

Recruitment of Automation Coordinator

Efforts are underway to recruit a librarian to lead Mid-Hudson's automation program following Laurie's resignation and decision to join Innovative Interfaces Inc. It won't be easy to find someone with Laurie's expertise, intelligence, good humor, ability to communicate and commitment to customer service.

Notice of this opportunity has been sent to the Millennium and Mid-Hudson lists, NYLINE, library system directors throughout the state, and the national Innovative users list. Resumes, statements of interest, and lists of three professional references can be sent to my attention at search@midhudson.org through December 31, 2011. Minimum qualifications are a Master's degree (MLS, MIS) from an ALA accredited institution and 2 or more years of related full-time experience, including 1 year of supervisory experience.

If we're lucky, we could have a successor in place by mid-February. A review committee will be formed in December. Review of candidates will begin January 3rd. My goal is to schedule a first-round of phone interviews by January 13.

Transition

We want our automation and technical support services to continue as smoothly as possible after Laurie leaves on December 9. We are identifying what Laurie does on a daily, weekly, monthly and as-needed basis and have developed a checklist of about 60 items. Our goal is to have staff temporarily handle the high priority tasks that have been routinely handled by Laurie. High priority items include:

- Updating ytd and lytd fields on January 1
- Updating the WAM tables
- Compiling and providing member libraries statistics for annual reports
- Loading records
- Tracking calls in CS Direct on a daily basis
- Updating the days-closed table for 2012 (Member libraries will do this in 2012 for 2013)
- Checking back-ups daily
- Checking Teleforms daily
- Staff for the hours we've scheduled for technical support
- Monitoring transaction Files daily
- Managing Millennium tables in the backend

But we won't be able to do everything we're doing now. We will need to put some tasks on hold or give them a lower priority than we do now. These include

- New SAM installations
- Changing loan rules
- Training and workshops

Because we switched to (845) 471-6060 Extension 240 for our technical support line, we will be able to triage all incoming calls and transfer them to the right person. We will update member libraries as our plans become firmer.

Automation Billing

Beginning in 2012, the annual automation billing that was part of member library and Mid-Hudson automation agreements will be replaced by the bimonthly billing of the members fee.

2012 MHLS Budget

We are still finalizing Mid-Hudson's 2012 budget and continuing to work on projections for 2013 and 2014. The 2012 budget will be reviewed by the Finance Committee on November 30 and will go to the Mid-Hudson Board of Trustees on Saturday, December 10.

There are no increases in the rates for member fees in 2012 or 2013, and no restoration of aid in 2012-2013 to the Governor's proposed cuts is expected.

We reached an agreement with our CSEA bargaining unit on Friday, November 18. The agreement goes to the Board in December for consideration and possible ratification.

Review of staff compensation has also been completed and will be reviewed by the Board in December as well. This may result in some targeted increases for staff but has unfortunately come too late to retain one key coordinator, Laurie Shedrick, who leaves on December 9.

Restricted fund balances will be kept to 58% of total expenditures to provide the System adequate cash flow in 2012. We don't want a repeat of the embarrassing inability to pay the Overdrive platform fee in 2012 that occurred in 2011.

eBooks

It's been a very successful inaugural year for our OverDrive service as MerriBeth reported on November 18th. Just a day past the anniversary of its launch, the ratio of items circulating to items in the collection was nearly 16:1. The service circulated just under 20,000 items, including 15,654 eBooks we purchased and 4,277 eBooks from Project Gutenberg.

But what are the chances that demand for the service will shoot through the roof with the sale of several million Kindle Fire tablets this shopping season, not to mention the sale of the Kindle Touch priced at \$99!

I'm beginning to wonder if I might have been too quick to discount the predictions by publishing industry executives involved in the eBook trade that 50% of books will be eBooks by 2014 as wishful thinking or over-the-top hype.

According to Library Journal's second annual eBook survey conducted this summer, expenditures for eBooks by public libraries averaged 2% of materials budgets in 2010 and 4% in 2011. Respondents predicted that the percentage spent on eBooks will be 9% in five years.

According to the survey, almost all libraries providing eBook collections do so through consortia. Twenty-seven percent of libraries serve populations under 25,000 but provide average size collections of 2,709 eBooks. Five percent of libraries reported serving populations of 500,000 plus with eBook collections averaging 9,610.

The Library Journal survey doesn't produce statistically valid data for all U.S. public libraries, but it does provide some indication where our peers are headed.

Based on the total expenditures for library materials by Mid-Hudson member libraries in 2010 of \$2,548,611, expenditures for eBooks at 2% would be \$50,972, at 4% \$101,944, and 9% at \$229,375. Our current level of annual investment in eBooks *and* downloadable audiobooks is \$40,000.

Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology

The New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology is holding a public hearing on Tuesday, November 29, 2011, at 10 am in Albany. It is seeking testimony on 1) the impact of the 2011-12 State budget on public libraries, and 2) the future needs of our public libraries and library systems.

First, we need to hammer home the message of the continued importance and relevance of public libraries. The perception that libraries are no longer relevant in a digital world would be accurate if all digital content were free. But this is demonstrably false. Access to information and publications should not depend on the ability of state residents to pay for this access.

There is also the multiplier effect of public funding. The public leverages a small bit of its wealth and makes an investment in its local library, and the state in library systems, that pays again and again and again each time a state resident uses a computer, accesses the WiFi, or downloads an eBook provided by a library.

There are also the negative impacts of the tax cap, especially on association and municipal libraries, and the lack of mandate relief that could possibly ameliorate these impacts. This impacts all members of a system by dampening cost-sharing at a time when yet another format--ebooks--is joining an already crowded field.

There's also the economic development role in addition to the more widely recognized quality of life contributions libraries make. Additional information on the hearing and the reply form can be found at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/comm/Library/20111028/>

There's a lot to share!

Libraries and economic development

Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council published its Strategic Report. Public libraries and library systems are mentioned as potential partners in workforce development and economic development projects. I attended the presentation of the draft report on November 9 and, it took a bit of effort, but this is something we can really build on.

You may have seen the article on the Fayetteville Free Library that Rebekkah sent out about the opening of its Fab Lab. The Fab[rication] Lab is a movement to provide communities with a local means of developing and demonstrating new products and services. The article has actually received quite a bit of play in the library community as a way of increasing the local economic development potential of public libraries.

I think libraries with BTOP programs are good candidates to develop the resources and capacity needed for fab labs in the next 2-3 years. There are five BTOP-funded centers in the Mid-Hudson Economic Development Region:

- Poughkeepsie Public Library District
- Mahopac Public Library
- New Rochelle Public Library in Westchester County
- Port Jervis Free Library in Orange County
- Haverstraw King's Daughter Public Library in Rockland County

The BTOP-funded centers have the technology and expertise in place that can serve as a basis for the development of fablabs. And they have strong workforce development components that include skill-building and job-seeking training for the underserved, under-employed and unemployed.

I hope to leverage the inclusion of libraries and library systems in the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan to develop increased capacity for BTOP recipients. Library system directors in the state have emailed about using LSTA funding for this as well. But I'm thinking private funding may also be possible. (The news from Washington is anything but encouraging.)

Of course, there are already many reasons to recognize the economic development potential of public libraries.

- There is a direct relationship between property value and the reputation of a community's schools, the availability of good housing and other quality of life factors that include libraries.
- In 2010, 67% of public libraries reported being the only provider of free public access and WiFi in their communities.
- Public libraries already support many business professionals with on-site computers, productivity software, broadband and WiFi.
- Coworking is a growing trend. Public libraries are responding by providing resources to small and start-up businesses, and to those people armed with "a laptop and an idea." These resources include space and the tools for digital editing and production, photography, graphic design and web development.
- In 2010, people who have been negatively impacted by the economy are twice as likely to access the Internet at a public library than those who have not been negatively impacted, and are 50% more likely to visit a public library on a weekly basis. Use of a public library's computers is often for job seeking and skill development.