

# Executive Director’s Report to the MHLS Board | December 2021

## 1. State Update

- a. The Governor has signed into law one of the library community’s top legislative priorities for 2021: **S6511/A7021 Streamlining and Modernizing Library Aid**. This bill amends Education Law 273 to provide greater flexibility and ease program and reporting requirements, improve efficiency, and reflect changes in the way library and library system services are now delivered. Amendments relevant to MHLS include:
  - i. Consolidation of Central Library Development Aid and Central Book Aid to create a Central Library Services Aid Program.
  - ii. Streamlining of public library system basic aid formulas by combining per capita funding streams.
  - iii. Elimination of the separate Adult Literacy and Family Literacy Grant Programs and consolidation of those funds into the Public Library System Coordinated Outreach Services Program formulas.
  
- b. **The official Decennial 2020 Census Population and Land Area Data** for Public Library Systems has been released by the New York State Library. Per NYS Education Law, the State Education Department will use these official population and land area (square miles) to calculate Library Aid for library systems. The State Library anticipates using these figures for the first time in FY2022/2023 to calculate State funding allocations. Please note, there is a Hold Harmless provision for Basic, Coordinated Outreach, Central Library Development, LSSA, LLSA, Jails and Corrections State Aid.

### MHLS

County	2020 Census	2010 Census	# Change 2020-2010	% Change 2020-2010	Square miles
Columbia	61,570	63,096	(1,526)	-2.4%	634.7
Dutchess	295,911	297,488	(1,577)	-0.53%	795.7
Greene	47,931	49,221	(1,290)	-2.62%	647.2
Putnam	97,668	99,710	(2,042)	-2.05%	230.2
Ulster <small>(partial 80%)</small>	141,921	141,189	732	0.52%	619.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>645,001</b>	<b>650,704</b>	<b>(5,703)</b>	<b>-0.88%</b>	<b>2,927</b>

- c. **2022 NYLA Advocacy Day** will be completely online. While NYLA picks one date: Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, MHLS staff will once again plan to utilize the entire week of February 28-March 4 to schedule online visits with our state representatives. I hope you will reserve time that week to

join us. The schedule is usually available three weeks in advance.

## **2. Personnel Updates**

- a. **Kerry Chenier** will be joining the MHLS team on January 3<sup>rd</sup> as our new Administrative Associate.
- b. **Michael Tsahalis** has left MHLS for a new opportunity. He served as the Delivery Operations and Facilities Associate since May 2015.

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

- a. Libraries continue to operate under their Emergency Health Plans (public libraries) or Airborne Infectious Disease Exposure Prevention Plans (association libraries) as on October 31<sup>st</sup> the NYS Health Commissioner extended the classification of COVID-19 as a "...highly contagious communicable disease that presents a serious risk of harm to the public health in New York State..." through December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- b. At the request of the State Librarian, as of November 30<sup>th</sup> all member libraries have provided the required information regarding their schedules as they pertain to the state standards for minimum open hours. All but two member libraries will meet the standard for 2021, both libraries are failing to meet the standard due to issues related to construction project complications rather than COVID-19 issues.

## **4. Free Direct Access Plan Re-Vote**

- a. The Free Direct Access Plan (FDAP) is a State approved agreement between the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS) and the State Education Department's Division of Library Development of the New York State Library and is required by Commissioner's Regulations 90.3 (a) through (d)(4). The FDAP reflects MHLS' commitment that no resident in the area served by MHLS will be excluded from direct or on-site access to the resources of any of the system's member libraries on the basis of age, cultural, economic or civic status. The FDAP provides the process for member libraries to identify and place restrictions on excessive and unfair use of resources that have a negative impact on services a member library provides their resident borrowers. This plan is a required element of the MHLS Plan of Service.
- b. Earlier this year an ad hoc committee was formed to review the current FDAP and propose a new draft for the 2022-2026 Plan of Service submission. The plan is largely unchanged from the current FDAP apart from the removal of a restriction that was not technically possible and the inclusion of a restriction on patron and staff-placed holds in qualifying situations. This draft was provided to the System Services Advisory Committee of the Directors Association and the Personnel & Planning Committee of the MHLS Board of Trustees for their review and recommendation earlier this year. Both committees unanimously recommended this document for approval to their respective peers. The draft was approved by the full MHLS Directors Association in June 2021 and by the MHLS Board of Trustees in July 2021. In the fall, the State Library clarified that it would like this plan reviewed and approved by a majority of member library boards as well.

- c. Now that a majority of member library boards have approved the plan, the MHLS Board will need to re-approve it. It is unchanged from the version you approved in July. This is an action item under New Business for the December Board Meeting.

## **5. Vega Discover & Connect Contract Signed**

- a. With the endorsement of the MHLS Directors Association, we have signed a 5-year contract to lock in our adoption of Vega Discover (the new “Encore” or online catalog) and Vega Connect. This contract matches the original pricing obtained when our current Sierra Contract was signed, therefore this incurs no additional cost to MHLS.
  - i. Vega Discover includes:
    1. Discovery interface platform and improved patron experience
    2. Modern search environment with linked data using BibFrame
    3. Topic and Author pages included powered by integrated Syndetics Unbound
    4. Work level roll ups on related bibliographic records
    5. Curated and dynamic showcases
    6. Fine & fee payment integration
    7. Patron stored lists and searches
  - ii. Vega Connect includes:
    1. Unified, Web based staff experience
    2. Patron preference settings and record extensions of fields to be used within context
    3. Vega messaging for Sierra notices
    4. Patron Journeys for registration
    5. Syndetics content for email included
    6. Vega context engine connectors
    7. Improved courtesy notices.
    8. Email design tool for customization by library

## **6. The Library of Local Project**

- a. Attached to this report please find our Interim Report on the pilot year of [The Library of Local Project](#).
- b. We are currently working with [Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley](#) to develop a grant application for a second year of funding for this project.

## **7. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds**

- a. The State Library has allocated \$5,514,315 of federal ARPA funds to New York State’s nine regional Reference and Research Library Resources Councils for collaborative regional projects that will advance digital inclusion, encourage library/museum partnerships, and expand student access to digital resources. Of the earmarked funds, the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) will receive \$414,016 for their region, which includes the service area of MHLS.

- b. We are planning partners along with SENYLRC and the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) for the project: Hudson Valley Digital Equity Initiative. This project has two components:
  - i. Project A: ***Beyond the Library WiFi Access*** will extend wireless internet signals at participating libraries to reach up to 300 feet beyond the walls of the library. In more densely populated neighborhoods, the signal may extend beyond library property into nearby homes and businesses. This project will benefit any library that meets the MHLS definition of serving an “economically disadvantaged community” which was defined by the MHLS Board in March 2021 for the purposes of the State Aid for Construction Program.
  - ii. Project B: ***Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley*** will train library workers and others to aid members of their communities with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support. This training will be open to all library workers in MHLS and RCLS. Each library that participants will receive funds from the grant program to help carry out this new service. Project funds are also included for a marketing campaign to help current library users and non-users connect with this service at their local library.

**8. New Online Calendar & Learning Management System to be Launched in 2022**

- a. MHLS staff are working on launching a new online calendar in 2022 using open source software to streamline workflows for staff and improve the user experience for member libraries.
- b. MHLS staff are designing our first Learning Management System using Niche Academy as the basis. This new interface will allow our system to design and implement online coursework that allows member library staff to earn certificates necessary for Civil Service tests and the new Trustee Education mandate that goes into effect in 2023 in NYS as well as house archived versions of webinars for easy access.

**9. Downstate Correctional Facility to Close**

- a. The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) announced that six prisons across the state will officially close on March 10, 2022. This includes the maximum security Downstate Correctional Facility, located in the Dutchess County Town of Fishkill.
- b. This correctional facility houses one of the six correctional facility libraries located in MHLS that are part of the [State Correctional Facility Libraries State Aid Program](#).
- c. Items from their collection will be offered to other correctional facilities.

**10. A look back...** 2021 marks my third year as the MHLS Executive Director. As you did, I hoped 2021 would be a “return to normal,” leaving the pandemic in the rearview mirror. While things didn’t quite play out as we would have hoped our ability to manage our system in the face of continued disruption continued to improve. I would like to thank the Board for their partnership, leadership, and continued good humor as we worked together to navigate unprecedented impacts on our institutions thanks to the continued public health crisis and a political landscape that looks unlike what we have contended with before. Our board and staff did good work this year to stabilize our organization after the financial hits of 2020 and to continue to make progress on our goals.

Highlights included:

- a. Support for members on COVID-19 related issues from vaccine access for library workers; support for newly mandated Emergency Health Plans and Airborne Infectious Disease Exposure Prevention Plans;

management of Delivery Operations and our delivery vendor contract to acknowledge fluctuations; Open Meetings Law Advocacy; Open Hours Advocacy; and provision of more than 50 “COVID-19 Updates.”

- i. Petition Signature Reduction bill was co-authored by MHLS. Advocacy continued to extend this bill for 2022 and ultimately, to make it permanent. Thanks to this bill, a record number of 414 votes took place in 2021 with **all member library votes passing!** A grassroots effort in the Town of Union Vale using the 414 mechanism did not pass.
- b. Submission of our new 2022-2026 Plan of Service to NYS; adoption of a [revised mission statement and creation of a vision and values statements](#); Identification of five [themes](#) for action planning in 2022-2026:
  1. Sustainable Funding
  2. Digital Inclusion
  3. Collective Impact Efforts
  4. Outreach to New Residents & Non-Users
  5. Professional Development for Staff, Trustees, and Friends with a particular emphasis on tech competencies for staff.
- c. Securing a second Paycheck Protection Plan forgivable loan, which has been forgiven, and using 2020 funds restored from the state to lift the hiring freeze, restart capital stewardship projects, and advance our plan of service to the best advantage of the membership.
- d. Full-court press by the board of trustees and staff on the topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) resulting in:
  - i. Board of Trustees: A shift in board recruitment efforts to address diversity on the board; creation of policy analysis framework; board orientation on topics such as implicit bias and impact over intention; the creation of the new Outreach & EDI position; approval of [EDI](#) and [Sustainability](#) Policies.
  - ii. For the membership: new [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resource Page](#); [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion On Demand Training](#) for member library staff and trustees; two continuing education events: “When Anti-Racist Reading Lists Aren’t Enough” with Dr. Nicole Cooke and “Oh, the Places You’ll Go: The Intersection of Intellectual Freedom & EDI” with Deborah Caldwell-Stone and Dr. Emily Knox.
- e. Introduction of greatly expanded eMagazine product, now with over 3,000 titles.
- f. ILS Road Map Progress
  - i. Completion of the MHLS ILS Road Map 2.0, resulting in the implementation of:
    1. Serials
    2. Interlibrary Loan module
    3. Materials Booking
    4. Patron Images
    5. Encore Harvesting
  - ii. Running start at ILS Road Map 3.0: Vega Discover & Vega Connect as a development partner and the launch of a pilot project to test the discovery platform with the Poughkeepsie Public Library District
- g. New Partnerships Formed:
  - i. [Library of Local Project](#) Launched

- ii. MetroIAF/NYSERDA Funding access to decarbonize library facilities
- h. Largest Turning Outward Cohort yet!
- i. [MHLS Lab Project Toolkits](#)
- j. Introduction of new Continuing Education offerings including:
  - i. Reimagining Library Services Series: online programming, collaborations and partnerships, ebooks, digital literacy, Let's Move in Libraries, and more!
  - ii. Create Lists Lab
  - iii. Advanced Certificate in Public Library Administration Course from Long Island University
  - iv. [Trustee Handbook Book Club](#)

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

- a. Member Library boards have mostly moved back to meeting in-person but still have the legal right to meet online through January 15, 2021. Please ensure it is clear if they are meeting in person or online when you book a visit.
- b. Please encourage member library boards to reach out to [their state representatives](#) to invite them into their libraries and to share how the Mid-Hudson Library System benefits their library. The majority of state aid is allocated to systems but benefits local patrons, something not immediately evident to state representatives, particularly newer legislators.
- c. We have updated the [Year at a Glance document](#) with 2020 Annual Report Data that is approved by the State Library to share with member library boards during your visits.
- d. Should you be asked: the new Trustee Education Requirement goes into effect January 1, **2023**.

## **12. Executive Director's Event Participation: September 7 – December 3, 2021**

- a. Greene County Library Association
- b. [Critical Conversations: Sustainable Thinking](#), State Library of Ohio (presenter)
- c. Trustee Essentials Webinar (2), MHLS Trustee Education Series (presenter)
- d. Columbia County Library Association (3)
- e. MHLS Directors Association (2)
- f. MHLS Leadership Circle
- g. ALA Council Committee on Sustainability (3)
- h. Public Library System Directors Organization of NYS (3)
- i. Center for the Future of Libraries Board Meeting
- j. Core Values & Ethics Webinar (2), MHLS Trustee Education Series (presenter)
- k. Dutchess County Directors Association (3)
- l. NYLA Legislative Committee (2)
- m. NYS Division of Library Development (3)
- n. Support Meeting for 2021 Municipal Ballot Vote (414) Libraries (facilitator)
- o. Grand Opening Ceremony, Brewster Public Library
- p. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group (3)
- q. Sustainable Library Initiative Advisory Board (4)
- r. Ulster County Library Association (3)
- s. New York Alliance of Library System's Advocacy Kick Off Meeting
- t. Consultation, Amenia Free Library
- u. Landsfundur Upplýsingar (National Library Conference in Iceland) (Presenter)
- v. MHLS Facilities Committee (2)

- w. Legal Issues, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- x. Financial & Fiduciary Responsibilities, MHLS Trustee Education Series (presenter)
- y. Trustee Handbook Book Club (2) (presenter)
- z. Facility Tour, Pleasant Valley Library
- aa. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee
- bb. MHLS Annual Membership Meeting
- cc. MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee
- dd. Putnam County Library Association Annual Meeting
- ee. Seven Habits of Highly Effective Boards, MHLS Trustee Education Series (presenter)
- ff. MHLS Board Development Committee
- gg. New York Library Association Annual Conference, Syracuse, NY
- hh. MHLS Bylaws, Policies and Procedures Committee
- ii. Facility Tour, Lagrange Library
- jj. Readers Advisory Webinar (facilitator)
- kk. Libraries And Sustainability Seminar, State Library Victoria, Australia (keynote presenter)
- ll. MHLS Finance Committee
- mm. Putnam County Library Association
- nn. Sustainable Library Certification Program Meet Up