

**Director Report**  
**December 2021 - January 2022**

**Administration**

**Advocacy**

The New York Library Association (NYLA) Virtual Advocacy Day is March 2, 2022. Details are not confirmed, but it will include various activities that can include phone calls, letters, and remote meetings. We will be advocating for \$123.1 million. The New York State Education Law calls for \$102.6 million. Libraries received \$94.1 million in 2021-2022. The ask for library construction aid is \$45 million.

**Intellectual Freedom**

Book challenges have increased tremendously over the past few months. The American Library Association is reporting more than 155 challenges since June, 2021. In Texas, a public library was closed for four days while library staff reviewed all of its children's books for content deemed "inappropriate" for young readers. The most challenged books are about race, gender and sexuality.

Deborah Caldwell Stone, Director of the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom writes:

"The American Library Association fully supports the right of every parent to control what their child reads and to select alternative reading or instructional materials for their child. We do not believe, however, that a parent's right to control their child's reading includes a right to restrict what other children read, or to limit the books available to young people in the library.

Our belief is rooted firmly in the First Amendment. Young people have First Amendment rights — not only the right to speak but the right to access and use the resources of the school or public library, free from any censorship that arises from disapproval of a book's content or views. Our courts of law — including the Supreme Court — have said that a decision by a school or library board to remove a book from its library because the board disapproves of the words, ideas or opinions contained in the book is a violation of a minor's First Amendment rights.

Librarians and library workers will be the first to acknowledge that not every book is right for every reader. But librarians and library workers will also be the first to tell you that censorship only succeeds in fostering the conditions that destroy our precious liberties — our freedom to read and think for ourselves, which belong to young people as well as adults."

I was able to attend two excellent virtual webinars on this subject. The first was presented by Stephanie Cole Adams, an attorney in Buffalo, NY. She gave practical advice and tools on how to deal with book challenges geared to staff and trustees. The other was "Managing and Addressing Book Challenges in Your Community: Law, Policy, Advocacy." The speakers discussed current campaigns to censor diverse books that addressed racism and the experiences of BIPOC and LGBTQIA persons. They shared

information about the legal precedents pertaining to book censorship in public schools and libraries, and discussed how people facing challenges can advocate for themselves and their staff, as well as ways to protect their collections and curriculum. The speakers were Theresa Chimara, an attorney in Washington DC, Megan Cusick, ALA staff member, and Deborah Caldwell Stone.

My biggest take away - it is very important that all libraries have strong collection development policies in place and that library staff must follow the policy if and when something is challenged.

New York State Penal Law Section 235.10 Obscenity; presumptions

A person who promotes or wholesale promotes obscene material, or possesses the same with intent to promote or wholesale promote it, in the course of his business is presumed to do so with knowledge of its content and character.

2. A person who possesses six or more identical or similar obscene articles is presumed to possess them with intent to promote the same.

The provisions of this section shall **not apply to public libraries or association libraries** as defined in subdivision two of section two hundred fifty-three of the education law, or trustees or employees of such public libraries or association libraries **when acting in the course and scope of their duties or employment.**

## Digital Equity

For the past several years, many libraries within SALS and MVLS upgraded their internet connections to provide better broadband to their communities. The American Library Association passed a resolution stating that universal access to affordable high-capacity broadband is as essential as electricity and therefore a basic right for all. Presently, fifteen libraries are paying their full internet access costs. Several libraries, including all of the largest libraries, are paying part/most of those costs. Using JA fees, JA is paying internet access bills for fifteen libraries. There are sixteen libraries using free Spectrum lines (some libraries for all access others for some access). There are some libraries that have more than one connection.

To be fair to all libraries in both systems, the JA Council feels it would be best to move forward and request all libraries to pay for their internet connections. Currently there is a surplus in the JA budget that will allow the reduction of fees for all libraries in 2022. This will offset the cost of having the libraries pay for their own internet connections.

In SALS, there are seven libraries that this will impact. The Saratoga Springs Public Library, The Crandall Public Library, and the Clifton Park Halfmoon Public Library will see large savings that will cover the cost of the internet.

The Town of Indian Lake Public Library, Town of Johnsbury Public Library, CVW Long Lake Public Library and Raquette Lake will end up paying more for their connections. I have spoken with all of the libraries regarding the change. The JA staff will work with the libraries and the internet providers to get the most bandwidth at the lowest cost.

One library has expressed some concerns about the increase in costs, and SALS will work with them to find a way to meet this increased expense so late in the calendar year. If possible, it might be helpful if SALS could assist the one library in FY 2022 with the understanding the library must budget for the cost in their 2023 budget.

Under new business, the board will need to consider:

- Reduce 2022 fees across the board by 8% and at the same time have libraries pay 100% of their telecommunications fees
- 2022 Fees will be based on 2019 numbers
- 2023 Fees will be based on 2021 numbers (back to original plan to use 2 years previous) and 3% increase from 2022 Fees

### **State Aid for Library Construction**

A law passed in 2019 (*Chapter 381 of the Laws of 2019*) allows for additional state construction funding match up to 90% of the total project costs for a library serving economically distressed community. This law allocates to SALS a limited amount of funding to support such projects (funding is capped at 10% of the library system's construction aid allocation). If a library's application is selected by the system for State funding above 75%, the entire State-funded portion of the library's project application must come from this capped system allotment of 10%. If a system does not use the entire 10% allotment to fund projects requesting over 75%, then those State funds may be used to support other library projects.

If the library serves an economically distressed community, the library must meet all requirements to receive State funding at the 75% level. To be eligible for additional State funding beyond 75%, the library must meet additional requirements, including a poverty rate equal or greater than the NYS average poverty rate. The project application must address the service needs of one or more economically distressed communities within the library district. Also, the library must demonstrate that it cannot come up with a 25% match. SALS does not determine eligibility, it falls upon Library Development.

## **Trustee Search**

The SALS Nominating Committee will need to begin working on finding a Washington County trustee. Bob Odess completes his second five-year term in May 2022. Nancy Seifts (Hamilton County) may serve a second five-year term.

## **Annual Report to the State**

The Public and Association Library Annual Reports and Public Library System Annual Reports are expected to open in January. The due date for the 2021 Public and Association Library Annual Reports and Public Library Systems Annual Reports is March 15. There are some changes regarding children's programming. This and other changes will be shared in the Outline of Major Changes for the public and association library annual reports next month.

## **ARPA Funding**

SALS, Mohawk Valley Library System, Upper Hudson Library System have worked with the Capital District Library Council on an ARPA Grant. Erica Freudenberger is a member of the marketing committee and Jack Scott sits on the website development committee.

## **Administration/Personnel**

Colleen Smith is preparing for the fiscal year-end and the start of the new year. She has been working with the payroll company to capture the changes to withholdings, payroll, and retirees. She is preparing for the auditor's visit next month. Dianne Winter is available to help via phone or email. She came to SALS to work with Colleen in late December.

Work is progressing with the new phone system. The transition to the new system is scheduled for mid-January.

The position of System Services Support Clerk has been offered and been accepted by Pamela DeSignore. She begins on January 10, 2021.

## **Professional Service**

I will be presenting during the ALA conference in January. The topic is the work being done by the ALA Committee on Legislation.

I have been appointed to a task force to look at the New York State's Central Library Commissioner Regulations 90.4. The task force is comprised of system directors, central library directors and Division of Library Development.

I am part of a task force planning a symposium on Social Justice and the First Amendment.

## **Other Business**

There is continued turnover in member library directors (Stony Creek and Town of Johnsburg).

The Governor has not signed the eBook bill into law. She has until the end of 2021 to do so.

Three library directors in the member libraries have resigned in the past few months.

Finally, is there any interest in SALS trustees getting SALS email addresses?

### **Automation/JA**

The final Cassie PCs from the first 2021 group order have been delivered. Several items from the end of year 2021 order have been received. Laptops have arrived. The JA staff is working to correct a warranty issue that needs to be resolved before sending them out. PCs have not arrived.

Wording and cosmetic changes were made to the screens, messages and emails for patron self-registration. Trainers have developed documentation and have library staff testing. When it's ready, a decision will be made regarding timing for implementing the change for registration branch in the eCard staff application and turning on patron self-registration.

Cyber security insurance applications were sent to the agent. There has been no response from the agent. Chris Mundell and Michele Largebeau assisted several libraries (Crandall, Burnt Hills, Clifton Park-Halfmoon) with their own application questions.

Chris, Dave MacFarland and Michele interviewed four applicants for the Computer Support Specialist position. James Baker accepted the position and he starts January 18, 2022.

The new SALS VoIP phone system and phones will be installed on Jan 6, 2022. There will be a period of time where staff can test the new phones, the app for remote use, make outgoing calls and internal calls. On January 20, 2022 the system will go live for incoming calls and the auto attendant.

The JA staff helped transition Dianne Winter's OneDrive files and email to sals-business and Colleen Smith.

JA provided a summary report of the last two years of JA SysAid calls from GLE to Groff Networks.

JA turned on multi-factor authentication for two Clifton Park-Halfmoon employees to test and become familiar with it.

The III IdeaLab ticket for adding preferred pronoun functionality as reached Product Review stage. From here it can be chosen for a specific release or put in a queue for a future release.

JA had a problem where email to Spectrum email addresses were sometimes bouncing. Notices were not affected. After a few days the problem was resolved on the Spectrum side.

The III annual invoices were reviewed and approved for payment.

A reminder to library staff about the PC support dates and that JA will have loaners available if needed since PC orders have not arrived yet.

The CMOS battery had to be replaced on one of the virtual servers. Chris worked after hours (two nights) to get this replaced.

The Easton Library upgraded its Spectrum bandwidth.

More libraries are going fine free or partially (Town of Johnsbury, Corinth, Mechanicville in the SALS service area.

The JA staff have been making site visits to Galway, Salem, Greenwich, among other libraries.

Since October 27, 2021 the JA staff answered 481 SysAid calls. The highest number of calls dealt with PCs, Polaris and email. The calls that took the longest to resolve dealt with PCs.

- Top Counts – PCs, Polaris, Email
- Top Time – PCs, Polaris, Cassie

### **Cataloging, Technology, and Training**

Jill Ryder has been working with JA staff on final testing of the online patron self-registration form. The form has been shared with a few library staff members for feedback.

She is working with member library staff to complete year end tasks in Polaris for the 2021 fiscal year rollover.

Library of Congress changed the subject term “Illegal Aliens” to “Noncitizens” due to the offensive terminology. The online catalog has been updated to reflect the more inclusive and less offensive subject heading “Noncitizens”.

SALS catalogers (Jill Ryder and Sharon Shyne) modified a total of 2,536 bibliographic records in the catalog during December 2021. A total of 2,501 new bibliographic records and 6,900 new item records were added to the database during the same months. This work is done by cataloging and technical processing staff both at the System offices and the 61-member libraries.

During the transition between SALS Finance & Administration Managers, Jill assisted by creating purchase orders and ordering materials for JA.

### **Outreach**

Nine libraries continue to participate in the 2021 Notary Public Programs. This is made available through the Adult Literacy Grant. All receipts are due at SALS by December 31, 2021.

Erica Freudenberger and Caitlin Johnson (Director of the Schuylerville Public Library) did a presentation about the Farm-2-Library program for the Rural Library Network Summit.

SALS learned that the grant submission to the Schmidt Futures to build digital literacy skills for seniors in Hamilton, Warren & Washington counties was not funded. We will try again in June of 2022.

There was a very nice article in the Times Union on December 27, 2022 about the Comfort Foods Community. The article mentioned the libraries participating in the Farm-2-Library program. The program has shared more than 30,000 pounds of fresh, local food with more than 6,400 people. The Crandall Public Library will be coming on board the Farm-2-Library program in January. For more information about the program, look at the ALA’s Programming Library Blog:

<https://programminglibrarian.org/programs/farm-2-library>.

Erica presented a virtual workshop on grant writing in November. SALS will be offering a series of four workshops on how to convene, host, and facilitate inclusive conversations. This series is being funded through a grant from the American Library Association’s Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on

Small & Rural Libraries. All member libraries are eligible to participate, but the workshops are limited to 20 participants.

Jack Scott and Erica are working to build out a Moodle (learning management system) site to provide on-demand virtual learning for our member libraries. Moodle will allow us to include materials beyond recordings, and organize courses in a way that we are unable to on YouTube.

Erica continues to work with the member library staff, some areas of discussion included book banning, benefits for staff, adult programming and strategic planning.

She continues to publish a weekly e-newsletter and Facebook.

Erica reports that there is no librarian at the NYS Washington Correctional Facility and SALS has suspended services to the facility until a librarian is appointed.

Erica is active with ALA, serving on the ALA Committee on Professional Ethics and is a Public Library Association Board Member.

### **Technology & Youth Services**

Jack Scott is working with the Capital District Library Council (CDLC), Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS), Upper Hudson Library System (UHLS), and Unity Web Development agency to create a WordPress theme designed specifically with accessibility in mind. Using funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) CDLC has hired Unity Web Development agency to design this new theme. Once the theme is created it will be available to all member libraries going forward. As a result, Jack has stopped all current design projects until there is a new theme.

Efforts are underway to develop a series of workshops for member libraries with a focus on web content and accessibility. The workshops will take place in the first quarter of 2022 and instruct member library staff on how to make the content on their websites accessible to as many people as possible.

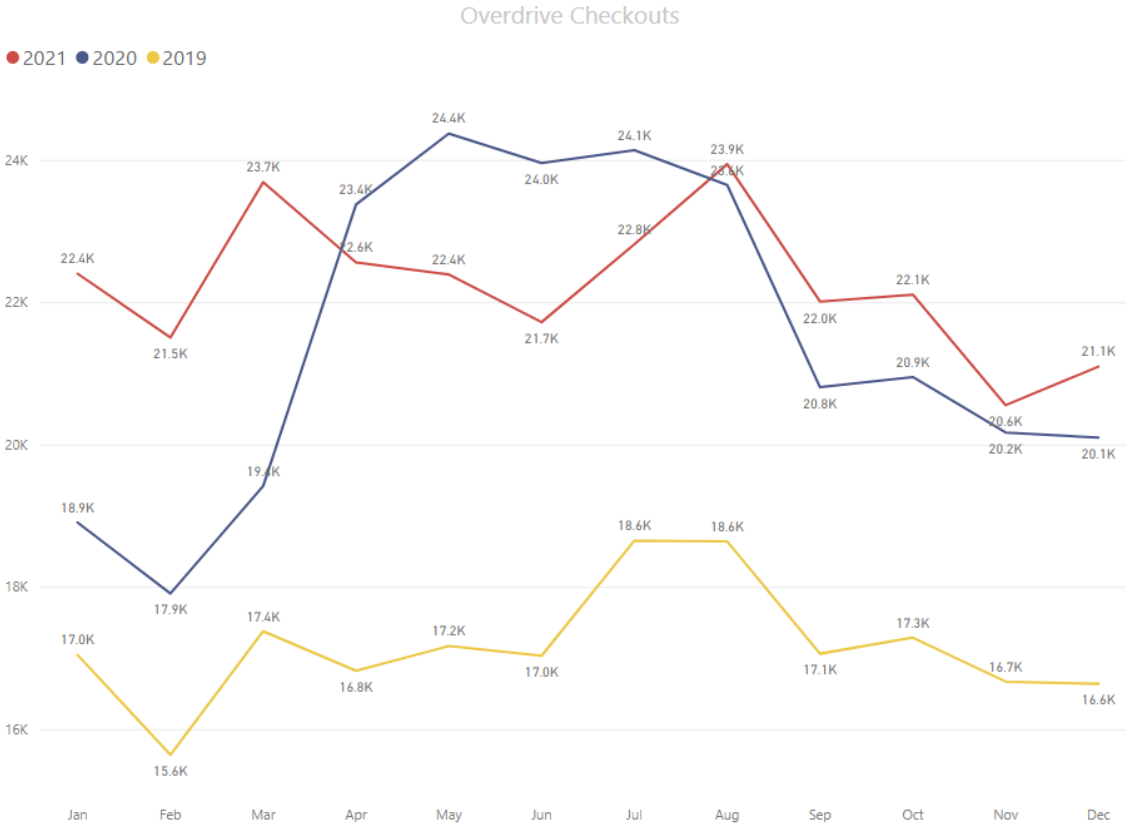
Jack continues to survey member libraries regarding their current library service levels and updating both our website and NYS monthly survey.

There were 1.3K web visits during November. The most visited pages were the Patron-Links, Jobs, and Current Library Services.

A new page was added to the site titled Overdrive & Libby. The purpose of the page is to give member libraries a go-to place when they have questions from patrons regarding accessing e-content, setting up a new device to use e-content, and troubleshooting e-content issues.

The web software used for the directory on the SALS website is antiquated and is not being updated — this has led to some issues with libraries not being able to post their correct hours of operation and closed dates. Jack is looking into alternatives we can use and still have the robust collection of data included.

Overdrive continues to be used by the public. There were over 266,000 items downloaded in 2021 (this report was submitted on Dec 15, so the second half of December is a forecast). This was an increase of 4% from 2020.



On December 8th, Jack hosted another workshop in the Tech After Lunch series, 15 people attended the workshop, which focused on assisting patrons in using Overdrive and specifically the Libby app.

Jack is working with 10 other library systems from across the New York State in a project we are calling, Oceans of Programming Possibilities: A Collaborative Summer Reading Program Workshop. We are pooling our Summer Reading Workshop experiences together to create 2 separate workshops on summer reading programs, one for children and one for teens. The teen programming workshop will be held virtually on Feb. 16 from 9:30 until 12:30 and the children’s workshop will be held on Mar. 10 from 9:30 until 12:30.

On November 3rd, the Governor signed the “technical amendments” bill, (Chapter 563 of the Laws of New York 2021) and by doing so combined the Adult and Family Literacy project funding and merged it into the Coordinated Outreach funding. The Coordinated Outreach funding now includes the age group of at-risk youth from 0-21. This will allow more flexible use of the funding and allow the inclusion of projects beyond just Early Literacy. Currently he is working on creating StoryWalks that can circulate



among member libraries and organizing the purchase of YA eBooks to increase the diversity of our collection.

Jack completed the Evaluating, Auditing and Diversifying Your Collections training class put on by Library Journal. He plans to include documentation and training for member libraries on how they can audit their collections on the previously mentioned on-demand eLearning website.

### **Meetings**

November 17	Freedom to Read Task Force on Social Justice Town of Chester Board Meeting
November 18	Division of Library Development call
November 22-30	Vacation
December 1	Freedom to Read Task Force on Social Justice
December 7	ALA Sustainability Committee
December 8	Annual JA fee meeting
December 9	ALA webinar on Book Challenges
December 13	Freedom to Read Foundation – Executive Board
December 15	Freedom to Read Task Force on Social Justice Prepare presentation for ALA
December 16	Division of Library Development call
December 17	SALS Directors Council
December 29	Freedom to Read Task Force on Social Justice
January 10	Freedom to Read Foundation – Executive Board
January 12	Freedom to Read Task Force on Social Justice JA Meeting
January 13	ALA Committee on Legislation Stillwater Board Meeting

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Dallas  
January 3, 2022