

**Mohawk Valley Library System  
Director's Report  
July & August, 2023**

**Empowering Member Libraries with Sound Administration & Governance**

Planning is ongoing for the 2023 MVLS Annual Meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, October 4, 5:30 p.m. at the Canajoharie Library & Arkell Museum. Please plan on attending! The meeting will include a celebration of MVLS libraries' accomplishments including updated library posters and specific recognition of individuals. Of course, that recognition culminates in the awarding of the three MVLS Awards providing special recognition for a library program, a library volunteer and a library staff member. The general format will mirror last year's event with an informal meal, networking and fun, with incentives for library staff and trustees to participate.

State Aid has been received for about half of the aid categories. Now that we have firm numbers, it is time to amend the 2023 budget. Proposed amendments will be included in the board information for the September meeting. On the income side, those amendments include the state aid, updated numbers for grants received, and a substantial increase in library computer purchases. The expense side contains expenses related to those income increases, unforeseen cost increases, some re-allocations, and increases due to year-end anomalies for the Central Library Aid and Local Library Services Aid. For both of those aid categories, we received aid payments at the very end of 2022, so those payments, amounting to \$56,522, happened in 2023, inflating our budget by that amount. That amount reflects the 2023 budgeted deficit; meaning the budgeted deficit is more than covered by the 2022 surplus of \$115,241.

The amended 2023 budget with its actual small surplus, sets MVLS up well for the 2024 budget. With the continuing uncertain future state aid situation, it is important to maintain the healthy fund balance, if we can. The Audit & Finance Committee will hold their annual future-looking budget planning meeting immediately following the September board meeting. The annual multi-year financial forecast will be included in the board meeting information. We will need to schedule a Personnel Committee meeting in October to develop a salaries and benefits proposal for the 2024 budget.

We are also working on migrating to the cloud-based version of QuickBooks, and are taking the opportunity to re-configure our chart of accounts and other data points to better track income and expenses; something that has been a long-term goal. Our current chart of accounts goes back decades, and since it has grown over many years it has become a bit random and bloated. Our goal is to simplify and better align our books with our various reporting requirements and the unified chart of accounts.

Another long-sought-after goal that is coming to fruition is our effort to find a safe, NYS approved investment option for earning more interest. We have looked at a variety of options for improving the abysmal 0.1% rate that our money market accounts and CDARS now earn. The New York Liquid Asset Fund (NYLAF <https://nylaf.org/>) is the answer. Joining NYLAF will be an agenda item at our September meeting. NYLAF has been meeting the investment needs of NYS municipalities and school districts for 25 years; and now they are expending into libraries and library systems. Joining NYLAF has the potential to increase our annual interest earnings 10-fold; from the budgeted \$3,500 to \$35,000.

If you approve my recommendation and vote to join NYLAF, we will also need to amend our investment policies and guidelines to include NYLAF as an approved permissible investment, and to update other language. Proposed amendments will be included in the meeting information.

In addition to the Finance policies, we will also continue to review our Library Collection Policies, which can be found at: <https://www.mvls.info/policies-and-guidelines/>. More information will be covered below under Training, Consultation and Collaboration.

### **Empowering Member Libraries with Automation and Resource Sharing**

The JA Council met on September 13. The JA Council approved a proposed 2024 consortia budget, received updated information on computer orders and computer model sunseting, reviewed the hiring of a new staff person, and discussed a proposal to review and update Polaris settings. The MVLS board will be asked to approve the proposed budget as required by the JA Agreement. A copy will be included in the meeting information.

We continue to work on developing new Central Library services. Member libraries have participated in a poll to help select new digital services. The new system-wide e-services are likely to include a video platform along with a few instructional resources. Other new services will include continuing education for library staff and trustees, and a new floating collection of new and popular materials, to help libraries deal with request queues.

This new floating collection is being developed through a pilot project Sharon O'Brien has set up with the vendor Ingram. The service, which is called InDemand, is designed to help libraries acquire inexpensive extra copies and new materials. MVLS is the initial customer for this product. Sharon is working with JA staff to make this work seamlessly in our Polaris library system.

### **Empowering Member Libraries with Youth, Adult and Outreach Services**

Libraries are currently compiling data for the 2023 Summer Reading Program final report. We do have preliminary results from the collaborative library passport program. 450 passports were picked up, and over 750 library visits – that is, visits to libraries other than the users home library – were made. Twenty-seven individuals/families visited all 14 MVLS member libraries.

Beth is continuing to update, improve and promote the science and STEM kits, developing a new kit called "Fun with Math". Newly compiled circulation statistics show good use of kits over the summer. MVLS is encouraging library participation in the upcoming solar eclipse events and this fall's Great Giveback program. Beth and Sharon have also made contacts that may help restart the Science at the Library project. They also teamed up to apply for a grant to acquire marketing materials to help with contacts and promotion.

Mary has scheduled several classes for her Digital Literacy project. Classes are being done in conjunction with libraries, senior centers and other agencies. Both Mary and Beth are out making community contacts with various agencies. Mary's contacts are in service of the Affordable Connectivity grant. Beth has invited several agencies to an Outreach Advisory Council meeting on September 13. She also continues to contact and provide resources to agencies that can help promote early literacy.

The Hale Creek Correctional Facility is spending some of the accumulated corrections funding on new furniture and supplies for their library. They are also exploring re-starting the former successful writing program.

### **Empowering Member Libraries with Training, Consultation and Collaboration**

MVLS libraries continue to appreciate the value of having informative, easy-to-use, and accessible websites; keeping Mary busy with website work. Over the summer, she has contacted and worked with Fort Plain, Gloversville, Johnstown, Northville and St. Johnsville. She has also highlighted recent trends illustrating the importance of maintaining accessible, informative websites.

Seven libraries have applied for library construction grants. The Library Services Committee has met, and will provide a recommendation for the system package to be forwarded to the state. With that many libraries and several significant projects, cuts had to be made. It is good to see libraries buying in to the concept that the goal is to provide maximum funding to all. The lengthened process definitely made things easier in this high-competition year.

Eleven libraries have applied for Foundation Dream & Do grants. You will be asked to approve that \$5,200 package at the September meeting. The expenditure has been approved by the Foundation board. This year, we are on track to award more than \$21,000 in Foundation grants, a significantly higher amount than in any preceding year.

The cooperative webinar “Defending the Freedom to Read: Policies, Procedures, and Civic Engagement” was attended by quite a few MVLS library staff and trustees. All libraries were sent the presentation slides and a summary of the content. Here is a digest of that summary. Libraries can help guard against difficult challenges and public relations rows by implementing a combination of broad community engagement and robust policies. Extensive community engagement, with many segments within the community recognizing the value of the library and of diverse resources and programs, forms a strong basis for avoiding division and rancor. Excellent customer service, so when individuals bring in concerns they feel heard and respected, minimizes formal complaints. And an attitude of de-escalation helps avoid the drama and negative publicity.

The policy recommendations, which will inform our own Library Collections Policies, revolve around collection development, requests for reconsideration, and public comment periods. Here is that summary for reconsideration policies:

- Apply the policy/form to resources, exhibits, programs; any library service that may be challenged
- Decide what “reconsideration” means. Recommendation: it simply means determining whether the library followed its policies and procedures in deciding that the applicable resource/service was appropriate in the first place.
- Determine who has “standing” to submit a formal complaint. Often, this will mean a resident of the service area.
- Do not remove items/services while they are being reconsidered.
- Reiterate that resources are judged on their entirety, not on small bits taken out of context.
- Set a time limit on any future reconsideration processes. Once a resource/service has gone through the reconsideration process, it will not be reconsidered again for X years. 3?

And for Public Comment:

- Have a board spokesperson read the rules and set the tone at the beginning of any public comment period.
- Determine who has standing to speak. Residents of the service area? Some boards have a sign-in requirement for public comment.
- Set time limits. Three minutes per individual and ½ hour total time relegated to public comment are not unusual. The overall time limit may be extended if necessary or desired. It is recommended not to allow speakers to cede their time to others. No one may go over the 3 minute maximum. With large crowds it can be helpful to ask for a show of hands to determine who agrees with a particular perspective. You may also choose to end the comment period asking if anyone has a different perspective or wants to comment on an unrelated issue.
- Board members should give public commenters respectful attention, but should not comment themselves or engage in conversation.
- Make clear that the board will not act on issues raised in public comment sessions in the current meeting.

### **Empowering Member Libraries with Advocacy & Awareness**

MVLS is publishing a new Shelf Life Newsletter. You should receive it by the time of our September meeting. Wade worked with various staff members in putting this issue together. It is sent to all member library trustees and many member library staff members.

On September 19 I will be attending the NYLA Advocacy Launch, which should provide more clarity on an updated statewide advocacy strategy for 2024. Advocacy day is scheduled for February 4. I will provide an update at the September board meeting.

MVLS is again providing NYLA organizational memberships to all member libraries. We are also again offering NYLA conference grants to encourage participation. The annual NYLA conference is November 1-4 in Saratoga Springs.

Wade's work helping libraries with community engagement continues. Gloversville's process is nearing completion. Middleburgh is getting started; and Schoharie and Fonda are in-process.

The Foundation is gearing up for a golf tournament on September 25, as well as the year end appeal that is our major fundraiser. Foundation fundraising efforts become even more important as participation in Foundation grants grows.

### **Empowering Member Libraries with Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits**

7/3/2023	Paul O'Brien Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
7/5/2023	Foundation Event Committee

7/6/2023 Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library  
MVLS Member Library Directors

7/10/2023 Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
Lauren Cardinal, Division of Library Development  
MVLS Member Library Directors  
Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System

7/11/2023 Foundation Board  
JA Council  
MVLS Member Library Directors  
Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
PULISDO  
Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System

7/12/2023 JA Council  
Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library

7/13/2023 Cheryl Miller  
Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery  
Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library  
Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library

7/14/2023 Susan Kazilas  
MVLS Board of Trustees  
Kim Zimmer, The Community Library

7/17/2023 Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library

7/19/2023 Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System

7/20/2023 MVLS Board of Trustees

7/21/2023 Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library  
Julia Maxwell, DLD  
John Sullivan  
Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
Kim Zimmer, The Community Library

7/24/2023 Foundation Event Committee

7/25/2023 Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library  
Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library  
Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library

7/26/2023 Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library  
Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery  
Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library  
Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library  
Kim Zimmer, The Community Library

7/27/2023 Cheryl Cufari  
Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery  
MVLS Board of Trustees  
MVLS Member Library Board Presidents  
MVLS Member Library Directors  
Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library

7/28/2023	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library Katherine Hawkins Tina Chericoni Versaci
7/31/2023	Jeanne M. Irwin Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library MVLS Awards Committee MVLS Member Library Directors
8/1/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Foundation Board MVLS Awards Committee MVLS Member Library Directors
8/2/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
8/3/2023	John Sullivan Chase Byler, NYLAF, PMA Financial Network, LLC
8/4/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery John Sullivan
8/7/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery John Sullivan Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library Tim Burke, Upper Hudson Library System
8/8/2023	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library MVLS Member Library Directors Chase Byler, NYLAF, PMA Financial Network, LLC
8/9/2023	John Sullivan Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
8/10/2023	Christine Witkowski Jeanne M. Irwin Linda Conroy, Gloversville Public Library Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
8/14/2023	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
8/15/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development MVLS Member Library Directors
8/16/2023	Mary VanPatten Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
8/17/2023	MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Staff Chase Byler, NYLAF, PMA Financial Network, LLC Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
8/18/2023	Thomas Gessick, CPA, T.M. Byxbee Company, CPAs, NY, PC Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
8/21/2023	Tina Chericoni Versaci Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library

	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
8/22/2023	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
8/24/2023	Stella Williams
	John Naple
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	John Sullivan
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
	Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
8/25/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	John Sullivan
	Lauren Hoyt, New York Library Association
	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
	Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
8/28/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	Lauren Hoyt, New York Library Association
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
	Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
8/29/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
8/30/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
8/31/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	MVLS Library Services Committee
	MVLS Staff