

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | December 2022

1. State Update

a. **2023 Budget Priorities from the New York Library Association:**

- i. \$147.1 million in Library Aid
- ii. \$69.3 million for State Aid for Library Construction

b. **Legislative Priorities Update:**

- i. The Board of Regents approved regulatory changes to:
 - 1. State Aid for Library Construction Program which will elongate the timeline for libraries to complete their projects to six year.
 - 2. Central Library Services Aid which will enhance our ability to leverage these funds to better meet the demand for content in OverDrive.
- ii. 414 Signature Reduction Bill: NYLA reports that the State Library and the Board of Regents have also prioritized this bill.
- iii. eBook Pricing: NYLA is exploring a revision to General Business Law 396-R which would allow libraries to be considered essential services in time of economic market volatility. This would mean prices for services such as eBooks could not be increased to an “unconscionable” level.
- c. I have been invited to testify at a hearing being held by the **NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries & Education Technology** on Thursday, December 15th. They have asked that I focus my comments on the need for State Aid for Library Construction.
- d. **Save the date for New York State Library Advocacy Day 2023:** Advocacy Day 2023 is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28. This will take place in Albany, however MHLS will have a hybrid meeting schedule with some appointments online on or around February 28th and some in Albany.

2. Personnel Updates

- a. The 2023 Salary Schedule is available for your consideration at this meeting. Please note that with this schedule we will have completed our goal to ensure all full-time employees are paid a [living wage](#). This goal was part of our work through the Sustainable Library Certification Program.
- b. Personnel Actions: Lisa Massarelli has resigned from the position of part-time Financial Assistant to take a full-time position. A search to find a new person for this position is underway.

3. Facility Updates:

- a. We have completed the renovation of an office on the third floor of the office building which has been reconstructed as a “recording and production room” for staff who participate in online meetings and produce live and recorded online content for member libraries. This room

was designed, renovated and outfitted by Chris Herron, MHLS Facilities Manager & Assistant Delivery Operations Manager and features adjustable lighting, acoustic panels, a drop ceiling, adjustable blinds, an adjustable desk and other thoughtful features to give staff options for lighting and sound. The technology and software was chosen by Gerry Formby, MHLS IT Operations Supervisor and is suitable for broadcast and recording of content meant to be viewed online. You are welcome to come over to the office building after the board meeting to check out this new space!

- b. We have purchased an automated external defibrillator (AED) for our office building. The product chosen comes with onsite inspection, medical direction and training for staff. This equipment and the associated training will be rolled out in early 2023.
- c. Our electric vehicle charging station project came in under budget therefore we will have funds available through the state grant to work on the site around the stations to make them more accessible in the new year.

4. **Delivery Contract Extension:** We have been in exploratory talks with Valley Courier, the system's delivery vendor, for another 1-year extension to our current delivery contract. As you may recall, our contract allows for two 1-year extension, one of which we took advantage of this year. The MHLS staff and Finance Committee are recommending a second 1-year extension which would go into effect July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024. This extension would enact a 5.5% increase to our current cost, the first contractual increase since our contract began with Valley Courier four years ago.

5. **Launch of New Learning Management System:**

- a. This month marks the introduction of a new service to member libraries, a learning management system (LMS) we are named "MHLS Training on Demand."
- b. We are using the software platform of Niche Academy to create a customized environment for member library directors, staff, and trustees that will enable MHLS staff to offer curated continuing education and professional development content that folks can view on demand, at their convenience.
- c. Upon completion, a viewer can obtain a certificate of attendance that provides the necessary proof for civil service requirements, public librarian certification in New York State, and will enable public and association trustees to comply with the new trustee education mandate that goes into effect on January 1, 2023.
- d. Member library directors will manage their "team" in the platform and be able to add/remove staff members and trustees as well as assign training to help with staff education at their libraries.
- e. Laurie Shedrick, MHLS Assistant Director and Technology Operations Manager has set up this new platform and worked on the procedures to enable members to interact with this new service.
- f. Both the Technology Operations Team and the Library Sustainability Team have been hard at work uploading, organizing, and creating content in the new platform. In Phase 1 of this rollout, members will have access to "the basics," meaning they should have access to "101" level

information to help staff get started with the Sierra software and cataloging and to help new trustees to access information on their basic roles and responsibilities. We have also uploaded content previously recorded such as the Reimaging Library Services Series, an Introduction to Minimum Standards, and the Trustee Handbook Book Club content. In Phase 2 we will develop “coursework,” that will create a guided learning environment that tests learning/retention along the way. The Technology Operations Team is already testing this new approach for MHLS to deliver training in Phase 1.

6. MHLS Directors Association (DA)

- a. We welcomed the MHLS DA back to the MHLS Auditorium for their first in-person meeting since the pandemic on Friday, November 18th. After this meeting, the directors hosted a luncheon in appreciation of MHLS Staff.
- b. Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee: The Committee has presented its [final report](#) to their peers.
- c. The DA has adopted an [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement](#).
- d. We have begun a process to update the Document of Understanding and Automation Agreement with members. The System Services Advisory Committee and MHLS staff have worked together to merge these two documents and update them to reflect current contracts, understandings, and best practices. A second draft, based on input received at each county’s directors meetings will be discussed in January by the System Services Advisory Committee meeting. After that round of input a draft will be shared with the MHLS Board and MHLS Directors Association in the first quarter of the year.

7. Hudson Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition Exploratory Group: We are working with the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) and the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) to explore the creation of a Hudson Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition. This would be a group of like-minded folks, beyond just libraries, that are working on digital equity and inclusion issues. We are working towards an introductory event in February to bring together representatives from groups across sectors doing work in this area to meet one another and discuss what we may be able to do to by getting to know each other’s strengths and needs more.

8. The Library of Local Project: We are wrapping up year 2 of The Library of Local Project which brought our number of hub libraries up to 17. The funder is interested in a third year of collaboration which would help enhance the collections at these hub libraries to coincide with the release of a new Hudson Valley Pollinator Toolkit and help us ideate on what “Emergency Communication Hubs” located in area libraries could look like. This was an idea brought to us by this year’s annual meeting speaker, Michele Stricker

9. Town of Union Vale Update:

- a. Richard Swierat, MHLS Board President and I attended a reception to welcome the newly appointed library trustees on October 26th.
- b. A custom training session for the newly appointed trustees was provided on November 16th. At the conclusion of this session the group asked for further training. To that end, a survey to assess their training needs and a meeting date poll was provided.
- c. I have recently met with the State Librarian and staff from the NYS Division of Library Development to ensure we can best support this group as they pursue an application for a provisional charter.

10. “Post”-COVID Survey Results: This fall, I surveyed member library directors to better understand the impact of the pandemic on their institutions. A few key findings I’d like to share with you:

- a. E-circulation (ebooks, downloadable audiobooks, emagazines) is steadily rising.
- b. Circulation of print materials is flat or decreasing in most libraries.
- c. Program attendance is steadily on the rise but is not back to pre-pandemic levels for most libraries.
- d. Door counts are steadily on the rise but are not back to pre-pandemic levels for most libraries.
- e. Here to stay: ebooks; lending wireless hotspots; online programs, outdoor programs
- f. Popular programs include “things that bring people together in a relaxing way,” for example: crafts, children’s programs; outdoor activities (walks, story walks, eco-literacy-themed); food related; local history; concerts and plays.
- g. Popular materials: romantic comedies; children’s; new fiction; “light fiction”; graphic novels; the “library of things,” in particular: puzzles, museum passes, sewing machines, and tools.
- h. Motivations have changed, to summarize, folks see more desire for socialization among patrons and between patrons and staff. Interactions have become less transactional at the libraries.
- i. 2:1, libraries are reporting they are issuing more library cards than in pre-pandemic times.

11. NYLA Conference Scholarship: Thanks to the increase in state aid this year we were able to provide five (5) member library staff with a scholarship to help underwrite their attendance at the 2022 Annual Conference of the New York Library Association. I thought you might like to read the attendance recap from Gabrielle Esposito, Head of Adult Services and Technology at the Howland Public Library in Beacon:

“A community is nothing more than a group of people who share a fellowship around common goals and interests. It is the goals and interests of a group that make a community special. The community that attended NYLA consisted of new, seasoned, and retired librarians; it consisted of board members and trustees, and it consisted of invested authors like Laurie Halse Anderson, who delivered a speech about intellectual freedom that made every community member stand up and clap.

There is no doubt that the presentations I attended gave career-changing advice. In “Project Management for Small Libraries,” I gained the tools to think critically about planning a program: materials and people needed,

time, and execution. From this same presentation, I wrote, “Make it a little bit better,” which I take to mean: Do everything a little bit better until it is your best. In Carrie Banks’ presentation, “Beyond Ramps: Serving People with Disabilities,” she discusses how the same story can be presented in different ways so that people so that people of all different capabilities can share a story as well-known as The Very Hungry Caterpillar. But the thing that made the most incredible impact was seeing how many people showed up to represent the library community. And this is only a fraction of the members who are working hard across New York State to uphold the core values that bind our communities.

At NYLA, I had the opportunity to meet wonderful members of the community that had, before then, been out of reach. I attended the conference with Howland Public Library’s newly appointed Assistant Director, Kristin Charles-Scaringi. In the lobby of Saratoga Hilton, she introduced me to Rebekkah Smith-Aldrich, whose name is known by every librarian in the Mid-Hudson Library System. Rebekkah said that it was lovely to meet me in-person and asked if I was going to get a tattoo. During the “Transformative Conversations in Hiring for Diversity” luncheon, I met two wonderful librarians from Buffalo, who were attending NYLA for the first time in ten years; they smiled the entire time they ate their lunch. On Saturday, I sat next to a board member who joined me in standing for Laurie Halse Anderson.

The community that NYLA brings together each year is ever present. When we are not passing each other to attend a presentation put on by our peers, we are working diligently in our libraries. We are working for a community or a school that is united simply by location. The most striking detail of the 2022 NYLA Trade Show and Conference was realizing that our community is one that is strong enough to withstand when it is apart, and even stronger when it's together.”

12. Board Operations

- a. Public Hearing at the December 2022 Board Meeting: You will see an unfamiliar entry in this month’s board agenda for a “Public Hearing.” This is required due to the nature of two of the policy actions recommended by our board’s committees, detailed below. A public hearing is different from a board meeting in that at our board meetings, visitors speak at the pleasure of the board. In a public hearing setting, we are required to allow the public to comment. As per the rules and regulations related to public hearings in New York State a legal notice has been published in our newspaper of record to advertise the public hearing portion of our meeting.
 - i. The Personnel & Planning Committee recommended an updated Internet Access Policy that is compliant with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). This was reported to the board at the September board meeting ([see item 3d in their September report](#)). In order to continue to receive funds through the federal E-rate program this level of compliance is necessary.
 - ii. The Bylaws, Policy & Procedures Committee is recommending the adoption of “Procedures for MHLS Board Member Videoconferencing” that comply with the recent changes to New York State Public Officers Law §103-a. As per this section of law, the adoption of procedures on this topic require a public hearing.
- b. Board-to-Board Visits

i. Reminders:

1. Please coordinate responses to libraries requesting a visit with your peers in the county and, as always:
 - a. Please let me know if you need any assistance to prepare for your meetings or with follow-up information.
 - b. Please let Farah know once you've attended a meeting for tracking purposes: ffaizi@midhudson.org

ii. Talking Points

1. Please raise awareness about the new web site [Unite Against Book Bans](#).
2. Trustee Education
 - a. Please help advertise the guidance on the new Trustee Education Requirement which goes into effect January 1, 2023:
<https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/trustees/education.htm>

13. Executive Director's Event Participation: September 19 – December 2, 2022

- a. MHLS Government & Community Relations Working Group (2)
- b. Ulster County Library Association (3)
- c. Facilitation: 2022 Turning Outward Cohort Meet-up (2)
- d. Consultation: Pine Plains Free Library Board
- e. Presentation: Trustee Essentials, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- f. MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee
- g. Site Visit: The Center for Sustainable Living at Omega with the MHLS Sustainability Initiative Team
- h. Sustainable Libraries Initiative Board Meeting (3)
- i. Presentation: Core Values & Ethics, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- j. Putnam County Library Association (3)
- k. Consultation: Red Hook Public Library Board (3)
- l. Nominating Committee, American Library Association (3)
- m. Consultation: Leigh Palmer, Board President, Tivoli Free Library (3)
- n. Presentation: Keynote, Mid York Library System Annual Meeting
- o. Consultation: Valatie Free Library Board
- p. Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO) Meeting (2)
- q. Facilitator: Municipal Ballot Vote (414 Vote) Libraries Meet-Up
- r. Center for the Future of Libraries Advisory Board Meeting
- s. Presentation: Financial & Fiduciary Responsibilities, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- t. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- u. Haverstraw King's Daughters Public Library's Sustainable Library Certification Award Ceremony
- v. Facilitator: The Library of Local Project Meet-up
- w. MHLS Facilities Committee
- x. Dutchess County Directors Association (2)
- y. MHLS Annual Membership Meeting

- z. Presentation: [Public Library District Toolkit](#) Introduction for NYS Division of Library Development Staff
- aa. MHLS Staff Event: Clean Up/Clean Out Day
- bb. MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee Meeting
- cc. Reception to Welcome New Library Trustees, Town of Union Vale
- dd. Facilitator: Effective Meetings Using Parliamentary Procedure (statewide webinar produced in partnership with PULISDO)
- ee. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee Meeting
- ff. MHLS Board Development Committee Meeting
- gg. Matt Stinchcomb, Climate Partners of the Hudson Valley
- hh. Presentation: [Public Library District Toolkit](#) Introduction for PULISDO
- ii. Annual Conference, New York Library Association
- jj. MHLS Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee
- kk. Consultation: Fran Harrison, Grinnell Public Library District
- ll. Facilitator/Presenter: American Library Association's Virtual Book Club: Libraries & Sustainability: Programs and Practices for Community Impact (Session 1: Chapter 12 & Session 2: Chapter 1)
- mm. Legislative Committee Meeting, New York Library Association
- nn. Panelist: Writing a New Chapter: The Library World Post-COVID, Main Library Alliance
- oo. Presentation: Custom Trustee Education, Town of Union Vale Trustees
- pp. MHLS Directors Association & Staff Appreciation Luncheon
- qq. Grand Opening Celebrations, Amenia Free Library
- rr. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group
- ss. MHLS Executive Committee