

Over the years there have been many questions about the role of the System and its relationship to member libraries. Clarification has been difficult as the services provided by the System have changed with the changing needs of the member libraries. This document presents an overview of System roles and services and the expectations for member library participation. We hope each member board will review the document before April 1, 2000 and offer further ideas for the development of System/Member roles and relationships. The document will be revisited and renewed as the needs of the members and the information environment change.

A C R O S S T H E

BOARD

Draft of the Document of Understanding Between the Mid-Hudson Library System and its Member Libraries

This document sets forth the major responsibilities of the System and its member libraries and their mutual expectations in order to provide better service to the public. In general, libraries serve the public directly and the System serves the member libraries. Systems were created by New York State to provide a means of encouraging and enabling libraries to share resources. Historically, this has been accomplished through the development and sharing of a union catalog of holdings and by providing delivery to facilitate interlibrary loan service. Over time more services have been added such as printing, rotating collections, and training sessions on technology and library issues. By using the central facility for its collective buying power (e.g. for such purchases as electronic databases), economies can result for all participants. ☛ The explosive growth in communications and computer technology and the growing expectations of our libraries and their patrons have put a severe strain on library resources, both in personnel and general costs. The pervasiveness of the Internet in all facets of information has also had an influence in the way libraries operate. ☛ To facilitate a better cooperative approach to meeting our mutual expectations for service, the following points are understood by both the member libraries and the System. These are *Core* and *Shared* services.

CORE SERVICES | Essential or Required under State Education Law, and funded primarily by New York State funds directed to the System.

☛ The System will maintain and operate an online union catalog and a delivery service for the interlibrary and library System distribution of materials for the support of ILL service and other library materials as appropriate. The schedule of deliveries will be done with input from the member libraries.

☛ The System will arrange training and consulting to member libraries on professional library issues and issues of computer and communications technology to encourage and enable member libraries to take advantage of the evolving information environment. The System will be available for consultation with member library board and staff members on professional library issues and issues pertaining to general management.

☛ The System will inform members of grant opportunities and will administer any grants received by the System for the benefit of members as well as provide support for appropriate programs.

☛ The System will provide a means for the mutual exchange of ideas and plans for service, such as the Directors Association, joint committees, and the Listserv.

☛ The System will communicate directly with any member library or libraries wishing to discuss issues.

☛ The System will provide Outreach Services as mandated by Section 90.4 of the Commissioner's Regulations.

☛ The System will support services to all age groups including Children, Young Adults, Adults, and Senior Adults.

☛ The System will support library development and provide guidance on national, state, and regional issues of concern to libraries.

☛ The System will support the Central Library as detailed under Section 90.4 of the Commissioner's Regulations.

SHARED SERVICES | Jointly supported, primarily elective, and may require a fee or charge to the using member(s) which might require a separate agreement or document of charges and services.

☛ The System will provide centralized support for printing services, rotating collections, and advocacy for libraries in the region; and will serve as a repository for professional material for libraries.

☛ The System will provide access to an integrated online library system, which supports circulation and patron database management, public access catalogs, and other functions.

☛ The System will communicate to the members changes in the capabilities and use of the central system and provide written guidelines of the level and type of system support.

☛ The System will try to make its facilities available to member libraries for appropriate functions, with a possible fee to cover the overhead costs.

SHARED SERVICES | MEMBER LIBRARIES

☛ Member libraries are expected to participate in planning and financial support for the cost of such shared services as they use.

☛ Member libraries are expected to maintain and contribute to an up-to-date, appropriate catalog of their holdings for a union catalog.

☛ Member libraries are expected to provide borrowing privileges to patrons of other libraries in the System area as provided for in the System's Free Direct Access Plan.

☛ Member libraries are expected to participate in the Interlibrary Loan service within the System area.

☛ Member libraries are expected to participate in, to the extent possible, the "Electronic Doorway Library" initiative of New York State.

☛ Member libraries are expected to provide, in a timely manner, the various reports required by the New York State Library.

☛ Member libraries are expected to encourage participation of their Director in Directors Association meetings and at least one System committee for the planning and improvement of System services.

☛ Member libraries are expected to keep their Trustees informed about events and services available from the System and to keep the System informed of services they desire.

—Samuel K. Patton, MHLS Board

FROM JOSH COHEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MHLS

When I awoke on January 1, 2000 I felt like I had entered the future—I still feel that way. Many of Mid-Hudson’s accomplishments this year were things that had been envisioned for more than a decade. For example over half of the member libraries are circulating online, all have Internet connections, and patrons now have access to full-text magazine and newspaper articles from their homes, schools, and offices. Interlibrary loan response time has been reduced by the institution of electronic requests. We anticipate more advances in information access next year when patrons can request physical items from the convenience of their homes, schools, or offices.

Technology has become more integrated into library service, and traditional services that had been overshadowed are making a comeback. The library as a community place and as a place for programs is once again the focus of service.

Over half... are circulating online, all have Internet connections, and patrons now have access to full-text magazine and newspaper articles from their homes, schools, and offices.

Those libraries with active program schedules become more visible to their publics and in turn are seen as more valuable resources. Mid-Hudson has supported a number of initiatives that help enhance the visibility and value of it’s member libraries. Along with the summer reading program, programs such as the *Funding Information Centers*, *The Forum (interactive, online fund-raising information)*, *Babies and Books Multimedia Family Literacy Centers*, and partnerships with the New York State Labor Department’s *Workforce Development* have highlighted libraries as places to find information that can enhance people’s lives.

Better public recognition can and has led to increased funding for libraries, some of which have been able to bring their budgets to the voters either through Special District legislation or a Section 414. Whichever way is taken, when a budget-level decision is put to the voters a library fares better.

Increased funding lies in presenting communities with libraries that have well-trained staff, current technology and enhanced programming. Through cooperative efforts the System and member libraries can build a solid future.

▶ Josh Cohen | 845.471.6060 ext. 17

FROM TOM LAWRENCE, DIRECTOR, CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Poughkeepsie Public Library District’s Adriance Memorial Library is the Central Reference Library for the Mid-Hudson Library System. Chartered to serve the 70,000 residents of the City and Town of Poughkeepsie, the Library District has experienced a major renaissance in the past four years as voters have overwhelmingly approved budgets (and tax increases) that better fund library operations.

The Library District serves the member libraries by providing expanded reference services, subject searches on complex or complicated topics, interlibrary loan from its

collection of circulating fiction and nonfiction books as well as its collection of magazines, periodicals and journals. Reference staff provide workshops on a variety of topics in order to enhance service at the local level. Topics covered included more effective use of the online catalog, consumer health information, and general reference techniques.

The traditional concept of central library services and central collections will be explored in the coming year in light of the Internet, changes in library service delivery patterns, and the greater ability of the Library District to provide more personal developmental assistance to libraries in areas of reference and collection development.

The staff and administration of the Central Library look forward to the challenges of the coming years and eagerly anticipate serving the member libraries.

▶ Tom Lawrence | 845.485.3445 ext. 3312

FROM GREG CALLAHAN, CHAIR, DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

The Directors Association, established in 1975, has proven to be an invaluable asset for newer as well as more experienced library directors. Every director in the System is a member and the importance of attendance cannot be stressed enough. Through networking and sharing of experiences, directors become familiar with issues facing libraries as a whole and System members in particular. In both the informal discussions that precede the sessions and in the actual business meetings of the association, new ideas and approaches are often presented. Directors benefit from a clarification of their roles and those of the Mid-Hudson Library System in a rapidly changing information environment.

The directors meetings provide crucial input to the System on planning, services, and feedback. Because of the importance of these meetings, the System provides mileage reimbursement for travel to and from the meeting. Each year

a director is appointed by the association as liaison to the Mid-Hudson Library System board of trustees and attends all board meetings. Directors’ concerns and recommendations are thus relayed to the board in a timely and effective manner.

The MHLS board has welcomed the directors’ input in numerous policy-making decisions, and a highly effective working relationship between the two bodies has evolved. The association has proven to be an effective organization on every level—however, we are only as strong as our membership. Active participation is vital.

▶ Greg Callahan | 845.229.7791

The Mid-Hudson Library System is the “Libraries’ Library,” serving 71 member libraries and their branches in Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Putnam and Ulster counties.

BOARD
A C R O S S T H E
103 MARKET STREET * POUGHKEEPSIE, NY 12601
Change Service Requested

From Jesse Feiler, President, Mid-Hudson Library System | As you will see from the other reports in this newsletter, by any objective measure the Mid-Hudson Library System is in excellent shape. This reflects the hard work of staffs at the System and at local libraries, as well as the work of volunteer trustees throughout the System. Local library trustees—more than 700 of them—are the largest constituent group in the System (other than patrons). Our outreach efforts over the last year have included two forums for presidents of local boards, both of which were well received and will be repeated (with other topics, of course). We also started four ongoing initiatives: ▶ a single point of contact at MHLS for local library trustees so that they could quickly get questions answered or locate the person who could do so; ▶ board-to-board visits with MHLS trustees visiting each library board at least once this year; ▶ this newsletter; ▶ and the first staff/trustee discussion group on matters of common interest—in this case, contemporary fiction. We intend to continue these initiatives and to launch others. In spite of these initiatives, all is not well at the trustee level. A third of our library boards are missing one or more trustees—sometimes a third or a half of their seats are vacant. While this reflects a growing trend in our society, nevertheless we must address the consequences it poses for libraries: more work for those who do serve, imposing on library staffs to do boards’ work, and in severe cases an absence of policy-making. We will be working with local boards to see what we can all do to make the job of the trustee more rewarding and to increase the satisfaction of trusteeship. ▶ Jesse Feiler | jfeiler@philmontmill.com