

**Mohawk Valley Library System
Director's Report
July, August, 2025**

Empowering Member Libraries with Sound Administration & Governance

The 2025 MVLS Trustee election process is nearing completion. The policy that was approved by the board at the May meeting appears to be bearing good fruit. For reference, that policy can be found here: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Board-Governance-Policy-Trustee-nomination-and-elections.pdf>. We have three seats to fill: those of April Davies and Haileab Samuel, which will expire on 12/31, and the vacant seat previously held by Chris Witkowski.

We went through the detailed nominating process, inviting nominations from library directors and forming a nomination advisory group made up of current and former member library trustees and interested library supporters. That group, working with the Nominating Committee, put forward April and Haileab to run for re-election to their seats, and identified Amsterdam resident Parish Ogunjana to fill the vacant seat. There were no other nominations. Our goal is to have equal participation from each county, and since Fulton and Montgomery counties currently have only one MVLS trustee, we prioritized nominees from those counties.

Following the bylaws and the policy, the virtual election meeting of member library trustee representatives, scheduled for September 25, will vote to fill the two seats that expire on 12/31. The MVLS board fills seats to partial terms, and can fill that seat at the September 18 board meeting.

Bill and I met with nominee Parish Ogunjana on July 29. The statement of interest that Parish wrote for the Nominating committee is with the board meeting materials. Parish intends to attend the meeting, so she can begin service as a trustee if and after the board makes the appointment.

The bylaws amendments presented at the July meeting are awaiting the final vote at our September board meeting. The marked-up version is with the July meeting materials, and is linked here: <https://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MVLS-BYLAWS-Proposed-Amendments-Presented-July-2025.pdf>. A fully amended version will be with the materials for the September meeting.

State aid payments came in in a big rush in the second half of August. We have received all aid except for the final 10% payments for the local aid that is usually distributed toward the end of the year. Our state advocacy efforts have been successful in 2025!

The release of state aid facilitates mid-year budget amendments. A budget proposal is with the meeting materials. The changes in the budget are due to increases in state aid, grants received, the SCPL withdrawal from the MVLS Overdrive platform, and minor changes to individual line items, the most unwelcome being spiking energy costs. The overall proposed changes add \$879 to both the income and expense sides of the budget.

Each September, in preparation for developing the following year's budget, I prepare a multi-year financial forecast using a template produced by the NYS Comptroller's office. A copy of this year's spreadsheet is with the board meeting materials. I will give an overview at the board meeting.

The MVLS Annual Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 8 at 5:30 at the Fort Hunter Free Library. Kate is collecting information from libraries, and is working on the Annual Report and the library posters. The Awards Committee is considering the awards to be presented at the meeting. We are excited to be celebrating our libraries' successes. Please come!

T.M. Byxbee is working on our annual financial review. We expect them to present their statements at the November board meeting.

Empowering Member Libraries with Automation and Resource Sharing

The JA Council met at MVLS on September 10. The proposed 2026 JA budget was presented and approved for presentation to the SALS and MVLS boards. A copy is with the meeting materials. We will discuss the proposed budget and present it for your action at the September board meeting. We also have a small amendment to the 2025 JA budget, which is to move \$1,210 from the Hardware Maintenance to the Generator Maintenance expense line.

We have a new draft agreement between MVLS and SALS concerning the Joint Automation project. Sara, Michele and I have been working with attorney Cole Adams to produce this new draft agreement. A copy of the current draft will be with the meeting materials. This proposed agreement will be discussed and acted on by the JA Council at a special meeting scheduled for October 8. The draft, with any amendments, will then come before the MVLS and SALS boards for their formal approval. Our goal is to have an agreement that clarifies the relationship between the systems, the JA Project and the various member libraries.

The JA Council is also working on recruiting and hiring a replacement for Project Manager Michele Largeteau, who will be retiring in mid-March, 2026. At the October JA Council meeting, we will be working on developing a job description and search process. I recommend that the board authorize the MVLS Executive Committee to make decisions as necessary, so that the search process can begin before the November MVLS board meeting.

JA staff and the system trainers are working to implement Vega Discover to make searching the catalog more accessible and user friendly. The proposed timeline is to have that operational by the end of the year.

After the July MVLS board meeting, Haileab worked to facilitate a meeting between MVLS and the Schenectady County Public Library so we could work toward resolution of the remaining issues flowing from the SCPL withdrawal from the JA Project and from the MVLS Overdrive platform. SCPL requested that MVLS produce summaries of the questions, to facilitate a productive exchange. MVLS did that. To date, SCPL has not responded. We continue to work toward finding solutions.

Empowering Member Libraries with Youth, Adult and Outreach Services

The Summer Reading Program is in the books. Libraries are currently compiling the annual statistics.

We now have working relationships with all four county jails. All are purchasing materials. Schenectady is exploring programing options.

Beth and Mary continue to offer Outreach programs at senior centers, schools, and other locations. Attendance was over 100 at July and August sessions. Two programs were provided at Broadalbin's Wilkinson Memorial Book Station. Beth continues to develop the memory care kits, which were presented at the Arkell Senior Center in Canajoharie.

The MVLS program kits were well used by member libraries this summer. Over 52 kits were used in July and August.

Empowering Member Libraries with Training, Consultation and Collaboration

The multisystem GOATS Teen Services workshop will take place in October 22 at the East Greenbush Community Library. Beth is working with SALS and UHLS on workshops on reading and mental health topics. Beth and Mary researched coding and robotics, purchased some new materials, and provided a workshop for member library staff.

Mary has again worked with the Mohawk Valley Broadband Coalition to include MVLS in a grant to provide additional resources for libraries to facilitate digital training. The grant was prepared earlier this year, but then the funding was withdrawn. The application window was reopened, so we again worked to be a part of that application.

Trustee training sessions will resume in October. *Trustees and Library Finances*, with sections on budgeting & reporting, securing funding, and risk management, will take place on October 17. We will then have a session on libraries and the future on December 4. I provided training for the Sharon Springs library at their August 28 board meeting.

Three MVLS libraries will be seeking new directors this fall. John Sullivan left Fonda earlier this year. Assistant Director Linda Bell has been doing a great job serving as interim, but they are now advertising for a new director. Maria Cancro will be leaving Canajoharie at the end of September, and Meghan Keaney will leave Sharon Springs at the end of the year. Both are pursuing bigger and exciting opportunities. I have been working with all three libraries on their recruitment plans.

The Library Services Committee is scheduled to meet on September 16 to review the 2025 public library construction grant applications. We ended up with four applicants, requesting a total of \$1,895,240. MVLS has \$1,145,377 to allocate. The committee will review the applications and bring a recommendation to the MVLS board for approval. I will send that recommendation out before the meeting. Amsterdam, Fonda, Gloversville and Johnstown submitted applications.

Empowering Member Libraries with Advocacy & Awareness

NYLA is working on the state legislative priorities for 2026. They will remain similar to 2025, including the unsuccessful school library materials aid, e-book pricing reform, and anti-censorship initiatives from 2025. In addition, there is a proposal to secure more funding for the state library.

The federal picture remains uncertain, but seems slightly improved. Thank you to all who participated in the late August EveryLibrary federal advocacy campaign. Wade and I met with NYLA Government

Relations expert Max Prime, and also with Cobleskill board President Becky Leggeri, who used to work in the House of Representatives, to improve our knowledge on the intricacies of federal advocacy. We learned that for federal budgets, libraries are part of the HHS budget. Having access to members and leaders of the various appropriations committees, and watching what those committees propose, is key to monitoring the process. In just the last few weeks, both the House and Senate proposed HHS packages have included IMLS funding on par with recent years. For all that, it is still important to be ready to jump into emergency advocacy if proposals change or continuing resolutions fail to fund the IMLS.

The PULISDO conference (public library system directors from around the state) that I attended in August also provided good information and inspiration for ongoing advocacy. There was also good information shared about planning, just in time for our 2026 planning process to begin. In late September, I will be attending the NYLAS Advocacy Launch where planning for the next year of state library advocacy is reviewed.

We had four applications for the three MVLS awards to be presented at the MVLS annual meeting. Our libraries have many deserving individuals and library programs. Applications were received from Canajoharie, Fonda, Gloversville and Sharon Springs.

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

Wade and I were invited to attend the July Schenectady County Public Library board meeting which was devoted to the public launch of their planning process. It was both a learning opportunity and a way for us to keep connected with what is happening in Schenectady.

The Foundation had another successful golf tournament in August. We are now planning for our annual year-end appeal and Giving Tuesday campaigns. Dream and Do and NYCON Incentive grant applications are coming in from member libraries.

Empowering Member Libraries with Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

7/1/2025	Foundation Board
7/2/2025	William Bonner
	Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	MVLS Nominating Committee
7/3/2025	Beverly Osborne
7/7/2025	William Bonner
	Foundation Board
	MVLS Nominating Committee
	Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
7/8/2025	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	JA Council
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System

	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
	Chris Sagaas, Upper Hudson Library System
7/9/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
7/10/2025	JA Council
	Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
7/11/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Foundation Board
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	Barbara Madonna, Gloversville Public Library
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	Stephanie (Cole) Adams, Law Office of Stephanie Cole Adams
	MVLS Board of Trustees
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
7/14/2025	William Bonner
	Julia Maxwell, DLD
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	MVLS Nominating Committee
	Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library
	Yvonne Keller-Baker, Schoharie Free Library
7/15/2025	Foundation Board
	MVLS Board of Trustees
	MVLS Member Library Directors
7/16/2025	Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development
	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
7/17/2025	Madelyn Thorne
	Division of Library Development, NYSED
	MVLS Board of Trustees
7/18/2025	Angela Tatem
	Beverly Osborne
	MVLS Nominating Committee
7/21/2025	Kathryn McCary
	Mary VanPatten
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	MVLS Nominating Committee
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
7/23/2025	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
	MVLS Nominating Committee
7/24/2025	Haileab Samuel
	April Davies
	Stephanie Cuomo
	Amy Heebner, Division of Library Development
	MVLS Nominating Committee

	MVLS SCPL Discussions
7/25/2025	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library MVLS Member Library Directors Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
7/28/2025	Beverly Osborne April Davies Stephanie Cuomo Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Alisha Rivera-Holmes, Northville Public Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
7/29/2025	William Bonner Parish Ogunjana Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
7/30/2025	Christine Witkowski Jeanne M. Irwin Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
7/31/2025	William Bonner Madelyn Thorne Haileab Samuel Whitney Hubbard, Fort Plain Free Library MVLS Member Library Board Presidents MVLS Member Library Directors Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
8/1/2025	MVLS Member Library Directors
8/4/2025	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library PULISDO Conference
8/5/2025	PULISDO
8/6/2025	PULISDO
8/7/2025	Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library Haileab Samuel Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
8/8/2025	Doug McFadden MVLS Member Library Directors
8/11/2025	Linda Bell, Frothingham Free Library
8/12/2025	Mark Davidson Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery Amy Heebner, Division of Library Development Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
8/13/2025	Merry Brown Diane Empie, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
8/14/2025	Maria Cancro, Canajoharie Library & Art Gallery
8/18/2025	Meghan Keaney, Sharon Springs Free Library
8/19/2025	Doug McFadden Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development

8/21/2025	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
8/22/2025	Doug McFadden
8/22/2025	Carol Stuff
8/25/2025	Foundation Golf Tournament
8/26/2025	Christine Witkowski
	Diane Stewart
	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
8/27/2025	JA Finance
	Charity Thorne, Schenectady County Public Library
8/28/2025	Tom Shaginaw, SALS
	Sharon Springs Free Library Board
8/29/2025	William Bonner
	John Naple