

# Executive Director’s Report to the MHLS Board | September 2022

## 1. State Update

- a. **414 Signature Reduction Bill:** I met with the policy staff of the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Libraries & Education Technology to discuss the viability of a bill in the next session to reduce the number of signatures required to get a library initiative on the November ballot. They feel this is a viable bill and are working on draft language.
- b. **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. Pre-Advocacy Day events will take place on February 27 at the Albany Hilton.
- c. **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds:**
  - i. **Beyond the Library Wi-Fi Project**
    1. We have completed the installation phase of the Beyond the Library Wi-Fi Project: Gerry Formby, MHLS IT Operations Supervisory and Isaac Barbee, MHLS Tech Support Specialist installed outdoor Wi-Fi extenders 44 member library locations.
      - a. 80% of the these libraries serve communities that meet the definition of an economically disadvantaged community.
    2. The “Beyond the Library-Wi-Fi Access Project” extends the wireless internet signal at participating libraries to reach up to 300 feet beyond the walls of the library, in all directions, on library property and in more densely populated neighborhoods into nearby homes and businesses.



The **Rosendale Library** celebrated the opening of its new outdoor program space on June 15th. The screened, 14-foot-by-20-foot gazebo is situated under a canopy of large old maple trees and next to the library building. It will be the location of many of the library’s programs such as the weekly story hour and the monthly slow jam for string instruments and the library’s summer reading program. The gazebo building was funded in part through a New York State Library Construction Grant. The gazebo will have a Wi-Fi router provided through the **Beyond the Library** Wi-Fi access point project. This program was supported with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to the New York State Library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

- ii. **The Digital Navigators** in Cohort 1 have completed their grant cycle and an extension of the original grant has allowed the program to start a second cohort which began in July. The second cohort have received the same series of training and will be meeting twice monthly to share their experiences in engaging and supporting community members to bridge the digital divide through March 2023. Cohort 1 members who chose to continue with their work to connect community members with affordable broadband and devices and free digital literacy training beyond the grant have been invited to continue meeting with the current cohort to benefit from the shared experience. See the full list of participating libraries and organizations at <https://hvconnected.org/>. More info about the DNHV program is available at <https://libguides.senylrc.org/DigitalNavigators/about>
- d. **MHLS will join Phase II of New York State’s “Connecting NY Libraries: A Broadband Improvement Plan”:**
  - i. Community access to broadband is considered an essential library service. Many libraries experience challenges with the performance of library technology networks, but often don’t know where to start to improve things, let alone make strategic technological improvements with confidence. This project is designed to help libraries of all sizes in New York assess, understand, and improve their broadband infrastructure through the caring and expert assistance of library system staff and a national library technology consultant.
  - ii. During 2022 - April 2023, the project will increase the number of assessments throughout the system, building upon the successful training model developed during the pilot project that included the libraries in Amenia and Claverack:
    1. Participating libraries will work with MHLS staff plus the state library’s consultant; this team will work together throughout the process.
    2. Participants will receive personalized and interactive training and support designed to demystify technology topics and inspire confidence and mastery of even novice library staff.
    3. The team will work together to perform an assessment of each library’s technology. This assessment will include specific improvements the library can make.
    4. The New York State Library will connect participants to relevant funding opportunities for technology needs, including the [federal E-Rate program](#), State Aid opportunities and other sources as suggested by the NYSL.

## **2. Personnel Updates**

- a. Personnel Actions:
  - i. Laura Crisci has been hired as the new Library Sustainability Coordinator. Her first day was September 6, 2022.
  - ii. Amy Kendel has been hired as the new Interlibrary Loan & Cataloging Specialist
- b. MHLS Outreach & Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Specialist Kerstin Cruger has been appointed for a second term as the President of the Friends of Libraries Section of the New York

**3. Facilities Updates:**

**a. Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations**

- i. Our application for the [Electric Vehicle \(EV\) Make Ready Program](#) was approved. This has resulted in an incentive from Central Hudson for \$25,578. This amount, combined with the \$17,600 discount negotiated with Livingston Energy Group means that for this \$59,600 project, MHLS will pay \$16,422 out-of-pocket. As you will see in the MHLS Incentives Committee report, we are applying for a State Aid for Library Construction grant to cover these out-of-pocket costs.
- ii. The two units, resulting in four parking spots for electric vehicle charging were installed the first week of September. These are set for full cost recovery thereby there is no financial cost to MHLS when someone charges their vehicle using these stations.



- b. We are consulting with two Master Gardeners from the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County to create a pollinator garden in the MHLS parking lot on the island where the EV Charging Stations are located. To this end, we plan to apply for an [Ecological Restoration Grant](#) from Climate Partners Hudson Valley to underwrite the excavation, materials, and landscaping work to establish this garden.



*Cathy Lane and Kathy Smith, Master Gardeners who volunteer through the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County came to visit and educate members of the MHLS team working on the Sustainable Library Certification ( Chris Herron, MHLS Facilities Operations Manager & Delivery Operations Assistant, Laurie Shedrick, MHLS Assistant Director and Technology Operations Manager, and Dave Haspel, MHLS Delivery Operations and Facilities Associate (not shown, me!) on Monday, September 19, 2022.*

4. **MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Mini-Conference: Friday, October 7, 2022 from 9:30am-3:30pm**

**Morning Program 9:30 am – 12:15 pm | REGISTER**

*This morning session is designed for library board members, directors, and administrators, but all are welcome to attend.*



**Session 1: KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Freddimir García, Co-Founder & Program Advisor for [The Board Institute](#), Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress

**Topic: Inclusive Leadership | Unmanaged Bias Limits Leadership**

We will be taking an excursion to understand the practical practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion while also identifying the key elements of an inclusive leader as a board member. We will challenge ourselves to also recognize the power of our minds and together, discover the functions and impacts of bias in our approach to governance decisions and board recruitment.

**Bio:** Freddimir García is the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Officer for the Hudson Gateway Association of REALTORS® (HGAR), a not-for-profit trade association representing over 13,000 real estate professionals doing business in The Bronx, Manhattan, Orange, Putnam, Rockland & Westchester Counties. It is the second largest REALTOR® Association in New York, and one of the largest in the country. In this newly created role, Freddy leads the Association's efforts in developing and executing HGAR's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

An active member of the community, Freddy is currently serving on various boards across the region including Family Services, Inc., RUPCO, Inc., Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, and Rhinebeck Bank. He also works with various organizations in the Hudson Valley on the development, understanding, and implementation of DEI strategies to help create environments of inclusion and accountability. He is also the co-founder and Program Advisor of The Board Institute designed to diversify boards across the Hudson Valley by equipping people of color with the knowledge, support, and tools to serve.

He is a two-time Marist College graduate with a Master's in Business Administration and holds a Diversity & Inclusion Certificate from Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

**Session 2: PANEL DISCUSSION:** Members of the Mid-Hudson Library System Board of Trustees Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group will share their experiences and resources developed over the last two years. Featured speakers: Richard Swierat, MHLS Board President; Priscilla Goldfarb, MHLS Trustee representing Putnam County; and Rajene Hardeman, MHLS Trustee representing Dutchess County. Facilitated by MHLS Executive Director Rebekkah Smith Aldrich.

**Afternoon Program 12:45 pm – 3:30 pm | REGISTER**

*This afternoon session is designed for library staff and directors, but all are welcome to attend.*



**Session 3: KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Maria Estrella, Founder of [Young Diverse Readers](#)

**Topic: *Flourishing Institutions: Best Practices for Inclusive and Equitable Library Spaces***

It's crucial for libraries to successfully foster and continue a culture where diversity, equity, and inclusion (EDI) are at the center of every library initiative. During this presentation, attendees will be introduced to basic EDI concepts, theories, and terminology key for establishing and continuing inclusive and equitable library spaces.

**Bio:** Maria F. Estrella (she/her/hers/ella) earned a Master of Communication and Information in Library and Information Science from Kent State University, two Bachelors of Arts and Sciences in Social Work and Spanish from Cleveland State University and received Diversity and Inclusion certification from Cornell University. She also holds two decades of library experience working in a five-star rated urban-research library system, including eight years working as a Children's/Teen Librarian and a Youth Services Subject Department Librarian. Maria similarly has thirteen years of significant knowledge advocating, promoting, and providing services to youth and caregivers. She served on national committees, juries, and task forces, whose primary goal is to provide diverse literacy and technological resources/services to enhance the lives of young readers and encourage them to become life-long scholars.

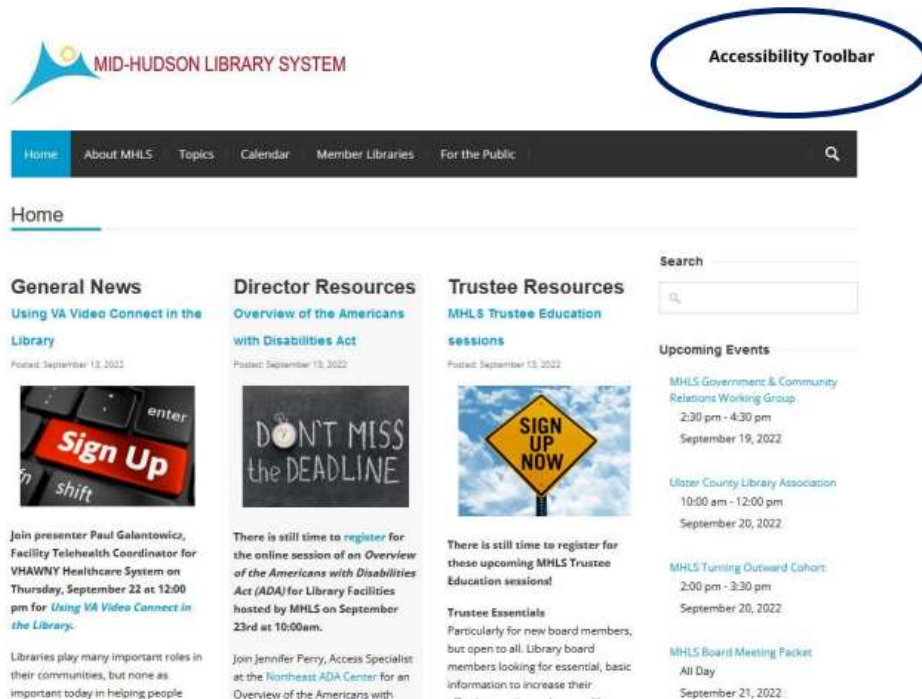
Maria is actively a REFORMA (National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking) Executive Board Member, the Children, and Young Adults Services Committee Chair, and a REFORMA liaison to the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). Maria was honored with the 2021 REFORMA Dr. Arnulfo D. Trejo Librarian of the Year Award and was recognized as a 100+ Latinos Cleveland Must Know, 2021 Edition. She will begin her 2022-2025 term as an American Library Association Councilor-at-Large as well as a Board Member of the Association of Library Services for Children.

**Session 4: PANEL DISCUSSION:** Representatives from three member libraries will talk about their experiences in implementing practices and programs at the local level to help engage their communities in conversations around diversity and employing hiring practices to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment. Panelists include Gina Loprinzo, Director of the Brewster Public Library; Erik Brown, Co-Chair of the Desmond-Fish Library's Racial Equity & Social Justice Committee; and Rhiannon Leo-Jameson, Director of the NorthEast-Millerton Library.

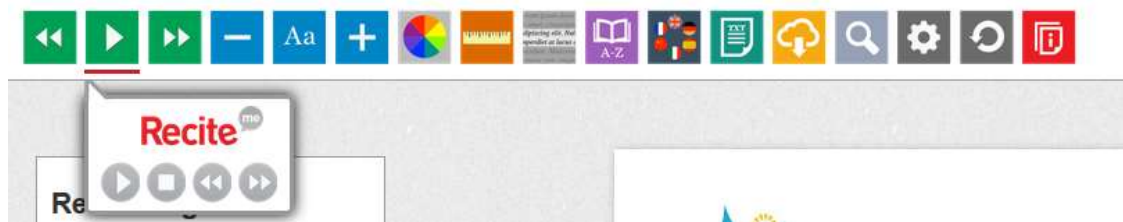
## **5. MHLS Directors Association's Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee**

- a. The Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee of the Mid-Hudson Library System's (MHLS) Directors Association (DA) was formed in June 2022 in reaction to the acknowledgement of the intersection of the increase in use of eBooks and downloadable audiobooks through the OverDrive platform; that some member libraries are struggling to meet demand in this platform; and that purchasing, overall, is behind the pace of other regional library systems.

- b. The Committee has met three times and discussed the growing use of OverDrive among patrons; the importance of e-books in keeping libraries relevant; the enhancement of the accessibility of library collections thanks to the Libby app; the need to balance demand with costs; the desire to balance print and e-book purchases; collection development and concern about its diversity; a desire to ensure the funding of the collection is being distributed equitably; an interest in data and a belief that metrics provide insight.
  - c. The Committee reviewed statistical reports, spending data, DA-approved policies, and purchasing models to identify key findings and corresponding recommendations to share with their colleagues. They released a draft report to their peers on September 16<sup>th</sup> with a goal to solicit feedback from their peers over the next month and a half and then finalize their report by the November DA meeting.
6. **Sustainable Library Certification Program Update:** WE ARE CERTIFIED! We are the first public library system in New York State to be certified under the Sustainable Library Certification Program. This process, which started in 2017, has shaped the work of the MHLS staff and board for the past five years leading to advances in our [policymaking](#), facilities operations, our staff awareness of issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, our financial stewardship and so much more. Over 140 actions were taken as part of this certification program. We will have a final presentation available soon for all to view and plan to make a really big deal about this announcement!
7. **Book Challenges Persist:** The American Library Association reports that there have been 1,651 attempts to restrict access to titles, so far, this year. MHLS staff continues to advise member library directors and boards on this area, utilizing both [resources from the American Library Association](#) and the new New York-specific resource developed in partnership with our library system peers, the *2022 Public Library Collection Policy Template & Guide* ([PDF/Word](#)). As part of this project, we co-hosted a one-hour webinar to discuss the *Public Library Collection Policy Template and Guide* on Tuesday, July 19 at 10:00 am. [View the recording of this webinar at this link](#). A second webinar, with a target audience of public library trustees will be announced shortly. We are also exploring a partnership with the Ramapo Catskill Library System and [The Library Freedom Project](#) on [doxing prevention measures](#) for library workers in light of the targeting of library workers in other parts of the state and country.
8. **Accessibility Assessment Work Continues**
- a. Web Site (midhudson.org): [ReciteMe](#) is now live on the general web site, MHLS Board page and MHLS Directors Association page.



Toolbar:



This is an “assistive toolbar” to create an inclusive environment for folks who visit our web site. The toolbar will include a screen reader, magnifier, translation into over 100 languages and give users control over the color scheme, text, font style, and spacing.

**9. Town of Union Vale Update:** As was reported at the last board meeting, the Town of Union Vale has voted to start their own library. A letter to congratulate them on this step and to clarify access to library services by Union Vale residents during this interim time, a copy of which is attached to this report, was sent to the town board by myself and our board president, Richard Swierat. On September 21<sup>st</sup> we received our first communication from the Town, indicating they have appointed their first board of trustees. They took the oath of office and met each other for the first time on September 20<sup>th</sup>. The town supervisor has requested training for this new board which we will provide.

**10. Board Operations**

- a. **The MHLS Annual Membership Meeting is coming up on Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup> from 10:00am-12:00pm.** During the business meeting we will report to the membership on the health of the organization, conduct board elections and hear from the MHLS Board President, Treasurer, and

Executive Director. Following the business meeting our keynote speaker will be **Michele Stricker, Deputy State Librarian of Library Development for the New Jersey State Library**. Ms. Stricker will speak about disaster preparedness and how libraries can contribute to community resilience before and after natural disasters.

*Please note there are separate registrations for the Business Meeting and our Keynote Speaker. If you would like to attend both events, please make sure to register for both sessions*

10:00 am | Business Meeting | [Register](#)

11:00 am | Keynote Speaker | [Register](#)

**Keynote Topic:** *From Disaster Preparedness to Community Resilience: The Long and Short of It*



Michele Stricker is the Deputy State Librarian of Library Development at the New Jersey State Library where she is responsible for library trustee and director education and training, strategic planning, disaster preparedness, and community resiliency. In addition to an MLIS from Rutgers University, she has an MFA in Museum Studies from Syracuse University, and an MA in Art History from the University of Pennsylvania. She received her certification in Preservation Management from the Rutgers School of Professional Development and has taught Preservation of Library & Archival Materials for the Rutgers Graduate School of Communication & Information

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.
  - b. Please let Farah or I know once you've attended a meeting for tracking purposes.

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>
  - b. Please raise awareness about the Fall 2022 Trustee Education Series Schedule:
    - i. Trustee Essentials (Introductory): Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-6:30pm ONLINE



- ii. Trustee Essentials (Introductory): Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> from 10:00am-12:00pm IN PERSON
- iii. Core Values & Ethics (Introductory): Thursday, September 22 from 5:00-6:30pm ONLINE
- iv. Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for Library Facilities: Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10:00-11:30am ONLINE
- v. Financial & Fiduciary Responsibilities (Intermediate): Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am-12:00pm ONLINE
- vi. Pathways to Sustainable Funding (Advanced): Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am-12:00pm IN PERSON
- vii. **NEW**: Robert's Rules of Order: Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-6:30pm ONLINE

**11. Executive Director's Event Participation: July 5 – September 16, 2022**

- a. MHLS Committee Chairs Mid-Year Check-in
- b. Meeting with Sally Cross, Executive Director of the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley
- c. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- d. Greene County Library Association (2)
- e. Presentation: "Libraries as Climate Resilience Hubs," Public Library Association
- f. Consultation: Alexis Tackett, Director, Pine Plains Free Library
- g. New Director Orientation: Jaclyn Savolainen, Director, Starr Library, Rhinebeck
- h. **Columbia County Climate Carnival**



*(Photo 1: Wendy Tremper Wollerton, Director, Livingston Free Library; Jen McCreery, Director, Chatham Public Library; Elizabeth Powhida, Director, Valatie Free Library. Photo 2: Elizabeth Powhida, Director, Valatie Free Library; Emily Chameides, Director, Hudson Area Association Library; Michelle Hoffman, Director New Lebanon Library)*

- i. MHLS Bylaws, Policies & Procedures Committee
- j. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- k. Consultation: Mary Chang, Trustee, Tivoli Free Library (2)
- l. Presentation: "[Sustainable Thinking for the Future of Libraries](#)," Niche Academy

- m. Meeting with the NYS Division of Library Development Staff & State Librarian with the Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO) (3)
- n. **Cairo Public Library Celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their Facility (w/Mary Linda Todd)**



*(Photo 1: Senator Michele Hinchey and Assemblymember Chris Tague look on as Debra Kamecke, Director, Cairo Public Library, presents a certification of recognition to former library board president Dot True for her leadership to build their facility; Photo 2: the Cairo Public Library's new Little Free Library was unveiled and dedicated to long-time staff member Robin Diffendale)*

- o. Facilitator, New Directors Forum (w/guest speaker, Thea Schoep, Director, Claverack Free Library)
- p. Consultation, Stephanie McLaughlin, Board President, Pawling Free Library
- q. Presentation: "[After Party II: Trustee Handbook Book Club](#)"
- r. Consultation: Ben Gocker, Assistant Director, Town of Esopus Library
- s. Consultation: Alan Gamble, Board President; Linda Gregory, Treasurer; Victoria Herow, Director, Amenia Free Library
- t. Staff Luncheon Event (w/Ric Swierat)
- u. MHLS Government & Community Relations Working Group
- v. Sustainability Libraries Initiative Advisory Board (3) (Check out the recent [news](#) and [newsletter](#) from the SLI)
- w. New York Alliance of Library Systems Conference, Ithaca, NY
- x. [Helping All Trustees Succeed \(HATS\) Team](#) Reunion
- y. Dutchess County Directors Association (2) + **Tour of the Morton Memorial Library & Community House (September meeting)**



*(l-r: new sewing machine stations and materials for upcycled crafts in the new makerspace at the Morton Memorial*

& Community House in Rhinecliff)



(l-r: mural in-progress and community composting station at the Morton Memorial & Community House in Rhinecliff)

- z. Ulster County Library Association (2)
- aa. MHLS Directors Association Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee (3)
- bb. Council Committee on Sustainability, American Library Association
- cc. MHLS Resource Sharing Advisory Committee
- dd. New Director Orientation: Katherine Reilly, Putnam Valley Free Library
- ee. Facilitator: Candidate Open House, American Library Association
- ff. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- gg. Meeting: Brendon Cunningham, Counsel, and Kevin Carmody, Legislative Director for Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre, Chair, [Assembly Committee on Libraries & Education Technology](#)
- hh. Meeting: Tim Burke, Upper Hudson Library System
- ii. MHLS Finance Committee
- jj. ALA Nominating Committee (2)
- kk. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group (2)
- ll. Legislative Committee, New York Library Association
- mm. Facilitator: Board Retreat, Amenia Free Library
- nn. MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee
- oo. Facilitator: Meet-up for Libraries pursuing a Municipal Ballot (414) Vote in November
- pp. Consultation: Starr Library (Rhinebeck) Board

qq. Presentation: [Locally Sourced: Municipal Green Policy Solutions](#), SUNY ESF in Syracuse, NY



rr. MHLS Nominations & Elections Committee

ss. MHLS Incentives Committee

tt. ALA Presidential Advisory Committee

uu. Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO)

vv. Presentation: Trustee Essentials, MHLS Trustee Education Series

ww. Launch Event, [Hudson Valley Climate Action Network \(HVCAN\)](#)

xx. Consultation: Claverack Free Library Board

yy. MHLS Directors Association



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July 28, 2022

Town Board Members  
Town of Union Vale  
249 Duncan Road  
LaGrangeville, NY 12540

Town Supervisor Maas, Town Board Members Gusikoff, McGivney, Durland and Welsh,

Congratulations on your decision to form your own municipal public library. Strong libraries build strong communities, and we applaud your efforts to invest in your constituents through the formation of a new library. We look forward to working with the new library board and their library director and wish you all the best on your path to receive a provisional charter and become registered through the New York State Board of Regents.

During this interim time, we wanted to be sure town residents were clear on their access to library services in the region:

- All Union Vale residents are welcome at and can receive a library card at any of our 66-member libraires.
- Residents have access to on-site services such as the print collection – including books, newspapers, and magazines – as well as points of service such as copy machines, notary public services, passport application services.
- Residents may borrow from the general Digital Download Collection (OverDrive) which includes ebooks, downloadable audiobooks and e-magazines.
- Residents are restricted from borrowing non-print materials on-site at member libraries including: DVDs, Video Games, Museum Passes, Wi-Fi Hotspots, Laptops and other items in a local library's "Library of Things."
- Local libraries continue to have the right to determine priority access for local residents for access to library programs, eResources such as Hoopla and Kanopy, and on-site technology.

Once again, congratulations on this positive move to support your constituents.

Sincerely,

*Rebekkah Smith Aldrich*

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Executive Director

*Richard Swierat*

Richard Swierat, Board President

cc: Lauren Moore, State Librarian; Mary DeBellis, LaGrange Library; Carol Fortier, Beekman Library; Courtney Tsalalis, Millbrook Library

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