

Massachusetts Public Library Trustees Handbook

Who Does What?

Chapter 1. Becoming a Trustee

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Who Does What?

Cooperation is the key! The duties and responsibilities of the library trustee and the library director may appear to overlap. Understanding the differences in function assures teamwork and better library service. Confusion may be avoided by discussing the following clarification of typically separate powers and obligations of the trustees and director.

Governance and Policy Making Responsibilities

Trustee Board

Has **indirect** responsibility for administration through employment of director and adoption of policies, plans, and budget.

Adopts by-laws for board procedures. Attends and participates in all regular meetings. Reviews reports; solicits information; obtains feedback from the community and personally uses the library.

Approves goals and objectives of the library, including the methods for annually evaluating progress.

Approves written policies to govern operation, use, and overall program of library service.

Officially approves and adopts library policies; assists in the interpretation of those policies to public and staff.

Library Director

Has **direct** responsibility for administration of total library program including all affiliated libraries within the framework of board plans, policies, budget and materials [selection](#).

Prepares regular written reports and submits other relevant documents. Attends all systems and affiliate board meetings or designates substitute; keeps trustees informed of progress and problems.

Provides assistance and direction to the board. Recommends methods for implementing plans and evaluation.

Recommends policies; supplies examples and sources of information and advises board of implications of various decisions.

Administers policies and maintains policy handbook; interprets policies to staff and public.

Legal Responsibilities

Trustee Board

Seeks cooperation with officials of municipality.

Attends and participates knowledgeably in all board meetings and decisions to assure conformity to legal responsibilities.

Seeks municipal legal counsel for review and approval.

Responsible for custody and management of library facility and holdings unless otherwise provided by municipal charter or special legislation. Private corporations or association library boards may hold title for property.

Knows, studies, and abides by all local, state, and federal laws and regulations which affect public libraries and empower boards of trustees. A copy of Massachusetts General Laws should be available, where space and budget allow, in every library in the Commonwealth.

Library Director

Prepares all needed library reports for local government, the system and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners; provides copies to the board and community.

Attends board meetings and suggests legal reviews or counsel on appropriate board actions.

Knows, studies, and abides by all local, state, and federal laws and regulations which affect public libraries and empower boards of trustees.

Human Resources Responsibilities

Trustee Board

Employs a library director who meets the personnel minimum standards for the [State Aid to Public Libraries](#) program. Develops guidelines for staff selection.

Adopts standards for evaluating library director's performance. Reviews director's effectiveness.

Provides adequate salary scale and fringe benefits for all employees.

Adopts personnel policies and personnel manual.

Recommends qualifications for board membership. Notifies appropriate authorities of board vacancies.

Library Director

Hires and supervises staff according to board policy.

Suggests basis for evaluation criteria. Provides materials for board to study. Maintains personnel records.

Suggests improvements needed in salary and working conditions. Utilizes skills and initiative of staff members to the library's advantage.

Provides board with recommendations and materials to review. Maintains personnel manual.

Assists in developing criteria for and selection of new trustees. Participates in orientation by introducing library staff, explaining procedures, etc.

Trustees and Director Together

Observe all local, state, and federal laws that relate to current employment practices.

Provide in-service training for professional development of staff members and effective implementation of policies. Provide opportunity for continuing education and advancement of staff and trustees.

Conduct an annual assessment of the board's performance including attendance and committee work.

Planning Responsibilities

Trustee Board

Analyzes the community and considers the strengths and the weaknesses of library service.

Approves goals, adopts both short and long-range plans for library growth.

Approves priorities and decides on courses of action to implement plans.

Library Director

Participates fully in the community analysis process and in the continuing survey of library service.

Recommends plans for library's growth which include measurable goals and objectives. Recommends activities to support these goals and objectives.

Administers library in terms of its plans as adopted by the board; suggests revisions as needed

Trustees and Director Together

Evaluate the library annually when planning for future development. Review the budget with regard to service, personnel, public relations, policies, regulations, and building maintenance.

Work as a team to develop the plan.

Financial Responsibilities

Trustee Board

Actively supports and presents a budget for adequate library funding.

Keeps informed of the financial status, funding sources, and needs of the library.

Scrutinizes preliminary budget request submitted by library director; makes recommendations and officially adopts budget.

May undertake special fund raising programs to raise money for the library.

Library Director

Maintains complete and accurate records of finances, inventory, and annual reports. Provides information with library reports to the board.

Prepares local, state, and federal grant budgets based on present and anticipated needs, taking into account the board's plan for library growth.

Trustees and Director Together

Attend budget hearings of funding agencies, including finance committee and town meeting, to answer questions about library growth and administration and to supply facts and figures to defend budget requests.

Explore all methods of increasing the library's income through new sources and cooperation with other libraries or agencies.

Submit an annual report of activities, income, and expenditures to be filed with the appropriate agency.

Continuing Education Responsibilities

Trustee Board

Reads trustee materials and library-related publications.

Sees that new trustees have planned orientation.

Attends local, state, and national trustee or library-related meetings whenever possible.

Belongs to professional associations such as [MLTA](#), [MLA](#), and [ALA](#).

Supports continuing education for director and staff and takes advantage of opportunities for trustee education.

Library Director

Calls significant materials and events to the attention of library board.

Organizes orientation of new trustees.

Informs trustees of important meetings and workshops for them to attend. Encourages financial support for travel in budget.

Belongs to professional organizations and attends local, state, and national library association conferences.

Designs and develops continuing education for staff and board. Develops skills and initiative of staff members to the library's advantage.

Trustees and Director Together

Plan and implement orientation of new trustees.

Provide in-service training opportunities for professional development of staff members and effective implementation of policies. Provide opportunity for continuing education and advancement of staff and trustees.



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