

Executive Director's Report to the MHLS Board | May 2022

1. State Update

- a. NYS Budget Finalized
 - i. Library Aid: \$99.6 million
 - ii. Construction Aid: \$34 million
 - iii. Digital Inclusion Grants (federal earmark): \$10 million
 - iv. Authorized release of the Love Your Library Funds: \$150,000
 - v. Establishment of the Working to Implement Reliable and Equitable Deployment of Broadband Act (WIRED)
- b. Modifications to Open Meetings Law
 - i. Remote meetings are currently authorized until June 8, 2022
 - ii. The Budget Bill included a modification to OML once the emergency declaration related to COVID-19 is rescinded, meaning when remote meetings are no longer allowed. The modification allows for an individual trustee to attend an in person meeting board via videoconferencing from a location not open to the public under "extraordinary circumstances." The law includes a non-exhaustive list of examples of such circumstances, "including disability, illness, caregiving responsibilities, or any other significant or unexpected factor or event which precludes the member's physical attendance at such meeting." There are steps our board must take before it can permit its members to participate remotely citing extraordinary circumstances, including the adoption of a resolution, which defines "extraordinary circumstances", and a public hearing regarding authorization of the use of videoconferencing in these circumstances.
 1. For more information please see this ["Questions and Answers" document](#) from the NYS Committee on Open Government.
 2. I am recommending that the MHLS Bylaws, Policy and Procedures Committee take a closer look at this new law and make a recommendation to the full board.

2. Personnel Updates

- a. Personnel Actions:
 - i. Financial Assistant Position:
 1. Joan Kay has announced her plans to retire at the end of May after 22 years of service
 - a. Recommended Resolution to Recognize Joan Kay
 2. Lisa Massarelli has been hired to fill the Financial Assistant position. Lisa has over 15 years of experience in bookkeeping and payroll. She is a graduate of Mercy College with a bachelor's degree in accounting. Her start date is May 9, 2022.
 - ii. Administrative Associate:
 1. Kerry Chenier has resigned effective April 30th.

2. A search is underway to fill this position.
 - iii. **ACTION:** You will be asked to vote on these personnel actions later in the agenda.
 - b. We have wrapped up our team-based discussions of the [MHLS Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(JEDI\) training videos](#).
 - i. These discussions were facilitated by our staff:
 1. Nina Acosta
 2. Rebekkah Smith Aldrich
 3. Saran Camara
 4. Kerry Carpenter
 5. Casey Conlin
 6. Tom Finnigan
 7. Gerry Formby
 8. Chris Herron
 9. Laurie Shedrick
 - ii. Staff were asked to consider how the topics covered in the videos intersect with:
 1. Our personal experiences
 2. How we interact with our co-workers
 3. How these topics impact the work we do at MHLS with our member libraries
 - iii. Debrief Notes:
 1. Key Finding: The need for empathy for the life experiences of others in all interactions.
 2. Key Best Practice: Pause. Treat people the way you want to be treated.
Shorthand: Be kind.
 3. Key Challenge: Ensure efforts in this area are ongoing and that practice follows policy. This should not be a “one-off” discussion in our workplace.
3. **Annual Report to the State:** The 2021 Annual Report to the State was accepted and approved by the NYS Division of Library Development.
4. **Cybersecurity Efforts:**
 - a. MHLS staff continue to improve the cybersecurity of our operations, most recently by streamlining the eCommerce process utilized by patrons to pay their fines and bills online. This process is now completed processed through forms hosted by PayPal, eliminating the pass through in Sierra webforms.
 - b. MHLS staff have created a [Security Checklist](#) for member libraries and we have been promoting the [Shields Up initiative](#) of the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency.
 - c. We continue to use [KnowBe4](#) to raise staff awareness and to assess the proficiency of MHLS staff to avoid cyber attacks deployed through email.

5. The Library of Local (LoL) Project Update:

- a. Ten new Library of Local Locations have been named, each location has received a custom bookcase, seed library and collection of books related to this year’s theme of climate solutions. [New Locations](#) include:
 - i. Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library (Cold Spring)
 - ii. Claverack Free Library
 - iii. Elting Memorial Library (New Paltz)
 - iv. Clinton Community Library
 - v. Millbrook Library
 - vi. New Lebanon Library
 - vii. NorthEast Millerton Library
 - viii. Philmont Public Library
 - ix. Roeliff Jansen Community Library (Ancram, Copake, Hillsdale)
 - x. Woodstock Public Library
- b. The project has made the “long list” for the International Federation of Library Association’s [Best Green Library Project of the Year Award](#).

6. Vega Development Path Update:

- a. Our staff continue to work with Innovative Interfaces Inc. (III), to develop a new online catalog. This product is called Vega Discover.
- b. MHLS staff have [created a web page](#) to introduce Vega Discover and to track updates from the pilot project.
- c. We have moved into the second pilot phase, expanding the number of libraries helping to test the product in its current state to include Highland, Kingston, Marlboro and Patterson. We are grateful to these libraries for stepping up to provide valuable testing and feedback on the catalog. Each library will be testing for inconsistencies, integration with OverDrive and Hoopla, as well as to share general observations and provide feedback to help guide the development of this product for consortia.

7. Trustee Education Updates:

- a. The Trustee Education Series for Spring 2022 launches this month and will include a new offering: *Pathways to Sustainable Funding*. This is directly tied to one of the five themes identified by member libraries as a priority in our planning process last year. This session will address trends impacting multi-year financial planning for member libraries as well as introduce the new [Public Library District Toolkit](#) from the NYS Division of Library Development.
- b. Draft guidance from the NYS Division of Library Development indicates that MHLS will be a pre-approved provider for trustee education events that will count towards the new trustee education mandate that goes into effect in January 2023.

8. The MHLS Early Literacy Cohort began in March:

- a. This four-month program includes participants of MHLS member library staff who work with families and young children age birth-5 who work together in a small cohort designed to help libraries strengthen their capacity to provide early literacy services in their community through member library peer support sessions and training on early literacy best practices including: Community Asset Analysis, Strategies for Partnerships, Planning Programs and Communication Strategies.
- b. This year's cohort includes: D.R. Evarts Library (Athens), Brewster Public Library, Catskill Public Library, Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library (Cold Spring), Town of Esopus Library, Hurley Library, Millbrook Library, Elting Memorial Library (New Paltz), Patterson Library, Putnam Valley Free Library and Tivoli Free Library.

9. Sustainable Library Certification Program Progress:

- a. MHLS has completed 93% of the required and recommended actions to achieve certification with an expectation that we will complete the program later this year.
- b. Remaining items are primarily tied to documentation of our sustainable building operations and maintenance procedures; a review of our disaster preparedness and response plans; working to identify all plants on the site to ensure they are native to the northeast region; amending the staff travel policy to prioritize sustainable choices; and two items you will see related recommendations for from the MHLS Facilities Committee.
- c. The EV Charging Station Project prioritized in the MHLS Capital Plan is a recommended item towards certification.

10. Book Challenges Increase Nationwide:

- a. In the [2022 State of America's Libraries Report](#) from the American Library Association (ALA), the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 729 challenges to library, school, and university materials and services in 2021, resulting in more than 1,597 individual book challenges or removals. Most targeted books were by or about Black or LGBTQIA+ persons. This was the most book challenges in the past 20 years.
 - i. "The 729 challenges tracked by ALA represent the highest number of attempted book bans since we began compiling these lists 20 years ago," said ALA President Patricia "Patty" Wong. "We support individual parents' choices concerning their child's reading and believe that parents should not have those choices dictated by others. Young people need to have access to a variety of books from which they can learn about different perspectives. So, despite this organized effort to ban books, libraries remain ready to do what we always have: make knowledge and ideas available so people are free to choose what to read."
- b. No member library has reported a book challenge. There have been book challenges in area school districts.
- c. MHLS staff has been diligently working to urge library directors and boards to review their Collection Development policies and their request for reconsideration process at county

meetings, through consultations, and via the MHLS Bulletin. This topic was featured at the April 19th Trustee Handbook Book Club session on Ethics & Conflicts of Interest + Intellection Freedom, Censorship and Privacy.

- d. ALA has launched [Unite Against Book Bans](#) to empower readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship as well as the [Unite Against Book Bans Toolkit](#) which is designed to help supporters of intellectual freedom with talking points and outreach best practices and social media post prompts and graphics.

11. MHLS Member Libraries and MHLS Services Featured in Recent Article: Several MHLS member libraries were featured in the HV1 publication through an article entitled, "[Each library is unique](#)," by Violet Snow. In the article the shared collection, ability to request materials across libraries, and the physical delivery provided by MHLS is prominently featured.

12. Board Operations

- a. The Board Self-Evaluation Survey will be distributed after the May board meeting as per the MHLS Board Development Committee's direction.
- b. Board-to-Board Visits
 - i. Reminders:
 - 1. Please coordinate responses to libraries requesting a visit with your peers in the county and, as always
 - 2. Please let me know if you need any assistance to prepare for your meetings.
 - 3. Please let me know once you've attended a meeting for tracking purposes.
 - ii. Talking Points
 - 1. Please raise awareness about the new web site [Unite Against Book Bans](#).
 - 2. 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 any active calls to action from the New York Library Association that may be enacted at the time of your visit.
 - 3. Trustee Education
 - a. Please help advertise the upcoming Trustee webinars
 - i. Spring 2022: [MHLS Trustee Education Series](#)
 - 1. [Includes a new offering: Pathways to Sustainable Funding](#)
 - ii. [Trustee Handbook Book Club](#)
 - b. Should you be asked: the new Trustee Education Requirement goes into effect January 1, **2023**.

13. Executive Director's Event Participation: March 4, 2022 – April 29, 2022

- a. Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO) monthly meeting (2)
- b. Teaching: Advanced Certificate in Public Library Administration Course (2)

- c. Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI) Discussion: Delivery & Facilities Teams (2)
- d. New Director Orientation: Matthew Pavloff, Kinderhook Memorial Library
- e. MHLS COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group (2)
- f. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- g. MHLS Sustainability Initiative Team
- h. Ulster County Library Association (2)
- i. Presentation: Sustainable Thinking Builds Strong Libraries and Resilient Communities ([Core: Leadership | Infrastructure | Futures Series](#))
- j. Dutchess County Directors Association (2)
- k. Division of Library Development/PULISDO
- l. Presentation: 2022 Meet-up for 414 Vote Libraries
- m. ALA Council Committee on Sustainability (2)
- n. Grand Opening Ceremony: Pleasant Valley Library
- o. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group
- p. Advisory Board, Sustainable Libraries Initiative (2)
- q. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- r. Public Library Association (PLA) Conference, Portland, OR
- s. Consultation: David Lavalley, Board President, Starr Library, Rhinebeck
- t. Presentation: Trustee Handbook Book Club (2)
- u. MHLS Nominations & Elections Committee
- v. MHLS Board Development Committee
- w. Facilitation: The Great Give Back 2022 Statewide Planning
- x. Consultation: Karen Unger, Starr Library, Rhinebeck
- y. Greene County Library Association
- z. Consultation: Alexis Tackett, Director, Pine Plains Free Library
- aa. MHLS Facilities Committee
- bb. MHLS Directors Association