

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | May 2020

1. COVID-19 Updates

- a. **System Services:** MHLS Staff continue to work remotely as per the Governor's Executive Order.
 - i. We have extended the temporary suspension of delivery, Interlibrary loan, in-person events and in-person consultations to match with the Governor's Executive Orders.
 - ii. I have been intensely focused on two areas of state level advocacy
 1. State Aid for Libraries
 2. Library Specific Guidance for Reopening
 - iii. We have offered weekly MHLS COVID-19 Briefings for Directors and two briefings for member library trustees. The goal of these briefings is to ensure our stakeholders have up-to-date, factual information related to the Governor's Executive Orders, evolving legal issues related to COVID-19 and updates related to financial considerations at the local, county, state and federal levels.
 - iv. We have developed a COVID-19 Resources Page [<https://midhudson.org/covid19/>] as a clearinghouse of information as our libraries work to manage and govern their libraries during this difficult time and produce responsive and relevant services for their public.
 - v. We have stepped up our continuing education and professional development offerings by increasing traditional program offerings in the area of Sierra training, converting existing programs to online events as well as develop new online programs in response to the trends in online programming, social media and to plan for an overhaul of the 2020 Summer Reading Program. This is an area we are continuously evaluating and developing as we recognize this delivery mode for CE/PD will be here for at least the next year. Coming soon: a full complement of our popular Trustee Education Series offered online.
 - vi. Delivery Operations: Tom Finnigan, MHLS Delivery Operations Manager and Chris Herron, MHLS Facilities Manager & Assistant Delivery Operations Manager have worked continuously to assess delivery services in preparation for restarting this critical service. They have worked with the Tech Ops team to pull Sierra data to project volume and worked with our delivery vendor to work through possible scenarios for restarting in this unusual situation. A limited delivery run in April provided good data and insights to us and our drivers to prepare for the future. However, it also exposed the fragility of our safety and security protocols as a driver returned from his initial run feeling unwell and was later diagnosed with COVID-19. Tom and Chris took immediate steps to evacuate our sorting staff from the area, notify directors of libraries on this run, isolate the materials handled by this driver and follow the response and cleaning protocols provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Reports are the driver is doing well, has exhibited no symptoms and is self-quarantined at home.
 - vii. Technology Operations: Laurie Shedrick, MHLS Assistant Director/Technology Operations Manager and her team have been extremely busy, answering – on average – more than twice the normal volume of requests from our members for assistance through our ticketing system. In addition to this, they have produced more than 24 webinars in less than two months, created 22 new online registration forms for members, processed over 1,800 new library cards since

mid-March, launched the final product in our first ILS Road Map, and aided dozens of libraries in introducing new resources to their public such as Kanopy, CreativeBug, and Hoopla.

- viii. Library Sustainability: Casey Conlin, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator and his team have



Casey conducted the Intro to State Aid for Library Construction webinar from his car due to a last-minute power outage at home!

been hard at work ensuring our stakeholder community stays connected and informed with daily, custom social media posts re-usable by our members, the weekly Bulletin which is running about twice the length as it usually does given the large volume of information and resources emerging during the crisis. Casey has assisted me in the necessary policy analysis on topics such as the Executive Orders, the CARES Act and the Paid Sick Leave legislation at both the state and federal levels. The team is currently focused on custom restart guidance for libraries to ensure they are following the recommended guidance for facility

cleaning, PPE for staff, thoughtfully designed social distancing parameters in their facilities and more. This team has also taken a lead on engagement work with our state legislators, harnessing their good will and profile in the community to help get the word out about the valuable resources our members and the system have to offer.

- ix. Financial Analysis of Member Libraries: I conducted an analysis of member library funding mechanisms to determine the financial stability of our membership. This enabled me to help libraries who are vulnerable during this time due to a lack of a public vote, high incidence of fundraising to make ends meet, or those with a lack of clarity surrounding their voting procedures for the year. As a result of this we were able to provide timely information to the State Librarian which heavily influenced Executive Order 202.26.

b. Re-Opening Preparations

- i. We are actively engaged at the state level, regionally, at the county level and with local libraries to help influence the inclusion of libraries into the re-opening phases laid out by the Governor.
- ii. The MHLS “Restart Guidance Campaign” that many of you helped with was successful, resulting in attention from Empire State Development within four-days of our kick off and an invitation to me to provide input for specific guidance for libraries in the reopening. I used this invitation to coordinate input from all member library directors, all public library system directors state wide and the government relations staff at the New York Library Association so we were able to provide a coordinated input document to both ESD and for a meeting this week with NYLA leadership and staff in the Governor’s office. I thank you for your quick action, it made a difference!
- iii. We are now working on coordinated outreach at the regional and county level with help from the DA leadership and county directors’ group chairs, to help local government officials who are influential with classifying business activity within the phases.

c. Finances

- i. The Governor has been clear that the economic crisis caused by the extraordinary efforts to “flatten the curve” of COVID-19 infections will have severe repercussions for state aid. We have reached the end of the first “measurement period” in which the NYS Division of Budget will

adjust their revenue projections for the year and likely increase the cut to library aid. Cut levels mentioned over the course of the past month could be anywhere from 14-50%.

- ii. The Executive and Finance Committee members have made it clear that preserving the jobs of MHLS staff is of the utmost importance to them and therefore all efforts will be made to do so. However, it is important that all stakeholders move forward with the understanding that we are faced with an unprecedented and very uncertain situation which may mean difficult choices lie ahead for our organization.
- iii. In preparation for the predicted cuts MHLS staff, in consultation with the MHLS Executive Committee and MHLS Finance Committee, have enacted cuts (including a hiring freeze), negotiated savings and calculated increased revenue since the passage of the budget in December. With the committees' approval, we also applied for a Paycheck Protection Program loan which was approved last week. This is a forgivable loan if certain conditions are met. Linda and I are confident we can meet those conditions.
- iv. Given that there are two more measurement periods in which further cuts could be announced we are pursuing and researching several options to further conserve finances and potentially increase revenues. The MHLS Finance Committee has agreed to meet more frequently this quarter to assist us with this work.
- v. Our staff and member library directors have been provided with an update on this topic and are aware of the severity of this situation.

2. ADVOCACY CALL TO ACTION: State Aid as Part of a Federal Stimulus Package

- a. The Governor has noted repeatedly that New York needs state aid to be a part of the next federal stimulus package.
- b. I am asking each of you to reach out to our federal representatives to express support of this and ask them what they will do help New York through this economic crisis at the federal level. Please tell them that the public library infrastructure of New York is highly dependent on state aid and without federal assistance the predicted cuts could decimate core services that public libraries rely on to offer affordable, modern library service to their constituents.
- c. Contact information for all federal legislators is available on our site at:
<https://midhudson.org/topics/sustainable-libraries/advocacy/mhls-legislators/>

3. MHLS Directors Association (DA):

- a. The DA passed their own [Pandemic Policy](#) to enable them to both meet online and vote online in between meetings as necessary.

4. **III Senior Leadership Meeting:** In March, MHLS Technology Operations Manager/Assistant Director Laurie Shedrick and I joined forces with the Boston Public Library/Metro Boston Library Network, Cape Libraries Automated Materials Sharing, Libraries Online, Library Connection, Minuteman Library Network, Ocean State Libraries, and the Suffolk Cooperative Library System in a joint meeting with Senior Leadership of Innovative Interfaces Inc. (III): Yariv Kursh, General Manager, Innovative Interfaces

& Hilary Newman, Senior Vice President, Innovative Interfaces. Our goal was to address areas of concern that have arisen since the acquisition of ILL by ProQuest/Ex Libris. Primarily of concern for MHLS were issues surrounding the future of the online catalog (aka discovery platform) as the initial announcements about their plans related to this area of their business ran counter to the contract we had recently negotiated to future proof our ILS in the coming years. Since this meeting Laurie and I have met with our account manager and sales rep who initially negotiated our current contract to further express our concerns. We have an upcoming meeting with development staff at ILL to continue to pursue the best possible outcome for our system.

5. Town of Union Vale Contract Update:

- a. After consulting with the impacted libraries, on March 27th we notified cardholders in the Town of Union that during the COVID-19 Emergency access to online services will be extended despite the lack of a contract for library services with the town. Once libraries have re-opened as per the Governor's Executive Orders, this will be revisited.
- b. The MHLS Directors Association conferred over the implementation of restrictions and agreed with the plan put forth, as authorized by the MHLS Board of Trustees.
- c. *For more detailed information about this situation please see these [answers to Frequently Asked Questions](#) provided to Union Vale cardholders in September.*

6. Board-to-Board Visits & Talking Points

- a. As you attend member library meetings during the COVID-19 era I would ask that you please listen to the issues the boards are contending with and let me know if you hear anything you think we have not addressed.
- b. I would recommend familiarizing yourselves with our MHLS COVID-19 Resources Page [<https://midhudson.org/covid19/>], particularly the "Administrative Resources" section as resources boards you speak with may need can be found there.
- c. Ensuring we are clearly communicating about our financial situation will be key. As news of the projected cuts comes out I will work with the Executive Committee and Finance Committee to ensure clarity in our messaging from our board to our stakeholders is provided.

7. Executive Director's Event Participation: March 14 – May 5

- a. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State
- b. MHLS COVID-19 Director Briefing
- c. Bob Dandrew, The New World Foundation
- d. MHLS Board of Trustees
- e. Joint Consortia Meeting with Senior Leadership of Innovative Interfaces Inc. (Yariv Kursh, General Manager, Innovative Interfaces & Hilary Newman, Senior Vice President, Innovative Interfaces)

- f. Division of Library Development Update
- g. Putnam County Library Association
- h. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State
- i. MHLS Lab Project Kick Off
- j. MHLS COVID-19 Director Briefing
- k. FEMA Applicant Briefing
- l. Ask A Lawyer Session with Stephanie Cole Adams
- m. Bob Dandrew, The New World Foundation & Matthew Stinchcomb, Good Work Institute
- n. MHLS COVID-19 Trustee Briefing
- o. Sustainable Library Certification Program Statewide meet up
- p. MHLS COVID-19 Director Briefing
- q. Ask A Lawyer Session with Stephanie Cole Adams
- r. MHLS Directors Association
- s. MHLS Leadership Circle with Ron Kirsop
- t. MHLS Finance Committee
- u. NYLA Legislative Committee
- v. Columbia County Library Association
- w. MHLS Facilities Committee
- x. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State
- y. Division of Library Development Update
- z. Dutchess Directors Meeting
- aa. MHLS COVID-19 Directors Briefing
- bb. Ulster County Library Association
- cc. Greene County Library Association
- dd. MHLS COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group
- ee. NYLA Library ReStart Meeting
- ff. Civil Service 101 Workshop with Geoff Kirkpatrick
- gg. MHLS COVID-19 Directors Briefing
- hh. Putnam County Library Association
- ii. MHLS Executive Committee & Finance Committee Briefing
- jj. Board Briefing
- kk. County Funding Advocacy Group
- ll. Assemblymember Didi Barrett
- mm. MHLS COVID-19 Directors Briefing
- nn. MHLS Trustee Services Committee
- oo. Bob Dandrew, The New World Foundation & Matthew Stinchcomb, Good Work Institute
- pp. MHLS Executive Committee
- qq. MHLS COVID-19 Trustee Briefing

