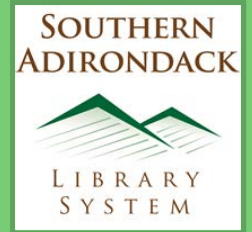


SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK LIBRARY SYSTEM



STRATEGIC PLAN
2022-2026



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) is at its best when we listen to and work with our member libraries to provide our communities with the best possible library services. The SALS Board of Trustees and leadership team embrace this perspective when strategically allocating resources and designing member services.

The SALS is a cooperative public library system located in Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties. We work in collaboration with our 34-member libraries. While our member libraries are a mix of urban, suburban, and rural, and range in size, staffing, and budget, each is committed to providing exemplary services to the people who reside in their communities.

When the pandemic precluded the possibility of hiring outside consultants to lead our strategic planning process, Erica Freudenberger used the Engaged Planning approach we encourage our member libraries to use when creating their community-responsive plans. We spent several months in conversation with various stakeholders – including the SALS Board of Trustees, trustees of member libraries, Friends of the Library, directors, staff, and volunteers, to create a member-driven strategic plan.

We heard that the strength of our system is our open communication, our network of member libraries, and existing relationships. Our member libraries believe our collaborative relationship provides cohesion in times of turmoil, allowing us to leverage our strengths across the system so that we can sparkle for our communities.

Our member libraries identified the following core services as being essential to supporting their work, and we recommit to providing them for the next five years:

- Joint Automation/Polaris
- Delivery
- Support from SALS Consultants
- Sharing E-Resources
- Collaboration with MVLS

We are committed to learning and growing. That process includes holding ourselves accountable by evaluating these core services each year. We value regular feedback from our membership and will revise our services as determined through the evaluation process.

Thank you to the SALS Board of Trustees, member library boards, staff, and volunteers, and the outstanding SALS and JA staff for all of their work.

SARA DALLAS

Director

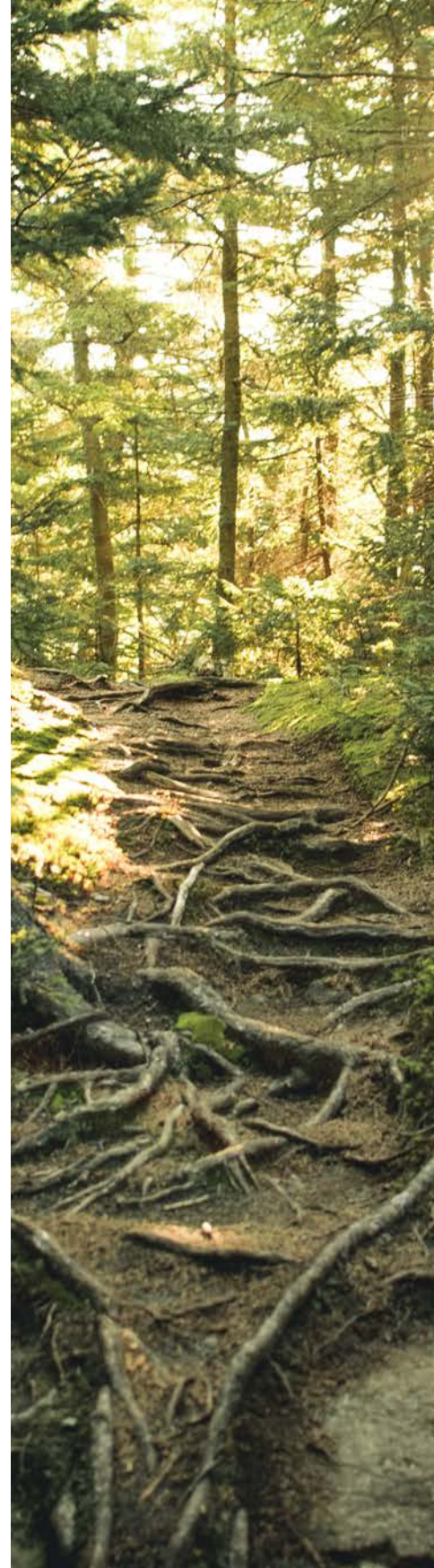
Southern Adirondack Library System

HISTORY

The Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) is a voluntary association of 34 public libraries in Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties. We work together to provide the best possible library services to residents of our region.

Chartered in 1958 by the New York State Board of Regents, SALS is one of 23 public library systems in New York State. Almost all of our revenue comes from the state of New York. We are governed by a Board of Trustees composed of three representatives from each county elected by the trustees of our member libraries. Each member library is governed by an independent board of trustees and is funded primarily by local taxes. Member libraries receive automated library services through the Joint Automation Project, a collaboration with Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS).

Our Plan of Service guides our operations. It was developed by a committee of SALS trustees, member library trustees, library staff, and Friends representing all sizes of member libraries with attention to geographic location. Crandall Public Library is our Central Library; for more information on Crandall Public Library, visit their Plan of Service for 2022-2026.





VISION

The Southern Adirondack Library System works with its member libraries to provide exceptional services to support thriving, resilient communities in Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington counties.

MISSION

The Southern Adirondack Library System provides leadership, effective and efficient services, continuing education and technology to support member library services to all the residents in Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington counties.

PROCESS

Erica Freudenberger, the Outreach, Engagement & Marketing consultant for SALS facilitated thirteen discussions from March through June 2021 about SALS. Those conversations inform this plan. All participants were asked to consider SALS and its member libraries as one ecosystem or community.

The questions discussed were:

- What do we do well?
- What are we best positioned to do?
- What are the priorities of our member libraries?
- How have our needs changed since the pandemic?
- What can we create or how should we adapt to meet the identified changing needs?
- What is no longer important?
- What is essential?
- What other resources do we need to do our work? Who could we collaborate with to accomplish our goals?
- Given what we've learned in the past year, what do we want our future to look like?





PROCESS

Thirty-six participants representing SALS staff, member library directors, SALS trustees, member library trustees, member library volunteers, Friends of member libraries, and member library staff participated in the discussion.

Our conversations included people who represented all sizes of libraries in each of the four counties served by SALS. Everyone agreed that our cooperation, collaboration, shared services, and expertise across the system benefit all member libraries. The strength of our system is our open communication, our network of member libraries, and existing relationships. SALS focuses on ensuring that all member libraries provide exceptional services to their communities regardless of size or budget.

As one participant said, “SALS as a system is very cohesive – each library is distinct for its community, but we sparkle and come together well.”

CORE SERVICES

The following core services currently offered by SALS were identified as being instrumental to the success of member libraries.

Our core services include:

- Joint Automation/Polaris
- Delivery
- Support from SALS Consultants
- Sharing E-Resources
- Collaboration with MVLS





EXPANDED AREAS OF EMPHASIS

In addition to the Core Services, our member libraries value the opportunity to continue to learn and grow together. SALS loves to amplify the great work done by our member libraries, inform them of opportunities, and advocate for continued support on a local, state, and national level. SALS continues to provide the following services:

Continuing Education

- As the Division of Library Development continues to explore the requirements of public library staff and trustees, SALS will develop targeted professional development opportunities – either in house, in combination with other library systems, or by hiring outside experts – to create a culture of excellence. To encourage library staff and trustees to embrace the value of lifetime learning, the System will create a variety of on-demand, virtual training courses.
- In addition to regular professional development, SALS will work on identifying the core competencies needed to successfully serve as a trustee, a library director, library staff, a Friend of the Library, or volunteer. Professional development will be made available to support the identified core competencies.

CORE SERVICES

Advocacy

- SALS will promote the System as a whole and explain the benefits of a system to the communities served. SALS will continue to work with and inform legislative representatives on the local, state, and national level about the role of libraries in supporting a democratic society.
- SALS will advocate for social justice, and encourage our partners to do the same, as outlined in its Social Justice Statement from June 8, 2020.

Operational Support

- To support the essential work of our member libraries, SALS will continue to provide information and guidance on complying with all state and national regulations regarding libraries.





STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Looking forward, participants identified two strategic directions to concentrate on so that SALS may work toward a more equitable, sustainable, and just future:

- Creating A Sustainable Ecosystem
- Future Forward


CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM

A culture of excellence requires building a robust ecosystem. It includes:

- Prioritizing equity and social justice,
- Ensuring the long-term financial stability of member libraries and SALS,
- Supporting member libraries as they create accessible, welcoming, state-of-the-art spaces,
- Building long-term strategic partnerships & welcoming collaboration,
- Communicating effectively across multiple platforms.

The 2020 COVID pandemic highlighted the need for digital equity and justice. It was a powerful reminder of the importance of using an equity lens when reflecting on our organization and how we make decisions.





SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM

Before doing this and other important work, our priority is to ensure that member libraries have sustainable funding through budget referendums, grant writing, endowments, and creating active and effective Friends groups. SALS supports these activities through consulting and workshops.

SALS supports open communication with our member libraries and between member libraries, using multiple platforms, including newsletters, social media, in-person and virtual meetings, networking opportunities, and email.

To best serve our communities, SALS continues to support member libraries' efforts to refresh, renovate, or construct ADA-accessible buildings reflective of the needs of the 21st century, including exceptional broadband and WiFi access and other technologies as they become available. Member libraries may improve their physical space through local, state, and federal funding opportunities.

FUTURE FORWARD

As we look to the future, we recognize the need to assist our member libraries in navigating unpredictable terrain and figuring out how to balance the in-person and virtual environments. We will research and identify beneficial new technology, services, and practices, provide professional development, and model how to plan for uncertainty using change management and risk mitigation strategies. To make informed purchasing and service decisions, SALS will invest time in data analysis to identify system-wide patterns.

To balance the many demands and challenges we face as public institutions, SALS will develop opportunities for colleagues to strategize, collaborate, and develop ongoing restorative practices as we chart a new way forward.





ACCOUNTABILITY

Each year, to ensure continued progress toward our identified priorities, SALS will evaluate its services by asking for feedback from member library directors, staff, and trustees. This current plan may be revised as we make progress, or to reflect the feedback from member libraries. This Plan of Service will be used as a tool to allocate resources, develop annual budgets, and evaluate staff.

THANKS!

This plan of service would not have been possible without the time and contributions of many people. Representatives from the following libraries provided invaluable insight and assistance in shaping the future of the Southern Adirondack Library System:

- Argyle Free Library
- Bolton Free Library
- Caldwell-Lake George Public Library
- Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library
- Corinth Free Library
- Crandall Public Library
- CVW Long Lake Public Library
- Easton Library
- Fort Edward Free Library
- Galway Public Library
- Greenwich Free Library
- Horicon Free Public Library
- Inlet Public Library
- Lake Pleasant Public Library
- Mechanicville District Public Library
- Richards Library
- Rockwell Falls Public Library
- Round Lake Library
- Saratoga Springs Public Library
- Schuylerville Public Library
- Stillwater Public Library
- Town of Ballston Community Library
- Town of Chester Library
- Waterford Public Library

