach out to the larger MHLS library community
4. Virtually everyone thinks the staff is great
5. The high quality of the MHLS staff and the services provided were recognized
6. Very positive comments indicating that the website content is helpful.
7. General positive responses regarding support, communications, interlibrary loan, education and training, advocacy, and technology
8. Ideas for improvements in the areas of education content for trustees, consulting, technology, communications, interlibrary loan and delivery, fees, advocacy, and board interactions

Directors (Appendix C – pg 17)

Done Well

1. Wonderful staff
2. Highly effective delivery services
3. Technology services working well and improved over prior years
4. The quality and quantity of continuing education and training services is highly commended
5. Communications provide important information updates and promotes sharing among members
6. Consultation services are essential and excellent
7. Additional advocacy on local and State levels is desired

Could Do Better

1. MHLS Web site needs to be improved including a search feature
2. Use of technology to support meeting and training events particularly for remote users
3. More training for trustees beyond the essential level
4. Reduce fees paid by members
5. Cooperative negotiations for services (e.g., health insurance, printing)
6. Budgeting and billing more transparent
7. Improve the running of the MHLS annual meeting

Priority Themes for 2013

Staff:

- Provide software/online applications that can be used to support meeting and training participation by remote users
- Reduce the fees paid by member libraries
- Enhance advocacy efforts to promote libraries to local and State elected and appointed officials

MHLS Board:

- Improve MHLS Board outreach by holding meetings throughout the MHLS service region and increasing MHLS Trustee contact with member library boards
- Recognize MHLS staff for the outstanding services being delivered

Directors Association:

- There are numerous comments regarding the Directors Association (DA) that have been brought up in 2012 and 2013 that should be addressed by the DA.

Appendix A. Comparison of Board Presidents Objective Responses (2012-2013)

2013 Survey			2012 Survey		Change (2012 to 2013)
1. The county of your library:					
Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Count
Columbia	21%	8	21%	7	1
Dutchess	39%	15	41%	14	1
Greene	5%	2	15%	5	-3
Putnam	13%	5	3%	1	4
Ulster	23%	9	21%	7	2
answered question		39	34		5
skipped question		0	0		0

2. In the last 12 months, I or members of my board attended a MHLS workshop that led to my board performing its role more effectively.					
Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent Count
Agree	74%	29	77%	26	-2% 3
Disagree	3%	1	0%	0	3% 1
No attendance	15%	6	21%	7	-5% -1
Don't know	8%	3	3%	1	5% 2
Comments:		8		7	
<i>answered question</i>		39			5
<i>skipped question</i>		0			0

3. In the last 12 months, I or members of my board met or consulted with the MHLS Executive Director whose assistance influenced a decision or action taken by my board.					
Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent Count
Agree	33%	13	32%	11	1% 2
Disagree	5%	2	9%	3	-4% -1
No consultations	56%	22	53%	18	3% 4
Don't know	5%	2	6%	2	-1% 0
Comments:		8		7	
<i>answered question</i>		39			5
<i>skipped question</i>		0			0

4. In the last 12 months, I or members of my board met or consulted with a MHLS Trustee whose assistance influenced a decision or action taken by my board.

Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Agree	13%	5	18%	6	-5%	-1
Disagree	8%	3	3%	1	5%	2
No consultations	69%	27	68%	23	2%	4
Don't know	10%	4	12%	4	-2%	0
Comments:		3		3		0
<i>answered question</i>		39		34		5
<i>skipped question</i>		0		0		0

5. In the last 12 months, I or members of my board met or consulted with a member of the MHLS staff whose assistance influenced a decision or action taken by my board.

Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Agree	90%	35	71%	24	19%	11
Disagree	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
No consultations	8%	3	21%	7	-13%	-4
Don't know	3%	1	9%	3	-6%	-2
Comments:		18		10		8
<i>answered question</i>		39		34		5
<i>skipped question</i>		0		0		0

6. In the last 12 months, I or members of my board received a communication from MHLS, such as the Bulletin, Across the Board trustee newsletter, or one of the MHLS e-mail listservs, that led to a useful discussion among my board members on an issue of importance to my library.

Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Agree	95%	37	91%	31	4%	6
Disagree	3%	1	3%	1	0%	0
Don't know	3%	1	6%	2	-3%	-1
Comments:		7		4	700%	3
<i>answered question</i>		39		34		5
<i>skipped question</i>		0		0		0

7. In the last 12 months, I or members of my board used the MHLS website (midhudson.org) to get information on an issue of importance to my library.

Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Agree	90%	35	82%	28	7%	7
Disagree	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
No use of MHLS website	0%	0	3%	1	-3%	-1
Don't know	10%	4	15%	5	-4%	-1
Comments		10		6		4
<i>answered question</i>		39		34		5
<i>skipped question</i>		0		0		0

8. Did Mid-Hudson Library System, its staff, Executive Director or Trustees benefit your library in the last 12 months in ways that may not be included in your responses to the statements above? (If "Yes", please comment.)

Answer Options	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Yes	59%	23	59%	20	0%	3
No	41%	16	41%	14	0%	2
Comments:		19		11		8
<i>answered question</i>		39		34		5
<i>skipped question</i>		0		0		0

Appendix B. Board President Open Comments

Workshop led board performing role more effectively.

most meetings/workshops are **too far away**.

At least one attendee and several who should! I don't really know how much it helped.

love Rebekkah's workshops

Trustee Essentials workshop

Trustee Essentials is a very helpful resource

Open Meetings Law & Freedom of Information Workshop clarified details that enabled our Board to function more properly

Two new board members joined our board and one was a returning member after one year off. Others are attending additional workshops.

Not all board members agree attending MHLS workshops are necessary for an elected position.

Executive Director Consult Influenced Board

We have received **excellent advice** on various issues.

Not to my knowledge.

We consult with Rebekkah

Communicated with Mike Nyerges and gained useful suggestions

In just the last few weeks, I have reached out to Mike for assistance in launching a search for a new library director. Both have been extremely helpful.

The Director did attend our 75th Anniversary fundraiser

Mike helped our library by attending important events and county funding meetings

Assisted us in questions we had regarding the Library Director search.

MHLS Trustee Influenced Board

Not to my knowledge.

We did not see any of our representatives

As a MHLS Trustee I bring to the Board a broader perspective on Board responsibilities

Staff Influence Board

Consultations--mostly by telephone-- have been **very useful**.

Met with staff member, decision not made yet

Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich has been a very valuable source of information and guidance for our board.

Meeting regarding information relative to a 414 budget vote and library charter service area

Not to my knowledge.

See above (*JHB: There was nothing "above" in this Dutchess comment*)

Rebekkah Aldrich communicated frequently and attended several local Trustee meetings to help us
tax issues

Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich continues to be an invaluable resource for our Board.

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich and Merribeth Advocate aided us immeasurably

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich has consistently provided much needed assistance as I began search for
new director

Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich has been extremely helpful as we discuss 414

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich did a fabulous job leading our Focus Groups and helping us to write a
Long Range Plan

This is in process: We are arranging with Rebekkah for a Board retreat to address areas of
contention within the Board that are affecting our performance

Rebekkah Smith Aldridge was helpful numerous times.

Rebecca Smith Aldrich consulted numerous times and has provided information that is useful for
training. More than willing to assist us and offered help with training our new Director.

Rebecca Smith Aldredge continues to be a constant resource to our operations and planning.

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich was very helpful in the possible purchase of our new building.

Communications led to Board Discussion

Distributed at our library board meetings

PPT on Responsibilities of library trustees

On occasion, but as a first year president, I was not aware that my trustees only receive these
through me until we worked through this survey. That changes immediately!

topics of interest to us were regarding grants, 414, and fundraising

As a Board we are continually discussing issues noted in the Bulletin and listserve messages that
expand our actions on such topics as policy and training. The listserve expands our awareness of
fellow Library activities centered on building expansion and votes.

Yes. We are receiving the Bulletin. **Very useful information.**

I try to routinely incorporate MHLS information for board trustees.

Other MHLS Benefit

Employee Recognition

Rebekkah helped us with guidance, moral support and coaching during a rough spot. We could
not have made it through without her assistance. She gets my utmost support and devotion as a
result.

Rebekkah came to discuss the 414 Proposition which we are considering whether or not to do again

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich was very helpful to me as I was learning my way as new board president

Rebekkah and Merribeth make the role of a library trustee doable. I would not do the work involved if it weren't for their help.

Rebekkah facilitated a conversation with Morton

Our director consults frequently with Mid-Hudson staff.

Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich can't be commended highly enough!

Tom Finnigan has done a great job with delivery and equipment loans

Rebekkah Smith Aldridge has supported and reached out to us on her own initiative.

The staff at MHLS is accessible for issues that concern our programming, technology and provides references for outside vendors and professional needs.

Linda from the business office and Robert from the computer office as well as Merribeth.

Miscellaneous

MHLS is a valuable resource for us in many ways.

Working to resolve the Union Vale funding issue

Always available to assist as questions or issues arise on topics other than what is noted above.

Probably but I had trouble getting answers from other board members.

Most likely, but I cannot think of the ways right now.

As a new Board President I found the items on Board responsibilities very helpful

I was in contact quite often when first starting our search for a new director.

Well, I find the MHLS monthly bulletins very helpful as I learn more my responsibilities as Board President.

Board used Website

policies

use it frequently

Have found site to be a **wealth of knowledge** and it has given me many useful ideas especially for review and revision of our policies

Our Board **frequently consults the MHLS website, particularly when drafting policies.** It's so helpful to have access to policies of other libraries - prevented re-inventing the wheel and also generated good discussion regarding what was pertinent to our library.

I turned to MHLS website for info on advertising for a new director.

fundraising tools

this is very helpful to us

We continually access the website for advice on Policy and general organization (Handbook) and training opportunities and meeting schedules.

We have used it quite often.

Love it!

Things that the Mid-Hudson Library System has done well are:

General Support

Act as a resource for good advice on a variety of issues.

Support for board efforts

providing help with finding -and hiring - a new library director

Provide guidance and training that help the staff and board operate our library at a high level.

guidance on 414 issue

Assistance from Rebekkah Smith Aldrich for our Long Range Planning efforts

Served as a valuable on-line resource

Answer all kinds of questions

Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich has provided great support - in giving presentations to our Board, facilitating focus groups, and being a "sounding board" when we need input or advice.

Provided recommendations and suggestions when contacted

guidance on library charter issue and service area

support to the member libraries

Rebekkah keeping us informed on mandates and legislation

Provided the personal assistance of Mike Nyerges & Rebekkah Aldrich - invaluable!

answering questions about everyday library operations

Rebekkah has been a tremendous help and is always available to answer questions

Got us to 414

Provide individualized support to libraries

custom discussions on local issues

Library Growth (Rebekkah Smith Aldrich)

Provide support with projects

Outreach Programs

Assistance with 414 process and consultation in regard to our consideration of moving to become a special district library

Assist with Search for New Director and respond to questions in a timely manner

Assistance with library issues/policies

Communications

The Bulletin which provides timely and useful (informative) information (6)

Communication through email and bulletins.

communication (2)

regular updates on system news

making information available through the website, phone calls etc for individual libraries eg
414 vs special district, fund raising

keeps library apprised of library trends

Inter-library Loans

Interlibrary loan (2) is fantastic

circulation system (interlibrary loan) & delivery services

Continue to host the union catalog and the Sierra system

Sierra

Provide an efficient inter-library loan operation.

on-line lending

system cross lending of books

interlibrary loan courier system

ILL System works very well

Interlibrary loan is very beneficial

Continue to provide transportation for and delivery of materials

maintains information and materials sharing

Education and Training*

Provided information about programs, training

Continuing to expand the available **webinars**

Provide support for Trustee Education

training workshops (4)

Provide Education and Assistance

Offer staff/director workshops

Trustee training

Provide annual basic Trustee training

Offer and invite trustees and staff to webinars and workshops

excellent workshops

seminars are informative

Advocacy*

Advocates for local libraries on a state level

advocacy

Advocacy around statewide funding issues

return calls promptly

Lobbying for us

Advocacy for member libraries

Continued advocacy for Union Vale funds

Technology

Provide platform for computerized operations
the technical staff is very helpful
Technology support is excellent.
shared resources
IS support
Provided tech support
helping libraries move forward with technology
lead the way in new technologies
Automated services (Eric McCarthy)
Web-site is easy to navigate and policy samples, in particular, are helpful.
Website has a lot of resources and info
Serve the public with online services
maintains an active website

Miscellaneous

The staff are amazing!
willingness
Availability
Hired excellent staff members
Annual Trustee Dinner
Informational resource in many ways
expertise
Information
access to credible speakers

Things the Mid-Hudson Library System could do better

Education

hold a few meetings/workshops in northern Columbia Cty *

Detailed, intensive Trustee training in the area of **Board organization: General, Committees, Long Range Plans**

Basic emphasis on **how a Committee performs**: Is it to instruct staff how to achieve a goal or work with staff to achieve that goal? How to establishing meeting schedules, follow up meetings, methods of communication between meetings, reporting to the Board

Trustee **training focused on Committee functions**: role of Chair, role of Trustee members, role of Staff

Trainings for Exec volunteers: Treasures, Presidents and VPs, Secretaries- definition of roles

Varied meeting times for trustee related workshops (day and evening)

Reach out to boards like mine who need to be motivated to take workshops.

Consulting*

Reinstitute the strategic planning aid
More help with grants & financial assistance

list grant opportunities for libraries

Help member libraries consolidate holdings to free up space in older buildings

Technology

coverage for tech services outside business hours

Provide better options for website development; if MHLS hosted we need ability to update easier, better look to it

Navigation in the Trustee Resources section of the website. A bit tricky.

Communications

Promote System libraries on mass media *[JHB: I also included this one comment under Advocacy]*

acknowledge success of individual libraries' programming, statistics, implementation of plans

create a forum for information sharing for member libraries' Friends groups

Inter-Library Loans & Delivery

continue to provide shared resources for libraries within service area at reasonable costs

Provide model listings for DVD, CD etc holdings

fill holds quicker

Fees

Reduce Costs / Lower fees (8 - 3 from same survey)

Lower member fees (we are really struggling here)

Lower the cost of software mandates

More equitable balancing of member library fees

Advocacy

Promote System libraries on mass media *[JHB: I also included this one comment under Communications]*

Greater involvement by the Executive Director in lobbying state and local elected officials.

Board Interactions

Establish opportunities for **interaction with MHLS Trustees**, possibly getting them to visit local libraries

hold a few meetings/workshops in northern Columbia Cty *

Outreach to Town and County Boards to demonstrate the value of libraries, and the value the libraries receive by being part of the MHLS

Generally, **trustees could be more involved with libraries they represent**

It is important to have MHLS trustee county representatives attend our meetings to learn of our challenges

maintain contact with member library boards

Miscellaneous

Restore KidsPort

Ask for more input from libraries regarding the MHLS budget and assessments to the libraries.

Greater leadership and involvement from the Executive Director.

Please stop denegrating your organization at the **Annual Meeting**; it is a poorly run meeting, lacks the professionalism it deserves

be more organized at the MHLS **annual meeting**, the last one was confusing to say the least.

Share info on staffing structures among libraries and evaluations of outcomes

Have an avenue for emergency help (funding) for libraries in unexpected crisis. A contingency fund?

Performer Showcase to return.

Comments / suggestions for the Mid-Hudson Library System Board of Trustees

MHLS Board

It would be nice to have a way to get acquainted with other library board presidents in our part of Columbia County--e.g., an annual coffee hour in our general area.

Improve the lines of communication between individual library boards and the MHLS Board of Trustees.

I am sorry to say that I am much less well informed about your organization than I should be. My real interest is with the building and its operation and I don't venture far from that. Maybe the incoming District president will be more involved with the total system...

Thank you for your help this past year. Keep up the good work!

We look forward to Michele Ment serving the MHLS System Board on behalf of Putnam Libraries

Education

Expand the Systems awareness of the benefits of providing more training sessions for Library Trustees

Training is very positive and well done. Our Friends of the Library group states that MHLS has provided them with good information and advice when needed.

Employee Recognition

We can not overstate the value of the the MHLS staff to our library. In particular, Rebecca Smith-Aldridge continues to provide outstanding service to our library. We have a deep appreciation for her dedication and willingness to provide assistance and direction whenever we have needed it. We hope her professionalism is acknowledged by the MHLS Director and Board.

Overall, we have been very satisfied with the service and advise we received. Rebekkah has been an invaluable resource as we possibly purchase a new building.

Give Rebekkah a promotion!

Keep Rebekkah and Meribeth happy.

Appendix C. Directors Open Comments

Things Done Well

Staff

Supportive, knowledgeable, hard-working staff

always available to answer questions

Staff is wonderful

Merribeth Adbvocate

The staff at MHLS is always ready to help with any questions we have.

Rebekkah's help with going for a public vote

Retained the wonderful, helpful MHLS staff who keep us well informed in so many areas

Knowledgeable, committed staff who go over and above to provide services to member libraries.

Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich

works as a team and supports oneanother, which is super for morale.

Always professional and polite

MHLS staff support for our library development

Staff that is knowledgeable, responsive and sensitive to the needs and challenges of every library

takes small libraries seriously

knowledge of laws governing libraries

Make difficult decisions well, as a team

Sierra has been disappointing, which is not the fault of MHLS at all. However, Eric has down a wonderful job of trying to make it work better. He's very responsible and responsive when we need him.

Kerstin Cruger

Help when needed especially from Rebekkah Smith Aldrich.

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich is an incredible resource

Staff knows member libraries and their individual concerns and situations

Delivery

Inter-library loan system - works very efficiently - very popular with patrons

delivery (14) and automation

Providing and maintaining ILS (2)

Interlibrary Loan

The delivery system works well and is dependable.

The Delivery system works wonderfully and quickly

Maintaining a shared catalog and delivery system for all member libraries. I don't think this is an easy task with the large number of libraries in our system.

Maintain the online catalog/databases

Provide connectivity to circulate materials

Executive Director

sought memeber option - not top down approach

Technology

Managing the transition to Sierra from Millenium (5). It went as smoothly as possible.

New Sierra system (2) - staff and volunteers like it. Launch and implementation went well

Tech support for the automative system

Technology maintenance and training.

Technical support (3)

Tech Support staff are always very helpful when we call, e-mail, etc. They're patience is appreciated.

Maintaining a website with a tremendous amount of information relevent to library administrators, staff and trustees for their everyday work in libraries.

Education

Professional development training (2)

Continuing Education for Staff and Board (5)

Continuing education in all areas of a library's professional interests, as well as support in the trends to come.

Excellent continuing education workshops

Continuing Education Services (3)

Excellent selection of workshops.(4)

Workshops, Informational sessions on topics of interest.

Provide useful trustee training (3)

Training (3)

staff training

Provide quality educational programs for Directors, staff, and trustees

Helped member libraries to grow by training on and supporting voter initiatives

provides education and resources to library staff and trustees

Provide training for staff and for best practices

workshops & user groups, trainings

Offer a wide variety of webinars

High quality, relevent continuing education sessions available to all member libraries in their counties--this includes trustee training.

Training for Directors and Staff is invaluable.

offer prof dev opportunities in a cost effective manner

Educated trustees on their roles

Communications

Enable communication between member libraries. (3)
provides connection with other libraries in the Mid Hudson area
Keeping us updated on issues and legislation which impact libraries. (5)
Keep member libraries up to date on technology improvements (2)
newsletter
Keep member libraries up to date on legislative updates.
Providing Information on stucture, compliance, legislation

Consultations

Provide essential support to member libraries (from consultants) (4)

Providing technical and professional help to member libraries - web pages, relevant workshops to help libraries provide more to their communities

Respond to the wide variety of Director questions and requests thoroughly and timely (2)

Provide excellent support for libraries doing budget referendums

Assisting member library boards in all aspects or their jobs - reaching out to the public, how to proceed with renovations, new construction, problem solving.

414 and special district funding support

Personnel support

Give guidance in planning grants, writing policies, and handling legal issues

Member Library Services

Taught libraries how to position themselves for sustainability

Helped member libraries to successfully apply for NYS Library Construction grants

Support to libraries during times such as 414, capital campaign

MHLS assistance with the DLD construction grant this year was very helpful. The outreach grants that are available through MHLS help us to develop and expand our programming to more members of the community.

Helped member libraries to successfully host community Focus Groups

Negotiating shared services

Helping libraries engage in best practices

Miscellaneous

Hiring a professional firm to hire the new executive director.
Hired an excellent new Director (though Meribeth would have been my first choice)
Kept it going during hard economic times
working with local libraries on improved local funding
Advocate for libraries on local and State levels (7)
Lobby for the benefit all libraries

Resource sharing

It is difficult to limit this to three things.

Three Things Could Do Better

Technology

While not top priority, the **website is pretty difficult to navigate** (4) - even just having a search feature on the homepage would be helpful.

Continued improvement and possible re-design of website. (Eliminate references to Millennium, improve search function etc.)

Make use of technology, like Skype, for meetings. *[JHB: Board or DA?]*

Tech department could be more responsive in **letting you know your observation was received and being worked on.**

Technical problems

Sierra is so slow- can it be speeded up?

Tech services during off hours for Sierra problems

A later night for tech support once a week

They do it well, but I want them to rev it up - get libraries to understand that we are technology.

Executive Director

MHLS Executive Director visits to member libraries.

A visit to the libraries in the MHLS system would be nice and allow the director to discuss individual needs

Work to merge with Ramapo Catskill Library system

Directors Association

Make use of technology, like **Skype**, for meetings. *[JHB: Board or DA?]*

parking during Director meeting is icky..... small parking space

have some **meetings in each county** rather than having them all in Poughkeepsie *[JHB: Board or DA?]*

Create **more opportunities for directors to connect** - not just D.A. meetings

Hold DA meetings in **various locations.**

Reach out to member libraries that are farther away by having **more regional meetings** outside of Poughkeepsie, etc. . *[JHB: Board or DA?]*

work with the DA to manage the decision-making process to be more timely (decisions take too long!; DA's fault, not the fault of MHLS)

Do **teleconferencing for all Director Association Meetings**

Help the Director's Association to better engage each other; to share challenges, ideas and solutions

Communications

Sending important notices through individual emails in addition to posting them to the google group.

Promoting system-wide services

Print Services

Provide (bring back) print services (2)

Education

Investigating webinars, ideas for new services, before recommending them on the listerv

Provide more training for people working in **children's services**

More **variety of times and days** for programs

Trustee education scheduling

More basic tech education. Classes for dummies that are clear, correctly paced on Sierra, lists etc

More Sierra Trainings, especially create lists.

more and varied workshops and training for Trustees

More "subtle trainings" on practical applications or how to apply what we learn in workshops in our own libraries

hold more **web based** training for staff/trustee education

Offer remote access to workshops

Offer more on best practices for circulation desk procedures and protocols.

Grading Trustee Exams!

education on civil service and union options

Focusing on library administration (ex: Affordable Healthcare Act impact on library operations). Libraries already know how to serve the public.

More customer service training for frontline staff

hold **more training for Trustees other than "Essentials."**- Online if possible. *[JHB] Note this comment comes from a DIRECTOR!*

Whenever possible, offer **workshops in each county** in order to reduce travel time and encourage participation. (2)

Miscellaneous

Advising libraries preparing for first vote

small library support , **help finding print services, youth services etc that are no longer provided**

There has been a certain emphasis on circulating cake pans lately as well as a recent suggestion that member libraries hold Halloween costume swaps. Frankly, I find this really astounding and unprofessional.

Ebook budget has already been spent for the year!

youth services and children's services support

Children's Services

Keep thinking of ways to get things done without looking for financial support of the member libraries

Lower member assessment **fees**

restructure **fee assessment** to be fairer to smaller libraries

Find ways to increase **funding opportunities** for local libraries and education of Library Directors

Reduce member **fees**

Work harder to **reduce** rather than increase the costs member libraries pay for collective service.

Better **explanation of member assesment bills** sent to member libraries, more clear memos.

Being fair about **relative contributions** based on size -- small libraries get saddled with too much

Drop the notion of **mileage reimbursements**. Stop being an enabler. If you want to put money back to the member libraries, find a way that isn't devisive and doesn't extract an administrative cost.

Help member libraries to move into the future of library services

Provide **access to legal help**

Provide legal information to help libraries protect their staff and patrons

Remember most libraries have small staffs and limited time to give to administration

Incentives

group buy info for health insurance and other benefit package items as well as payroll support

Insisting to member libraries that they toe the line in securing more funding for their libraries and education for their staff.

Move from paper and e-notices to simply e-notices. Using both seems redundant.

Continued **improvement of billing statements**. (Clear break downs of charges etc.)

Most of the financial information and charts seem to come from PPLD. **Perhaps MHLS's business office could produce that information instead.** *[JHB] ???*

MHLS Board

Increased **transparency** on and clarification of budgetary matters.

Understand the challenges of member libraries

advocacy at the county level

keep 103 Market Street from imploding

have some **meetings in each county** rather than having them all in Poughkeepsie *[JHB: Board or DA?]*

Encourage the MHLS Board to take advantage of the resources available to them both in-house and through NYLA to help them operate more effectively and with less discord-- including acting as true liaisons for their county member libraries.

Solve its internal issues so that staff and leadership are on the same page.

MHLS Administration needs to cultivate a supportive and collaborative environment for the highly skilled and capable team of consultants and staff employed by MHLS. Remove obstacles that may prevent them from doing their jobs as well as they know how.

Board members could be more receptive to MHLS staff and library directors.

manage System staff transitions better

I realize that personnel issues of MHLS are mostly off-limits to board members, however I hope with the new director, we don't have a repeat of the past few years of passive aggressive undermining.

Not happy with MHLS personnel decisions. Think we had a good director in the assistant director

help me or my Board of Trustees.

Reach out to member libraries that are farther away by having more regional meetings outside of Poughkeepsie, etc. . *[JHB: Board or DA?]*

Open the minds of some member library boards to embrace change, offer more than traditional services

MHLS Board member contact with member libraries and trustees.

Keeping trustees under closer supervision

Annual Meeting

Organize and run a professional annual meeting. I was embarrassed by the past two. Taking my trustees to this was not a positive thing.

Staff

I think that the MHLS system staff must be stretched to their limits. They have continued to provide us with amazing service throughout a great deal of staff reduction and turnover in the System director position.

Increase the MHLS staff to provide more service in the areas of technology, grant writing, human resource issues etc.

I have no suggestions. No matter what we need, there is always someone at Mid-Hudson who can _____. *[JHB] This was incomplete*

Do **more onsite visits** to the member libraries. However, considering the amount of staff and time available, this may be impossible. Staff is always available by phone and email.

Comments / suggestions for MHLS Board

MHLS Board

Some board members don't seem to understand our library issues

Get out and **visit the libraries you represent -- don't wait to be invited**; contact the libraries or stop by and check out what's happening.

Meet on Saturdays and/or during the evening which might make it easier to attract new board members.

Training for system Trustees, perhaps Gerry Nichols? I am glad to see that the system encourages training for all member library board trustees. I think training for system trustees would prove just as valuable.

Have a representative attend all Director Association meetings.

Have representatives attend local library Board meetings.

Have more workshops for local Board members and hold these programs in areas other than Poughkeepsie.

Board members should make a point to **attend at least 1 county meeting** from the area they are from.

I thank you for your dedication to libraries. I truly think volunteerism is necessary and do a lot of it myself! Thanks!

Very pleased that MHLS BOT will attend at least one training on libraries

It continues to be important for MHLS trustees to **attend library board meetings and county director meetings**

Reach out to Trustees of member libraries.

Miscellaneous

Maybe we need to stop treating the overdrive collection like it is it's own library and only buy what is popular

If the board is considering reimbursement for mileage, also please consider reimbursement for net lending libraries, those that lend more materials than they receive.

I understand that the MHLS board is considering reviving the travel reimbursement in some form. While it's important for people to attend meetings, that fact is that more people have been coming to DA meetings since the reimbursement ended. Any decision to renew the reimbursement should require an annual evaluation of the success of the program. Also, libraries that do not charge their patrons fines should not be eligible for full travel reimbursement. Fine income would help offset travel costs.

I recently applied for a Construction Grant and was turned down. Frankly, I was very surprised at how the entire process, never having done it before, was handled. The MHLS board left it up to an employee to explain to me why they chose not to fund my project. Why couldn't they tell me themselves through a written summary? I don't know how many libraries applied, how many were turned down, how many accepted and for what percentage of the pot. Afterwards I was told that had PPLD not applied, there might have been more money to go to smaller libraries. I would suggest that in the future this process be more transparent and better documented. A list of libraries applying should be published as well as a final document which shows which libraries were accepted, how much money was awarded and which libraries were turned down and why. If turned down, there should be an appeals process. Additionally, the board members involved should be listed as well. Without this information there's no accountability and no way to determine that MHLS did its due diligence. I would further suggest that the concept of anonymity be dropped and you allow a library representative to be present to answer questions. Funneling everything anonymously through one employee of the MHLS is unfair to everyone involved. There are many creative ways that this entire process could be handled.

It would be helpful to have periodic evaluations of our library by an outside seasoned library professional who could evaluate how well the library is fulfilling its mission, how well the board and staff are fulfilling their duties and working together, and to help clarify goals and priorities.

I wish that we could still have a share in evaluating the system director

See #1 and #2 above *[JHB: Those comments are elsewhere.]*

Staff

The Midhudson consultant staff are exemplary in every way.

The staff of the Mid-Hudson Library System, in the opinion of my library board and staff, are excellent. We hope and expect that they will be supported to the fullest as they continue to provide the assistance and expertise that the member libraries value.

You have an excellent staff at Mid-Hudson. You should be proud of them.

I truly hope that the Trustees recognize how effective the staff at MHLS are, especially given their budgetary constraints. They go above and beyond to make themselves helpful and available, and beyond that, they really care about their member libraries. This is particularly true of Merribeth Advocate, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Eric McCarthy and Robert Drake. We need to work to keep their talent in our organization and give credit where credit is due.

I was helped sooooo much from Mike Nyerges and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich with the problem we had and still are not in the clear. All the staff has been wonderful to us and I know they wear many hats but still have time for the little guy.

The system staff and their expertise are invaluable. Rebekkah and Merribeth in particular are tireless in their dedication to the success of every library and can always be counted on for support and an innovative approach to challenges. Tech. and Sierra support staff have been terrific as well. Eric McCarthy has done a great job and is always responsive to our needs for technical support. Kersten Kruger and Robert Drake have also provided invaluable support and go above and beyond to help.

I am always impressed with MHLS staff and depend on their expertise and networking. Unfortunately, this year I have been very busy and my schedule has clashed with DA meeting. But I can always count on MHLS staff!

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich is worth her weight in gold. Always responsive without judgement.

MHLS staff are super helpful and quick to respond to me cries for help. Their reassuring demeanor makes my life so much easier to have the answers I need to do my job.

I think Merribeth and Rebekkah are essential to the functioning of MHLS. There is no question I have that they cannot answer, and I have been asking them for over a decade.

Please continue to manage your Executive Director and the MHLS Staff so there is less friction and more ability to work together.

The system has to move forward. **I hope that with the new director, the Board will make it clear to the staff and the members that this new individual is our leader in whom they have vested full authority to take the system to the next level. If there continues to be internal and active dissent, it should be dealt with in a swift and decisive manner.**

I am extremely grateful for the services provided by MHLS - our Library receives great service from the system staff. Many of us are still wondering why Merribeth Advocate was not considered for the Executive Director position the passed two times it was open. For years she has demonstrated a level of competence and professionalism that has greatly benefited MHLS and the members and would have been a great addition to MHLS leadership.

Get more librarians from outside of MHLS involved for consultations

Please understand that the well deserved respect and recognition that MHLS has throughout the library community is the result of the intelligence, hard work and dedication of the system staff. Trustees come and go but this system's strength is the result of the staff that we are very fortunate to have working with and for member libraries. They need to be supported and encouraged to continue the outstanding work that they have been doing.

MHLS is known throughout the state for the exceptional STAFF they have. We are very fortunate to have Merribeth and Rebekkah and the MHLS BOT should appreciate their knowledge and expertise. **I do not feel the members of MHLS BOT listen to library directors.** I hope with new County representation this will change.

I have only been dealing with MHLS since October 16 so I don't have much input to give at this point. Everyone is great so far!

Communications

I was amazed at the disorganization at the **annual meeting** .If that is any indication of the way the Board functions, it ought to get its act together.

The MHLS Annual Meeting was very uncomfortable and at times "cringe-worthy". The lack of organization and professionalism was astounding. Preparing and sticking to an agenda and script prepared ahead of time is necessary! Merribeth and Rebekkah were VERY gracious in acceptance of well deserved recognition despite the rude and ungrateful manner in which their awards were presented to them by the Executive Director. It made for a very uncomfortable and confusing experience, particularly for my Trustees. It is difficult for dedicated but busy Trustees to take time out of their schedule to attend this event, so it has to be worth their time. Although the speaker was engaging and informative the rest of the meeting was unorganized and unprofessional.

Annual meeting speaker was great. Format of Annual meeting could be better.

Better communication with member Libraries as well as actually listening to their problems, issues, concerns.