

Mohawk Valley Library System

Director's Report

April & May, 2022

Administration & Governance

We have several building issues that have been neglected in the last several lean years that we now have an opportunity to address. At the same time, while MVLS has established working relationships with contractors for many building issues – heating & cooling, security, roofing – we have not developed that kind of relationship with a general contractor. I am hopeful that the proposal that I sent to the board from Scotia contractor Modern Domains will help solve both of those issues. The three initial jobs are as follows: repair & painting of the rear wall, repair and repainting of the window & door trim, and repair & cleaning of the railing system at the front entry. We will discuss this further at the June board meeting.

Other building issues also on the docket for attention this year are re-grading to keep melt water away from the building, water-tight thresholds on the garage doors, and the building sign.

We are still waiting for actual state aid numbers for this year. While the overall library aid was increased by 5.8%, in this year, because the new census figures may play a role in the aid calculations, that probably won't mean a 5.8% increase in MVLS' aid numbers. State construction aid, for example, was held steady between 2021 and 2022; but the MVLS allocation was reduced by 1.66% due to population loss in our counties. There is some confusion over how that will affect other aid categories. We will experience a nice increase, we just don't know how nice.

At the June board meeting we will continue our discussion on the MVLS Annual Meeting. Here are a few points to consider. The success of the meeting depends on participation, so there needs to be a draw, a tangible benefit for member library directors & trustees to participate. Second our goal is to have the meeting serve as a vehicle for collaboration and continuing education. We are developing a format that combines those elements, which we will discuss more at the June meeting.

I would also like to further discuss the concept of an annual board retreat. This is really a way to make planning an expected, regular part of what MVLS does. I will be starting a new tradition on that front at the June meeting by using my time to review what MVLS is doing related to our 4 goals. I am envisioning the annual board retreat as a way to facilitate member feedback and discussions, and to encourage member libraries to also make planning a regular, scheduled part of their board's year.

Having the MVLS annual meeting in the fall, and a board retreat in the spring of each year will be easier if we alter the regular MVLS board meeting schedule, moving to a regular every-other month schedule with meetings in January, March, May, July, September and November. That will also leave the intervening months as possible times for more regular committee meetings.

Finally, on the subject of meetings, the new Open Meetings Law provisions are now in effect, making in-person meetings again the norm for all library (and system!) board meetings. In order to continue to have an option for virtual attendance for trustees with what the law terms "extraordinary circumstances", the board should consider passing the resolution included with the meeting materials. With these changes to Open Meetings Law, all library board meetings must be in-person and must have a quorum of trustees participating in-person.

Automation and Resource Sharing

The next meeting of the JA Council is scheduled for July 13. JA will be hiring a new staff person to replace now-retired Mary Hanley. The consortium continues to experience supply challenges with computers and components, with the current acute challenge being routers.

Here is some additional summary data to continue the discussions we have had on central library funding. For the central library funding currently controlled by MVLS, we spend \$40,000 of CBA on Overdrive e-resources, which is about 36% of overall annual spending on e-resources. That results in over 150,000 annual circulation transactions, with 40% of those transactions taking place outside of Schenectady County. For comparison, the \$78,000 spend annual on the CBA collection at Schenectady results in about 40,000 annual circulation transactions, less than 5% of which go to borrowers in the other three counties. We can do better.

The concept is to spend more of the funding directly through MVLS, for resources that provide more benefits to the system as a whole. It is important to point out that this will also benefit Schenectady by providing additional resources that will not be a part of the SCPL expense budget. At the same time, it removes a crutch used by the county to keep local public funding lower than it should be.

Outreach, Adult and Youth Services

MVLS Youth Services workshops are back, with the “STEM/Start With Science Playdate” and Joyce Laiosa youth readers advisory workshops both held in May. Heather also provided an MVLS presence at the Cobleskill-Richmondville Battle of the Books. This event illustrated the Community Library’s excellent community engagement.

Heather has continued the summer programming mini-grants. This year, 20 libraries and branches received funding (\$500 each maximum) that supports specific presenters, general programming supplies, or specific equipment that is beyond the library budget. Heather is also continuing to offer hands-on help with some library summer programs.

Ordering continues for collections at the Fulton and Montgomery county jails. Their wish was for books to support addiction recovery and mental health support, plus renewals of magazine subscriptions. They’re trying some book groups with multiple copies of titles.

Montgomery County Literacy Council is back up and running. Heather provided them with 25 copies of our Job Search Toolkit for their users, with the hope to use more. They’ve also expressed interest in the Tech Savvy program; MVLS will keep sharing that information with them. They’ve shared that they’re so glad to have our continued support as they reopen after two years.

Heather has been restocking Little Free Libraries in our region, distributing 75 books.

Mary Carrier has been providing classes, scheduling and coordinating contractor-provided classes, and promoting the Tech Savvy project, making contact, most recently, with Laurie Bargstedt from Hamilton Fulton Montgomery BOCES. Laurie is interested in our Tech Savvy program and shared our info with her contacts. Working with member libraries and using social media is building interest in the project.

Mary has submitted several grant applications to regional organization to provide funding for technology equipment to help MVLS and the libraries provide technology programming for communities.

Both Heather and Mary continue to spend time in direct contact with member library staff, including in-person and virtual contacts.

Member Services

It is library budget vote season, and this year provides a great illustration of the efficacy of the consistent, persistent messaging that MVLS has engaged in for years about library budget votes. We will review more data at the June meeting; but the summary is that we had a majority of MVLS member libraries requesting significant budget increases, and the voters passed all with comfortable majorities. It is really wonderful to see libraries moving beyond the fear and inertia that keeps library budgets low. Certainly, we still have libraries that struggle with inadequate funding; but nearly all recognize the need to educate and trust their voters with library budget needs, and are on a solid path to making their finances secure. There is one budget vote still to go: Johnstown on June 22. Congratulations to all of the MVLS libraries with successful budget votes.

An event held in early June at the Amsterdam Free Library provided another demonstration of library community engagement similar to Heather's experience at the Cobleskill Battle of the Books. Congressman Paul Tonko requested a meeting of library and community leaders to create a case for federal local projects funding for the library construction project. It was great to see many institutions and individuals in the community praise the vision of Director Nicole Hemsley and the library for the planned construction and associated expanded services.

The library construction grant application is open for the 2022 year. We have several libraries interested in projects. MVLS will have \$885,064 to allocate in this round.

The Foundation annual presentation has been scheduled for Tuesday, June 21. Like last year, this will be a Zoom panel discussion featuring staff members from 3 libraries: Amsterdam, Cobleskill and Gloversville. The title is "Libraries Finding New Ways to Serve Communities." We hope this type of sharing becomes something that happens more than once a year.

Advocacy & Awareness

There remains one library related bill that will affect MVLS libraries; that of creating a path for Association Libraries to participate in the state retirement system. This could greatly improve the ability of these libraries to attract and retain qualified staff. The bill is unlikely to pass this year, but we hope to create enough interest to keep it in the pipeline for future enactment.

I attended the NYLA Spring Fling continuing education and advocacy event on May 17. Much of the discussion centered on legal issues, library materials challenges, and advocacy efforts.

The CDLC ARPA grant project has had a very welcome schedule extension. There are two aspects to the project. One provides assistance with library websites, and the other is a marketing project designed to boost public knowledge of digital resources available in public libraries. Mary and Sharon are working with the website design part of the project.

Applications are now open for the summer round of the Foundation/MVLS Advocacy Grants. Upcoming Foundation fundraisers include the July 25 and September 26 golf tournaments.

Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

4/1/2022	Capital District Library Council
4/4/2022	Rosemary Barger Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Foundation Board MVLS Trustee Education Session – Sharon Springs
4/5/2022	Judi Steiger, Fort Hunter Free Library Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library MVLS Member Library Directors
4/6/2022	MVLS Member Library Board Presidents
4/8/2022	Foundation Board
4/11/2022	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library MVLS Trustee Education Session - Northville Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
4/12/2022	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library MVLS Staff Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
4/14/2022	MVLS Member Library Board Presidents MVLS Member Library Directors Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
4/15/2022	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Kathryn McCary, Law Office of Kathryn McCary Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
4/18/2022	Capital District Library Council Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library MVLS Board of Trustees Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
4/19/2022	Robert Weatherby, Johnstown Public Library MVLS Board of Trustees MVLS Member Library Directors
4/20/2022	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
4/21/2022	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Division of Library Development, NYSED MVLS Board of Trustees
4/22/2022	Capital District Library Council
4/25/2022	Rebecca Sokol Capital District Library Council Peter Oberacker, New York State Senate James Tedisco, New York State Senate

	Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
4/26/2022	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie
4/27/2022	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
4/28/2022	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	MVLS Board of Trustees
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library
	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
5/2/2022	Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	MVLS Trustee Education Session - Schoharie
	Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
5/3/2022	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
5/4/2022	Karen Bradley
	MVLS Workshop – Science Playdate
	Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library
	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
5/5/2022	Karen Bradley
	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
5/9/2022	Karen Bradley
	Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	JA Council
	JA PAC Steering Committee
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
5/10/2022	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
5/11/2022	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
5/13/2022	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Capital District Library Council
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
5/15/2022	Jennie Mosher, Schoharie Free Library
5/16/2022	Capital District Library Council
	MVLS Member Library Directors
5/17/2022	NYLA Spring Workshops & Advocacy
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
5/18/2022	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library

5/19/2022 Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
Division of Library Development, NYSED
Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library

5/20/2022 Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library
Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
Foundation Event Committee
Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library

5/23/2022 Foundation Event Committee
Kristi Beedon, HFM BOCES SLS

5/24/2022 Capital District Library Council
Kim Anderson, Division of Library Development
Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library

5/26/2022 Jeanne M. Irwin
MVLS Member Library Directors

5/27/2022 Deb Escobar
Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
Capital District Library Council
Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library

5/31/2022 Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library
Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
Kim Zimmer, The Community Library