

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

1. Financial Update

a. State Aid

i. FY2021-2022 State Budget Aid Totals:

1. Library Aid: \$94.1 million. This is up from the Governor's proposal of \$87 million for this year but a significant decline from the pre-pandemic trend line for funding. (For your reference: [History of Library Aid](#))
2. Construction Aid: \$34 million. This is up from the \$14 million received last year and proposed by the Governor for this year. (For your reference: [History of Construction Aid](#))
3. Bullet Aid (aka Special Legislative Grants) reinstated:
 - \$5 million in the NYS Senate
 - \$8 million in the NYS Assembly
 - \$10 million for the Governor
4. Creation of a "Digital Inclusion Program" funding at \$15 million. Libraries and library systems are explicitly listed as eligible. No guidelines have been issued yet.

- ii. Preliminary budget adjustments are discussed under the Executive Committee's report this month.

b. Federal Funds

i. America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

1. We have learned that the New York State Library will receive \$6.2 million. Some of these funds will be re-granted to the public library systems. We are awaiting more information from the Division of Library Development.
2. Guidance for the \$7.172 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s E-Rate program has not been released yet. These funds will likely be available to member libraries and MHLS and are described as being available to provide "off-campus connectivity" to patrons which will include Wi-Fi hot spots, routers, laptops, and more.

- ii. We are avidly advocating for the Build America's Libraries Act (BALA), a bill that would provide \$5 billion for library modernization, renovation, and construction.

1. The American Library Association has provided [a very helpful web page](#) with key information about the bill, sample letters to the editor and social media messages. They have challenges New Yorkers to get all Congressional representatives to sign on to this bill and to have daily contact with Senator Schumer's office until Memorial Day to emphasize how important this bill is for New York's libraries.

2. Congressman Antonio Delgado meet with the Ulster County Library Association in April so we could explain what this bill would mean to the libraries in his district. I would like to thank all three of the Ulster County representatives to the MHLS Board: Stuart Auchincloss, Ken Goldberg, and Lynne Ridgeway for taking the time to attend this meeting. **As a result, he has become a co-sponsor of this bill.** A similar effort is underway with Congressman Maloney. Shown below: *Ulster County delegates join me in an online visit with Congressman Antonio Delgado to delegate for BALA:*



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

- a. Member libraries continue to fine tune re-opening plans and service levels in light of increased vaccination rates among library workers and new guidance for cleaning and disinfecting of facilities from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- b. The New York State Division of Library Development announced that they will be going back to enforcing the minimum standard for open hours starting June 1st. All member libraries have been notified of this fact and provided with guidance as well as a path of recourse should they be challenged by this deadline. Our Central Library is mandated to be open at least 55 hours a week by this date as well which is already happening.
- c. The practice of quarantining library materials upon return or delivery is winding down and the State Librarian announced on April 30th that due to the new CDC guidance, quarantining should be ceased.
- d. Libraries are planning for increase occupancy levels indoors and working through the logistics of offering outdoor programs for the spring, summer and Fall.

3. Delivery Stop Restorations

- a. Our recent quarterly analysis of delivery operations volume revealed trend lines that indicate delivery volume is rising to pre-pandemic levels. As a result, we are reinstating stops for the 20 libraries impacted by our service resizing in October 2020 due to volume trends caused by pandemic-era operations. This will go into effect the week of May 17th and we will then be back to having all libraries receive at least three delivery stops a week.

4. Plan of Service Development (2022-2026)

- a. Eight (8) community conversations with member library directors were held in March. will be held to help inform the development of the 2022-2026 MHLS Plan of Service. Follow up surveys were provided to directors unable to make the in-person, online meetings. Seventy-five percent (75%) of directors participated.
- b. The questions asked in the sessions/survey were consistent, designed by modifying the American Library Association's Turning Outward program to help focus research to inform the new plan of service on the aspirations of member library leaders for the next several years.
- c. We have produced a report on the themes that emerged through this state of the process that is [available here](#).
- d. Next Steps:
 - i. An action memo has been issued to all member library directors, staff and you, our board, to rank the required service categories. This ranking will inform resource allocation and reporting decisions during and after the development of the plan.
 - ii. MHLS staff will present a draft Plan of Service and accompanying Action Plan for feedback at the next System Services Advisory Committee (SSAC) (May), the MHLS Directors Association (DA) (June) and MHLS Planning & Personnel (P&P) Committee (June) meetings.
 - iii. An ad hoc committee has been convened to review the MHLS Direct Access Plan, a component of the Plan of Service. Their draft will be presented to the SSAC later this month, to the DA in June and to the P&P Committee in June.
 - iv. The Central Library/Collection Development Committee is working on a draft Central Library Plan, the third component of our Plan of Service, and will present their draft to the DA at their June meeting. This draft will then be shared with the P&P Committee in June.
 - v. Full [Timeline](#)
- e. Mission, Vision, Values & Ethics Process
 - i. While not required by the State Library's mandated Plan of Service process, we will also be engaging in a review of our organization's mission statement and develop accompanying vision, values, and ethics statements for our organization. This process is detailed in the report from the Executive Committee in this month's board packet.

5. **Technology Operations Team Re-organization:** In the aftermath of two members of the MHLS Technology Operations team departing last year, MHLS Assistant Director/Technology Operations Manager, Laurie Shedrick, undertook a full analysis of all job descriptions and a skills assessment of the team to regroup and reorganize the team for the future in the first quarter of 2021. As a result, you will see two action items coming out of the Executive Committee for this month's board meeting: the promotion of Nina Acosta to a new position, Data Operations Supervisor, and the creation of a full-time new position, Technology Operations Support Specialist. Both moves help to evolve job descriptions and goal setting for the team to strengthen the capacity of the team and to be more strategic.
6. **Large Number of New Member Library Directors:** We have seen a significant number of new, or new to the position, member library directors emerge so far in 2021. This is due to a combination of factors, including retirements and long-time directors moving to directorships of other member libraries. All new directors receive an orientation from MHLS staff, are connected with resources designed for new directors and are invited to the New Director Forums we have reintroduced this year. It is a good reminder that there is always someone new in our system to meet!
- Kim Benjamin, Interim Director, D.R. Evarts Library (Athens)
 - Jen McCreery, Director, Chatham Public Library
 - Johanna Reinhardt, Interim Director, Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library (Cold Spring)
 - Donna Perolli, Director, Dover Plains Library
 - Pam Read, Interim Director, Desmond-Fish Public Library (Garrison)
 - Stephanie Pushman, Director, Hunter Public Library
 - Michelle Hoffman, Director, New Lebanon Library
 - Gillian Murphy, Director, Elting Memorial Library (New Paltz)
 - Alexis Tackett, Director, Pine Plains Free Library
 - Mary Collins, Interim Director, Town of Ulster Public Library

7. **The Library of Local Project Launches**



Sow, Grow, Reap, Repeat! Gardening and Foraging for Resilience, that's the theme for the pilot year of [The Library of Local](#) program. *The Library of Local* program has three components, all designed to help build community resilience and self-reliance through the libraries of the Mid-Hudson Library System. This year's theme focuses on local agriculture and the local experts who are willing and able to share their knowledge to augment our communities' ability to increase their own food security.

This year the program establishes four pod libraries: **Hudson Area Library, Kingston Library, Morton Memorial Library and Community House in Rhinecliff, and Mountain Top Library in Tannersville.** These libraries have received start-up grants, custom-designed pods (*shown below*), and curated collections of books, films, online sources, garden tools, and seeds. Participating libraries will produce programming for their community with help from local experts and participate in anchor programs available to all member libraries.

All member libraries are welcome to advertise **system-wide "anchor" programs** which are organized centrally and available to all residents throughout the five-county region of the Mid-Hudson Library System. The first anchor event will be [Seeds of Community with K Greene](#), which will take place online on Saturday, April 24th. All

member libraries are welcome to list this event on their local library's program calendar.

All member libraries will have access to a Speakers Bureau to book local programming on this year's theme.

The Library of Local is a partnership with [Lifeboats HV](#), the Mid-Hudson Library System and participating member libraries. The project is funded by the [Local Economies Project of The New World Foundation](#). Support and development for events and programs also comes from *Dirty Gaia*. For more information about *The Library of Local*, including upcoming events, please visit <https://www.libraryoflocal.org/>.

8. **Emerging Partnership with Metro Industrial Areas Foundation and Community Purchasing Alliance**

- a. Thanks to an introduction made by MHLS Trustee Stuart Auchincloss I was invited to participate in the Earth Day Press Conference with the Metro Industrial Areas Foundation, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York State Energy Research Development Authority (NYSERDA), Con Edison, Long Island Power Authority, BlocPower, and the Community Purchasing Alliance to announce the "Clean Energy for Anchor Institutions." You can view the press release [here](#) and the press conference [here](#).



Above: Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul speaks at the April 22 press conference to announce the \$4 million, 2 year grant program from NYSERDA: Clean Energy for Anchor Institutions

- b. We will be hosting an **informational webinar on the Clean Energy for Anchor Institutions (CEAI) and Community Purchasing Alliance** for member libraries on May 27th at 2:00pm. The CEAI program could result in energy assessments/long-term energy plans and solar installation assessments of library facilities, and subsidies of up to \$75,000 for up to four member libraries to install demonstration projects that help them move away from the use of fossil fuels through the installation of heat pumps and solar.

- c. The Community Purchasing Alliance is a group of 25 nonprofits who have banded together to negotiate lower cost solar installations by bulk buying. We will be exploring our opportunity to work with them for the proposed solar project at 103 Market Street.

9. Spring 2021 Intern: Tamara Gaskell

- a. We are concluding our time with Tammy Gaskell, our Spring 2021 intern from the University at Albany, who is also a member library director at the Roeliff Jansen Community Library. Tammy worked on three projects for us:
 - i. Assisting with the review of 66 member library annual reports to the state
 - ii. Production of the MHLS Lab Project Toolkit, which you can [read about in the 4.27.2021 MHLS Bulletin](#)
 - iii. Research and production of five “Digital Divide Data Reports,” one for each county served by MHLS which are attached to this report, and a full analysis of broadband providers in our region. These resources will be included in a new “Digital Inclusion Toolkit” being developed by MHLS staff to help better position member libraries for the upcoming federal funds that will provide grants in aid of digital inclusion efforts.

10. Upcoming Trustee Education Workshops

- a. **COVID-19 Briefing for Trustees:** May 13th at 2:00pm
- b. **Trustee Education Series**
 - i. **Trustee Essentials** (*Updated for 2021 with emphasis on the intersection of classic content with the topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion*)
 - 1. May 13 at 10:00am
 - 2. May 18 at 5:30pm
 - ii. **Core Values & Ethics**
 - 1. May 25 at 5:30pm
 - 2. May 27 at 10:00am
 - iii. **Intermediate Level Workshops:**
 - 1. **Financial & Fiduciary Responsibility:** June 8 at 10:00am
 - 2. **Legal Issues:**
 - COVID-19 Legal Issues with Ellen Bach & Robert Schofield: May 26 at 2:00pm
 - Open Meetings Law & Freedom of Information Law (FOIL): June 15 at 5:30pm
 - iv. **Advanced Level Workshop:**
 - 1. **Seven Habits of Highly Effective Boards:** June 23 at 10:00am

11. “Oh the Places You’ll Go!”: The Intersection of Intellectual Freedom & Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Issues: June 4 at 10:00am

12. Women’s History in the Hudson Valley Project: We invited to assist Assemblymember Did Barrett with her annual Women’s Local History project which was expanded this year to include a [video series](#). As a

result all [booklets are now findable in our online catalog](#), we have helped to coordinate a fact checking team made up of information professionals, history professors and interns from Marist College, and Nina is working to convert the booklets to the ePub format to enable them to be uploaded into Libby.

13. Board Operations

- a. 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 months, please encourage member library boards to attend MHLS Trustee Education webinars and ensure they know MHLS staff is still conducting board consultations albeit online for now.
 - iii. There will soon be legislative calls to action to help advance legislation important to the library community in New York State and nationally. Please be sure to mention and active calls to action that may be enacted at the time of your visit.
 - 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.

14. Executive Director's Event Participation: March 4 - April 30, 2021

- a. Member Library Director Meet Up (informal event hosted by MHLS)
- b. MHLS Plan of Service: Community Conversations (8)
- c. Meeting with Julie Kelsall-Dempsey, Director of the Highland Public Library & 2021 Chair of the System Services Advisory Committee and Tom Lawrence, Director of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District & Central Library Director to discuss the future of the Members' Assessment Chart
- d. Public Library System Director Organization of New York State (PULISDO) monthly meeting (2)
- e. Consultation: Victoria Herow, Director, Amenia Free Library
- f. Dutchess County Directors Association (2)
- g. Columbia County Library Directors (2)
- h. New Director Orientation: Mary Collins, Town of Ulster Public Library
- i. Ulster County Library Association
- j. NYLA Legislative Committee meeting (2)
- k. Meeting with staff from Assemblymember Didi Barrett's office and the Columbia County Youth Theater re: Women's History Booklet and Video project.
- l. Monthly meeting with NYS Division of Library Development (2)
- m. Presidential Advisory Committee meeting (2)
- n. MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee meeting (2)
- o. Consultation: Starr Library (Rhinebeck) Board of Trustees

- p.** Putnam County Library Association (2)
- q.** Webinar: Building Support for the Build America’s Libraries Act (ALA)
- r.** Sustainable Libraries Initiative Advisory Board (3)
- s.** Consultation: Jessica Kerr, Director and Jeff Collins, Board President, Woodstock Public Library District
- t.** Presentation: Computers in Libraries Conference
- u.** Presentation: NYLA Youth Services Section Conference
- v.** Consultation: Gil Bagnell, Board President, Catskill Public Library
- w.** Consultation: Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library (Cold Spring, Board of Trustees, with Casey Conlin, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator
- x.** MHLS Board Development Committee
- y.** MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group (3)
- z.** MHLS Intern Check-in Meetings (5)
- aa.** Greene County Library Association
- bb.** Jane Minotti, NYS Division of Library Development Liaison (2)
- cc.** MHLS Directors Association
- dd.** Presentation: MHLS Leadership Circle – Writing Your Library’s Comeback Story with Casey Conlin, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator
- ee.** MHLS Facilities Committee
- ff.** Free Direct Access Plan Ad Hoc Committee
- gg.** Presentation: Texas Library Association Conference
- hh.** Presentation: County Funding Advocacy Meeting
- ii.** MHLS Bylaws, Policy, and Procedures Committee
- jj.** Consultation: Carol Fortier, Director, Beekman Library; Donna Perolli, Director, Dover Plains Library; Mary De Bellis, Director, LaGrange Library; Donna Perolli; Courtney Tsahalís, Director, Millbrook Library with Casey Conlin, Library Sustainability Coordinator
- kk.** New Director Orientation: Alexis Tackett, Pine Plains Free Library
- ll.** MHLS Executive Committee
- mm.** Presentation: Institute of Museum and Library Services
- nn.** New Director Orientation: Michelle Hoffman, New Lebanon Library
- oo.** Trustee Handbook Book Club Planning Meeting: Jerry Nichols, co-author of the Trustee Handbook; Brian Hildreth, Executive Director of the Southern Tier Library System; Ron Kirsop, Executive Director, Pioneer Library System
- pp.** Frank Rees, head, Public Library Services Team, NYS Division of Library Development