

**Mohawk Valley Library System
Director's Report
September & October, 2023**

Empowering Member Libraries with Sound Administration & Governance

We will begin the November board meeting with the traditional Budget Hearing. The draft 2024 budget will be included with the meeting materials. As usual, the changes are explained in the notes column. The 2023 column is the current, amended approved budget. The proposed deficit is in line with what has been proposed in the last 5 years. In that same 5 years we have built our fund balance by \$500,000. Small proposed deficits aren't unhealthy. MVLS is in good financial shape, in spite of the scandalous failure of our state lawmakers to adequately fund the state library and library systems. More on that below under advocacy.

The Personnel Committee is meeting on November 7 to discuss the salaries & benefits for the 2024 budget. We have proposals for general cost-of-living salaries increases, and an adjustment to the summer hours language in the Personnel Manual. We are also looking at one-time increases for specific employees. Details will be shared with board members before the November board meeting.

The 2023 MVLS Annual Meeting was a great success. Thank you to all, especially Kate Clingan, who helped to make everything go smoothly. The Canajoharie Library Great Hall is a perfect venue. We had about 70 attendees. Congratulations to the award winners: the Gloversville Public Library for their "School's Out" initiative, Letah Graff from Fort Hunter who received the staff award, and Wusterbarth Award winner Jean LaPorta from the Friends of the Gloversville Library. We will have a brief discussion at the November board meeting to review any issues or concerns to improve future meetings.

After the action taken at the September meeting, we have worked to open accounts with NYLAF. We started transferring money to those accounts on October 15, and now have a seamless way to transfer money to and from the NYLAF account. The increase in interest earnings is tremendous, and will make a great difference in MVLS' financial health going forward.

We have been discussing collections policies for the past few meetings, and are now prepared to present specific amendments to the policies. Proposed changes to the policies will be included with the board meeting materials. As is our usual practice, language to be deleted is in ~~overstrike~~, and language to be added is in green. The amendments seek to incorporate the changes recommended in our sponsored webinar and to emphasize the importance of community engagement and excellent customer service.

In addition to the budget hearing, the November meeting is also now our reorganizational meeting, designed to set everything up for the new year. This includes electing officers and a variety of reorganizational motions that are outlined in the meeting agenda. The proposed meeting schedule is at: <https://www.mvls.info/meeting-schedule/>.

Related to the reorganizational items, is the issue of the vacant MVLS board seats. I am somewhat embarrassed that it has taken me so long to come to this realization; but meetings with the MVLS staff and Fulton County directors has finally broken through. In the 21st century, thirteen is too many trustee seats to try to fill. Nobody forming a new organization would select a number that high. We have had

libraries see the advantages of officially reducing their number of trustees, and the Foundation has also reduced its number of trustees. I propose that we begin work on amending the bylaws to change the number of trustees on the MVLS board.

The Executive Committee is meeting on November 9 to refine a proposal. Two items are under discussion: changing the number of trustees from 13 to 9 (reducing by 1 per county); and loosening the language on geographic distribution to at least 1 and no more than 3 trustees per county.

Now is an opportune time to make the change in trustee numbers, since we will have 9 filled trustee positions as of 1/1/2024.

Empowering Member Libraries with Automation and Resource Sharing

The JA Council has cancelled the November meeting. There were no pressing action items to approve. Michele Largeteau did share a written report, which will be in the meeting materials for your review. Of note are the ongoing work on tightening up security, account permissions, developing guidelines for library settings and all of the work going into helping libraries, like Schenectady, Amsterdam and Cobleskill, with expansion projects and new equipment.

For the last year, we have been working with SCPL and the Central Library Advisory Committee on developing a new plan to use the system's Central Library Aid in a way that brings more direct benefits to all system residents. A draft budget will be in with the meeting materials for the November meeting. This draft supports existing resources like the Overdrive resources that many library users now value, as well as many new resources that were not available in any MVLS libraries before. We will discuss the plan at the November meeting in preparation for formal approval in January.

Empowering Member Libraries with Youth, Adult and Outreach Services

Beth and Mary have been developing a variety of initiatives to help libraries with training and collaboration. They have helped to coordinate an Adult Program Swap with SALS at UHLS, and have hosted both Youth Services and Public Services virtual meet-ups for member library staff members. They are also developing other training activities for member library staff, some of which can be paid for using the Central Library Aid as noted above. Beth and Mary both are involved in providing training beyond MVLS. For example, Beth is currently providing Supercharged Storytimes training through the NYS Division of Library Development.

Mary's Digital Literacy classes are getting excellent participation. She is working with senior centers and communities as well as with libraries. Mary and Beth are planning additional programs under the title "Cabin Fever Club" that will be targeted at a similar audience. Beth encouraged member libraries to participate in the Great Give Back, and is providing resources to facilitate programming related to the upcoming solar eclipse events.

Mary continues to provide libraries with website assistance. In September and October, Canajoharie, Fort Plain, Gloversville, Johnstown, Northville and St. Johnsville received website assistance.

Beth has been developing a variety of Outreach contacts. The Outreach Advisory Council is reconvened with seven active members, including former MVLS board member Sarah Beekman from Middleburgh. In addition, Beth has established contacts with Head Start organizations in all four counties, providing

books and other support. In an effort to boost the name recognition of MVLS, we have spent some outreach money to get logo imprinted clothing to use at these and other events.

Empowering Member Libraries with Training, Consultation and Collaboration

The annual New York Library Association Conference was held November 1-4 in Saratoga Springs. MVLS assisted six MVLS libraries with conference attendance grants. Beth and I attended from MVLS. For me, the conference is often an opportunity to recommit to the overarching importance of community engagement and customer service. Here are just a few nuggets that were reiterated for me. Community engagement and customer service are the best indicators of positive budget propositions, and the best antidote to difficult materials and program reconsideration issues. Libraries can improve their service by designing flexible, easy to navigate, inviting spaces; and by taking the library out into the community by partnering with parks, businesses and other non-profits.

In addition to working on member's websites, Mary continues to build the MVLS website, working to include resources that will be of value to our member libraries. She has added information on trustee training and on legal resources for libraries. We will continue update these resources, and to develop additional guides.

You should have all received the first MVLS Director's Update email a few weeks ago. Finding a way to connect more directly with member library trustees has been a goal for some time; a goal validated by the results of our most recent planning activity and the spring symposium. The update email is organized around the four MVLS goals, and is designed to provide trustees with information on timely issues, and the resources available to them through MVLS.

The Foundation is in the midst of its annual appeal; our most consequential fundraising activity of the year. In 2023, the Foundation provided more that \$21,000 in grants for libraries. This depleted the Foundation's fund balance, so we need a successful annual appeal to continue to be able to fully fund the Foundation grants.

Empowering Member Libraries with Advocacy & Awareness

The Sharon Springs Free Library saw tremendous voter support on Election Day. Their budget proposal passed with a great majority supporting the library. That makes MVLS library budget votes 10 for 10 in 2023. Our goal, which is not impossible, is for all MVLS libraries to have successful budget votes every year. Libraries with annual budget votes have stable, growing budgets and demonstrated community support.

MVLS has again paid for member library's organizational memberships in the New York Library Association. This is part of an effort to help library staff and trustees stay connected to the bigger library world.

Wade continues to work with the Gloversville, Middleburgh and Schoharie libraries on community engagement initiatives.

I have been participating in efforts to develop a Mohawk Valley Broadband Coalition through the New York Connect All project.

Both the annual Advocacy meeting in September and the NYLA Conference in November provided information on the state advocacy effort for 2024. NYLA is developing a new strategy to try to get better results in state aid for libraries. There are mixed signals at this point. On one hand, 2024 is expected to be a more difficult budget year in general for the state. That may be countered by a renewed effort to lobby directly with the Governor's Office to put libraries in a better starting point in the NYS budget process.

At the same time, there is a growing realization that library systems have been too good at making do. The fact is that there has been no discernable consequence to the state's failure to adequately fund their state library apparatus and library systems. But now there are starting to be real consequences. The demise of the NOVEL databases will be a real consequence. The state's failure of Federal Maintenance of Effort is another. Our advocacy efforts need to better exploit these and other deficiencies in order to get state leaders to adequately fund libraries.

Empowering Member Libraries with Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

9/1/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
9/5/2023	Foundation Board MVLS Library Services Committee Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
9/6/2023	John Sullivan JA Finance Committee MVLS Library Services Committee
9/7/2023	Carol Stuff MVLS Staff Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
9/8/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Foundation Board
9/11/2023	Foundation Board John Sullivan MVLS Board of Trustees MVLS Library Services Committee
9/12/2023	MVLS Library Services Committee MVLS Member Library Directors Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
9/13/2023	Rebecca Sokol JA Council MVLS Awards Committee
9/15/2023	Foundation Board MVLS Board of Trustees Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
9/18/2023	Lauren Barton, NBT Bank - Duanesburg Branch Chase Byler, NYLAF, PMA Financial Network, LLC

9/19/2023	Thomas Gessick, CPA, T.M. Byxbee Company, CPAs, NY, PC Wanda Bruchis, Mid York Library System NYALS
9/20/2023	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library Carol Stuff Jennifer Deweerth, Mohawk Valley Community College Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
9/21/2023	MVLS Board of Trustees Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
9/22/2023	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
9/25/2023	Foundation Golf Tournament Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
9/26/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Foundation Board John Sullivan Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
9/27/2023	Beverly Osborne Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Community Library Appreciation Reception Chase Byler, NYLAF, PMA Financial Network, LLC Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
9/28/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery MVLS Staff Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
10/2/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
10/3/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
10/4/2023	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library MVLS Public Relations Event
10/5/2023	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
10/6/2023	Beverly Osborne Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library
10/10/2023	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library Lauren Barton, NBT Bank - Duanesburg Branch Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library PULISDO Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library Helen Thomas, Sharon Springs Library
10/11/2023	Thomas Gessick, CPA, T.M. Byxbee Company, CPAs, NY, PC Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library

	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	Terry Pavoldi, Middleburgh Public Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
10/12/2023	Gabriel Lukas, PMA Financial Network, LLC
10/13/2023	Linda Carpenter
	Gabriel Lukas, PMA Financial Network, LLC
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
10/16/2023	Rebecca Sokol
	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
10/17/2023	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
10/18/2023	Rebecca Sokol
	MVLS Member Library Board Presidents
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
10/20/2023	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
10/23/2023	Haileab Samuel
	Foundation Board
10/24/2023	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library
	Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library
	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
10/25/2023	Valerie Acklin, Gloversville Public Library
	HFM School Library System Council
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	Heather Devitt, Mohawk Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition
10/27/2023	Frank Reese, Division of Library Development
	Foundation Board
10/30/2023	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	Max Prime, NYLA
10/31/2023	MVLS Executive Committee