

## Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | December 2020

### 1. Financial Update

- a. MHLS Staff and Board Members continue to work to address budget shortfalls due to the withholding of state aid for the current fiscal year and projected withholdings for FY2021.
  - i. A complete report is provided through the Finance Committee meeting notes however I would like to point out that we are on a path to close out 2020 without debt and with our reserves intact. This would not have been possible without the teamwork of all stakeholders: MHLS staff, trustees, and the MHLS Directors Association.
  - ii. We also welcome new partners to the table who have helped us to diversify our revenue streams and to build capacity including The Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley and The Lifeboats of the Hudson Valley, a fund of the New World Foundation.
- b. We have been awarded a \$10,000 Pivoting to Respond Grant by The Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley. This is an unrestricted gift for MHLS operations.
- c. State Advocacy
  - i. The General Election Results have been certified, most of our state representatives will remain in office with three districts welcoming new representatives in the Senate this year.
  - ii. Advocacy Day will be held online this year. Our advocacy strategy will include outreach to new representatives to introduce ourselves and connect them with the libraries in their district as well as online meetings we will be inviting you and our members to join us during. Advocacy Day will look different in 2021 because of the pandemic but it is no less critical for us to connect with our state legislators to ensure they understand how critical library service have been and continue to be during the pandemic and explain how system services contribute to member success.
  - iii. On November 19th I was invited to testify before the New York State Assembly's Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. I used my brief time to drive home the need for restored and increased state aid for the Mid-Hudson Library System and to convey the dedicated and exemplary work of MHLS member libraries over the past several months to meet the needs of their communities during the pandemic. I focused on the work of our libraries in four areas:
    1. Information Literacy
    2. Combatting Social Isolation
    3. Bridging Food Scarcity Gaps
    4. Digital Inclusion ChallengesA recording of the hearing is available through the [NYS Assembly's web site](#).

### 2. Personnel Updates

- a. MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer: Saran Camara has been hired to fill the MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer position that became available upon Linda Vittone's announced retirement. Saran has spent the past 13 years working as an auditor for the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC), one of our regulatory agencies. Saran is a Certified Public

Accountant (CPA) and has a master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). Saran will begin work at MHLS on Monday, December 7th and spend two weeks with Linda to get an overview of our financial and personnel management systems. Linda Vittone's last day will be on December 18<sup>th</sup>. I would like to thank MHLS Treasurer, Mark Wilson, for joining our search committee and taking on an extra duty in doing so. His input was invaluable.

- b. MHLS ILP Operations Supervisor: Thomas O'Connell has resigned for a new job in Massachusetts. His last day will be December 18<sup>th</sup>. We thank Thomas for his service to our organization and wish him all the best. We are currently assessing the needs of the Tech Ops Team in order to determine how best to move forward.
- c. Tech Support Specialist: Joris Lemmens resigned from this part-time position to take on a full-time position with his local school district. We are in the midst of a search to fill this position to ensure we can fulfill our contractual obligations to member who have tech support contracts with us.

### **3. The Current Impact of COVID-19 on System & Member Library Operations**

- a. As we enter into a new phase of pandemic response measures, the landscape is shifting yet again as libraries work to maintain a balance for worker safety, the delivery of services and community resilience.
- b. As a result, MHLS staff have created new documentation to aid libraries that may find themselves in a declared cluster action zone or confronted with a hyper-local COVID-19 incident.
- c. At our most recent MHLS Director Briefing we focused on helping libraries fine tune proactive infection plans, the newly required pandemic response plans, and working through the various scenarios, that are increasingly likely, that will result in service level changes. Many libraries are planning to rollback services and shut down public access to facilities if they find themselves in a red zone. Some may also do the same in an orange zone. A majority are reporting they plan to continue curbside service if their facilities are closed to the public.
- d. Our goal is to keep MHLS delivery services going for as long as possible. Factors that may impact this include the number of libraries on a route, in a county or in our region that continue circulation operations. We have updated our delivery vendor on this situation and our plans and they have once again responded with openness to working with us as conditions on the ground change.

### **4. Ransomware Attack Recovery**

- a. On Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> we experienced a Ransomware attack. Ransomware is malicious software that infects your computer and displays messages demanding a fee to be paid in order for your system to work again. This class of malware is a criminal moneymaking scheme that can be installed through deceptive links in an email message, instant message or website
- b. Thanks to our business continuity planning over the past two years, we were not "held hostage" by this attack. We had four hours of downtime while Tech Ops staff analyzed what had happened, removed the virus from our system and restored impacted files from a backup that is done routinely.

- c. As a result of this incident, we have reset all administrator passwords, provided a refresher for staff on password management, restructured our shared files once again to limit even further the number of staff who have access to shared documents and disabled remote access for all non-essential uses. We will be implementing a remote desktop software solution to further minimize risk given our current telecommuting arrangements. We will continue to utilize the Phishing Awareness Training for staff through our KnowBe4 subscription which irregularly, but frequently sends mock phishing emails to staff to see if they will fall for the latest scams. This product, which has been in use for the past two years at MHLS has proven that these scams keep evolving and therefore we need to stay vigilant.
5. **A look back...** 2020 marks my second year at MHLS Executive Director. It has been, shall we say, a unique year, once again filled with opportunities and challenges but perhaps to a degree none of us expected. I would like to thank the members of the MHLS Board for your commitment, hard work, and good humor throughout this year which has been intense for all of us. While the pandemic and ensuing financial crisis are center of mind, I wanted to be sure to acknowledge the highlights we achieved this year:
- a. Decision Center was implemented, completing our very first ILS Road Map.
  - b. ILS Road Map 2.0 was developed and includes the Serials, Interlibrary Loan, Materials Booking, Patron Images modules and Encore Harvesting.
  - c. MHLS signed on as a development partner for the next generation online catalog product from Innovative Interfaces Inc., Vega.
  - d. 65 out of 66 of our member libraires now have an online registration form to connect with new library users.
  - e. We secured and implemented two grants to help get the word out about the 2020 Census and partnered with Bard College and La Voz to amplify our messaging to the Spanish-speaking community.
  - f. Multiple contracts were renegotiated for financial savings in light of state funding issues including III, Valley Courier, Universal Class, Mango and OverDrive.
  - g. The MHLS Trustee Education Series was transitioned and reconstructed to be offered 100% online.
  - h. MHLS staff produced social media marketing materials, re-usable by members to help get the word out about online resources, COVID-19 specific issues, the Census and voting.
  - i. A Phased Reopening Plan template was created to aid member libraries reopen library facilities safely during the pandemic and training was offered for Directors, Staff, and Trustees to work through tough issues related to reopening facilities.
  - j. A Proactive Infection Policy template was created which is, unfortunately, being well used by member libraries as they contend with staff who have become symptomatic or have received test results indicating they have COVID-19.
  - k. A COVID-19 Resources clearinghouse and member library reopening status page was created and kept up-to-date.

- l. Regular updates, Director and Trustee Briefings were offered on COVID-19 related regulation and law to help keep directors and trustees aware of a fast-moving policy changes.
- m. A “Reimaging Library Services” webinar series was produced to help member libraries learn from each other as social distancing, digital inclusion and food insecurity issues have challenged our communities.
- n. We participated in the first-ever statewide Great Give Back program in October 2020.
- o. MHLS negotiated a 15% discount for member library NYLA memberships.
- p. Working with the Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee we produced an eCollection Development Webinar Series to heighten awareness of OverDrive collection trends, the need to devote more resources to our ecollections and to draw on the expertise of our members who have invested time, energy and funds to build up their ecollections.
- q. The MHLS Board continued to pursue “board-to-board” visits to be sure you remain connected to issues our member libraries are facing; formed a COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group to seek alternative revenue sources in light of the financial crisis brought on by flattening the curve of COVID-19; and formed a Racial Equity Working Group to assess System planning, policies and procedures through a racial equity lens. The Finance Committee and Executive Committee, in particular, met more often and contended with tough issues, always keeping the stability and sustainability of our organization in mind.

#### **6. Board-to-Board Visits & Talking Points**

- a. As you visit with area library boards, we hope you will take time to listen to their efforts to iterative and innovate their service models to respond to COVID-19 concerns for library workers and the public. The creativity and determination of our members in the face of this challenge has been remarkable and we ask for your help to continue to gather stories from the field.
- b. Member boards may have questions about the System’s finances given the severity of the cut this year, please note that all of our financial documentation, including reports of the Finance Committee, are available on our web site at <https://board.midhudson.org> If there is anything you cannot answer just let me know.

#### **7. Executive Director’s Event Participation: September 8 – December 4, 2020**

- a. MHLS Racial Equity Working Group (6)
- b. MHLS Directors Association (2)
- c. Presentation: Introduction to the New Minimum Standards for Directors
- d. MHLS Executive Committee
- e. Presentation: Trustee Essentials, MHLS Trustee Education Series (2)
- f. Columbia County Library Association (3)
- g. MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee (2)
- h. Dutchess County Directors Association
- i. NYLA Legislative Committee (2)
- j. Presentation: Core Values & Ethics, MHLS Trustee Education Series (2)
- k. Meeting with member libraries impacted by the Town of Union Vale
- l. Center for the Future of Libraries Advisory board (2)

- m. Putnam County Library Association (3)
- n. Special Task Force on Sustainability, American Library Association (3)
- o. Presentation: Introduction to the New Minimum Standards for Trustees
- p. Presentation: Introduction to eCollection Development in OverDrive and Best Practices, MHLS eCollection Development Series
- q. MHLS COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group (3)
- r. Presidential Advisory Committee, American Library Association (3)
- s. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (2)
- t. Division of Library Development, New York State Library (2)
- u. Presentations: [Sustainability in Libraries Conference](#), Library 2.020/San Jose State University
- v. CARES Act Meeting, New York State Library
- w. Ulster County Library Association
- x. MHLS Director Briefing (2)
- y. MHLS Annual Membership Meeting
- z. Presentation: Beyond OverDrive in eCollection Development, MHLS eCollection Development Series
- aa. System Services Advisory Committee
- bb. Presentation: [Ecotopian Library](#), Basilica Hudson/[ToolShed](#)/Hudson Area Association Library
- cc. Presentations: [New York Library Association Conference](#)
  - i. Beyond Thunderdome: Regenerative Thinking for Libraries
  - ii. Panel Facilitator: The Comeback Kids
- dd. MHLS Facilities Committee
- ee. Testified: [NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology Hearing](#)
- ff. MHLS Board Development Committee
- gg. MHLS Bylaws, Policy and Procedures Committee
- hh. Presentation: Financial & Fiduciary Responsibilities, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- ii. MHLS Finance Committee