

Mohawk Valley Library System

Director's Report

October 2021

Administration & Governance

The proposed 2022 MVLS Operating Budget will be on the MVLS website with the rest of the documents for the November meeting. The annual budget hearing will be at the beginning of the November 18 board meeting. With one exception, the proposed budget shows little change from the current approved 2021 budget. That exception is that the extra state aid that was received in 2021 will not be repeated in 2022. This extra aid includes the 2020 aid that was held until 2021, and the CARES act funding. With those income items removed, and the associated expense lines adjusted, the only significant changes in the budget are the increases in salaries and in contract costs like delivery. We will discuss the proposed budget in detail at the budget hearing.

We continue to have interviews to fill the Technology and Growth Consultant position. One of our finalists has dropped out. I expect to have two recommendations for you at the November meeting. The first will be to modify the job title and description to Technology and Growth Specialist. A copy of the amended description will be with the meeting materials. I also hope to come to you with a recommendation for a candidate to fill the amended position.

The staff and Personnel Committee are meeting separately to work on coming to an agreement on the salary and benefits for 2022. We will discuss the salary proposal as a part of the budget hearing and executive session, and will also discuss small modifications to the Personnel Manual. One of these will be to add Juneteenth to the holiday schedule.

The planning process continues. The state has approved our submitted plan of service. This includes the goals and objectives for the eleven required elements, as well as the Free Direct Access Plan and the Central Library Plan. So, from the Education Department's perspective, our planning for the next five years is done.

But in another way, we are still at the beginning. We continue to work with Elissa Kane to develop compelling answers to the two overarching questions: "What did our members want to tell us?" and "What are we going to do about it?" In one sense, the answers to those questions are really communications issues for MVLS. My expectation is that we will be presenting our planning documents for your approval at the January board meeting; and that this may end up being an annual exercise. In other words, I think it would be healthy for us to develop a tradition of approving annual goals and objectives each year.

A second outcome of the planning process will be to work to develop a more collegial working environment among all MVLS stakeholders. The concept is to put less emphasis on MVLS providing services (of course we are still going to provide services) but to concentrate more on working to create conditions that promote all library supporters in our four counties working together to achieve shared goals.

We have received the final payment of the CARES Act funding, and continue to work with CDLC on the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding. The current iteration of that project includes digital equity training for library staff, work on making library websites more accessible, and a marketing campaign –

similar to what was done a year ago on our Census 2020 project – promoting how libraries provide access to digital resources and internet connectivity.

Automation and Resource Sharing

The JA Council meets on November 10. Issues include searching for a new staff member for computer support, continued efforts to keep the network secure, ongoing issues with long wait times for new computers, changes in telecommunications and the virtual library card sign-up.

One new aspect of cyber security is data breach insurance. JA has been researching available coverage, and has determined that, while SALS can get coverage for the JA resources that live in the SALS building, JA cannot get coverage on behalf of member libraries. Libraries that feel the need for this coverage need to get their own cyber insurance.

JA is also looking into regular penetration testing and possible vendors for providing regular training to all users in avoiding risky behaviors while using the JA network. This training will augment the existing security policy that all users need to read and affirm each year.

The target date for beginning virtual library card sign-up is January 2022. We have been working toward this for a long time, so it is good to see it come to fruition.

Another issue that has needed attention for years is the growing discontinuity in how library internet access is provided and paid for. A JA financial surplus is presenting an opportunity for again treating all libraries the same. The plan is to reduce library fees while at the same time putting all telecommunications charges in individual library budgets rather than in the JA budget. This will effect seven MVLS libraries.

Outreach, Adult and Youth Services

The Adult Literacy and Family Literacy grants have been rolled into Coordinated Outreach funding; and serving a new target population of folks birth through age 21 has been added to that charge. MVLS will continue to provide those services, with greatly simplified record keeping and reporting.

We are finally beginning to resume library services to the Hale Creek Correctional facility. Heather connected with Deputy Close and staff person Jackie Gibson about getting books ordered and delivered to the library. Hale Creek has escaped the most recent round of prison closures. We have also continued ordering materials for the Fulton and Montgomery County Jails.

MVLS continues to distribute giveaway books to community partners: YMCA Lally Center Early Learning Center in Scotia; Johnstown's Food Pantry Little Free Library; and Little Free Libraries in Glenville and Fonda.

The twice-monthly Youth Services Meetups are popular among staff and supervisors. The idea generation and camaraderie in the informal meetings are a real chance for folks to develop ideas and share best practices. Attendees are from Johnstown, Schenectady, Fort Plain, Schoharie, and Northville.

The Tech Savvy Meeting was a chance for Jennie Mosher to share ideas and get some feedback about planned programs that fall within the Adult Literacy purvue. It was suggested that MVLS may perhaps purchase some tech items for virtual programs that could be loaned, like an overhead "hover-cam" and a swivel microphone to pick up everyone in the room. Attendees were from Cobleskill and Schoharie.

And finally, Heather reports on an initiative that fits in well with our strategic planning. “Something new I tried was creating a “Bat Week” toolkit. I created a list of resources about Bat Week (held the last week in October), and shared it with member libraries. The result was that several of our libraries shared information on social media and hosted bat-themed storytime programs. It was an experiment to see how libraries would receive and use turn-key programming materials; it was successful enough that I’ll try it again”.

Member Services

We had excellent participation in the MVLS continuing education grants to promote participation in the annual NYLA conference. We awarded grants to support attendance by five libraries. Most chose to participate in the virtual conference at the end of October. I did attend the in-person conference in Syracuse on November 4 and 5. It was good to get back to an in-person event. NYLA and the convention center did a good job with presenting a safe and effective event.

Advocacy & Awareness

The governor has signed another library bill, this one consolidating several aid lines and simplifying reporting on projects like the literacy grants. Changes have also been made to the construction program, making the popular 25% match permanent, and adding a year to the calendar for completing projects. There are a couple of additional legislature approved bills awaiting executive action.

Please support the Foundation for Mohawk Valley Libraries Stay at Home & READ virtual fundraiser. The event is scheduled for Friday, November 12. Please be on the watch for social media and other publicity, and promote this event as you can.

The Foundation fundraisers provide the funding for grants for member libraries. The next round of grants will be for advocacy and community engagement efforts by member libraries. The application deadline is December 31. Approval of those grant amounts will be an agenda item for the January MVLS board meeting.

NYLA Library Advocacy Day for 2022 has been set for March 2. It may seem a long way off, but it is never too early to plan for advocacy. The effort is likely to be largely virtual, though there may be opportunities for a reduced in-person element.

Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

10/1/2021	MVLS Member Library Directors Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
10/4/2021	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
10/5/2021	MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Staff
10/6/2021	Particia Clancy Mary Finch, Frothingham Free Library

10/12/2021	HFM School Library System Council Judith Kelly PULISDO
10/13/2021	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System Capital District Library Council Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development Nicole Hauser, Gloversville Public Library Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
10/14/2021	Beverly Osborne MVLS Staff
10/15/2021	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Capital District Library Council MVLS Board of Trustees
10/18/2021	Elissa Kane, Kane & Lekakis MVLS Member Library Directors Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
10/19/2021	Charles Reed Foundation Board MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Staff
10/20/2021	Capital District Library Council Glenn Winter, T.M. Byxbee, CPA, PC Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
10/21/2021	MVLS Board of Trustees Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
10/22/2021	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Eric Laughlin, Council Services Plus Foundation Board Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
10/25/2021	Jeanne M. Irwin Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council MVLS Member Library Directors Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
10/26/2021	Jeanne M. Irwin MVLS Member Library Directors
10/28/2021	NYLA Virtual Conference
10/29/2021	NYLA Virtual Conference