System Services Advisory Committee
May 28, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Matt Pavloff (Columbia)
Mary DeBellis (Dutchess)
Catherine Benson (Greene)
Christopher Leary (Greene)
Johanna Reinhardt (Putnam)
Michelle Capozzella (Putnam)
Margie Menard (Ulster)

MHLS Staff
Rebekkah Smith Aldrich
Laurie Shedrick

Absent

Thea Schoep (Columbia), Carol Fortier (Dutchess), Julie Kelsall Dempsey (Ulster)

Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the January meeting was made by Menard, seconded by Bensen, and passed unanimously.

State Funding Update: Aldrich reviewed the New York State budget and discussed how the changes could impact the system and libraries across the state. Aldrich mentioned that there is a slim chance that the funds allotted to library aid could be cut in the fourth quarter if the governor determines to do so, and she will let directors know of any changes once she hears of them.

Discussion Items

1) Capital Fund Update: Aldrich informed the committee that MHLS signed up for the New York Liquid Asset Fund, an investment opportunity for local governments. She explained that the fund has a higher yield than bank accounts or CDs and the money is liquid and can be moved at any point. The committee discussed moving the capital fund into the NYLAF as well. A motion to move the money over was made by Menard, seconded by de Bellis, and passed unanimously. The capital fund currently has slightly over $200,000.

2) Members Assessment: The committee reviewed the impact that different levels of assessment increases would have on member libraries and on MHLS. Aldrich pointed out that this assessment will draw from the years 2022-2024, the first year that numbers will be based on data post-COVID lockdowns. The committee discussed the services that MHLS offers and the importance of maintaining adequate funding to maintain these services. Committee members agreed that an increase over 10% would not be necessary this year, and agreed that an increase of 9.5% would be best to recommend. A motion to recommend to the Director's Association an increase of 9.5% was made by Pavloff, seconded by Menard, and passed unanimously.

3) Public Facing Messaging: The committee discussed what types of messaging would be best for patrons to receive from MHLS directly, as opposed to individual libraries via the

catalog, app, and OverDrive. The committee discussed ways in which MHLS could communicate with patrons to sign up as Library Advocates through the New York Library Association to grow the number of residents helping with advocacy efforts and to promote the upcoming MHLS road trip. The committee will recommend to the DA to allow these two limited promotional opportunities.

4) Development of the Plan of Service (2027-31)

   a) Aldrich reviewed the reason for the Plan of Service for the committee, which needs to be reviewed every 5 years.

   b) After hearing about the process for developing the Plan of Service, the committee had no recommendations for changes and agreed that the timeline presented by Aldrich was ideal.

5) MHLS Updates

   a) Aldrich informed the committee on four advocacy initiatives that MHLS will be implementing: online advocacy briefings and webinars, an Ambassadors Program for Friends and trustees, the development of an advocates listserv, and a postcard mailing campaign.

   b) MHLS will send an RFPs to courier companies this summer to monitor current rates and practices. They will also be reviewing delivery schedules for libraries during this same period.

   c) Shedrick discussed an issue with Sierra where a number of crawlers have been detected and are being dealt with. She also discussed the roll out of the MHLS app, upgrades to the phone and text alert systems, and e-Rate funding opportunities, which she is trying to encourage more libraries to take advantage of. Shedrick also discussed a number of opportunities for MHLS to work with Innovative in developing and adopting new features and programs.

   d) Aldrich discussed the success of the Sustainable Funding Series, which has been well attended and generated interest in continuing the program, and informed the committee of many other upcoming webinars and professional development opportunities. She also discussed the Tempestry Project, which has sold out much faster than she expected

   e) The Annual Membership Meeting will be held on October 24 at the FDR Library in Hyde Park and will feature incoming ALA president Sam Helmick as keynote speaker.

6) November Luncheon: The committee discussed the annual Luncheon to celebrate the MHLS staff. Capozzella volunteered to take the lead in organizing the event with Reinhardt offering to assist.

7) 2025 Board Liaisons Reminder

    a) Friday, July 18, MHLS Auditorium: Reinhardt
    b) Friday, September 12, Beekman Library: Fortier
    c) Tuesday, December 9, MHLS Auditorium: Schoep

8) The date of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Bravery in Literature ceremony has been moved to October 11th and will be held at the Bardavon in Poughkeepsie.

Next Meeting: October, 2025