SALS/MVLS JA responses to the SCPL Withdrawal from Joint Automation Whitepaper
The JA responses are indented and in italic text.

Schenectady County Public Library would enjoy many benefits from expanding IT resources by being supported by County IT and withdrawing from Joint Automation including:

- Access to a local team of fifteen IT staff shared only with other county departments instead of a remote team of 6 IT staff shared with 49 other libraries
    - *JA staff includes IT professionals, employed by the library system, who have provided IT services and support to the public libraries of MVLS and SALS for over 30 years with high satisfaction ratings. Specializing in public library information technology, JA works closely together to provide seamless support to all member libraries. JA support includes ILS management, end user support, PC support, server support, network, security and consulting.*
- Regularly scheduled IT support during some of our night/weekend operating hours instead of on-call support for emergencies during all night/weekend operating hours
    - *JA staff are on call 24/7 for member library support. Library staff can call the on-call number for support outside of JA's normal working hours. JA staff will respond onsite for network outages when needed. System upgrades and maintenance are performed during off hours, even when this requires an additional fee to our ILS provider.*
- Compliance with county records retention and record management policy and improved records retention
    - *MVLS, SALS and JA cannot speak to the county records retention and record management policy. Continuing to participate in JA should have no effect on SCPL's records management.*
- Implementation of rigorous cybersecurity practices in compliance with county policy and procedure including endpoint protection and firewalls
    - *JA staff continually monitor and update security practices to secure, control access, and prevent unauthorized processing, transfer, or deletion of data. JA's goal is to safeguard the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information necessary for the operation of the Polaris ILS. JA's solution includes endpoint protection and firewalls.*
- Eligibility for cyber liability insurance through the County once we are in compliance with cybersecurity best practices
    - *JA offers assistance to all member libraries to meet cyber liability insurance requirements. JA also provides contact information for an insurance agent who has provided cyber insurance to other MVLS/SALS libraries.*
- Dramatically improved protection of patron privacy through discontinuing routine JA practices such as use of generic staff logins with weak passwords
    - *JA encourages member libraries to change the staff password on non-shared PCs. JA also encourages member libraries to request the enabling of MFA (multi-factor authentication) on Microsoft 365 accounts for all staff. On shared PCs, like those at a circ desk, multiple staff need access to the same programs; however, access to any data, such as Microsoft 365 and Polaris requires additional credentials to be entered that are unique to each user. Sharing of these credentials to gain access violates JA policy.*

- Access to upgraded Office365 licenses that include an improved ability to collaborate on documents for a more efficient and effective workflow
  - *JA utilizes free Microsoft 365 licenses in order to keep member library fees down. These licenses provide the ability to collaborate with any user in the MVLS/SALS Microsoft 365 tenant via OneDrive, Teams and various other Microsoft products.*
- Centralized network so all of our libraries can talk to one another and we can implement library-wide services such as print and PC management (we currently manually manage much of this at all locations other than Bornt, Mont Pleasant and Central), as well as being able to easily access all security cameras on-site (currently we drive to the individual location to retrieve and save footage from that location), and add a door fob system to all of our buildings for improved safety and security (keys can be lost, copied, etc., and rekeying each time an employee leaves the library is not practical or cost-effective)
  - *Creating a virtual network for the SCPL branches would assist in these projects. JA staff are always willing to work with member libraries to find solutions to their needs.*
- Email addresses on our own domain of scpl.org instead of mvls.info
  - *This is accurate. There is no impediment to SCPL having their own email system in conjunction with the JA email and 365 accounts.*
- Confidentiality of library files and emails from any non-County third parties
  - *JA's Microsoft 365 tenant prevents sharing of files to sources outside of the MVLS and SALS member libraries in order to prevent unintentional exposure of confidential patron data. MVLS/SALS email cannot be blanketly forwarded to outside addresses. Encryption can be used to further protect the confidentiality of library data via email. All staff with Polaris ILS access are required annually to read and sign the "Confidential Library Patron Data" section of the MVLS/SALS Joint Automation Security Policy.*
- Access to support for a wider variety of computers and related technology hardware
  - *CPH, GLE and SAR employ local IT staff and are afforded more autonomy for hardware purchases, as long as they meet JA's minimum recommendations.*
- Ability to offer upgraded patron printer/copier/scanner/faxing systems
  - *CPH, GLE and SAR employ local IT staff and are afforded more autonomy for local hardware and software solutions.*
- Ability to easily and effectively communicate with the county via email and file sharing
  - *This is accurate. JA's Microsoft 365 tenant prevents sharing of files to sources outside of the MVLS and SALS member libraries. There is no impediment to SCPL having their own email and 365 accounts in conjunction with the JA email and 365 accounts.*
- Ability for library staff to print from their library-issued laptops while connected to library Wi-Fi (critical for branch librarians)
  - *JA has several options for Wi-Fi printing from laptops.*

It's important to note that this is not intended to be a cost savings measure, and in fact represents a significant investment on the county's part in ensuring we have the technology infrastructure necessary to operate effectively, comply with county policy and state law, reduce risk, improve patron privacy protections, and adapt and innovate with the changing technological needs of our community and staff.

JA is a small operation of only 6 IT staff serving SCPL and 49 other libraries. The practical constraints due to their size means they only offer a one-size-fits-all approach that does not meet our needs as a large county library with nine locations. We are restricted in which equipment we can order/have supported, which software we can use (such as type of Office 365 licenses and type of public PC and print management solutions), our ability to collaborate with one another and our county colleagues as well as community partners, and our ability to customize our configurations to our library's needs.

- o *JA utilizes standard images and hardware in order to provide efficient support to all member libraries and to reduce costs for the members. Similarly, offering a single software solution for PC management allows JA to provide fast, efficient support and reduce overall costs. JA staff have evaluated new print solutions as requested by member libraries, most recently Princh. Larger libraries (CPH, GLE and SAR) have opted for library employed IT staff in order to have more autonomy in these areas. JA continues to provide support to these libraries in these areas as needed.*

Initially we sought to rectify much of this by having the County take on management of our IT and remaining members of JA for access to the shared catalog. This approach itself was not sustainable long term as JA informed us in June 2023 our membership fees would not change to reflect the shared catalog as the only service being provided but it represented a significant step forward in improving our IT situation in the interim. Unfortunately in late January of this year, JA informed us they will not allow us to completely manage our own IT and remain members of the shared catalog.

- o *MVLS, SALS and JA object to allowing government employees access to confidential patron data.*

While the primary impetus for this change is the ability to manage our own IT in order to benefit from significant improvements and upgrades, withdrawal from Joint Automation and exploring alternate resource sharing arrangements with regional libraries has many advantages for us as it relates to the integrated library system (ILS/catalog), key among them:

- • Ability to implement autorenewal - instead of items going overdue at their original due date and us billing for their replacement costs at 3 weeks overdue, the system can automatically renew them if no one is waiting
  - o *When this feature was first offered by Polaris, the options available would have been confusing for patrons and staff in a consortial environment. At that time, the MVLS/SALS Operations Committee determined that it was best to not implement. The implementation of this feature could be revisited.*
- • Improved public catalog features including the ability to filter by items currently on the shelf, display of locations on the main search results page, display of how many holds are currently on a title and your place in line
  - o *Ability to filter by items currently on the shelf is available. For SCPL it has been set up as on shelf at any SCPL branch. This could be revised.*
  - o *The other features mentioned were addressed by the PAC Steering Committee and were previously determined to be excluded or do not make sense in a consortial catalog.*
- • Ability for us to manage and set appropriate ILS permissions for each library employee according to their job titles, functions and assigned responsibilities
  - o *Per the MVLS/SALS JA User Account Policy:*

- ▪ *All Polaris account requests (new users, change of Polaris permissions) will go through the system trainers.*
  - • *Polaris permissions are based on job function, not job title.*
  - • *Users must be trained for Polaris access (either by the system trainers or library staff as approved by the system trainers).*
  - • *For complex Polaris functions, only staff who will be performing those functions regularly will be given access*
- Ability to implement SCPL Board of Trustee policies relating to circulation, such as our fine block threshold
  - o *Per the JA Council, trainers and JA staff have been tasked to develop guidelines for Polaris ILS settings and possible standardization in order to best support a consortial environment.*
- Ability to automate replacement cost bills via digital communications instead of printing and manually mailing them
  - o *This requirement is per the MVLS/SALS JA Fines and Fees Policy, approved 1/9/2019. At that time, this was deemed the best practice for billing patrons for library materials.*
- Ability to discontinue collecting unnecessary personally identifiable information such as driver license numbers and reduce library liability and impact in the event of a cybersecurity breach (which in itself would be much less likely with the enhanced cybersecurity measures we'll implement under County IT)
  - o *This requirement is per the MVLS/SALS JA Identification information in Patron Registration policy, approved 1/9/2019. As a unique identifier, Patron ID information helps to reduce duplicate patron accounts. JA staff continually monitor and update security practices. All library personnel are required annually to sign and follow JA policies, including the Confidential Library Patron Data policy.*
- Ability to do our own cataloging
  - o *This service is provided as part of the JA fees and system contributions by four catalogers for all member libraries who participate in JA.*
- Ability to edit bib records
  - o *This service is provided as part of the JA fees and system contributions by four catalogers for all member libraries who participate in JA. Having limited, dedicated staff with the ability to edit bib records ensures a cleaner, consistent database.*
- Ability to run custom reports
  - o *JA and system trainers are happy to respond to library requests for custom queries, reports and record sets. JA and system trainers work with library staff to develop the questions and parameters necessary to provide correct and accurate information.*
- Ability to utilize functionality such as bulk record changes
  - o *See the MVLS/SALS JA User Account Policy.*