

Library Trustees and Personnel Practices

Understand how the board's role and the library director's role differ

The board of trustees and the library director are both involved in library governance and policy development, financial management, and personnel administration. However, the type and level of involvement must be clearly differentiated in order to avoid conflict and for the library to operate professionally and effectively.

Typically the board establishes overall personnel policies such as guidelines for salary and benefits, hiring practices, and other personnel actions unless the library is part of a town/city and must follow municipal policy. If the library is part of a municipal system that maintains authority to hire the director, the board hires the library director and sets salary and benefits.

Your public library director is the department head of a city service and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the library. The director acts as the professional/technical adviser to the library board on policy, finances, planning, library performance and more.

Some of the ways the roles of the library director and the board differ are:

- The library director may suggest or draft policies. It is the board that actually adopts the policies. Once a policy is adopted, the director and staff carry it out as they operate the library.
- The board hires and evaluates the library director while the director hires and evaluates other staff.
- The library director may draft a budget request; the board officially adopts the budget.

Use the chart below to openly discuss the board's role and the director's role. Most conflicts can be avoided if the board and director understand and respect each other's roles.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Board and Library Director

Library Board	Library Director
<p>Staff: Employ a competent and qualified librarian. Includes recruiting, hiring and annually evaluating the director based upon a well-defined job description and expectations. Adopt personnel policy and set adequate salary and benefits for all staff.</p>	<p>Staff: Recruit, hire and annually evaluate library staff based upon well-defined job descriptions and expectations. Suggest improvements needed in salaries, working conditions and personnel policy.</p>
<p>Policy: Determine and adopt written policies to govern the operation of the library.</p>	<p>Policy: Carry out the policies of the library as adopted by the board. Recommend policies to library board.</p>

<p>Planning: Determine the direction of the library by studying community needs. See that a plan is developed for meeting needs and that the plan is carried out.</p>	<p>Planning/Management: Suggest and carry out plans for library services. Manage day-to-day operation of library. Design library services to meet community needs/interests. Report library's progress and future needs to the board.</p>
<p>Budget: Examine budget proposed by the director; make revisions as needed; officially adopt the budget; present library budget to mayor/city council. Review expenditures in accord with budget, amending line items within the budget if needed.</p>	<p>Budget: Prepare and submit to library board a budget request based on present and anticipated needs. Maintain complete and accurate records of finances. Expend funds based on approved budget.</p>
<p>Advocacy: Advocate for library through contacts with general public, civic organizations and public officials. Attend city council meetings to keep council informed on library activities. Work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library's services.</p>	<p>Advocacy: Advocate for library through contacts with general public, civic organizations and public officials. Attend city council and/or county supervisor meetings. Work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library's services.</p>
<p>Legal Issues: Be familiar with library ordinance as well as state and federal laws affecting the library.</p>	<p>Legal Issues: Be familiar with library ordinance and keep board informed on laws affecting library.</p>
<p>Continuing Education: Participate in continuing education activities and encourages library director to do the same. Provide and/or see that new trustees receive an orientation to the library.</p>	<p>Continuing Education: Participate in continuing education activities and professional organizations; encourage continuing education for library staff. Participate in orientation of new trustees.</p>
<p>Communicate with the library director</p>	<p>Communicate with the library board</p>
<p>Collection Development: Adopt collection development policy.</p>	<p>Collection Development: Select and order all books and other library materials and resources.</p>
<p>Board Meetings: Regularly attend board meetings; conduct affairs of board at regularly scheduled meetings.</p>	<p>Board Meetings: Attend board meetings; prepare written progress report; provide information as needed/requested by board.</p>
<p>Board Member Recruitment: Recommend qualifications and candidates for board to mayor/city council. Notify city of board vacancies.</p>	<p>Board Member Recruitment: Assist in developing qualifications for new trustees.</p>

Working with the Library Director

Human relationships determine the inner climate of the library. Every effort should be made to maintain cordially cooperative and mutually productive relationships. Chief among these relationships, because of its effect on the overall library administration, is that between the library board and the library director. The working relationships that prevail within the library determine the attitudes of librarians and staff, which in turn determine the quality of service offered to the public.

The board delegates all library management responsibility to the director. The board's job is monitoring the director's effectiveness in providing library service to the community. This system is effective because it has a board of trustees who represent the interests of the community and a qualified director who has the skills to make the library run efficiently within the parameters set by the board. How much does the board do and what are the responsibilities of the library director? There are several ways to clarify responsibilities:

- Look at the relationship with the director as a partnership between the board and the director in providing the best library service to the community.
- The board members' duties can be defined loosely as dealing with issues that affect the whole library and its position in the community. The board sets parameters of how the library will operate. Then the director's duty is to carry out the day-to-day functions (procedures) of running the library within the parameters (policies) set by the board.
- Open communication prevents confusion and conflict. Board members and the director must feel free to discuss their respective roles.

The director is a valuable resource to the board on all issues and often the leader on many issues that come before the board. The director should attend all board meetings and be encouraged and expected to make well-supported recommendations on all issues that come before the board. The director should be expected to take part in deliberations to help the board make decisions in the best interests of the library service to the community.

Although the director is responsible for the management of the library, the board retains ultimate responsibility. It is the right and responsibility of the board to request from the director all information necessary to fulfill the board's governing responsibility. It is the director's obligation to report to the board accurately and completely about how the library is being managed including problems, plans, progress.

The director is responsible to the board as a whole, but not responsible to each board member individually. Individual board members, including the board president, have no power to make demands or give orders to the director. This does not rule out individual board members asking the director for clarification about issues facing the board or discussing with the director concerns that individual board members may have. The board must speak with one voice when delegating to the director, when giving direction to the director, when requesting information. The director must serve the board as a whole in order to manage the library efficiently.