

## **Director Report December 2024 - January 2025**

### **Administration**

The SALS 2025 Construction Challenge Grant information was distributed to the member libraries. The completed online application form is due to SALS on April 1, 2025. The SALS Building Committee must review the applications and make recommendations to the entire board at its April 2025 meeting.

The State construction grant applications, submitted and reviewed by the Division of Library Development, received positive feedback. Pamela DelSignore was informed that the applications were of high quality and that SALS would “not hear anything” until DASNY provided review comments.”

I was asked to visit with the Hamilton County Supervisors in December to explain how the libraries use county funds. Library directors Susan Rollings and Katrena Cohea joined me. I spoke about how SALS distributes the funds and provided an overview of the number of visits, WIFI sessions, and circulation of print and content. I also shared the return on investment. For every dollar, the return on investment is over \$7.00. Katrena spoke about library programs and the summer reading program. Susan talked about the impact libraries and library programs have on all residents, especially children and young adults.

I am happy to report that our libraries will receive county aid in 2025 (Saratoga County—\$30,000; Hamilton County—\$11,500; and Warren County—\$55,000). When the funds arrive, SALS will distribute them to the Hamilton County and Warren County libraries. The Saratoga County aid will be used to purchase E-content.

Appointing someone to fill Tim McDonough's JA Council seat will be a new business item during the SALS January board meeting.

As of the close of business on December 31, 2024, Schenectady County Public Library will no longer be a member of the Joint Automation Project but will continue to be an MVLS member library.

The SALS Board will need to approve the 2026 JA fees. The JA Finance Committee met on December 11, 2024. Concerning 2026 fees, Michele Largeteau, Eric Trahan, and Sara Dallas recommend that the fee budget stay at the 2025 level of \$591,471. The proposal is to update the formula for the two systems contributing to the JA budget 2026. With that increased allocation from SALS and MVLS, a balanced budget is expected for 2026.

Concern was expressed about years beyond 2026 and the need for a balanced JA budget that does not deplete either the JA or the systems' fund balances. Bob Jeffords suggested a study and analysis of JA services in 2025. Concern was also expressed about potential losses to other system services if more is put into JA. It was emphasized that both systems have adequate fund balances, that JA is consistently rated as one of the most essential system services, and that it controls costs. The attendees agreed that the JA Council and

the two system boards would present a proposal to keep the fee budget flat for 2026. The proposed fee budget will be \$591,471, and the basis for the fee formula will be updated to 2024 data.

The fees and budget for 2026 will be presented as new business during the January 2025 SALS Board Meeting.

The New York Library Association's Pre-Advocacy Day is scheduled for February 4, 2025. A new event is "Lunch with the State Librarian." It is an opportunity to meet with Ms. Moore and discuss issues with her. Advocacy Day will take place on February 5, 2025. We will prepare for virtual visits with our representatives.

The New York Library Association will host [virtual prep sessions](#) on January 10 or 15 at 11:00 a.m. or January 24 or 29 at 1 p.m. Trustees and staff may also register for the pre-advocacy day at that link.

The legislative asks for FY 2025-26:

**NYS Library Operating Aid: \$176.8 million**

Increased aid is needed to support the foundational framework of New York State libraries, which improves the lives of residents of all ages, abilities, and economic statuses. Adequate funding is also needed to support school, public, and academic libraries and library systems.

**NYS Library Construction Aid: \$175M**

Increased investment is needed to maintain and develop the physical infrastructure of New York State's libraries, ensuring a safe, accessible, and sustainable environment for the future.

**Library Materials Aid: \$11.33/pupil**

The per pupil rate of \$6.25 has remained stagnant since 2007. We are seeking an increase in the rate to reflect general inflation and the rising materials costs in school libraries.

**NOVELny: \$3.1M**

Building on the successful campaign to save NOVELny from funding-related termination by including \$3 million in the FY 2025 budget, NYLA advocates for \$3.1 million in FY 2026 to ensure no resources are lost due to annual cost increases.

The NYLA 2025 Policy Initiatives include a Freedom to Read Act:

If enacted, this bill would require the education commissioner to develop policies to ensure that school libraries and library staff are empowered to curate and create collections that provide students access to the broadest array of developmentally appropriate materials available.

## Protection in Public Libraries

Multiple pieces of legislation intended to curb threats to patron access to materials and services in the public library setting have been introduced in the State Assembly and Senate. NYLA has helped craft the above legislation, which would include in the state's Standards of Library Service a requirement that libraries adopt policies and procedures that ensure library staff can curate and develop collections, services, and programming that reflect the interests of all people in the community that the library serves.

Two other policy initiatives include eBook Licensing Reform and Media Literacy in New State.

To learn more, please visit this [link](#).

Pamela will begin scheduling our virtual visits next week.

The SALS Annual Dinner will be held in person on May 19, 2025, at the Saratoga National Golf Club in Saratoga Springs.

Colleen Smith is preparing for the Annual Audit review in early January. Work is progressing on the revised Employee Handbook. The SALS Personnel Committee has reviewed the draft, which will be shared with the SALS/JA staff and the board.

Pamela DelSignore reports that she will work with the member libraries regarding the SWANK licenses for 2025-2026. These licenses allow libraries to show movies to the public legally without violating copyright.

Stephanie "Cole" Adams will review the JA Agreement between SALS and MVLS and the JA agreements sent to each member library.

If it is January, it means the annual "Annual Reports Party." Over the next few months, Pamela will spend much time reviewing the member library yearly reports and submitting them to the Division of Library Development.

She is also scheduling a CPR class, as required by the AED equipment.

The SALS board supported me and my work with the American Library Association. My work was highlighted in the January/February 2025 [American Libraries](#) article, "2024 Year in Review – A Look Back at News That Affected Libraries and the Profession." Please note the "New values for challenging times" and "Intellectual Summit convenes."

## **Automation/JA**

Michele Largeteau reports that the last group PC order for the year has been placed, and the PCs have arrived. JA staff is working on new images. In 2022, Microsoft decided that public libraries are no longer eligible for educational pricing but are eligible for non-profit pricing. The Microsoft Office education pricing was about \$65. The recent non-profit price

quoted was over \$300. Other public library systems were contacted to see how they handle the increased cost and look for the best pricing alternatives.

SCPL withdrawal meant many meetings with both JA staff and system trainers to discuss plans and the status of the SCPL withdrawal, including planning communications to member libraries as the transition progressed.

As mutually agreed, orders for pickup of items at SCPL branches were stopped on 11/11/2024.

County IT and JA began transferring PCs and networks from JA control to County IT control in mid-November.

As of 11/25/2024, SCPL is no longer on the JA Polaris ILS. They went live on their new system on 12/5/2024.

County IT continues to remove PCs from JA networks.

JA has been sending weekly messages to the transition team to identify outstanding items that must be resolved.

As of 12/31/2024, SCPL staff will no longer have access to MVLS/SALS email, OneDrive, Teams, and Microsoft 365 and will no longer be members of the MVLS/SALS Joint Automation Project, but they will remain members of MVLS.

Michele is working with III to establish a new multi-year contract for our Polaris-hosted ILS and associated products. The new contract includes a 12% discount on our current contract and reduced increases for years 2-5.

At the January 8th JA Council meeting, we will discuss upgrading our Polaris Hosted product to a bundle that includes Vega Discover (an enhanced PAC platform) and the Innovative Mobile app.

Library directors and staff from both systems participated in the demo and provided feedback through the survey. Thirteen libraries responded. All responses were positive (and one neutral) for Vega Discover. Responses for Innovative Mobile were split equally between positive, neutral, and negative. Due to accessibility features available on Vega Discover, this will most likely happen.

Since we could not find a vendor or reasonable price for painting the generator, and wintry weather has arrived, this will be tabled until the spring.

The computer room AC unit had multiple problems. First, the humidifier failed, and then the cooling failed due to a fan motor. Stark ordered parts, and while the unit was down, we used the backup unit in the ceiling for cooling and closely monitored the humidity. All parts

have been replaced, and the unit is now working. We plan to work with Stark in January to obtain a budgetary quote for replacement. We will hold off until 2026 to replace it.

The annual JA Fees meeting was held at the Clifton Park Halfmoon Public Library on December 11th. The meeting recommended keeping fee income for 2026 the same as for 2025, with the two systems contributing more to maintain a balanced budget. Projects for 2025 were also discussed.

Jason Thomson is working to make as many last-minute changes to the NYS annual report as possible, specifically to the section numbers and descriptions.

JA assisted CPH with installing new credit card readers. Chris Mundell and David MacFarland made site visits to help with network changes and issues. Cassie issues. Jill, Sharon, and Jason met to discuss the SCPL exit checklist and status (10/31/2024).

There have been 588 SysAid calls since 10/29/2024. The most calls pertained to emails, PCs, and User Accounts, and the most prolonged calls dealt with these.

### **Cataloging**

Jill Ryder has been working as part of the internal SCPL withdrawal transition team, drafting messages and creating a plan for SCPL to leave the Polaris ILS. The team meets frequently to address concerns and share information with the membership.

As part of her day-to-day work, Jill assists library staff with running reports, changing Polaris system administration settings, bulk changing library items in the catalog, database cleanup, and answering any Polaris questions that arise.

SALS catalogers (Jill Ryder and Johanna Hall) modified 4,994 bibliographic records in the catalog during November and December of 2024. Four thousand two hundred seventy-six new bibliographic records and 18,245 new item records were added to the database during the same month. This work is done by cataloging and technical processing staff at the System offices and the member libraries. Bib records represent the individual works (a book or a DVD, etc.), and item records represent each library's copy of that work.

Jill oversees the purchase of eBooks and eAudiobooks for the shared OverDrive collection; 381 titles were purchased throughout November and December 2024. Popular titles purchased include Freida McFadden's thriller *The Boyfriend*, Miranda July's humorous novel *All Fours*, and Paula Hawkins's latest suspense novel, *The Blue Hour*.

### **Outreach**

Erica Freudenberger reports that she worked with the Fort Edward Library on Narcan training and sharing of Xylazine testing strips. She went to Argyle Library to meet with the director & trustees to discuss strategic planning.

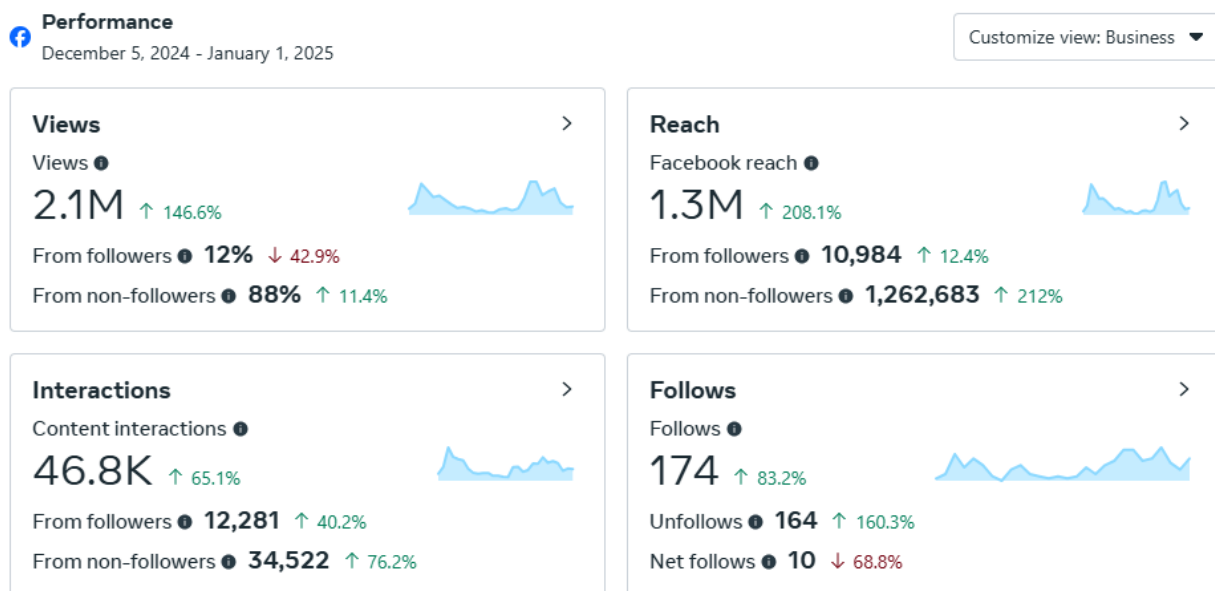
Erica provided the Town of Chester Board with information about trustee evaluations and discussed grants, personnel issues, funding issues, and building issues with the Long Lake director.

At the NYLA Annual Conference in Syracuse, Erica presented a Continuing Education workshop on the Path to Belonging. She also submitted a \$20K grant to NNLM to help with the costs of launching a statewide cohort in July 2025. We are expected to hear something in January / February regarding the grant.

Sustainable library funding is essential, and Erica met with the director and trustees from Whitehall to discuss budget referendums.

In addition, Erica is working with several member libraries on a system-wide NEA books discussion grant. Matching funds will be needed.

Due to Erica's gift with social media, the SALS Facebook page continues to be active. In 2024, SALS earned \$2027.22 through the Meta bonus program.



### Technology & Youth Services

In 2024, the SALS website had around 10k visitors to our website. Jack Scott has updated the Local Authors webpage (<https://authors.sals.edu/>) & the SALS Calendar page (<https://salsblog.sals.edu/calendar/>). He continues to visit member library sites as requested and check and fix accessibility issues as needed.

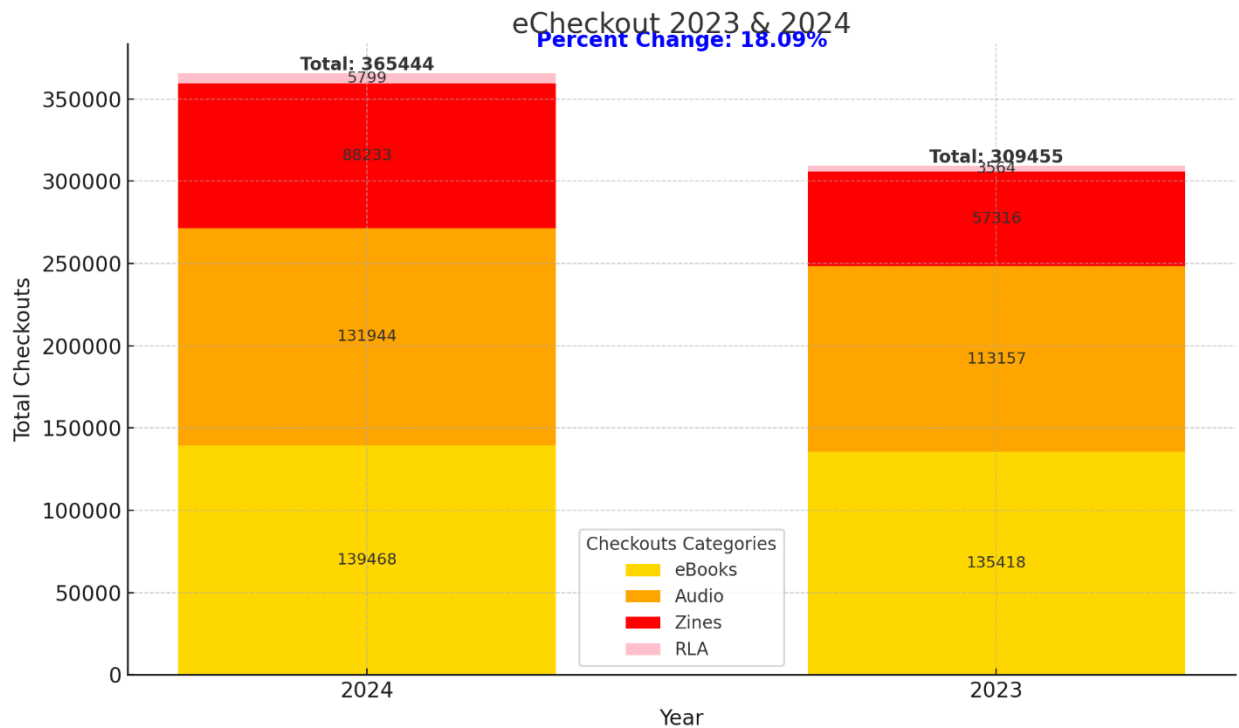
The Accessibility Working Group, in collaboration with systems across the state, continues to develop solutions. The next full meeting is scheduled for March 2025.

OATS: In 2024, 10 member libraries held 58 unique sessions, totaling 181 individual sessions, attended by 732 participants. The top three programs by attendance were Streaming & Smart TVs, Getting to Know Your Smartphone, and Protecting Your Personal Information.

OverDrive: In 2024, an estimated 365k items were borrowed, an 18% increase from 2023. There was a significant increase in the number of Magazines & Audio eBooks borrowed:

Content	Percent Change
Magazines	+54%
Audio	+17%
eBooks	+3%
RLA	+63%

\*RLA is our Reciprocal Lending Agreement between MVLS, MHLS, and UHLS.



Gale recorded 17,000 article retrievals, showing no significant statistical change from 2023. The 2024 use of Ancestry is currently unavailable because of a reporting issue.

Jack is collaborating with 14 other library systems across NYS to plan two virtual summer reading programming events: the Children’s Workshop on Feb. 25 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and the Teen Workshop on Mar. 11 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

This year’s summer reading theme is Color Our World. Jack is excited about this year’s artwork.

