

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | December 2024

1. State Update:

- a. The Division of Budget has issued a memo to all state agencies to request flat funding for the coming fiscal year. The New York Library Association has unveiled a budget advocacy agenda that continues to make the case for further investment in libraries and library systems since the state has been chronically underfunding the library network in the state for years.
 - [NYLA Requests:](#)
 - \$176.8 million in library operating aid
 - \$175 million for State Aid for Library Construction Program
 - \$3.1 million for NOVELny
 - \$11.33/pupil for Library Materials Aid
- b. I was invited to testify at the October 21st public hearing on Improving and Supporting New York State's Libraries hosted by the NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. My written testimony can be found [here](#).
- c. We will discuss how to best advocate for increased library aid at the December Board meeting.
- d. NYLA Legislative Priorities for the coming session include:
 - Defending the Freedom to Read
 - Protection in Public Libraries: [S.7677-A](#) / [A.7843-B](#) - [NYLA Memo of Support](#)
 - Freedom to Read Act: [S.6350-B](#) / [A.6873-B](#) - [NYLA Memo of Support](#)
 - eBook Licensing Reform: [S.6868-A](#) / [A.10544](#) - [NYLA Memo of Support](#)
 - Media Literacy in New York State, including calls for media literacy professional development for teachers and certified school librarians; requiring a library media specialist in each school building; creation of a media literacy advisory group; and the creation of media literacy standards by the NYS Education Department.
- e. Please save the date: February 5th is NYLA Library Advocacy Day in Albany
- f. The first Trustee Handbook Book Club event of 2025 will focus on Advocacy: January 22nd at 5:00pm. This is an online event. Register [here](#).

2. Personnel Updates:

- a. Staff restrooms have been supplied with supplies to promote **menstrual (or period) equity**. Menstrual equity refers to equal and comprehensive access to menstrual hygiene products, just as we provide toilet paper and hand soap to facilitate basic human needs in our restrooms, we are also acknowledging the needs of folks born female who manage menstruation on a monthly basis throughout much of their working life. This is something many in our field are working to normalize and I feel it is important to model this as well. Here is an article to help explain this a little more: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/period-equity-what-is-it-why-does-it-matter-202106012473> and two to help you see how libraries across the country are addressing

this: <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2022/05/02/period-end-of-story/> & <https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2024/01/period-poverty-resources-at-the-library/>

- b. We hosted an optional **Citizen Preparedness Corps** for the staff in November. Staff received information on preparing for potential hazards and disasters that may cause disruption in the Hudson Valley. Each staff person received a “Go Bag” with a variety of helpful supplies such as an AM/FM radio, long-storage food and water, a flashlight, a mini-first aid kit, and more.
- c. Staff participated in **World Kindness Day** by donating items from the Dutchess County ASPCA’s wish list.

3. **Audit Services**

- a. Our current audit firm has presented a draft Audit report. The Audit Committee will meet on December 18th to discuss this. They have now begun work on our Annual Financial Report to the Office of the State Comptroller.
- b. Our new audit firm has begun working on our 2024 audit.

4. **Technology Operations**

- a. **New online calendar launched:** We have upgraded from our open source online calendar to a calendar product called LibCal from SpringShare. We did so after evaluating four calendar options popular with libraries across the country. This was not only the most affordable but also had all the features we were looking for. The new calendar boasts a fully accessible design, a power search option, and improved category and audience filters to make it easier to find the events and training that interests you. All registrations for events listed in the former calendar have been carried over. Gerry Formby, MHLS IT Operations Supervisor, Laura Crisci, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator, and Ashley Teal, MHLS Administrative Assistant teamed up to bring this project across the finish line. You can check it out [here](#).
- b. **Mobile App Launch:** We are working with our vendor on a new approach to roll out a single app (rather than 67 separate apps), where each library will have a branded spaces which can be set as a patron’s default interface.
- c. **Our former catalog, Encore,** will be decommissioned at the end of the year.

5. **Library Sustainability**

- a. **MHLS Outreach Mini-Grants** have been awarded to member libraries. A list of awards and project descriptions are attached to this report.
- b. **Seven new topics have been added to the MHLS Training on Demand platform** including Policies 101 and Governance Structure: The Role of Board Officers and Board Committees for library trustees; Building a Culture of Accessibility in Your Library; Teen Services: Behavior, Programming, and Connection; 211 Informational Session; and Learn All about Charitable Gaming from the New York State Gaming Commission.

- c. **100% of member libraries participated in The Great Give Back** this year and all five county groups had collaborative joint efforts.

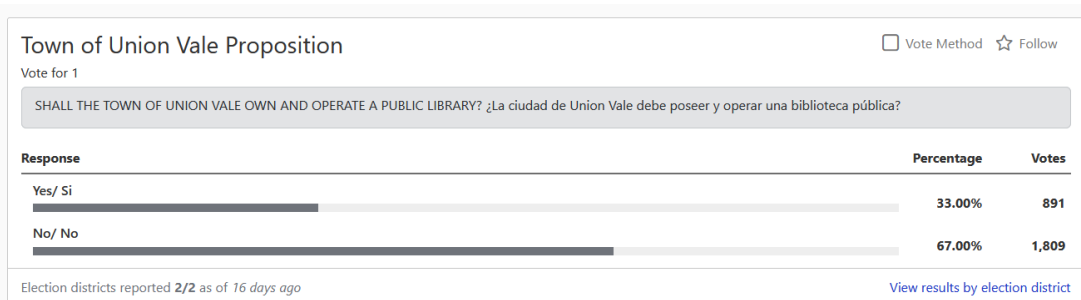
6. MHLS Outreach to Midwest Tapes/Hoopla: The MHLS Directors Association has asked MHLS staff to reach out to the leadership of Midwest Tape, the vendor of the eResource Hoopla due to the finding of [Library Futures](#), a national advocacy organization, of widespread concerns about “junk content” in the Hoopla collection that libraries have little control over. [Complaints included](#) large quantities of self-published books and AI-generated content that are unvetted by libraries or reviewers. We will be reaching out to inquire about Hoopla’s collection development policy and their plans to address the concerns in the library community over junk content in their collection. MHLS will report back to member libraries on the response received to inform their advocacy with their Hoopla sales reps.

7. Developing Strategic Partnerships:

- a. I was an invited speaker at the recent [Thriving Together: Strengthening Community in a Time of Rapid Change](#), hosted by Mohonk Consultations at the Mohonk Mountain House
- b. Thanks to the leadership of Kingston Library Director, Margie Menard, we are exploring the creation of a Mid-Hudson Free People Read Freely affiliate of the [Kids Right to Read Network](#) through the National Coalition Against Censorship
- c. [Central Hudson](#): I have met twice with staff from Central Hudson’s Residential Energy Efficiency Program to explore a strategic partnership to help more Hudson Valley residents connect with free programs and services to reduce their electricity bills. A draft of the strategic “alliance” is attached for your reference.
- d. [The Tempestry Project](#): I recently met with the founders of this project to explore a potential partnership to create a collaborative community art project to represent climate data for the Hudson Valley through fiber arts.
- e. We are close to an agreement with Amazon to provide free [Amazon Business Prime accounts](#) to any member library that would like one. This is a \$1,299/year value. This would result in free delivery of items to libraries and allow them to use invoicing to ensure transparency in the use of public dollars.

8. The Town of Union Vale Update:

- a. The State Librarian is convening a meeting with MHLS representatives, the Union Vale Library Board and the Union Vale Library Board to discuss the impact of the results of the item on the ballot for the general election asking Town of Union Vale residents if they feel the town should own and operate their own public library. Vote results:



9. Board Operations:

a. Board-to-Board Visits

- Reminder: Please coordinate response to libraries requesting a visit with your peers in the county before individually responding and, as always, please let me know if you need any assistance to prepare for your meetings or with follow-up information.
- Please let Ashley know when you have completed a visit so we can track our outreach to members as per the request from the Board Development Committee:
ateal@midhudson.org
- Suggested Talking Points:
 - Please urge all member library boards to participate in state-level funding advocacy.

10. Executive Director's Event Participation: September 18 – November 29, 2024

- a. Dutchess County Library Association, Millbrook Library
- b. NYS Division of Library Development Update for the Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (2)
- c. Partners for Climate Action HV Event, Hutton Brickyards, Kingston
- d. Dare Thompson, President, League of Women Voters of the Mid Hudson Region
- e. Advisory Panel, Library Journal, Year in Architecture issue
- f. Aisha Kutter, Central Hudson
- g. Pawling Library Groundbreaking Ceremony
- h. Presentation: Policies 101, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- i. Putnam County Library Association, Mahopac Library
- j. Facilitator, MHLS New Directors Forum with guest speaker, Ron Kirsop, Executive Director of the OWWL Library System
- k. Beekman Library Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for their newly constructed meeting room
- l. Facilitator, MHLS 414 Vote Libraries Meet-up
- m. Meeting with Union Vale Library Board along with Dutchess County representatives from the MHLS Board: Rajene Hardeman, Barry Ramage, and Richard Swierat
- n. NYLA Legislative Committee
- o. Visit with Senator Rob Rolison at MHLS
- p. Columbia County Library Association
- q. Ulster County Library Association
- r. Presentation, Governance Structure, Trustee Handbook Book Club
- s. Chair, MHLS Road Trip Exploratory Committee
- t. Presentation, Sustainability: The Newest Core Value, MHLS Trustee Education Series at the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison
- u. Presenter, LIU/Palmer Course, Public Library Administration Post-Graduate Certificate Program (4)
- v. Dutchess County Library Association
- w. NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries & Education Technology Hearing in Albany
- x. Advisory Board meeting, Sustainable Libraries Initiative

- y. Greg Belvedere, Director, Union Vale Library
- z. Presentation, Multi-Year Financial Planning, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- aa. Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee at the Adriance Memorial Library of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District
- bb. MHLS Facilities Committee
- cc. Presentation, Maryland Library Association Future of Libraries
- dd. Steve Frazier, Town Supervisor, Town of Union Vale
- ee. New York Library Association Conference, Syracuse NY. Presentations included:
 - Library Leadership for Crisis Response (CE)
 - Empowered Libraries Tackle Climate Change Together!
 - Trustee Handbook Book Club for Directors
 - Activating Trustee Leadership: Beyond Board Meetings
- ff. Invited speaker, [Thriving Together: Strengthening Community in a Time of Rapid Change](#), Mohonk Mountain House
- gg. MHLS Directors Association & Staff Appreciation Luncheon
- hh. MHLS Board Development Committee
- ii. Citizens Preparedness Training, Dutchess County Medical Reserve Corps
- jj. MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee
- kk. Event to recognize Kingston Library Director, Margie Menard's 20 year anniversary at the library
- ll. New Director Orientation: Shannon Powell, Hurley Library
- mm. Keynote Presentation: New Jersey State Library Trustee Institute
- nn. 2024 MHLS Board Committee Chairs
- oo. Frank Rees, NYS Division of Library Development re: Union Vale
- pp. Consultation: Veronica Stork, Director, Livingston Free Library
- qq. MHLS Finance Committee
- rr. Consultation: Director, Board President, and Trustee of the Philmont Public Library

11. I have been named to the Presidential Advisory Committee for incoming-President of the American Library Association, [Sam Helmick](#).

12. I was awarded a \$200 "bonus" from author James Patterson through his partnership with the American Library Association. I have donated this, splitting it between [The Debra Wilcox Klein Book Haven Collection](#) and the [Sustainable Libraries Initiative](#). Read more at [American Library Association](#).