

Minnesota Public Library Trustee Handbook

March 2017

State Library Services

1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113



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Preface

Minnesota's public libraries serve as centers for learning, innovation, and inspiration in communities across the state. Libraries are community hubs where people of any age can access resources vital to full participation in contemporary life. Libraries are a lifeline for students as well as those seeking technology training, employment resources, and access to government resources. Children, teens, and adults come to libraries to borrow or download books, use a computer, attend a class or program, meet or study with friends and colleagues, or just relax in a quiet, comfortable environment.

Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) [Chapter 134. Public and Multitype Libraries](#) allows the governing body of any city or county to establish and maintain public library service for the use of its residents. The statute also allows for regional public library systems and multicounty, multitype library systems. Multitype systems are composed of any combination of public libraries, regional public library systems, public school libraries, public or private college or university libraries, state government libraries, nonprofit special libraries and any other libraries which share services and resources within multicounty areas.

Minnesotans support public libraries through local property taxes and state income. Cooperative agreements among libraries provide cost-effective access to the collections of public, school, academic, and special libraries statewide. Thousands of e-books and trusted collections of information databases for K-12 and college students and lifelong learners are provided through state appropriations.

Library trustees endeavor to improve and expand library services in their communities. They make a commitment to promote the library's mission, set policy, and responsibly spend public funds to meet the needs of their communities.

This handbook is meant to be a useful resource for trustees. It will inform trustees about Minnesota's public library environment and governance structures. It will also help trustees understand their roles and responsibilities as library stewards. Its purpose is to give trustees a broad view of their duties and responsibilities.

We hope that this handbook will serve both new and experienced trustees in their important work of sustaining and growing public library service in Minnesota. On behalf of my colleagues at the Minnesota Department of Education, I extend my gratitude for your leadership and service. Please call on us if we can assist you in any way.



Jennifer R. Nelson, State Librarian and Director, State Library Services
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Introduction

Public library trustees represent the community to the library and the library to the community. You work effectively to fulfill your duties as a board member. You abide by local, state, and federal laws that affect libraries. You learn about best practices, emerging trends, and new developments in the library field, and plan for future growth. You adopt policies that will fulfill the goals and objectives of the library. You promote library services and programs, and articulate the value of libraries to all.

Each trustee is part of a decision-making team that includes the rest of the trustees, the library director, and city or county government. For a board to function effectively, all members must bring enthusiasm, preparation, and dedication to the task and have a firm understanding of the different roles played by the board, director, government, and library staff.

This handbook consists of basic information for you, the trustee, to be an effective board member and library advocate.

Since the governance models of Minnesota libraries are quite varied, information in the handbook won't necessarily apply to your library. It is the responsibility of each Minnesota library to understand its legal status based on its establishment documents. We recommend that you consult your library's attorney if you have any questions about how the laws apply to your library. The information presented in this handbook is in no way to be considered as legal advice.

This handbook can be used in a variety of ways. Specific chapters may be referenced for continuing education at board meetings, or to explain the role of a trustee to a potential recruit or new trustee. Your local funding agencies may also appreciate an overview of certain topics.

There are additional resources and templates in the appendix at the end of the handbook.

You are embarking on important work that will have an impact on your community for years to come. Best wishes for a rewarding and effective term of service.

Library Values

The core values of libraries are expressed in two foundational documents from the American Library Association (ALA). The [Library Bill of Rights](#) and [Freedom to Read Statement](#) champion intellectual freedom and urge libraries to "challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment." Some libraries include these documents along with their own core values in their policies.

Other core values are included in the [ALA Policy Manual](#). These values are:

Access to information should be equitably available to all.

Confidentiality/Privacy is necessary for intellectual freedom.

Democracy depends upon an informed citizenry. Publicly supported libraries provide free and equal access to information for all people in the community the library serves.

Diversity requires libraries to provide a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities they serve.

Education and Lifelong Learning support efforts to ensure that school, public, academic, and special libraries in every community cooperate to provide lifelong learning services to all.

Intellectual Freedom requires libraries to resist censorship.

The Public Good recognizes that libraries are fundamental institutions in democratic societies.

Preservation supports the conservation of information published in all media and formats.

Professionalism supports the provision of library services by professionally qualified employees who have been educated in graduate programs within institutions of higher education.

Service promotes the provision of the highest level of assistance to all library users.

Social Responsibility encourages libraries to support efforts to examine the many views on and the facts regarding each problem that confronts the community the library serves.

Library trustees share and uphold these values.

New Vision

Libraries are shifting away from the traditional model of organizing and lending the world's knowledge toward a new vision of the library as a central hub for learning and community connections. Libraries are becoming less about *what they have* and more about *what they do for and with people*.

The Aspen Institute in [Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries](#) (October 2014) identifies some of the needs and challenges that libraries are facing and provides some framing around creating community outcomes.

According to the Aspen Institute, the library:

- Is a key partner in sustaining the education, economic, and civic health of the community.
- Creates services that prioritize local goals.
- Promotes a better trained and educated workforce.
- Ensures equitable access and provides civic space for advancing democracy and the common good.

The report re-conceptualizes libraries as organizations that are about people, place, and platform, rather than books and information. Libraries:

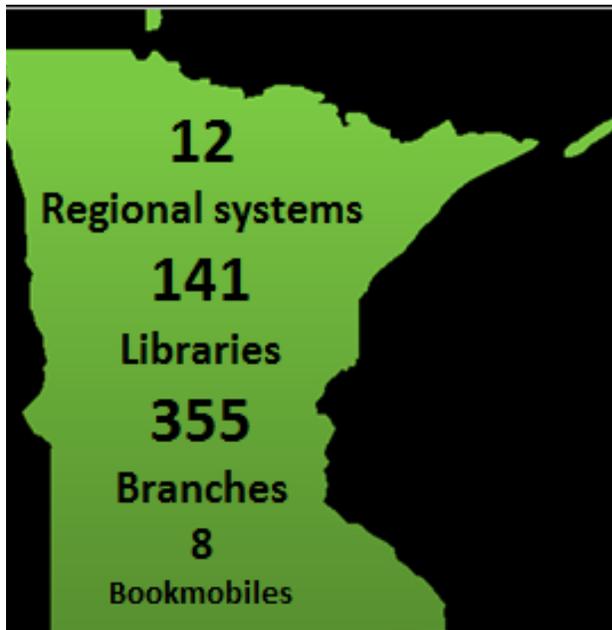
- Connect people to resources and are neutral conveners.
- Facilitate learning and creation for children and adults.
- Offer a welcoming space for reading, learning, playing, meeting, and getting business done.
- Serve as a neighborhood anchor by curating and sharing the community's knowledge and innovation.
- Serve as a "third place" that can facilitate a wide range of purposes for people either individually or in groups and support the learning needs of the community.
- Fill gaps in community services including early-childhood education, lifelong learning, technology literacy, and e-government.

By supporting this new vision of public library service, library trustees enable the library to transform and fulfill the expectations of their communities.

Governing and Advisory Boards

There are two types of library boards. Governing boards have full authority over the governance of the library. They hire the library director, set policy, and work closely with the director in establishing and presenting the library's budget to the local government. An advisory board does not have responsibility for the budget or the direct oversight of the library director. Advisory boards advise a library director and local government on library concerns and promote library service in a community or region. Both governing and advisory boards develop and implement policies that govern library services. They also work with library administration in planning and setting goals for the library.

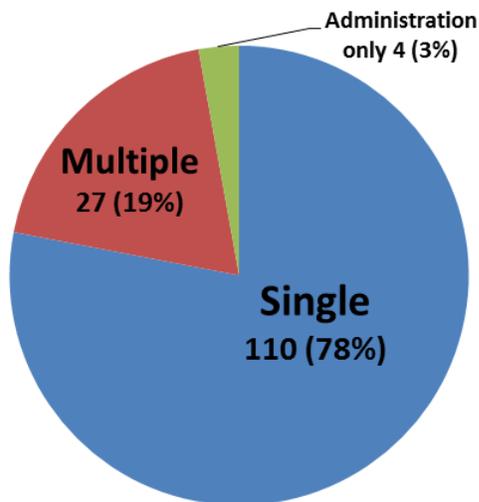
Public Library Structure in Minnesota, 2015



Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) [Chapter 134. Public and Multitype Libraries](#) allows the governing body of any city or county to establish and maintain public library service for the use of its residents.

Public library services are available in all 87 counties. There are 141 public libraries and twelve regional public library systems in Minnesota. Twenty-seven libraries have multiple branches. Combined there are 355 library locations and eight bookmobiles serving communities and neighborhoods across the state.

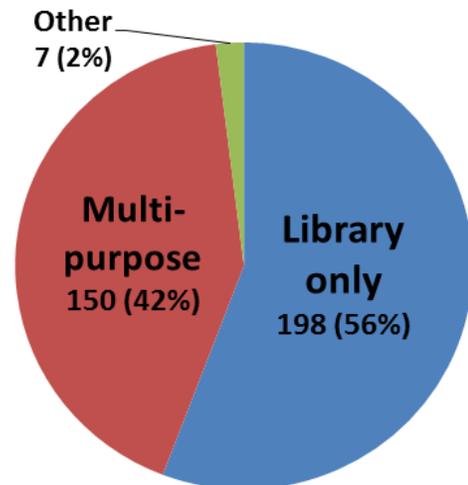
Library locations



Source: Minnesota Public Library Report, 2015

Most public libraries serve their communities from one building that functions only as a library. Fewer libraries have multiple branches. Four libraries serve as administrative headquarters for regional systems.

Facility Type



Source: Minnesota Public Library Report, 2015

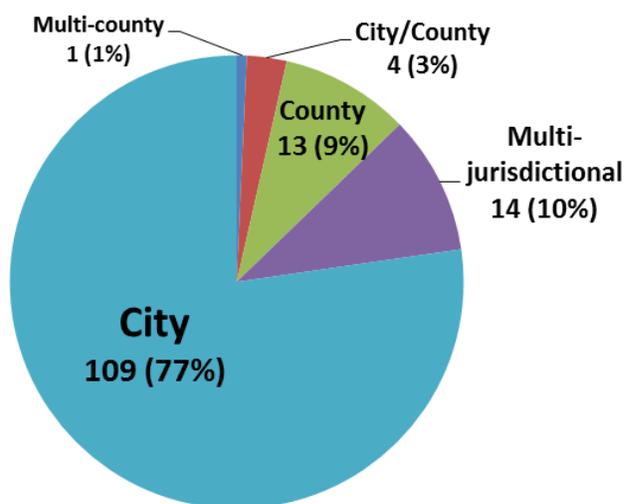
The majority of public libraries are a single-purpose building built to serve as a library. A significant number of libraries share a building with other entities such as other government offices, schools, organizations, or businesses.

Legal Basis

A library established under Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) [134.001 Definitions](#) provides free access to all residents of a city or county without discrimination and receives at least half its financial support from public funds. [M.S.134.07 Public Library Service](#) allows cities and counties to set aside property for a public library and levy an annual property tax for public library service. If public library service is not established under section 134.07, [M.S.134.08 Establishing and Discontinuing Library Service: Applicability of Law](#) allows citizens to petition city or county government to establish a public library by a vote of the residents.

Among Minnesota's 141 public libraries, 109 are city libraries. Fourteen are county libraries, 13 governed by a single county and one governed jointly by two counties. Four counties provide public library services through contracts with cities. Fourteen libraries are multi-jurisdictional--twelve regional library systems, including one that does not provide direct public service, and two libraries operated jointly by a city and school district.

Legal basis



Source: Minnesota Public Library Report, 2015

Most public libraries are operated by municipal governments. Fewer are operated by county governments. Ten percent are operated jointly by two or more units of local government such as a city, county, or school district.

City Libraries

City libraries are established under [M.S.134.07](#) or [M.S.134.08](#). State law allows cities to set aside property for a public library and levy an annual property tax for public library service. City libraries provide services by city employees in city-owned facilities.

Cities are classified by population under [M.S. 410.01 Cities, Classes](#). Cities are divided, for legislative purposes, into four classes.

- First class—Cities with a population of more than 100,000.
- Second class—Cities with a population between 20,001 and 100,000.

- Third class—Cities with a population between 10,001 and 20,000.
- Fourth class—Cities with a population of not more than 10,000.

Minnesota has two types of city government authority, *statutory* and *home rule charter*. The type of city government determines how public library services are administered and governed.

Statutory cities derive many of their powers from [M.S.412](#). Most cities in Minnesota are incorporated as statutory cities. They operate public library services under the authority of [M.S. 134.07](#), [M.S. 134.08](#) or [M.S. 134.20](#). In any statutory city and in any city of the second, third, or fourth class, the governing body may levy an annual property tax for public library service. [M.S. 412.621 Boards and Commissions](#) requires the appointment of a library board which has the authority to hire the library director and govern the public library.

Home rule charter cities obtain their powers from a home rule charter which defines the specific powers of elected officials and appointed staff. The charter is, in effect, a local constitution. The charter may provide for any form of municipal government, as long as it is consistent with state laws that apply uniformly to all cities in Minnesota. These cities can exercise any powers outlined by their locally adopted charters as long as they do not conflict with state laws. They operate public library services as outlined in the charter. Nothing in [M.S.134.08](#), through [M.S. 134.15](#) limits any power or duty with respect to libraries conferred by a city charter. If a city charter does not address matters provided for in [M.S. 134](#), the provisions of the statute apply.

Cities may also support library services through participation in a **regional public library system**. Regional public library systems are established through a joint powers agreement. Funding is combined from member cities and counties in order to provide library services in a multicounty area. The regional library provides administration, staffing, library materials, and other services needed for public library operations. The city provides funding for library operations, but does not employ city employees to provide public library services. The city also appoints members to the regional library system's board of trustees. The city may provide a library building.

County Libraries

County libraries are also established under [M.S.134.07](#). [M.S.134.08](#) requires counties to set aside property for a public library and levy an annual property tax for public library service. Counties fund and provide library services in three ways: 1) directly, 2) through a contract with a city library, or 3) through a joint powers agreement with other counties and cities to form a regional public library system.

Direct library service may be provided by county employees in county-owned facilities. The county is responsible for ensuring residents in areas not otherwise taxed for public library service to have access to services. The libraries are governed by library boards appointed by the county board of commissioners or function as a unit of county government.

Through a contract with a city, a county may provide funding to a city within the county to provide administration, staff and library materials for all service locations in the county. By local

agreement, the county board of commissions may appoint one or more trustees to serve on a city library board.

Through a regional library system, a county may join with one or more other counties or cities through a joint powers agreement and provide funding to a regional public library system that provides public library services. The regional system provides administration, staffing, library materials, and other services needed for public library operations. The regional library system board may consist of as many members, from among the residents of the contracting counties, as the contracting counties deem necessary.

City and School District Libraries

State statute ([M.S. 134.195 Library Operated by City and School District](#)) allows a city which has established a public library and a school district to agree by ordinance or resolution to jointly finance and operate a public library for use by both the general public and school students. The library is generally located in or near a school.

Regional Public Libraries

A **regional public library system** serves residents of a multicounty region. Through cooperation and consolidation, residents have access to all public library resources within the region. By joining together, communities gain a larger tax base, economy of scale, more resources, and combined administration. There are twelve regional public library systems, eleven of which provide direct public services, in Minnesota.

Regional public library systems are multicounty political subdivisions formed under a joint powers agreement between cities and counties. Regional public libraries organized under [M.S. 134.20 Regional Public Library Systems](#) or [M.S. 471.59 Joint Exercise of Powers](#) are eligible for Regional Library Basic System Support and other state funding from the Minnesota Department of Education.

Because of flexibility in the statutes relating to the organization of regional public library systems, no two regional library systems are exactly alike. There are three general types: 1) consolidated, 2) federated with centralized services, and 3) federated.

1. A **consolidated regional system** provides public services and centralized administration for all member public libraries in the region. All member libraries are branches of the system. The participating cities and counties provide the funding and there is usually a single budget. The system provides administration, staff, library materials, library automation, and other services necessary for public library operations throughout the region. The participating cities and counties appoint members to the regional public library board that is a governing body. Its governing board is composed of members appointed by the contracting cities and counties.

There are six consolidated regional public library systems in Minnesota.
East Central Regional Library (ECRL)
Great River Regional Library (GRRL)
Kitchigami Regional Library (KRL)
Lake Agassiz Regional Library (LARL)

Northwest Regional Library (NWRL)
Pioneerland Library System (PLS)

2. A **federated with central services system** is a combination of the consolidated and federated systems. The system provides some shared services, such as library automation, to member libraries. In addition to state and federal funds, they may receive county funds to provide services directly to the public through bookmobiles or other supplementary services such as books-by-mail. They are governed by a board of representatives from member libraries and counties within the region.

There are five federated regional systems with central services in Minnesota.

Arrowhead Library System (ALS)
Plum Creek Library System (PCLS)
Southeastern Libraries Cooperating (SELCO)
Traverse des Sioux Library Cooperative (TdS)
Viking Library System (VLS)

3. A **federated system** provides services to participating city and county public libraries. Each library that is a member of a federated system has its own board and maintains local financial and administrative autonomy. A federated system may receive state and federal funds but does not receive direct funding from cities or counties. The system provides services to member libraries but does not generally provide direct services other than online resources to the public. It is governed by a board of representatives from member libraries.

There is one federated regional public library system in Minnesota.

Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA)

Regional Public Library District

[M.S. 134.201 Regional Library District](#) allows cities and counties to establish a public library district. The statute allows the Great River Regional Library and East Central Regional Library systems the option of forming a district. No regional library district currently exists in Minnesota. District boards could include both elected and appointed trustees. A district board would have the authority to levy for public library services. The district levy would replace levies by participating cities and counties.

Multicounty, Multitype Library Systems

A **multicounty, multitype library system** is a cooperative network composed of any combination of public libraries, regional public library systems, public school libraries, public or private college or university libraries, state government libraries, non-profit special libraries, and other non-profit libraries which share services and resources within multicounty areas. Each system develops its own plan and program within the scope of activities outlined in [M.S. 134.351](#), [134.353](#), [134.354](#), and [134.36](#). Multicounty, multitype library systems are funded by state appropriations and are eligible to receive federal funds. Multicounty, multitype systems are not a primary funding source for members.

In addition to public libraries, the following types of libraries may participate in a multicounty, multitype system.

- **Public or private college or university libraries** serve a college, university, or other academic institution providing post-secondary education. They are organized and administered to meet the learning and research needs of students, faculty, and staff at the academic institution.
- **Public school libraries** are libraries or locations in an elementary, middle, secondary, or combined school. The collection supports the curriculum and may support associated equipment and technology. Services from media center staff are accessible to students, teachers and other school staff.
- **Non-profit special libraries** are libraries supported and administered by a private corporation or business, government agency, association, or other group to meet the information needs of its staff or members in pursuing the goals of the non-profit organization.

Collaborative activities may include resource sharing, digital collections, communication systems, and long-range planning. Additionally, systems provide continuing education opportunities for library employees.

Multitype library systems operate under a governance system that represents both citizens and participating libraries. Governing board members are drawn from the membership of any regional public library system board which is a part of each multitype system's geographic area. Advisory committees, representing the various types of member libraries, advise the governing board. Under another option, systems may adopt an alternative form of governance in which the governing board is combined with the advisory committee, consisting of five or seven citizens and one representative from each of the four types of libraries.

There are seven multitype library systems in Minnesota.

Central Minnesota Libraries Exchange (CMLE)

Metronet

Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)

Southwest Area Multicounty Multitype Interlibrary Exchange (SAMMIE)

Three of which are merged with regional public library systems covering the same geographical area.

Arrowhead Library System (ALS) with ALS

Southeast Library System (SELS) with SELCO

Traverse des Sioux Library Cooperative (TdS) with TdS

State Library Services

All states and territories have library agencies that administer federal and state funds and develop library services within their jurisdictions. In Minnesota, [State Library Services](#) is a division of the Minnesota Department of Education. Division staff are consultants who help libraries plan, develop, and implement high-quality services that address community needs. State Library Services administers federal grant, state aid, and state grant programs that benefit all types of libraries.

[M.S.134.31 Department Of Education: Library Responsibilities](#) gives the department the responsibility for supporting library service for every citizen and developing cooperative programs for sharing resources.

State Library Services' programs and activities include:

Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library

The Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library, located in Faribault, provides statewide direct library service for preschool age children to seniors with visual, physical and reading disabilities for whom conventional print is a barrier to reading. The library is a program of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and is funded through the Minnesota Department of Education and federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds.

State Grant and Aid Programs

State Library Services administers state grant and aid programs including:

- [The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund](#) Grants
- Library Construction Grants ([M.S. 134.45](#))
- Multicounty Multitype Library System Aid ([M.S. 134.353](#) and [134.354](#))
- Regional Library Basic System Support ([M.S 134.355](#))
- Regional Library Telecommunications Aid ([M.S 134.355](#))

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) provides LSTA funds to Minnesota through the [Grants to States Program](#). The annual allotment is based on population. A portion of these funds are used for competitive grants.

Library Statistics

Minnesota's public libraries are required by [M.S. 134.13 Annual Report](#) to submit reports to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). The data is also submitted to the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) for the Public Libraries in the United States Survey.

Statistics collected include input and output measures related to facilities, services, programs, collections, staffing, hours of operation, and income and expenditures. Statistical information is used by public libraries and policymakers to create centers for learning, innovation, and collaboration in their communities.

Supporting Libraries Serving Youth

State Library Services offers statewide programs and offer professional development opportunities for librarians working with youth.

Partnerships

State Library Services partners with government agencies and other organizations to share information, best practices, tools, and programs with Minnesota's libraries.

Consulting

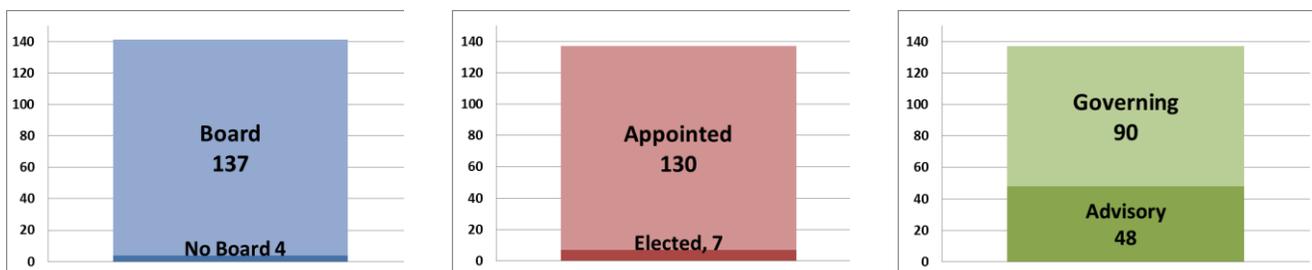
Division staff are consultants who help libraries to plan, develop and implement high-quality services that address community needs.

Library Boards

Library board trustees are elected or appointed representatives who are entrusted with the oversight of a public library, regional library system, or multicounty, multitype library system. Trustees support library services and serve without compensation.

In Minnesota, 97% of public libraries have a board of trustees. 91% of board members are appointed to represent a governmental unit such as a city council or county board of commissioners.

- 63% of boards are governing boards with trustees making decisions pertaining to hiring a library director, setting policies and procedures, and budgetary matters.
- 34% of boards are advisory boards with trustees advising the city council or county board of commissioners on library matters.



Source: Minnesota Public Library Report, 2015

In Minnesota, most public libraries have a board of trustees. Most of the trustees are appointed by the governing authority and are responsible for the governance of the library or library system.

Boards benefit when there is a balance between experienced and new members that provide for both the wisdom of experience and the infusion of new ideas. Rotation of members is important. [M.S. 134.09 Library Boards](#) specifies that a library board member shall not be eligible to serve more than three consecutive, three-year terms (nine consecutive years).

Governing or Advisory Boards

There are two types of boards—a *governing board* or an *advisory board*. Both governing and advisory boards develop and implement policies that govern library services. They also work with library administration in planning and setting goals for the library. All regional library boards, most county library boards, all statutory city library boards, and many charter city library boards are *governing boards*. Jurisdictions without a governing board generally have *advisory boards*. Four county library systems have advisory boards.

Governing boards have full authority over the governance of the library. They hire the library director, set policy, and work closely with the director in developing the strategic plan and establishing and presenting the library's budget to the local government. Governing boards are established by local governmental bodies pursuant to [M.S. 134.09 Library Boards](#) or their city's home rule charter. Board organization and duties are outlined in [M.S. 134.11 Organization of Board; Duties](#).

Advisory boards have limited governing authority. An advisory board is responsible for setting policy, but it does not have responsibility for the budget or the direct oversight of the library director. The library director is hired by the city or county administrator. Trustees advise a library director and local government on library concerns and promote library service in a community or region. An advisory board acts as a liaison between the service area, the library, and the local government. In cities, the advisory board's responsibilities may be outlined by the city charter.

Elected or Appointed Trustees

Governing board members may be either elected by the general population or appointed by the legal authority. Almost all advisory board members are appointed by the legal authority. 130 public libraries have trustees that are appointed by the elected officials of the city or county to which the library or regional system provides service. Seven libraries or regional systems have elected trustees.

In compliance with [M.S. 134.09 Library Boards](#), the mayor of a city that is a branch or member of a regional library system, with the approval of the city council, may appoint residents of the county who live outside of the city's boundaries to the city library board. The majority of the members on the board, however, must be residents of the city. For county libraries, library board members must be residents of the county.

Regional Library Board

Regional public library system boards have all the same powers and duties as city and county library boards and are organized according to [M.S. 134.20 Regional Public Library Systems](#). Regional library trustees need to be familiar with the city or county they represent as well as the entire region served by the library system. Successful regional system boards are those in which trustees understand system-wide goals.

Trustees on regional library boards differ from local library trustees in several ways. They serve a greater geographical area. More time may be required to attend additional meetings. Regional board meetings may involve traveling considerable distances. And, trustees need to be familiar with state funding sources that make up a portion of a regional system's budget.

Branch Board

According to [M.S. 134.20 Regional Public Library Systems](#), cities included in the county tax and with public libraries which are part of the regional public library system, may levy taxes for the additional support of their local library services. A local public library board or governing body may continue to control the local library fund, or pay all or part of it to the regional public library system fund, to be used to increase or improve public library services in the city.

If a city library is a branch of a county library or a consolidated regional library system, the library board may have specific oversight responsibilities including:

- Building maintenance
- Utilities
- Furnishings and equipment

- Funding for additional library services not budgeted by the county or regional library
- Gifts directed to the local library
- Advocacy for local community support

Multitype Library System Board

Trustees on a multitype library system board, like regional public library system trustees, should have an understanding of the entire service region. The trustee should understand how all types of libraries operate, the variety of library resources available in their region, and state funding for multitype system support.

[M.S. 134.351 Multicounty, Multitype Library Systems](#) allows two options for multitype system governance.

- 1) The law allows responsibility to the regional public library system board members, or, when a multitype system includes more than one regional public library system, to a new board consisting of representatives from those regional public library system boards. An advisory committee advises the governing board and consists of one representative from a publicly supported academic library and one from a privately supported academic library, two representatives from public libraries, two representatives from school library media services, and one representative from special libraries.
- 2) The law allows multitype systems to create a combined board of five or seven citizens and four librarians representing the various types of libraries.

Legal Responsibilities

Governing boards are designated as the governing, policy making bodies of a library or library system. Advisory boards inform a library director and local government on library concerns and promote library service. These responsibilities are distinct from and should not be confused with library administration which is the responsibility of the library director.

Federal Laws, Rules and Grants

Numerous federal laws affect public libraries. A selection of relevant federal laws is included here. The American Library Association [Office of Government Relations](#) has more information about federal laws and regulations as well as current legislative issues related to libraries.

[American with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#): Civil rights legislation that makes it illegal to discriminate against people with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities.

[Children's Internet Protection Act \(CIPA\)](#): Libraries that participate in E-Rate program or LSTA grants for internet connectivity or computers must filter all computers for defined categories of images.

[Employment Laws](#): Libraries must abide by federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination in relation to hiring, promotion, and all other working conditions of employment.

[E-Rate](#): E-Rate is the commonly used name for the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission. The program provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.

[Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#): FLSA establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards affecting employees in the private sector and in federal, state, and local governments.

[Intellectual Freedom](#): The First and Fourth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution are the basis of intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom accords to all library users the right to seek and receive information on all subjects from all points of view without restriction and without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinized by others.

[Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program \(LB21\)](#): Supports professional development, graduate education, and continuing education to help libraries and archives develop a diverse workforce of librarians to better meet the changing learning and information needs of the American public. Grants are administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

[Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\)](#): A means of national funding for public library development and other related programs administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The Grants to States program, awarded by IMLS to state library administrative agencies, is the largest source of federal funding support for library services in the U.S.

[National Leadership Grants for Libraries \(NLG\)](#): Support projects that address significant challenges and opportunities facing the library and archive fields and that have the potential to advance theory and practice. Grants are administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

[U.S. Patriot Act](#): A set of federal anti-terrorism measures that lowers the standards of probable cause for obtaining intelligence warrants against suspected spies, terrorists, and other enemies of the United States.

State Statutes and Rules

The formation and operation of libraries are governed by state laws and regulations. Trustees should be familiar with Minnesota laws that pertain to libraries. (See excerpts below from 2015 Minnesota Statutes. In future years, please refer to current statutes at [The Office of the Revisor of Statutes website](#).)

Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) [Chapter 134. Public and Multitype Libraries](#) outlines statutory requirements for public library service.

[M.S. 134.001 Definitions](#) defines the terms used in Chapter 134.

M.S. 134.07 to 134.13 outline the basic responsibilities and authority of a governing library board.

[134.07 Public Library Service.](#)

The governing body of any city or county may establish and maintain public library service for the use of its inhabitants. By ordinance or resolution it may set apart for the benefit thereof any public property of the city or county. In any statutory city and in any city of the second, third, or fourth class, and in any county, the governing body may levy an annual tax on all taxable property therein except counties may not tax property which is already taxed for public library service. The proceeds of the tax shall be known as the library fund.

[134.08 Establishing and Discontinuing Library Service; Applicability of Law.](#)

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.**

If public library service is not established under section 134.07, the governing body of the city or county, upon the petition of eligible voters, as defined in section 201.014, subdivision 1, of the city or county, in a number not less than five percent of the number of persons who voted at the last general election in the city or county, shall submit the question of the establishment or provision of public library services to the voters at the next general election. If a majority of the votes cast on the question are in the affirmative, the governing body shall establish the library or shall provide public library service as authorized in section 134.12 or 134.20 and levy an annual tax for its support.

Subd. 2. **Discontinuance.**

If public library service is established under the provisions of subdivision 1, it may be discontinued only after a majority of the votes cast on the question are in the affirmative on a

question on a ballot in a general election. The question of discontinuance of public library service shall be placed on the ballot at the next general election upon the petition of eligible voters, as defined in section 201.014, subdivision 1, of the city or county, in a number not less than five percent of the number of persons who voted at the last general election in the city or county.

Subd. 3. Applicability.

All public library service heretofore established and now existing in cities and counties is continued and all ordinances and resolutions setting apart public property for their support are hereby confirmed. Nothing in sections 134.08 to 134.15 shall be construed as abridging any power or duty in respect to libraries conferred by any city charter. If a city charter does not address matters provided for in this chapter, the provisions of this chapter shall apply.

[134.09 Library Boards.](#)

Subdivision 1. Appointment.

When public library service is established, except in any city of the first class operating under a home rule charter, the mayor of the city with the approval of the council for a city library or the board of commissioners for a county library, shall appoint a board of five, seven or nine members from among the residents of the city or county. If the city library is a branch or a member of a regional public library system, as defined in section 134.001, the mayor, with the approval of the city council, may appoint to the city library board, residents of the county, provided that the county is participating in the regional public library system and that the majority of the members of the city library board are residents of the city. The number of members on the board shall be determined by resolution or ordinance adopted by the council or the board of commissioners. Not more than one council member or county commissioner shall at any time be a member of the library board. The appointments shall be made before the first meeting of the library board after the end of the fiscal year.

Subd. 2. Term of office.

If nine board members are appointed, three shall hold office for one year, three for two years and three for three years. If seven members are appointed, three shall hold office for one year, two for two years, and two for three years; if five are appointed, two shall hold office for one year, two for two years, and one for three years. All terms shall end with the fiscal year. Annually the mayor with the approval of the council, or the board of county commissioners shall appoint board members for the term of three years until their successors qualify a sufficient number of members to fill the places of those whose term or terms expire. A library board member shall not be eligible to serve more than three consecutive three-year terms.

Subd. 3. Removal of members.

The mayor with the approval of the council, or the board of county commissioners may remove any member for misconduct or neglect.

Subd. 4. Abolishment.

Upon recommendation of a majority of any library board created under the provisions of subdivision 1, the governing body of the city or county may abolish the library board at the end of any fiscal year provided that the governing body shall simultaneously establish a successor library board of either five, seven or nine members by resolution or ordinance. The appointment of successor board members shall be made as provided in subdivision 1. The terms of successor board members shall be as provided in subdivision 2.

[134.10 Board Vacancies; Compensation.](#)

The library board president shall report vacancies in the board to the council, mayor or the board of county commissioners. The council, mayor or board of county commissioners shall fill the vacancies by appointment for the unexpired term. Library board members shall receive no compensation for their services but may be reimbursed for actual and necessary traveling expenses incurred in the discharge of library board duties and activities or a per diem allowance according to section 375.47 in place of the expenses.

[134.11 Organization of Board; Duties.](#)

Subdivision 1. Organization.

Immediately after appointment, the library board shall organize by electing one of its number as president and one as secretary, and from time to time it may appoint such other officers as it deems necessary.

Subd. 2. Duties.

The library board shall adopt bylaws and regulations for the government of the library and for the conduct of its business as may be expedient and conformable to law. It shall have exclusive control of the expenditure of all money collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund, of interest earned on all money collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund, of the construction of library buildings, and of the grounds, rooms, and buildings provided for library purposes. All money received for the library shall be paid into the city or county treasury, credited to the library fund, kept separate from other money of the city or county, and paid out only upon approval by the board. The library board may lease rooms for library use. The library board shall appoint a qualified library director and other staff as necessary, establish the compensation of employees, and remove any of them for cause. With the approval of the council or board of county commissioners, the library board may purchase grounds and erect a library building thereon.

134.12 Benefits of Library.

Subdivision 1. **Nonresidents.**

Any library board may admit to the benefits of its library persons not residing within its city or county under regulations and upon conditions as to payment and security prescribed by the library board.

Subd. 2. **Contracts with cities and towns.**

The library board may contract with the county board of the county in which the library is situated or the county board of any adjacent county, or with the governing body of any neighboring town or city, to loan library materials to residents of the contracting county, town, or city.

Subd. 3. **Use of public library; tax levy.**

Any county board or city governing body may contract with the board of any city or county public library for the use of the library by the residents of the county, town, or city who do not have the use of a public library, upon the terms and conditions as those granted residents of the city or county where the public library is located, and to pay the library board an annual amount therefor. Any county board or city governing body may establish a library fund by levying an annual tax upon all taxable property which is not already taxed for the support of any public library and all taxable property which is situated outside of any city in which is situated a public library.

134.13 Annual Report.

As soon as practicable following the end of the fiscal year the library board shall report to the governing body of the city or county all amounts received during the preceding year and the sources thereof, the amounts expended and for what purposes, the number of library materials on hand, the number purchased and loaned, and such other information as it deems advisable. No later than April 1 of each year the library board shall file this information with the Department of Education on forms supplied by the department.

Trustees should also be familiar with other state laws that affect the library and board which include but are not limited to the following statutes.

[M.S. 138.17 Government Records; Administration](#) provides requirements for public record retention and maintenance.

[M.S. 358.05 Oath of Office](#) requires a member of any public board to take the oath of office defined in the state Constitution.

[M.S. 13.40 Library and Historical Data](#) provides requirements for how data is collected, maintained, used, or disseminated by a library or historical records repository operated by a government entity.

[M.S. Chapter 13d. Open Meeting Law](#) requires that public board meetings must be open to the public.

[M.S. 609.541 Protection of Library Property](#) makes it a petty misdemeanor to damage or fail to return library materials in a timely way after notification and a misdemeanor to remove library material from the library.

[Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 3530, Libraries; School District and Community Services](#) provides rules for administering state aid and grants.

Local Ordinances

There may also be local laws and regulations that apply to library operations. Trustees should be aware of these local requirements. Types of local laws can include the following.

- Municipal or city code requirements
- Local taxing limitations or requirements
- Home rule limitations
- County or township requirements

Library trustees who operate in cities under local home rule charters and/or in part under the terms of special legislation should also be familiar with the additional responsibilities and authorizations contained in such charters and legislation. If a city charter does not name the library and its governance, then Minnesota Statutes apply. Frequently, in charters where the library board is mentioned, it is said to be advisory only. Advisory library boards can make recommendations but have no decision-making authority.

Bylaws

Library board bylaws are the rules established by the library board that govern the board's own activities. Well-crafted bylaws help provide for the smooth and effective functioning of a library board. [M.S. 134.11 Organization of Board; Duties](#) requires that library boards adopt bylaws and regulations for the government of the library and for the conduct of its business. Library board bylaws must comply with all relevant statutes. In addition, all board meetings and board committee meetings must comply with [M.S. Chapter 13d. Open Meeting Law](#). State and federal laws supersede any local library bylaw provisions.

At a minimum, library board bylaws should include provisions for:

- Elected offices, how they are elected, the length of their term, and the powers and responsibilities of each officer
- When meetings are held, and how meetings are conducted
- Definition of a quorum and attendance requirements
- What standing committees are appointed, how they are appointed, and what they do (examples: personnel and finance)
- Amending bylaws

- Term limits
- Calling special meetings
- Removing a board member with reasonable cause
- Reviewing bylaws at least every three years

Because bylaws are fundamental to legal and effective library board operations, great care must be taken when developing new bylaws or amending existing bylaws. Bylaw language must be clear and unambiguous. Imprecise language can result in confusion. For example, confusion can result if it is unclear who has the authority to make decisions for the library. Library board bylaws should make clear that actions by board committees are advisory only. A library board committee cannot act on behalf of the full board—only actions by the full board have legal authority. Likewise, individual board members and board officers can perform official actions on behalf of the board only with specific authorization from the full board.

If the board wants to develop new bylaws or amend existing bylaws, it is recommended that a special committee be appointed to develop drafts for full board review. To change your bylaws, you must follow any procedures required by the current bylaws.

Regional library systems that have IRS 501(c)(3) status may be required to report changes to its bylaws and other governing documents annually to the IRS on the organization's [IRS Form 990](#). Substantial changes to a tax-exempt organization's character, purposes, or method of operation should be reported to the IRS as soon as possible because such changes, if inconsistent with the organization's tax exemption, could affect the organization's tax-exempt status. Certain governmental units or affiliates of a governmental unit described in Rev. Proc. 95-48, 1995-2 C.B. 418 are not required to file Form 990.

See Appendix for Sample Bylaws.

The Library Board of Trustees

The success and achievements of public libraries depend upon the leadership, commitment, and dedication of its trustees. Library trustees have legal and fiduciary obligations to ensure that public libraries provide the highest quality of library service. Core competencies enumerate skills, qualities, and abilities essential for trustees to undertake their duties. Being a library trustee means that you have been entrusted with the welfare of an important community institution charged with serving everyone in your community.

Core Competencies

[United for Libraries](#), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), is an association of library trustees, advocates, Friends, and foundations. The Association lists ten trustee competencies on its [Tools for Trustees tip sheet #9](#).

A library trustee maintains core knowledge about his or her position, including:

- Organization of the board
- Mission and policies of the library
- Library services and available resources
- Information needs and interests of the community
- How to work effectively in a group
- Services and resources available from State Library Services, Minnesota Department of Education, regional, state, and national library associations
- National library trends, standards, and developments
- Library terminology
- State law
- Legislation affecting libraries and pending legislative developments

Role of the Board

It is the role of the library board to:

- Support growth of library services to the community, remembering that the goal is not to save the community money but to spend funding wisely for efficient and effective library service
- Advocate for excellence and adequate funding
- Obey all library laws, state and federal
- Devise a strategic plan for library services and update it every 3-5 years

- Conduct analyses of the community and its needs, and implement responses to those needs
- Build board policies and procedures that work together effectively on behalf of the community for needed library services
- Hire a competent, professional library director and conduct a formal evaluation of that director every year
- Provide a model of exemplary performance of a public body functioning as a part of government

A library board works because of the leadership abilities and commitments of each member. The most important work of the board is conducted at board meetings. Most importantly, individual trustees have no legal authority over the library. Any change in policy or other governing act must be brought before the entire board. The board only has authority when it makes a group decision in a legally constituted meeting.

Generally, boards meet monthly at a time convenient for the members. Every board should have a set of policies and procedures, called bylaws, for its own governance and operation. Bylaws give the board its framework for operation. Bylaws are regulations made by a public association for the regulation of its own local or internal affairs and its dealings with others or for the governance of its members. Bylaws may not supersede state statutes and should be reviewed and updated at least every three years.

Characteristics of Successful Boards

Among the keys to success for a library board are:

- A board composed of trustees giving time and talent as equally as possible
- Officers who follow procedures and accept the leadership role
- Focus on the future
- Lead but don't manage the library
- A presiding officer who knows the appropriate use of parliamentary procedure to move meetings and to allow and encourage full participation of every trustee
- Bylaws and procedures which cover typical situations and assign functions
- Meetings held frequently enough to do the work without rush but planned to move along
- Develop their own board agendas that quickly cover the routine, then proceed to plans, reports and issues
- Minutes that offer a sufficient and accurate written record of formal actions and decisions

- A director willing to work with the board to make meetings productive and a board that considers the director integral to its actions and achievements
- A board that welcomes public interest and the media and encourages public attendance at its meetings
- A board that sees itself as representing and reflecting the community
- Members that appreciate the library
- Membership that is diverse in age, ethnicity, occupation, and gender but without any personal agendas

Trustee Job Description

Even though serving as a trustee is a volunteer position, it requires the same hard work and willingness to learn as does a paid job. A written job description may help potential trustees to understand the roles and responsibilities of the position.

A sample job description for a public library trustee is included in the Appendix.

Trustee Expectations

A trustee is expected to:

- Follow local, state, and federal laws
- Take an oath of office as defined [M.S. 358.05 Oath of Office](#)
- Support the library and library director
- Attend all regular and special meetings of the board
- Give time outside of meetings for the work of the board
- Participate in discussions, having read the agenda and material supplied in advance
- Contribute individual opinion and knowledge to decision making, but be a member of the board rather than operate individually
- Stand by decisions of the board, or seek to change them
- Know the library: its mission, goals and objectives, its services and programs, the director, and budget details
- Promote and represent the library in the community; be an advocate for library service; work to make needed services possible
- Know the community – its many groups and elements and represent the entire community's interests
- Accept assignments for committee work, lobbying, public relations activities

Characteristics of an Effective Trustee

The effective trustee is a dedicated, informed citizen who is knowledgeable about libraries and willing to be an active member of the board. Serving on a public library board requires:

- Time to attend meetings, participate on committees, and read board materials and library publications to learn about library service
- Willingness to give time – and having the time to give
- Interest in the library
- Willingness to learn
- Acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to do the job
- Dedicated effort to improve library service in the community served
- Personal flexibility
- Ability to work cooperatively
- Knowledge of the community or region, its needs, interests, and resources
- Knowledge of legal responsibilities and authority under which the library is organized
- Understanding of the library's place in government; knowing or learning about budgets, sources of funding, concepts of current library service
- Knowledge of the library's funding sources and budget
- Relationships with local government officials
- Ability to work with others
- Respect for confidential information
- Ability to ask pertinent questions of the library administration on programs, policies, and functions
- Knowledge of the local library's role in regional, state and national library networks
- Awareness of trends and new technology and procedures in the library field
- Participation in community groups to represent community needs
- Willingness to share skills (but not to serve in any professional services capacity that might create a conflict of interest, e.g., as the board's attorney)
- Willingness to compromise, but not on ethical questions or legal points; ability to organize facts and discuss problems calmly

- Willingness to take on assignments
- Having a record of community effectiveness and of achievement in other groups
- Respect for the work of others and the recognition and rewards which good work should bring

Characteristics That a Trustee Does Not Necessarily Need

While there are many skills and characteristics which might be desirable in a trustee, not all are necessary. While backgrounds in law or finance may be useful in discussions, it is not a best practice for trustees to be the board's practicing attorney or accountant. Conflicts of interest are all too easy when trustees try to play two roles.

Other characteristics that are desirable but not required include:

- Although being an avid reader and a frequent library user is very desirable, it is not required. What is important is that trustees understand the importance of a library to a community, and know how the community wants to use the library.
- Having money. Boards often look for someone who is wealthy. It's far more important to have roots in the community and try to represent that total community.
- Being a college graduate. Many library trustees have a good educational background, but some of the best are those who recognize the value of education obtained from many sources, especially the library.
- Having special interests. It may sound helpful to put a trustee on a board for a special purpose, but this may not be the case. A trustee who is the resident expert on children's services or vitally interested in resources for business or hooked on computers is valuable only if not deferred to in decisions. Broad interests and representative trustees provide a better base.

A successful trustee board starts with engaged and informed trustees. A strong board is then built one trustee at a time, keeping in mind all of the skill sets outlined above.

Duties and Liabilities

There are two types of library boards. An advisory board does not have responsibility for the budget or the direct oversight of the library director. Advisory boards make recommendations on policy and budget to the governmental authority and act as a liaison between the library, local government, and community. Governing boards are legally responsible for the control and management of the library. A trustee who is a member of a governing board is a public officer who has a fiduciary role to the citizens and taxpayers of the jurisdiction they serve. As a public officer certain duties and responsibilities take effect.

Duties

[M.S. 134.11 Organization of Board; Duties](#) authorizes the duties of library trustees on governing boards including:

- Adopt bylaws and regulations for the government of the library and for the conduct of its business as may be expedient and conformable to law
- Keep separate from other money of the city or county all money received for the library
- Control the expenditure of all money collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund, of interest earned on all money collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund
- Purchase grounds and construct library buildings or lease rooms for library use
- Appoint a qualified library director and other staff as necessary, establish the compensation of employees, and remove any of them for cause

Ethics

Library trustees make a commitment to faithfully carry out their duties and responsibilities with integrity. A library board should establish a Code of Ethics policy to prevent conflict between public duty and private interest.

For example, United for Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, has an official [Public Library Trustee Ethics Statement](#). The Statement includes the following principles.

- Respect the opinions of colleagues when they have a different viewpoint
- Comply with all laws, rules, and regulations that apply to trustees and the library
- Do not be swayed by partisan interests, public pressure, or fear of criticism
- Do not engage in discrimination
- Support patron privacy and confidentiality
- Support the position of the Board even if you disagree
- Avoid conflicts of interest and disqualify yourself whenever a conflict exists (Consider having board members submit an annual conflict of interest disclosure.)
- Do not use the position to gain unwarranted privileges or advantages for yourself or others who do business with the library
- Do not interfere with the management responsibilities of the director or the supervision of library staff
- Support the efforts of librarians in resisting censorship of library materials

Legal Issues

When dealing with legal issues, the board should consult with an attorney for interpretation of the law. The lawyer should be familiar with library law. As a best practice the board should consider retaining its own attorney, and that a line item be retained in the budget to pay for legal services. The board may also consult with city or county attorneys, depending upon which is the

governing authority of the library. For personnel issues, the city or county Human Resources department may be consulted.

Library boards must also avoid taking actions that violate rights guaranteed by the federal constitution or federal law. Special care must be exercised in actions that concern discrimination laws, employment laws, and First Amendment rights. Before taking any actions that may jeopardize these rights, it is strongly recommended that the board seek the advice of an attorney.

If a library trustee violates trust or fiduciary duty, the trustee may be suspended, removed, assessed civil damages, criminally fined, convicted, or sentenced to prison.

Liabilities include:

- Errors or mistakes in exercise of authority
- Acts in excess of authority such as censorship
- Nonfeasance—failure to act when one should have acted, such as failure to get licensure agreement for electronic collections
- Negligence such as unsafe buildings and grounds, interfering with property of another, failure to supervise funds, insufficient interest accounts, or loss due to depositing funds over the maximum amount insured
- Intentional tort such as libel, assault, improper discharging of an employee, or theft
- Conflict of interest when a trustee derives any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation on the Board ([Minnesota Rules 1512.0500 Conflict of Interest](#))
- Acts in contravention of statutory direction such as improper reimbursement to trustees and employees; authorizing payment of improper expenses; failure to follow rules, regulations, and bylaws; purchasing property without bidding; tailoring specifications to a specific bidder; or conducting business at meetings which are not open to the public.

Protection from Liability

Library trustees generally will not be subject to personal loss or liability for the performance of their official duties and exercise of powers granted by law. Court cases generally provide that public officials are immune from individual liability for actions performed within the scope of their office. But personal liability is still possible for intentional or careless injuries or damages, illegal use of public funds or authority, ethics and conflict-of-interest law violations, public records law violations, and open meetings law violations. Liability insurance for the board should be a part of the liability insurance paid for by the library.

Boards can greatly lessen the possibility of liability by:

- Becoming knowledgeable about the laws that apply to library board actions and library operations (such as state open meetings and public records laws, state and local ethics laws, and state and federal employment laws)
- Exercising care and diligence in board consideration of actions or policies; reviewing each action in light of these determinations
- Voting against any proposed board action that you believe is illegal or improper; voting to table an issue if you believe insufficient information has been provided on which to base an informed opinion; making sure the minutes reflect your vote
- Acting and speaking for the library only when authorized to do so by the full board
- Avoiding even the appearance of conflict of interest
- Inviting the principal governmental unit(s), of which the library is a member, to audit the records and accounts of the library at least once every two years
- Adopting rules, regulations and policies and keeping them up to date; posting the rules, regulations and minutes in a public location to avoid any charge that the information is being kept secret
- Inviting public disclosure of trustee actions; publishing minutes in local newspapers or library website or newsletter to inform the public and ensure consistent public awareness of trustee actions
- Consulting with State Library Services or an attorney if you have concerns about the legality of any action or failure to take an action; recording a written protest to the board president if you suspect conflict of interest on the board

Responsibilities

Board responsibilities include the legal responsibilities specifically enjoined upon the board by statute. The statutory governing board powers—such as fiduciary responsibility, handling of buildings and real estate belonging to the library, and control of library finances—are defined in the state and municipal laws that affect libraries. An advisory board collaborates with the governing authority in fulfilling their legal responsibilities.

Other board responsibilities include:

- Policy making
- Funding and budgeting
- Community relations and public awareness
- Interlibrary collaboration (In Minnesota, regional public library systems and multitype library systems are the models for interlibrary cooperation.)
- Selecting and evaluating a director
- Strategic planning
- Advocacy
- Capital planning
- Intellectual freedom
- Board succession planning

The following ten chapters provide details for each responsibility listed above.

Policy Making

Well-written, reasonable, and up-to-date policies are central to library operations and legal protection. One of the most important parts of a trustee's job is the preparation, approval, and review of policies. It is the board's responsibility to adopt, in the case of governing boards, or recommend, in the case of advisory boards, and periodically review policies governing library services. The library's governing authority may also review and approve policies.

Policies guide operations and provide a basis on which the director and the staff can make decisions and respond to challenges and emergencies. Sound policies are written in the best interest of the community and maximize the delivery of library services and access for the greatest number of users.

Policies should be legally defensible. A legally defensible policy is:

- In compliance with current local, state, and federal laws
- Reasonable
- Clearly written and understandable
- Publically available for review and reference
- Applied without discrimination
- Consistent with the library's charter, mission, and goals

The most frequent public challenges to policies are aimed at collection and internet use policies, but making sure that every policy is legally defensible will protect the library and governing authority against liability.

Every policy should:

- Include the date of original adoption and then dates of any subsequent revisions
- Be recorded and compiled with other policies into a readily accessible print and/or online manual

Distinction between Policies and Procedures

A **policy** makes clear how your library will conduct itself in relation to providing a service or responding to requests. Policies are the managing principles that guide decisions. The board is responsible for policies such as those concerning personnel, collection development, and public rules and regulations. All of these areas require written policy statements which set standards for the staff. Policies guide staff members in making day-to-day decisions.

A **procedure** makes clear the steps that library staff take to provide a service and respond to requests. Procedures are similar to instructions and include: who will do what, which steps need to be taken and in what order so that the procedure can be correctly completed, and which

forms or documents to use in the procedure. Procedure manuals are recommended but are distinct from policy manuals. The director and other library staff are responsible for procedures.

Developing, Revising, and Reviewing Policies

The legal authority to make policies lies with the governing board, or, in the case of advisory library boards, with the governing authority. The process works best when the library director and key staff are involved. The director can provide a foundation for issues so the board can have a knowledgeable discussion. Staff can be given the responsibility to provide options, draft recommendations, and present them to the board for discussion and approval. Referring to the policies of other libraries may be useful for creating your library's policies.

Developing and revising policies requires substantial time and thought, along with collective discussion and reflection during which it is important to consider all the implications of any given policy. Before beginning the process prepare the following:

- Description of the issue to be addressed
- Statement describing how a policy would contribute to the accomplishment of the library's goals and objectives
- List of existing policies related to, or affected by, the policy under consideration
- List of policy options available, with appropriate analysis (including effects of enforcing the policy, legal ramifications, and costs to resources, facilities, and staff)

During the process, the board should ask if the policy is:

- In compliance with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations
- Consistent with the library's vision, mission, goals, and plans
- Complete, clearly written, and easily understandable
- In the best interest of the community at large, devoid of politics, prejudice, or favoritism
- Designed to maximize library services and access
- Easily enforceable without undue burden on the library staff

The approval of new policies or changes in policies should be on the board's meeting agenda and discussions should be conducted in open meetings.

Make policy review a part of the board's ongoing responsibilities. Every policy should be reviewed within three years of its creation or previous review. Incorporating reviews into the board's calendar is the best way to keep the review cycle on track. Eliminate policies when they are no longer relevant to library operations.

Challenges to Policies

Once policies are formally approved, all board members need to unanimously support the policy and its implementation. The time for airing disagreements is during the development or revision process. However, policy challenges can come from the public or government officials at any time, and the board should be prepared with a policy and corresponding procedure for handling challenges. Many challenges or complaints can and should be handled by staff following clear procedures.

If the complaint comes directly to a trustee, refer the person to the library director. Inform the person with the complaint that there is a process for handling complaints and that no individual board member is responsible for determining further action. Explain that the director will share the process, including any forms for registering the complaint. As a board member, you should also contact the director soon after receiving the complaint so they will not be caught off guard. If the director is unable to resolve the matter with the person registering the complaint, it then becomes a matter for the board. The matter should be addressed at an open meeting and the complaint should be on the public agenda.

The role of the board is to listen to the complaint and defer a decision to a subsequent meeting after the board has had sufficient time to consider the issues raised. The board should consult with its attorney if necessary. After the board comes to a decision, the matter is closed. However, the person or persons who made the complaint have the right to pursue it through the courts.

Types of Policies

Written policies for service, collection, personnel, and operations are needed by all libraries even if there is only one employee. The following are typical public library policies. Most policies have corresponding procedures. Some policies are related to state statutes. A library may need some but not all of these policies, or other policies not included in the list.

Statutory-related Policies

Conflict of interest: No trustee shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation on the Board ([Minnesota Rules 1512.0500 Conflict Of Interest](#))

Cooperation with other libraries and information providers: Formal or informal agreements with other libraries or information providers that allow cooperative or reciprocal services, purchases, or shared resources ([M.S. 134.18](#), [134.21](#), [134.23](#), and [134.24](#) Public And Multitype Libraries); also conditions under which the library will cooperate with other agencies, types of cooperation, and legal or other guidelines to be followed ([M.S. 134.18 Privileges Extended to Counties and Statutory Cities](#), [M.S. 134.23 Agreements](#))

Copyright: How the library complies with copyright law in making copyright-protected materials available to users ([U.S. Copyright Office](#))

Fines and fees: Fines for overdue, lost, or damaged material and fees for various services, including but not limited to borrowing of certain materials, printing fees, meeting room fees, etc.

and the legal consequences for misuse of library materials ([M.S. 609.541 Protection Of Library Property](#))

Gifts and appraisal: Conditions for the acceptance and use of gifts of money, shares of stock, land, books, materials, or other gifts to the library ([M.S. 134.15 Gifts](#)); also includes how to publicly recognize gifts

Internet acceptable use: Conditions for patron use of public computers, wireless networks and Internet including time limits, acceptable or unacceptable types of information sought, or method of storing information for later retrieval ([M.S. 134.50 Internet Access; Libraries](#))

Internet filtering: Use of software on Internet workstations to block or filter visual depictions that are obscene, child pornography or harmful to minors as defined by the federal [Children's Internet Protection Act](#) ([M.S. 134.50 Internet Access; Libraries](#)); required for participation in E-rate program

Privacy and confidentiality: To ensure that personally identifiable information about a patron and the materials a patron has borrowed is confidential information and may not be made available to any other person or governmental agency except through proper legal process, court order, or subpoena ([M.S. Chapter 13. Government Data Practices](#), [M.S. 13.40 Library and Historical Data](#))

Personnel: Policies regarding employee hiring, suspension, dismissal, salaries, benefits, performance review, job duties, conduct, grievances, promotion, and use of substitute staff and volunteers ([Minnesota Statutes Index \(topics\): Labor and Employment](#))

Records retention and data privacy: How the library manages their official records and maintains an updated records retention schedule, i.e. which records should be held permanently and which should be purged periodically, and protects personally identifiable information about patrons, e.g. which staff members have access to patron records, ([M.S. 138.17 Government Records; Administration](#); [M.S. Chapter 13. Government Data Practices](#))

Unattended children and vulnerable adults: Procedures to protect children or vulnerable adults when unaccompanied by a responsible adult

Non-statutory Policies

Access: The availability of the library and its services to residents of the legal service area including public service hours

Borrowing privileges: Eligibility for library cards, card expiration, type of materials available for borrowing, fees for non-residents, and consequences for misuse of privileges

Cash handling/audit: The job classifications authorized to deal with cash and other monies; types of expenditures allowed without approval; frequency and procedure for audit

Circulation of materials: Length of loan period of various types of materials, renewal and reserve processes, and fee schedule for overdue, damaged, or lost materials

Collection development: Principles related to developing a library collection, including assessing user needs, analyzing collection use, standards for selecting materials, and maintaining the collection by removing dated, damaged, or unused materials from the collection; also includes statement of purpose of collection, subject areas, material formats, and resolving complaints; may include “Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources” or other form for patrons to express concern about a particular library resource (Collection development policies should be consistent with the [Core Intellectual Freedom Documents](#) of ALA.)

Complaints: How complaints or concerns about materials, policies, staff, or incidents are appealed to the board

Continuity of operations: How the library operates during and after a disaster; the order of succession when the director or other crucial staff members are unreachable; how the library communicates with officials and the public during a crisis

Electronic access: How patrons may access the library’s online information resources and services

Emergencies in the library: How the library will evacuate patrons and staff in an emergency and how staff will respond to medical or other emergency situations in the library

Exhibits and displays: Explanation of what types of groups may use exhibit and display areas and for what purpose, priority of library use, length of time, and types of materials allowed

Facilities: Criteria for locating branches, kiosks, or mobile service within service area

Holds on library materials: Types of materials that may be reserved, how users are notified that their reserved materials are now available, and length of time reserved materials will be available for pickup

Intellectual freedom: Affirms a citizen’s right to hold and express individual beliefs, and the library’s obligation to provide information representing a continuum of viewpoints about specific topics and to ensure that challenges to First Amendment rights can be met and defended; may be combined with a policy regarding censorship

Interlibrary loan: How the library obtains information and materials for their users from other libraries

Meeting room use: Explanation of what types of groups may use library meeting rooms and for what purposes, priority of library use, time period of use, booking period limits, frequency of use, available furnishings and equipment, any fees assessed for use, whether refreshment is allowed, and how it may be provided

Outreach services: How the library provides services at other locations such as schools, senior residences, or jails

Programming: Types of performances, lectures, forums, special events, or activities the library will sponsor or permit to be presented at the library and the perceived value of such events or activities to attendees

Provision of library equipment and supplies for public use: Types of library-owned equipment and supplies available for public use

Public relations policy: Who speaks for the library and how the library responds and communicates with the public and media

Reference and information services: How library staff members provide information services, types of service provided, length of time allowed, and variety of resources used

Rules of public behavior: How the library provides a safe and welcoming environment for use of its services, prevents disruptive activities, and protects library resources and facilities

Service access: When the library is open to the public and when phone or online services are available; includes closures for holidays, training, or other circumstances

Volunteers: Criteria for using volunteers including, recruitment, selection, duties, limitations, library staff relationship, recognition, and rewards

The library director is responsible for making sure that all library staff know about and understand the policies that affect their work. Regular reviews of library policies should be incorporated into training for all staff. Front-line staff need to be able to clearly explain policies to library patrons. Policies should be accessible to staff online, on an intranet or in a manual. Library service policies should also be online so that patrons can readily access them.

[United for Libraries](#), a division of the American Library Association for library trustees, advocates, friends and foundations, provides [sample library policies](#) on its website.

[WebJunction's Policies](#) webpage offers examples of library policies and explains how other libraries have successfully implemented a policy.

Funding and Budgeting

Governing board trustees are legally responsible for overseeing library finances. Accountability and awareness are keys to meeting fiscal responsibilities. Accountability is imperative because public funds are being expended. Awareness is crucial because the board cannot make wise budgeting decisions unless members are aware of how the library is funded, what it costs to run the library, what the library needs, and what those needs will cost.

Library financing includes:

- Budget related to the strategic plan
- Budget preparation
- Budget adoption
- Budget presentation to the local governing authority who must act upon it
- Securing funds to provide library services, staff, and facilities
- Evaluation and authorization of expenditures
- Overseeing the annual audit

Budget Purpose

The budget process serves three basic purposes.

Accountability is related to the stewardship role of the library; the trustees have a responsibility to safeguard public funds; however, the stewardship role also includes spending the funds needed to provide library services to the community.

Financial information relates to the management role of trustees and the need for accurate, timely, and reliable information as a basis for effective decisions and library policies.

Transparency allows the public to assess the financial conditions and operations of the library.

To understand the budgeting process and approve an annual budget for the library, trustees 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 as board members must encourage continued funding from those sources and find new sources when needed.

Each board member should:

- Know the library's financial base and background
- Know the governmental unit(s) allocating the local funds
- Understand the basics of legal regulations and financial reporting required for library funding

- Understand the financial needs of library operation and plan for funds needed for growth and expansion
- Be aware of the grants available from state and federal government
- Investigate other possible sources of funding, e.g. a bond issue, endowments, trusts, memorials, dedicated tax revenue, foundation grants, donations, gifts, and fines

Budget Planning

A necessary first step in successful budget planning is knowing who has authority and who does what in the budget planning process. A governing board is responsible for approving the budget. An advisory board makes budget recommendations to the governing authority.

Written policies and procedures should outline responsibilities and roles. Developing the budget should not be up to the library director alone. Developing a budget is a team process. Trustees can 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.

It takes time to make a budget. Boards should develop planning calendars. Since budgeting, like planning, is a cooperative process, the director and staff must be given adequate time to make requests and recommendations. Local funding authorities must be given enough time to consider the budget. Think long range, so funding resources for future growth can be identified or developed.

Be aware of what is happening in your community. Understand the community's ability to pay so you know what can and can't be expected. Understand the competing demands of other agencies on your funding agency so you know your fair share in relation to others.

The public has a right to know how their money is spent. Make the budget understandable. Learn how to use simple and familiar comparisons to illustrate the value people are getting for their tax dollars. For example, instead of using large figures, use per capita figures for expenditures and then compare these to the average cost of a meal in a restaurant, the cost of one hardbound book, or the price of a ski lift ticket.

Budget Calendar

The budget process for the next fiscal/calendar year begins shortly after the beginning of the current fiscal/calendar year. While completing the library's annual report, the library director should gather information for the trustees to review in developing the budget. Some questions trustees might ask are:

- How did library programs and services impact the community?
- Did the library add value to patron's lives?
- Are there better ways to serve the community through the library?

The library director is responsible for the preparation of the budget request and the board of trustees is responsible for the final budget request before it is submitted to the governing authority for approval.

Items to consider when setting the budget request include:

- Reviewing the strategic plan
- Projecting anticipated expenditures
- Determining library priorities
- Projecting anticipated revenues

Budgets of county and city libraries are typically prepared under the same guidelines as their county and city departments. In the case of regional library systems, the board of trustees sets the final budgets that are then submitted to the member board of county commissioners and the city council for joint review and recommendation. Library trustees present the budget request to the governing authority. For county libraries, the board of county commissioners sets the final budget. For city libraries, the city council sets the final budgets.

Funding Sources

When reviewing budgets, special consideration should be shown where it concerns governing or funding bodies. Communication with state, county, or city agencies that govern budgets should be a high priority to make sure all information about funding is current and thorough.

Public libraries are structured in a variety of ways. It is incumbent upon all trustees to familiarize themselves with the structure of the library they serve. For example, county and city libraries are departments of county or city government and must compete with other departments of local government, i.e. police, fire, etc., for funds.

Libraries may receive additional funds by providing services to other jurisdictions on contract. For instance, one county library contracts with two other counties for administration of library services, and some public libraries contract to provide cooperative services to school districts.

If your library receives additional funding from federal, state, or private grants and gifts or donations, it is important to meet the reporting and auditing requirements of funding sources. These funds may not be co-mingled in the same budget categories as general fund revenues budgeted by cities, counties, and regional library systems. While some private grants may be eligible for deposit in a gift fund, many will have reporting requirements similar to those for federal and state funds.

Both state and federal grants have very specific requirements and regulations. Becoming familiar with these requirements and regulations will help you better understand the use of these funds, reporting, evaluation, and procedures.

In Minnesota, public library funding comes from various sources.

Local Funds and Assets

Donations, endowments and gifts: Funds that come directly to the library as a result of wills, memorials, etc., or that come as a result of a gift solicitation program. Gifts can include property, money, or assets that transfer to the library from an individual or organization receiving nothing or less than fair market value in return.

Foundations and corporations: Private 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.

Friends groups: Friends groups are voluntary, non-profit organizations that support public libraries by earning funds and advocating within the community.

Investments: As authorized in [M.S. 118a.04 Investments](#), public bodies may invest any funds not presently needed. These funds may be invested in certain obligations of the United States and its agencies, or obligations of the State of Minnesota and local governments. Funds may also be invested in specified commercial papers or in time deposits that are fully insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or bankers' acceptance of United States banks.

Library funds: As authorized by [M.S. 134.07 Public Library Service](#), cities and counties may levy an annual tax for library services or may provide funds from other sources available to the funding authority including the general fund, reimbursements, and the state.

Library foundations: A foundation, designated as 501(c)(3) by the Internal Revenue Service, seeks funds and uses them to support the library. (Section 501(c)(3) is the portion of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code that allows for federal tax exemption of non-profit organizations.) Foundations receive donations and invest them to provide a stable future for the library.

State Funds

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund: As authorized by a Minnesota Constitutional Amendment ([Article 11, sec. 15](#)), the fund receives 19.75 percent of the sales tax revenue resulting from the Legacy amendment to support arts, arts education, and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage. The Minnesota Legislature chooses to allocate a portion of the funds to public libraries. State Library Services distributes these funds based on biennial legislative appropriations to regional library systems to support arts and cultural heritage programs in their communities.

Library Construction Grants: As authorized by [M.S. 134.45 Library Construction Grants](#), this is a dollar-for-dollar matching program. It provides public libraries with funding for renovation, construction, and improvement projects that result in more accessible library facilities. The program is authorized by the Minnesota Legislature funded from the sale of General Revenue Obligation Bonds and administrated by State Library Services.

Multicounty, Multitype Library System Aid: As authorized in [M.S. 134.353 Multicounty, Multitype Library System Development Aid](#) and [M.S. 134.354 Multicounty, Multitype Library](#)

[System Operating Aid](#), aid is appropriated every biennium by the Minnesota Legislature. The funds are allocated to multicounty, multitype library systems through State Library Services. A description of the aid program and requirements for participation are outlined in [Minnesota Rules, Chapter 3530 Libraries; School District and Community Services](#).

Regional Library Basic System Support: As authorized in [M.S. 134.32 Grant Authorization; Types of Grants and Aid](#) and [M.S. 134.34 Regional Library Basic System Support Aid; Requirements](#), aid is appropriated every biennium by the Minnesota Legislature. The funds are allocated to regional public library systems through an aid program administered by State Library Services. A description of the aid program and requirements for participation are outlined in [Minnesota Rules, Chapter 3530, Libraries; School District and Community Services](#).

Special Purpose State Grants: Libraries may be eligible for other state grants that provide funds to public and non-profit institutions for special purposes such as grants to develop information for specific populations, provide job and career information, construct energy efficient buildings, advance the arts and humanities, etc.

Federal Funds

[Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Grants](#): Funds support professional development, graduate education, and continuing education to help libraries develop a diverse workforce to better meet the changing learning and information needs of the American public. Grants are administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants: The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) provides LSTA funds to Minnesota through the Grants to States Program as authorized in the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). Funds, including all competitive grant projects, address one or more of the goals in the state's five-year plan.

[National Leadership Grants for Libraries](#): Funds support projects that address Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) priorities for significant challenges and opportunities facing the library fields and that have the potential to advance library theory and practice. Projects generate results such as new tools, research findings, models, services, practices, or partnerships. Grants are administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Special Purpose Federal Grants: Many federal programs provide funds to public and non-profit institutions for special purposes such as grants to develop information for the aging, provide jobs for youth at risk, conduct energy audits for buildings, and advance the arts and humanities, etc.

E-Rate: E-Rate is the commonly used name for the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission. The program provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.

Regional Library Telecommunications Aid: As authorized in [M.S. 134.355 Basic Regional Library System; Support](#), aid is appropriated each biennium by the Minnesota Legislature. Funds are allocated to regional library systems for eligible libraries through an aid program administered by State Library Services.

Fund Management

All revenues, including fines and fees, must be budgeted as a part of the regular budgeting process and amended in the same way. Cash for fines and fees collected in the library must be acknowledged by receipt and deposited as often as recommended by your auditor, but not less than weekly. Fines and fees must never be deposited in the gift fund. (A gift fund is an account set up to receive property, money or assets transferred to the library from an individual or organization receiving nothing or less than fair market value in return. Funds may come directly to the library as a result of wills, memorials, etc., or that come as a result of a gift solicitation program.) Some cities and counties may attempt to revert fines and fees to the general fund. This can be avoided by appropriately budgeting them as revenue and expenditures. Cash collected for fines and fees must never be treated as petty cash. If petty cash is needed, a separate fund should be established and used as necessary. Receipts must back up all withdrawals.

Maintenance of Effort

Most public libraries in Minnesota are members of regional library systems. Regional library systems are eligible to receive Regional Library Basic System Support (RLBSS) from the Department of Education. State law ([M.S. 134.34 Regional Library Basic System Support Aid; Requirements](#)) as amended by [M.S. 275.761 Maintenance of Effort Requirements Reduced](#) requires that local governments maintain a minimum level of funding for public library services. This is known as “state-certified levels of library support,” commonly known as “maintenance of effort” (MOE). As of 2012, the MOE formula is set at 90% of the amount established in 2011.

Budget Presentation

The proposed library budget is presented to the local governing authority, or authorities in the case of regional library systems, to inform them about the scope of services for the next one or two years. Trustees should be informed about every aspect of the budget. At least one or two trustees should make the presentation and explain, justify, and negotiate budget details. Obtaining financial support for the library and using this support to the best advantage increases in direct proportion to the trustee’s understanding of the library’s financial needs and objectives.

Budget Oversight

When the library’s budget is adopted by the governing authority it gives the library the authority to spend all funds budgeted. No library can spend more than has been budgeted unless the budget is formally amended. If the library receives additional income from any source, it cannot be spent unless the budget is amended to include this additional income. This does not apply to funds maintained in library gift funds, by foundations, or by Friends of the Library.

[M.S. 134.11 Organization of Board; Duties](#) gives governing boards control of the expenditure of all money collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund; of interest earned on all money collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund; of the construction of library buildings; and of the grounds, rooms, and buildings provided for library purposes. Trustees monitor the library's fiscal operations to assure that financial records are complete and accurate. They assure that the library is using its resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner. They also ensure that a system of internal controls exists to safeguard the assets, assure accuracy of accounting, promote efficiency, and encourage adherence to management policies such as fines and fees and cash handling and audits.

The board should be aware of all internal controls, methods to ensure the integrity of financial and accounting information, and general accounting principles. They must also disclose any conflict of interest.

The library director or other staff member is responsible for presenting trustees with financial reports. Library trustees should carefully review these financial reports and be prepared to question them at board meetings, if necessary.

Financial reports include:

- Current expenditures
- Year-to-date figures
- Total budget
- Budget balance
- Explanations of major changes
- Budget amendments

To make maximum use of funds for supplies and equipment, trustees should know that as units of government, public libraries are eligible to make purchases from suppliers with whom the State of Minnesota has negotiated a contract purchasing agreement, following competitive bidding. [M.S. 471.345 Uniform Municipal Contracting Law](#) encourages eligible municipalities to utilize the state's contracts available under the [Minnesota's Cooperative Purchasing Venture \(CPV\)](#).

Trustees should also know that there are state laws which must be followed when making large purchases over a certain amount. Requirements for bidding and contracting are specified in [M.S. 471.345 Uniform Municipal Contracting Law](#), to [471.37 Violations](#). Depending on the source of funds, such as E-Rate and Regional Library Telecommunications Aid, there may be other state or federal legal requirements.

Exempt from Sales Tax

Public libraries, regional public library systems and multicounty, multitype library systems are exempt from sales tax ([M.S. 297a.70 Exemptions for Governments and Nonprofit Groups](#)).

Exemption include most, but not all, tangible items and services including telecommunication services, bookmobiles, utilities, and late fees. To claim the exemption, the library must provide the seller with a [Certificate of Exemption, Form ST3](#).

Libraries must collect sales taxes on the items they sell such as removed or donated books, CDs, DVDs, and photocopies as well as rental fees for library materials.

For details refer to [Minnesota Department of Revenue, Fact Sheet 139, Libraries, rev. 11/16](#)).

Audits

The governing board of trustees has the fiduciary responsibility for all funds in the public library budget. Cities and counties usually include public libraries in their annual audit.

Regional public library systems and multitype library systems are required by [Minnesota Rules 3530.2600 Audit](#) to be audited annually. The audit must be performed by the staff of the State Auditor's Office, by a certified public accountant or by a public accountant defined in accordance with [M.S. 6.64 Cooperation with Public Accountants](#) to [6.71 Scope Of Auditor's Investigation](#). Audits are submitted to State Library Services at the Minnesota Department of Education.

Community Relations and Public Awareness

The public library is a community hub. Trustees represent the community and are among the library's most influential representatives. They play an important role in shaping the public image of the library.

Successful representation of the community begins with the openness of the library board to new people and ideas and engaging the community in board decisions. The library board should be visible in the community through open meetings, personal appearances by trustees, and communication of decisions and activities.

While trustees have a responsibility to represent the library, trustees should never undertake a formal public relations initiative on their own. All their efforts should be channeled through the director and library staff.

Goals of community relations are to:

- Represent the library in a positive manner
- Tell the library's story through the media
- Obtain citizen support for library funding
- Encourage use of the library
- Inform the public about library services and programs
- Show recognition of the part played by trustees, staff, and Friends groups
- Enhance cooperation between the library and other community groups
- Reach out to segments of the community that do not use the library

Trustees can promote good community relations by:

1. Community engagement with:
 - Young adults
 - Senior citizens
 - Minority groups and people with disabilities
 - Writers and artists
 - School librarians and teachers
 - Business owners
 - Professional organizations

- Social service organizations
- Faith communities
- Governmental units
- Other community organizations and groups

Public relations tips for trustees include:

- Use the library and its services
- Make the library an ordinary part of conversation
- Don't use library jargon
- Be familiar with all library policies
- Be willing to defend library needs
- Be familiar with your library's strategic plan
- Do not give out misleading information; be sure of your facts
- Be aware of and promote high quality library service
- Attend presentations to the official governing authority with the director
- Visit libraries in other communities

Interlibrary Cooperation

Each type of library serves the needs of different clientele. While libraries vary in purpose, organization, service, and funding, none is able to independently provide all the resources its users need. Minnesota libraries cooperate in order to better serve customers, widen the reach of libraries, and save money through shared services and products. Trustees develop policies that make interlibrary cooperation possible. Interlibrary cooperation encompasses many programs among various types of libraries. Libraries develop their collections and services based on their ability to connect with other libraries.

In Minnesota, regional public library systems and multitype library systems are the models for interlibrary cooperation. Although the public and multitype library systems have functional differences, what they have in common and what they offer the local library are similar:

- More effective planning and administration
- Lower unit costs through larger scales of operations
- Greater flexibility in using available resources

Library systems coordinate activities which may be difficult or impossible for a single library. Minitex provides statewide interlibrary loan, digital information resources, ebooks, virtual reference service, and library staff training. Regional public library systems use funding sources to support direct services to members and community library users. With state funding for operations, the multitype library systems bring member libraries of all types together. By sharing resources among libraries, multitype members increase their capacity to serve their patrons.

Below is a list of some, but not all, of the services that may be handled by statewide (Minitex), regional public, and multitype library systems:

- Reciprocal borrowing, i.e. library cards issued by participating libraries are accepted at other participating libraries for the purpose of borrowing library materials (See Minnesota Library Reciprocal Borrowing Compact below.)
- Delivery services for shared materials
- Area-wide collection development, especially digital collections
- Purchasing of materials and supplies
- Regional storage of seldom used materials
- Shared specialists in adult, children's, or technical services
- Joint contracts for equipment maintenance agreements
- Automation for sharing bibliographic information, data processing, circulation, acquisitions, and information services

- Access to collections for people with disabilities
- Contracts with artists, authors and performers for shared programming
- Implementation of state and federal appropriations and programs
- Continuing education and in-service training for library staff
- Telecommunication infrastructure
- Communication systems

Minnesota Library Reciprocal Borrowing Compact

The [Minnesota Library Reciprocal Borrowing Compact](#) allows any participating library to accept any other participating library's borrower cards for the purpose of loaning library materials. The compact allows any valid library card holder to borrow materials from any other participating library in Minnesota. Each participating library determines which library materials are available for loan. Borrowers accept the rules and regulations of the lending library. Libraries agree to promptly return to the lending library any items returned to their library. The compact does not apply to libraries unaffiliated with participating regional public library systems.

Hiring a Library Director

A governing board hires the library director. The director works with the board, staff, local, regional and state decision makers, government officials, and professional colleagues to meet the needs of the community and provide the vision, leadership, and management needed for library service.

Although an advisory board does not hire the library director, it may make recommendations to the governing authority responsible for hiring the director. Board members may participate in the process by recommending changes to the job description, recruiting qualified candidates, serving on the search or interview committees, and meeting with final candidates.

A director vacancy should be filled only after a careful review of the organization's goals and objectives and consideration of how the director will contribute to their achievement. Trustees should be aware of current practices in the profession, current needs and direction of the library, and competitive professional salaries and benefits.

Before hiring a library director, the entire board should understand what a public library director does. Library director responsibilities include:

- Acts as the professional/technical advisor to the library board of trustees on policy, finances, planning, library performance, and laws affecting libraries
- Implements strategic plan
- Hires and supervises library personnel
- Implements board policy; interprets library policy for the public
- Administers the library budget
- Oversees the library collection: books, DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers, electronic resources, kits, and other materials for library users
- Manages library services and programs
- Directs and provides outreach services to the community
- Manages and maintains the library facilities, computer technology, automation system, and other library equipment
- Represents the library in the community and promotes the library and its services
- Teaches the community how to access, evaluate, and use information resources

The size of the library will determine the scope of director duties. In larger libraries directors will mostly be engaged with the governing authority and library management. In small libraries with few or no other library staff, the library director also serves customers directly and may also:

- Provide preschool storytime to build early literacy skills in young children
- Help students find resources to complete school assignments
- Help readers discover books they will enjoy
- Find answers to questions from users
- Check out books

To ensure that the most qualified candidate is hired, it is critical that the governing library board follow standard hiring procedures.

Preliminary Assessment

The governing board must reach consensus on what it wants a new director to accomplish and what qualifications are needed. They should also consider what the library has to offer the director. Offer the best salary possible to secure the services of a qualified person. Consider any added incentives or challenges offered by the job opportunity.

In order to do this, the board should discuss the following questions among others:

- Is the strategic plan still relevant?
- What is the role of the library in the community?
- Have community needs changed? Has the library kept pace?
- What direction does the library need to go?
- What qualifications are needed in the next director?
- What is the reason for the job opening?
- Was the previous director dissatisfied? Why?
- Was the board dissatisfied with the previous director? Why?

Develop a Timeline

Hiring a director may take just a few months to as many as six or more months. A timeline should be established and include:

- Appointment of the search committee
- Hiring a search firm
- Review of the job description and writing the job announcement
- Date that the job announcement will appear on websites and/or in newspapers or journals

- Deadline for applications
- Time to review applications and decide on persons to interview
- When to interview
- Time for the board to make a decision and offer the job to the candidate
- Time for the candidate to respond
- Anticipated starting date for the new director

Search Committee

The board as a whole can function as the search committee or they may hire an executive search firm to consult with the hiring authority. An alternative is to form a committee of board members, staff, and community members to review the applications and recommend candidates for the board or governing authority to interview. If a search committee is appointed, be sure the duties of the committee and the deadlines are clear.

Job Description

The job description should indicate the minimum requirements for education and work experience. It should also include any desirable areas of expertise and work experience. All minimum requirements and desirable qualifications must be job-related. The board should not hire a person with less than the minimum requirements.

Obtain a copy of the current job description. If no written job description exists, the board will need to write one before continuing with the hiring process. Review it to ensure that it meets current requirements including:

- Areas of responsibility
- Specific duties
- Minimum requirements for education and work experience
- Desirable areas of expertise and work experience
- Salary and benefits
- Whether there is a period of probation
- Expectations for successful job performance
- Physical/environmental requirements of the job
- Certification requirements

Salary

The first step in achieving pay commensurate with the work performed, referred to as “pay equity,” is to understand the job duties and responsibilities. In some libraries, the director’s position might be comparable to the city clerk, or in a county, it might compare to another county department head. Pay for the library director should be comparable to local positions with similar education requirements and responsibilities.

Library boards and directors often ask about salaries of directors of nearby libraries of like size. While that can be useful information it should not be the sole basis for decisions on salary for the library director. Because low pay is a common concern among libraries, comparing to other libraries’ salary schedules is often comparing to equally low salaries that don’t adequately compensate for the work performed.

Advertising the Position

The job description should be used to write the job announcement. The job announcement should be as comprehensive as possible. Provide a description of the position, required education and experience, and desirable areas of expertise and work experience. Include the salary range and benefits, a brief description of the library and community, where to send applications, and application deadline. Request a resume and professional references.

The job opening should be publicized widely. If the library board is considering hiring a director with a master’s degree in library science, notify library schools and purchase an online ad through the American Library Association. A master's degree in library science from a library education program accredited by the American Library Association is required for regional library system directors in order for the library to be eligible for Basic Regional Library System Support ([Minnesota Administrative Rules 3530.1000 Criteria for Eligibility](#)). If you decide to place print ads in professional journals such as American Libraries and Library Journal, check publication deadlines and how they fit with your time line.

The governing authority’s (city or county) human resources department can assist in advertising the position. If you hire a search firm, the contract will include how the firm will attract candidates for the position.

Reviewing Applicants

Applications should be acknowledged (such as via e-mail) by the search committee. Before applications are reviewed, criteria should be developed and used to rank them. It is helpful if a form is developed to screen and compare each applicant’s qualifications to the requirements of the position. Do not consider any candidate that does not meet minimum qualifications.

Some qualifications to consider are:

- Education
- Public library experience
- Other library experience

- Management or supervisory experience
- Board experience

Candidates who satisfy the requirements for the position become part of an official pool of applicants for further consideration. The search committee should be able to agree on three to five candidates to be called for interviews. A phone interview with preliminary candidates may be helpful to determine final interviewees.

Prior to the interviews, provide candidates with the library mission statement; planning document; budgets for the last several years; size and description of your community; information about employers, shopping, schools, churches, recreation, higher education, and any other information that will inform candidates about the library and community.

Interview

Only governing boards interview library director candidates. The board determines whether the search committee or other members, usually three to five trustees, will conduct the interviews. Designate one person to handle the planning and scheduling of the interviews. Identify what expenses will be paid or reimbursed for each candidate.

Develop a list of questions to be asked of every candidate interviewed. Topics to cover in the interview include management and fiscal philosophy, intellectual freedom, technology, trends, and the library's role in the community. Be sure to follow state and federal hiring laws. For example, it is illegal to ask certain questions of candidates such as marital status, age, and family plans.

As part of the interview, arrange a tour of the library, a meeting with staff, and an opportunity for the candidate to learn about the community.

Evaluating Candidates

Use an evaluation form to record candidate responses and interview committee notes. Once all of the finalists have been interviewed, the search committee should discuss and rank the finalists.

Some qualifications to consider in ranking candidates are:

- Attitude of service to the community and enthusiasm for librarianship
- Philosophy of library service in harmony with the library's mission statement
- Ability to explain how his or her experience and talent can be used as library director
- Understanding the role of trustees
- Successful record of working with board and community leaders, and supervising staff
- Willingness to become involved in the community and ability to be comfortable in relations with the public

- Knowledge of basic principles such as intellectual freedom
- A reasonable grasp of the library's situation, budget, and plans based on information supplied to the candidate in advance
- Commitment to continuing education for the board, director and staff

Check references before offering the position to a candidate. When calling references, agreed-upon questions should be asked with space on the form for search committee members to write down responses. A search committee may want to seek out references other than those listed. Some employers will only verify such things as dates of employment and last salary earned.

Hiring Decision

Finally, the full governing board decides if one or more of the candidates should be offered the job or if the search is to be reopened. The top candidate should be offered the position, contingent on a successful background check, by telephone. Determine if there is room for salary and benefit negotiations. When a candidate accepts the position, follow up with a letter of agreement indicating date employment begins, salary, benefits, etc. The board may want to consider a formal contract. Notify other candidates that they have not been selected immediately after the job offer has been accepted. Retain all of the documents associated with the job search and hiring process for the period specified in the library's retention policy.

When the New Director Arrives

Orient the new director. Provide help with school and housing information and additional information about the library and community, if needed.

Welcome the new director. News releases should be arranged. Personal introductions to staff members, trustees, foundation and friends groups' officers, community representatives, and local government officials should be scheduled. An open house or reception hosted by the board, and assisted by other groups such as the Friends of the Library, is a standard courtesy.

Evaluating the Library Director

It is the responsibility of the governing board to regularly evaluate the library director. An advisory board may make recommendations for the governing authority's evaluation. Trustees may evaluate the director by what they see in the library, what they hear from the public and what they perceive as the library's reputation in the community. But that informal consideration does not take the place of a formal review of the director's performance. The best way to evaluate director effectiveness is by doing a formal annual evaluation to determine how well s/he is accomplishing library goals based on the job description and strategic plan.

An annual performance evaluation:

- Provides the director with a clear understanding of the board's expectations
- Ensures the director is aware of how well the expectations are being met
- Serves as a formal vehicle of communication between the board and director
- Identifies the board's actual concerns so that appropriate action can be taken
- Creates an opportunity to review and acknowledge the director's accomplishments
- Demonstrates sound management practices and accountability to the governing authority and the community

The format and procedure for director evaluation must be determined by each board, but it is important for each board member to understand what is appropriate and inappropriate for the evaluation. The method used should be understood by the board and director at the beginning of the evaluation period so it is clear to everyone what the basis for the evaluation will be. The board may schedule a closed meeting in order to conduct the director's evaluation.

A written evaluation allows the board and the director a process to communicate about how to improve the library. Look for what the director does well and areas that need improvement. Acknowledge and reward good performance. Work with the director to correct inadequate areas of performance. Then, the cycle starts again by deciding the basis of the evaluation for the coming year's performance.

Evaluation Criteria

Your community, the library, and the board's priorities will determine what factors to consider when evaluating the performance of the director. The performance criteria should be included in the director's job description and work plan. The following list gives you some points to consider.

Preparing and managing the budget

- Are funds aligned with the strategic plan?
- Is the preparation work completed in a timely manner for the board?

- Does the budget cover all necessary expenses?
- Are funds allocated or reserved for unanticipated contingencies?
- Are the funds allocated effectively?
- Are major corrections to the budget during the fiscal year avoided?

Managing the staff

- Are positive management/staff relations maintained?
- Are fair and equitable policies proposed for board adoption and then fairly administered?
- Have grievances been filed? If so, what is their nature?

Keeping current

- Are innovations in service delivery and technology studied thoroughly and implemented if they fit the needs of the library and are proven to be cost-effective?
- Does the director maintain current knowledge of best library practice?
- Is the staff encouraged and assisted in learning about best library practice?

Collection management

- How adequately does the library identify needs and interests in the community and translate these into the library's collection and services?
- Have priorities been established to enable the library to respond to changes?

Communication with board

- Does the director inform board members of finances, issues, and programs?
- Does the director set and post board agendas and minutes for the public?
- Does the director contact board members in a regular and timely manner?

Implementation of board decisions

- Are board decisions implemented on a timely basis?
- Once board decisions have been made, does the director support and not undermine them?

Use of the library

- How effectively are the current and new services of the library communicated to the board and public?

- Does the library have a positive impact on the community?
- Does the community value and use the library?
- Does the library use data to evaluate programs and services?

Staff selection (if not responsibility of city or county government)

- Is the selection process designed to ensure that the best person is hired?
- Is the selection process consistent with legal requirements?

Development of staff

- Does staff receive training adequate to perform their jobs?
- Is staff encouraged to develop career goals and/or goals for learning new skills?
- Does the director promote staff development and support it with funding?

Staff utilization

- Have peak service hours been identified and staff assigned accordingly?
- Are staff functions analyzed periodically with the objective of combining or eliminating tasks or creating new assignments?
- Are job descriptions current?

Planning

- Are the director's activities and accomplishments consistent with the strategic plan?
- Does the director provide enough information to the board about implementing the strategic plan?

Other rating factors

- Are "hard decisions" made and implemented or are they deferred or ignored?
- Does the director display initiative?
- Does the director make decisions objectively or do personal biases intrude?
- Is the director open with the board about both accomplishments and problems?
- Does the director set an example for other staff through professional conduct, high principles, good work habits, etc.?

Within each of these areas determine how success will be measured. During the evaluation process set new goals for the coming year based on what's been accomplished. Provide

constant and constructive feedback and engage in a formal evaluation at the end of each fiscal year.

Performance Review

United for Libraries, a division of ALA, offers a Tool for Trustees for [Evaluating the Library Director](#).

Ask for community feedback on the director's performance. Be honest. Don't discount areas that need improvement.

Types of performance reviews include:

Informal feedback during private meetings between the president of the board and the director to determine how things are going, what has been accomplished and what is unfinished, whether any problems have arisen, and how the board president might assist the director.

Coaching is used when the focus of the board president is on some type of performance problem or inadequacy. The problem is identified and a solution is proposed. Specific measurable results and a time line for completion are agreed upon and written down. When the task is completed according to the agreement, trustees should recognize the accomplishment.

Performance review should be scheduled annually. Depending upon the performance of the library director an additional review can be held during the year. The session should include a review of the director's progress toward the objectives with evaluation measures and completion dates.

Dismissing the Library Director

Directors are usually dismissed only after serious infractions of board policy, violation of the law, or very poor performance coupled with unwillingness or inability to improve. It is important that reasons for dismissal are carefully documented. The board has a responsibility to ensure that personalities and biases are not factors in any dismissal decision. The dismissal and/or appeals procedure should be described explicitly in board policy and allow the director a full hearing to discuss specific charges. A board should not begin a dismissal process unless it understands the implications, has consulted with the appropriate local government officials, believe its position is defensible, and has obtained appropriate legal advice from an attorney. Working with human resources professionals ensures all procedures are followed correctly.

The following factors should be considered prior to making a final decision to dismiss a library director:

- Was notice given to the director?
- Was the reason for termination reasonably related to library employment?
- Was there an investigation and documentation?
- Was the investigation fair and objective?

- Was there proof of a violation?
- Is there equal treatment of other library employees in similar situations?
- Is termination of the director an appropriate disciplinary action? Even if the library director has done something wrong, has been given notice, and has not ceased the activity, is termination too harsh a penalty? Or would some other consequence be more reasonable?

Planning Library Services

Planning for libraries is a process of envisioning the future of both the community and the library and setting a direction for library movement toward that chosen vision. Planning helps the staff and board understand the community's needs, set priorities, and establish methods for achieving those priorities. The planning document provides a record of the decisions made during that process. The document also becomes a guide for decision-making and action by staff and the board.

The most streamlined planning involves five basic questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?
- What timetable will move us forward effectively?
- How can progress be measured?

A planning process is an individualized approach to community library services. Even though city, county, and regional libraries plan for their entire service area, data should be collected on a community level as well. Planning also involves exposure to new ideas and an examination of what is going on in other libraries and institutions.

As authorized by [Minnesota Administrative Rules 3530.1000 Criteria for Eligibility](#), regional public library systems provide State Library Services a long-range strategic plan in even-numbered years as part of the library's application for Regional Library Basic System Support.

Strategic Plan

Libraries need a strategic plan to guide actions toward their communities' goals. Library services need to reflect changes in their communities.

Strategic planning begins with assessing the library's service area and analyzing trends which will influence its residents' library and information needs in the future. Strategic planning affects all aspects of library functions, operations, and services. It is linked to the library's financial, staffing, disaster, facility, equipment, and operations plans, as well as library policies and procedures.

Every library needs a strategic plan, no matter how small or how large the library and community may be. The process followed to create a strategic plan will depend on the size of the library and community. Large and even many medium-sized libraries, or those libraries accustomed to planning, may have the resources and experience to undertake a comprehensive process.

Strategic planning is a continuous process of assessing the community, the library, and its services. It involves choosing a framework for future decision-making regarding services, the

performance and operational capabilities of the library or regional system, and the results or outcomes desired.

There are several strategic planning programs specifically for libraries, including [Planning for Results](#) from the American Library Association and [Rapid Results Planning](#) from Library Strategies. The process is less important than the fact that the planning is carried out. First-time planners often want to follow a simplified process that is less time-intensive. Even a simplified process will help the board and staff gain vital information about the library and community, as well as the experience and confidence needed to expand the process during the next planning cycle.

The library can hire a consultant familiar with library strategic planning to assist with the process. The contract will specify what the consultant's role will be, the deliverables to the library, and the dates each deliverable is due to the library.

The process includes:

- Establishing a *vision* which sets the overall direction for the library and its leadership
- Defining a *mission* which indicates the library's purpose and provides a focus for activities and services, as well as expenditures and use of resources
- Identifying overall organizational *goals* for a designated period of time, usually three to five years
- Identifying *outcomes* and *outputs*, i.e. statements of what will exist at some determined future date as a result of the implementation of the plan, and which will also serve as indicators or measures to be used in evaluation

Community Engagement

Community engagement ensures that the strategic plan addresses community needs. While the board and staff take the initiative in writing and revising goals and objectives, it is important that community groups have opportunities to make suggestions and discuss ideas before the goals are adopted. The board forms advisory committees, sponsors public meetings, and encourages the involvement of members of the community and staff to contribute their ideas and expertise. This leads to better use of the library, understanding its directions and problems, and support for its goals and financial needs.

The more people you talk to about the community, the more information you will have to create your strategic plan. By talking to community stakeholders, library planners can add to the strength and reliability of their plan as well as obtain buy-in from the public. There are many individuals and groups that might be consulted as part of a basic planning process. Which ones you choose will depend on your particular situation.

Information Gathering

Probably the most common mistake library planners make when consulting the community in preparation for a strategic plan is to ask people about the library. The real purpose of consulting

all of these community representatives is to find out about them—what they are doing and what is important in their lives and work. The library staff and board are the experts in the broad array of possible library services. It is up to these experts to be creative in proposing new services or changes in services to meet emerging needs. For example, the mayor and city council may be interested in developing tourism in a community, but they may never think of the library as a vehicle for collecting and disseminating local information of interest to tourists. If you ask someone what the library should be like, they will answer based on their preconceptions about what a library is. Instead, ask about community needs and then apply library resources to fashion the services to help the community fill those needs.

There are a variety of ways to ask stakeholders about community needs. One of the simplest but most effective is simply to invite them to the library or a neutral site and talk to them. Find someone who is experienced in facilitating conversations. Construct one or more groups built around particular interests, such as the needs of children in the community or the needs of immigrants. Assist the interviewer in eliciting the opinions of interested parties regarding what is important to them.

The strategic plan for the library benefits from input from multiple individuals. The library director, with the help of staff, can be relied on to gather statistics about a community. At the same time, the director and staff can gather facts about the library. By discussing these and similar facts about the library and the community, the staff and board can come to some basic conclusions about the library on which to plan future services.

Planning Tools

There are several ways to gather information for a strategic plan.

- Create a community profile that includes:
 - Census and demographic data from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#)
 - Community histories
 - Description of geography
 - Identification of government(s), commercial and industrial activities, communications media, traffic patterns and transit routes, other libraries, educational institutions, recreational facilities, entertainment and cultural agencies, faith communities, senior residences, correctional facilities, health centers, and other community groups
- Staff interviews and questionnaires
- User surveys including evaluations of existing programs and services
- Citizen surveys including awareness of library
- Focus groups with library stakeholders

- Professional consultants, especially if the library is contemplating major internal reorganization or facility construction or remodeling

Plan Outline

A simple plan might be organized like this:

Introduction: Discuss the planning process: Who are you? What are your library and community like? How did you find this out? Who did you consult? How did you consult them? What did you find?

Mission Statement: What vision of the community are you are trying to support? What is the library's role in supporting that vision? What is the reason the library exists?

Service Responses: What are the specific services you will offer and why? Service responses are services typically offered by libraries such as basic literacy or lifelong learning.

Goals: Once you've identified 4-5 service responses to concentrate on, the next step is to identify the goal. This is the outcome your target group will receive as a result of your program or service. Remember the focus is on the community, not the library. If the service response is "Basic Literacy," then a goal might be "Foster love of reading in children."

Strategies/Objectives: These outline the ways that the library will implement the goal, like summer learning programs, preschool storytimes, or baby storytimes.

Activities: Library staff rather than board members are responsible for activities. Activities are the specific actions taken by library staff to achieve the strategies/objectives, e.g. contact schools, get Summer Learning Program manual, get craft supplies, find speakers, find sponsors for prizes, etc.

Operations or Work Plans: Like activities, library staff rather than board members are responsible for work plans. These are more specific and focus on the immediate future. Work plans provide a detailed accounting of a library's specific goals, usually revised annually with key activities, identifying what will be done, by whom and with what staffing. It includes target dates and output and/or outcome statements.

Evaluation: How will you measure the impact these services are having on the target population? How do you know if you are doing it right? What are your alternatives if you are not? Evaluation during the strategic planning process should include a schedule for reviewing the plan and assessing whether services and programs are on target.

The specific time frame your plan covers will depend on how ambitious your plan is, or how many activities you hope to carry out. Your plan can cover the next five years, three years, or even one year. Do what makes sense for your library and your community. The most important thing you can do is to be adaptive. Follow your plan and revisit it along the way. Make sure it is taking you where you want to go, and revise it as necessary. At the end of the planning cycle, when all evaluations are in, start over. Create a new strategic plan and perhaps go a little further in your information-gathering process.

Be prepared to respond to questions and comments from library users and members of the community.

Other Plans

In addition to strategic planning, you may also want to consider planning projects focusing on specific issues.

Disaster Plan

Libraries need disaster plans for each building in order to assure that in the event of a disaster, staff and others will be prepared to implement the emergency procedures. The procedures safeguard the health and safety of the users and staff and preserve library resources. At least one trustee should have a copy of the master disaster plan at their home.

Facilities Plan

The facilities plan describes the services, collections, technology, and functional relationships needed in a new or remodeled facility. When planning for facility improvements, use the same tools used in strategic planning. Trustees identify and help obtain the funding for building projects. Trustees also work with library staff in determining and documenting what is needed before engaging an architect. The facilities plan is a guide for the architect to use in designing the project.

Technology Plan

Technology is an integral part of library services. Libraries need to plan for the rapid changes in technology. In greater Minnesota, most of the automated library services are provided through the regional public library systems. Trustees should understand what automated and other technology systems are used in their libraries and the plan for future technology. The trustee's role is to develop the funding plan for technology and to set priorities for balancing new technologies and traditional resources.

All plans need continual updating. Consider a schedule to revisit and revise each plan during a specific time period, every year or every other year, for example.

Advocacy

Both advisory and governing board trustees serve as advocates for their library. Being an advocate means communicating, as an individual or group, with stakeholders and decision-makers in support of or opposition to specific issues. There are many ways for a library board to do this. Providing funding agencies with an annual report that outlines the services offered is one way. Asking to present a "State of the Library" address at a meeting of the city council and/or county board is a way to let them know what's going on at the library. The library director should present the report but trustees should attend the meeting to support the director. Trustees should always support the director when the director is presenting the annual budget to the governing authority. Advocacy efforts should always be coordinated with the library director and the library's communication office.

Library advocates:

- Speak out about how libraries benefit constituents
- Acquaint themselves with decision-makers and help them learn about libraries
- Gather facts and translate them into action for a law or appropriation
- Provide reliable, accurate information to decision makers on library concerns and issues
- Attend state and federal "Library Legislative Day" activities

Trustees can be effective advocates because they:

- Are strong supporters for library services
- See the library from the user's viewpoint
- Represent a broad base of constituents
- Are volunteer participants in government
- Act in the best interests of the library

As an advocate, trustees 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

Trustees should also be part of any statewide advocacy efforts. If the American Library Association or the Minnesota Library Association issue a call to action, trustees can visit, write, call, email, or tweet their legislators to support the proposal.

Tips for being an effective advocate:

- Take a positive approach; be considerate and polite
- Timing is important; keep in touch with officials and keep on top of political developments that affect the library; don't wait until it is too late
- Credibility is crucial; make clear who you represent and have a clear purpose in mind
- Be concise, clear, and consistent
- Be persistent and reasonable, and respect the opinions of others
- Know the personality and interests of the official you are trying to persuade; relate your goals to their interests
- Avoid repetition and overkill
- Orchestrate your advocacy effort carefully with that of others
- Thank officials for their consideration even when they do not agree to what you want
- When an official supports you, thank them

The American Library Association has resources available on its [Advocacy, Legislation & Issues](#) web page. Trustees can learn more about current national issues and legislation affecting libraries by signing up on [ALA's Legislative Action Center](#).

Building a Library

Plans for small and large library facilities vary in scope. Relatively small projects that are not part of a major renovation of an extensive portion of a library or new construction require a plan that at a minimum lists supplies and materials, the estimated costs, and an anticipated time line for completion.

Projects qualifying as capital include furnishings and equipment (including computer hardware and software); the replacement of a roof; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; and minor renovations of library buildings such as installing an elevator. Large projects such as new buildings, additions, or a major renovation of an extensive portion of the library require a detailed capital plan.

This section does not include legal advice. When embarking on building planning, board members and the library director should be familiar with any state laws and county or city ordinances that place requirements on planning, design, or implementation. Local ordinances and state statutes will supersede anything addressed within this section.

Planning Library Buildings

As trustees plan library services for the future, they should consider increased space and additional locations. Governing boards must decide whether to build a new library, renovate or expand current facilities, or find an existing space to be converted into a library. Advisory boards make recommendations about library buildings to the governing authority. Construction plans should be considered in the context of the total library plan. Trustees need to study service needs, explore alternatives, estimate funding needs, and establish priorities.

While having a new building may be the best answer, it is not always the most practical and should be measured against other options such as purchase of an existing building, lease of an existing building, remodeling of the library, addition to the library, or in some cases, adding branches. Depending on the library and its services, the addition of a bookmobile, kiosk, or other outreach services may be considered in expansion plans.

Because a library board and staff will not have the necessary expertise to deal with all aspects of a building project, outside consultants may be used to provide specialized guidance. Consultants can suggest procedures, prevent mistakes, introduce new ideas, and sometimes defuse controversy. Some types of consultants whose services may be needed are: library building consultant, automation consultant, attorney, architect, interior designer, certified public accountant, and library services consultant.

Funding for Building Projects

There are a variety of sources for financing library buildings. In most cases, more than one source is used. The board and the library director should be aware of the different funding possibilities and be thoroughly familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Local Government Appropriation: The local government is a viable source of funding for capital projects. It is not uncommon for a project to be financed over a period of three to five

years, scheduled to accommodate the use of current revenues. [M.S. 134.41 Library Construction: Joint Financing](#) allows a local government unit to agree with other local government units to tax property within their boundaries to discharge debt incurred for the construction of a library and related facilities.

Bond Issues: Another method is to have a library bond referendum on the ballot to finance the project. This method requires the development of a comprehensive needs statement, convincing the local government of the needs, understanding the electorate, and conducting an effective campaign.

State Funding: Library Construction Grants, authorized by [M.S. 134.45 Library Construction Grants](#), is a dollar-for-dollar matching grant program. The program provides public libraries with funding for renovation, construction, improvement projects, and accessibility projects. The maximum amount for improvement projects is \$1 million, and \$200,000 for accessibility projects. Projects generally need to be completed within five years of the passage of the bonding bill which funds the project. The program is authorized by the Minnesota Legislature and funded from the sale of General Revenue Obligation Bonds. All projects that receive general obligation bond funding from the State of Minnesota are required to follow [B3 Guidelines](#) for energy efficiency and sustainability.

Gifts, Bequests, and Foundation Funding: Gifts and bequests from citizens and corporations, as well as private foundation grants, have traditionally provided funds to supplement other sources of funding. Occasionally, a single benefactor will contribute the full amount or make a substantial contribution to the building fund. As a rule, however, securing funds by this means is a slow process and should not be relied on as the sole funding source.

Fundraising Campaigns: Fundraising requires a great deal of time and careful planning. Hiring a professional fundraiser may be expensive, but may be a very worthwhile investment toward mounting an effective building campaign.

Building Program

A building program is developed after the library has completed its community analysis, defined its long-term goals and objectives, and determined the need for additional space. The building program defines the specific needs of the library in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The building program should bring together the thinking of the governing authority, funders, library board, library director, library staff, and the community on the purpose, scope, and function of the library building. A library consultant may be hired to assist in writing the building program.

The building program should require that the building be flexible and able to respond to future developments. Library functions and spaces should be able to expand and contract as needs develop or diminish. Existing and future technologies should be anticipated. These technologies have implications for the building's structure; heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems; its power, lighting, electronic, and communications systems; as well as ergonomic considerations in planning spaces and equipment.

State laws may require additional steps or procedures to the process. Be sure to research federal, state, and local regulations on bidding and awarding contracts, as it's important to make

sure you adhere to all governance regarding building issues. An attorney specializing in construction law should be consulted for building-related state standards, guidelines, and for general information regarding your building program and the availability of state or federal funding for the project.

All projects that receive general obligation bond funding from the State of Minnesota, such as [Library Construction Grants \(M.S. 134.45\)](#), are required to register projects and follow [B3 Guidelines](#) for energy efficiency and sustainability. Related Minnesota statutes applicable to state-funded capital projects include but are not limited to:

- State statute on energy conservation ([M.S. 216C.19 Energy Conservation](#))
- State statute on energy conservation in public buildings ([M.S. 216C.20 Energy Conservation In Public Building](#))
- State statute on heating and cooling systems installed in state-funded buildings ([M.S. 16B.326 Heating And Cooling Systems; State-Funded Buildings](#))

Architect

The architect should be hired after a library has completed the preliminary steps for a building plan. In hiring an architect, follow state rules and laws for the bid process. Then solicit applications, rank them by preference, and enter into negotiations with the top choice, conducting personal interviews with the person or firm that most interests the library board. The past experience of the architect should be considered, as well as the architect's personal philosophy. Final fees are discussed and an agreement is reached. If an agreement cannot be reached with the first choice, the board then declares that is the case and enters negotiations with the next candidate.

Building Design

Once an architect is hired, the actual design of the building can proceed along with final decisions on location, size, addition, or all new construction. The general steps that follow are:

1. Preparation of schematic design
2. Preparation of preliminary plans and design development
3. Preparation of specifications and working drawings
4. Advertising and receipt of bids
5. Award of contracts
6. Actual construction
7. Acceptance of performance
8. Move to new building

There is nothing more satisfying than a new facility that enhances the ability of the board to bring exciting services to an appreciative community.

Questions about Building and Planning throughout the Process

Should the board use a building consultant?

In recent years, some librarians have specialized as building consultants, most often in determining space needs and layout for the purposes the board has approved. A consultant will look at the community data; consult with the director, staff, and board; and apply data to recommendations, right down to location and size of a department in the building. Most consultants are not designers, but they provide guidance to the architect who must visualize the structure.

How does a board find an architect?

Boards can visit, or review plans and pictures, of other libraries for clues to find suitable architects to interview. There are now architects who specialize in libraries.

The board will need to be satisfied that the architect has some understanding of the functions of libraries, will work closely with the board on designs reflecting what the board feels the community will enjoy, and will provide good supervision in regard to the contractor. Legal counsel should be sought on the contract.

Even architects experienced in library design need specifications for use of the library such as space for special purposes, the need for floor loads, extra power, and access for people with disabilities. Directors and the building consultant will have noted special needs for public and private areas, for loading, for staff use, and for future expansion.

How does the board find a contractor?

Specifications created by an architect will be submitted to contractors for bids. The specifications should include a number of options so that the board can add or subtract options as costs become known. Library planners who think ahead have often been able to secure inexpensive future expansion space. And the board should be prepared to settle for fewer features if costs mount.

Often the governing authority will have a list of those to whom it offers bidding opportunities and regulations governing the bidding process. Multiple bids are needed, but an overly long list may not add to the board's ability to make the decision. Consider "best value" bids as well as low bids. Low bid is one factor, probably the most important, but value and evidence of past good work are important as well.

Who supervises the construction?

Usually the library director or city or county planning departments are the connection between the board and the architect and contractor, and checks to be sure the library is meeting local ordinances and codes. The director and architect and sometimes the contractor give the board decisions on changes as well as regular reports on progress. The board observes and asks questions. The project is a team effort, which may also involve local officials. The better the

original plans and the more precise the specifications, the more likely that construction will run smoothly.

Most library boards, having weathered a building project, report that vigilance on the part of the board, close supervision by the architect, timely performance by the contractor, and surveillance by the director kept the project on time and in good order.

How does the library keep the public informed?

As construction on a new building progresses, there will be public interest in what's happening. Regular updates through media releases is recommended, and there are times during the process when special events can be held, such as groundbreaking, cornerstone laying (perhaps with a time capsule), the first brick, and topping off. In the case of additions, the public should be carefully forewarned of disruptions or change in service due to construction.

How should the board open the new facility?

Plan and announce an occupancy date when the public can see the building. If the community is to be involved in helping to move, set dates and procedures.

Schedule an open house after the library is really ready, including completed parking areas and landscaping. Make the ceremonies memorable. The date will be the library's birthday for many years.

When does the board begin thinking about future needs?

Ideally, the new space will meet the needs for a long time, but not forever. The planning agenda should include discussion about what comes next. Most of these elements apply to planning of new space, whether in a new building, an existing building, or a conversion.

Additional information about building planning is available from the Public Library Association's [Facilities](#) and American Library Association's [Library Buildings & Space Planning](#) web pages.

Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual Freedom is the right of every individual to read and seek information that they want. The role of the public library in a democratic society is to ensure free and open access to information as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession, and a basic right in a democratic society. A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community.

Intellectual freedom requires libraries to resist all efforts to censor library resources. Censors pressure public institutions, like libraries, to suppress and remove from public access information they judge inappropriate or dangerous, so that no one else has the chance to read or view the material and make up their own minds about it.

Library trustees protect and defend intellectual freedom. They should have a policy on collection development that includes selection criteria for library materials and a process for reconsideration of library materials that are challenged.

Challenges to Materials and Programs

Public libraries are for everyone. There are those who want to limit what others may read, see, or listen to, but libraries provide the right of unrestricted access to the expressions and beliefs of others. In the event that someone wants materials or programs restricted or eliminated from a public library, it must be addressed thoughtfully and carefully by those ultimately responsible for all library operations, i.e. the library board of trustees.

It is crucial that there are written policies in place that specifically address how challenges to library materials and programs will be handled in a respectful and consistent manner by the board. Libraries should have procedures for citizens to follow when registering a complaint or challenge. Library staff need to be knowledgeable about the procedure for receiving the complaint if it should come to their attention first.

Keep these key points in mind when responding to a challenge:

- Libraries are democratic institutions and are obligated to provide free choice of materials and programs to all
- Libraries provide materials, programs, and information resources across the spectrum of political and social points of view and on a wide range of subjects
- Parents and guardians are responsible for supervising library use by minors

The library's collection development policy should include these concepts so the public is clear about how materials are selected for the collection.

- Library directors and their delegated staff who are qualified by education and training are responsible for the selection of library materials
- No library material should be excluded based on political or social views

- Patrons are free to reject for themselves materials that they disapprove of, but they must not use self-censorship to restrict the freedom of others
- No challenged materials will be removed from the library except by the library or court order

The American Library Association has resources for defending intellectual freedom.

[Banned & Challenged Books](#)

[Challenges to Library Materials](#)

[Children's Internet Protection Act \(CIPA\)](#)

[Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Toolkit](#)

[Intellectual Freedom Manual](#)

[Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q & A](#)

[Protecting Your Library's Collection](#)

Privacy and Confidentiality

A citizen's right to privacy and confidentiality are First Amendment rights and, as such, go hand in hand with intellectual freedom.

The American Library Association frames privacy and confidentiality as follows: "The right to privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinized by others. Confidentiality relates to the possession of personally identifiable information, including such library-created records as closed-stack call slips, computer sign-up sheets, registration for equipment or facilities, circulation records, websites visited, reserve notices, or research notes."

The confidentiality of library records is a fundamental value of librarianship. Library directors, staff, and trustees are ethically bound to uphold patron privacy. The [Library Bill of Rights](#) addresses privacy as does the [Code of Ethics of the American Library Association](#). Privacy and confidentiality are protected by [M.S. Chapter 13. Government Data Practices](#). Publicly-funded libraries are part of government and are legally required to limit the degree to which personally identifiable information is collected, disclosed and distributed. [M.S. 13.40 Library and Historical Data](#) defines Minnesota law regarding library records.

Recommending New Trustees

Some trustees serve the maximum number of terms on a board, however it is important for a board to think about succession planning. New trustees can provide a fresh perspective and create an infusion of energy and interest, along with an updated skill set to the board and library. New trustees should be inclusive and represent the diversity of the community. Trustees may help to build the library board with replacements carefully trained and selected. Boards and librarians usually exercise influence on the selection process even though the decision is that of an appointing body. If trustees have carefully cultivated relations with appointing officials, they will be able to make suggestions when appointments are made. In each community, the specifications will vary depending on the role and status of the library.

Current boards can help appointing officials make good trustee selections by describing the kind of person or skill set needed, and boards may even recommend specific persons with proven interest. It is helpful to talk to appointing officials about the qualifications of board members. What does a trustee do? How much time does it take to be an involved trustee? What are the skills and characteristics most vital in a candidate? Consider giving your appointing authorities a checklist of desirable skills and characteristics along with a cover letter outlining the importance of effective trustees. Your influence and that of the director depends on how trustees are seen by the officials. If your library is running well, serving well, and well-regarded by the people with whom officials talk, then the trustees should have a voice in new appointments.

Roles and Responsibilities

Trustees and the library director work together as partners. Both are involved in policy development, financial management, and personnel administration. Governing board trustees make and advisory board trustees recommend policies. They also act as agents of public trust. The director manages the operation of the library. The type and level of involvement should be clearly differentiated in order to avoid conflict and for the library to operate professionally and effectively.

The library director is the department head of a city, county, or regional system 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:

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

Most conflicts can be avoided if the board and director understand and respect each other's roles.

Working with the Library Director

Human relationships determine the library's internal climate. Every effort should be made to maintain cooperative and mutually productive relationships. Chief among these relationships 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.

To clarify board and director 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 library director is a valuable resource to the board and often the leader on many issues that come before the board. The director should attend all board meetings and 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.

It is the right and responsibility of the board to request from the director all information necessary to fulfill the board's governing or advisory 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, and 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, giving direction, and requesting information. The director must serve the board as a whole.

The chart below outlines the board and the director's roles.

Board and Library Director Roles

Responsibility	Library Board Role	Library Director Role
Policy	Determine and adopt written policies to govern the operation of the library	Carry out the policies of the library as adopted by the board Recommend policies to library board
Planning	Adopt vision and mission statements Ensure that the library has a strategic plan with implementation and evaluation components Determine the goals, functions, and services of the library	Implement vision, mission, and objectives of strategic plan Recommend and carry out plans for extending library services Prepare reports detailing the library's current progress and future needs
Budget	Examine budget proposed by the director Make revisions as needed Approve budget Review expenditures in accord with budget, amending line items within the budget if needed	Prepare and submit to library board a budget request based on present and anticipated needs defined in the strategic plan Maintain complete and accurate records of finances Expend funds based on approved budget.

Responsibility	Library Board Role	Library Director Role
Advocacy	Advocate for library through contacts with general public, civic organizations, and public officials Attend governing authority meetings to keep them informed on library activities Work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library's services	Advocate for library through contacts with general public, civic organizations, and public officials Attend governing authority meetings Work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library's services
Legal Issues	Be familiar with library ordinance as well as state and federal laws affecting the library	Be familiar with library ordinance and keep board informed on laws affecting library
Meetings	Participate in all board meetings Conduct affairs of board at regularly scheduled meetings	Attend board meetings Prepare written progress report Provide information as needed/requested by board
Networking	Join state and national professional organizations as a resource for policies, operations, and advocacy Attend regional, state and national trustee meetings and workshops	Encourage board members to join state and national professional organizations as a resource for policies, operations, and advocacy Attend regional, state and national professional meetings and workshops
Board Member Recruitment	Recommend qualifications and candidates for governing authority Notify city of board vacancies	Assist in developing qualifications for new trustees
Governing	Boards only	
Administrative	Recruit and hire a qualified library director Maintain on ongoing performance evaluation process	Administers daily operations of the library including personnel, collection development, budget, facilities, and services Acts as advisor to the board
Budget	Officially adopt the budget	
Advisory	Boards only	
Administrative	Assist governing authority with hiring a qualified library director Advise government authority on library funding needs	Administers daily operations of the library including personnel, collection development, budget, facilities, and services Acts as advisor to the board
Budget	Present library budget to governing authority	

Board's Relationship with Library Staff

The only employee who reports directly to the governing authority is the library director. The governing board supervises only the director. The advisory board advises the governing authority in supervising the director. Board members have no direct authority for other library staff, although decisions by a governing board affect working conditions, salaries, benefits, and other personnel matters for all library employees.

The board works with library staff through the director.

Understanding the nature of the relationship between the board and other staff members will prevent organizational problems and contribute to a smooth running library. While the board should strive to create a climate of cordiality and friendly interest with staff, members should not personally intervene in matters between the staff and supervisors.

The library director is responsible for hiring, supervising, evaluating, and, if necessary, disciplining and dismissing staff. The director is accountable to the board for the performance of all staff. Employees need to clearly understand the authority of the library director, who is accountable to whom and who has responsibility for what.

The board hires the director to be the expert in management of the library, including the management of all other library employees.

- The board has no direct responsibility for day-to-day supervision of staff other than overseeing the director.
- Board members have no authority to issue orders to staff or make demands of staff except through the director.
- The board has no direct responsibility for assessing staff performance other than the director's.

Staff members may sometimes take concerns and complaints directly to the board or to individual board members. It is the trustee's responsibility to remind those staff members about the proper procedure for concerns or complaints. The board does not act on complaints from the staff. Operational concerns or complaints that come directly to board members should be reported to the director for resolution. However, if the complaint is about the library director, then the board should respond to the complaint.

As a board member, you should show concern for the well-being of staff. Encourage retention of good staff by budgeting for competitive pay and benefits, and for training and continuing education. Work with the director to recognize and acknowledge good performance and say thanks to staff through board action.

Board members may interact with staff:

- In committee settings
- In the planning process
- When staff are asked by the director to make reports at the board meeting
- If board members volunteer at the library
- During library social events

Rules of Authority and Responsibility

Board	Director	Library Staff
<i>Governing board</i> hires Director <i>Advisory board</i> advises governing authority in hiring Director	Hires, supervises, evaluates, disciplines, dismisses and promotes staff	
<i>Governing board</i> creates clear lines of authority and accountability for staff <i>Advisory board</i> follows governing authority's personnel policies and procedures	Accountable to board for performance of all staff	Understands chain of authority, who is accountable to whom, who has responsibility for what
<i>Governing board</i> has a policy that provides a grievance procedure for staff complaints and concerns <i>Advisory board</i> follows governing authority's policy and grievance procedure	Administers grievance procedure	Follows grievance procedure for complaints and concerns
<i>Governing board</i> budgets for staff salaries and benefits <i>Advisory board</i> recommends budgets for staff salaries and benefits to governing authority		
Requests information on projects and programs	Requests that staff report to board on projects and programs	Makes reports to board as requested
Gives recognition of exemplary staff performance through board action	Informs board of exemplary staff performance	
May work with staff in committees, planning processes and library social events	Coordinates board/staff cooperative activity	May work with board in committees, planning processes and library social events as assigned by director

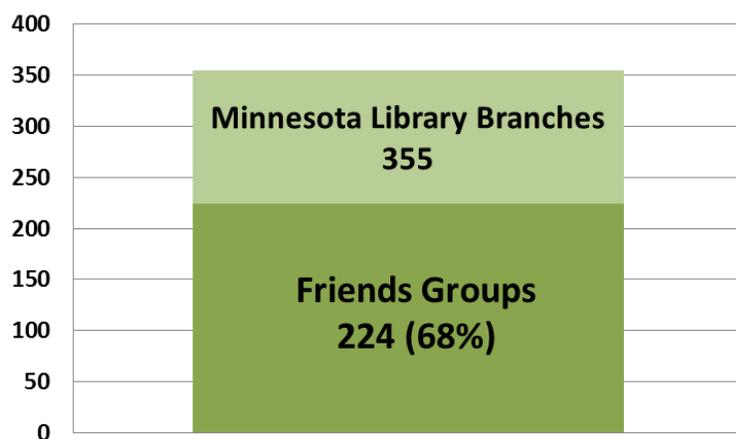
Friends, Foundations, and Volunteers

Friends Groups

Friends of the Library groups are volunteer organizations formed by citizens to raise funds, advocate, and volunteer for the library. Friends groups are typically registered with the United States Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations. Most concentrate on raising funds through special projects and on serving as library advocates in the community. They are often involved in lobbying for the library and for library legislation. Friends supplement the work of the board as well as provide a link to the community. Boards can contribute to harmonious relations by recognizing the Friends, asking for help in planning mutually beneficial activities, and giving support to the concept of a community group willing to work to benefit the library.

Funds from Friends groups supplement the library's budget. Friends work to raise funds for projects and purchases. Their purpose is not to hold large sums of money to produce interest or to fund a major building project. If the Friends are registered as a 501(c)(3) corporation, gifts to the Friends are tax deductible. These funds should not replace money provided by the governing authority. Friends decide how to spend their money after conferring with the library director and board.

Minnesota Public Library Friends Groups



Source: Minnesota Public Library Report, 2015

The majority of library branches in Minnesota have an organized Friends of the Library group that supports the library through financial contributions for specific projects, volunteers, and/or advocacy.

Friends usually operate with a self-elected board of directors. Bylaws determine who may be a member and serve as an officer. Bylaws establish how funds will be spent and where funds go should the group dissolve.

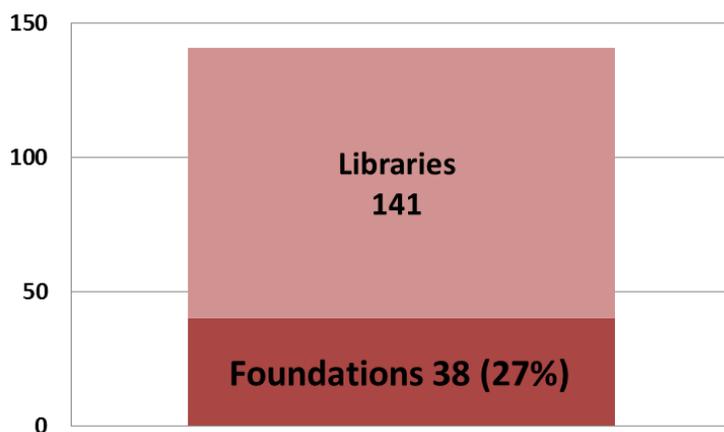
If a member of a Friends board is also a member of the library board, dual membership could become a conflict of interest, for example, when a policy the library board is proposing is not in the best interest of the Friends. There may also be a perceived conflict if a member of the library board is also in a decision-making role on the Friends board that helps fund library services. It can also give a single member more power and authority than other members of each of the boards.

Friends groups should be kept informed about the library by the library director. Friends understand that they do not make policy for the library, but should feel that their opinions are valued by trustees.

Foundations

Any size library may create a library foundation. Foundations involve non-library users as well as library patrons to increase awareness of library services and resources throughout the community. The non-profit status of a foundation provides a platform for raising money and support for current library services as well as securing a financial future for the library. Foundations, like Friends groups, are established as 501(c)(3) non-profits.

Minnesota Public Library Foundations



Source: Minnesota Public Library Report, 2015

More than a quarter of Minnesota public libraries have a foundation with funds managed by its own trustees that provide a stable source of income for the library through investments of the principle.

There are two main reasons for a foundation:

Advocacy: The foundation can form new partnerships with schools, businesses, organizations, and agencies to offer new programs and services in addition to expanding local resources.

Financial support: Minnesota requires that local governments maintain a minimum level of funding for public library services. This is known as “state-certified levels of library support,” commonly known as “maintenance of effort” (MOE). (As of 2016, the MOE formula is set at 90% of the amount established in 2011.) Even with MOE, local funding for a public library may vary when local governmental officials commit much of the local tax base to other services, such as fire and police. The public library may then be relegated to using state and local funds for basic operations with little money allotted for special materials and services to carry out its goals and objectives.

Much of the money raised by the library foundation will be local money Their 501(c)(3) status also opens up grant opportunities for the public library foundation to help collect money outside of the local area to benefit the library services and the community it serves.

Members of a foundation's board of directors are generally selected from people in the community who have the most experience in serving on boards and raising money for projects. They often are and/or know people who might make sizable contributions to the foundation. Their purpose is to raise a significant sum of money, often for a building project or perhaps an endowment. As with the Friends, contributions are tax deductible with 501(c)(3) status and bylaws determine membership, officers, and the dispersal of funds.

United for Libraries, a division of ALA, offers [Friends & Foundations Fact Sheets](#) on their web site.

Volunteers

Volunteers are not a substitute for paid staff that is necessary to provide good library service. Since volunteers are not paid, the expectation should not be for them to work as substitutes for staff or on a regular schedule. They may or may not be available consistently. Maintaining dependable library service is very important if a community's needs are to be met. A volunteer program should have its own goals and objectives, a plan, and a management system.

Assuming a library of modest size, these are the elements of a volunteer program:

- A coordinator of volunteers, preferably hired but possibly a volunteer, who likes to manage, has good skills in working with people, is reliable, and can give planned time
- An office or location with desk, file, telephone and computer, as well as access to a private interview area
- A list of jobs which volunteers may be invited to do, along with an estimate of the time requirements and the levels of skill required
- An interview process which results in placing volunteers in the most suitable jobs
- A process for conducting background checks on potential volunteers, especially those who will be working with youth
- A training program for volunteers covering job requirements, techniques, and the library's functions and purposes
- A manual of operations setting policies for volunteers and including job descriptions and regulations
- A reward system coupled with evaluation
- A recruitment system that makes it possible for new people to become volunteers
- A method for dismissing a volunteer who does not perform
- Funds and an accounting system to cover out-of-pocket expenses for volunteers who do more than come to the library

Board Meetings

Managing an effective meeting is the duty of the library board president. Effective board meetings move at an appropriate pace. Board meetings can begin with a quick review of the agenda to make sure there is adequate time to cover all items and to modify the order of business if necessary. Time for questions and full discussion is allowed, but the president makes sure discussion remains focused and decisions are reached. The president also needs to ensure that a few members do not dominate discussions, that all members have a chance to be heard, and that accountability for follow-through is assigned as needed.

The Board President can use the following best practices for conducting effective meetings:

- Start on time
- Use an agenda
- Make sure everyone is heard
- Be inclusive
- Stay composed
- Maintain focus
- Model behavior
- Use board rules (See sample Library Board Compact in Appendix.)

Meetings are managed more effectively with ground rules. Every board should develop and review a list of ground rules at the beginning of each year.

The list below provides sample ground rules:

- Start and end meetings on time
- Stay on task; no sidebar conversations
- Come prepared and ready to contribute
- Listen to others and don't interrupt
- Be open to hearing other people's perspectives
- Question assumptions
- Make decisions based on clear information
- Identify actions that result from decisions
- Bring closure to decisions

- Be respectful
- Board members will support committee recommendations
- Confidentiality
- Give specific examples
- Attack the problem, not the person
- Minutes are approved by the group
- Capture decisions and action items

Regular attendance at board meetings is essential. The board president and the library director should be notified in advance if attendance is not possible. A trustee who misses meetings frequently may not completely understand the issues at hand and valuable meeting time can be lost bringing that trustee up to speed. An uninformed trustee cannot make the best possible decision when it comes time to vote. The board may want to implement an attendance policy. It is a good idea to define in the by-laws what constitutes a satisfactory excuse for absence. (Example: "If any trustee shall fail to attend three consecutive meetings without excuse accepted as satisfactory by the trustees, that trustee shall be deemed to have resigned...") A successful library board needs every trustee at every meeting.

Board meetings generally should be completed within two hours. If meetings consistently last longer, issues can be referred to committees or the library director for further study or tabled for action at subsequent board meetings. Establish an ending time for the meeting and stick to it.

The Board should consider scheduling one extended meeting or retreat each year for planning and evaluating purposes. If possible, the meeting should be held off-site.

Policies and Procedures for the Operation of a Board

A board should accept, adopt and follow orderly means of doing business and carrying out functions and responsibilities. It is often difficult to distinguish policies from procedures. Generally, policies are those statements, which establish firm and usually long-term positions to which the board adheres. Procedures are the details or steps that carry out the policies. If the board does not have a policy manual for its operation, begin by going through the board minutes for motions, which established policies in the past. There may also be a file of policies in the library or in the board files, which can be reviewed and expanded. In any case, determine what policies are needed for your particular library. Thereafter, the board should use the manual as reference, and review its provisions, revising as necessary. Boards have multiple members in order to tap the thinking of more than one person. Allow for many opinions but arrive at one conclusion in a concerted action.

The checklist below includes most of the procedures a board should adopt for its efficient operation:

- Establish regular times, days, dates and places for the meetings and the methods for temporary or permanent changes
- Open meetings: the public is welcome to attend meetings as required by [Minnesota's Open Meeting Law](#)
- The agenda: who prepares it and when, how much detail and distributed to whom
- The minutes: who records minutes, the format, approval procedures, and filing as public documents
- The officers: titles and basic responsibilities, method of naming, terms of office (One way to do this is to create a committee within the board once a year, which will recommend candidates for each office needed that year to the entire board for their vote.)
- The director: relationship to the board, role in board meetings, expectation for reporting
- Legal responsibilities: a listing of those items which the board must handle, use of legal counsel
- Records: records to be kept and access to them
- Reports: required or expected reports from the director according to law and board wishes, reports from committees, reports by trustees on continuing education
- Budget: an outline of the process with a timetable and role of the board in the sequence
- Financial: figures the board expects to see (It's not necessary for every board member to review every bill. Rely on staff, the treasurer or a committee.)
- Who speaks for the board: It is important to assign the president the responsibility for representing the board, especially to the media.
- Committee job descriptions: for standing and ad hoc committees to establish assignment

Open Meetings

[M.S. Chapter 13d. Open Meeting Law](#) requires that public board meetings must be open to the public. Open meetings protect transparency in government. Open meetings are important for the public to understand why government acts affecting their daily lives are taken. The process of decision-making as well as the end results must be conducted in full view of the governed.

Closed meetings of the Board of Trustees are justified when discussing disciplinary proceedings against a staff member or personnel evaluations, considerations of the purchase or lease of property until an option is obtained, consultation with counsel regarding settlement strategy in connection with specific pending litigation, or consideration of specific contents of applications for employment or appointment.

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure, e.g. Robert's Rules of Order, is used during meeting and committee deliberations to allow self-governing organizations to debate and reach group decisions, by vote, with the least possible friction. (See [Robert's Rules of Order Summary Version](#) for simplified procedures.) Library boards should include in their bylaws a statement of adherence to parliamentary procedures. Following parliamentary procedures allows for debate and group decisions to be made by majority opinion with respect for the minority opinion.

Meeting Agendas

Meetings are conducted under the rules set forth in the library's by-laws. In order for all trustees to be properly prepared for the meeting, trustees should receive an agenda packet before the meeting date. The packet typically includes the meeting agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, financial reports, the schedule of bills to be paid, proposed personnel actions, committee reports, and the director's report. Background information on the issues before the board should be distributed as well. All trustees are expected to come prepared to participate fully in meeting discussions and actions and to be familiar with the activities of the committees to which they are assigned. Using the talents and skills of every board member creates a more cooperative, congenial, and productive board.

The most effective boards concentrate their time and energy on a few issues that will have a major impact on the library's future. Routine business should be dealt with promptly to allow adequate time to consider and discuss agenda items. Activities that can be completed by individual trustees outside the meeting (such as reading the minutes) should not take up valuable time at a board meeting.

See Appendix for a Sample Meeting Agenda.

Before the meeting, the library director, in consultation with the board president or chair, prepares an agenda. The agenda lists the items to be considered, the estimated time for discussion, the person responsible, and the process—for example, presentation, discussion, problem solving, or brainstorming. The agenda should be available to the public by posting it in the library or on the library's website.

Staff distributes the agenda along with minutes from the last meeting, financial reports and other background information before a meeting. Trustees should have time to review the agenda and accompanying materials and be ready to discuss the items and recommend actions.

At the meeting, have copies of the agenda available for the public. Start on time. Review the agenda to determine if the time is reasonable and rearrange the order, if necessary. Stick to the agenda, once approved. Control discussion, especially if it becomes lengthy. End on time.

After the meeting, distribute draft minutes to board members and the library director. For transparency and accountability, make all approved meeting minutes available to the public online or in print. Minutes should be retained and archived for future reference and to create an historical record of board actions.

Clerical duties may be assigned to a library staff member (other than the director) or an outside service, rather than to a trustee.

Effective Decision-Making

It is important to keep in mind that legal responsibility for overall library operations rests in the governing library board, not individual trustees. Therefore, it is important for the board president to use leadership techniques that promote effective group decision-making on the part of the entire library board, not decision-making by a few board members, or the library director, or any other individual.

Board meetings are the place for trustees to raise questions and make requests of the library director and/or staff. Individual trustees should never make such requests or demands on their own. You are members of a governing body and must act as a body. Yet, as an individual trustee, you should not hesitate to raise concerns or questions at board meetings. By raising questions and/or concerns, you may help the board avoid rushing into an action without appropriate consideration of all of the ramifications or alternatives.

When dealing with the public or the media, trustees should not feel pressured in having to come to an immediate decision or make an immediate statement on an issue. Remember that what is said in an open regular public meeting can be quoted in the media. A good rule of thumb is to remember that individual board members should never speak for the whole board and that questions from the media should be referred to the spokesperson for the library whether it be the board president or library director.

A “public comment” period during the meeting is not required, but it can be a helpful way for the board to hear about particular public concerns or needs. The board should limit itself to answering basic questions from the public and place any matter on a future meeting agenda if additional discussion or deliberation on the issue is needed.

Board Committees

Many boards find their operations run much more smoothly by creating a structure of subcommittees, consisting of several members. Keep in mind that subcommittee meetings would be subject to the [Minnesota Open Meeting Law](#) if the number of subcommittee members constituted a quorum of the full board. Subcommittees can discuss and investigate matters, then bring them before the entire board for discussion and approval. Board committees are advisory bodies that make recommendations to the entire board for consideration and action. Some common subcommittees are Finance, Personnel, Building and Grounds, Community Relations, and Policy. These committees are established in the bylaws for such specific purposes as the business of the board requires, and have no other power than advisory. It is a best practice for committee reports to be written and submitted to the secretary for filing. Committee meetings may be called as necessary at times that are convenient to members and that comply with the open public meeting law.

Trustee Orientation

New trustees need enough information to competently respond to questions about the library from the community. New trustees should understand their role as a public official. They should understand state laws and local policies that affect the library. Working with the library director, the board provides orientation for new trustees to inform them of their duties and responsibilities.

A new trustee should receive:

- Online link to [Minnesota Public Library Trustee Handbook, revised edition, 2017](#)
- Board bylaws
- Local laws, charter or contracts pertaining to the library's legal structure
- Copy of the [Minnesota Open Meeting Law](#)
- Contact information for board members and library director
- Schedule of board and committee meetings
- List of board committees, their functions and members
- Library's organizational chart
- List of library staff names and positions
- Library's vision and mission statements and strategic plan
- List of service priorities
- Library policies and procedures
- Library's annual and statistical reports
- Library's current and previous year's budgets
- Board meeting minutes and director's report for the past six months
- Annual calendar, including legal requirements and deadlines, the fiscal year, when officers are elected, when budget is prepared, and when forms are due to other agencies
- List of elected and appointed officials of the governing authority which the library serves with contact information and meeting dates
- Information about Friends of the Library and/or library foundation

After the new trustee has had time to review the information listed above, the new trustee meets with one or more experienced board members and the library director.

At the meeting, board members and the library director share:

- Library's mission, goals, and strategic plan
- Budget, sources of funding, expenditures, and the library's financial status
- Board minutes and director's reports for the past six months to give the new trustee a sense of who the board members are and how the board works
- Policy manual to explain the policies and the procedures for reviewing them
- Library's relationship to local governing authorities, both elected and appointed
- Library's relationship to the regional system, State Library Services, and to state and national associations
- Roles and responsibilities of the trustees and the library director
- Trustee's role as a spokesperson for the board only
- That only the board as a whole has decision-making powers, not trustees as individuals

The orientation also includes a tour of the library and its branches with the library director, to explain and show how the library works internally, to introduce the staff, and to demonstrate how library services operate.

Ongoing Learning

Trustees understand the needs of the library and community and are aware of trends and new technology and procedures in the library field. You will want to read library publications, meet with peers from other libraries, visit other libraries, and attend library conferences and meetings.

Many opportunities are available for trustees to continually update their knowledge and skills including:

- Setting aside time at each board meeting to review an aspect of the library's administration or services
- Rotating board meeting locations among various branches
- Rotating memberships on committees for a more in-depth understanding of board duties and responsibilities
- Scheduling a board retreat for board development
- Becoming a member of the [Minnesota Library Association](#) (MLA) and the MLA subunit [Minnesota Library Trustee Association](#) (MLTA), the [American Library Association](#) (ALA) and the ALA Division [United for Libraries](#)
- Attending MLA and ALA annual conferences

- Reading articles, blogs, and literature related to the work of the library trustee

Appendix

Following are hyperlinks to resources for public library trustees.

Professional Associations

[American Library Association](#) (ALA)

The mission of ALA is “to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.”

[United for Libraries](#) (Division of ALA)

United for Libraries is a national network of enthusiastic library supporters who believe in the importance of libraries as the social and intellectual centers of communities and campuses.

[Minnesota Library Association](#) (MLA)

The Minnesota Library Association is an association of library supporters, representing all types of libraries by helping them accomplish together what none can do alone. MLA serves the interests of its members by facilitating educational opportunities, supporting strong ethical standards, providing legislative assistance, and fostering connections between the library community and various constituencies.

[Minnesota Libraries Trustees and Advocates](#) (Division of MLA)

Objectives:

To promote, develop and extend library service in the State of Minnesota through cooperation with MLA and the Minnesota Department of Education

To provide library trustees with the opportunity for an exchange of ideas

To supply information to the public with regard to library services and finances

To stimulate the interest of trustees in becoming more effective in developing library policies

[Minnesota Association of Library Friends](#) (MALF)

The Minnesota Association of Library Friends connects Friends of Library organizations, provides valuable resources to support their work, and is a strong voice for Friends of Library groups and libraries throughout Minnesota.

American Library Association (ALA) policies

[Library Bill of Rights](#)

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

[Freedom to Read Statement](#)

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression

that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said.

Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

[Code of Ethics](#)

Ethical principles guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs

[Copyright](#)

Fundamental copyright doctrines that are legal cornerstones of library services

Minnesota Statutes and Rules

State laws governing libraries and library trustees

[Minnesota Statutes \(M.S.\) 13. Government Data Practices,](#)

[M.S. Chapter 13d. Open Meeting Law](#)

[M.S. 13.40 Library and Historical Data](#)

[M.S.\) Chapter 134. Public and Multitype Libraries](#)

[M.S. 138.17 Government Records; Administration](#)

[M.S. 358.05 Oath of Office](#)

[M.S. 609.541 Protection of Library Property](#)

[Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 3530, Libraries; School District and Community Services](#)

Minnesota Library Resources

[Minitex](#)

Minitex is a publicly supported network of academic, public, state government, and special libraries working cooperatively to improve library service for their users in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Multicounty, Multitype Library Cooperative Systems

Multitype library systems improve library services by facilitating cooperation among academic libraries, public libraries, school library media centers, and special libraries.

Regional Public Library Systems

Regional Public Library Systems are multicounty service agencies. Regions and their branch or member public libraries provide free access to library services for all residents of the region without discrimination.

State Library Services

State Library Services, a division of the Minnesota Department of Education, provides leadership to Minnesota's libraries. Division staff are consultants who help libraries to plan, develop, and implement high-quality services that address community needs.

Grant and Aid Programs administered by State Library Services

Regional Library Basic System Support Aid ([M.S 134.355](#))

Purpose: To strengthen, improve, equalize, provide interlibrary loan support, and promote public library services throughout the state through twelve regional public library systems.

Regional Library Telecommunications Aid ([M.S 134.355](#))

Purpose: To provide funding for data and video access, maintenance, equipment, or installation of telecommunication lines for eligible regional public library system branch or members libraries.

Multitype Library ([M.S. 134.353](#) and [134.354](#))

Purpose: To provide development and operating aid to multicounty, multitype library systems.

Library Construction Grants ([M.S. 134.45](#))

Purpose: To provide public libraries with funding for renovation, construction, and improvement projects that result in more accessible library facilities.

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants

LSTA is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries. As authorized in the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), grants to states are administered and distributed through the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS). State Library Services distributes the funds through sub-awards to public, academic, research, or special libraries or consortia of libraries.

The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund

The fund receives 19.75 percent of the sales tax revenue resulting from the Legacy amendment to support arts, arts education and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage. The Minnesota Legislature allocates a portion of the funds to the Minnesota Department of Education for regional public library systems.

Following are templates for library board bylaws, board meeting agendas and request for reconsideration of library materials.

Sample Library Board Compact

- I will uphold and enforce all laws, rules and regulations that pertain to [city or county] and the [public library]. Desired changes shall be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.
- I will make decisions in terms of the welfare of the community and will seek to develop and maintain a public library that meets the needs of all citizens without regard to age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, status with regard to public assistance, and membership or activity in a local commission.
- I will confine my board action to policy making, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the Board has consulted those who will be affected by them and hear and discuss facts about the above actions.
- I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the library, but, together with my fellow Board Members, to see that it is well run.
- I will recognize that authority rests with the Board of Trustees and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the board.
- I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the library for personal gain or for the gain of friends.
- I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the library which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the library. In all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow Board Members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its library.
- I will refer all complaints to the director.
- I understand that the Board makes decisions as a team. Individual Board Members may not commit the Board to any action.
- I recognize that decisions are made by a majority vote and should be supported by all Board Members, and I will respect the right of other Board Members to express and have opinions and ideas that differ.
- The board president or his/her designee will be the spokesperson for the Board. The Board President must notify the [staff position] of any media requests.

Sample Board Bylaws for Governing Boards

The following are sample library board bylaws that can be adapted to local library use. (Note: Material in brackets is for purposes of explanation and should be removed from the final bylaws approved by the board.)

Article I. Identification

This organization is the Board of Trustees of the _____ Library, located in _____.

Article II. Membership

Section 1. Appointments and Terms of Office. The board shall consist of . . . members who shall be elected/appointed by . . . and shall serve for a term of . . . years.

Section 2. Meeting Attendance. Members shall be expected to attend all meetings unless prevented by a valid reason.

Article III. Officers

Section 1. The officers shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer, elected from among the appointed trustees at the annual meeting of the Board. No member shall hold more than one office at a time. No member shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. Vacancies in office shall be filled by vote at the next regular meeting of the Board after the vacancy occurs.

Section 2. A nominating committee shall be appointed by the president three months prior to the annual meeting and shall present a slate of officers at the annual meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at that time.

Section 3. Officers shall serve a term of one year from the annual meeting at which they are elected and until their successors are duly elected.

Section 4. The president shall preside at meetings of the Board, authorize calls for special meetings, appoint all committees, execute all documents authorized by the Board, serve as an ex-officio voting member of all committees except the nominating committee, co-sign all checks drawn on funds held in custody of the library (independently of the municipality), and generally perform all duties associated with the office of president.

Section 5. The vice president, in the event of the absence or disability of the president, or of a vacancy in that office, shall assume and perform the duties and functions of the president.

Section 6. The secretary shall keep true and accurate minutes of all meetings of the Board, shall issue notice of all regular and special meetings, and shall perform such other duties as are generally associated with the office of secretary. The library director or a member of the staff may be designated by the Board to perform any or all of the above duties.

Section 7. The treasurer shall co-sign all checks drawn on funds held by the library, sign all bills/invoices for disbursements from the library fund, and perform such duties as generally devolve upon the office. The treasurer shall be bonded in an amount as may be required by a resolution of the Board, and not less than the value of any property held by him or her. The treasurer shall make monthly reports to the Board showing in detail the amount and investment of, and income and disbursements from, the funds in his or her charge.

Article IV. Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings. The regular meetings shall be held each month, the date and hour to be set by the Board at its annual meeting.

Section 2. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting, which shall be for the purpose of the election of officers, shall be held at the time of the regular meeting in _____ (month) of each year.

Section 3. Agendas and Notices. Meeting agendas and notices shall indicate the time, date, and place of the meeting and indicate all subject matters intended for consideration at the meeting.

Section 4. Minutes. Minutes of all meetings shall, at a minimum, indicate board members present, all items of business, all motions (except those that were withdrawn), and the result of all votes taken. Current board minutes shall be posted on a bulletin board in the library.

Section 5. Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called at the direction of the president, and shall be called at the written request of _____ members, for the transaction of business as stated in the call for the meeting. Except in cases of emergency, at least 48 hours' notice shall be given. In no case may less than two hours' notice be given.

Section 6. Quorum. A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting shall consist of _____ members of the Board attending the meeting.

Section 7. Open Meetings Law Compliance. All Board meetings and all committee meetings shall be held in compliance with Open Meeting Law as it applies to your type of library. (Consult your attorney for clarification).

Section 8. Parliamentary Authority. The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order, latest revised edition [or The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure by Alice F. Sturgis], shall govern the parliamentary procedure of the meetings, in all cases in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any statutes applicable to this Board.

Article V. Committees

Section 1. Standing Committees. The following committees:

_____, shall be appointed by the president promptly after the annual meeting and shall make recommendations to the Board as pertinent to Board meeting agenda items. [Examples of possible standing committees are Personnel, Budget, Building, and Policy.]

Section 2. Nominating Committee. (See Article III, Section 2.)

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees. Ad hoc committees for the study of special problems shall be appointed by the president, with the approval of the Board, to serve until the final report of the work for which they were appointed has been filed. These committees may also include staff and public representatives, as well as outside experts. [Examples of possible ad hoc committees are Planning and Automation.]

Section 4. No committee shall have other than advisory powers.

Article VI. Duties of the Board of Trustees

Section 1. Legal responsibility for the operation of the _____ Public Library is vested in the Board of Trustees. Subject to state and federal law, the Board has the power and duty to determine rules and regulations governing library operations and services.

Section 2. The Board shall select, appoint and supervise a properly certified and competent library director, and determine the duties and compensation of all library employees.

Section 3. The Board shall approve the budget and make sure that adequate funds are provided to finance the approved budget.

Section 4. The Board shall have exclusive control of the expenditure of all moneys collected, donated or appropriated for the library fund and shall audit and approve all library expenditures.

Section 5. The Board shall supervise and maintain buildings and grounds, as well as regularly review various physical and building needs to see that they meet the requirements of the total library program.

Section 6. The Board shall study and support legislation that will bring about the greatest good to the greatest number of library users.

Section 7. The Board shall cooperate with other public officials and boards and maintain vital public relations.

Section 8. The Board shall approve and submit the required annual report to the Division for state library, and/or the [city council, village board, town board, county board, and/or any other governing body].

Article VII. Library Director

The library director shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees and shall be responsible to the Board. The library director shall be considered the executive officer of the library under the direction and review of the Board, and subject to the policies established by the Board. The director shall act as technical advisor to the Board. The director shall be invited to attend all Board meetings (but may be excused from closed sessions) and shall have no vote.

Article VIII. Conflict of Interest

Section 1. Board members may not in their private capacity negotiate, bid for, or enter into a contract with the _____ Public Library in which they have a direct or indirect financial interest.

Section 2. A board member shall withdraw from Board discussion, deliberation, and -*8/7vote on any matter in which the Board member, an immediate family member, or an organization with which the Board member is associated has a substantial financial interest.

Section 3. A board member may not receive anything of value that could reasonably be expected to influence his or her vote or other official action.

Sample Trustee Job Descriptions

Governing board trustee

Summary: As a member of a library governing board, trustees are responsible for the governance of the library; establishing policy; setting goals and objectives; hiring and evaluating the director; establishing and monitoring the annual budget; signing necessary contracts; and exercising such other powers, consistent with the law to foster the effective use and management of the library.

Responsibilities include:

- Hires, sets salary, evaluates and supervises a qualified library director to implement board decisions and directions and to carry out day-to-day operation of the library and its programs and services
- Participates in the ongoing responsibilities of the board, including establishment of library policies and planning for current and future library services and programs
- Contributes to the board's adoption of written policies that govern the operation and services of the library; works with director to establish short and long range goals for the library
- Attends all regular and special meetings of the board, and participates in committees and activities as necessary; attends appropriate library functions
- Contributes to the board's approval of the annual budget and expenditure of funds; monitors budget and expenses throughout the year
- Understands related local, state, and federal laws; actively supports library legislation in the state and nation
- Advocates for the interests and needs of the library
- Represents the interests and needs of the community
- Acts as liaison with the public, interpreting and informing local government, media and the public of library services and needs
- Lends expertise and experience to the organization; maintains knowledge of library issues, laws, and trends, and their implications for library use
- Reviews and signs necessary contracts
- Is interested in the library and its services
- Has the ability and time to participate effectively in board activities and decision making

- Is able to represent varied needs and interests of the community and of the library
- Has strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Has the ability to work with governing bodies, agencies and other libraries
- Has the ability to handle opposition and make decisions in the interest of library service

Advisory board trustee

Summary: As a member of a library advisory board, trustees are responsible for advising the governing authority on library policy, goals and objectives including hiring and evaluating the director, establishing and monitoring the annual budget, and other matters consistent with the law to foster the effective use and management of the library.

Responsibilities include:

- Participates in the ongoing responsibilities of the board, including establishment of library policies and planning for current and future library services and programs
- Contributes to the governing authority's adoption of written policies that govern the operation and services of the library; works with director to establish short and long range goals for the library
- Attends all regular and special meetings of the board, and participates in committees and activities as necessary; attends appropriate library functions
- Contributes to the governing authority's approval of the annual budget and expenditure of funds; monitors budget and expenses throughout the year
- Understands related local, state, and federal laws; actively supports library legislation in the state and nation
- Advocates for the interests and needs of the library
- Represents the interests and needs of the community
- Acts as liaison with the public, interpreting and informing local government, media and the public of library services and needs
- Lends expertise and experience to the organization; maintains knowledge of library issues, laws, and trends, and their implications for library use
- Is interested in the library and its services
- Has the ability and time to participate effectively in board activities and decision making
- Is able to represent varied needs and interests of the community and of the library
- Has strong interpersonal and communication skills

- Has the ability to work with governing bodies, agencies and other libraries
- Has the ability to handle opposition and make decisions in the interest of library service

Sample Board Meeting Agenda

State open meetings laws usually require that the meeting notice include the time, date, place, and subjects to be discussed and/or acted upon at the meeting. Check state statutes and regulations for guidance.

Hometown Public Library Board Meeting

Date, Time, Place

AGENDA

- Call to Order Board President
- Roll call and introduction of guests Board President
- Consideration of Agenda
- Approval of minutes of previous meeting [Provide copy of minutes to board members in advance of the meeting.]
- Director's report and statistical report Library Director [Provide copy of reports to board members in advance of the meeting.]
- Financial report Library Director and/or Board Treasurer or Financial Secretary [Provide copy of report to board members in advance of the meeting.]
- Audit and approval of monthly expenditures [Provide list of bills to board members in advance of the meeting.]
- Committee reports or other reports [such as a report on legislative or other statewide issues] [Optional—include on agenda only if there is actually something to report]
- Subject matter of issue to be considered by board [for example, "Consideration of revised library collection development policy"]
- Additional issues to be considered by board [Be reasonably specific about all subject matters to be considered by board.]
- Public comment period [This is not required, but it can be helpful for the board to hear about particular public concerns or needs. To avoid open meetings law violations, the board should limit itself to answering basic questions from the public and place the matter on a future meeting agenda if additional discussion or deliberation on the issue is needed.]
- Board continuing education session to be held to review and discuss [for example] library advocacy

- Roll call vote to hold closed session for board consideration of the performance evaluation and compensation of the library director as authorized by _____
- Reconvene in open session
- Approval of the performance evaluation and compensation of the library director.
- Next meeting scheduled
- Adjournment

Sample Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

If you are requesting reconsideration of more than one item, then complete a separate sheet for each item.

Date:

Your Full Name:

Address (Street, City/Town, Zip Code):

Author/Artist of Library Material:

Title of Library Material:

1. From which library did you obtain the material?
2. How did you learn of this item?
3. What are your objections to this item?
4. What harm do you feel might result from reading, listening to, or viewing this work?
5. Did you read, listen to or view the work in its entirety? If not, what parts did you read, listen to or view?
6. Have you read any professional reviews of the work? Circle one: Yes No

If yes, please list the names of reviewers and the sources in which it/they were published.

7. What do you think are the main ideas of the work or what was the author's/artist's purpose in creating the work?
8. What suggestion do you have for a work with a similar purpose to replace this item?