Trustee Essentials
An Orientation for Library Trustees

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North Country Library System
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NCLSWEB.org
NORTHCOUNTRYLIBRARIES.org
Libraries in NY State

Board of Regents

Commissioner of Education

Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Education

Division of Library Development

Reference and Research Resource Councils (9)
- College/University Libraries
- Hospital Libraries
- Special Libraries

Public Library Systems (23)
- Public Libraries
- Outreach Services
- Correctional Facilities

School Library Systems (42)
- BOCES
- School Library Media Centers
The role of the North Country Library System

- Delivery
  - Shared Circulation System
  - Network and Wireless
  - Web Site hosting + design
  - eBooks, e-magazines
  - Continuing Education Classes
  - Youth Services Consulting
  - Printing

- Outreach

- Technology
  - State Construction Grants
  - Help with School Ballots
  - Help with Municipal Ballots
  - Help with Municipalities
  - Statistical Comparisons
  - Help with Policies
  - Assist with Erate rebates
  - Moral Support!
National, State and Local Library Organizations

- American Library Association [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)
- New York Library Association [www.nyla.org](http://www.nyla.org)
  - Library membership now includes personal memberships
- Library Trustees Association [www.librarytrustees.org](http://www.librarytrustees.org)
- Northern NY Library Network [www.nnyln.org](http://www.nnyln.org)
- NCLS [www.nclsweb.org](http://www.nclsweb.org)
  - Joint Automation Board (JAB)
  - North Country Public Library Director’s Organization
    - Central Library Advisory Committee
    - System Services Committee
By-Laws and Charter

- Charter: Gives the library a legal corporate existence
  - All Libraries are chartered by the Board of Regents
- Bylaws: The rules for conducting Board meetings
- Bylaws + Charter: Be sure they are in agreement
  - Number of trustees
  - How trustees are elected / appointed

Some common issues (dismissing trustees, missed meetings, residency of trustees) are already covered in NYS Education Law or NYS Public Officers Law and must be followed.

NCLS has your full charter file as and can send you a copy.
# Types of Public Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Library</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Library</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District Public Library</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Legislative District Library</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Municipal Library**: Appointed Trustees. Principal funding by municipality.
- **Association Library**: Elected or Appointed Trustees. Funding varies.
- **School District Public Library**: Elected trustees. Funding by public vote.
- **Special Legislative District Library**: Elected Trustees. Funding by public vote.
Legal Structure & Education Law
Minimum Standards: Commissioners Regulation 90.2

1. Written Bylaws
2. Long Range Plan of Service
3. Annual Report to the Community
4. Board Approved Polices
5. Present Budget Annually to Funding Agencies
6. Evaluate Services
7. Minimum Hours Open
8. Maintain Adequate Facility
9. Provide Equipment + Connections to meet Community Needs
10. Distribute Printed Info
11. Employ a Paid Director in accordance with Reg. 90.8

Helpful information for meeting minimum standards:
www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/helpful.htm
Legal Structure & Education Law

Useful References

Ed. Law 226  Powers of Trustees
- Number of Trustees, Quorum
- Vacancies, Removals
- Control of Employees, Property

Ed. Law 259  Library Taxes
- Control of Tax Revenues
  - “all moneys received from taxes for library purposes shall be kept as a separate fund by the treasurer of the municipality”
  - “expended only under the direction of the library Trustees”
- Authority for School Ballot and Municipal Ballot Votes

Ed. Law 260  Trustees
- Appointment, Election
- Residency

www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/excerpts/statutes.htm
Oaths of Office for Public Library Trustees

- All trustees of municipal public (not association) libraries must take and file an oath of office with the county clerk at the beginning of every term.

The Oath of Office is on our web site: [www.nclsweb.org](http://www.nclsweb.org)
- Trustee Resources Menu
- Click on ‘Sample Policies’
- The Oath is listed under ‘Trustee Essentials’ section
Open Meetings Law

- Required for all Public Libraries
  - Association, Municipal and District
  - Education Law 260-a.

- Open Meetings Law (Public Officers Law Article 7)
  - Section 104: Public Notice
    - one week prior thereto shall be given to the news media and shall be
      conspicuously posted in one or more designated public locations at least
      seventy-two hours before such meeting.
  - Section 105: Conduct of Executive Sessions
    - Litigation
    - Sale of Land
    - appointment, promotion, discipline, or removal of a particular person

Committee on Open Government: www.dos.ny.gov/coog/openmeetlaw.html
Board Meetings: The Agenda

- The Roadmap for the Meeting
- Director + President should collaborate
- Vote to approve the agenda
- Stick to it
- List the action for each Agenda item
  - Put the expected action for each item.
  - If you will be voting on an item, say so.
  - If you will only be discussing a topic, say so.
Board Meetings: Keeping Minutes

- Minutes should be detailed enough that anyone can know what decisions were made
- Record decisions + issues discussed
  (not dialog – this is not a transcript)
  - Accurate – Brief – Clear
- Should correspond to the Agenda
- An historical document – Keep forever!
- Must be available for public inspection with two weeks of the meeting, even if not yet approved
  - (NYS Open Meetings Law §106. #3)
Top 10 Warning Signs for Boards

1. Lack of available documentation on the organization’s by-laws, charter, mission statement, organization chart, and prior year financial statements.
2. Lack of independent attitude or excessive conflict among trustees/board members.
3. Infrequent board meetings. Absence of board minutes.
4. Poor board attendance at meetings.
5. Lack of access to key, fiscal, budget, program, and operations information.
6. Lack of access to the chief financial officer.
7. Existence of conflict of interest relationships or less than arm’s length transactions between the institution’s board members and organizations that conduct business with the institution.
8. Lack of internal financial controls and written policies and procedures to safeguard, promote, and protect the organization’s funds and other assets. Lack of fidelity bonds. (Insurance protection against fraudulent acts).
9. Lack of involvement in the hiring of key employees.
10. Failure to file documents with key control agencies such as the NYS Education Depart., IRS, and NYS Department of Taxation and Finance.
Trustee Responsibility #1

Hire a Qualified Director

- Minimum Standard #11
- Support Competitive Salaries
- Evaluate Annually
  (See Sample Policies under Trustee Resources @ nclsweb.org)
- Understand the Role of the Director
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIBRARY BOARD</th>
<th>DIRECTOR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Employ a competent and qualified director.</td>
<td>1. Hire personnel and supervise their work.</td>
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<td>2. Adopt a mission statement. Determine goals. (Long Range Plan) Evaluate progress toward meeting them.</td>
<td>2. Inform the Board about regional/state/national library issues and trends.</td>
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<td>3. Adopt policies. Review periodically.</td>
<td>3. Suggest needed policies for Board consideration. Carry out the policies as adopted by the Board.</td>
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<td>4. Secure adequate funding support.</td>
<td>4. Prepare reports with library's current progress and future needs. Suggest plans for extending library's services.</td>
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<td>5. Establish and participate in public relations and marketing programs.</td>
<td>5. Maintain active public relations program.</td>
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<td>6. Work with the Director to prepare the budget.</td>
<td>6. Prepare an annual budget in consultation with the Board. Give a report of expenditures at each meeting.</td>
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<td>7. Present the budget to funding agencies and the public; explain and defend it.</td>
<td>7. Closely follow the budget process. Provide leadership in supporting the budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Monitor budget expenditures.</td>
<td>8. Oversee expenditures from budget including selection and ordering of all library materials and equipment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Attend continuing education workshops to keep up-to-date with trends and changes in the library field.</td>
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Secure Adequate Funding

- Minimum Standard #5
  “Present Budget Annually to Funding Sources”
- Participate in the County Funding process
- Advocate for State Support for Libraries
- Know the Available Options for Funding
Trustee Responsibility #2, cont’d

Funding Options

Municipal Budget
- Village, Town, City

Referendum Item
- School Ballot
- Municipal Ballot

District Public Library
- With School District Boundary
- Special Legislative

45 of 65 NCLS Libraries now have a public vote as their largest source of local public support!
Trustee Responsibility #2, cont’d

Common to all Ballot Issues

- **Trustees must speak with one voice**

- Prepare answers to difficult questions
  - Why can’t the library run with volunteers?
  - Is this an additional tax?
  - Why are you raising my taxes?
  - The Library has an endowment. Why don’t you spend that first?
  - Why not apply for more grants?
  - Shouldn’t the Town/City/Village just give you more money?
  - Will the tax increase automatically?
  - I don’t use the library. Why should I pay for it?
  - The library seems fine. Why do you need more money?
Trustee Responsibility #3

Adopt Policies

- Minimum Standard #4
- Critical “MUST HAVE” Policies
  - Internet/Computer Use (Ed. Law 260.12)
  - By-Laws+Long Range Plan (Min Standards 1+2)
  - Circulation (Lending) / Collection Development
  - Challenges to Library Materials
  - Meeting Room Use
  - Personnel (Including Staff Evaluation)
  - Friends Group / Volunteers
  - See Sample Polices under Trustee Resources @ www.nclsweb.org
Trustee Responsibility #3

**Adopt Policies**

- Keep all policies in a notebook in the library
- Post policies on your Web Site
- Have policies available at the circulation desk
- Review all Policies periodically!
Trustee Responsibility #4

Promote the Library! Be an Advocate!

- Report to the Community!
  - (Minimum Standards 3 & 10)
- People should identify you with the library!
- Know the services provided by the library!
- Have a “Coffee Shop” speech ready!
- Be prepared to promote - & defend – the library.
  - As a Trustee, the Library should be your #1 community service priority
Checklist for Effective Library Trustees

- Understand the roles of all involved - the Board, Director, staff, Friends, patrons
- Support board decisions even if you disagree. A democracy works by the rule of the majority. Seek reconsideration in the future if circumstances change.
- Support competitive salaries in order to attract and retain qualified staff.
- Be active and informed about library matters in general and of those affecting your library. Ask questions of the director and study the issues.
- Attend all board meetings and be fully prepared to participate knowledgeably.
- Question issues until you understand. Don't be reluctant to vote no on a proposal you don't understand or are uncomfortable about.
- Conflicts of interest by any board member are the concern of all members of the board. A trustee may not receive any gain in dealing with the library.
- Appropriate compensation is a direct measure of the commitment and respect a community has for the institution and its staff.
- Understand and respect the role of the Director and support the Director's administrative decisions.
- Always remember that your job is to provide the highest quality library service possible for your community, not the cheapest
Trustee Resources

Handbook for Library *Trustees of New York State*.
www.librarytrustees.org/handbook.php

Handbook for New Public Library Directors in NY State

NCLS Web Site
www.nclsweb.org Trustee Resources menu

Statement on the Governance Role of a Trustee
From the NYS Board of Regents – See Appendix A+B:
“Top 10 Warning Signs for Boards” + “Best Practices”
www.regents.nysed.gov/about/statement_governance.html

Right from the Start: Responsibilities of Directors + Officers of Non-for-Profit Corporations. NY State Charities Bureau
www.charitiesnys.com/pdfs/Right%20From%20the%20Start%20Final.pdf
“There are obligations that only the library board of trustees can perform. These include making policies for the library and hiring and evaluating the library director. In addition, the library board is, in the final analysis, responsible for the financial integrity of the library as well as its overall financial health.”

These responsibilities cannot be delegated.

Thank You for being a Library Trustee!