

MHLS Report to Member Library Directors | February 2025

The format of this report is based on the MHLS service priorities as determined by MHLS stakeholders.

1. Delivery Services

- a. Driver Updates: Kamil Parzych is a new substitute driver for MHLS delivery vendor, Valley Courier. Kamil has covered routes 3, 4, and 5 since starting in December. Bright Benyi, the previous substitute driver, is now the primary driver of route 2 taking over for long time driver Rony Cantarero. Rony is now the primary driver of route 4 with the departure of Jose Estela.
- b. MHLS and Valley Courier work together during inclement weather events to discuss the best strategy regarding the delivery service. This includes options for night delivery, delayed delivery, or the cancelation of delivery. The drivers are independent contractors and make the decision of whether conditions allow for the safe completion of their routes.
- c. Mitigating Service Interruptions / Temporary Storage: MHLS Delivery Operations recently worked with the Grinnell library with a hold on delivery and provided storage of their materials as they completed an abatement project. Also, the department assisted the Palenville branch of the Catskill library with a hold on delivery and provided storage of their materials as they moved into their new location. We are currently working with Cairo providing delivery to a temporary location as they work through a mold remediation project. Let us know if you have or need any special delivery requests during renovations, construction, or emergency situations.
- d. MHLS is closed on Monday, 2/17, in observance of Presidents' Day and there will be no delivery. A general reminder to factor in holidays when forward sorting materials to expedite delivery and forward sort for your next MHLS scheduled delivery day after a holiday. MHLS will send a reminder to the notice list prior to any holiday and delivery routes by day and library are at <https://midhudson.org/topics/resource-sharing/delivery/>

2. Integrated Library System & Cataloging Services

- a. **The Encore catalog has been issued end-of-life dates.** Current customers have received notification that the product will move into a period of limited support, beginning February 1st with an end of product at the close of the year. While we are no longer technically Encore customers, we do still have a working installation in place which we are using as our current solution for access to text messaging. We will be replacing this with our new version of SMS text messaging as Development Partners, just as soon as Innovative is ready for us. We will be the second and largest consortia to use the new texting product, which we negotiated in our new contract as an upgrade with no additional cost to member libraries.
- b. **New patron registration is coming to Discover (Vega).** Innovative will be announcing a new patron registration feature that will be available in Discover (Vega) at their user group conference in March.

MHLS has asked to be early adopters as a voice for consortia as the service is made available for testing.

- c. Our **Mobile Patron App** is being tested by PPLD and Highland. We will soon be adding Marlboro and Mahopac. A change in how Innovative would deploy the app to us has delayed us, but in the end, the change will be advantageous to our launch as it adds a more manageable interface that enables MHLS to distribute updates and features more efficiently. We are working on establishing each library's profile in the app with baseline services and some branding. Once our pilot libraries have tested the app with good results, we will publicize our Launch Kit, complete with training opportunities and marketing materials. At that time, we will work with libraries as they are ready to take over managing their app, through Director requests in the MHLS Technology Operations Ticketing System.

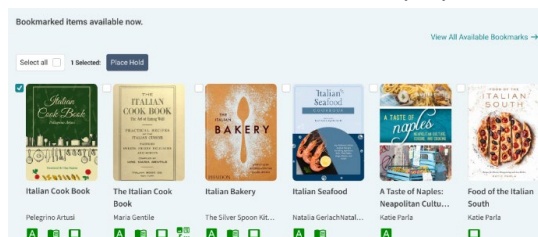
[Video of patron features.](#)

- d. **MHLS Authority Control switching to Backstage.** Our previous vendor for bibliographic authority control (Marchive) abruptly announced that they would be going out of business. Nina has quickly pivoted the Cataloging Team to a new vendor, Backstage (Yes, they are the ones with the cool postcards from movie posters.) The process of switching requires a full export and import of our database to align our records with Backstage's files. The process should be completed by mid-February.

- e. **Local Subject Headings** work continues to improve access and inclusive language in our catalog. Nina, BJ and Rebecca have updated more than 1000 subject headings ([get a copy of the file](#)) in our catalog have been supplemented with additional terms that make it possible for patrons to find resources using the terms that phrases that connect with their experience. If you have recommendations for subject heading updates or includes, please submit them as an email to cataloging@midhudson.org

f. **Coming soon to Discover:**

- **New full record display** – one pain point we hear about often is the lack of detail that is available in the full record view. Innovative is working in more content in the edition are to include the aspects that differentiate editions in the summary area of the editions. We expect to have this available for beta testing this Spring.
- **Patron bookmarked lists** will have the option to display a showcase of items that are currently bookmarked items that are currently available for borrowing. This will also be available as a filter within the bookmark list display.



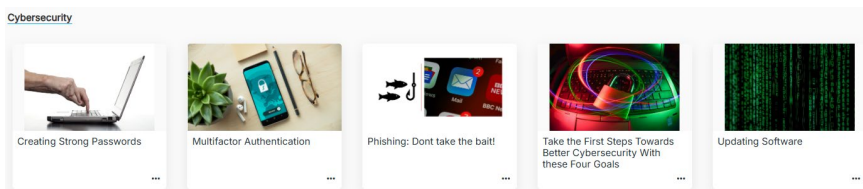
- **Pickup Areas:** Innovative has been working on supporting pickup areas, which would be a subcategory within a pickup location. For example, if a library has lockers, or substations for picking up materials or if a library has more than one circulation desk the library could offer patrons the option of picking up at one site or another within the library based on the area they visit. This development is in the final stages. If you have thoughts about how you might

use this or considerations that we can take to the development conversation, please do reach Laurie Shedrick at lshedrick@midhudson.org or X 220.

- g. **Member Exclusive Enhancement Process (MEEP) voting:** Each year the Innovative User Group, gets to “demand” a short list of upgrades to be prioritized. This is done through the process of a selection committee (MHLS has requested a seat at that table, as there are currently no consortia) who create a ballot of items for the membership to vote on. This year the following were selected for Sierra, so we should see these within the calendar year.
- An increase in the categories available in the patron block table. This table manages the limits we set on patrons. Currently we have only four types of materials that we can limit – which is quite limiting for us! Innovative has committed adding variables that include ptype, itype and checkout location. We think this will greatly improve on what is available in our loan rules, particularly for library of things materials and passes.
 - The ability to open and edit a patron record from the item record patron fields. (Finally!)

3. Coordinated IT Services

- a. **A reminder about Static IP Addresses:** Your building must have a static internet IP address. This is necessary for secure access to the Sierra Desktop environment and is required by our ILS Vendor. If you change providers or IP addresses, you must notify MHLS with an email to techsupport@midhudson.org **at least two weeks prior to the change**. The requirement is part of the [Memo of Understanding](#) which has been signed between MHLS and all member libraries (See item #10 on page 6).
- b. The Patron Mobile App includes the option to include a digital barcode that can be scanned like a library card with the appropriate barcode scanner. **Scanners must be “2D” to read the screen**. The Zebra model DS4608 is a recommended model or equivalent specification profile. Libraries can also order using the [MHLS equipment](#) form.
- c. A rise in cybersecurity attacks on Schools and Libraries marks an opportunity for you to work with beefing up your staff’s awareness. Enroll them in the [Cybersecurity series](#) on MHLS Technology | Training on Demand. If you need a little brushing up, our Admin area of Knowledge Base includes a [Security Checklist](#) with resources to guide you towards a more secure digital environment.



- d. **E-rate Filing Window Dates:** The Funding Year (FY) 2025 FCC Form 471 application **filing window opened on Wednesday, January 15, 2025**, at noon ET and **will close on Wednesday, March 26, 2025**, at 11:59 p.m. ET. **Wednesday, February 26, 2025 is the last date that you can submit and certify an FCC Form 470 and still wait the required minimum 28-day period** before submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471 by March 26, 2025, the last date of the FY2025 application filing window.
- e. **Erate Webinar Series:** Erate: Form 471/End bidding, the fourth tutorial in the Erate Series on MHLS [Technology | Training on Demand](#) is now available. The tutorial takes filers through the end of the bidding process, which includes evaluation of bids and documentation, and concludes with the form 471 filing to complete the bid process and request funding. As the others in the series before it, this tutorial

includes a resource page with links to related content and worksheets.

- f. **Windows 10 end of support:** As Windows 10 approaches end of support on Oct 14, 2025. If you still have windows 10 computers, you will want to schedule your upgrade soon. Microsoft has released some more information, there will be an option to purchase Extended Security Updates (ESU) for Windows 10. This would extend the support for 1-year (10/14/2026), at a cost of \$61 for business and \$30 for individuals. There is no mention of education or nonprofit pricing.
<https://www.theverge.com/2024/10/31/24284398/microsoft-windows-10-extended-securityupdates-consumer-pricing>

4. Professional Development & Continuing Education

- a. The Central Library Collection Development Advisory committee and the OverDrive Ad Hoc Advisory Committee have both identified a need for improved collection development and management. To that end MHLS Technology department has put together a full year of training options to build a better foundational understanding of the data and reports that our ILS has to offer to help administrators and staff manage and build collections that meet their community's needs.

Introduction to OverDrive Marketplace	In this webinar, Nina Acosta, MHLS Data Operations Supervisor, will provide an orientation to the OverDrive Marketplace for library staff. We will review several reports to help you better understand your patrons' usage of OverDrive/Libby, and review tools and features that make it quicker and easier to build your Advantage Plus collection. This webinar will be recorded and made available to watch on-demand after the session. REGISTER HERE	2/20/2025 10:00-11:00 AM
Introduction to Sierra Reports and Statistics	In this session, Technology Operations Manager Laurie Shedrick will introduce the many resources for reporting within Sierra. The session will identify the strengths and weaknesses for each report type as well as provide the insight for which report to use when. This is perfect for new Sierra users who want to get to know what Sierra has to offer in reporting, and also for those sage administrators who have fallen into a pattern of using only the reports they know well. REGISTER HERE	2/26/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM
Sierra Circulation Reports	There are several resources for reporting circulation statistics. We will begin with some foundational information on circulation statistical reporting and build on that with a deep dive into the various reports available in the circulation reporting tools. By the end of the session you will have a good understanding of how to capture your libraries data and see it in the context of your county and the rest of the consortium. REGISTER HERE	3/06/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM

Understanding the Sierra Holds	This session will review how to manage the demand across both physical collection and OverDrive. In the first part of the session we will review the Sierra High Demand Hold Report, The Manage Holds Report and the holdshelf. We will review how holds work start to finish, including the Patron placed hold in Discover. REGISTER HERE	4/03/2025, 10:00-11:00 AM
Introduction to OverDrive Marketplace	In this webinar, Nina Acosta, MHLS Data Operations Supervisor, will provide an orientation to the OverDrive Marketplace for library staff. We will review several reports to help you better understand your patrons' usage of OverDrive/Libby, and review tools and features that make it quicker and easier to build your Advantage Plus collection. This webinar will be recorded and available on-demand after the session. REGISTER HERE	6/12/2025, 2:00-3:00 PM
Decision Center Reports	Decision Center offers reporting tools that can help you to better evaluate your transactions in larger context. There are tools for collection development that examine your current collection for usage trends and weeding tools that will help you to locate the most appropriate titles for weeding based on no use or overuse. Once the reports are created, they can be further filtered. The export to review file or excel will make the next step in your project a breeze. REGISTER HERE	7/10/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM
Mobile Worklist	Mobile Worklist is a staff application that can be used in many staff tasks. As a mobile app the product is designed for tasks that are done in the stacks or away from the traditional circulation desk environment. REGISTER HERE	9/24/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM
Introduction to Weeding your Collection	Collection Development includes removing the items that have lost relevance, are no longer in demand or are no longer physically appropriate for use. We will explore reports that will help you to identify and target areas of your collection for weeding. REGISTER HERE	10/07/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM
Introduction to Create Lists	Create Lists is the key to understanding your collection hands down. This session will introduce you to this tool and get you started with the basic searches that will be the foundation for most searches across all record types. REGISTER HERE	11/20/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM
Create Lists - Advanced	Once you have the basics of creating lists of your items and patrons under your belt, it is time to take the next steps! We will cover more complex and nested searches and explore more exported options withing Excel. REGISTER HERE	12/11/2025, 10:00-12:00 PM

- b. Please see Section 5 for information about the **2025 Sustainable Funding Series** for Directors and Trustees.

- c. **New Directors Forum:** Immediately following the Directors Association (DA) meeting on Friday, April 25th we will host the New Directors Forum which is designed for directors in their position for three years or less, but all directors are welcome to join us if you are interested in the topic. For this meeting we will be talking about “Key Performance Indicators for Library Success.” Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measurements used to gauge performance. They can help your library know if you are achieving your strategic, financial or other goals. We will be joined by a guest speaker, Matthew Bollerman who has worked with his board of trustees to define, develop and track KPIs for almost two years. Come find out how you can use these measures to better use the limited resources you have.

Learning Objectives:

- Why the use of key performance indicators (KPIs) in libraries can lead to improved performance.
- What KPIs are and how to gather the information needed.
- Using the KPIs in making operational decisions, tracking progress and allocating resources.

- d. **NYS Talking Book and Braille Library Informational Session | Thursday, February 20 | 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM | Online | [REGISTER HERE](#)**

In this one-hour online session New York State Talking Book and Braille Library (TBBL) Senior Librarian Laurene Teachout (she/her) will share recent updates to the program, provide an overview of services focusing on institution membership and the important role public libraries play in connecting community members to accessible reading materials. There will be plenty of time for your questions. If you would like to send a question in advance of the event, please email your question to kcruger@midhudson.org with TBBL Information Session in the subject line before February 13th.

This session is open to all member library directors and staff no matter your registration status with TBBL.

The New York State Talking Book and Braille Library (TBBL) is a free library service for residents in Upstate New York who have difficulty reading standard print due to a visual, physical, or reading disability. TBBL’s service includes free circulation of audio and braille books and magazines through the US Postal Service, long-term loan of playback equipment, and access to a free online downloading service called Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD).

- e. **Statewide Summer Reading Program Planning Workshops**

Hosted by: Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System, Finger Lakes Library System, Mid-Hudson Library System, Mid-York Library System, Mohawk Valley Library System, Nassau Library System, North Country Library System, Onondaga County Library System, Ramapo-Catskill Library System, Southern Adirondack Library System, Southern Tier Library System, Suffolk Cooperative Library System, Upper Hudson Library System

- f. **Children's Statewide Summer Reading Planning Workshop | Tuesday, February 25, 2025 | 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM | Online | [REGISTER HERE](#)**

Library systems representing libraries from around the state are joining together to host an epic summer programming workshop -- *Color Our World: Collaborative Children's SRP Workshop!*

Hear from your colleagues around the state and walk away with ideas for your summer reading program.

- g. **Teen Statewide Summer Reading Planning Workshop | Tuesday, March 11, 2025 | 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM | Online | Registration opening soon**

Library systems representing libraries from around the state are joining together to host an epic summer programming workshop -- *Color Our World: Collaborative Teen SRP Workshop!*

Hear from your colleagues around the state and walk away with ideas for your summer reading program.

5. Consulting & Development

a. Sustainable Funding

- **A letter will be sent to all board presidents and directors of association and municipal public libraries** encouraging annual budget votes from this point forward. Within this letter there will be info about the **Sustainable Funding series of workshops and webinars** planned for 2025 that will include:

1. For Trustees:

a. Finance for Trustees

i. Part 1: (IN PERSON - June 3 from 5-7pm)

1. Fiscal Oversight
2. Reading Reports
3. Budget Development

ii. Part 2: Multi-Year Financial Planning (ONLINE – June 24 from 5-6:30)

2. For Directors:

a. Finance for Directors (IN PERSON – May 14 from 10am-2pm)

- i. Budgeting 101
- ii. Financial Reporting
- iii. Working with a treasurer/bookkeeper
- iv. Multi-Year Financial Planning

3. For Directors & Trustees

- a. Sustainable Funding Options for Association & Municipal Public Libraries (ONLINE - April 3 at 5-6:30pm)
- b. Employee Benefits: Health Insurance & Retirement Options – Date TBD
- c. Insurance Coverage – Date TBD

- **2025 Budget & Building Votes:** Please let us know if your library is planning a 259, 414, or building referendum vote this year. You can report that to Laura at lcisci@midhudson.org
 1. MHLS will once again host 414 Meet-ups throughout the year for libraries pursuing a ballot initiative in November. Watch the MHLS Notices list and Bulletin for registration information.

- b. **Form I-9: Employment Eligibility Verification** - All employers must complete and retain [Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification](#). The form consists of two sections and two supplements:

- [Section One: Employee Information and Attestation](#)
Completed by employees
- [Section Two: Employer or Authorized Representative Review and Verification](#)
Completed by employers
- [Supplement A, Preparer and/or Translator Certification for Section 1](#)
Completed by individuals who assist employees in completing or translating Section 1.
- [Supplement B: Reverification and Rehires](#)
Completed by employers for employees who are rehired or whose employment authorization requires reverification.

The links above for each section and supplement review the instructions for these areas of the form.

- c. **The State Library has posted this [Information to Help New York’s Libraries Safeguard the Rights of Immigrants](#)** and shared the Office of New Americans’ [Know Your Rights](#) resources. The Office of New Americans Hotline number available if anyone is looking for referrals to legal services or other support. They can call 1-800-566-7636, Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm, all calls are confidential and information is available in 200+ languages.
- d. The Lawyers Alliance For New York recently issued a **briefing for nonprofits** with some advice in light of their interpretation of comments from the incoming presidential administration regarding plans for “massive changes to federal oversight and policies” relating to nonprofit organizations. Since many member libraries and Friends Groups hold federal nonprofit status (501(c)3), we thought this would be helpful to share: “[Get Ready for New Federal Government Policies and Enforcement Priorities](#)”
- For item B: sample COI and disclosure forms are available on the [MHLS web site](#)
 - For item D: libraries are probably better prepared than most organizations due to our professional ethics and the [NYS law](#) that protects library records. But this is a good reminder to review your Law Enforcement Inquiry policy and procedures (or adopt those if you don’t currently have them, samples are available on the [MHLS web site](#))
- e. Key changes in NYS Employment Law in 2025:
- **Minimum Wage Increases.** Effective January 1, 2025, the hourly minimum wage will increase from \$15.00 to \$15.50.
 - **Salary Exempt Threshold Changes.** Employees may be exempt from overtime requirements depending on their job duties. On January 1, 2025, the new weekly minimum salary threshold for exempt status will increase, the new weekly minimum salary is \$1,161.65 per week, up from \$1,124.20. Here is a good explanation of the differences between “exempt,” “nonexempt,” “salaried,” and “hourly” from SHRM: <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/hr-answers/terms-exempt-nonexempt-salaried-hourly-mean>
 - **End of COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave.** COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave expires on July 31, 2025.
 - **Paid Prenatal Leave.** Effective January 1, 2025, private employers are required to provide employees with 20 hours of prenatal personal leave during any 52-week calendar period. Paid prenatal leave is to be provided in addition to other existing sick leave. The leave may be taken for health care services such as physical examinations, medical procedures, monitoring and testing and discussions with health care providers related to pregnancy. Paid prenatal leave may be taken in and must be paid in one-hour increments. Additionally, the use of the

language “their pregnancy” indicates the law covers only pregnant employees and not spouses. The law does not state employees must work for a specified period of time before being eligible for prenatal leave. Employers are not required to pay an employee for unused paid prenatal leave upon termination, resignation or other separation from employment. Private-sector employers include persons, corporations, limited liability companies, or **associations** employing any individual in any occupation, industry, trade, business, or service, regardless of part-time status, and overtime exempt status. For more information, you can visit New York State’s Website dedicated to Paid Prenatal Leave: <https://www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-paid-prenatal-leave>

- f. **New York State Labor Law (Section 220-i) has been changed** in a way that impacts public works contracts, so for all public libraries - and those association libraries that have received a ruling from the Department of Labor that your project is classified as a public works project - this will be something you will want to take note of. All contractors and subcontractors who submit bids or perform construction work on public work projects or private projects covered by Article 8 of the Labor Law are required to register with the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) by Monday, Dec. 30, 2024, pursuant to N.Y. Labor Law Section 220-i. The new law is designed to ensure contractors and subcontractors working on public projects or projects receiving public funding “do not have previous labor law violations and will abide by the New York Labor Laws and Regulations, including prevailing wage requirements.” Penalties for non-compliance are directed at the contractors/subcontractor rather than the customer (library). However it is recommended that you make note of this requirement in your bidding documents and be sure to be clear that if they have not complied with this requirement their bids may be disqualified. It is recommended that you require compliance with this registration before commencing work on a covered project.
 - FYI: [Frequently Asked Questions for NYSDOL Contractor Registry, NYS Department of Labor](#)
- g. After 15 years, a new edition of the [Handbook for New Library Directors in New York State](#) is in the works for 2025. If you are interested in providing feedback that will shape the new edition, please let Rebekkah know: rsmith@midhudson.org
- h. We have re-introduced a **trustee-specific newsletter** that will go out 3-4 times a year. Directors will be copied on each issue. Content will include advertising for trustee education events that help trustees meet their annual education requirement; advocacy opportunities; and best practices for governance practices in alignment with the Trustee Handbook.
- i. Member Library **Annual Reports are due by Friday, February 14 at 5:00 pm**. Contact Laura Crisci with questions or visit <https://midhudson.org/annualreporttips/>

6. Cooperative Collection Development & Digital Collection Access

- a. Please see the reports from the MHLS Central Library / Collection Development Advisory Committee and the Ad Hoc OverDrive Committee for the latest information.

7. Awareness & Advocacy Services

- a. State Advocacy

- Executive Budget Proposals:
 1. Library Aid: \$104.6 million
 - a. \$750,000 over last year.
 - b. 40% below the formula amount adjusted for inflation
 2. Construction Aid: \$34 million
 - a. \$10 million decrease from last year
 - b. \$1.75 billion in reported need statewide.
 - c. \$38 million in reported need in MHLS
 3. NOVELny
 - a. Included – this is a win
 - b. Funded at \$3 million which is flat over last year
 - c. NYLA is advocating for \$3.1 million
 4. Library Materials Aid (school libraries)
 - a. No change, this amount has not changed in decades.
 5. Dolly Parton Imagination Library
 - a. Increased from \$1 million to \$7 million for grants to organizations, including libraries
- Our ask of you:
 1. Please work to get as many library supporters signed up as Advocates with the New York Library Association as possible: <https://www.nyla.org/become-an-advocate->
 - a. Help motivate more patrons to join this by sharing how much money they are saving by using your library:
 - i. You can add a “You just saved” dollar amount on receipts
 - ii. Add the [Library Use Value Calculator](#) from Syracuse University to your library’s website, social media, and enewsletters with photos of folks who have calculated their amount for inspiration.
 2. Please call your State Senators & Assemblymembers, they need to hear from you that MHLS Services make a difference to your library and therefore their constituents.
 3. Scheduling legislators’ to come and visit your library, host their office hours and town halls at your libraries is a great way to connect with them as well.



b. Federal Advocacy

- The American Library Association has launched the [Show Up for Our Libraries Campaign](#):
 1. Advocacy Resources
 2. Share your Story
 3. Take Action
- Sign up to receive timely advocacy alerts and updates on policy issues that impact library services from ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office [here](#).

- c. **County Funding Advocacy Group:** Save the date – March 27th at 10am. Registration info coming soon.

8. Interlibrary Loan Services

- a. **The regional interlibrary loan code has been approved** by all governing members of the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council and is now in effect. The policy updates were based on revisions of the ALA code to accommodate local exceptions for lending and increase emphasis on providing accessible copies of materials when requested as a means of providing an inclusive service to patrons with formats appropriate to accessibility needs. The code was approved by the MHLS Directors at the September 2024 meeting. You can find a PDF of the updated code [here](#). In addition SENYLRC has created [document](#) that summarizes each of the changes made to the code.

9. Construction Program Services

- a. Watch for the Construction Needs Update Action Memo in April, this will be the first step to apply in the next funding round

10. Communications Among Member Libraries

- a. Job Postings: The deadline to submit job openings to be included in the MHLS Bulletin is Wednesday, 4:00 pm of the week before publication. The MHLS Bulletin is published every Tuesday. Please send job ads to bulletin@midhudson.org the job posting should not be more than 100 words and include a link to the complete job posting
- b. Library Spotlights: MHLS is always looking for member spotlights to share in the Bulletin. If you have a program, partnership, grant, collection, etc. that you would like to share with your peers, please let us know, bulletin@midhudson.org.

11. Special Populations

- a. **The President has declared a national emergency and issued several executive orders on immigration.** There are two primary areas this effort may impact libraries related to the work of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement: investigations of immigrants that may use your library or be employed by your library.
 - As shared on the MHLS Notice List in December, the American Library Association (ALA) has created a list of things that you can do to prepare your library for a visit from law enforcement, including ICE agents. If ICE agents visit your library, there are also guidelines for how to respond in the “During a Visit” section: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/lawenforcement/guidelines>
 - The ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom has provided an explanation of the types of warrants ICE may present you with; an explanation of how this intersects with library privacy laws; and what you can do to protect privacy in your library through a post from Deborah Caldwell Stone, who you may remember from our 2023 annual meeting: <https://www.oif.ala.org/libraries-and-immigration-enforcement/>
 - The State Library has posted this Information to Help New York’s Libraries Safeguard the Rights of Immigrants and shared the Office of New Americans’ Know Your Rights resources. The Office of New Americans Hotline number available if anyone is looking for referrals to legal services or other support. They can call 1-800-566-7636, Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm, all calls are confidential and information is available in 200+ languages.

- b. **There are three executive orders that roll back policies diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.** These are primarily directed at federal agencies and the private sector. At this time, there are no direct impacts on our work but it is a signal that federal funds that have been invested in efforts to promote these topics in our profession through IMLS may be frozen and not awarded in the near future.
- c. **Outreach Mini-Grants:** In 2024, 23 member libraries received \$1,000 grants to advance equity and inclusion work to improve library services for their communities. Grant funds came from New York State Outreach Categorical Aid funds received from the NYS Library Division of Library Development.
- d. **Libraries Working with Vulnerable Patrons: Practices to Ensure Staff and Patron Safety**
The New York State Library's Division of Library Development is excited to announce a webinar series beginning February 28th from 10:00 am-11:00 am, introducing Excelsior Service Fellow, Antonia Bruno. This series will be held monthly. Registration is required.

Antonia is a social worker with previous employment as a social services advocate at a public library on Long Island. At the NYS Library, she aims to reach library staff across the state with a webinar series that supports libraries serving vulnerable and often marginalized populations.

The webinar on February 28th is the first installment in a series which will begin as informational and evolve to serve as a space to learn from one another's experiences and perspectives to better support staff in meeting patrons' needs in a safe and transparent environment.

Recording for this series will not be available. Staff of various levels in libraries are welcome to attend.

- e. **Incarcerated Individual Reference Request Procedure:** A reminder to all MHLS member libraries that should you receive - by mail - a reference request directly from an incarcerated individual in a correctional facility you should not respond to them.

Please send the letter including the envelope to MHLS, ATTN: Kerstin Cruger, to forward to the senior librarian at their correctional facility. This will legitimize and facilitate their access to information as the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision has a mechanism and procedure for information sent to the incarcerated, and it must involve the facility library. Keep in mind that there is seemingly innocent information that certain incarcerated individuals are not allowed to have, due to their history of criminal actions, and when the requests come to you unmediated by a facility librarian it is not possible to determine what those specific parameters are.

The best way to serve this patron, if they contact your library directly, is to send the request to Kerstin Cruger, Outreach & EDI Specialist at MHLS through the delivery.

- f. **Service Animals in the Public Library:** A service animal is any dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or 11 domestic, trained or untrained, are not considered to be service animals. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability.

To determine if an animal is a service animal, a public entity or a private business may ask two questions:

- Is this animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has this animal been trained to perform?

These inquiries may not be made if the need for the service animal is obvious (e.g., the dog is guiding an individual who is blind or is pulling a person’s wheelchair.) A public entity or private business may not ask about the nature or extent of an individual’s disability. It also may not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained or licensed as a service animal, or require the animal to wear an identifying vest.

It is important to understand the rights and responsibilities of service animal handlers and their service animal partners under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To learn more please visit the Northeast ADA Center.

- g. If you would like to volunteer in a NYS correctional facility library, you can do so through the Volunteer Services Program of Corrections and Community Supervision. View the directive 4750 document to access the forms and specifications. The Division of Volunteer Services can be reached at (518) 402-1700 or mfvs@doccs.ny.gov for specific volunteer questions. Please specify the facilities you are interested in

12. Cooperative Efforts with Other Library Systems

- a. Trustee Handbook Book Club
 - **2024 Recordings** – all available on the MHLS Trustee on Demand (TOD) Trustee Education Academy:
 1. [Governance Structure: The Role of Board Officers and Board Committees](#)
 2. [Libraries for the Future: An Introduction to Sustainability as the Newest Core Value](#)
 3. [What’s New in the 2023 Edition of the Trustee Handbook](#)
 4. [After Party III](#)
 - **The latest “After Party” recording is now available:** Each season we record an “After Party” session of the Trustee Handbook Book Club to answer audience questions we did not get to during the live sessions. You can find the latest, After Party IV, covering questions from the 2024 season on the MHLS TOD Trustee Education Academy.
 - MHLS is once again partnering with the Public Library System Directors Organization of New York State (PULISDO) to offer a **2025 schedule** of offerings through the Trustee Handbook Book Club program:
 1. Advocacy – held on January 22 is now available in the MHLS TOD Trustee Education Academy
 2. Wednesday, April 30: – **Board Development: Recruitment, Orientation, Education and Evaluation** | [REGISTER](#)
 3. Tuesday, July 15: **Recruiting & Retaining Quality Staff** | [REGISTER](#)
 4. Tuesday, November 18: **Next Level Trusteeship: Building an Effective and Impactful Board Culture** with guest speaker Terry Kirchner, Executive Director, Westchester Library System | [REGISTER](#)
- b. MHLS is partnering with other public library systems and the New York State Library to leverage The Great Give Back in 2026 to align with the [America Gives](#) program through the 250th anniversary celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- c. a. **2025 Digital Navigator “lite” program:** Individuals from libraries and community-based organizations in the Hudson Valley who have trained as Digital Navigators or have equivalent skills are encouraged to [apply](#) to this program. Navigators work in a community of practice to build the skills necessary to meet with clients and help them with their tech needs. We have an active listserv, office hours, marketing

materials, and professional support available to everyone in the program. In exchange for your time and effort in meeting with clients, we offer an investment incentive to active members of the cohort.

About the 2025 cohort:

- This group is for trained Digital Navigators who have completed the DNHV training or equivalent program in another region.*
- Contract requirements:
 - The individual Navigator will meet with five (5) unique clients and submit an intake form and session summary form**
 - The contracted Navigator will send at least one (1) message on the listserv
 - Demonstrate the use of marketing materials or outreach for the organization
 - Attend at least one (1) office hour session hosted by system staff. (These will be regularly scheduled on the 4th Thursday of the month at 2 pm)
- When those requirements are met, the library or organization can receive a \$500 investment incentive. Before June 30, 2025, the individuals can receive up to four (4) incentives, or \$2,000 total.
- You must have a signed contract before starting the work.
- You can apply any time between January 1, 2025, and June 30, 2025. However, you must meet the requirements by July 15, 2025.

* If you trained with DNHV before October 2023 or with another organization, you must watch a short, pre-recorded video on how to use our new forms. If you have not trained with DNHV, we encourage you to apply with the understanding that your acceptance to the program is subject to approval by system staff.

** Forms are subject to quality control by system staff. They must demonstrate that the navigator has had a substantive session with the client.

a.

13. Administrative

a. MHLS Board:

- MHLS welcomes five new members to its board, elected by the membership in October:
 1. Jenny Post (Claverack) representing Columbia County
 2. Mark Williams (Stanford) representing Dutchess County
 3. Charles Kutcher (Tannersville) representing Greene County
 4. Kevin Finnegan (Brewster) representing Putnam County
 5. Leslie Gerber (Woodstock) representing Ulster County
- [2025 Priorities of the MHLS Board](#):
 1. Financial Stability
 2. Member Outreach
 3. Board Education

4. Living Our Values Out Loud
 - a. Intellectual freedom and defending the right to read
 - b. Equity, diversity, and inclusion
 - c. Environmental stewardship
- The Board Outreach Memo went out in January to all member library board presidents and directors. This is part of the MHLS Board's "Board-2-Board" Visits effort to ensure they are well connected with member libraries and aware of local issues you are contending with.
- b. Strategic Partnerships
 - MHLS has received a third year of funding for The Library of Local Project from [Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley](#). This year's theme will be community preparedness.
 - MHLS is negotiating a memo of understanding with Central Hudson to leverage the public library network through MHLS to connect more of the residents in Central Hudson's service area with their residential energy savings programs. Once in place, we will be reaching out to the other utilities that cover our service area to see if they would like to replicate this project. Stay tuned for more info.
 - MHLS is in talks with [The Tempestry Project](#), a locally run initiative (one of the founders is a librarian at Vassar College!), to create a public art project with the help of the fiber arts communities at member libraries. Stay tuned for more info.
- c. An update on the status of the Union Vale Library will be provided at the meeting.
- d. We are still waiting on Amazon Prime Business to book training for MHLS member libraries.