

**Mohawk Valley Library System
Director's Report
November December, 2024**

Empowering Member Libraries with Sound Administration & Governance

Just in time for the beginning of the 2025 state advocacy season, I can report that MVLS received its final 2024 state aid payment in December. Last year, we didn't receive the final payments until February of the following year, so this is progress! In December we also received \$55,000 in Bullet Aid awards for three member libraries, given through Senator Breslin's office. Both of these payments make our income in 2025 look even better than it actually was. The result: MVLS is in good financial shape.

We are expecting Tom Gessick from T.M. Byxbee to present the 2023 reviewed financial reports at the January Board meeting. I am sure Tom will, as usual, praise the work of Joe Sherry and Kate Clingan in maintaining our financial records and processes in good order.

Cole Adams will also present at the January board meeting, concerning the proposed Bylaws Review Committee. She will present options for addressing the issues that came up at the MVLS Annual Meeting and through requests from SCPL.

The specific amendment to the MVLS bylaws that we will be voting on at the January meeting – removing the words “library directors” from the clause on voting at the annual meeting, will be posted with the board documents for the January meeting.

The Executive Committee met on January 8 to discuss various initiatives that, we hope, will help MVLS get off to a good start in 2025. One of those topics was the proposed Bylaws Review Committee for which Cole will be providing guidance. We have added a page to the Board of Trustees section of the MVLS website (<https://www.mvls.info/trustees/>) on 2025 Board Initiatives. At this point, there are links on that page under “Bylaws Study” that include the bylaws of the public library systems that are most similar to MVLS, and a digest document that summarizes the information on trustee distribution for these library systems. These are all things for the Bylaws Review Committee to review and discuss.

A second issue discussed by the Executive Committee was encouraging board training for MVLS trustees, and including training opportunities in our meeting schedule. The concept is to schedule training and discussion sessions on some of the months between MVLS board meetings. We propose starting with February 20. The 2025 Board Initiatives webpage mentioned above will contain various sources for webinars that we can use as the basis for these training sessions. The training sessions will also be open to member libraries.

The committee also discussed the planning process for developing the Plan of Service which we will need to submit to the Division of Library Development in fall 2026. We have time to work on this, but the goal is to develop a process through which the people who run the MVLS libraries can develop a shared mission, vision, core values, goals and objectives. We may also want to develop a more formal system agreement to go along with the JA participation agreement that each library reviews each year.

Finally, January is the time to repopulate the MVLS committees. A draft committee list will be included with the meeting materials. Please review and suggest changes. If you would like a change in your committee assignments, send an email or bring it up at the meeting.

Empowering Member Libraries with Automation and Resource Sharing

Schenectady is no longer a participant in the MVLS/SALS Joint Automation Project. Their last day on the shared catalog was November 24, and their last day using the JA network and software was 12/31. There are still some technical details to tie down, and they need to return some equipment and meet their obligations concerning verification of repurposing other equipment. The expectation is that those technical details will be resolved in January. We also need to continue to review the mechanisms that will allow for continued resource sharing between SCPL and the other MVLS libraries. MVLS scheduled two training sessions on using the CDLC LiNX system to facilitate that sharing. We have also discussed the need to develop an MVLS Interlibrary Loan policy to facilitate that activity.

We need to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that the JA staff and Sharon O'Brien continue to do to make the transition as smooth as possible. Though, in one sense, the transition is accomplished, there are ongoing issues that will continue to require our intervention as we work to minimize the negative impacts on library patrons. We can't make the system work as smoothly as it does when all libraries share the same database, but the JA staff and Sharon are working every day to keep the impacts as minimal as possible.

One area where we still need to work out many details is with the Overdrive e-resources. SCPL has elected to also separate from the rest of the MVLS libraries with their use of Overdrive. They have set up their own, separate Overdrive platform, and will no longer be contributing to the MVLS platform. As with the JA exit, this raises questions about users' ability to access resources. In general terms, the ramifications are similar to the exit from JA. Users who want access to both the separate SCPL resources and the MVLS shared platform will have to maintain valid library cards in both systems.

The Joint Automation Council met on January 8, with a full agenda of items being sent on the SALS and MVLA boards of trustees for consideration. The first is to set the JA library fees for 2026. Each year, all libraries are invited to a December meeting where JA fees, services and plans are discussed. This year, the participants reached a consensus that the fee budget should remain constant between 2025 and 2026. The JA Council passed motion to have the fee budget remain at \$591,471 for 2026 and for the fee calculation in 2026 to use 2024 library data for library items and circulation. The SALS and MVLS boards are asked to confirm that JA Council approved motion.

The second item concerns the product Vega Discover. This is a user interface that is designed to make it easier for library patrons to use the Polaris database. JA looked into the product a few years ago, and the Council at that time determined it was too expensive to implement. However, the price has come way down, and libraries have expressed an interest in the product. Additionally, the Vega product has accessibility solutions that, we are told, will never be included in the existing basic product. JA Council approved adding Vega Discover at a cost of about \$27,000 per year.

Finally, the Council discussed the need to fully implement Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) in libraries. SALS, MVLS, and a few libraries have been using MFA since 2023. MFA means users (staff) have to verify their identity, through a cell phone or some other device, in order to log in to the JA resources. This has

become common for financial and medical applications, and is a requirement for most cyber insurance. The Council voted to require all libraries to use MFA by April 15, 2025.

MVLS, the member libraries, and particularly, Amsterdam, continue to work on the transition of the MVLS Central Library to the Amsterdam Free Library. The great bulk of the CBA book collection is now temporarily housed at MVLS, and we have a working budget for Central Library services through Amsterdam. You will begin seeing expenditures come through for new resources and services. The Central Library Advisory Committee has been active in approving and implementing these changes.

Empowering Member Libraries with Youth, Adult and Outreach Services

Early Literacy activities continue to be an area of focus for Beth and the MVLS member libraries. New kits on music and drumming, and new flannel sets have been made available to enhance storytimes at libraries. Beth also continues to provide early literacy services to outreach sites, and held a session with Head Start in Sharon Springs. She continues to work to expand the Book for Every Baby project, piloted in Gloversville, to Schoharie County, by working through the Schoharie County Childhood Development Council. Beth is also helping libraries develop activities for Take Your Child to the Library Day, which is February 1.

The in-person summer reading planning workshop is scheduled for January 14. Everyone is excited by the return to a regional, in-person summer reading workshop. Beth is working extensively with Mary Fellows from the Upper Hudson Library System to make this an inspiring and effective experience for all.

Distribution of publisher's copies of children's books continues to be an impactful service for our libraries and for outreach sites. In 2024, 579 books were distributed to MVLS libraries, and books were shared with many outreach partners including the Schenectady STARS project.

The active Outreach Advisory Council met again in December. Discussion focused on early literacy and services to jails. Beth is having good success in working with the Schenectady County Jail. We also have a new annual agreement with the Hale Creek facility, and are again working closely with them.

The Memory Care Kits are beginning to have an impact in member libraries. Most recently, they have been promoted in Cobleskill. Mary Carrier has also been working to implement the Senior Planet programs. These will be rolled out in 2025. Mary's technology classes were a very effective outreach strategy in 2024. Forty-three programs were attended by 407 individuals in libraries and many outreach sites in Montgomery, Schenectady and Schoharie counties.

Beth visited Broadalbin's Wilkinson Memorial Book Station to provide information on early literacy and to again provide information and encouragement for them to become a real public library.

Empowering Member Libraries with Training, Consultation and Collaboration

The Cabin Fever Club virtual programs will begin on January 29. The full schedule is in the December MVLS newsletter at: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/December-2024-Newsletter.pdf>.

As shared in the November report, MVLS has several user groups that help member library staff make connections and collaborate. The Youth Services group met in Sharon Springs in November. Staff from

six member libraries attended. Beth also organized a session to help connect public library staff with the librarians in their associated school libraries, working through one of our regional school library systems.

Several Director's meetings were held in November and December, with discussions on SCPL exit issues, Overdrive and central library planning. On that note, the director's have decided, for 2025, to bring the Director's Council under the auspices of the central library. So, Nicole Hemsley will be organizing the director's meetings in 2025. The first meeting is scheduled for January 13.

For the last couple of years, MVLS has used software called Kit Keeper to schedule and manage reservations for the many kits and other resources (signs, tables, pop-up tent, etc.) that MVLS makes available to member libraries. Unfortunately, that software was discontinued late in 2024. Sharon O'Brien led the effort to acquire and implement a new service, called My Turn. It is going live on January 10. There are currently more than 150 items that libraries can borrow from MVLS to help with library programming.

Empowering Member Libraries with Advocacy & Awareness

State Advocacy season is upon us. The Governor will release her budget later this month, and Library Advocacy Day is scheduled for Wednesday, February 5. Information on the NYLA advocacy initiatives is available here: <https://www.nyla.org/2025-legislative-initiatives>

Of course, the Governor's budget always sets the agenda for advocacy day. NYLA is being much more active in lobbying the Governor's office; so, we hope we are in a position of not having to work against a budget cut; but in the current political climate you never know. So please, participate in advocacy initiatives in every way you can. And if at all possible, join us in Albany on February 5.

Here is NYLA's state budget information: https://nyla.memberclicks.net/assets/ADVOCACY/Legislative-Initiatives/LegislativeInitiatives25/Budget26_1Pager.pdf

And the information on bills supported by the library community:

https://nyla.memberclicks.net/assets/ADVOCACY/Legislative-Initiatives/LegislativeInitiatives25/Policy2025_1Pager.pdf

We had one application for the winter 2025 round of Foundation/MVLS Advocacy grants. Gloversville requests \$2,000 to partly fund consultant Elissa Kane to assist them with having a successful budget vote in 2025. I recommend full funding.

This will probably be the end of that particular Foundation grant. The Foundation, and the MVLS staff are working to develop more targeted incentive grants to help libraries grow in service-related ways. The initial grants will probably focus on either early literacy programming or collection development.

The Foundation year-end appeal was a success. We raised \$5,200, more than in any recent year.

One of the new initiatives we will be developing in 2025 is a project to more systematically publicize system and library success stories and services. We will be working with member library staff to develop regular press stories that show MVLS and our libraries making an impact in our communities. This comes from the very successful publicity that came from the MVLS GO! Project last summer. Our libraries have many more services that deserve greater press attention.

We continue to work with libraries on local planning and advocacy issues. Most impactful at this time is St Johnsville's first proposed budget increase since 2012. This is another milestone in reaching the current status of most MVLS libraries having an annual budget vote with the community.

Empowering Member Libraries with Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

11/1/2024	Foundation Board
11/4/2024	Karen Bradley Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Nominating Committee Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
11/5/2024	Stephanie Cuomo Jeanne M. Irwin Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Leah Fitzgerald, Amsterdam Free Library Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Board of Trustees MVLS Member Library Directors Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
11/6/2024	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Judi Steiger, Fort Hunter Free Library Kristi Beedon, HFM BOCES SLS Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Heather Devitt, Mohawk Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition NYALS PULISDO Meghan Keaney, Sharon Springs Free Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
11/7/2024	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery MVLS Nominating Committee MVLS Personnel Committee Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
11/8/2024	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
11/12/2024	JA Council Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Personnel Committee
11/13/2024	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library

	JA Council
11/14/2024	Thomas Gessick, CPA, T.M. Byxbee Company, CPAs, NY, PC Christine Witkowski Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Personnel Committee
11/15/2024	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library William P. Leitch Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Board of Trustees
11/18/2024	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System Thomas Gessick, CPA, T.M. Byxbee Company, CPAs, NY, PC Christine Witkowski Susan London Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library MVLS Member Library Directors
11/19/2024	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System Haileab Samuel Madelyn Thorne Frank Reese, Division of Library Development MVLS Member Library Directors
11/20/2024	MVLS Board of Trustees Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
11/21/2024	Haileab Samuel Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library MVLS Board of Trustees
11/22/2024	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System Stephanie Cuomo Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
11/23/2024	Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams
11/25/2024	Haileab Samuel Jeanne M. Irwin Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Board of Trustees
11/26/2024	Christine Witkowski Frank Reese, Division of Library Development Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams
12/2/2024	JA Council Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Board of Trustees

12/2/2024	MVLS Member Library Directors Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
12/3/2024	Frank Reese, Division of Library Development Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Lauren Moore, New York State Librarian
12/4/2024	Brideen Finegan Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Heather Devitt, Mohawk Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library Meghan Keaney, Sharon Springs Free Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
12/5/2024	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Lauren Cardinal, Division of Library Development Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
12/6/2024	Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Central Library Advisory Committee
12/9/2024	Brideen Finegan Christine Witkowski Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development Lauren Cardinal, Division of Library Development Lauren Groff, Groff Networks, LLC. Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
12/10/2024	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Staff
12/11/2024	Christine Witkowski HFM School Library System Council JA Finance
12/12/2024	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Lauren Barton, NBT Bank - Duaneburg Branch
12/13/2024	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
12/16/2024	William Bonner Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Frank Reese, Division of Library Development JA Council Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams MVLS Board of Trustees MVLS Member Library Directors

12/17/2024	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
12/18/2024	Haileab Samuel Christine Witkowski William Bonner Stella Williams Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Lauren Cardinal, Division of Library Development MVLS Executive Committee
12/19/2024	Division of Library Development, NYSED
12/20/2024	MVLS Member Library Directors
12/23/2024	Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Mid-Hudson Library System Max Prime, NYLA Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
12/26/2024	Judi Steiger, Fort Hunter Free Library Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Mid-Hudson Library System Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
12/27/2024	Stephanie Cuomo Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
12/30/2024	Christine Witkowski Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library