

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | March 2021

1. Financial Update

a. State Aid

- i. The Governor has proposed \$87 million in library aid and \$14 million for the State Aid for Library Construction Program. To put this into context: compared to 2019, pre-pandemic, this is the equivalent of a 10% cut to library aid and a 58% cut to the construction program.
- ii. Thank you to all who participated in our Advocacy Week activities. Legislators were very positive about combatting the Governor's proposed cut to both library aid and the State Aid for Library Construction Program. The Chair of the Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology, Kimberly Jean-Pierre, reported "momentum" towards investing in libraries in the Assembly. The Senate has finally formed a permanent committee on libraries. Both are very good indicators of support for the library community in the legislature, however, Senator Ryan, chair of the Senate Libraries Committee **urged library supporters to write letters to the editor of local newspapers urging the Governor to invest in libraires**. The budget negotiations are ongoing, with a budget bill that should be signed by April 1st.
- iii. The State Library has informed us that the NYS Division of Budget is preparing to release some or all of the 20% of funds that were withheld during our FY2020. The amount MHLS may see released is unknown at this time, but is expected to arrive by the end of March. This would include funds across all categorical aid areas with the exception of the State Aid for Library Construction Program which saw no aid withheld.

b. Federal Funds

- i. CARES Act funds through the New York State Library: Our application has been approved for approximately \$52,000. These funds are reimbursement for many COVID-19 related expenses including staff time related to producing events and facilitating meetings related to the pandemic, PPE, and software solutions to enable quality system service in remote environments to enable social distancing.
- ii. Paycheck Protection Program (PPP): Our second PPP loan has been approved for approximately \$300,000. These funds can be applied towards salary, staff benefits, and utilities. This loan will be forgiven if we expend the funds as designated this year which will be no problem for our organization.

c. Grants

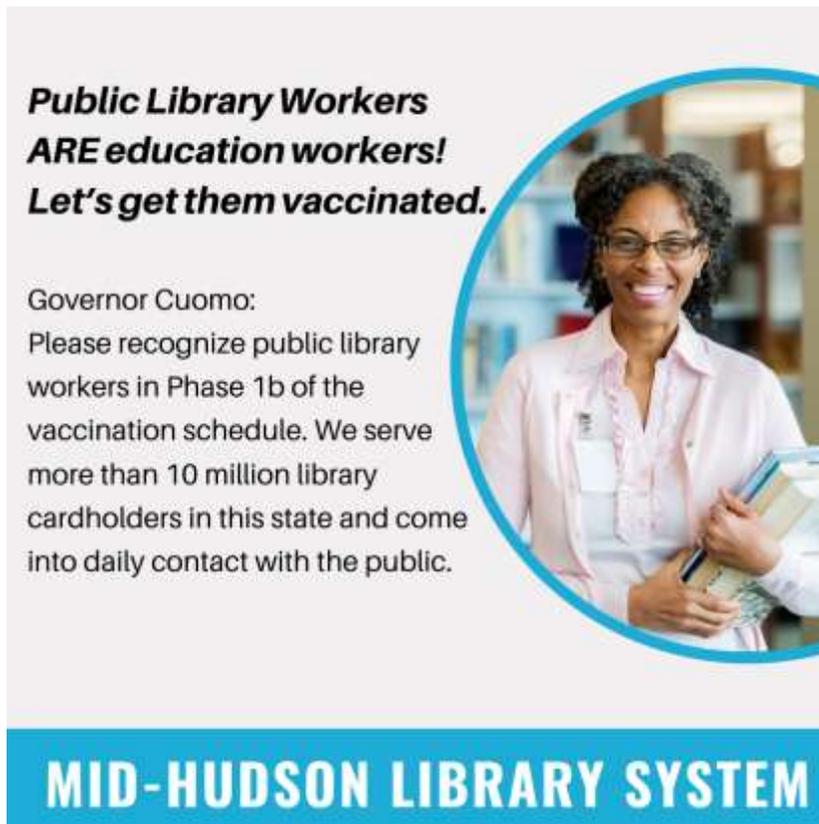
- i. Grow with Google Partnership: We have received approximately \$4,300 through this program from the State Library. The funds will be used to supplement the OverDrive ebook collection with titles related to job search, career development and civil service test preparation in addition to the regional promotion of the [Google Primer App](#).

2. Legislative Update

- a. I have consulted with the New York Library Association to advance a bill that would enable a reduced number of signatures for 414 libraires and school district public library trustee candidates in 2021. This bill has passed in both houses and is moving to the Governor’s desk for his consideration. MHLS has the most 414 libraries of any system in the state, this is a critical funding mechanism for the bulk of the operating aid for 50% of our members.
- b. For an up-to-date look at the other items on the New York Library Association’s Legislative Agenda please visit <https://www.nyla.org/2021-legislative-session/?menukey=advocacy>

3. The Current Impact of COVID-19 on Member Library Operations

- a. As infection rates decline and vaccine access for community members expands, more member libraries have been able to re-open their facilities to the public. Seventy (70) percent of member libraries now have their facilities open to the public. We expect these numbers to continue to shift in the next few months as members, particularly our libraries with small numbers of staff members continue to struggle to manage when just one staff person is diagnosed or exposed to the virus.
- b. We continue to strongly advocate for public library workers to be added to Phase 1b of the NYS vaccine schedule and are pleased that many legislators such as Assemblymembers Didi Barrett and Jonathan Jacobson, as well as Senator Sue Serino and her staff have joined us in our efforts.



***Public Library Workers
ARE education workers!
Let's get them vaccinated.***

Governor Cuomo:
Please recognize public library workers in Phase 1b of the vaccination schedule. We serve more than 10 million library cardholders in this state and come into daily contact with the public.

MID-HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM

4. Reports to the State

- a. The 2020 Annual Report to the State from MHLS is included in your board packet for your review. The board is asked to vote at the meeting to accept it. You will see areas where the pandemic has had a marked impact, both in financial information and in member activity. Please feel free to send me any questions you may have.
- b. Plan of Service Development (2022-2026):
 - i. In March
 1. Eight (8) community conversations with member library directors will be held to help inform the development of the 2022-2026 MHLS Plan of Service
 2. Following these meetings will be a survey of directors who were unable to attend these conversations.
 3. The MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee will begin work on the Central Reference Library Plan of Service, a component of the MHLS Plan of Service
 - ii. April
 1. A System Services Ranking Survey will be issued in April.
 2. An ad hoc committee focused on updating the MHLS Free Direct Access Plan will be convened, this plan is a component of the MHLS Plan of Service
 - iii. May: Staff will present a draft plan to the MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee and the MHLS System Services Advisory Committee in May.
 - iv. June-September: drafts of the Plan of Service will be presented to the MHLS Board and MHLS Directors Association
 - v. A final plan, approved by both the DA and the MHLS Board, is due to the State in October.
 - vi. Annual Action Plans will be designed 2022-2026 to carry out the approved Plan of Service.

5. Board Operations

- a. MHLS Board Orientation: The annual orientation for new(er) MHLS trustees will take place the same day as our board meeting, Saturday, March 13th at 1:00pm. We estimate this program will last two hours. As this program we will review:
 - i. The mission of MHLS and how we carry out that mission.
 - ii. MHLS Board Operations
 - iii. A review of fiscal documents you are asked to review
 - iv. Key operational relationships
 - v. New for 2021: an overview of the [MHLS web site](#)
- b. Board-to-Board Visits & Talking Points:

- i. Since our last meeting, many of you have received invitations to member library board meetings and county association meetings. Thank you for your coordinated and prompt reply to these invitations.
- ii. For the coming month, please encourage member library boards to participate in the calls to action related to the state budget from the New York Library Association and to consider advocacy action on the vaccine issue for library workers.
- iii. Please help to advertise the upcoming Trustee Education Series for Spring 2021. All sessions are now open for registration at <https://calendar.midhudson.org>
- iv. As you visit with area library boards, we hope you will continue take time to listen to their efforts to iterate 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.
- v. Member boards may have questions about the System's finances given the current lack of clarity over the funds withheld by the state last 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.

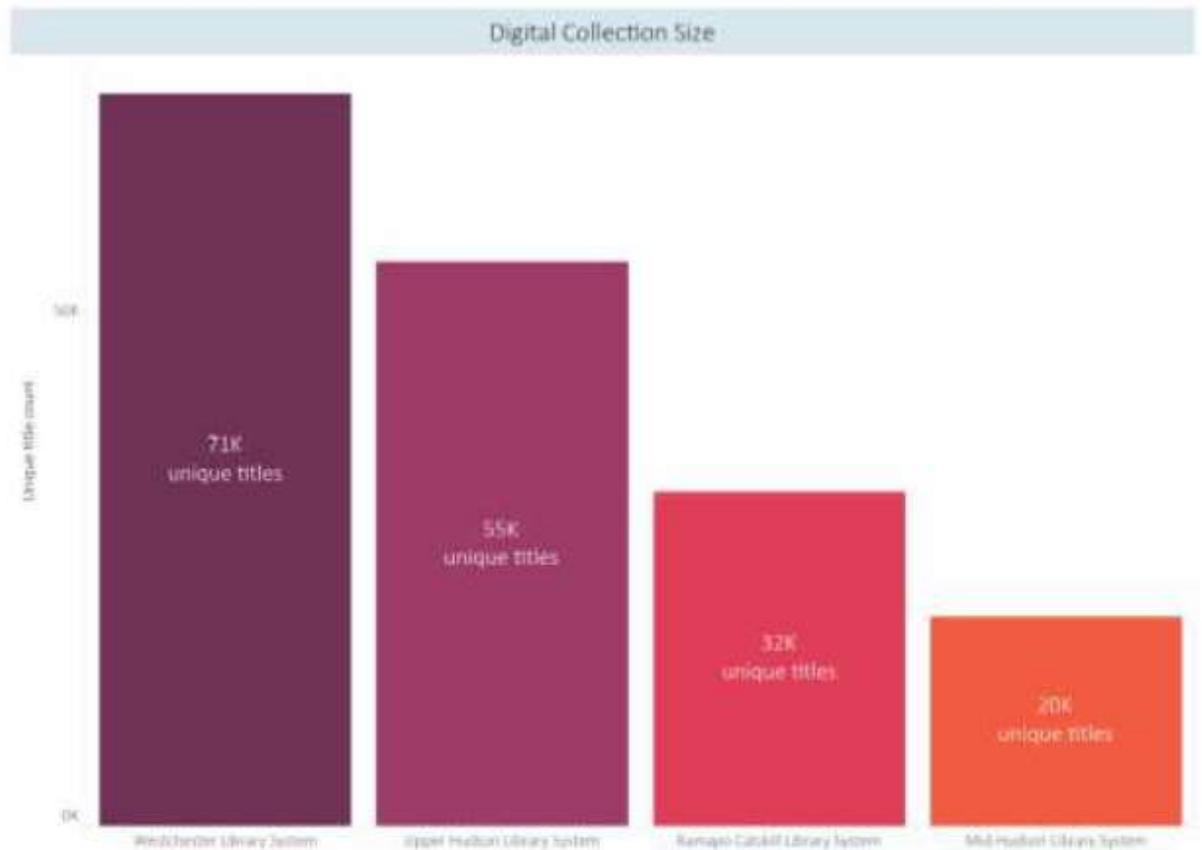
6. Delivery Operations Update

- a. MHLS staff continue to monitor the volume of items coming through the MHLS delivery service.
 - i. This past quarter we made minor adjustments that went into effect on February 22nd to balance route loads. We are also pursuing an alternate schedule for weeks with a Monday holiday or when we have a cancellation of delivery services due to weather on a Monday. This will help those libraries that now receive two-day a week delivery.
 - ii. Systemwide:
 - 1. Circulation of physical materials is down by 27% from January 2020.
 - 2. Searches in the online catalog are down by 18% over the same period.
 - 3. Holds placed is down by 5.5%
 - 4. Delivery volume is down by 12%
 - iii. Delivery vans are currently running at 56% capacity. The COVID-19 era related analysis has revealed an opportunity to optimize delivery van capacity from pre-pandemic times, separate from the member closure-related decline in delivery volume. This will inform the re-design of delivery schedules later in the year.

7. Technology Operations Updates

- a. MHLS staff have begun to work on a new element of the ILS Road Map 2.0 which will integrate two new digital collection into our online catalog search results, in addition to the already available [Main & Market Collection](#) from the Poughkeepsie Public Library District . Laurie is working to bring in content from both:
 - i. [New York Heritage](#)
 - ii. [Hudson River Valley Heritage](#)

- b. With the Directors Association’s approval, we are proceeding with an OverDrive Reciprocal Lending Agreement (RLA) with the Ramapo-Catskill Library System, Upper Hudson Library System, and the Westchester Library System. This will allow MHLS region cardholders to access and borrow from the OverDrive collections from these three systems and for cardholders from their systems to borrow from ours. Parameters have been established to ensure usage from non-MHLS cardholders does not include cost per circ or metered access titles.



- c. **New E-Magazine Service Now Launched:** As reported at our last meeting, we are continuing our e-magazine service and greatly expanded the offerings through this service from 125 titles to 3,200 titles. If you are a fan of OverDrive’s Libby app, you will now find e-magazines as an option. In the first month we saw 4,500 downloads of e-magazines by area cardholders.
- d. **New Ticketing System Implemented:** MHLS Technology Operations staff are now using an upgraded ticketing system to manage member library requests for assistance. I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Gerry Formby, MHLS IT Operations Manager for his work to research and configure this important service point. The upgrade allows for streamlined management of tickets, tracking of response time, and provides for analytics as well as a clearinghouse so staff do not have to reinvent the wheel once a question has been answered

already.

8. Library Sustainability Update:

- a. Support for Member Libraries to complete their mandated Annual Report to the State has been more involved this year due to the impact of COVID-19. Casey Conlin, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator is to be commended for his management of this work, particularly given we have one less staff person to assist in this area this year.
- b. We are continuing the Reimaging Library Services webinar series this year given the continued impact of the pandemic on library services. Topics include addressing food scarcity, collaborations and partnerships, eBooks, and online programming.
- c. The MHLS Turning Outward Cohort has a record number of libraries signed up this year: 15. This program is designed to provide structure and guidance to help member libraires gather community input to inform strategic planning. This program will aid members to come into compliance with the new minimum standards for public libraries in New York State which require community-based planning starting this year. After this cohort, almost 50% of our libraries will have gone through this process.
- d. Trustee Education Series: The Spring sessions are now on the calendar and in addition to our lineup of Trustee Essentials, the new Core Values & Ethics webinar, the intermediary financial responsibilities webinar and advanced session (7 Habits of Highly Effective Trustees) we will also welcome a speaker from the NYS Committee on Open Government to provide a webinar on the NYS Open Meetings Law and, separately, a speaker from the NYS Archives to discuss the new records retention schedule.
- e. Winter Semester Intern: We are pleased to work with Tammy Gaskell, director of the Roeliff Jansen Community Library, who is interning with us this semester as part of her pursuit of the Masters in Library Science at the University at Albany. In addition to providing support in the review of member library annual reports, Tammy will be working on a special project to create a toolkit related to three MHLS Lab Projects that focused on increasing circulation of physical materials, increasing program attendance, and increasing

9. Executive Director's Event Participation: January 11 – March 3, 2021

- a. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group (2)
- b. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (2)
- c. Dutchess County Directors Association (2)
- d. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee
- e. New Director Orientation: Donna Perolli, Dover Plains Library
- f. Meeting with Assemblymember Didi Barrett
- g. Ulster County Library Association (2)
- h. Orientation for MHLS Committee Chairs
- i. MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee
- j. Consultation: Clinton Community Library re: Starting a Friends Group
- k. Sustainable Libraries Initiative (3)
- l. ALA Midwinter Conference
- m. Putnam County Library Association

- n. Center for the Future of Libraries Advisory Board
- o. Meeting with [Regent Frances G. Wills](#), Assemblymember Didi Barrett, the State Librarian, Staff from the State Education Department Government Relation's Office
- p. MHLS Director Briefing
- q. Meeting with Grace Riario, Executive Director of the Ramapo Catskill Library System, and Tessa Killian, Executive Director of the Southeastern Library Resources Council
- r. Meeting with NYLA Executive Director Jeremy Johannsen; NYLA government relations director, Bri McNamee; Kevin Verbese, Executive Director of the Suffolk Cooperative Library System; Jerry Nichols; Ellen Bach and Bob Schofield of Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna
- s. Consultation: Clinton Community Library re: 414 votes
- t. Greene County Library Association
- u. Consultation: Blodgett Memorial Library (Fishkill) Board Meeting
- v. Columbia County Library Association
- w. Sarah Glogowski, Executive Director, Finger Lakes Library System & 2021 Chair, PULISDO
- x. MHLS COVID-19 Working Group (2)
- y. Presentation: Advocacy Day Briefing
- z. NYLA Legislative Committee
- aa. MHLS Directors Association
- bb. MHLS New Directors Forum
- cc. MHLS Bylaws, Policy & Procedures Committee
- dd. New Director Orientation: Stephanie Pushman, Hunter Public Library
- ee. Presentation: The Just Transition for the Library Journal Summit: Building the Next Normal
- ff. New York Library Association Advocacy Day Briefing
- gg. Advocacy Week
 - i. Meeting with Chief of Staff for Assemblymember Jake Ashby
 - ii. Meeting with Ben Wheeler, Chief of Staff for Senator Oberacker
 - iii. Meeting with Kelly Zelaya, Legislative Analyst for Senator Hinchey
 - iv. Meeting with Kimberly Jean-Pierre, Chair, Assembly Committee on Libraries & Education Technology & Senator Sean Ryan, Chair, Senate Committee on Libraries
 - v. New York Alliance of Library Systems (NYLAS) business meeting
 - vi. Meeting with Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson
 - vii. Meeting with Senator Daphne Jordan
 - viii. Meeting with Assemblymember Didi Barrett
 - ix. Meeting with Senator James Skoufis
 - x. Meeting with Senator Sue Serino
- hh. MHLS Incentives Committee
 - ii. Plan of Service Development: Community Conversation with Columbia County Directors
 - jj. Plan of Service Development: Community Conversation with Dutchess County Directors (2)

