

Executive Director’s Report to the MHLS Board | September 2023

1. State Update

- a. We are still waiting for the 414 Municipal Ballot Petition Signature Reduction bill to be sent to the Governor for signature. The library community is on record with the Governor’s staff in support of this.
- b. FY 2024 Budget Advocacy has started:
 - i. In addition to strategy meetings through the New York Library Association’s Legislative Committee, I will be attending the Advocacy Kick-Off meeting hosted by the New York Alliance of Library Systems (NYALS) on September 19th in Guilderland, NY.
 - ii. Library Advocacy Day is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7th.
- c. FY 2022-2023 State Aid for Library Construction Grants have been officially announced by the State Library. All projects our board recommended for funding have been funded:

Beekman Library	11 Town Center Blvd Hopewell JCT, NY 12533	\$167,215.00	A renovation in our existing basement that will include a meeting room, equipment for presentations, storage, restrooms, and a staff break room.	Dutchess
Lagrange Association Library	1110 Route 55 Lagrangeville, NY 12540	\$177,108.00	Renovation of the Children’s Room to add a youth program room,toddler play area,staff office,more collection space and relocate the staff breakroom.	Dutchess
Mid-Hudson Library System	103 Market Street Poughkeepsie, NY 12601	\$8,211.00	This project will install four electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at MHLS headquarters in Poughkeepsie.	Dutchess
Pawling Free Library	11 Broad St Pawling, NY 12564	\$151,377.00	Children’s addition to library building	Dutchess
Mahopac Library	668 Route 6 Mahopac, NY 10541	\$168,987.00	Building Safety and Emergency Preparedness Upgrades	Putnam
Elting Memorial Library	93 Main Street New Paltz, NY 12561	\$46,188.00	Increase accessibility and energy efficiencies in the 2006 library addition to the Elting Memorial Library.	Ulster
Highland Public Library	14 Elting Place Highland, NY 12528	\$8,525.00	The project is to replace 2 outdoor sun damaged digital signs in order to increase public awareness and improve communication with our community.	Ulster
Marlboro Free Library	1251 Route 9W Marlboro, NY 12542	\$297,575.00	Efficiency and accessibility improvements to the public service desk area (circulation desk) and staff work areas of the existing Library.	Ulster
Town Of Esopus Port Ewen Library	128 Canal St Port Ewen, NY 12466	\$270,801.00	Strengthening disaster responsiveness, climate resiliency, and accessibility with generator installation, lighting upgrades, and photovoltaic upgrades	Ulster

Source: <https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/construc/2223Projects.pdf>

- d. Tom Lawrence, the Director of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District, the Central Reference Library of MHLS has been named to a statewide task force looking into the impact of the State Library’s plan to sunset the [NOVELny program](#) on June 30, 2024.
- e. I have provided input on four bills that have been introduced by NYS legislators (none of which are in our service area: Senator Mays, Assemblymember Lavine, Assemblymember Kelles, and Assemblymember Cunningham) to help defend the right to read in New York State. Unfortunately, some of the bills, due to a lack of understanding of how state funds flow to libraries, could compromise MHLS access to state aid if just one of our libraries decides to ban

one or more books. We are on record opposing this approach and urging local consequences for library boards that do not defend the right to read.

- f. Recommendation 7 in the final report of the Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee calls for our system prioritize advocating at the **federal and state level** for legislation and agreements with publishers that achieve the goal to have library digital book access be at least comparable to library access to print books (e.g. digital titles available for circulation at the same time as general public release, and at reasonable terms, especially with respect to pricing; equitable access for people with disabilities; and fair use rights in the digital age that are at least as robust as these rights in the analog context.)
 - i. To this end, we have booked Alan S. Inouye, Ph.D, Senior Director, Public Policy & Government Relations and Interim Associate Executive Director of the American Library Association is booked for an online session to and educate us all about the current state of eBook legislation and advocacy issues on Tuesday, October 10th at 10:00am.
 - 1. Alan S. Inouye is director of public policy for the American Library Association (ALA). Based in Washington, D.C., he oversees ALA’s federal policy & lobbying activities and national initiatives. Previously, he was the coordinator of the President’s Information Technology Advisory Committee in the Executive Office of the President of the United States and a study director at the Computer Science and Telecommunications Board of the National Academy of Sciences. Alan earned his Ph.D. in library & information studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

2. Personnel Updates – Action Requested (item 6.A)

- a. New Hires
 - i. Ricky Conner, Materials Handler, start date: September 5th
 - ii. Ashley Teal, Administrative Assistant, start date: September 8th
- b. Open Searches:
 - i. Finance Assistant (re-opened)
 - ii. Library Sustainability Associate & Communications Specialist
 - 1. We have reimagined the job description for this position based on input received from the Dyson Foundation-funded experience with PR consultants from Impact PR & Communications.
 - 2. In recognition of the large workload shifted to the Outreach & EDI Specialist in light of the resignation of the Library Sustainability Associate & Communications Specialist and the work to cover work in the absence of an Administrative Assistant, and now to help with onboarding a new Administrative Assistant, you will see a temporary salary adjustment in the Personnel Actions attachment.
- c. Vinnie McCombs is retiring from MHLS after almost 10 years of service. Vinnie has been a true asset to our organization. He will be greatly missed.
- a. Staff milestones in 2023:
 - i. Nina Acosta, 10 years

- ii. Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, 25 years
 - iii. Laurie Shedrick, 15 years
- d. We have contracted with Visions Human Resource Services, LLC to help with our HR policies and procedures. We will have unlimited access to an HR professional to answer questions, evaluation our current policy and procedures, and ensure we are on top of recent changes to federal and state employment laws.

3. Facility

- a. The 2021 insurance claim with the Valley Courier driver who damaged the railing on the front entrance ramp has been settled.
- b. Roof & Solar Project
 - i. Bid Opening responses are being vetted.
 - ii. State Aid for Library Construction application has been drafted. This can fund up to 50% of our total project costs less any incentives we are able to obtain from the state and federal government.
- c. The Pollinator Garden installation will begin October 4th, 2023.
- d. *Action Requested* - No Trespass Order: This year we have experienced a sharp increase in the number of unhoused folks camping out on our property overnight. This has led to numerous calls to the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department. The police department is recommending a “No Trespass Affidavit” be filed with them to allow for proactive monitoring of our property after hours. Please see the document under New Business for more information.

4. Memo of Understanding Development Update:

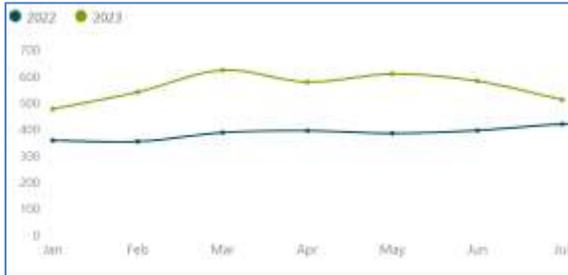
- a. The System Services Advisory Committee has approved a fourth draft that will once again go to county director groups for their input. This draft will also be provided to the MHLS Executive Committee for their input. Recent changes included clarification of terms, further detail in the review schedule post-approval, ensuring parity between MHLS and member library responsibilities. The goal is to retain the “Good Neighbor” mentality our libraries currently exhibit and ensure what is working about the MHLS-Member Library relationship is preserved.

5. Technology Operations

- a. Vega Discover Launch: MHLS staff have been hard at work as development partnered with our ILS vendor, Innovative, to create a new discovery platform that will replace Encore as our library catalog. With only a few more items to fix, we feel we are ready for a soft launch of the [new catalog](#) to member library staff. [Training](#), both online and three in person sessions, has been scheduled September-October and on demand training modules through the MHLS Training on Demand platform are under development. MHLS staff is also working on a “[Launch Kit](#)” to help members advertise the new catalog to the public. The public launch date will be discussed by the System Services Advisory Committee at their October meeting. Both Encore

and Vega Discover will be available for 30 days before Encore is turned off for the public.

- b. Tech Ops Ticketing System: In 2020 we invested in ticketing software to better help MHLS staff manage, track, and report on tech support tickets submitted by member libraries and MHLS staff. At our request, member libraries have been moving away from emailing staff and now use the ticketing system almost exclusively which speeds up response time and allows for trends to be spotted across the Tech Ops team. During the pandemic, our support ticket rate just about doubled. The volume of tickets continues to grow at just under 25% in years since.



By the Numbers: Q1-Q2 2023

- 87.2% 1 resolved with “one touch”
- 82% resolved under 1 hour
- 96% resolved the same day they are received
- Total: 3,442 tickets solved; 2 unresolved related to equipment

The tickets are overwhelmingly related to Sierra and the bulk of those are answered by our Cataloging Team, headed up by Nina Acosta. Our tickets range from quick expertise taps to full-on projects. We also manage equipment purchases, support Sierra installation and access issues, as well as printing. “The MHLS Technology Operations team is an incredible assembly of individual expertise and experience,” said Laurie Shedrick, MHLS Assistant Director and Technology Operations Manager, “Our ticketing system helps us to not only divide the work for efficiency, but we each have full view of all tickets and often cross lines to complete tickets in each other’s areas when we can.”

6. Library Sustainability

- a. Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley
- i. Thanks to an investment in this program by Senator Michele Hinchey, Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson, and Senator Skoufis, we are in talks to bring back the [Digital Navigators program](#) with our existing partners the Southeastern Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) and the Ramapo Catskill Library System. The Westchester Library System will be joining the program as well this time around.
 - ii. The legislators’ investments are specific to their district so to ensure parity across the system’s service area MHLS will need to financially contribute to the operation of this program and sponsorship of libraries within the areas with no legislative investment. The Finance Committee discussed this and has made a recommendation for your consideration at this meeting.
- b. The Library of Local Project:
- i. Citizen Preparedness Corps: With severe weather events becoming more frequent and more extreme, it is more important than ever that New Yorkers are prepared for disasters. We have partnered with First Lieutenant Kyle Kilner of the New York National Guard to bring the NYS Citizen Preparedness Corps training program to six of [The Library](#)

[of Local](#) locations throughout the Mid-Hudson Library System. The NY Citizen Preparedness Training Program teaches residents to have the tools and resources to prepare for any type of disaster, respond accordingly and recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions. The training course will provide an introduction to responding to a natural or man-made disaster. Participants will be advised on how to properly prepare for any disaster, including developing a family emergency plan and stocking up on emergency supplies. **Training session dates, times and locations** are as follows:

1. Wednesday, September 27 at 6:00pm
Where: NorthEast Millerton Library, 75 Main St, Millerton, NY 12546
 2. Wednesday, October 3 at 3:00pm
Where: Millbrook Library, 3 Friendly Lane, Millbrook, NY 12545
 3. Wednesday, October 3rd at 3:00pm
Where: Mountain Top Library, 6093 Main St, Tannersville, NY 12485
 4. Wednesday, October 25th at 5:00pm
Where: Roeliff Jansen Community Library (Ancram, Copake, Hillsdale), 9091 State Route 22, Hillsdale, NY 12529
 5. Friday, November 10th at 5:00pm
Where: Claverack Library, 629 NY-23B, Claverack, NY 12513
 6. Thursday, November 16th at 6:30pm
Where: Morton Memorial Library & Community House (Rhinecliff), 82 Kelly Street, Rhinecliff, NY
- ii. We have partnered with Sustainable Hudson Valley and the Ramapo Catskill Library System to bring [placemaking](#) expert, [Cynthia Nikitin](#) in for a webinar for member libraries on October 19th, "[Libraries and Community Resilience Hubs.](#)"
- c. The MHLS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Series continues this fall with [Bystander Intervention in Public Workplaces](#) on September 14th and [Conflict De-escalation in the Workplace](#) on October 12th.
- d. The Library Horizons Series continues on September 21st with "[Understanding Artificial Intelligence: What librarians need to know,](#)" with Alison Macrina, director of the [award-winning Library Freedom Project](#).
- e. Trustee Education for Fall 2023
- i. On August 10th a message was sent to all member library trustees and directors with a reminder about the new Trustee Education Requirement that also provided links to all upcoming trustee education events that meet the requirement. Laura Crisci, MHLS Library Sustainability Coordinator also has issued a "[Statement on Trustee Education Certificates](#)" to help our 600+ trustees document their attendance.
 - ii. The [MHLS Trustee Education Series for the Fall](#) was designed around the scheduling input received from trustees throughout the system.

- iii. We will issue 30 minutes of trustee continuing education credit for those trustees that attend the annual meeting to hear keynote speaker Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the Director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom and Executive Director of the Freedom to Read Foundation.
- iv. The Trustee Handbook Book Club series continues this year with:
 - 1. [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access & Justice on October 17th with Freddy Garcia](#)
 - 2. [Financing & Managing Construction Projects on December 19th with Jerry Nichols](#)
- v. All online trustee education events are recorded and available through the [MHLS Training on Demand platform for Trustees](#).
- vi. I have completed the new edition of the Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State. It is going to the printing house this month and should be in-hand by November 2023. We will design training around introducing what is new in this edition for the first quarter next year.
- f. All member libraries have access to the currently running [Sustainable Libraries: Resources and Webinars for Climate Action](#). This is a series of webinars I am presenting or moderating. They are recorded and archived along with an introductory article and related resources on WebJunction's website.

7. Website Redesign Project

- a. Our new tagline, decided upon after our experience with Impact PR & Communications, but drafted by our very own Kerstin Cruger, Outreach & EDI Specialist, will be front in center in our new home page design: **"66 Libraries, 1 Great Community."**
- b. The research phase of the website redesign is wrapping up, moving into preliminary design phase. Key design goals include a completely redesigned home page to be PR-focused to appeal to all segments of stakeholders, not just members. This is based on advice from the PR firm, Impact PR & Communications, the firm we hired with a grant from the Dyson Foundation. The Members Resources area of the web site will be fine-tuned based on feedback received from member library directors, staff, trustees and MHLS Staff.

8. Update on **Eleanor Roosevelt Val Kill offer to partner on a Banned Books Club** will be provided at the meeting.

9. Update on the **Town of Union Vale effort to create a new library** will be provided at the meeting.

10. Board Operations

- a. The Annual Membership Meeting is coming up on Friday, October 27th at the Wallace Center of the FDR Presidential Library & Museum in Hyde Park, NY.
 - i. **Action Requested:** Please [use this poll](#) to let us know if you are planning to attend. **There is no charge for MHLS Trustees.**
 - ii. Please help get the word out about this event. This is our first time hosting an in-person annual meeting since the pandemic.

- b. Sexual Harassment Prevention Training: Both forms provided are due to me by September 30th. If you have any questions, please reach out to me, Ken Goldberg, chair of the Board Development Committee, or Barry Ramage, Board President.**
- c. 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](#)
- d. Board-to-Board Visits**
 - i. Reminder: Please coordinate responses to libraries requesting a visit with your peers in the county before individually responding to request 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. Let them know their staff are test driving the new catalog!
 2. Promote the MHLS Annual Membership Meeting on Friday, October 27th
 3. Promote the availability of the MHLS Trustee Education Series, Trustee Handbook Book Club, MHLS Training on Demand Service, and Annual Membership Meeting to help them meet their trustee education requirements: 2 hours annually.

11. Executive Director's Event Participation: July 1 – August 31, 2023

- a. Meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt/Val Kill Historic Site Staff regarding plans for a Banned Book Club
- b. MHLS Committee Chairs, mid-year check-in
- c. New Director Orientation: Chloe Higgins, D.R. Everts Library (Athens)
- d. Consultation: Board President, Tivoli Free Library
- e. Field Visits with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS): Kingston Library, Hudson Area Association Library, Mountain Top Library (Tannersville)
- f. Consultation: Board President, Howland Public Library (Beacon)
- g. Columbia County Library Association (2)
- h. Meeting with Tessa Killian, Director of the Southeastern Library Resources Council re: Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley Program (2)
- i. Presentation: [Sustainability 101, WebJunction](#)
- j. Putnam County Library Association (2)
- k. Bid Opening, Roof Replacement & Solar Installation Project
- l. Consultation: Ivy Gocker, Director, Woodstock Public Library District
- m. Consultation: Megan Fritche, Library Manager, Town of Union Vale
- n. MHLS Finance Committee
- o. National Climate Action Strategy Planning Meeting (Sustainable Librarians Initiative-ALA)

- p. Meeting with Francis Rees, Library Specialist, NYS Division of Library Development re: Town of Union Vale
- q. Advisory Board, Sustainable Libraries Initiative
- r. Ulster County Library Association
- s. [Presentation: Strategic Planning, Trustee Handbook Book Club](#)
- t. NYLA Legislative Committee
- u. Presentation: [Climate Action Planning \(Part 1\), WebJunction](#)
- v. Meeting with Grace Riario, Executive Director, Ramapo Catskill Library System; Terry Kirchner, Executive Director, Westchester Library System, Tessa Killian, Executive Director, Southeastern Library Resources Council re: Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley Project Relaunch
- w. MHLS System Services Advisory Committee
- x. Meeting with Carol Fortier, Director, Beekman Library; Mary De Bellis, Director, LaGrange Library Association, and Courtney Tsahalís, Director, Millbrook Library re: Town of Union Vale
- y. Consultation: Amy Smith, Director, Dover Plains Library
- z. Consultation: Lynn Ruggiero, Board President, Hyde Park Public Library District

12. Next month it will be announced that the Sustainable Libraries Initiative and the American Library Association are partnering to create a **National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries**. I will be leading this project September 2023 – June 2024.

13. Helping in Hawaii: Stacey Aldrich (no relation), the Hawaii State Librarian reports that all staff who work at the Lahaina Public Library are safe. The library facility in Lahaina was reduced to walls and a sign, they will work with the community to rebuild. Sadly, the loss of family, friends, businesses, and cultural heritage is great. Stacey reports that the best thing to do right now is to focus on the people. If folks want to provide direct support, the best way is to go to <https://www.mauinuistrong.info>. There are organizations that are listed that will provide direct support.