

**Mohawk Valley Library System  
Director's Report  
January - February 2021**

**Administration & Governance**

Thank you to all who have participated in advocacy activities. There is more on advocacy later in this report. This section is about the results; the proof that advocacy works! We have begun receiving the 20% aid that was withheld in 2020. We should receive all of it within the next couple of months. And the outlook for 2021 aid is much better than it was when we were developing the 2021 budget. The budget amendments that we do later in the year, when all of this shakes out, will be to increase the budget and get rid of the budgeted deficit. We had to circle the wagons for a while, but it looks like we can now start moving forward again.

One of the most effective things we can do to get moving forward is to structure the open consultant position to deliver what our libraries need, and to get an outstanding person in that position. We have begun discussions among the staff on developing a position description, and plan to have a description approved and to advertise the opening by June. At this point we are looking at a position that combines technology, analyzing and using data, and working with libraries to expand services and impact.

The current MVLS new staff – Heather Dickerson and Kate Clingan – are settling in and getting ready to put their stamp on MVLS services to member libraries. More on Heather's activities is in the Outreach and Youth Services sections below. You will all meet Kate at the board meeting; she will be taking the minutes.

The next iteration of the MVLS Plan of Service is due to the state in October. It is somewhat sobering to reflect that this is already the third MVLS Plan of Service that I will have submitted to the Education Department. Five years ago, our big emphasis was on communications and community engagement; and hiring Wade was a direct result of our planning. This time around, I hope to make the new position a part of an overall effort to help our libraries move forward.

It is time to start planning for the 2021 MVLS Annual Meeting. According to the MVLS Bylaws, we need to have the annual meeting before June 1. In spite of the improving pandemic situation, gathering 60 - 80 people for a banquet doesn't seem like a viable option. We will discuss the possibilities at the board meeting.

**Automation and Resource Sharing**

The JA Council will meet on March 10. One item for discussion is the JA Agreement that every MVLS and SALS member library board is asked to approve each year. Sara Dallas, Michele Largeteau and I have been working on editing and updating the agreement. A copy, highlighted where wording changes were made, will be included with the board materials. It will be an item for action at the board meeting.

JA has been working for months on patron self-registration, which means providing a way for individuals to sign up for a library card from anywhere, using the online catalog. This would make it possible for people who don't already have a library card to be able to borrow e-resources, for example. It could also become a good way to recruit more library users. The New York Public Library has been doing this

for years. Anyone – including you – can sign up for a New York Public Library card without ever going to New York City. Our goal – and we are getting close – is to make that a reality locally as well.

As of March 1, MVLS and SALS have reduced the delivery quarantine from 96 hours to 48 hours. There is tremendous variability in libraries around the country on the need to quarantine materials, but the general trend is to reduce quarantine times, making our action part of the larger trend.

With your approval of the Central Library Plans at the January board meeting, and the promise of receiving the full 2020 aid, MVLS is making the initial 50% CLDA payment to the Schenectady County Public Library.

Sharon O'Brien has been working with MVLS libraries to develop standards for the loaning of Chromebooks and hotspots. We have several libraries pursuing this new service.

Sharon was also successful in negotiating a solution to the e-magazine problem that I shared with you in January. Libraries now have access to a much larger group of magazines at a price that is in line with what we paid previous to 2019, all within the Overdrive platform. Use has increased.

### **Outreach & Adult Services**

Heather Dickerson has been working with Schoharie County libraries, and by extension with all of our libraries, in helping libraries develop a role in helping people register for COVID vaccines. This is building on the work that Schenectady has done in helping with vaccination appointments. Heather reports:

One take-away from our initial conversations, which have included a Meg Parsons from Schoharie County Office for the Aging, is that small libraries aren't fully equipped to welcome large numbers of people into library buildings to make appointments. Staff time, computers, and space are the big barriers. The directors at Sharon Springs, Cobleskill, Middleburg, and Schoharie agreed that one area where libraries can help is by offering education and connection. To that end, I've created (and am still creating) tutorials that walk appointment seekers through the process and ins-and-outs of finding vaccine appointments at area pharmacies. This does not duplicate the work being done by the Schoharie county health department, which is connecting pre-registered seniors to vaccine appointments available through county health vaccine clinics. You can watch videos for making an appointment at [Price Chopper here](#), and at [CVS here](#). There is also a detailed handout for [Price Chopper](#) and [CVS](#). Because the vaccine appointment process asks a lot of questions, I've made worksheets for both [Price Chopper](#) and [CVS](#) that folks can fill out in advance. This is especially helpful if someone is making an appointment on behalf of someone else.

I'm working on tutorials for Walgreens and Hannaford. The group will continue to have conversations about what libraries can offer and how to share that information with communities. We are compiling a "resources roundup" that can be linked off of any library's website and/or social media.

Heather is also working on the Adult Literacy grant. Virtual programs are happening in Schoharie County.

## **Youth Services**

The 2020 Summer Reading Program is underway. We are hoping to have better participation in 2021, both because of reduced restrictions, but also because everyone is getting better at socially distanced programs. Heather reports about summer reading activities:

MVLS once again cohosted our popular Summer Reading Workshop with Upper Hudson Library System. We pivoted from an in-person event to an all-day Zoom workshop. We had 90+ participants from libraries across MVLS, UHLS, and SALS. Five one-hour sessions covered topics related to planning a summer reading program with manageable expectations; virtual programs; outdoor programs; services for children; and services for teens. Much thought and planning went into making the day as hands-on and engaging as possible. Participants enjoyed break-out room discussions with special themed snacks and time for networking between sessions. We also offered a “dessert” activity during each session: something fun and light that librarians could use in their own programming. Examples of dessert include “Coding Chicken Dance” (where folks got up and followed a sequence of dance moves), and a “Reverse Scavenger Hunt” (participants had one minute to gather items around them and earned points if they were on the facilitator’s list). Feedback from the workshop has been positive, indicating that participants appreciated the ways the virtual workshop engaged them through activities and discussions, and also offered practical ideas for programs and events.

Heather is also working on several ideas for the Family Literacy grant to help libraries with virtual programming.

## **Member Services**

Upcoming meetings and workshops include the following:

March 4 – Director’s Meeting

March 10 – JA Council Meeting

April 1 – Director’s Meeting

It is state annual report season. I have been assisting libraries with the new questions and with the challenges with the data in such an unusual year. It is a good opportunity to get connected to what has happened in our libraries in the past year, and to help libraries use numbers to tell stories of library impact.

The MVLS 2021 awards applications have been sent to members, and are available on the website at: <https://www.mvls.info/insidemvls/awards/>. The application deadline is March 31.

I have been working with several libraries on planning, funding and chartering issues and there is good news to report. Canajoharie has a new library director starting on March 15. Maria Cancro most recently worked at the North Onondaga Public Library. She will be moving to the area. I also continue to work with Canajoharie as they seek to clarify their charter.

MVLS staff is working with Schoharie's new director, Don LaPlant, helping him make use of MVLS' resources and assistance. Schoharie's charter amendment has been approved by the Regents, expanding their official service area to the Schoharie Central School District. There is a lot of change happening in Schoharie, and sometimes that is difficult, but it is very good to see them grow and become more professional.

I met with the Sharon Springs board to provide information on planning and funding, and also finally presented the 2020 MVLS Wusterbarth Award to Regina Gilbert. Sharon Springs is looking to increase their budget, and maybe to increase their service area.

Wade continues to work with Cobleskill's Community Library on community engagement and planning. The next steps will involve us guiding them through the development of a new Plan of Service. It has been very encouraging to see them successfully host community forums virtually.

I have been in discussions with the Division of Library Development on the Schenectady County Public Library and their issues with opening, staffing and funding. As an outgrowth of receiving state aid, central libraries are required to meet Maintenance of Effort (MOE), which means that local public funding is required to be no less than 95% of the previous year. Failure to meet this standard can result in a 25% reduction in state aid. If a central library's MOE failure affects the overall MVLS library local public funding, it can also result in a 25% reduction in system state aid. SCPL last had a maintenance of effort issue in 2013, and MVLS was successful in avoiding a crisis. I am hopeful that we can do that again.

### **Advocacy & Awareness**

The Virtual NYLA Library Advocacy Day was a success. Thanks are due to Wade for his work on recruiting participants, scheduling and training. It wasn't the same as an in-person visit, but it also allowed for expanded participation and more locally focused discussions with some of our representatives. We are working to find ways to make this model an ongoing addition to the more traditional mass gathering of librarians in Albany. Both are useful and have a place in keeping our representatives informed and energized on library issues.

The most positive aspect of these advocacy visits has become the near universal support we get back from our representatives. In the past, advocacy visits could be challenging, with representatives that had no background or interest in the library story and library need. Now, virtually all, and even all of the brand new representatives, know the library issues and needs before we say anything. Legislators speak knowledgeably about library funding; and also closely follow issues like broadband access and COVID vaccines.

The Foundation is working on a new fundraising initiative called Library Giving Day. This was developed by the Foundation for the Seattle Public Library three years ago. It is now a national appeal used by libraries and library systems around the country. Library Giving Day is held annually on the Wednesday of National Library Week, which makes it April 7, 2021. The Foundation will be doing a mail, email and social media campaign. Please share and respond if you see these. For more information on the national Library Giving Day initiative see: [www.librarygivingday.org](http://www.librarygivingday.org). Our specific Foundation information is at: <https://mvlslibraryfoundation.wordpress.com/library-giving-day-april-7-2021/>.

## Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

1/5/2021	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
1/6/2021	MVLS Member Library Directors Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
1/7/2021	Jeanne M. Irwin Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library MVLS Member Library Directors Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library Erica Freudenberger, Southern Adirondack Library System Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie
1/8/2021	Steve Bachman, Four County Library System
1/11/2021	John Naple Jeanne M. Irwin Eric Laughlin, Council Services Plus Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development Division of Library Development, NYSED MVLS Board of Trustees Gene Nescot, NYS Deferred Compensation Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie Mary Fellows, Upper Hudson Library System
1/12/2021	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library PULISDO
1/13/2021	William Levering JA Council
1/14/2021	Division of Library Development, NYSED Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie
1/15/2021	Capital District Library Council MVLS Board of Trustees MVLS Member Library Directors Tim Burke, Upper Hudson Library System
1/19/2021	William P. Leitch Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library
1/21/2021	MVLS Board of Trustees Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
1/22/2021	Cheryl Cufari Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library

	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
1/25/2021	Edward Asselin
	John Naple
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
1/26/2021	Tim Burke, Upper Hudson Library System
1/27/2021	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library
1/28/2021	Cheryl Cufari
	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library
1/29/2021	Mal Martin
	Particia Clancy
	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
	HFM School Library System Council
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
2/2/2021	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
2/3/2021	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
2/4/2021	Capital District Library Council
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
2/5/2021	Foundation Board
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
2/8/2021	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
2/9/2021	Joanne Mickle
	Katherine Hawkins
	John Naple
	Mal Martin
	Judi Steiger, Fort Hunter Free Library
2/10/2021	Jane Borrelli
	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
2/11/2021	Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library
	Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie
2/16/2021	Don LaPlant, Schoharie Free Library

2/17/2021 Kathryn McCary, Law Office of Kathryn McCary  
Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library

2/18/2021 Division of Library Development, NYSED

2/22/2021 MVLS Member Library Directors  
Peter Oberacker, New York State Senate  
NYLA  
Edward Asselin, SUNY Cobleskill

2/23/2021 Beverly Osborne  
John Naple  
Peter Oberacker. New York State Senate  
MVLS Member Library Directors  
Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library

2/25/2021 Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library  
Linda Conroy, Gloversville Public Library  
MVLS Trustee Education Session – Sharon Springs  
Michelle Hinchey, New York State Senate  
NYALS

2/26/2021 Chris Tague, New York State Assembly  
Robert Smullen, New York State Assembly  
James Tedisco, New York State Senate