

Executive Director's report to the MHLS Board | September 2018

1. Getting Started

I am excited to have begun my new role at MHLS! After twenty years of watching and participating in the powerful platform the System provides to strengthen member libraries, I am honored to take on the challenge of being this organization's executive director.

During my tenure as Coordinator for Library Sustainability I was focused on a goal of helping member libraries receive direct-taxpayer support of their operations in order to stabilize and sustain our libraries. We are now faced with a new challenge – to inspire taxpayers and legislators to continue to invest in the promise of our libraries and our system so that we can increase our capacity to meet growing and changing community needs.

There are both opportunities and challenges ahead. State funding has been stagnating for years, stunting the purchasing power of MHLS. We are all confronted with a hyper-visual digital landscape that we must master to ensure citizens are connecting with the various services we invest thousands of dollars in for their benefit. Our world today is a disruptive place not only technologically but politically, economically, environmentally and socially. Divisive politics, an era of “fake news” and “alternate facts,” and threats to our economy from cyberterrorism and severe weather are characteristics of our time. A true sign that the role of the local public library to serve as not just an educator but as a community catalyst and convener for positive change has never been more important.

Never forget: we are mighty! This System boasts a dedicated and talented staff and board; 66 member library directors who are leading and innovating on the frontlines; and more than 600 member library trustees that are dedicated to making the world a better place through their local public library. Library cardholders number over 300,000 systemwide. There is a veritable army of library advocates out there that we need to help all pull in the same direction to inspire future investment of both dollars and good will in our libraries.

I look forward to working with you all to find the right paths forward. This system is a cooperative, it only works when we work together.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with issues, concerns, ideas or kudos for the MHLS staff. I aim to be your partner in creating quality library services for the citizens of the Hudson Valley. My email address and phone extension will remain the same: rsmith@midhudson.org; x239.

2. Stakeholder Survey & Listening Tour

a. Over the next three months I will be engaged in two focused activities to engage with MHLS stakeholders:

i. Stakeholder Surveys:

1. MHLS Board & Staff Survey – this survey is designed to solicit your best thinking on the future of our System and where our energy should be focused in the future.

2. Member Library Director & Board President Survey – this survey is designed to gather information about the goals member library leadership have as they look to the future of their own libraries.
 - ii. Listening Tour: I will be attending as many county directors meetings as my schedule allows at all times but with a particular focus in the next quarter to facilitate a conversation around the questions I will ask in the Member Stakeholder Survey.
- b. I will use the information I have gathered to help MHLS staff, trustees and the System Services Advisory Committee to strengthen critical services as well as to design future services and programs that are relevant to our members and help us all advance the cause of increasing the visibility, viability and vibrancy of our member libraries.

3. Filling the Coordinator for Library Sustainability Position

- a. Efforts are underway to advertise for a new staff person to fill a position similar to the Coordinator for Library Sustainability position I vacated to accept the Executive Director position.
- b. In the interim:
 - i. Member library directors and trustees have been encouraged to continue to contact me as they always have for technical assistance and consulting services.
 - ii. Kerstin Cruger, MHLS Library Sustainability Associate & Communications Specialist, has agreed to take on a more prominent role in a number of key Action Plan projects such as Project Outcome, the Turning Outwards cohort, the 2018 Lab Project and production of the MHLS Bulletin. We have temporarily adjusted the salary of this position in acknowledgement of the increased workload and responsibility.

4. 59th Annual Membership Meeting of the Mid-Hudson Library System

- a. Registration for MHLS Trustees is now open for the 59th Annual Membership Meeting of the Mid-Hudson Library System. Our theme this year: *Libraries Are Our Future*. Please use this VIP link rather than the general link sent out to members: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MHLSAMM>
- b. Details:
 - o **When:** Friday, November 2, 2018
 - Registration opens at 8:15am
 - Breakfast Buffet provided
 - Business Meeting & Awards at 9:00am
 - Keynote Presentation at 10:30am
 - Program ends at 12:15pm
 - o **Where:** [Locust Grove Historic Estate, Museum & Nature Preserve](#) in Poughkeepsie, NY
 - o **Keynote Presenter:** **Garry Golden, Futurist** [<http://www.garrygolden.com/>]



Focusing on the Future: Getting Ahead of the Curve:

Today, libraries are continually confronted with claims that advances in technology will disrupt our future. Some predictions may be overhyped, while other emerging trends may indeed change the role of libraries in helping our communities thrive in an uncertain future. Futurist Garry Golden will help us imagine implications at the intersection of demographic and digital change,

exploring questions such as: How aging populations and caregiver culture will impact our communities; How social equity can be achieved while pursuing innovation; and What will the next wave of digital policies and innovations mean for the library user experience?

After a break our keynote speaker will provide an **extended session** to continue the conversation, taking a deeper dive into the emerging trends introduced in the keynote presentation and expanding into the topic of the future of learning and “experience data.” Attendees will have the opportunity to imagine the future of library experiences and how they may be transformed by access to lifelong learning data through a Q&A portion of the session with Mr. Golden as well as table talk discussion with fellow attendees.

- c. **Pre-Event Survey:** MHLS is focusing on the future for our 2018 Annual Meeting! This survey should take you around 15 minutes to complete. The responses will help us begin thinking about how the future might be different and help our presenter, Futurist Garry Golden, get a sense of where our thinking is. Survey responses are anonymous. We will provide an aggregated summary to all attendees.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TYWQRS6>

5. Union Vale Contract Update

- a. Four member libraries impacted by the Union Vale contract (Beekman, Dover, LaGrange & Millbrook) have directed MHLS to engage in a contract negotiation with the Town Board of Union Vale to prepare for the expiration of the current contract at the end of 2018.
- b. This contract is in place as a result of our [Free Direct Access Plan](#) (FDAP). The town of Union Vale does not have a library and Union Vale residents have traditionally used the four neighboring libraries. However, this use had, for many years, been subsidized by the neighboring towns. Usage of neighboring libraries rose to a level that trigger restrictions to library services for these residents due to the lack of financial investment by their town as per the FDAP. The current contract provides for a more equitable financial arrangement.
- c. An initial proposal was sent to the town board in May, a counteroffer received and a second draft proposal provided to the town board earlier this month.

6. NYLA Steps Up to Help the Woodstock Public Library District

- a. The Woodstock Public Library District is faced with an unprecedented situation: a petition has been filed by citizens of the town to force a vote on the questions of whether or not the library district should be “dissolved and terminated.” This vote will take place in November on the date of the general election.
- b. The Council of the New York Library Association (NYLA) has authorized both in-kind support in the form of consulting from NYLA staff and financial support to help the community keep its library in its current form.

7. Looking Ahead:

a. **2019 Contracts**

- i. Our delivery service vendor contract with ALD will expire in June 2019. MHLS staff have crafted an RFP timeline and a communication plan leading up to this event is in the works.
- ii. Our ILS contract with Innovative Interfaces Inc. will expire in August 2019. As per our 2018 Action Plan, MHLS staff have been working with an advisory group of member library directors

and staff to inform this process. A whitepaper will be issued to the Directors Association this fall. A process timeline is in place.

- b. **Save the Date:** 2019 NYLA Library Advocacy Day in Albany is on Wednesday, February 27th

- 8. **ALA Advocacy Boot Camp:** Thursday, September 20th from 9:30am-12:30pm at the Bethlehem Public Library
 - a. MHLS has joined with our public library system director peers from around the state to bring in two national speakers on the topic of advocacy.
 - b. MHLS Trustees are welcome to attend this event. Details have been emailed to all trustees.
 - c. If you plan to attend please go ahead and [register](#), seating is going fast. Once you've completed the training, email your registration confirmation to Linda @lvittone@midhudson.org for reimbursement of the registration fee.

9. **MHLS Leads the Way on Sustainability**

- a. In December of 2017 the MHLS Board endorsed the MHLS staffs' recommendation that we pursue the [New York Library Association's Sustainable Library Certification Program](#). A MHLS Sustainability Initiative Team was formed and has been working diligently through the first section of the certification program which is focused on environmental sustainability. Technical support for this portion of the program is provided by the Green Business Partnership, a program of the Business Council of Westchester in partnership with Westchester County and Green Team Spirit LLC.
- b. Sustainable Hudson Valley and the Green Business Partnership reached out to MHLS to host a meeting of civic and government leaders in Dutchess County to spotlight the work MHLS has been doing on the topic of sustainability to assist in the exploration of the idea of this program being adopted in Dutchess County as it has been in Westchester County.
- c. On August 9th in the MHLS Auditorium we hosted an hour-long meeting. In addition to myself, Kerstin Cruger from MHLS, Ric Swierat from our board and Stephanie Harrison, director of the Millbrook Library, chair of the Dutchess County Directors Association (and certification program participant!) we were joined by the Assistant County Executive for Economic Development, Dutchess County legislators, the CEO of [Think Dutchess](#), representatives from Dutchess Tourism, Dutchess County Planning & Development, Dutchess County IDA/LDC, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Dutchess County Community College and the Council of Industry.
- d. As a direct result of this meeting Dutchess County has decided to join the Green Business Partnership and begin promotion of this program to local businesses and civic organizations.

10. **Executive Director's Event Participation: August – early September**

- a. Columbia County Board of Supervisors Government Committee
- b. MHLS Central Library / Collection Development Advisory Committee
- c. Sustainable Hudson Valley / Green Partnership / Dutchess County Introductory Meeting
- d. MHLS Board of Trustees meeting
- e. MHLS Incentives Committee meeting
- f. MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee meeting
- g. MHLS Finance Committee meeting
- h. Ulster County Library Association meeting