

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | September 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.
- b. The State Library let us know that 22.6% of all aid types will be withheld, 2.6% of which was a known cut in the state budget that was passed in April. 20% is being withheld as the lobbying effort to have state aid included in the next federal relief package is pursued. However, as we enter the later half of our fiscal year we are planning as if this amount will continue to be withheld.
- c. In good news, the Division of Budget released a portion of our Basic Aid in August. This greatly helps with the cashflow issues previously reported to the board. At this point we have received approximately 46% of the state aid we normally would at this point in our fiscal year.
- d. As you will see in the Finance Committee Report, the MHLS staff and board has worked hard to combat the significant reduction in State Aid for the year, often with the help of key stakeholders. To achieve the results you see in the mid-year budget adjustment document provided we:
 - i. Enacted a hiring freeze leaving the Outreach & Engagement Specialist and Administrative Association positions unfilled;
 - ii. Postponed building renovation and maintenance projects;
 - iii. Negotiated discounts with ILL, Valley Courier, OverDrive, Universal Class, and Mango;
 - iv. Eliminated the NYLA Scholarship and Travel Programs for 2020;
 - v. Secured funding from The Boatbuilder Fund of the New World Foundation;
 - vi. Suspended benefits negotiated under the MHLS-CSEA contract;
 - vii. Secured a Paycheck Protection Program forgivable loan which is on track to be forgiven (*MHLS is participating in a pilot program through TDBank to test their loan forgiveness application process, at this time we have submitted all required paperwork for the loan's forgiveness*);
 - viii. Formed a COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group, a sub-group of the MHLS Finance Committee, to explore and recommend new opportunities to secure alternative funding; and
 - ix. Found numerous ways to save smaller but meaningful amounts on custodial supplies, technology, training, and more with the help of just about every member of the MHLS Staff.
 - x. In addition to this work we have submitted grant applications for the Institute of Museum and Library Services CARES Act grant and a Pivoting to Respond Grant from the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley.

2. MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer

- a. As reported to the board via email, Linda Vittone, MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer will retire at the end of 2020. Linda has served MHLS with high honor, ensuring our finances are in good order and that we are highly transparent and accountable in our role as stewards of the funds invested in our organization by the state and our member libraries, as evidenced by the outcomes of our annual audits and a visit from the Office of the State Comptroller. After 20 years of service, we wish Linda well in her retirement and thank her for the work she is doing to aid us with the transition.
- b. We are conducting a thorough analysis of this position’s job description, assessing documentation and training needs and interviewing other cooperative public library systems as to their financial management approaches to ensure we can solidly recruit quality candidates for this position. Our goal is to have a new person in place before Linda’s last day in December.

3. Member Library In-Person Service Update

- a. Member libraries continue to fine-tune in-person services in the face of COVID-19. Many of those categorized as “curbside” below are actually what we call “curbside +” meaning patrons can pick up physical items placed on hold as well as program kits and request documents to be scanned, printed, or faxed. Many curbside libraries also offer popup libraries for browsing sections from their collection. All libraries have continued to offer online programs.

A: Facility closed/all staff working from home	0
B: Curbside Service	41%
C: Limited Access to Library Building	33%
D: Reopened Building with Social Distancing	16%
E: Reopened Building (including programming) with Social Distancing	10%

4. MHLS Delivery Operations Update

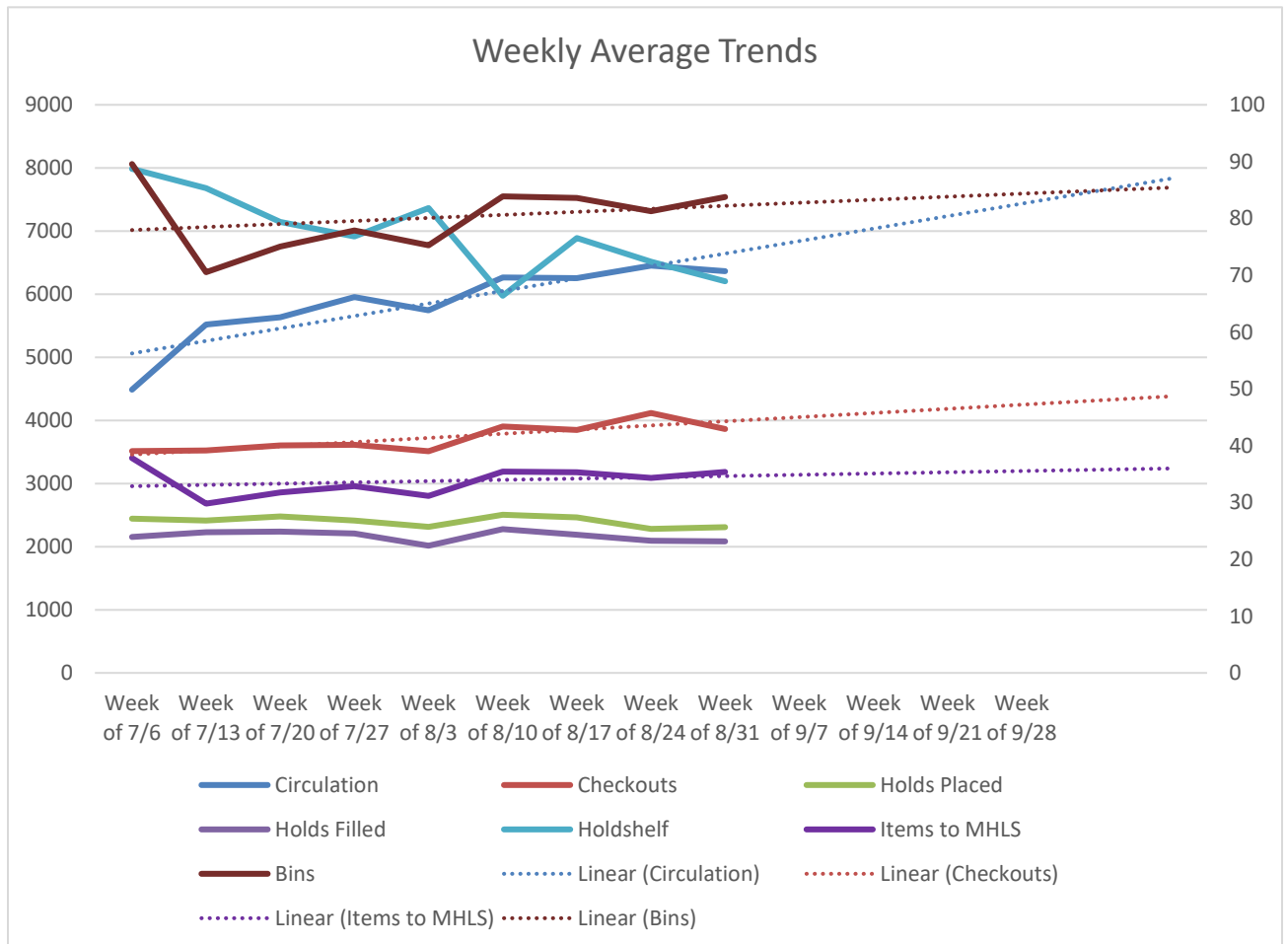
a. Background:

MHLS contracts with a third-party vendor, Valley Courier, to provide delivery services across the MHLS service area. We are in the second year of a three-year contract. The number of stops a library receives from Valley Courier drivers is based on a rolling three-year average of items received and sent. The number of stops is revisited annually to adjust for changes in volume.

Issue:

COVID-19 is a two-fold crisis with both public health and financial implications. Due to COVID-19-related facility closures and the subsequent phased-in restart of socially distanced public

service models the circulation of physical materials has significantly declined in the past five months. Our current analysis shows that vans are at 43% capacity and indicators do not point to a drastic increase in this number in the next several months. Our analysis also shows that delivery volume is consistently higher on Mondays and Tuesdays compared to the remainder of the week. Concurrent to the decline in the volume of materials traveling through the delivery system MHLS is also contending with a 22.6% cut in library aid for the fiscal year with concerns about another cut coming in fiscal year 2021. Our analysis of data related to circulation and delivery volume and discussions with Valley Courier have revealed that it is clear that we have an opportunity to right-size our delivery capacity while bringing down the cost for this service. Valley Courier is willing to work with us to make an adjustment and to re-evaluate it as necessary to maximize our ability to responsibly pay for this service.



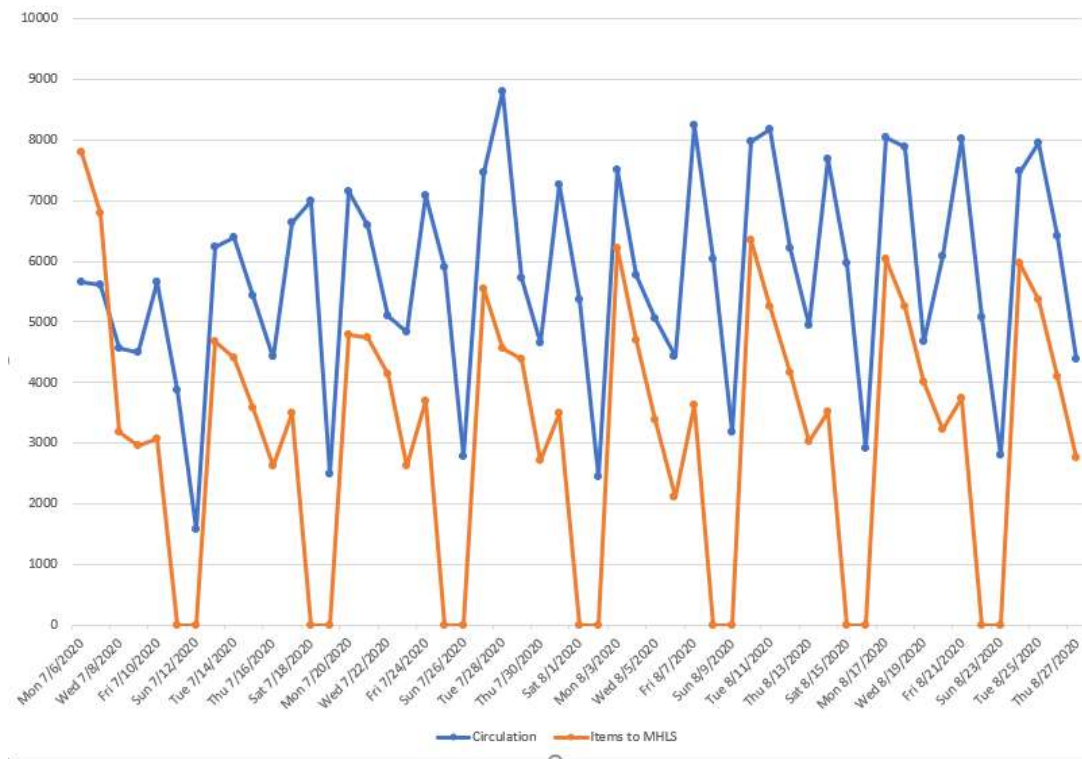


Chart tracking circulation and items in the delivery system July 6-August 22, 2020

Course of Action:

- On October 5th we will begin delivery service using reconfigured routes, which respond to reductions in volume which is observed in the data we have been collecting since libraries reopened their facilities. The new routes are right-sized to current and forecasted needs. This reconfiguration will reduce the cost for delivery services by approximately \$800 a week which will help to mitigate the news, received in the 8th month of our fiscal year, that our state aid for 2020 is being reduced by 22.6%.
- Under the reconfiguration we will still provide 5-day-a-week delivery service. The schedule of stops will still be based on volume at individual locations. There will be no changes to the Monday-Tuesday schedules, however, there will be one less route run on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays to both right-size the service capacity and cost for current needs.
- The routes will be evaluated against new data on a quarterly basis.

Impact:

- As a result of this reconfiguration some libraries will notice differences. Some libraries will experience less delivery stops (maximum 2 less stops per week); nine libraries will have their delivery days of the week adjusted as noted in the attached; a third of libraries will note their delivery time will be altered, however we expect the majority of deliveries will continue to be made before the public hours of the library start.
- MHLS will no longer be paying for delivery capacity that is not being used thereby reducing the cost of this service by approximately \$800 per week.

MHLS staff will continue to monitor the delivery service, making adjustments that best serve the membership and manage resources effectively and efficiently.

5. Town of Union Vale Restrictions Update

- a. On September 1st restrictions were put into place in reaction to the lack of a contract for 2020 to fund library services for the residents of the Town of Union Vale.
- b. The process to negotiate a 2020 contract began in May 2019 with outreach to the town supervisor of the Town of Union Vale. After extensive email exchanges between May 2019- January 2020 an in-person meeting was called in January with the town supervisor and a member of the town board, the four board presidents, four directors of the impacted libraries, and myself. The boards of the four boards made a final offer with a due date in February 2020. The town did not respond. As we moved to put restrictions in place in the second quarter of this year COVID-19 hit and the libraries agreed to delay restrictions as physical access was cut off for the residents during the Governor's shutdown orders. As the libraries re-started in-person services it was agreed that restrictions would be fair at this time in light of the history.
- c. At a town board meeting the first week in September it was reported that the town plans to offer direct access to a streaming service and physical items, such as books, with long-term plans to start their own library.
- d. *For more detailed information about this situation please see these [answers to Frequently Asked Questions](#) provided to Union Vale cardholders.*

6. Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Form Due September 30th from All MHLS Board Members

- a. **Action Required:** All MHLS board members must file their Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Form by September 30th with Linda Vittone, MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer. A link to the training videos and the form is available in this month's board packet.

7. 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.
- c. Please help get the word out about Trustee Education Series (<https://calendar.midhudson.org>) and our upcoming Annual Membership Meeting on October 23rd (details below).

8. MHLS Annual Membership Meeting

- a. The MHLS Annual Membership Meeting will be held on Friday, October 23rd. This event will either be 100% online or a hybrid event with both online and in-person participation based on the status of the Executive Orders that adjust NYS Open Meetings Law.
- b. I am very pleased to announce that Tracie. D. Hall, the new Executive Director of the American Library Association will be our Keynote Speaker. In February 2020, Ms. Hall was



appointed the American Library Association's 10th executive director in its 143-year history. In her new role, Hall oversees the oldest and largest library association in the world, made up of 57,000 members and more than 200 staffers. Hall is the first female African American executive director in ALA's history. Upon Hall's appointment ALA President Wanda K. Brown observed that "Her unique combination of philanthropy and library know-how position her to be the leader ALA needs today. She is optimistic, energizing, and innovative, qualities that will serve the association well as it continues its investments in advocacy, development, and information technology." Hall is no stranger to libraries, or to ALA. Over the years she has worked at the

Seattle Public Library, the New Haven Free Library, Queens Public Library and Hartford Free Public Library. In 1998, she was among the first cohort of ALA's Spectrum Scholars, a grant program to diversify librarianship, and she served as the director of ALA's Office for Diversity in the early 2000s and has served on advisory councils for the Institute of Museum and Library Services and written for the field's major publications. She was highlighted as a "Mover and Shaker" in the field by *Library Journal* early in her career. Most recently, Hall directed the culture portfolio at the Chicago-based Joyce Foundation, developing new grant programs designed to foster greater equity and diversity in arts administration, catalyze and scale neighborhood-based arts venues, cultural programming and creative entrepreneurship. Prior to that she worked as Deputy Commissioner of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. A civic leader in Chicago, Hall was appointed to serve on the City of Chicago's Cultural Advisory Council at the beginning of 2020. Hall has also served in multiple roles in academia, including as assistant dean of Dominican's Graduate School of Library and Information Science in River Forest, IL and as visiting professor at Wesleyan and Catholic Universities among others. In addition to her MLIS from the Information School at the University of Washington, Hall holds an MA in International and Area studies with an emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa from Yale University and dual bachelor's degrees in Law and Society and Black Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Hall has also studied at the Universities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in East Africa. Hall was born and raised in Los Angeles.

9. Executive Director's Event Participation: July 7 – September 8, 2020

- a. Advancing Racial Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace Symposium
- b. The Resilience Hub Information Session
- c. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- d. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (PULISDO) (3)
- e. Monthly Update, State Library
- f. Dutchess County Directors Association
- g. The Great Give Back Information Session (PULSIDO)

- h.** Ulster County Library Association
- i.** Legislative Committee, New York Library Association (2)
- j.** Putnam County Library Association (2)
- k.** MHLS COVID-19 Response & Recover Working Group (3)
- l.** Greene County Library Association
- m.** MHLS Racial Equity Working Group (5)
- n.** State Funding Update, State Library (2)
- o.** Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee
- p.** MHLS Incentives Committee
- q.** MHLS Director Briefings (3)
- r.** MHLS Trustee Briefing
- s.** MHLS Finance Committee
- t.** Groundbreaking Ceremony, Amenia Free Library
- u.** New Director Orientation, Jennifer Russel, Saugerties Public Library
- v.** MHLS Nominations & Elections Committee (2)