A Reference Manual for South Carolina Public Library Trustees

2016 – Abridged Edition
Dear Library Trustee,

Serving on the Board for your public library is an excellent opportunity to serve your community and carries great responsibility. Public libraries support the educational development of citizens from young children just beginning to learn the magic of books, to adults seeking to increase their work-related skills, to senior citizens pursuing lifelong learning.

With access to electronic books, databases, and the Internet readily available, libraries continue to find a balance among new information sources and traditional services in order to meet the needs of their community. Public libraries also strive to serve the variety of cultures, interests, and ethnic groups represented within their communities.

The purpose of this document is to give new and “not-so-new” public library Trustees in South Carolina a guide reviewing the responsibilities and powers of the office they hold. Library Trustees are now, and will continue to be, provided exciting possibilities and opportunities for improvement. How they respond will determine the future of library services to the people of South Carolina.

The South Carolina State Library works closely with South Carolina's public libraries to support, supplement, and improve services to their communities. Library Trustees are an integral and essential part of the structure of public libraries. We hope this guidebook to the powers and duties of your role will be of assistance during your tenure in this important position.

Please contact us if we can be of service.

Sincerely,

Leesa M. Aiken
Director
South Carolina State Library
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Public Library Trustees in South Carolina

History

Few states can boast a library history as interesting as that of South Carolina. Beginning in 1698 with the establishment in Charles Towne of the first public library in America and coming down to the present day when county and regional libraries serve all forty-six counties, libraries in the state have had an adventurous and exciting existence…. They have suffered the natural disasters of earthquake, hurricane and flood; they have been the object of enemy attack, have been invaded, captured and carried off into captivity. They have fostered friendships and sometimes have contributed to romance. But always, wherever they have existed, they have been used and loved by South Carolinians.

Today South Carolina has public library service in each of its forty-six counties either as county or as regional libraries. The libraries are legally established, in charge of legally appointed boards and are largely supported from local tax funds. State and federal aid, in supplementing local funds, has done much to enrich local library programs. Wherever you are or whoever you are, you are never far from public library service in South Carolina. Service is available for the visually and physically handicapped, for the disadvantaged and for the non-English speaking. It is a total program to serve a total state and owes its success to the dedicated service of librarians, library board members and library staff throughout the state.

Estellene P. Walker, State Librarian 1946-1979

South Carolina Public Library Systems

After the passage of home rule in South Carolina in 1976, the State Legislature passed an act in 1978 mandating public library service and specifying provisions of county library ordinances.

The Statewide Library Act (SC Code § 4-9-30 Ann. et seq.) and the resulting county library ordinances have given South Carolina public library systems a strong legal foundation and a certain uniformity of operation and support.

SC County Public Library Systems 42
Regional–Multi-County Public Library Systems (as of 2016) 2
Municipal Libraries (as of 2016) 1
County and regional library systems in South Carolina have governing boards that are legally responsible for the control and management of the library.

Each board must elect a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer and must meet at least four times each year. The boards have broad administrative and policy-making duties that are specified in South Carolina law and by county ordinance.

Governing boards have the power and authority to actually make decisions on library services rather than just simply making recommendations. Listed below is a brief account of the powers and duties of county library boards:

- Employ a chief librarian whose qualifications and credentials shall meet the certification requirements of the State Library.

- Purchase, lease, hold and dispose of real and personal property.

- Acquire books and other library materials.

- Accept donations of real property, services, books and other items suitable for use in the county library system.

- Cooperate with or enter into contracts or agreements with any public or private agency, which will result in improved services or the receipt of financial aid in carrying out the functions of the library system, subject to the approval of county council.

- Enter into contracts or agreements with other counties to operate regional or joint libraries and related facilities, subject to the approval of county council.

- Receive and expend grants.

- Take any actions deemed necessary and proper by the board to establish, equip, operate and maintain an effective library system within the limits of the approved appropriations of county council.

- Determines the roles, regulations, and policies governing library services.

All library personnel are subject to the established personnel system of the county unless granted an official exemption from a particular policy. Members of the county or regional library boards of trustees in South Carolina are all volunteers serving without remuneration of any kind.
Legal Responsibilities and Liability

Legal Status of Library Trustees

As a library trustee, you have become a member of a public body—the board of trustees of a public library. As a public servant, you enact the role of a fiduciary—that is, a person who holds something in trust for others. A public library is a community asset that you and the other board members, in your fiduciary role, hold in trust for the public. Violations of that trust could result in legal consequences for you and other trustees. Such violations might include active errors, as for example, exceeding legal authority; or passive errors, as in failing to meet responsibilities to provide a safe, accessible library environment.

A Library Board’s Basic Legal Obligations...

- Organize the board with written bylaws and elected officers
- Meet regularly in conformance with the South Carolina Open Meetings Law (See Board Organization.)
- Provide written minutes of every meeting of the board and its committees
- and to archive the minutes after approval by the board;
- Supply the South Carolina State Library with statistics and information as it may from time to time request;
- Conduct all library business in accordance with federal, state, and local laws.

Trustees should become familiar with the following laws and be certain to meet their requirements:

Open Meeting Law. SC Code § 30-4-70 et seq.
USA Patriot Act. Public Law 107-56
Confidential Library Records SC Code Ann § 60-4-10 et seq.
Library Security Act SC Code § 16-13-331 et seq.
Use of State Aid Funds. 26 SC Code Ann. Regs. 75-1 Revised
Duties and Qualifications of Director. 26 SC Code Ann. Regs. 75-3
Children Internet Protection Act. 47 U.S.C. § 254 (h) et seq.
Sales Tax Exemption SC Code Ann. § 12-36-2120

Trustees and the library director should work with their County Council and the South Carolina State Library to monitor new laws or revisions to existing acts and regulations.

Risks of Liability for Library Trustees

A library board of trustees has legal status similar to that of a corporation: it can enter into contracts. Like other corporations, the library board can sue—and it can be sued. So long as a trustee is operating within the lawful authority of his/her position, a trustee will not be held personally liable for his/her actions. However, there is no way to prevent someone from individually initiating a suit against a trustee. For that reason, library boards typically purchase insurance against liabilities related to the public library. Such policies may be called “directors and officers liability” insurance or “errors and omissions” insurance.

Liability may result from injury or harm that a person receives while on library property. If a library patron falls on a slippery floor and breaks an arm, for example, that person might have legal ground to sue the library board for damages. Liability may also result from malfeasance committed by one or more library trustees, in gross violation of trustee fiduciary responsibility. The section of this chapter entitled “Ways to Minimize Risks of Liability” will help you understand how to carry out your board responsibilities properly so as to minimize legal risks.

The library board should carefully and in good faith exercise its responsibility in hiring a library director who understands the legal implications of library administration.

Conflict of Interest: An Invitation to Liability

A situation known as conflict of interest arises if any library trustee or trustee relative or associate receives any gain, tangible or intangible, in the course of the trustee’s service on the library board. Conflict of interest is one of the most serious forms of public malfeasance, and it may be prosecuted criminally. Liability may well extend to board members other than the perpetrator, if there is any appearance of collusion or even passive tolerance.

The following are examples of situations in which there is a conflict of interest.

EXAMPLE: The library board enters into a contract with a company that will provide a service to the library; a trustee on the board is a relative of the company president.
EXAMPLE: The board purchases a lot for library construction from a real estate company with which a trustee is associated.
Boards can lessen their vulnerability through the following actions:

- Encourage all trustees to attend board meetings, study the issues, ask questions, vote, monitor progress and maintain active committees.
- Record the minutes and make corrections.
- Vote against proposed action if convinced there is insufficient information on which to base an opinion; make sure minutes reflect that vote. When abstaining until more information is provided, follow up on the issue and let the record show the eventual decision.
- Through bylaws, force resignation of trustees who do not participate.
- Use a qualified attorney for all legal matters and controversial issues.
- Adopt written rules, regulations and policies and keep them up-to-date. Publicly post rules, regulations, agendas and meeting minutes to avoid any charge that the information is being kept secret.
- Publish minutes in newspapers, the library’s newsletter, and post them on a library bulletin board to educate the public and provide a continuous public record of board actions.
- Adopt rules, regulations, policies and budgets formally, by use of a motion and vote. Be sure these are documented in the board minutes.
- Refuse to allow conflicts of interest on the board. Write a letter of protest for the record if conflicts are occurring.
- Hire a qualified library director and perform annual evaluations that include a review of staff management.
- Carefully follow any procedures established by the board for the avoidance of personal conflicts and the reporting of ethical violations.
- Establish legally defensible library policies.
- Post library rules and regulations openly.
- Trustees my not receive any monetary compensation whatsoever in dealing with the library.

Individual board members are shielded from personal liability, IN PART, by South Carolina General Statutes (SC Code Ann. § 15-78-120, SC Tort Claims Act) for certain financial losses and expenses incurred as a result of their public positions.

**BUT … PROTECT YOURSELF**

*Even if you follow through on these recommendations and act in good faith, board members can still be sued. To protect yourself, it is advised by the American Library Association, that you should try to determine if you need insurance protection. There is no easily ascertainable standard or accepted amount of this insurance. Policies exist for public officials that can be extended to library board members/or library governing authorities.*

*This SC Public Library Trustee Manual provides only a general outline of the law and should not be construed as legal advice in individual or specific cases where additional facts might support a different or more qualified conclusion.*
Library Funding, Finance and Budget

Under state law and the county library ordinance, the library board establishes policy and is responsible for passing a budget. To understand and approve a budget for the library, board members must know where the money comes from and how much revenue they can expect to build into the budget each year. A good understanding of revenue sources is important to advocate for continued funding.

To learn about library finance, new board members should insist on a good orientation about library finance and how to monitor financial status. You are responsible to know the following:

- Knowledge of all funding sources for the libraries expenditures;
- Understand and be able to explain the annual budget to county council;
- Understand the monthly financial report;
- Understand the annual audit.

Library Funding Sources

South Carolina public libraries receive funding from three main sources:

**Local Government** (primarily county governments), which can come through an appropriation or from, a special tax levied on property, or a combination of the two.

**State Government**, through participation in the State Aid program. Each year the South Carolina State Legislature allocates a sum of money for State Aid to public libraries through a line item in the budget for the South Carolina State Library. These funds, administered by the State Library, are provided to each county library system based on the county’s population at the latest decennial Census.

**The following are requirements for public libraries to receive State Aid:**
- The public library system must be legally established and fiscally sound;
- Provide library service to all residents of the county;
- Provide remote access to statewide databases coordinated by the South Carolina State Library;
• Adopt an annual budget with balanced proportions among personnel (65%-70%), information resources (15%-20%), and maintenance (10%-20%).
• Employ in professional and preprofessional positions librarians meeting the certification requirements of the SC State Library.
• Systematically acquire library materials consistent with a collection development policy approved by the local library board;
• Adopt a long-range plan that provides access to all library services to all residents of the library’s service area;
• Supply the South Carolina State Library with such statistics and information as it may from time to time request;
• Have the financial records of the library audited annually by a certified public accountant and furnish the SC State Library with a copy of the audit report;
• Invite the State Library Director to one board meeting annually.

Local, state, and federal grants in addition to your library's county tax or appropriation, State Aid, and LSTA funds are other possible sources of income. For example, public libraries may receive grants for programs, usually on a matching basis from such agencies as the South Carolina Humanities Council and the South Carolina Arts Commission. Board members should keep their eyes and ears open for any additional or new sources of public funding that might become available.

• **The Federal Government**, through its funding program called Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). LSTA authorizes federal aid for libraries and is administered by the South Carolina State Library. These funds are an annual appropriation to the State Library to provide services and assistance to libraries. Through the program, the State Library awards grants to county and regional libraries primarily on a competitive basis. Libraries are eligible to apply for LSTA funds, under guidelines set by the State Library.

• **Library Foundations** may be established to receive additional through gifts, bequests, and donations, private funding projects, and investments.

The library foundation functions as a separate entity and can attain 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service. Gifts to this foundation are tax deductible to the donor. One factor, which makes setting up a foundation extremely attractive, is that many foundations will not give to tax-supported agencies, but will give to an organization that will enhance that agency’s services and programs.

• **Trusts or Endowments** are monetary gifts that are set up as an endowment for specific purposes. Monies are donated to these funds and interest income is generated from the investments.
- **Friends of the Library Groups** encourage citizens to raise funds and to be an advocate for library services and funding. Friends groups are excellent at attracting publicity and encouraging good public relations and good will for a library.

- **Private Grants**, foundations, businesses and corporations may award grants to assist local libraries with programs, services or building projects. Many times the grants are from local or regional organizations or businesses that wish to give something back to their communities.

  *It is important to note that non-governmental funds should never be depended upon for on-going costs for operating a modern public library system. It is not realistic to expect that sufficiently major gains can be made in a library’s revenue from private sources to compensate for the lack of adequate public funds needed to operate a public library system.*

**Budget and Finance.** In order to make good decisions, library board members need a basic understanding of library finances. The board has a clear responsibility to ensure that public funds are used in the best interest of the community and that the library has adequate financing to continue its programs and services.

  **Successful Budget Planning** - A budget is a plan for the expenditure of funds for the next year to carry out the library's programs. County and state governments in South Carolina operate on a July-June fiscal year while the federal government operates on an October-September fiscal year. The budget process for the next fiscal year begins shortly after the beginning of the current fiscal year.

  **Know who does what.** Trustees play a vital role in creating the budget and getting it approved because they are the library's link to the community and its government. The preparation of the budget is a cooperative process involving trustees, the library director and staff. The library director is responsible for preparation of the budget request; the board of trustees is responsible for final approval and adoption of the budget.

  **Understand the budget's planning context.** The budget must reflect the purposes and priorities of the library as outlined in the long-range plan.

  **Give yourself and others time.** Ample time should be allowed for the development of the budget and for consideration by the local funding authorities. Usually, it takes from six to nine months to develop a budget.
Question everything. The budget is a tool for accomplishing specific objectives. When an objective has been accomplished, phase out the program or project that was designed to meet it and request that funding be moved to the next priority.

Be realistic. Board members should understand the financial climate in the community, so that they know what can and cannot be expected in the way of library support. Boards may use the South Carolina Annual Statistical Summary published annually by the State Library to compare their library with others and to understand their government's level of effort.

Additional funding. Boards might look to other sources for funding such as federal grants and donations. Not all money has to come from local government sources. Grants, donations and sponsors can be used for one-time projects. Boards should look for community support for alternative funding when appropriate.

The budget is not a secret. People have a right to know how their money is spent. The budget must be understandable. The board should use simple and familiar comparisons to illustrate the value people are getting for their tax dollars.

Read, listen and learn. Boards can learn how other departments and agencies present their budgets. Success can be used as an example. Boards can determine what the funding agency is looking for and what impresses them.

Budget presentation to county council is part of the library boards responsibility. Boards must justify the budget increases in the request, as well as the budget base. They must state why the community needs the service and what is unique about the service. They must describe the library's contributions and the benefit to taxpayers. They should describe who uses the particular library service. They should present library goals, plans and accountability.

Library trustees should not wait for a budget presentation to make a case for needed funding or to describe programs and services. This is an ongoing responsibility of all trustees.

Budget Management

- Financial Reports: The library director should provide trustees with monthly financial reports, which review:

  1. total budget;
2. current month’s expenditures;
3. year-to-date expenditures;
4. balance of budget;
5. explanation of major changes.

- **Annual Audit.** Every county and regional public library in South Carolina must, in order to qualify for State Aid and Federal funds, have its financial records audited annually by a certified public accountant and must supply the State Library with a copy of the audit report.

   The audit must clearly show receipts and expenditures of State Aid and federal funds, broken down by item, for the July 1- June 30 fiscal year.

   If your library's audit is part of the overall county audit, the audit report may not be sufficiently detailed to serve your library's or the State Library's purposes. If this is the case, a separate audit of the library's records is recommended. State Aid funds may be expended for this purpose.

- **Insurance.** Trustees have the obligation to protect the assets of the library against serious loss and to protect the staff and themselves against tort. Trustees should ascertain whether or not county insurance and bonds cover library property, personnel, and trustees. The board should delegate responsibility for an adequate insurance program to the library director, who should make periodic reports regarding insurance to the board.

Board Organization

Library Board Bylaws

Every library board should establish *bylaws*, a set of rules that define the structure and function of the board and its operational procedures. The bylaws should be recorded in clear, unambiguous language. Board trustees should review bylaws annually and amend them as necessary. The bylaws of a public library board in South Carolina must not conflict with federal or state laws.

The following list summarizes topics that the bylaws should address.

- The name of the board
- The constituency served by the library and its board
- The composition of the board
- Procedure for election or appointment of board trustees
- Terms of board trustees
- Procedure for filling an un-expired trustee term
- The schedule (frequency) of board meetings
- Procedure for calling special meetings of the board
- Specification of a quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of people who must be present in order for a deliberative body to transact business. By law, public library boards should consist of not fewer than seven nor more than eleven members appointed by the county council (council) for terms of four years and until successors are appointed (SC Code §4-9-35).

The board shall annually elect a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer and such other officers, as it deems necessary. The board shall meet not less than four times each year and at other times as called by the chairman or upon the written request by a majority of the members (SC Code §4-9-35 et seq).

Board Meetings

The library board's work is done in board meetings and committee meetings. What takes place in board meetings can make the difference between an effective or an ineffective board.
Open Meeting Law (SC Code § 30-4-70 et seq.)

A public body may hold a meeting closed to the public for one or more of the following reasons:

- Discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline, or release of an employee, a student, or a person regulated by a public body or the appointment of a person to a public body;

- Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and proposed sale or purchase of property, the receipt of legal advice where the legal advice relates to a pending, threatened, or potential claim or other legal concerns.

Before going into executive session the public agency shall vote in public on the question and when the vote is favorable, the presiding officer shall announce the specific purpose of the executive session.

All public bodies must give written public notice of their regular meetings at the beginning of each calendar year. The notice must include the dates, times, and places of such meetings. Agenda must be posted on a bulletin board at the office or meeting place of the public body at least twenty-four hours prior to such meetings. All public bodies must post on such bulletin board public notice for any called, special, or rescheduled meetings. Such notice must be posted as early as is practicable but not later than twenty-four hours before the meeting. The notice must include the agenda, date, time, and place of the meeting. (SC Code § 30-4-80).

The Agenda

Your board meeting should run according to the agenda prepared by the director and the board chairperson. The purpose of the agenda is to set a clear direction for the meeting.

When not well planned, meetings tend to digress and waste participants’ time. The board president should develop a meeting agenda and distribute it in a timely fashion before each board meeting. The following is a sample agenda.

Sample Agenda…

- Call to order; recording of attendance; determination of quorum
- Review of minutes from previous meeting; call for corrections or additions; motion to accept minutes
- Financial report
- Library Director’s report
- Board President’s report
- Committee reports
- Unfinished business
• New business
• Closed Session (best to keep on the agenda permanently so the session is always in order if needed)
• Items for the next agenda
• Announcements
• Adjournment, with announcement of date, time, and location.

Parliamentary Rules

Board meetings should be conducted according to established parliamentary rules, such as Robert’s Rules of Order, or some other parliamentary procedure guide agreed on by all board members. Board members should have a basic understanding of parliamentary rules so that they can be moving quickly and efficiently through an agenda. When a disagreement among board members occurs about the way to proceed, consult the parliamentary guide specified in the board bylaws.

Caution: Parliamentary rules are not intended to impede the meeting process, but simply to ensure that the rights of all board members are protected and meetings move towards action. Using parliamentary rules for the purpose of impeding the meeting process is unethical and detrimental to the team atmosphere.

Meeting Minutes (SC Code § 30-4-90)

All public bodies shall keep written minutes of all of their public meetings. Such minutes shall include but need not be limited to:

• The date, time and place of the meeting;
• The members of the public body recorded as either present or absent;
• The substance of all matters proposed, discussed or decided and, at the request of any member, a record, by an individual member, of any votes taken;
• Any other information that any member of the public body requests be included or reflected in the minutes;
• And, the minutes shall be public records and shall be available within a reasonable time after the meeting

Responsibilities of Board Members

You can expect the board chairperson to run the meetings and keep the board moving toward good decisions. However, it is each board member’s responsibility to:

• Attend all meetings.
• Prepare well for meetings.
• Take part in all discussions.
• Cooperate with fellow board members to make meetings work.
• Understand the basics of parliamentary procedure, as well as any state laws that apply to your meetings and then adhere to those laws.
• Learn traditional meeting practices of the board and follow them.
• Practice the art of compromise with other members of the team.
• Practice the art of listening and merging your comments with those of the other board members.
• Work towards consensus on issues.
• Focus all deliberations on the ultimate mission of the library and the best interests of those you serve.
• Publicly support the board decisions.

Officers of the Board

Most library boards require four officer positions, those of president (chairperson), vice-president, secretary, and treasurer.

President (Chairperson)
The president, working closely with the library director, prepares agendas for board meetings for distribution to participants in advance of each meeting. The president presides at board meetings, serving as discussion leader, and appoints committee members. He or she signs official documents and may under instruction from the board represent the library at public meetings and gatherings. When the board president speaks on behalf of the library, he or she must reflect the adopted positions of the board, not personal views. As a single member of the board, he or she has one vote.

Vice-President (Vice-Chairperson)
The vice-president presides at board meetings in the absence of the president and performs such other duties as are assigned.

Secretary
The secretary records the proceedings of meetings, then prepares written minutes and issues them to trustees in advance of the next meeting. After the minutes of a past meeting are approved, the secretary prepares a permanent and correct copy for the archives of the library. The minutes of open sessions should be kept in a secure but accessible location in the library and made available to the public upon request.

Treasurer
The treasurer of the board is responsible for presenting the financial report to the full board and moving for its acceptance. In a number of library systems in South Carolina, the treasurer may co-sign the checks and in some instances, serves as chair of the board's finance committee.
The Board Develops Policy

Policymaking is one of the board’s most important responsibilities. Policies are vital tools in carrying out the board’s planning and evaluation decisions. In county and regional library systems, policies established by the board govern and guide all phases of the public library system’s operation. Effective policies are management tools for running the library. The trustees, with the help of the director and staff, create these tools. The director and staff use them.

Benefits of Policy

- Determines the library’s mission and roles and makes sure that the library’s goals and objectives, plans and procedures support the mission.
- Guides the director and staff in implementing the board’s decisions.
- Provides direction and consistency in day-to-day services and operations.
- Assures that library users and staff are treated fairly and consistently.
- Encourages informed and proactive decision making by anticipating needs and problems before they reach the crisis stage.

Who Makes Policy?

While only trustees have the legal responsibility and authority to make policy, experience shows that this process works best when the library director and staff are involved in researching options, drafting policies and making reports and recommendations to the trustees.

It is the responsibility of the director and staff to keep the trustees informed about progress and problems. They advise, assist, report and recommend. When policy decisions are made, they implement the board’s decisions, administering the library’s programs within the framework of the board’s policies, plan and budget.

Comparing Policies and Procedures

Policies are written principles for guiding trustees and library staff in providing library services to the community.
**Procedures** are actual steps needed to complete a task or to follow a policy.

**Making Policy: Tools for Organizing and Managing**

The crafting of a specific policy is usually prompted by a specific problem or need. Often the issue is brought to the board’s attention by the library director or other staff members who are “on the front lines” providing public services.

The following flowchart summarizes the policymaking process:

- Identify problem or need
- Receive staff input
- Solicit community input
- Discuss in board meeting
- Assign to board committee
- Committee draft policy statement
- Board considers policy statement
- Board approves policy

Key questions to ask are “How does this policy contribute to the mission and goals of the library?” and “What needs and reasons are there to change this policy or make a new one?”

Typically, the board will assign a committee to make an assessment of the issue and an analysis of how the problems identified can be treated. This committee may include the director, staff members and board members. An analysis should consider:

- Long and short-range effects of enacting the policy;
- Possible positive and negative side effects of the policy;
- Estimated costs of implementing the policy, including the library budget, staff resources, building and equipment requirements and collection implications;
- Legal implications of enacting and implementing the policy.

Once the assessment and analysis are completed, the committee reports to the full board, usually with recommendations. The committee should give the board any relevant documents to be considered.
The South Carolina State Library can supply sample policies for the committee to use in developing the first draft. This draft is distributed and reviewed. After responses to the draft are considered, the board completes a final draft and formally adopts the policy in a business meeting.

Once the policy is adopted, it must be introduced to the staff. Training may be required. The policy should be published and distributed to all who may be affected or concerned by it. The board can use the policy as a public relations tool to tell the community that they are working proactively to improve the library and its services.

A Policy List for Public Libraries

Every public library system should have the following policies. Additional policies may be necessary dependent on each library’s community.

- Mission and Role Statement
- Library Board By-Laws
- Public Service Policies
  - Eligibility for borrowing and services
  - Resident and non-resident
  - Fines and Fees
- Collection Development and Management Policy
- Meeting Room Policy
- Exhibits and Displays Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Internet Use Policy

Review and Revise Policy

The library environment is not static. Effective policy-making is flexible to reflect changing circumstances. A policy is rarely a finished product; it is more like a work in progress. Policies should be reviewed and revised periodically, as changing needs and circumstances dictate. Sometimes a change in policy is dictated from outside agencies.

As policies are reviewed, the board should carefully consider some key questions:
- Are these policies still appropriate?
• Do they account for changes in the library’s environment?
• What new circumstances or needs require changes in policy?
• Is the new policy focused services to library users or is the focus to assist library staff with process?
• Are there legal issues, especially new ones that the library’s policies should address?

To make board policies usable, they should be collected in one manual. The manual makes the process of learning board policy simpler for new board members and it makes application and interpretation of policies easier. A manual also makes the process of review and update of board policies much easier.

Once a board adopts policies, any changes in those policies must have board approval.
Planning for the Library's Future

Library boards continuously guide, shape, and build library services for their community as they make judgments on money, buildings, programs and staff. The challenge is to make these decisions based on a carefully considered written plan. The purpose of planning is to anticipate both opportunities and problems.

Planning involves the following basic questions:

1. What is our purpose?

   The library mission is a brief statement of the library’s purpose, which sets the focus for the planning. While somewhat general, the statement should summarize the library’s major areas of emphasis.

2. Where are we now?

   Every library board has a fundamental duty to develop an effective library plan. A good plan becomes a road map for the library. It assists the board and the director in making decisions that are the best ones for the community being served. It also publicizes the library’s priorities and its vision of the future.

   The plan should reflect intense examination of the following questions:

   - What is the present state of the library? How is the library meeting the needs of the community? What are the economic, political, cultural and technological factors that have an impact on library services? What trends can be identified as being significant to the library? What role does the library want to play in the community?

   - Where should the library be in the future? What is the mission of the library? What are the goals? What does the library want to accomplish?

   - How will the library get to the future? What steps should be taken? Who has responsibility for each step?

   - How will the board determine when the plan has succeeded? What measurements will be used?

Planning involves looking at what is possible and considering a wide range of alternatives. Open-mindedness and creativity are paramount in developing a plan, which will direct the most effective use of library resources. Board
members must keep in mind the present and future needs of the entire community served by the library. Planning is a board/director partnership.

3. Where do we want to go?

Goals and objectives describe the conditions, which must be achieved in order to support the library’s mission. Both goals and objectives describe what the library should accomplish, not how it will accomplish those results.

**Goals** are general, non-measurable descriptions of conditions or accomplishments, which will support the library mission.

**Objectives** are specific, measurable, time-limited descriptions of desired results. Achievement of objectives will be the basis for assessment of success in meeting library goals.

A resource for planning is *South Carolina Public Library Standards*, published by the South Carolina State Library. This document, developed with input from the public library community, encourages the ongoing development of quality library service in South Carolina. Used as a planning tool, it assists libraries in setting goals and objectives based on service standards.

4. How will we get there?

Activities are specific steps, which will be taken in order to meet stated objectives. The activities will state how each objective can be met. For every objective, a number of possible activities should be identified and analyzed. The analysis should include the potential impact of each activity on the objective, the likelihood of success, and the cost and impact on other library activities. One or more activities should be selected for each objective.

5. How do we know what we accomplished?

After the plan has been finalized and implemented, the planning process shifts to review and evaluation. The board will monitor the plan’s progress. Have any goals been accomplished? Are parts of the plan out of date and in need of amendment? Are there new elements that need to be added to the plan? Plans are not set in stone. They are dynamic documents that, at times, need to be changed. While mission statements are not apt to be changed for a long time; goals, objectives and action steps are likely to be altered in the review process. Existing plans should be reviewed and updated at least annually.
Library Advocacy

One of your major responsibilities as a public library trustee is to act as an advocate for the library. A library advocate is someone who understands the value and importance of public library service and who communicates that value and importance to the community, government leaders, and other decision-makers.

Your primary function as a library advocate will be to provide clear, accurate, and timely information on library issues to people who need it in order to make sound decisions on those issues. Library trustees need to know:

- What are library advocates and why are they needed
- How to establish priorities for advocacy
- Ways to act as an advocate

Libraries need their trustees to act as advocates for several reasons. Pressures on local, county, and state budgets make it harder than ever for libraries to obtain adequate funding.

As a representative of the general public, you can make a more effective case on the importance of adequate funding for the library than the librarian who may be viewed as having a vested interest in a larger budget. Because public libraries have a unique place in local government, government officials not as readily understand the needs for libraries services and collections.

In addition, because library systems primarily provide "behind the scenes" services, an extra effort is sometimes needed to make government officials aware of their services and the value of those services to the public.

Establish priorities for advocacy

Since the advocacy role is a basic duty of a library board member, it's important to channel these energies carefully. Early each year, the library board acting as a whole should decide which of its goals or positions to advocate most strenuously. Emphasis will vary by library. For instance, you and the library board might work for the adoption of an improved library budget, seek support for enhanced library technology, or inform the public of the need for a library building program. What is important is that you decide with other library board members what the areas of emphasis will be and how board members will go about advocating those goals or positions.
Your goal as an advocate is to shape the local decision-making process, which requires an understanding of how decisions are made in the community and who must be influenced in order to achieve favorable outcomes.

**Staying informed**

Your effectiveness as an advocate depends on being well informed about library issues at the local, state, and federal levels. Trustees should know the budget process on the state and local level and be able to contact local leaders about issues and concerns.

Make personal visits with your legislators and county council members. Schedule a meeting when the governing body is not in session—before the pressure builds. Constituents are always welcome to come to the legislator’s office, but make an appointment. Get to know secretaries, administrative assistants and other staff. Be prepared to talk about the issues and concerns for your library. Leave your card and background materials. Follow up with a thank you note.

**Ways to act as an advocate**

- As an advocate, you can influence decision-makers by:
  - Speaking to civic groups about library needs and issues.
  - Talking to friends about the library, its role in the community, and its needs.
  - Writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper.
  - Testifying at local and state budget hearings.
  - Talking and writing to state and federal legislators about the needs of the library.
  - Contributing to a library newsletter that is sent to decision-makers.

If you choose to advocate a library-related position not agreed on by the board, be sure to make clear that you are speaking for yourself as an individual, not for the board.

Your work as a library advocate is never done. Each success leads to a new area of effort. Library advocacy does not represent a narrow commitment to a single issue—it’s an ongoing commitment to supporting library issues in a wide range of ways.
Sources of Additional Information

You and your fellow library board members are not alone in advocating for high-quality public library service. There are a number of groups that share your belief in the value of public library service and can provide information and support you in advocacy efforts. Some of these groups are listed below, along with other tools to help you advocate for your library.

- Your library system staff
- Your library friends organization
- South Carolina State Library
- South Carolina Library Association
- Association of Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) (at http://www.ala.org/alta)
- Friends of South Carolina Libraries (FOSCL) (at http://www.foscl.org)
- Legislative Information (at http://www.scstatehouse.net)
- Contact information for your United States Senators: http://www.senate.gov
- Contact information for your United States Representatives: http://clerk.house.gov/members/index.html

The following resource was used in developing the Library Advocacy Chapter of the SC Public Library Trustee Manual: Trustee Essentials: A Handbook for Wisconsin Public Library Trustees was prepared by the DLTCL with the assistance of the Trustee Handbook Revision Task Force. Copyright 2002 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Duplication and distribution for not-for-profit purposes permitted with this copyright notice. This publication is also available at http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/handbook.html.

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