
MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Member Library Trustee Newsletter Summer 2018

Libraries in the News

Intriguing services offered in NYS public libraries

For one hundred years, overdue fines have been a fact of life for public libraries. But in the last couple of years a growing number of public libraries have experimented with eliminating fines on some materials. These libraries find that fines no longer serve the purpose of getting materials back by the due date, and they are a barrier to library use for many. This article:

<https://www.pressconnects.com/story/opinion/2018/07/03/turn-one-less-barrier-kids-reading/36561035/> shares the experience of the Johnson City Public Library near Binghamton. More discussion on eliminating library fines was recently highlighted in *American Libraries* magazine at: <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2018/06/01/library-fines-overdue-discussion/>

Has your library looked at the true economics of library fines? Have you considered the increased library use that could result from changing the way you charge fines? Is your fine policy accomplishing the goals you think it is accomplishing?

MVLS is developing ideas and initiatives to make it easier for libraries to experiment with fine-free borrowing. Stay tuned!

Calendar of Events

Opportunities for continuing education and input

Thu Aug 23, 2018	9:30am – 11:00am	MVLS Board Meeting
Thu Sep 6, 2018	9:30am – 11:00am	Director's Council at St. Johnsville
Wed Sep 12, 2018	9:30am – 10:30am	JA Council at SALS
Mon Sep 17, 2018	9:30am – 11:00am	Construction Grant Meeting
Thu Sep 20, 2018	9:30am – 11:00am	MVLS Board Meeting
Thu Sep 27, 2018	9:30am – 11:30am	Adult Program Swap at MVLS
Fri Sep 28, 2018	9:30am – 11:30am	CDLC Member Showcase
Thu Oct 11, 2018	9:30am – 11:30am	Youth Services Workshop
Thu Oct 18, 2018	9:30am – 11:00am	MVLS Board Meeting at AMS
Wed Nov 7 – Sat Nov 10	All Day	NYLA Conference in Rochester

You can always find the full MVLS Calendar at: https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=mvls%40mvls.info&ctz=America/New_York Keep in mind that workshops may require pre-registration. See www.mvls.info for details.

What's My Job - Trustee Training

Information on how to be an outstanding library trustee

Library trustees are entrusted with making sure the library mission is fulfilled, and making sure institutional resources are managed in a way that makes library operations sustainable into the future. Trustees do this by meeting regularly and effectively, developing policies, hiring and supporting an executive director, providing financial oversight, evaluating services and planning for the future. But in all libraries, particularly smaller libraries, individuals who serve as library trustees also fill other roles.

Trustees may volunteer in a wide variety of capacities including program provider or organizer, handyman (or woman), construction project overseer, etc. Note that the only thing that these potential "extras" have in common is that they are not defined roles of trustees. When trustees serve in roles that are not in the domain of the board, they have to take off the trustee hat and put on the volunteer or other suitable hat. It can be one of the hardest things a library trustee has to do. Serving as a library trustee conveys no power – it rather conveys responsibility. But it is still difficult – but necessary and important – to lay that mantle aside when serving as a volunteer. Nearly every trustee has experience with putting aside the trustee mantle when you take on the role of library user. As library users, trustees get no special treatment. It works the same when library trustees serve as library volunteers.

MVLS offers trustee training several times a year, and we are happy to work with individual library boards on trustee training. There are a variety of 45 minute sessions on topics from a basic overview to finances, legal issues and planning. Contact Eric Trahan at 355-2010 x223 or etrahan@mvls.info for more information or to schedule a session at your library.

Policy Update

Help in keeping your policies current

For this issue we are continuing to discuss Board & Governance policies. As reviewed in the last issue, it would be impossible to overstate the importance of a regular review of the library's Charter & Bylaws. To briefly review again, the library's Charter is the incorporation document that defines the library's name, purpose, number of trustees (usually a range), length of trustee term, and chartered service area. A library cannot change any of these without reviewing and possibly amending the charter. Bylaws set the rules for how the board is organized and for board meetings. Bylaws need to be in accord with the charter, and the bylaws must define a specific set number of trustees – not a range as is common for charters. So boards cannot change the number of trustees without amending the bylaws. Please see the Spring 2018 issue for more info on public library charters and bylaws.

In addition to the required charter and bylaws, it is also good practice for libraries to have planning policies and board development policies. A planning policy can be as simple as a set of benchmarks for regular reviews. For example, it is good practice to have a policy stating that the bylaws will be reviewed every 3 years, the mission statement every year, and a strategic plan every 3-5 years. Of course, at MVLS, we encourage a 3-year schedule for policy review. So a planning policy lets everyone involved know that these important documents will be reviewed on a regular schedule. A Board Development Policy helps answer the question: who will be the future library trustees? The Board Development Policy seeks to create conditions that encourage community members to consider board service and encourages board members to consider board leadership.

MVLS is always available to assist libraries with policy development. Call or email Eric Trahan at 355-2010 x223 or etrahan@mvls.info for more information.

MVLS Serves Member Libraries

Highlighting services that can help your library

The MVLS mission could be expressed as promoting sharing. And one of the ways we do that is through shared library collections. Of course, virtually all library collections within MVLS and the member libraries are shared, and that is as it should be. As stated in the MVLS Circulation Guidelines, why should a book be sitting on another library's shelf when you have a reader who wants that book? And at the same time, why should a book be sitting on your library shelf if there is a reader within the system who wants to read it? We can all serve our users better if we share.

That ethic of sharing extends beyond the ability to request items from other libraries, to the many collections where we have planned sharing. These include rotating collections of audiovisual items and specialized items like graphic novels and large type books; as well as e-books and e-audio. These are shared by their very nature, and that sharing creates tremendous value for all libraries and library users.

These highlights provide just a few examples of the services that MVLS provides to member libraries. For information on any MVLS service see the website at www.mvls.info, email Eric at etrahan@mvls.info or call 355-2010.

The Library of the Future

Interesting articles for library trustees to ponder

Public libraries in New York State are required by Civil Practice Law section 4509 to keep confidential all personal information that the library maintains on library users. This means that the patron contact information and records on what library services and materials library users access cannot be revealed to any individual or agency without a subpoena. MVLS and the MVLS/SALS Joint Automation project take this responsibility very seriously. The JA Security Policy, which all libraries approve as part of the annual JA Services Agreement and which all staff and volunteers who use the library software must read and acknowledge, addresses many aspects of library data security. The policy can be viewed at:

<http://www.mvls.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/MVLS-SALS-Security-Policy.pdf>

In the past few months, there has been a lot of media churn about user privacy in the online environment. This article:

<https://www.engadget.com/2018/04/10/senators-introduce-bill-creating-a-privacy-bill-of-rights/>, for example, deals with efforts to place similar privacy requirements on online companies.

Is your library doing everything possible to protect the privacy of library patrons?

This newsletter is a service for the library trustees that serve the 14 member libraries of the Mohawk Valley Library System. All newsletter issues are archived at <http://www.mvls.info/insidemvls/newsletter/>. MVLS educates, empowers and supports public libraries in Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties, helping libraries enrich their communities.



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