

1. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR ADVOCACY** - It seems to be the second year in a row when advocacy for library services across the state may have made a difference in Albany. There were about forty of us from Mid-Hudson in Albany on March 5, legislators and their staffs were generally supportive, and many of us made follow-up calls, emails and letters and visits.

We clearly benefited from a number of champions in the legislature, especially Senator Hugh Farley who appeared at the annual New Yorkers for Better Libraries annual dinner the night before Advocacy Day to propose a \$3 million restoration. This somehow became \$4 million in the Senate budget bill on its way to the printers. We also know that Assembly Member Cahill signed a letter to Speaker Silver asking that the final budget include the \$4 million proposed by the Senate. So there were other legislators in our corner as well.

Recognize the state's restoration of support for libraries when you get a chance. Add your representatives to your mailings, if you haven't already done so. Keep them updated. Some are new to you, introduce yourself. There's open discussion of member items, so keep your representatives informed!

2. **2013 BUDGET REVISIONS AHEAD** - The state budget has not been approved as of this writing, but the word is \$4 million more has been restored this year in the final version of the budget, which may get voted on today, March 28. This would bring state aid to \$85.6 million. This is 84% of full-funding, which is \$102 million.

State aid and central library aid to Mid-Hudson can now be expected to increase by 4% from last year. We predicted even less for our general aid, so these revenues will need to be increased by about 6%.

The system services and funding ad hoc committees are meeting following the April 5th DA meeting. Discussion will include merging but also reach a more finalized understanding of expected state revenues, how system and central library aid can be used towards shared member library costs, integrating the Sierra cloud fee in 2014, and any possible credits to member libraries in 2013. Final decisions will be made in May and June following the May MHLS Board meeting. The MHLS Board will see a draft of the revision on May 8. The Board Finance Committee meets on April 22 and will probably meet again before July. The Board would vote on the revised budget at its July 10 meeting.

3. **2012 ANNUAL REPORT** In addition to reviewing member annual reports--Merribeth Advocate, Linda Vittone and I are each reviewing a third of member library reports--the System has its own. Many staff are involved in gathering and reporting data. Linda Vittone takes care of the financials; it's her second financial report to the state this year having already submitted a report to the State Comptroller. I review the calendar and reports by staff--I am finishing drafts of the System Plan of Service Progress Report--and I'm still impressed by how much the System is able to accomplish with one of the smallest staff in the state relative to the number of libraries served. We'll make the report available in April once it's completed and submitted to the state.

4. **2012 ANNUAL MEMBER SURVEY SHARED** The MHLS Board has shared the results of last October's members survey with minimal interpretation. There were two surveys, one for board presidents and one for directors. Links to the results of these, including comments, were sent out via email on March 22 to directors and board presidents. I thought to share my comments on the directors survey here and gather additional comments at the DA meeting. Please, keep providing us feedback! And thank you for participating in last October's survey.

### **Directors Survey**

Nearly seven out of ten directors from each of Mid-Hudson's counties responded. The results suggests to me that member libraries view the System very favorably but there are areas where improvement is suggested.

### **Three Things the System does Well**

Every respondent thought of at least one thing the System does well and most thought of three things. Responses are grouped into categories to help organize what is a very long list. Responses include praise and thanks for specific staff, for the knowledgeable and committed staff at System generally, trustee education and resources, consultant services, board development, Millennium services and the catalog, resource sharing and delivery, wide ranging continuing education opportunities for director and member library staff, technical support, and many other positive examples of good System service.

### **Three Things the System Could do Better**

Most respondents provided one thing the System could do better and, even though fewer respondents contributed two and three comments, respondents produced a long and diverse list. The list included restoring services, such as mileage reimbursement, a youth services consultant, help desk support when libraries are open, and it included new considerations, such as more staffing to make more onsite visits, faster turn-around in the purchase and prep of member library computers, needing to work to achieve a better balance between small and larger libraries, improving System billing, reducing MHLS board conflict, enforcing resource sharing rules, and for the executive director to write and speak less and to advocate more. Review these and you'll see these and other responses as well.

Staff and I have been looking at these suggestions. We reviewed some of our billing and decided to add some additional material with these. We're talking about how we can expand our help desk hours and organize the purchasing and prepping of member library computers, among other considerations.

### **Comments and Suggestions for the MHLS Board**

Half the System's directors or 60% of the directors who responded to the survey, shared comments and suggestions for the MHLS Board. These included concerns about member fees, concerns about reduced System services, a perception that members are being charged more and getting less, concern with System staff frustration, concern about the executive director and encouraged by, and encouraging more, communication between System trustees and

member library trustees. The Board Incentive Committee meets on June 11 to finalize an afternoon MHLS board workshop that will include a discussion on outreach to member library boards. The afternoon workshop is planned for July 10 following the Board's regularly schedule meeting in the morning.

5. **TAX-FREE GASOLINE GONE** - Mid-Hudson will not be getting gas on state contract through Dutchess County, after all, because our drivers use their private vehicles in our delivery service. There was no way to guarantee to the county that each gallon pumped of tax-free gas would be used only for the public purpose of delivery.

It seems we started work on this a year ago and we did! Most of the year, however, was waiting for the county to automate the management of fuel at each of its depots. But in the end, although gas is fungible, its use is not. The county's automated system is based on how many miles are driven for each tank of gas on each vehicle. We average miles per gallon for five vehicles by two manufacturers and in four different models. So there was no way to assure the county that what they pumped would not be used for private miles driven.

Our failure, however, may be another's gain because the legal basis, for a county to provide state-contract gas to a cooperative library system that owns its own vans and drives those vans for delivery and system business only, could potentially save thousands. Hopefully systems that meet these criteria are already running their delivery on tax-free gas. But I'll share the legal findings with other public library system directors just in case these systems are not running on state contract gas.

Finally, nothing ventured, nothing gained: this was a great but unworkable idea. Thanks goes to Tom Finnigan and Chris Herron, who did a great job pursuing this and had great patience as the county worked through the automation of their fuel management and the heads of Central Services and DPW at the county left and new administrators took charge. Thanks also goes to Alex Ibara of Hudson River Transport and his drivers, who were willing to assist in switching over to county gas that would have saved Mid-Hudson thousands.

6. **MHLS FACILITY UPDATE** Mid-Hudson sent in the required Construction Project Progress Report verifying that we would complete all work by June 30. Grant-funded work is in two phases. Phase one was replacement of the auditorium roof and roof decking where needed. This was placed out for bid in July, bids were opened in August and the work was awarded and competed by October 15, 2012. Phase two is the repainting and refurbishing of the auditorium's facade. The work has been registered with the Department of Labor for prevailing wages and quotes will be solicited over the next couple of weeks. Work is expected to be completed no later than May 31, 2013. Meanwhile, we're planning to move forward in the fall with the asbestos abatement project.
7. **EBOOK NEWS** - The news was not good of Penguin's decision to begin selling ebooks at retail to libraries the same day of sale as the physical books, beginning April 2, but titles would expire after a year. That's not good for library or publisher with the latter undervaluing

the role of libraries in sustaining their readers and customers. Getting quality product to readers has always had its challenges, but given what we understand about the explosion of content online, this isn't going to get any easier for the publisher and it's certainly already a lot more complicated for libraries!

8. **READERS FIRST!** There are a lot of efforts leading for the establishment of a more rational model of library ebook purchasing that is based on “one book, one reader.” [ReadersFirst](#) is calling for "open, easy and free access to e-books” like with physical books. Signatories include Finger Lakes Library System in Ithaca, Mid York Library System in Utica, and Brooklyn, Queens and New York Public. Are there efforts you are willing to have Mid-Hudson advocate?