

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

## 1. State Update

- a. 2023 State Budget finalized: The Governor's proposed cuts to library aid and the State Aid for Library Construction Program were averted. However, no gains were made in the amount of aid as compared to last year.
  - i. Library Aid: The budget assumptions used to create our budget have held true as we based our assumptions on no more funding than received last year.
  - ii. Construction Aid is once again at \$34 million which should result in \$1,242,064 for our region. Laura Crisci, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator, has administered the MHLS Action Memo to gather construction needs from members as well as to gauge intent to apply levels. We conducted an Introduction to State Aid for Library Construction webinar for members on April 19th and have a technical assistance webinar scheduled for June 28th. Laura will also provide office hours June-August to assist members with their applications.
- b. 414 Petition Signature Reduction Bill Update: We have initiated our second phase of advocacy for this bill in hopes of getting it through committee and to a vote by the legislature before the end of session in early June.
- c. The state budget bill included a provision for the increase of minimum wage over the next several years:
  - i. 2024: \$15.00
  - ii. 2025: \$15.50
  - iii. 2026: \$16.00
  - iv. 2027: \$16.00 + an increase based on a rate determined by the Consumer Price Index in order to keep up with inflation. There would be no increases to the minimum wage in 2027 and beyond if over a period of the prior year, the calculations published by the United States Department of Labor show that:
    1. The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for Northeast Region Urban Wage Earners is negative.
    2. The statewide unemployment rate increases by one-half percentage point or more.
    3. Total non-farm employment decreases (measured seasonally).

## 2. Personnel Updates

- a. Amy Kendel has resigned to pursue a full-time degree program at the University at Albany. We are currently advertising for her position, Interlibrary Loan & Cataloging Specialist.
- b. Farah Faizi is scheduled to return from maternity leave on June 29<sup>th</sup>.
- c. We are contracting with a new Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The new program will greatly enhance the services available to our staff and provide a streamlined approach for

assigning training for staff, including the mandated sexual harassment prevention training. New services for staff will include:

- i. Clinical Counseling Services
- ii. Self-Help Resource Center with over 25,000 webinars, expert articles, tools, tutorials, training, and video resources

**Sampling of issues addressed with thousands of resources:**

- Parenting and Family Issues
- Elder and Child Care Resource Locators
- Adoption and Special Needs
- Health and Wellness Resources
- 700+ Health Videos
- Cancer, Diabetes and Other Illnesses
- Health Assessments
- Personal Finance and Education
- Financial Assessments and Tutorials
- Debt and Debt Restructuring
- 150+ Financial Calculators
- Wills, Forms and Legal Templates
- Home Ownership and Mortgages
- Taxes and the IRS
- Legal Information
- Consumer Rights and Resources
- Pet Resources
- Lifestyle Benefits and Discounts
- 100+ Personal Improvement Webinars
- Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience
- Articles and Videos on Personal Problems
- Stress, Grief, Depression and Trauma
- Mental and Behavioral Health Issues
- Domestic and Workplace Violence Resource Center
- Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Abuse

- iii. Coaching Programs

**ESI COACHING PROGRAMS**

- Personal Finances
- Budgeting
- Balancing Life at Work and at Home
- Resilience
- Effective Communication
- Home Purchasing
- Student Debt
- Relaxation for Beginners
- Workplace Conflict
- Saving & Spending
- Basic Supervisory Skills
- Practical Aspects of Retirement
- Fitness
- Nutrition
- Weight Loss
- Stress
- Tobacco Cessation
- Drugs and Alcohol

- iv. Support for our Finance Manager & Personnel Officer on Human Resource issues, including background searches.

- v. Trauma Response Service: If our organization experiences a serious traumatic event, a trained response team will be available to us. They provide on-site intervention by a senior counselor with special expertise in dealing with traumatic events.

### 3. **Facility**

- a. The automated external defibrillator (AED) is now installed in the MHLS Business Office. Nine MHLS staff members volunteered to be certified on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and on how to use the automated external defibrillator (AED) in our workplace. We completed our training in April:
  - i. Rebekkah Smith Aldrich
  - ii. Kathryn Brew
  - iii. Kerri Carpenter
  - iv. James Coyle
  - v. Laura Crisci
  - vi. Tom Finnigan
  - vii. Gerry Formby
  - viii. Dave Haspel
  - ix. Chris Herron (Project leader)

4. **Memo of Understanding Development Update:** The third draft is currently being reviewed by member library directors and the MHLS Executive Committee will convene soon to review our lawyer's input.

5. **New Online Catalog Update:** Laurie Shedrick, MHLS Assistant Director and Technology Operations Manager provided our member library directors with an exciting preview of the development advancements for our next generation library catalog. New enhancements now working well include:

- a. ReciteMe accessibility toolbar – the same product we use on midhudson.org



- b. Customizable front page
  - i. Cover Carousel
  - ii. Showcase Groups
  - iii. Hero Carousel
  - iv. Author Spotlight

## Staff Picks for Summer



Beach reads



Gardening



The Library of Local

## It Happened Here: Set in or About the Hudson Valley

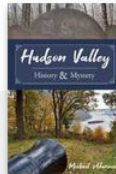
[View All →](#)



Ask again, yes : a novel...  
Keane, Mary Beth



Ghosts of the missing...  
Donohoe, Kathleen



Hudson Valley history & m...  
Adamovic, Michael



Kaaterskill Falls  
Goodman, Allegra



Light years  
Salter, James.



Patriot hero of the Hudso...  
Daquino, V. T. (Vincent ...



## 6. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Efforts Update:

### a. Continuing Education/Professional Development

- i. On May 8<sup>th</sup> we welcomed back speakers from The SafeZone Initiative to provide a program for member libraries on pronouns. Participants worked through hands-on activities to practice utilizing pronouns in different contexts. Facilitators guided the conversation around proper pronoun usage, what to do when you misgender someone, the history of pronouns, as well as practicing utilizing them in day-to-day conversations.
- ii. On September 14<sup>th</sup> we welcome speakers from [Right to Be](#) for Bystander Intervention in Public Workplaces training. "When harassment happens at a public workplace, people are almost always around and if they aren't around, they can be quickly summoned to show up. Our goal is to reduce instances of workplace harassment by giving employees the tools they need to disrupt those perpetrating the harassment. We will equip your employees with the right information on how to be an effective bystander in the midst of workplace harassment using our proven 5Ds methodology; 98% of employees leave our training committing to intervene next time they witness disrespect or harassment."

### b. Outreach Mini-Grants: Each year, dependent on state budget levels, we offer "Outreach Mini-Grants" to member libraries to help accelerate their work to reach out to one or more of the state designated target populations in their community. This year we will offer two mini-grant programs:

- i. Assistive equipment: Members can use these funds to purchase new equipment or software, for example: assistive technology such as ZoomText Magnifier/Reader; CCTB/Video Magnifier; FM Assistive Listening System, tec.

- ii. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Mini-Grants support MHLS' commitment to ensuring library services are equitable, respect the diversity of our communities and are inclusive. Funds may be applied for to meet a variety of project outcomes including developing accessible and inclusive collections and programs; collection audits; and staff training that strengthens diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

7. **Midhudson.org Redesign Update:** We have completed phase one of our information gathering to inform a redesign of midhudson.org, this entailed a review of usage statistics/trends and interviews with directors in all five counties as to what they use the site for frequently; what they love about the site; what they find challenging about the site; and suggestions they have for improvements. Next up is a survey that will be administered to (1) member library directors, staff, and trustees and (2) MHLS staff.

8. **Variance Requests:** Each year, member library boards certify that they meet minimum standards of service according to Section 90.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. Meeting the standards is crucial for libraries to maintain their registration with the state. Their registration is what allows them to receive tax dollars to operate their libraries. We have five libraries this year who have indicated they did not meet one or more of the standards. As per the procedure set forth by the state library these libraries are required to apply for a "variance" which outlines why they did not meet a standard and, in consultation with MHLS staff, outlines their compliance path. The MHLS board is asked to consider these requests and, if found acceptable, recommend their variance request to the State Library. This will be an item under New Business at the May meeting.

9. **Hudson Valley Digital Inclusion Efforts:**

- a. **ConnectALL Regional Listening Session Findings:** In March, we co-hosted the Mid-Hudson Listening Session with the New York State ConnectALL office. More than 140 residents attended, including both online and in person attendees. Key findings:
  - i. Public libraries were identified as a key internet access location for both those without and with internet access at home.
  - ii. Insufficient bandwidth speeds and limited digital literacy skills were identified as barriers to community members using the internet. Participants pointed to certain online activities, such as using online portals and chat boxes, or using telehealth services, as being particularly complex. Participants identified aging individuals as a population particularly likely to lack digital literacy skills. Participants expressed that cost can be a barrier to internet access, particularly when the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) discount is not sufficient to cover the entire cost of a service plan. Participants also suggested that internet services are not sufficient to cover the entire cost of a service plan. Participants also suggested that internet services are not always reliable, that they have experienced slower speeds on evenings and weekends,

and that dead spots in their homes make it difficult to access the internet from certain rooms. Finally, participants identified the lack of adequate devices as a barrier to full access, as some individuals in the community rely on their smartphones to access the internet.

- iii. It was noted that students cannot be successful without internet access as every teacher is required to post course content, learning materials, and grades online.
  - iv. The challenge of accessing government services online both for those that may struggle with digital literacy and those with lower English-language proficiency was noted as a significant problem in communities.
  - v. Online privacy and security were hot topics of discussion at the event.
  - vi. Affordability and reliability of internet access was prioritized as was an investment in digital literacy skills.
- b. To follow up on the ConnectALL Regional Listening Session, we will be involved in (1) convening regional focus groups with folks in targeted special population groups to help inform first a regional, and then statewide Digital Inclusion Plan; (2) the administration of a regional survey to gather additional information to inform the regional digital equity plan; and (3) the creation of an asset map identifying those organizations/agencies in the Hudson Valley assisting with digital equity/inclusion efforts.

**10. Libraries featured in the new Regional Climate Action Road Map and Tool Kit:** I am pleased to report that, after some targeted advocacy, libraries are now featured in the [Climate Action Road Map and Tool Kit](#) under development to address how the Hudson Valley region will collaborate to achieve New York's climate goals. This resource is currently available as a discussion draft, suggestions for improvements are welcome: [roadmap@sustainhv.org](mailto:roadmap@sustainhv.org)

**11. Cooperation with other Library Systems**

- a. Two new Reciprocal Lending Agreements (RLA) for OverDrive access have been implemented. One with the Mohawk Valley Library System, the other with the Southern Adirondack Library System.
- b. The latest installment of the Trustee Handbook Book Club on the board-director relationship broke registration records with over 700 registered and over 450 that attended live. This series is produced thanks to a cooperative effort among three public library systems: MHLS, OWWL, and Southern Tier and a promotional relationship with the entire Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (PULISDO), the New York State Library, the New York Library Association, and the Library Trustee Association Section of the New York Library Association. All recordings are available through MHLS Training on Demand.

**12. MHLS Featured in in Library Trustee Association Section of the New York Library Association (LTAS):**

Thanks to MHLS trustee Mark Wilson, MHLS is featured in the most recent newsletter of LTAS which was a special issue devoted to sustainability. Please find the issue attached to this report.

### **13. The Library of Local Project:**

- a. We are still in talks with our funders for a third year of this project. 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 have meetings scheduled with [Radio Kingston](#) and the [Ulster County Citizens' Commission for Digital Inclusion](#) to assist with this pilot 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.
- b. We have been approached by Sustainable Hudson Valley to collaborate on a project to support community resilience-building. This project, still under development, would work to build a network of knowledgeable participants through "Resilient Places" training, potentially hosted at LoL sites. I hope to have more details for you by our July meeting.

**14. Town of Union Vale Update:** A fourth custom training has been scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>.

**15. WebJunction Partnership:** I am partnering with WebJunction, an international provider of free professional development for the library community, to produce [a series of six webinars on the topic of sustainability](#) with my colleagues at the Sustainable Libraries Initiative. These will all be open to our members at no charge:

- a. [Sustainability 101](#)  
18 July 2023 (2:00 pm–3:00 pm EDT)
- b. [Climate Action Planning \(Part 1\): An Introduction](#)  
16 August 2023 (2:00 pm–3:30 pm EDT)
- c. [Climate Action Planning \(Part 2\): Disaster Preparedness and Community Resilience](#)  
26 September 2023 (2:00 pm–3:30 pm EDT)
- d. [Climate Justice](#)  
3 October 2023 (2:00 pm–3:30 pm EDT)
- e. [Living Our Values Out Loud: Programs that Walk the Talk](#)  
28 November 2023 (2:00 pm–3:00 pm EST)
- f. [Stronger Together: Collective Impact and Climate Action Programming](#)  
13 December 2023 (2:00 pm–3:30 pm EST)

### **16. Board Operations**

- a. **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](#)
- b. **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 thank their state legislators for their advocacy for library aid in the state budget.
  - 2. Promote the availability of the MHLS Training on Demand Service to help them meet their trustee education requirements: 2 hours annually.

## **17. Executive Director's Event Participation: March 6 – May 9, 2023**

- a. Chief of Staff, Assemblymember Anil Beephan Jr.
- b. Senator Robert Rolison
- c. Consultation, Kirsten Salierno, Director, Howland Public Library (2)
- d. Instructor: Palmer/LIU Public Library Administration Course (2)
- e. Chief of Staff, Senator Peter Oberacker
- f. Consultation, Alexis Tackett, Director, Pine Plains Free Library
- g. Facilitator/Presenter, Launch Event for 2023 Turning Outward Cohort (2)
- h. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- i. Sustainable Libraries Initiative Advisory Board (2)
- j. MHLS Board of Trustees Meeting & Orientation
- k. Impact PR & Communications Check-in Meetings (4)
- l. MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group
- m. Center for the Future of Libraries Advisory Group
- n. Training, Town of Union Vale Trustees
- o. Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (PULISDO) (2)
- p. Council Committee on Sustainability, American Library Association
- q. Consultation, Red Hook Public Library (2)
- r. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- s. Consultation, Kathy Reilly, Putnam Valley Free Library
- t. State Aid for Library Construction Program briefing, NYS Division of Library Development
- u. Consultation, Millbrook Library Board
- v. Consultation, Jill Leinung in her capacity as a trustee of the Valatie Free Library
- w. Interview, Cornell Cooperative Extension, [Nature Calls Podcast](#) (broadcast date TBD)
- x. Interview, [In Touch Media](#) (broadcast date TBD)
- y. Hudson Valley Climate Action Network Meet-up, Poughkeepsie
- z. CPR/AED Training, Roeliff Jansen Community Library
- aa. Field Trip, New Canaan (CT) Library
- bb. Melissa Everett, Executive Director, Sustainable Hudson Valley
- cc. Greene County Library Association
- dd. Presentation, 414 Vote Libraries Meet-up (2)
- ee. MHLS Finance Committee
- ff. Presentation, Trustee Essentials, MHLS Trustee Education Series (2)
- gg. Ulster County Library Association
- hh. Presentation, The Director-Board Relationship, [Trustee Handbook Book Club](#)



- ii. MHLS Nominations & Elections Committee
- jj. Legislative Committee, New York Library Association
- kk. Presentation, Introduction to the State Aid for Library Construction Program
- ll. MHLS Directors Association
- mm. Climate Adaptation Seminar, FEMA Region 2
- nn. Presentation: Change Management, New York Library Association's Developing Leaders Program
- oo. MHLS Board Development Committee
- pp. Presentation, Censorship in Libraries, Dutchess County Trustee Reception at East Fishkill Community Library
- qq. Facilitation, MHLS County Funding Advocacy Group
- rr. Jenny Lee, Ulster County Citizens Commission for Digital Inclusion
- ss. Consultation, Plattekill Library Planning Committee
- tt. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee
- uu. New Director Orientation: Linda Holik, Livingston Free Library
- vv. Consultation, Starr Library (Rhinebeck)
- ww. Presentation, Finance & Fiduciary Responsibilities, MHLS Trustee Education Series
- xx. Presentation, OCLC Distinguished Seminar Series – [viewing guide now available](#)
- yy. MHLS Bylaws, Policy and Procedures Committee
- zz. MHLS Central Library/Collection Development Committee
- aaa. Presentation, Censorship in Libraries, Putnam County Library Association