

### **2011-2016 Library System Plan of Service - Final Draft**

The core of the system's new five year plan of service has reached its final draft. It moves to the Directors Association for review on July 8. The Association will be asked to endorse the plan before the MHLS Board of Trustees considers it for adoption on September 14.

The final draft represents a significant collaborative effort by the Library System and member libraries.

- Areas of member library need were first identified and prioritized in focus groups that included 244 member library trustees, directors, friends and staff from 63 libraries and five correctional facilities.
- Summaries of these needs were prepared and made available to member libraries.
- To address these needs, the Directors Association brainstormed library system goals and their intended results. Categories provided by the state were used to organize these goals and intended results.
- System advisory committees continued the work of the Directors Association in the areas of their oversight by completing the goals and intended results. These included the advisory committees for marketing, resource sharing and continuing education and professional development.
- A central library plan was developed by the advisory committee for central Library and collection development for the services funded by the state central library development and central book aid.
- In June, the MHLS Ad Hoc Services Committee met twice to
  - Edit the goals and intended results for appropriateness, substance and clarity.
  - Review the methods of evaluation developed by system staff, adding outcome-based evaluation where appropriate.
- Also in June, the MHLS Board of Trustees Planning and Personnel Committee met to
  - Edit the plan for clarity.
  - Delegate the identification of changing member needs to system advisory committees as a pathway to revising the plan when needed.
  - Authorized advisory committees to validate patron satisfaction with system-wide collections and the system's integrated library system.

### **Library System Preliminary 2012 Budget and 2013, 2014 Projections**

The MHLS Board of Trustees Finance Committee, system staff and I have begun work on the MHLS 2012 budget, as well as budget projections for 2013 and 2014. We will be presenting a preliminary budget summary to the MHLS Board at its July 13 meeting. The budget is very tentative and based on a number of assumptions.

- State aid will be less in 2012 than in 2011 and will reflect the governor's full 10% cut in library aid proposed for NYS FYs 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.
- No additional state revenue will be expected in 2013 and 2014.
- Member fees for "wires and tires" in 2012 will be calculated with the rates and formulas developed by the 2010 System Funding Task Force.
- There will be no increase in the rates for member fees in 2013 and 2014.
- State aid for jail and correctional services will actually decline below the governor's 10% cut, reflecting the declining populations in the correctional facilities served by MHLS.

- Restricted fund balances of 58% of total expenditures will support cash flow in 2012, 2013 and 2014, which will, for example, be sufficient to pay the platform fee for Overdrive in 2012 and avoid losing momentum in the purchase of e-books as occurred in 2011.
- Negotiations with CSEA will focus on cost of living increases for both 2011 and 2012, and possibly 2013, but the MHLS Board of Trustees Planning and Personnel Committee will be conducting a review staff compensation and benefits, in part to address the system's Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) and any unfunded liability.
- Attention will be given to long-overdue capital repairs beginning this fall to address safety concerns in the parking lot--filling depressions--and to limit repair costs to the exterior of the Auditorium.
- Negotiations for a new delivery contract will begin in 2012, which expires June 30, 2012, and will result in no increase in costs.

### **Ask Us 24/7 - Rear guard action?**

Jim Cosgrove of the Marlboro Free Library shared an article with Rebekkah Smith Aldrich from *MSN Money*, "13 things that are free at the library." Among the many things of value mentioned in the article, which Rebekkah shared on Mid-Hudson's *In the News* Listserv, was the realtime answering service of Librarian 24/7.

The service is part of a national network of hundreds of libraries and library systems, colleges and universities, that collaborate to move the once traditional desk-bound reference service to a service available online anytime, anywhere.

For Mid-Hudson to participate, there would be a one-time setup fee of \$1,450 and an annual fee of \$4,703. Member libraries would also need to provide online reference for a total of 15 hours a week, system-wide. At present, participation is limited to librarians with an MLS.

But there is the view that this service is a rear guard action by libraries and that the battle is already lost to realtime services such as ChaCha and Twitter Answers, or to just Google and Bing.

There are libraries that have tried the service and quickly dropped it, arguing the service isn't worth the effort; too much of the service is to non-residents; too many questions focus on ordinary library procedures, such as how to get a card or renew materials; and that people no longer look to libraries for answers anyway.

But for those who think this may be a strategic retreat, one wonders what other library services may be replaced by emerging services and technologies.

Readers advisory? Amazon already leads the way by displaying titles of interest that may be related to a customer's search. There are libraries that have joined Amazon in providing this value-added advisory in their catalogs. Many have not.

Emerging services based on artificial intelligence promise to give many traditional expert services a run for their money. In some areas this challenge has arrived. The *New York Times* reported in March 2011 that e-discovery software is replacing teams of lawyers and paralegals in preparing complicated civil cases that involve pouring over thousands of documents; and that a "hollowing out" of whole professions may be just around the corner, impacting legal, accounting and banking services first.

Makes you wonder how ready libraries are to move aggressively forward and fight for a spot in the emerging digital forest, and where the battle lines will be drawn.

**Other Items:** Living (anxiously) in the future - My summer read of *Super Sad True Love Story* and an example of life imitating art.