MID-HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM
System Services Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: May 10, 2022   **Location:** Virtual

Committee members attending:

☒ Elizabeth Powhida (Columbia)   ☒ Maureen Garcia (Greene)
☒ Thea Schoep (Columbia)   ☒ Michele Capozzella (Putnam)
☒ Jesse Chance (Dutchess)   ☒ Johanna Reinhardt (Putnam)
☒ Mary De Bellis (Dutchess)   ☒ Julie Kelsall-Dempsey (Ulster)
☒ Catherine Benson (Greene)   ☒ Margie Menard (Ulster)

Staff Attending: Rebekkah Smith Aldrich (MHLS), Saran Camara (MHLS), Laurie Shedrick (MHLS)
Others Attending: None

Discussion Items:

1. The Committee welcomed new member Elizabeth Powhida (Valatie).

2. **Finalize and Recommend 2023 Assessment**
    Michele Capozella motioned, and Julie Kelsall-Dempsey seconded that SSAC forward the draft 2023 Assessment (see attached) to the DA. All voted in favor, with no abstentions. The following points were discussed:

    - 1% overall increase over 2021
    - 2020 and 2021 circ figures were not used to calculate the 3-year averages
    - Innovative contract items will increase by 2% to match the contractual increase
    - 2020 census numbers will not be used as they have not yet been released by DLD

3. **DA Operations**
    Julie made the motion and Mary De Bellis seconded the proposal that the June DA meeting remain online due to current covid numbers with a switch to in person for the November meeting unless any counties are in a red zone as per CDC Community Levels, which would cause a switch back to virtual. This will be re-evaluated in 2023. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

    - **Schedule**
        - **In-person, virtual, or hybrid**:
          Michele said attendance is better for virtual meetings. Rebekah added that it allows remote counties to participate more easily. Jesse Chance suggested a compromise could be to have at least one meeting a year in person.

- **Dates to avoid for future meetings:**
  MHLS put together a list of dates that could cause a scheduling conflict, including county meeting dates, MHLS holidays, dates of importance, and relevant conferences/meetings (see attached).

  Mary made the motion to endorse the list, with Michele seconding. All voted in favor with no abstentions.

- **Secretary Role for Advisory Committees**
  It was brought up that a secretary role can be a burden for advisory committee members. It was discussed whether another director should be appointed to committees to take on the role or if a MHLS staff member should take minutes and not a director because it could be too difficult for that director to meaningfully contribute to the discussion while focused on taking notes. Some said it had worked well in the past when a staff member acted as secretary while others said it was too big of a responsibility for them. It was suggested that each committee could decide to record virtual meetings, or the secretary could record it themselves. Rebekah suggested that veteran secretaries could share their best practices.

4. **Developing an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Statement for the MHLS DA**
   Thea Schoep proposed that a small committee be formed to work on a statement to present at the November SSAC meeting. It was discussed that it's important to address the fact that the DA is aware of and sensitive to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion after a situation where a meeting was planned on the religious holiday of Good Friday. Michele said it's important that issues be raised and get addressed respectfully and in a timely manner. Thea pointed out that all should keep in mind that everyone's schedules are different, and that some may be off and not checking emails on days when others are working. Everyone should be reminded to be respectful of each other's different backgrounds. Michele and Thea will work with Rebekah on a statement to raise DA awareness as well as to address the procedural issue that arose because of the oversight.

5. **MHLS Staff Report**

   2022 Budget Outcome
   Rebekah reported that we are seeing funding we haven't seen in over a decade due to the governor and the legislature increasing funding for libraries. $14m in construction aid was restored, which is last year's level - good, but not great. Libraries should have a priority list to make the monies last as long as possible because there will always be budget uncertainties and lean years. Libraries should also have "shovel-ready" projects, planning 3-5 years ahead for when funding opportunities arise, particularly for digital equity/inclusion efforts. The increase in funding will allow us to address the issue of gas surcharges (physical deliveries and staff travel has been impacted), as well as bringing back Catalog Authority Control, something that hasn't been done in over 20 years. It will also allow MHLS to address issues important to directors such as EDI speakers), and accessibility issues (facility/web

presence/continuing education). We want MHLS to be a model to others going forward in accessibility best practices. We want the money to go as far as possible while moving forward on the themes directors identified as important to them.

Catalog Authority Control (AC) Restored

This will help modernize the language and information found in the catalog, and the necessary annual upkeep. AC will help alleviate the time cataloguers need to spend (they work on over 400,000 records/month) because it merges everything into the most up-to-date records, keeping our catalog current with updated headings on authors/subjects/series, etc. It will also allow us to choose our own local authorities where we can pick our own headings and add EDI language.

Delivery/ILS

There has been a slight upward trend in circ but it's been fairly stable so we won't need to overhaul the delivery schedule at this point. The new presorting process has gone well, which has helped the relationship with our vendor. Gas prices are a concern.

Vega Discovery Development

We are in the second phase of the pilot for bringing Vega online, adding 4 more libraries. Vega Connect will be part of our installation. Laurie is documenting areas of interest/issues with the rollout on Knowledgebase.

- **Pilot Testers Google Group:**
  There is a new Google group for Vega pilot testers so that they can facilitate conversation and keep up to date with developments in the product.

2022 – 2026 Themes Report/Focus Groups

Ways MHLS can support member libraries:

Sustainable Funding
- Rebekah helped launch a new Public Library District Toolkit on Sustainable Funding
- 2022 Advanced Trustee Education topic: Pathways to Sustainable Funding to help libraries find ways to fund their libraries and educate boards
- Studies are being done to itemize double-taxation by libraries in state (libraries can find out if they are double-taxed by contacting Casey Conlin to look at district maps) and MHLS is working to control the narrative so libraries can do what they need to do to meet their complicated situations.
- 414/Municipal Ballot Vote meetups
- Advocating for a reduction in required signatures for 414 ballots: gathering signatures can be overwhelming especially for smaller libraries so this can be a way to stabilize and grow funding in the future

OverDrive Reciprocal Lending Agreement with Upper Hudson Library System:
It has been a tremendous success, resulting in three times the available titles for patrons. An ad hoc DA committee has been formed to address OverDrive investment issues.

Fiscal Stress Test for Libraries
We need to be able to lead our boards forward toward multi-year (3 – 5 year) financial planning and develop a fiscal stress tool like that for other institutions (towns/schools).

Addressing Digital Inequities
- More than 118k children in our system don't have reliable access to the internet (Digital Equity portal/State Library). Eighty-three percent of the libraries in MHLS don't have the recommended level (as defined by FCC and ALA) of broadband connectivity. Broadband must be considered critical library infrastructure.
- MHLS is part of the **Public Library Broadband Assessment Pilot Project**. MHLS staff use the *Toward Gigabit Libraries* toolkit to advise libraries on broadband connectivity and advocate for higher connectivity speeds. You can request a Custom Consultation from MHLS for help in this area. This plus **Digital Navigators Program** (in its first year; it's currently the largest DN program in the country) establishes staff as tech advocates. MHLS will evolve DNs in coming years to other areas and provide the resources. **Beyond the Library Wifi** extends signals in 43 libraries. It's important to keep in mind funding available to do these things such as e-rate. Money could be left on the table; an area of ongoing work by MHLS is to connect libraries with funds to bridge the gap.
- **Digital Inclusion** money from state that should be released this year that libraries will be eligible for, together with the **Connect All** program the Governor has established ($1b invested) so there is good chance we should see pathways to this money for projects. But this goes back to sustainable funding – if you get money to bump up your devices one year, how do you sustain this going forward. We can't sit back and wait for the money; NYLA helps advocate to get this money released.

Professional Development - **Staff/Trustees/Friends**

Collaborative/Collective Impact Efforts & Connecting with New Residents and Non-Users
Big focus on these kinds of projects that will raise the profile of libraries:
- **Outreach mini grants**: MHLS will be able to increase the amount offered this year due to the budget increase
- **Turning Outwards** cohorts: so far over half of libraries have used it to reach out to community groups to find out what people are interested in, and to connect with those who didn't know they wanted/needed their local library
- **Library of Local**: creates cache in communities for libraries taking the lead on topics like resilience and climate adaptation – 10 more libraries have joined in Year Two.
- **Sustainable Library Certification**: opt-in program with MHLS supporting libraries that do
- **Going Fine-free**: this has been a big area of support. Fines are   barriers to use that punish the wrong

people. An EDI lens is being reflected in this work.
- **National Voter Registration Day** and **the Great Giveback**: provide excellent opportunities to interact with your community

JEDI – Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion
Some of the initiatives MHLS has undertaken demonstrating its commitment to EDI:
- redid its mission, vision and value statements to include EDI principles
- board education on the topic
- changed board recruitment/policies
- have invested in staff focused on EDI
- conducted an EDI assessment which resulted in an EDI action plan
- EDI website (www.midhudson.org/edi) for member libraries
- EDI Series with Kerstin Kruger:
    From Diversity to Inclusion: How to Audit your Collection and Why
    An Introduction to the Talking Book and Braille Library
- Justice at Work cohort will be established
- EDI mini conference in October full day online training with keynote speakers, member libraries and staff
- Accessibility statement has been added to midhudson.org
- Accessibility checklist of MHLS facilities to make sure they are fully accessible, and the board is assessing themselves to hold themselves accountable
- **Safe Zone training** for staff especially those working with younger/teen ("emerging adults") populations – Safe zones are places for kids to not feel judged about their sexuality/gender, and to connect them to resources

JEDI is an area that needs continuous attention and active engagement to infuse this in our work. Respect everyone's life experiences and be kind in all your interactions.

EDI Statement in Online Catalog
MHLS Cataloging team would like to add an EDI statement to the front of the online catalog:
"Mid-Hudson Library System recognizes that our catalog includes language that may be outdated, biased, or harmful. We are engaging in ongoing efforts to update our catalog with more inclusive language to be more respectful, reduce harm, and better connect users with relevant material."

It was recommended to change wording as follows: replace "harmful" with "insensitive":

"Mid-Hudson Library System recognizes that our catalog includes language that may be outdated, biased, or *insensitive*. We are engaging in ongoing efforts to update our catalog with more inclusive language to be more respectful, reduce harm, and better connect users with relevant material."

Julie motioned, Michele seconded, that it be recommended to the DA for a link to this statement be added to the online catalog and it was unanimously approved. Maureen Garcia thanked MHLS for this initiative.

Niche Academy - Professional Development
Board members as well as staff will be able to use NA for training.
- access to on-demand recordings
- certificates of completion
- will help board members comply with new trustee education law (January 1, 2023)
- badges can be earned for new staff or those growing/changing positions

Trustee Handbook Club
- it has been extremely popular and will be back in the fall in addition to the traditional trustee education series
- will be partnering with other library systems to broaden offerings

The next SSAC meeting will be October 28 at 10:00 am online.

To include in DA Business Meeting Agenda Attachment as an Action Item:

- Title: **2023 Draft Assessment**
- Background: This is the annual assessment table. 2020 and 2021 circ figures were not used to calculate the 3-year averages for the 2023 assessment table
- Issue: The Committee is waiting for 2020 census numbers but they have not yet been released by DLD (expected in June)
- Recommendations:
    - A 1% overall increase
    - Innovative contract items will increase by 2% to match the contractual increase
    - See the draft "Budgeting for the MHLS Member Assessment" explanatory document
- Status: Discussed at the May 10, 2022 SSAC Meeting

- Title: **DA Meeting Format**
- Background: At past meetings it was discussed that the format would be evaluated based on the current environment. Covid numbers are now rising, causing a need to evaluate the format of the upcoming meetings.
- Issue: Whether the upcoming meeting should be in person or remain virtual
- Recommendation: The June meeting should remain virtual, and the November meeting will be in person unless covid numbers at that time indicate otherwise.
- Status: For DA vote

- Title: **Proposed EDI Statement for Online Catalog**
- Background: MHLS has prioritized the topic of equity, diversity, and inclusion in its work both in policy and priority settings. One of several initiatives staff are engaged in is a way to apply these values to the library catalog to provide more inclusive metadata that is respectful of the subjects, creators, and users of our resources while enhancing discovery of those materials by our users. The cataloging team has developed a plan that involves authority control as well as using terms for controlled vocabularies and style guides recognized as industry standards.
- Issue: The need to have a visible EDI statement in the MHLS online catalog
- Recommendation: To include the following EDI statement/link to statement in the online catalog: "Mid-Hudson Library System recognizes that our catalog includes language that may be outdated, biased, or insensitive. We are engaging in ongoing efforts to update our catalog with more inclusive language to be more respectful, reduce harm, and better connect users with relevant material."
- Status: For DA vote