

Mohawk Valley Library System

Director's Report

October, 2020

Administration & Governance

It is budget season. We will have two budgets to review and approve at the November board meeting. Since we have no clarity from the state as to what we can expect in funding, the state aid numbers in both budgets are based on current best guess assumptions. At this point, my assumption is that we will eventually get the funding that was approved in the 2020 state budget. We almost certainly won't get it in 2020; but, since the state is unlikely to amend their budget, we will probably receive the final 20% payments sometime in 2021. At the same time, it is likely that we see a significant cut in library aid in the 2021 state budget. I know of no public library system that, for 2021, is budgeting for more than 80% of 2020 approved aid. With those assumptions, I am keeping the 2020 state aid budget lines at the approved 2020 numbers, and am budgeting for a 20% state aid cut in 2021. As we have been discussing for the last several months, because of MVLS' strong fund balance, we can weather a 20% state aid cut in 2021. It will give us a significant deficit for the year, but we have the fund balance to counteract that deficit.

Given those assumptions, the 2020 budget amendments reflect the approximately 2.8% reductions in state aid that are part of the 2020 state budget. The other proposed budget amendments for 2020 are due to the various census grants, changes due to COVID, and unforeseen needed repairs. The bottom line is a budget with an \$18,000 deficit. We will not have an actual deficit due to being considerably under budget in Salaries & Benefits.

The 2021 budget, with assumed 20% cut in state aid, will have a deficit of \$172,723. While we have the fund balance to counteract that, we will almost certainly cut that deficit in half by having a consultant position open. The budget includes funding for all staff positions, regardless of whether they will be filled. Also, assuming our PPP loan is forgiven, we will in 2021 recognize that as income, which will erase the deficit entirely. So while our finances are uncertain, as we have discussed before, we should be fine through the end of 2021. We will review other aspects of the proposed 2021 budget at the budget hearing that will open the November 19 board meeting.

Continuing with the 2021 budget, now that our union is disbanded, as a part of budget approval we need to approve a Salary and Benefits package for the coming year. We will hold an executive session to review the recommendations that we discussed last month, and will then approve the salaries and changes to personnel policies. The policy changes will be available on the meeting website.

Now on to more staffing issues. Our new Public Services Consultant will be joining us in early January! After a quick but thorough search, we had several well-qualified candidates. Of our four finalists, one really outshone the others, and we offered her the job, which she accepted. Heather Dickerson will make a great addition to the MVLS professional staff. Affirming her appointment will be an agenda item at the November meeting.

Finally, it is my sad duty to inform you of a not unexpected but still terrifying staffing issue. Kathy Insero has announced her retirement effective December 31. It would be impossible to exaggerate how central Kathy is to the efficient provision of MVLS services; and similarly, I can't adequately express how much I value her contributions or how much I enjoy working with her. But life goes on. While Kathy certainly can't be replaced, we have developed a plan to limp along without her. A job description/announcement will be included with the meeting materials, and approval of that, along with the proposed salary, will be on the agenda in November. Our plan is to advertise the opening immediately following the board meeting, with the hope of having the position filled by January.

Just a reminder about Board of Trustees openings for Fulton and Schoharie counties. The Gloversville and Schoharie libraries are looking for candidates. With Christina Knee's resignation, we need to fill the Vice President position. Cheryl Cufari, our longtime Treasurer, will also be leaving us in January. We will discuss these openings at our November meeting.

Automation & Resource Sharing

The JA Council is meeting on November 12. We will have 2020 budget amendments to approve. The amendments are due to upgrades and changes in operations. There is no change to the overall expenditures.

The JA Council is also discussing the pros and cons of making local changes to subject headings. For example, many find the heading "Illegal Aliens" to be offensive. Unfortunately, making a local change is not easy, and involves regular ongoing manual data entry of the kind that we have worked hard to eliminate. We will discuss this at the November meeting.

The annual JA Fees meeting – all virtual this year – is scheduled for December 9.

We are working with SALS on the CARES Act funding from NYS. Since the primary purpose of this funding is to improve digital services, it makes sense to do it through the JA project. The basic idea is to replace the MVLS and SALS allocations to the JA by the CARES funding amount, freeing up system money for other services.

Outreach & Adult Services

A few virtual, and even an in-person NYSCA programs have been held, as well as a few Adult Literacy programs. Our libraries continue to be invited to the 3-system Adult Program Swaps.

Youth Services

The Preview books continue to rotate among member libraries to assist with selection. We expect to be revising this service once our new consultant is in place.

Member libraries have also continued to be invited to the 3-system youth service virtual workshops.

Member Services

Upcoming meetings & workshops

Thursday, November 12

Adult Program Swap

Thursday, December 3
Wednesday, December 9

Director's Meeting
JA Fees Discussion

We continue to work with both the Canajoharie and Schoharie libraries on charter issues and on new library director searches. Schoharie is close to naming a new director, their first director with a library degree. MVLS will be active in providing orientation.

I provided a trustee training session for the Schenectady board on October 22. There is a long history in Schenectady of the library board ceding its responsibility to Schenectady County. I had two goals for this training. The first was to remind the trustees that they are a separate, somewhat independent entity, and that the degree of that "somewhat" is entirely up to them. Second, to make clear that their meeting of their responsibilities must be active, not passive. It is fine to cooperate with the county and to use many county services. It is not fine to institutionalize helplessness.

The census grant project has come to a frustrating but characteristic end. In keeping with the impossible and conflicting schedule that was the hallmark of this funding from the start, on November 2 the state announced that all spending had to be complete by October 31. We have received the funding from Schoharie County, and expect our allocations from Montgomery and Schenectady Counties any day. Hotspots and exhibit systems will be delivered to the libraries when they are received.

Advocacy & Awareness

Wade continues to work on the 21st Century Library Initiative with Cobleskill. Several other libraries are exploring working with Wade on Community Engagement.

The Foundation's "Stay at Home and Read" virtual event is attracting quite a bit of attention. We'll see whether that translates into significant contributions.

The virtual NYLA conference went OK. My opinion: it is no replacement for an in-person conference, but it was better than I expected. We had several libraries participate through the MVLS continuing education grants.

Meetings, Contacts & Field Visits

10/1/2020	MVLS Member Library Directors
10/2/2020	Deborah Grimshaw Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library
10/5/2020	Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie Natalie McDonough, Division of Library Development Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System

10/6/2020	Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
10/7/2020	Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
10/8/2020	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Deborah Grimshaw
	Kathleen Gundrum, Capital District Library Council
	Shannon Aldi-Hogan, Frothingham Free Library
	MVLS Board of Trustees
10/13/2020	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
10/14/2020	Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Michael Burnett, Northville Public Library
	Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie
10/15/2020	Mary Beth Farr, Division of Library Development
	MVLS Board of Trustees
	Kim Zimmer, The Community Library
10/16/2020	Catherine Caiazzo, Schoharie Free Library
10/19/2020	Dawn Lamphere, The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library
10/20/2020	William Levering
10/22/2020	Michael Klein, Arnoff Global Logistics
	MVLS Trustee Education Session
	Lauren Moore, New York State Librarian
	Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
10/23/2020	William Levering
	Foundation Board
	MVLS Member Library Directors
10/26/2020	Lauren Moore, New York State Librarian
10/27/2020	Nicole Hemsley, Amsterdam Free Library
	Karen Bradley, Schenectady County Public Library
10/28/2020	MVLS Member Library Directors
10/29/2020	Foundation Board
	Shannon Aldi-Hogan, Frothingham Free Library
	MVLS Member Library Directors
	Suzan Friedlander, The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie
10/30/2020	Erica Wing, Johnstown Public Library