

# Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | July 2025

## 1. State Updates:

- a. The State Library has received their federal funding via the **Grants to States Program**, administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This will fully fund the NYS Division of Library Development through October of 2026 and should mean that state aid flows normally from the Division of Budget to MHLS barring any catastrophic events that negatively impact the state's budget.
- b. The Governor has been given special authority to make **mid-year cuts** this fiscal year should the outcome of federal budget deliberations have a deeper, negative impact on New York State than is currently calculated.
- c. **Special Legislative Grants**
  - Senator Michelle Hinchey has notified us that she has secured a \$30,000 special legislative grant that will be awarded to MHLS to support the libraries in her district via several of our projects, including The Library of Local, The Tempestry Project, and the Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley.
  - Assemblymember Didi Barrett has notified us that she has secured a \$100,000 special legislative grant that will be awarded to MHLS and split evenly as cash grants among the libraries of her district.
- d. We have been authorized to submit our application for the Community Resiliency, Economic Stability and Technology (CREST) grant through the Dormitory Authority of NYS **to help underwrite MHLS capital projects**. This is thanks to the work of Assemblymember Jonathan G. Jacobson.

## 2. Federal Updates:

- a. Given the pace of events, a report on the status of the **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)** will be provided at the meeting to ensure you have the most up-to-date information.
- b. Our application for the **Energy Credit through the IRS was denied without explanation**. We are pursuing an appeal, however, given the passage of the recent budget reconciliation bill which terminates these credits, our effort may be for nothing. As a reminder, this credit, as allowed for by the Inflation Reduction Act, would reimburse part of the cost of the rooftop solar project. These credits are threatened by the current budget bill being debated in Washington D.C.

- c. The Supreme Court upheld the fee that is added to phone bills to fund the **E-Rate program** which subsidizes phone and internet services in schools and libraries.

### **3. Personnel:**

- a. Please join me in welcoming **Elinor Levy as the new Administrative Assistant.**
- b. **Thomas Finnigan, MHLS Delivery Operations Manager, has announced his plans to retire.** His last day will be September 1, 2025.
  - As per our Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Policy, I am notifying you that we will be transferring \$13,452.95 from that reserve fund to pay out Tom's unused vacation time.
- c. **We will be promoting Chris Herron, currently our Facilities Manager & Assistant Delivery Operations Manager, to a new role, that of Operations Manager.** Chris will oversee both Delivery Operations and managing our buildings and grounds.
- d. **We will be promoting Dave Haspel, currently our Delivery Operations and Facilities Associate, to the new role, that of Assistant Operations Manager.** Dave will assist Chris to oversee both Delivery Operations and managing our buildings and grounds.
- e. **Kerstin Cruger, MHLS Outreach and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Specialist has been elected incoming President of the New York Library Association!**

### **4. The MHLS Directors Association has approved a 9.5% increase to the Members Assessment for 2026.**

This increase impacted members differently from community to community based on the formula which is weighted based on three-year averages of circulation and holds. This will result in an additional \$60,856 in revenue for MHLS. We are greatly appreciative of the DA for the foresight to more deeply invest in the Members Assessment line of revenue for MHLS next year in light of the combination of stagnant state aid, rising inflation, and the concerns surrounding the federal budget's impact on state finances.

### **5. Facilities**

- a. The request for proposal (RFP) for the **third floor HVAC system** went out on schedule. Responses are due by July 25. Reminder: We will apply for State Aid for Library Construction to help underwrite the cost of this project.
- b. We have signed a letter of intent to move to the next stage of development and research for **Central Hudson's Community Geothermal Project.**
- c. **The Poughkeepsie Public Library District has notified us of their plans to separate their internet connection from ours.** We currently share a broadband connection that runs through

our network equipment on the third floor. They will have new fiber run to their own building on Market Street. The timeline for this work is unclear.

6. **Delivery Operations:** The request for proposal (RFP) for delivery services went out on schedule. Responses are due by July 30.

7. **Technology Operations:**

- a. **Mobile App** updates:
  - The mobile app has been downloaded by 1,700 patrons so far.
  - We are pilot testing ad hoc push notifications.
- b. We are offering an **Introduction to E-Rate webinar** now that the program is confirmed to continue by the Supreme Court. We also have an E-Rate series on MHLS Training on Demand for step-by-step instructions to help libraries access these funds.
- c. Our member libraries have voted to **remove A.I.-generated content in the Hoopla collection** from the MHLS shared catalog.
- d. I recently attended the **Library Futures eBook Summit** at The Ferguson Library in Stamford, CT. This summit discussed the current attempts to work with publishers to bring the cost of licensing e-content under control, including legislation in various states, including Connecticut. While at the summit, the Connecticut bill was being debated on the floor of their legislature and ultimately passed. It will bar state funds from being used to purchase ebooks under the current licensing framework but will not kick in until another state or enough states with at least 7 million in population follow suit. As a result of my participation at this summit I am now part of working group in New York that is exploring content negotiation strategies, ideal contract language, and fine-tuning our own ebook legislation.

8. **Library Sustainability**

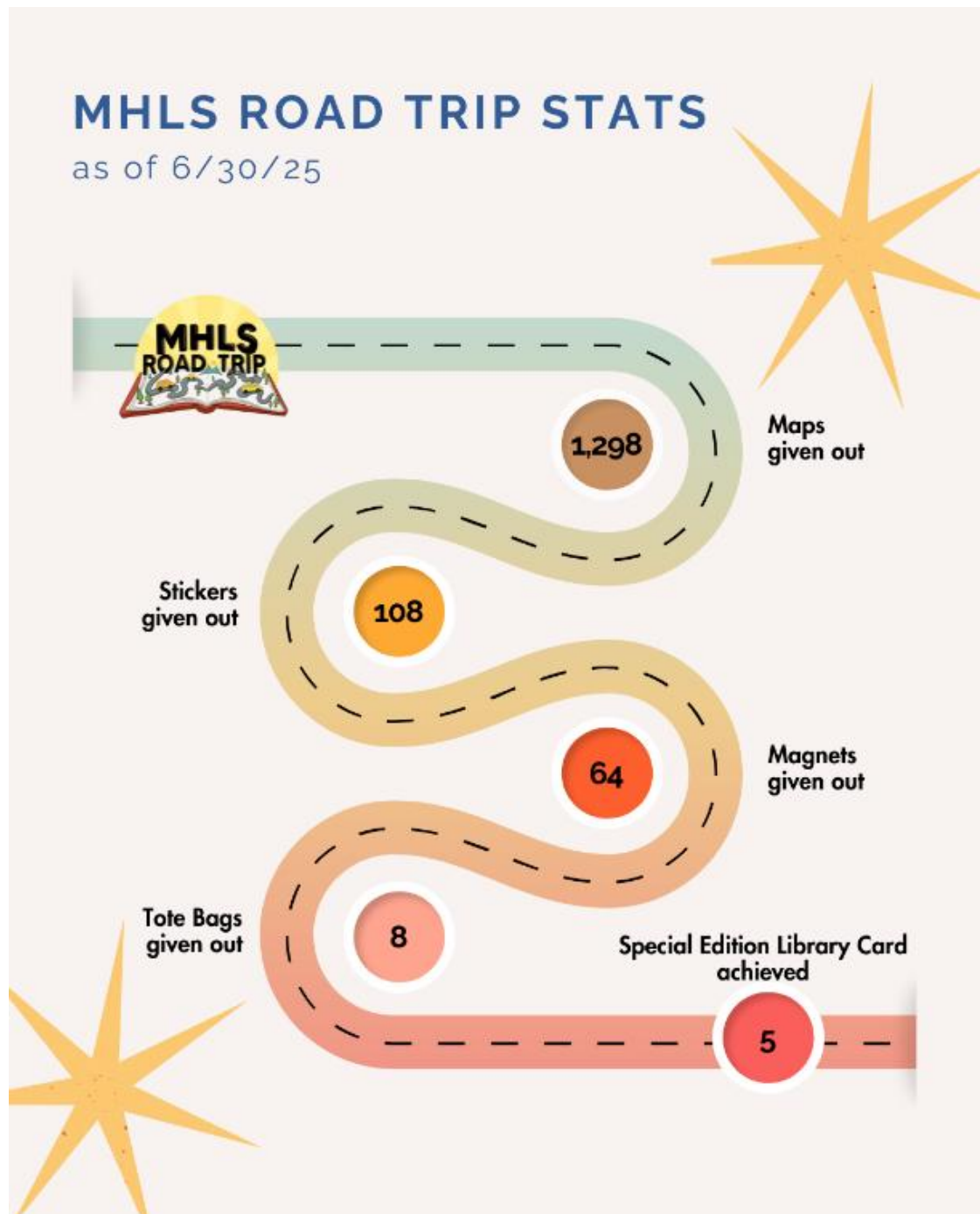
a. **Advocacy Push:**

- Online Advocacy Briefing offered on June 25. 80 trustees and directors attended.
- Postcard Campaign Launches later this month. You will all receive a package of postcards at the board meeting to participate.
- Member library directors will receive an Action Memo later this month to help us kick off our Advocacy Ambassador Program.

- A listserv has been established for advocates that were formerly on the MHLS Board, member library board, and former member library directors and staff.

**b. MHLS Road Trip**

- In addition to the donation from Central Hudson we have also received donations from Stewart's Shops and Adams Fairacre Farms to underwrite the Road Trip this year.

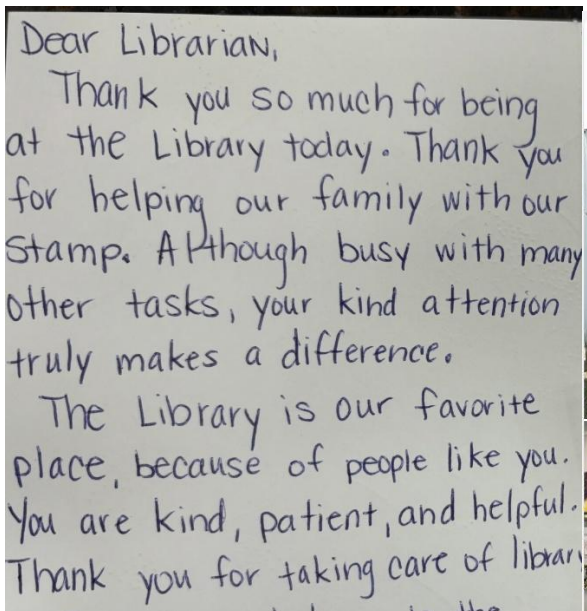




**Our first Road Tripper to visit all 70 libraries, Paul,** just happens to be the father of our very own ILL & Cataloging Specialist, Rebecca Hagan. Paul is shown here with Rain Whittaker, Director of the Philmont Library (along with the Philmont Library mascot Phil).



The Dover Plains Library celebrated their first local family to complete the Road Trip this week!



Thank you note from a grateful Road Tripper to the Mahopac Library staff.



My dad is riding his bike to all of the Dutchess County libraries this summer!

- c. Our third issue of the new **MHLS Trustee eNewsletter – Across the Board** - went out in June. This issue featured “Five Easy Things You Can Do Now” as a library advocate; a list of upcoming

trustee education opportunities; “Ask Rebekkah Anything,” a feature where I answer commonly asked questions from trustees; and “Cool Stuff” – news and innovative ideas from MHLS Member Libraries.

- d. We once again hosted the **Mexican Consulate** in April and June in the MHLS Auditorium in partnership with the Poughkeepsie Public Library District. In April, the Mexican Consulate was able to assist **923** people with passports, renewals, dual citizenship and birth certificates, many of them for children. The Consulate offered additional financial workshops, a health services mobile unit and a large food pantry donated by the Hispanic Federation

**e. Upcoming Trustee Education Opportunities:**

- July
  - MHLS Trustee Education Series: Policies 101 (essentials level) Thursday, July 24 | 5:00 – 6:30pm | Online | [Register here](#)
- August
  - Multi-Year Financial Planning Wednesday, August 13 | 5:30 – 7:30pm | Roeliff Jansen Community Library | [Register here](#)
  - Facilities for the Future: Evaluation, Planning, Operations and Renovation/Construction Friday, August 15 | 10:00 – 11:30am | Online | [Register here](#)
- September
  - MHLS Trustee Education Series: Seven Habits of Highly Effective Boards (advanced level) Tuesday, September 16 | 6:00-8:00pm | IN PERSON: Mahopac Library | [Register Here](#)
  - MHLS Trustee Education Series: Trustee Essentials (essentials level) Wednesday, September 24 | 5:00 – 6:30pm | Online | [Register here](#)
  - MHLS Trustee Education Series: Board Development – Recruitment, Orientation, Education and Evaluation (advanced level) Thursday, September 25 | 6:00 – 8:00pm | IN PERSON: Beekman Library | [Register here](#)
  - MHLS Trustee Education Series: Policies 101 (essentials level) Tuesday, September 30 | 5:00 – 6:30pm | Online | [Register here](#)
- October
  - MHLS Trustee Education Series: Seven Habits of Highly Effective Boards (advanced level) Thursday, October 9 | 5:30 – 7:30pm | IN PERSON: Philmont Public Library | [Register here](#)

- f. We are conducting a **census of member library Friends Groups** to re-establish a community of practice to help support these groups.

**g. Recently offered programs for library workers:**

- Supporting LGBTQIA+ Families in Your Library
- Safe Zone Training - Safe Zone trainings are opportunities to learn about LGBTQIA+ identities and examine prejudice, assumptions, and privilege to help create inclusive and supportive environments for LGBTQIA+ individuals and their allies by promoting understanding, raising awareness, and providing resources. The curriculum for this workshop is provided by the [Safe Zone Project](#) and facilitated by MHLS Outreach & EDI Specialist, Kerstin Cruger.
- Civic Engagement in Public Libraries

h. Scenes from the 2025 Summer Reading Program Kick Off Parties Around the System:



Hudson Area Library



Millbrook Library



Kent Public Library



Elting Memorial Library (New Paltz)



East Fishkill Community Library

9. The **Olive Free Library** is planning to open a branch in the American Legion Hall in the Town of Olive. This will be called the Shokan Branch. MHLS Staff are working with the director and board to integrate this new location into our ILS and delivery services.

## 10. Union Vale Library:

- a. They have hired a new director, [Kathryn Deliktas](#).
- b. They submitted their registration application on June 28. After consulting with our liaison at the NYS Division of Library Development we responded with our review of the application on July 3.

## 11. Board Operations:

- a. A reminder that the annual **Sexual Harassment Prevention training forms are due to MHLS by September 30**. They were emailed to you again on July 3.
- b. The **board self-evaluation process** has been delayed. Please look for this survey later this summer.
- c. **Board-to-Board Visits**
  - Please designate a point person from your team of three representatives from your county to ensure requests are met with a timely response that at least acknowledges the receipt of the request and an estimate of when the contingent will respond.
  - 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 review the [Board-to-Board Visits Program Information Sheet](#).
  - Please let Elinor and I know when you have completed a visit so we can track our outreach to members as per the request from the Board Development Committee.
  - Suggested Talking Points:
    - Sign up for library advocacy messages through the New York Library Association: <https://www.nyla.org/become-an-advocate->
    - Invite your elected officials into the library to see Summer Reading Program activities and the library has to offer.
    - Save the Date: MHLS Annual Membership Meeting, Friday, October 24 at The Wallace Center of the FDR Presidential Library & Museum.

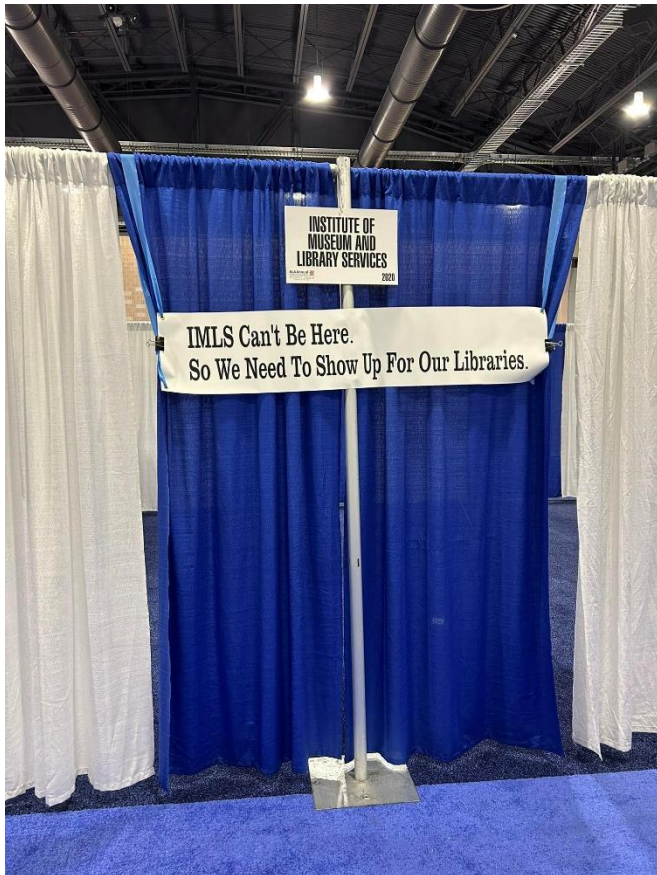
12. Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley recently released a new report: [Voices of the Hudson Valley: What We Learned from YOU](#) (2025). Here is an excerpt I thought you would appreciate from the section “What You Love”:

*“People expressed a strong connection to their local libraries as won of the most vibrant places in their towns. Libraries have evolved as community centers that offer far more than access to books. Most libraries now offer classes for kids, adults, and senior citizens, after-school programs and tutoring, and public lectures on many topics.”*

**13. Executive Director's Event Participation: May 1 – July 3, 2025**

- a. Dutchess County Trustee Reception, Boardman Road Branch, Poughkeepsie Public Library District
- b. Presidential Advisory Committee, American Library Association (2)
- c. Facilitator, Building Referendum Best Practices Panel recording for MHLS Training on Demand
- d. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- e. MHLS Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee
- f. Interview, Q92 Radio, re: MHLS Road Trip
- g. Presentation, Winning at the Polls, MHLS Sustainable Funding Series
- h. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (2)
- i. Presentation, Finance for Directors, MHLS Sustainable Funding Series
- j. Library Futures eBook Summit, Stamford, CT
- k. Dutchess County Library Association (2)
- l. Keynote Presentation, Maine Library Association
- m. Spring on the Hill, New York Library Association
- n. New Yorkers for Better Libraries Reception
- o. Greene County Library Association (2)
- p. Legislative Committee, New York Library Association (2)
- q. Facilitator, 414 Vote Meet Up (2)
- r. Advisory Board, Sustainable Libraries Initiative (2)
- s. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- t. Interview, Conor Walsh Podcast, re: MHLS Road Trip
- u. Meeting with Kevin Quilty, Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley
- v. System Services Advisory Committee
- w. Facilitator, Insurance Coverage for Your Library, MHLS Sustainable Funding Series
- x. MHLS-CSEA Health Insurance Discussion
- y. Meeting with Senator Harckham
- z. New Director Orientation: Denise Martens, Reed Memorial Library, Carmel
- aa. Central Library / Collection Development Advisory Committee
- bb. Building Resilient Communities, STAR Library Network
- cc. Keynote Presentation, Southeastern Library Resources Council
- dd. Keynote Presentation, Libraries Connected Conference (UK)
- ee. Presentation, Legal Basics for Trustees, Town of Esopus Library, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- ff. Ulster County Library Association
- gg. Presentation, Finance for Trustees, MHLS Trustee Education Series/Sustainable Funding Series
- hh. Interview, Cidiot Podcast, re: all manner of things MHLS + MHLS Road Trip
- ii. Reception honoring Stephen King, trustee of the Claverack Library
- jj. MHLS Personnel & Planning Committee

- kk. Presentation, Multi-Year Financial Planning, MHLS Trustee Education Series/Sustainable Funding Series
- ll. Facilitator, Salaries & Benefits: Strengthening the Future of Your Library by Investing in Your Staff with Brian Hildreth, Executive Director, Southern Tier Library System MHLS Sustainable Funding Series
- mm. Presentation, MHLS Advocacy Briefing
- nn. MHLS Directors Association
- oo. Annual Conference of the American Library Association, Philadelphia, PA
  - Presentation: Disaster Response and Sustainability: how libraries are using Federal funds to support communities with co-presenters, Marcia Mardis, Professor, Florida State University & Denise Lyons, Kentucky State Librarian



At the American Library Association annual conference, I filled in for a colleague at IMLS who guessed earlier this year that she most likely would not have a job by the time conference came around. She was unfortunately correct. Our goal for the presentation was to make sure that the more than \$11 million that IMLS invested in research and pilot projects to help libraries adapt in the face of climate change and improve their disaster preparedness lives on and benefits the maximum number of libraries.

*[shown: Exhibit Hall booth space that IMLS would normally occupy at the ALA Conference in Philadelphia ]*