

Advocacy

I joined Mid-Hudson Board Members, staff and others in a series of visits, letters and emails as part of mid-Hudson's advocacy campaign leading up to March 1, Advocacy Day. It's hard to overstate the need to talk up the benefits of system services such as resource sharing, equality of access, economies of scale leading to cost savings, education and leadership.

Board Meetings

I attended board meetings at Reed-Memorial on February 7 and Kent Public Library on February 15. Mid-Hudson Board Member Jean Ehnebuske attended the board meeting in Carmel and Pat Miller joined me at Kent. We encouraged board members to participate in Advocacy Day or to advocate for the better funding of libraries by contacting their state representatives.

Senator Greg Ball

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich arranged a meeting between Senator Greg Ball and Mid-Hudson Board Members Jean Ehnebuske, Pat Miller and me on February 11.

Because the Senator has been appointed to the SAGE Commission, we focused on the cooperative nature of library systems and the use of economies of scale to reduce costs. The message we conveyed to him was that the twenty-three library systems across the state have been the model of resource sharing and efficiency for fifty years and are examples of how other state services can be organized to realize economies of scale, save tax dollars and improve service.

Now, after years of no increase in funding, however, funding to libraries is now being cut disproportionately. Under the Governor's budget, state library funding falls \$102 million to \$76 million, which was the funding for library services in 1994!

I was encouraged by Senator Ball's reaction to the 25% cut to library funding. He seemed sympathetic to the argument that libraries were being cut unfairly.

Because he co-sponsored the property tax cap, we also raised the issue of the potential unintended consequences of a tax cap on libraries. Senator Ball commented that he did not really support the tax cap for "towns." He would prefer that it apply only to "school districts."

Panel Discussion

I attended a panel discussion hosted by Assemblywoman Sandy Galef at the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison on February 10 that focused on alternatives to property taxes to fund education. Panelist included Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, who discussed his bill to finance schools through income taxes, economist Frank Munro, and others. Mid-Hudson Board Member Jean Ehnebuske also attended.

Member Library Visits

I attended the Public Computer Center opening ceremony at Mahopac on February 4. Mahopac and Adriance are two Mid-Hudson member libraries that received a BTOP grant. Mahopac had a wonderful turn-out with a number of local, county, state and federal leaders and representatives attending. Mid-Hudson Board Members Martin Miller and Jean Ehnebuske also attended. I also had a chance to meet Assemblyman Steve Katz and share my concern with continued cutting of library funding.

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I visited and toured the Marlboro Public Library, talked with Jim Cosgrove, met library staff and learned about the library, especially its use of technology. I also visited and toured the Kingston Public Library with Margie Menard, met some of the library's board members and staff, and learned about the library and its connection to the arts community. There is a lot of passion and great energy in our member libraries!

Division of Library Development (DLD)

I participated in the February conference call between DLD and library system directors, which included Jeff Cannall and Mary Todd from DLD. Heads of Departments at Mid-Hudson are invited to join in on these calls and Linda Vittone and Laurie Shedrick were able to attend the February 8th call.

It was announced that Article VII legislation was on the Governor's desk and would become law on February 14 unless vetoed. It has subsequently become law. It includes supplementary system aid language for 2010-11. The Final 2010-2011 total for state funding of library services is expected to be \$84.458 million. Funding charts are expected by the first week of March.

It was shared that the 2011-2012 Executive budget included:

- 10% cut to the library aid appropriation, to \$76 million
- \$14 million in capital funds for public library construction grants
- Supplemental system aid would be annualized and made permanent in law. This change would enable NY State to use these annualized state funds for maintenance of effort for federal LSTA monies.
- That there was no "held harmless" provisions for categorical aid that might be affected by a fall in population served, such as correctional services aid.

There was some discussion about [waivers for systems in financial distress and other forms of relief](#). There was also discussion about the possibility of cross-library system cooperation and possible merging of services if not systems.

Plan of Service

I've attend a number of our plan of service focus group sessions to listen to what various stakeholders of our member libraries are saying about their opportunities and challenges. So far these include the sessions for the directors of Dutchess, Greene and Putnam counties and the trustees from Dutchess County. Rebekkah Smith Aldrich and Merribeth Advocate are doing a super job in getting everyone to contribute.

Important focus sessions ahead that I am planning to attend include Ulster County Trustees on February 23 and the Central Library Advisory Committee meeting on February 25.

Resource Sharing Advisory Committee

My attendance of the Resource Sharing Advisory Committee was a good introduction to collaborative governance. The discussions that interested me most were those that dealt with the issue of fairness. How do we determine what is fair or unfair use under our resource sharing

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agreements. When is a net borrower, as opposed to a net lender, exceeding the fair use of other member collections?

Fortunately Laurie Shedrick is able to gather the data from Millennium that will document the rates member libraries loan and borrow from one another. Once the data is hand, we'll need to identify when the difference between borrowing and loaning might become unfair and any remedial steps that might be taken.

There was also concern that materials sent to correctional facilities resulted in higher than average loss rates. Actual data, however, showed that there was a less than 1% loss rate for material sent to correctional services. And in fact, the seven correctional facilities and five jails that are in the Mid-Hudson region are members of Mid-Hudson and fall under the system's resource sharing agreements.

Free Direct Access

There was some discussion around the Free Direct Access policy. The policy identifies what constitutes unfair use between member libraries and by the residents of unserved areas.

Documentation is key and the data is available from Millennium to determine use in support of the policy. Thought has to be given to what constitutes a level of unfair use. Presently unfair use is use by residents of an unserved area or from another service area that represent "10% of an onsite library's circulation... or 25% of holds."

Once these thresholds are reached, a member library would, if it wished, 1) document at least two failed attempts to obtain funding from the town; 2) have the system draft a proposal for a denial of service to the residents of the town; 3) have the proposal submitted to the Directors Association for approval; and 4) have the denial of service submitted to the Commissioner for approval.

Under the current policy, denial of service is limited to and includes 1) refusal to lend material less than a year old; 2) refusal to lend non-print, e.g. video, music CDs, books on tape; and 3) refusal to allow attendance at programs.

Residents affected by a denial of service could still obtain a free library card and would still enjoy on-site use of library resources with the exception of programs.

One question that was raised about a denial of service, and we are researching this now, was whether a denial of service could legally be levied on the residents of an unserved (and uncontributing) town if the town had a population less than 10,000.

An ad hoc committee was formed under the Resource Sharing Advisory Committee to begin drafting a new free direct access policy.