

This past year MHLS staff met with over 200 member library stakeholders—directors, staff, Trustees and Friends. We asked what people thought were the strengths and weaknesses of MHLS, what challenges they were facing in their roles at the library and how they defined “Quality Service.” What we heard forms the basis of our new Plan of Service.

ACROSS THE

BOARD

Quality Library Service 2007–2011 Plan of Service

THE focus of the 2007–2011 Plan of Service is to assist member libraries in providing quality library service that meets the needs of their changing communities. **Quality Service** has been defined as ensuring that patrons have a positive experience at the library: they are treated with respect and can obtain the information they request in a timely manner. Operationally this falls into three areas:

VALUE: *The ability to fill all requests for information or materials.* Value is created by connecting a patron with the right information, in the right format in a timely manner.

Resource sharing is a critical component in library success. The sharing of materials in all sixty-six member libraries through our online catalog and the ability to request items from all libraries, including those beyond the borders of the MHLS mission and service area—academic, hospital, and school libraries as well as other public libraries in Orange, Rockland and Sullivan counties, through the SEAL catalog—are mainstays of our success.

Even the smallest library can now answer reference queries through Home**ACCESS**, the thousands of magazine, newspaper and journal articles and full-text reference books available in our online databases both in the library and from home.

Libraries also have become increasingly valuable to their communities in terms of social interaction, through programming and by offering meeting space.

Over the next five years, MHLS will work with libraries to increase their value by ensuring that:

- Staff have and are aware of the resources they need to fill the requests of their patrons;
- Collections are strengthened through system-wide collection analysis: Patrons view our catalog as one collection. By analyzing our collection we will strive for comprehensive coverage, while ensuring all member libraries maintain their responsibility in contributing;
- All libraries have improved access to electronic resources: We will be creating strong links to web resources and purchased database products to make sure all staff in any library are able to answer most reference queries.

VISIBILITY: *Being recognized as an essential community institution.* Few people understand all the resources libraries offer. As we found out from our work this past year, many people do not realize that libraries have DVDs, audio books, Internet access and adult

programming. Libraries need to raise their profiles by becoming partners in the growth and development of their communities by identifying the needs of target groups within the community; developing service responses in information provision, programs, or collaboration; and by promoting those services throughout the community. Over the next five years MHLS will work to help libraries increase their visibility:

- Aid libraries to identify and promote services for their communities;
- Help libraries become recognized as valuable, cost-efficient resources in their communities;
- Develop a system-wide marketing strategy that will help libraries build their customer base;
- Develop a strategy to target new users with communication and programming to bring them into our libraries;
- Increase the number of library supporters that will vote “yes” for libraries.

SERVICE: *Insuring patrons consistently receive friendly and efficient service.* From the focus groups we conducted for member libraries this year we found that people considered staff one of the greatest assets of our libraries. By providing patrons with a satisfactory visit, a library builds support in its’ community every day.

This can only be achieved by insuring that staff has the skills, resources, and infrastructure they need to provide high-quality customer service.

Over the next five years, MHLS will continue to work with member libraries to help them improve the level of service staff can provide. Ideally, we want to see:

- Staff highly skilled in customer service that understand all available resources and services;
- The library infrastructure to function seamlessly and efficiently;
- Staff in all libraries receiving continuous training in technologies supported by the System;
- Libraries to continually review their programs for effectiveness and responsiveness;
- Continual upgrades to the automated circulation system;
- Assistance with program development for all age groups;
- Better relations between public schools and libraries;
- Consultations available to every board on any topic to assist them in upgrading their organizations;
- System help for libraries to improve their level of organizational development.

SAVE THE DATE

Tuesday, March 13, 2007

New York Library Association's Library Lobby Day

SYSTEM FUNDING

MHLS is fully funded through the state of New York. Our funding depends on what happens in Albany. Year after year, for over a decade, public library systems have been dealing with almost flat funding. Last year we finally received the 2000 Census money and saw a one-time infusion of \$71,000. We need to see this funding put into the budget every year.

TRUSTEE ADVOCATES

As a member library trustee, you are a primary advocate for public library systems. Without the automated circulation system, delivery, staff education and board consultations, what would your job as a trustee be like? What would the future of your library look like?

SYSTEM SERVICES

Are the services you receive from MHLS worth writing a letter to your state legislators? Making a phone call? Giving a legislator a tour of your library? How about a visit to your legislators' local office? Please take some time in 2007 to communicate with your legislators about the value of MHLS to your library—it really does make a difference.

INFORMATION

MHLS' Advocacy Central: <http://midhudson.org/funding/advocacy/main.htm>
NYLA Lobby Day: Tuesday, March 13, 2007 in Albany

