

**Mohawk Valley Library System
Director's Report
May, June, 2025**

Empowering Member Libraries with Sound Administration & Governance

As of this writing, the state aid charts are not yet out for 2025. We will wait for budget amendments until we have accurate information on how much state aid we can expect in 2025. In general, aid should be approximately 2.4% higher than budgeted.

The Governance Structure Review Committee has finished its work for 2025, and has several items to bring to the board for action. Of course, the first is the amendment to the MVLS Bylaws Article III Section 5 that was passed as a resolution at the May board meeting. For review, that resolution is here: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MVLS-Bylaws-Amendment-July-Meeting-Notice.pdf>; and the complete amended bylaws is here: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MVLS-BYLAWS-July17-2025.pdf>.

The committee has also proposed additional bylaws amendments, which can be found here: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MVLS-BYLAWS-Proposed-Amendments-Presented-July-2025.pdf>. Finally, the Committee is recommending approval of a Board of Trustees Ethics Statement (<https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MVLS-BOT-Ethics-Statement-Cole-Final.pdf>) and a new Conflict of Interest policy: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Conflict-of-Interest-Policy-2025-Draft-Cole-Final.pdf>.

We have begun the trustee election process for board seats that will be open as of 12/31/2025, according to the amended bylaws and the new Trustee Nomination and Election Policy (<https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Board-Governance-Policy-Trustee-nomination-and-elections-DRAFT.pdf>.) Those seats are the vacant seat formerly held by Chris Witkowski, and expiring seats held by April Davies and Haileab Samuel. Both April and Haileab are eligible to run again, and both have indicated that they are interested in continuing to serve.

The Nominating Committee has implemented the required Advisory Body, and is working to develop a slate of candidates to be distributed to the member libraries by August 1.

The first Board Evaluation retreat was held at the Rotterdam Branch Library on June 27. Thanks to all for taking the time to fill out the evaluation form. I believe that engaging in this process annually will be a very positive development for MVLS.

We are planning to return to Fort Hunter for the 2025 MVLS Annual Meeting. Proposed dates are Wednesday, October 7 or Thursday, October 8. In the next few weeks, we will be asking libraries to develop their entries for the three MVLS Awards.

T.M. Byxbee is working on the annual review of the MVLS and JA Project financial statements.

Empowering Member Libraries with Automation and Resource Sharing

The JA Council met as SALS on July 9. There is one development that will require MVLS board action. In the last few months, many providers have, for security and regulatory reasons, ceased providing the email-to-text service that facilitated library users receiving text messages about the status of their library account. JA has contracted for service from a new vendor to facilitate that service through a different protocol. As a part of the security and public disclosure protocols required by the vendor, Message Bee, we need to publicly post Terms of Service and a Privacy Policy. A copy of this new document is with the meeting materials for the July board meeting. There is nothing new in this document; it just brings other policy and regulatory information into one document.

Other JA issues include the approval of a new contract with our ILS (Polaris) provider (III/Clarivate), implementing the Vega Discover product, and re-activating the JA Operations Committee to get member input on implementing Vega and on other ILS issues. Finally, JA continues to be negatively impacted by changes in Microsoft pricing for Windows and Office products. We continue to look for ways to address this issue.

Our contract with library delivery vendor Arnoff is up for renewal in October. Sharon O'Brien has worked with Arnoff to propose an extension with minor changes, extending the contract for another year. This will keep us in line with the other regional library systems that use Arnoff: Upper Hudson and SALS.

Schenectady has requested that we stop the ongoing meetings, facilitated by Haileab, that were designed to help find common ground in the ongoing working relationship between MVLS and SCPL. While I fully understand the desire to avoid unnecessary meetings, there remain issues that we need to resolve with SCPL. We will continue to seek solutions for the public service challenges resulting from SCPL's withdrawal from JA and the MVLS Overdrive platform.

Empowering Member Libraries with Youth, Adult and Outreach Services

The Summer Reading Program is in full swing. Supplies were distributed to all members to facilitate the reading program and the 2025 collaborative initiative, the community puzzle art project. We also coordinated the ordering for the MVLS, SALS, UHLS collaborative Read it Forward project. This year's titles are *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi and *The Dire Days of Willowweep Manor* by Shaenon K. Garrity.

Outreach mini-grants were awarded to all applicants. Fonda, Fort Hunter, Gloversville, Schenectady and Schoharie will receive funding for their projects.

Beth is working to renew our agreement with the Hale Creek Correctional facility, and ordering for materials for that state facility is ongoing. We are also doing ordering for the Fulton and Montgomery County Jails, and progress is being made with getting things re-started in Schenectady. We received information on another potential contact in Schoharie County, but that has not yet produced results.

Both Beth and Mary continue to offer Outreach programs, with sessions at the Whispering Pines preschool, the Parkland Gardens senior center, as well as various Digital Learning sites in Schenectady and Schoharie counties.

Empowering Member Libraries with Training, Consultation and Collaboration

Planning is underway for a variety of collaborative workshops with SALS, UHLS and others. The regional Greatest of All Teen Services gathering is being planned for October. We are working with partners on a workshop from the Strong Museum on “The Power of Play, and a possible workshop on the science of reading. In addition, Mary and Beth are planning a fall workshop on Coding and Robotics.

The Public Library Association Digital Learn grant is complete, with 94 total participants. Both Amsterdam and Cobleskill received laptop labs, and both continue to offer digital learning programs.

We want to resume our trustee training sessions in the fall. I am proposing Thursday, September 4 as the next session. The tentative topic is *Trustees and Library Finances*, with sections on budgeting & reporting, securing funding, and risk management.

Library Construction grant season has begun for another year. We worked with libraries on final edits for the 2024 projects, and allocated the state’s additional funds among the MVLS library projects. Final approval of those 2024 proposed grants should be forthcoming from the state by October. At the same time, the grant process for 2025 has begun, with the first application deadline for libraries being July 9. We have six libraries interested in applying, with nearly \$2.5 million in proposed projects. Since MVLS will have approximately \$1.14 million to award in 2025, the amount of each project that we can fund may be lower than in recent years, closer to 50% of each project cost.

We continue to work with libraries to get the 2024 annual reports approved. As a result of that work, we will be assisting St. Johnsville with financial reporting, policy, and procedure issues in the coming months.

Empowering Member Libraries with Advocacy & Awareness

Nine MVLS libraries had successful budget votes this spring, adding many thousands of dollars to library operating budgets. Congratulations to Amsterdam, Cobleskill, Fonda, Gloversville, Johnstown, Middleburgh, Northville, Schoharie and St. Johnsville for the successful local advocacy! We have one more budget vote to go, Sharon Springs, which, as a town election, happened on election day.

We continue to be in an uncertain time concerning federal library advocacy. The good news: the State Education Department is confident of receiving the federal library aid that has been allocated for 2025. They also continue to work on updating the Cultural Education Fund to help fund the New York State Library if we do lose federal library aid. No library advocacy organization has to date commented on the potential impact of the “big beautiful bill.” That legislation does give congressional approval to the federal executive order that included reductions at the IMLS. However, those reductions do not include the end of the library grants to states awards that the state library relies on; and there is still an active lawsuit out on that executive order. We are still in the arena of wait-and-see. Please be on the lookout for federal advocacy opportunities. We will forward any information coming out from NYLA, ALA and EveryLibrary.

Wade continues to work on library planning with Cobleskill, Fonda and Canajoharie. Community engagement is a year-round activity.

Another edition of the MVLS newsletter, *Shelf Life*, has been distributed. You can review it on the website at: <https://www.mvls.info/newsletter/>.

The Foundation had a successful golf tournament in Canajoharie on June 30. We are now preparing for the 2nd golf event of the year at the Fox Run Golf Club in Johnstown on August 25. This year's successful fundraising allows us to go forward with more grant opportunities for member libraries. We are again planning the annual Dream & Do grants for member libraries, with awards of up to \$500 per library. We would also like to offer another incentive grant, this time to encourage member library membership in the New York Council of Non-Profits (NYCON). The cost for most libraries will be either \$130 or \$160. Membership offers many advantages, including access to insurance offerings, continuing education and human resources guidance. Many libraries are interested in participating in this opportunity.

Empowering Member Libraries with Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

5/1/2025	William Bonner Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Spring Symposium Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
5/2/2025	Susan London Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams Alex Kuttich, Montgomery County Planning MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee MVLS Member Library Directors MVLS Staff Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
5/5/2025	William Bonner MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee MVLS Member Library Directors
5/6/2025	Division of Library Development, NYSED MVLS Member Library Directors Mary Fellows, Upper Hudson Library System
5/7/2025	MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee Roseann Doran, Wilkinson Memorial Book Station
5/8/2025	William Bonner
5/9/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library MVLS Board of Trustees Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library Meghan Keaney, Sharon Springs Free Library Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
5/12/2025	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development

5/13/2025	<p>MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee</p> <p>Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library</p> <p>JA Council</p> <p>MVLS Staff</p>
5/14/2025	<p>Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System</p> <p>Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library</p> <p>JA Council</p> <p>MVLS Board of Trustees</p>
5/15/2025	<p>Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System</p> <p>Division of Library Development, NYSED</p> <p>MVLS Board of Trustees</p> <p>MVLS Member Library Directors</p>
5/16/2025	<p>Thomas Gessick, CPA, T.M. Byxbee Company, CPAs, NY, PC</p> <p>Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library</p> <p>Amy Heebner, Division of Library Development</p> <p>MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee</p> <p>Beth DeMidio, Schenectady County Public Library</p> <p>Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library</p> <p>Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library</p> <p>Kim Zimmer, The Community Library</p> <p>Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library</p>
5/19/2025	<p>William Bonner</p> <p>MVLS Member Library Directors</p> <p>Roseann Doran, Wilkinson Memorial Book Station</p>
5/20/2025	<p>Dave and Pat Gosda</p> <p>William Bonner</p> <p>MVLS Member Library Directors</p> <p>NYLA</p>
5/21/2025	<p>Stella Williams</p> <p>Becky Leggieri</p> <p>Jacqueline Haddam</p> <p>Stephanie Cuomo</p> <p>Mary Donohue</p> <p>Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library</p> <p>Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development</p> <p>Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams</p> <p>Mandy Travis, Mid York Library System</p> <p>MVLS Member Library Directors</p> <p>Robert Smullen, New York State Assembly</p> <p>Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library</p> <p>Mary Fellows, Upper Hudson Library System</p>
5/22/2025	<p>Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development</p> <p>Steve Bachman, Four County Library System</p> <p>MVLS Member Library Directors</p> <p>MVLS Nominating Committee</p>
5/23/2025	<p>MVLS Awards Committee</p> <p>Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System</p>

	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
	Roseann Doran, Wilkinson Memorial Book Station
5/27/2025	Christine Witkowski
	Julia Maxwell, DLD
	MVLS SCPL Discussions Meeting
	MVLS Staff
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
5/28/2025	Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams
	MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee
	MVLS Nominating Committee
5/29/2025	Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams
	MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
6/2/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	Amy Heebner, Division of Library Development
	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Foundation Board
	MVLS Governance Structure Review Committee
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
6/3/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
6/4/2025	HFM School Library System Council
	Heather Devitt, Mohawk Valley Digital Inclusion Coalition
6/5/2025	Julia Maxwell, DLD
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
	Devon Hedges, Schenectady County Public Library
	Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
	Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
6/6/2025	Christine Witkowski
	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
6/9/2025	Doug McFadden
	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library

	MVLS Member Library Directors
	MVLS Nominating Committee
6/10/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
6/11/2025	Becky Leggieri
	Stephanie Cuomo
	Wendy Sullivan
	William Bonner
	Christine Witkowski
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
6/17/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
6/18/2025	Dave and Pat Gosda
	William Bonner
	Madelyn Thorne
	Carol Stuff
	Mark Davidson
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library
6/20/2025	William Bonner
	Madelyn Thorne
	Carol Stuff
	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Foundation Board
	Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library
	Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library
6/23/2025	William Bonner
	Becky Leggieri
	Mark Davidson
	MVLS Nominating Committee
	Meghan Keaney, Sharon Springs Free Library
6/25/2025	Doug McFadden
	Madelyn Thorne
	Amy Heebner, Division of Library Development
	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
6/26/2025	Dave and Pat Gosda
	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
	MVLS Board of Trustees
	MVLS Nominating Committee
6/30/2025	Foundation Board