

# Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | March 2023

## 1. State Update

- a. Thank you to all who participated in "Advocacy Day" activities. The snowstorm forced all meetings to be rescheduled but we have persevered in getting our messages across with particular emphasis on education as to how the cuts proposed to library and construction aid impact our system and member libraries as well as advocacy for our petition signature reduction bill.
- b. Advocacy work continues as we are still meeting with legislators, working with the New York Library Association to influence the one-house budget bills, and continuing to build support for the petition signature reduction bill. Please watch for and do your best to attend scheduled meetings with legislators in your county as well as office hours held in communities by legislators and their staff – every point of contact helps!



*Above: Assemblymember Matt Slater spoke at the NYLA Rally on Advocacy Day*



*Above: Speaking with Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson on Advocacy Day. We (Laura Crisci, Kerstin Cruger, Alexa Stroh and I) were joined by Tessa Killian, Executive Director of the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council; Kristen Salierno, director, Howland Public Library (Beacon) & Palmer/LIU Public Library Administrator Cohort member; Lindsay Jankowitz, Assistant Director, Marlboro Free Library & Palmer/LIU Public Library Administrator Cohort member; and Darren Lanspery, director, Plattekill Public Library*

- c. I would like to acknowledge the work of Alexa Stroh, MHLS Library Sustainability Associate for her excellent work to not only develop our complex Advocacy Day schedule but for working quickly to help us reschedule in light of the disruptive weather.

## **2. Annual Report to the State:**

- a. In this month's board packet, you will find our annual report to the state. The board is asked to review this report and vote to authenticate it at the March 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. If you have any questions about the report, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.
- b. Member annual reports: Staff are currently reviewing all MHLS member library annual reports. Should any variance request emerge we will report on this and provide the needed background to the board at the May board meeting.

## **3. Personnel Updates**

- a. We have hired James Coyle as our new Financial Assistant.
- b. Farah Faizi, our Administrative Assistant will be on maternity leave until the end of June.
- c. I have worked with our team supervisors to create a new performance evaluation form that will be piloted with staff this year.

## **4. Facility**

- a. We have signed a contract with Synergy Design Architecture & Engineering PLLC to provide design, drafting, and oversight of our rooftop replacement and solar installation project this year.
- b. In light of the recent mass shootings across the country we have reviewed our facility safety protocols with all staff including entry/exit from the building and the availability of panic buttons. We will be scheduling refresher training for staff on how to best respond in an active shooter situation.
- c. Eight staff volunteers will be trained on CPR and use of our new AED unit by the American Heart Association at the end of March.

## **5. Memo of Understanding Development Update:** The second draft is currently being reviewed by member library directors, the MHLS Executive Committee, and our attorney, Ellen Bach.

## **6. Hudson Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition:**

- a. On February 16<sup>th</sup> we co-hosted, along with the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council and the Ramapo Catskill Library System, an event to bring together leaders from across the Hudson Valley who are working to address [digital inclusion and digital equity](#) issues. The group agreed it is a worthy cause to continue to build a coalition among those working on these issues in the Hudson Valley to ensure we are prepared to partner together to apply for state

funds to address needs in our region. While not all who were invited could attend on this date we were joined by representatives from the following organizations:

- i. Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
  - ii. Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley
  - iii. Hudson Valley Community College
  - iv. OpenHub
  - v. Orange County Youth Bureau
  - vi. The STEM Alliance
  - vii. Ulster County Citizens' Commission for Digital Inclusion
  - viii. Workforce Development Institute
- b. ConnectALL Regional Listening Sessions: We have been asked by the New York State ConnectALL office to assist with the creation of a regional needs assessment that will influence a statewide digital inclusion plan. This plan will be the basis for how the state expends over \$1 billion to bridge the digital divide. The development timeline for the plan is tight, with the statewide plan being due in August. To this end, we are co-hosting a regional "listening session" that will be held at SUNY Purchase on Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup>. More information about this event is attached to this report. You are welcome to attend or to provide leads for those who should be invited.

## **7. Cooperation with other Library Systems**

- a. At their February meeting, the MHLS Directors Association approved two new Reciprocal Lending Agreements (RLA) for OverDrive access. The agreements made with the Mohawk Valley Library System and the Southern Adirondack Library System will result in an additional 30,000+ unique titles being made available to our library patrons at no cost to the system or our member libraires. We anticipate these agreements will be implemented in April. Our RLA with the Upper Hudson Library System is still in place which tripled the number of unique titles available to our patrons.

## **8. Trustee Education**

- a. The 2023 Trustee Handbook Book Club series kicked off with a presentation from Kristin O'Neill from the Committee on Open Government who helped trustees better understand the recent changes to NYS Open Meetings Law. Our next session is on [Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm](#) and will address the topic of the Board's relationship with the library director. For the full schedule please visit <https://midhudson.org/trusteebookclub/> To view recordings and receive a certificate of attendance, please use your Training on Demand log-in.

9. **The Library of Local Project:** I am currently in talks with our funders for a third year of this project. The third year will look different as no new [LoL hubs](#) will be added. The funder is interested in partnering with us to explore how libraries can best play a role in emergency communication networks created

before and after disruptive events in communities. I am exploring partnerships with [Radio Kingston](#) and the [Ulster County Citizens' Commission for Digital Inclusion](#) to assist with this project. The LoL community of practice will continue to be supported through MHLS with a convening of this group and coordinated programming efforts commencing later this year.

**10. Town of Union Vale Update:** A third custom training is scheduled for Monday, March 13<sup>th</sup>.

**11. Board Operations**

- a. **Board Orientation:** Directly after the March 11<sup>th</sup> board meeting, we will offer lunch before our two-hour orientation for new system trustees. This orientation session is designed by the MHLS Board Development Committee to be suitable for our new/newest trustees but, as always, all are welcome to attend. A tour of the facilities will be offered after the orientation for those who are interested.
- b. **MHLS Trustee Continuing Education Reminder:** MHLS trustees should take 2-hours of continuing education relevant to our work on the board each year:
  - i. [Trustee Continuing Education Policy](#)
  - ii. [MHLS Trustee Continuing Education Procedures](#)
- c. **Board-to-Board Visits**
  - i. Reminder: Please coordinate responses 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.
  - ii. Suggested Talking Points:
    - 1. Encourage folks to be active with the advocacy efforts promoted by the New York Library Association to restore state aid.
    - 2. Promote the upcoming Regional Listening Session sponsored by ConnectALL on March 24 – detailed in item 6.b above. (flyer attached to this report)

**12. Executive Director's Event Participation: January 11 – March 3, 2023**

- a. Consultation: Jodi Fernandes, Board President, Millbrook Library
- b. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- c. MHLS Central Library / Collection Development Advisory Committee
- d. ALA Council Committee on Sustainability (2)
- e. Ulster County Library Association
- f. Instructor: Palmer/LIU Public Library Administration Course (5)
- g. Meeting: Augustus (Teddy) Artschwager, Director of Community Affairs, Office of Assemblymember Sarahana Shrestha (w/Stuart Auchincloss)
- h. MHLS Executive Committee
- i. NYS Division of Library Development Standing Meeting (2)
- j. Dutchess County Directors Association (2)
- k. Meeting: Jimmy Buff, Radio Kingston

- l. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee
- m. Consultation: Town of Union Vale Trustees
- n. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- o. Advisory Board, Sustainable Libraries Initiative (2)
- p. LibLearnX Conference (American Library Association), New Orleans, LA
- q. New Director Orientation: Amanda Merk, Chatham & Amanda Mesas, Valatie
- r. Kick Off Meeting, Impact PR & Communications (w/ Barry Ramage, Ric Swierat, Mark Wilson and Laura Crisici)
- s. Consultation: Putnam Valley Free Library Board (2)
- t. Presentation: [Libraries as Climate Adaptation Leaders, with Bill McKibben](#) (Gigabit Libraries Network)
- u. Consultation: Tivoli Free Library (2)
- v. MHLS Committee Chairs Kick-off Meeting
- w. Presentation/Participation: Local Champions/Climate Partners of the Hudson Valley
- x. Meeting: Matthew Stinchcomb, Climate Partners of the Hudson Valley
- y. MHLS Directors Association
- z. Meeting: Margie Menard, Director, Kingston Library
- aa. Consultation: Livingston Free Library (4)
- bb. Reception: Retirement of Dawn Jardine, Red Hook Public Library Director
- cc. Presentation: Advocacy Day Briefing
- dd. Meeting: Assemblymember Didi Barrett
- ee. Co-Host: Hudson Valley Digital Inclusion Meet-up
- ff. Consultation: Victoria Herow, Director, Amenia Free Library
- gg. Facilitation: Trustee Handbook Book Club – Open Meetings Law
- hh. Pre-Advocacy Day Meetings: NYLA Legislative Committee; Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISOD); New York Alliance of Library Systems (NYALS); and New Yorkers for Better Libraries Political Action Committee event
- ii. Advocacy Day Meetings: Assemblymember Matt Slater; Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson; Anna Milchek, Chief of Staff for Senator Michele Hinchey
- jj. MHLS Government & Community Relations Working Group
- kk. MHLS Incentives Committee

**13.** I have been invited to be the OCLC Research Distinguished Speaker/Scholar for 2023. This will involve one, free global webinar for 30,000 OCLC members (including the MHLS community) and two meetings, one with OCLC executives and one with senior management to advise them on how climate change is impacting the library community and how libraries are responding. OCLC is best known for [WorldCat](#) which is the unifying interface that facilitates worldwide interlibrary loan. They are also well-known as a go-to resource for free professional development for the library community through [WebJunction](#), among other things. They are a non-profit organization.