

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | December 2023

1. State Update

- a. The 414 Municipal Ballot Petition Signature Reduction bill has been signed into law. In 2024 member libraries will be able to get on the General Election ballot with 25 signatures. We will be working with the State Library to update both the [Public Library District Toolkit](#) and [Inch by Inch "how-to" document](#) to reflect this advancement.
- b. FY 2024 Budget Advocacy:
 - i. Please reach out to Governor Hochul using the New York Library Association's Call to Action Campaign to express your opinion on the importance of an increase in state aid for System operations and library. Construction.
 1. Now is also a good time to reach out to your local state Senator and Assemblyperson to ask for their help in advocating for an increase in System operating aid. Many newer legislators may not understand how public library systems in New York State work to benefit local libraries and their constituents.
 - ii. NYLA Library Advocacy Day in Albany is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2024. We are partnering with the Ramapo-Catskill Library System to have buses transport advocates to Albany. We will have a stop in Putnam County for the first time in addition to the usual stops along the NYS Thruway. Please register today through the [MHLS Calendar](#).

2. Personnel Updates

- a. New Hires (Action Item)
 - i. Stephanie Werskey, Library Sustainability Association & Communications Specialist
 - ii. Elizabeth Garcia, Finance Associate
- b. We have received the first draft of a new Personnel Handbook from Visions Human Resource Services, LLC to ensure our policies follow state and federal law. We are comparing this to our current policy manual to ensure alignment with the CSEA contract. We will report our findings to the MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee.
- c. For National Kindness Day (November 13th) MHLS staff collected donations for the Dutchess County SPCA
- d. In the first quarter of 2024, the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice Discussion Series will be convened for new/newer staff.

3. Facility

- a. Roof & Solar Project
 - i. The bid was awarded to United Solar for both the roof and solar installation project.
 - ii. The roof project is completed. The solar project will start in mid-December.
- b. The railings on the front of the office building have been replaced.

- c. The Pollinator Garden installation has been completed.
- d. No Trespass Order filed with the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department. This has, thus far, proven to be effective in deterring folks from camping out on the property overnight.
- e. Mandatory Active Shooter Training for staff was held on September 26th. This program was provided free of charge thanks to the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department.
- f. Clean Up/Clean Out Day, an annual staff event, was held on October 31st.

4. Memo of Understanding Development Update:

- a. The MHLS Directors Association has approved a draft for your consideration. This document is the result of over a years' worth of work between the MHLS staff, board and Directors Association. This is the fifth draft, all counties' director's groups had multiple rounds of feedback on the document. The goal is to retain the "Good Neighbor" mentality our libraries currently exhibit and ensure what is working about the MHLS-Member Library relationship is preserved. This is an action item under the MHLS Executive Committee's section of the agenda.

5. Path to System Membership Joint Committee

- a. A joint committee made up of members of the MHLS Executive Committee and MHLS System Services Advisory Committee were convened to discuss and propose steps in the path for a library that request membership in the Mid-Hudson Library System. The committee's report can be found as an action item under the MHLS Executive Committee's section of the agenda.

6. Technology Operations

- a. [Discover.MidHudsonLibraries.org](https://discover.midhudsonlibraries.org) will be widely available to the public starting Wednesday, December 6th, 2023. Training and resource development by MHLS staff are archived here: <https://kb.midhudson.org/vega/> This includes a "Launch Kit" to help member libraries advertise the new catalog to their communities.
 - i. Help Guides in the new catalog have been customized for MHLS at no additional cost thanks to the leadership of Assistant Director and Technology Operations Manger Laurie Shedrick.
- b. At the DA's request we have implemented a new field in Sierra for "Preferred Name." This enables a patron to use a preferred name over their legal name in the patron field.

7. Library Sustainability

- a. A new [Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State](#) is now available.
 - i. What's New:
 - Integration of issues surrounding equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as sustainability
 - Significant upgrades to the Planning and Evaluation and Board Development chapters
 - An introduction to Board Committees
 - Clarifying reserve funds and fundraising issues

- Intersections with the Public Library District Toolkit
 - Updated explanation of the current state of the NYS Open Meetings Law
 - New appendices on hiring a new director, sustainability as a core value, and PILOT Payments
 - Upgrades to the sample bylaws and Civil Service 101 appendices
 - Updated policies checklist and glossary
- ii. We have completely updated the sample policies pages on the MHLS web site to align with the new policies checklist in the 2023 edition of the Trustee Handbook. This section now includes resources associated with many of the policy areas as well as samples from public and association libraries in New York State and beyond. [Internal Policies](#) | [External Policies](#)
- b. Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley applications are now open.
- c. We kicked off a new partnership with Sustainable Hudson Valley and the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) with a webinar, Libraries as Resilience Hubs on October 19th. We hope to host a cohort of libraries from MHLS and RCLS who will learn more about placemaking and facilitating climate solutions in their communities in 2024.
- d. The 2023 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Libraries Series wrapped up in November. Events in the series included:
- i. Creating Inclusive Collections
 - ii. The Pronoun Workshop
 - iii. Bystander Intervention Series (3 parts)
 1. Bystander Intervention in Public Workplaces
 2. Bystander Intervention 2.0: Conflict De-Escalation in the Workplace
 3. Resilience: This Moment and Beyond
- e. Outreach Mini-Grants Awarded in two categories: adaptive equipment and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) support.

8. Update on the **Town of Union Vale effort to create a new library** will be provided at the meeting.

9. **2023 Highlights:**

- a. Advocacy efforts helped to restore cuts to our operating aid and construction aid proposed by Governor Hochul.
- b. Municipal Ballot Petition Signature Reduction Legislation signed into law
- c. New Library Catalog Launched
- d. One-Year Contract Renewal with Valley Courier
- e. Dyson Foundation Grant enabled us to hire a PR Consultant
- f. MHLS became an official partner of Unite Against Book Bans
- g. Launch of *MHLS Training on Demand*, an online training platform that allows member library staff and trustees to take courses online, at the time of their choosing. Three academies:

- i. Technology
 - ii. Library Sustainability
 - iii. Trustees Education
- h. Authority Control Backfile Processing
 - i. Updated: author names, subject headings, genre headings, uniform titles, and series titles verified or updated to match the current Library of Congress headings.
 - ii. Alternative subject headings to records where the current authorized terms may seem outdated, insensitive, or confusing to our users.
 - iii. More inclusive terminology for describing groups of people using the words that these people often use to describe themselves.
 - iv. Inclusion of Accelerated Reader and Lexile Measures
 - v. Review our “near match” report to improve search results
- i. eResource Enhancements
 - i. OverDrive
 - 1. Final Report of the Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee released
 - 2. 100% of member libraries now have OverDrive Advantage Accounts
 - 3. Two more Reciprocal Lending Agreements (RLAs) signed:
 - a. Mohawk Valley Library System
 - b. Southern Adirondack Library System
 - ii. Transparent Language Online Added
 - 1. 110+ languages and 30+ ESL/EAL Courses
 - 2. American Citizen Test Prep course
 - 3. KidSpeak for Libraries: designed for kids ages 6 and up to learn Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.
 - 4. Survival Spanish for Librarians course
- j. Digital Equity Efforts Continued:
 - i. Beyond the Library Access Project Completed: 44 member libraries received access points and 90% saw a 25%+ increase in usage.
 - ii. ConnectALL Digital Equity Survey Facilitation
 - iii. Improved Connectivity Speeds at 30% of Member Libraries
 - iv. Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley program resurrected
- k. 25% increase in Tech Support Tickets; 96% resolved within 24 hours.
- l. Trustee Education
 - i. Trustee Education Series Survey conducted
 - ii. Trustee Education Certificate of Attendance Process Developed
 - iii. Trustee Handbook Book Club Partnership Continued:
 - 1. Robert’s Rules of Order
 - 2. Open Meetings Law Updates
 - 3. The Board-Director Relationship
 - 4. Financial Planning & Budgeting
 - 5. Strategic Planning

- 6. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access & Justice
- 7. Financing & Managing Construction Projects
- iv. Trustee Education Series
 - 1. Trustee Essentials
 - 2. Core Values & Ethics
 - 3. Financial Responsibilities
- v. New Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State
- vi. Updated Sample Policies Collection on the MHLS Web Site
- m. MHLS Horizons Series on Artificial Intelligence
- n. MHLS Early Literacy Cohort Program
- o. MHL Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Libraries Series
 - i. Creating Inclusive Collections
 - ii. The Pronoun Workshop
 - iii. Bystander Intervention Series (3 parts)
 - 1. Bystander Intervention in Public Workplaces
 - 2. Bystander Intervention 2.0: Conflict De-Escalation in the Workplace
 - 3. Resilience: This Moment and Beyond
- p. Professional Development Partnerships on the topic of Sustainability
 - i. Sustainable Libraries: Resources and Webinars for Climate Action (Sustainable Libraries Initiative & WebJunction)
 - ii. Libraries as Resilience Hubs (Sustainable Hudson Valley & Ramapo Catskill Library System)
 - iii. Libraries for Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework (Sustainable Libraries Initiative & State Library Victoria)
 - iv. Northeast Summit on Climate Adaptation for Library Facilities (Sustainable Libraries Initiative, Connecticut State Library; Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners; Massachusetts Library System; New Jersey State Library, New York State Library; Office of Library & Information Services; State of Rhode Island, Vermont Department of Libraries)
 - v. Citizen Preparedness Corps Training (New York National Guard and libraries in The Library of Local Program)
- q. Advocating for Equitable Access to Digital Books with Alan S. Inouye
- r. 414 Library Meet-ups
- s. NYLA Scholarships Awarded
- t. Fall Into Books Children's and Teen Literature Conference held at the Newburg Armory
- u. Member Library Salary & Benefits Survey Conducted
- v. Movie Licensing Group Discount
- w. New Director Forums & Custom Orientations for New Directors
- x. 2023 Great Give Back: 100% participation among member libraries

- y. Grant Administration
 - i. Successful administration of \$1.3 million in State Aid for Library Construction funds in our region
 - ii. 2023 MHLS Outreach Mini-Grants Program
 - 1. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Service Improvements
 - 2. Assistive Equipment
 - iii. Partnership with the Adirondack Mountain Club to help distribute \$6,000 in program funds to member libraries.
- z. Personnel
 - i. Seven new staff members welcomed:
 - 1. Ashley Teal, Administrative Assistant
 - 2. James Coyle, Finance Manager & Personnel Officer
 - 3. Elizabeth Garcia, Finance Assistant
 - 4. BJ Vickery, Cataloging Specialist
 - 5. Rebecca Hagan, ILL & Cataloging Specialist
 - 6. Stephanie Werskey, Library Sustainability Associate & Communications Specialist
 - 7. Ricky Conner, Materials Handler
 - ii. New Employee Assistance Program introduced
 - iii. New Performance Appraisal Process piloted
 - iv. Active Shooter Training conducted
 - v. HR Consultant hired

10. MHLS office building:

- i. AED installed
- ii. Pollinator Garden completed
- iii. Front entrance railing replaced
- iv. New roof installed
- v. Solar project predicted to be completed by end of year

11. 2024 Action Plan Development

- a. Under the Personnel & Planning Committee report you will see the draft Action Plan for 2024.
- b. Given that we are mid-way through our Plan of Service, In the first quarter of 2024 I will be conducting focus groups with each county director’s group to refresh our understanding of member library opportunities and challenges. This may result in adjustments to the 2024 Action Plan mid-year.

12. Board Operations

- a. **MHLS Trustee Continuing Education Reminder:** MHLS trustees should take 2-hours of continuing education relevant to our work on the board each year:
 - i. [Trustee Continuing Education Policy](#)
 - ii. [MHLS Trustee Continuing Education Procedures](#)
- b. **Board-to-Board Visits**

- i. Reminder: Please coordinate responses to libraries requesting a visit with your peers in the county before individually responding to request and, as always, please let me know if you need any assistance to prepare for your meetings or with follow-up information.
- ii. Suggested Talking Points:
 1. How MHLS supports member libraries
 2. How state aid underwrites MHLS services
 3. Library Advocacy Day: February 7th

13. Executive Director's Event Participation: September 5 – November 27, 2023

- a. MHLS Incentives Committee
- b. Meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt/Val Kill Historic Site Staff regarding plans for an event to celebrate the defense of the right to read (3)
- c. LIU/Palmer School Public Library Administrators Course (6), Instructor
- d. Consultation: Dover Plains Library Board of Trustees
- e. Consultation: Director, NorthEast-Millerton Library
- f. Columbia County Library Association (3)
- g. Hudson Area Library Literary Lions Event
- h. Legislative Committee, New York Library Association
- i. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (PULISDO) (3)
- j. [Capitol Press Room Interview](#)
- k. Tour of the new Woodstock Public Library District Facility
- l. Ulster County Library Association Annual Dinner, Presenter
- m. Webinar: [Libraries for Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework](#), Moderator
- n. Dutchess County Directors Association (3)
- o. Webinar: Trustee Essentials, Presenter
- p. Advocacy Launch, New York Alliance of Library Systems (NYALS), Guilderland Public Library
- q. Roof/Solar Project Bid Opening
- r. Public Library Systems monthly meeting with the staff of the State Library (2)
- s. Webinar: Core Values & Ethics, Presenter
- t. MHLS Directors Association (DA) (2)
 - i. Appreciation Luncheon for MHLS staff, sponsored by the DA
- u. Advisory Board Meeting, Sustainable Libraries Initiative (3)
- v. Employee Assistance Program Introduction
- w. Consultation: Director, Hurley Library
- x. Active Shooter Training, City of Poughkeepsie Police Department
- y. Webinar: [Climate Action Planning Part 2: Disaster Preparedness & Community Resilience](#), Presenter/Moderator
- z. Workshop: New Directors Forum, Moderator
- aa. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group (2)
- bb. MHLS Executive Committee
- cc. Meeting: Union Vale Charter Application w/director of the planned Union Vale Library and staff from the Division of Library Development

- dd. Webinar: [Climate Justice](#), Presenter/Moderator
- ee. Consultation: Turning Outward Program with the Pleasant Valley Library
- ff. Putnam County Library Association Dinner, Presenter
- gg. Consultation: Director, Morton Memorial Library (Pine Hill)
- hh. MHLS 414 Meet-up, Moderator
- ii. Consultation: Director, Red Hook Public Library
- jj. Webinar: Advocating for Equitable Access to Digital Books with Dr. Alan S. Inouye, Moderator
- kk. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee
- ll. Iowa Library Association Conference, Keynote Presenter
- mm. MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee
- nn. Ulster County Library Association (2)
- oo. Webinar: [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Justice](#), Trustee Handbook Book Club, Moderator
- pp. Webinar: Libraries as Community Resilience Hubs, Host
- qq. Webinar: Core Values & Ethics, Presenter
- rr. MHLS Resource Sharing Advisory Committee
- ss. New Director Orientation: Putnam Valley & Valatie
- tt. Putnam County Library Association
- uu. MHLS Path to System Membership Joint Committee
- vv. MHLS Annual Meeting
- ww. MHLS Clean Up/Clean Out Day
- xx. MHLS Annual Meeting
- yy. New York Library Association Annual Conference, Saratoga Springs, NY
 - i. Presentation: Preconference: Practical Approaches to Sustainability in Libraries
- zz. MHLS Central Library / Collection Development Advisory Committee Meeting
- aaa. Consultation: Board President, Elting Memorial Library (New Paltz)
- bbb. [Northeast Summit on Climate Adaptation for Library Facilities](#) (in partnership with the Connecticut State Library; Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners; Massachusetts Library System; New Jersey State Library, New York State Library; Office of Library & Information Services; State of Rhode Island, Vermont Department of Libraries, and Sustainable Libraries Initiative), Organizer & Presenter [[presentation recording](#) | [slides](#)]
- ccc. NYS Adaptation Practitioner's Network Fall Convening
- ddd. Consultation: Director, Plattekill Library
- eee. Presentation: What's New in the Trustee Handbook for public library system staff
- fff. Grand Opening, Kingston Library's temporary location
- ggg. MHLS Finance Committee
- hhh. State Aid for Library Construction Program Contacts meeting with the NYS Division of Library Development
- iii. Mini-Orientation, Tom Silvius, MHLS Board Member

14. I will be on medical leave December 20, 2023 – January 15, 2024.