

To: Eric Trahan, Executive Director, Mohawk Valley Library System; Mary Van Patten, President, Mohawk Valley Library System Board of Trustees; Sara Dallas, Executive Director, Southern Adirondack Library System; Russell Wise, President, Southern Adirondack Library System Board of Trustees; Charity Thorne, Executive Director, Schenectady County Public Library; Madelyn Thorne, President, Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees; Tim Burke, Executive Director, Upper Hudson Library System; Susan Keitel, President, Upper Hudson Library System

From: Lauren Moore, Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, New York State Education Department

Re: Schenectady County Public Library and Mohawk Valley Library System

Thank you for informing me of the status of the Schenectady County Public Library's (SCPL) Joint Automation (JA) agreement with Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS) and Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS). Outlined below is the State Library's position on the matters brought to my attention.

1. The State Library is not aware of any explicit prohibition against SCPL withdrawing from the JA Agreement and contracting with the Upper Hudson Library System for ILS services.
 - a. If this occurs, MVLS will need to ensure that the SCPL's Central Library and Free Direct Access plans comply with all Commissioner's Regulations and New York State Education law.
2. We have not seen indication that parties have adequately planned to address the implications of SCPL's withdrawal from the JA agreement, and therefore encourage all parties to continue conversations and cooperate to resolve disagreements rather than forcing this drastic measure. We hope these conversations allow for compromise and result in SCPL rejoining the JA.
 - a. The State Library sees no reason why the Schenectady County IT Department cannot perform IT at SCPL
 - b. The State Library expects the principals of cooperative library systems to apply to the JA negotiations.

- i. Cooperative library systems are associations created by agreement between the boards of chartered member library. Member libraries retain their autonomy.
 - ii. Member-driven priorities are the core of all shared decision-making and shared governance.
 - iii. Shared decision-making must include and define a clear process, including feedback from member libraries for cooperative decisions.
- 3. If this situation escalates to the point where SCPL proposes leaving the MVLS, the State Library is not aware of any explicit prohibition against a member library withdrawing from a cooperative library system. These implications should be carefully considered and discussed by all parties:
 - a. If MVLS was required to recharter, it would not be eligible to receive state aid as per Education Law 272(e).
 - b. There would be consequences related to system charters, and the State Education Department would have to approve all charter amendments.
 - c. If system leadership is considering consolidations, mergers, or significant changes to chartered service areas, exploration of those options should be done with care and planning.

It is now the State Library's expectation that all parties will continue conversations and cooperate to resolve the remaining disagreements in a collegial manner. State Library staff and I are ready to help this process proceed in any way we can.