

Montgomery County Library District

Handbook for New Library Board Members



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Introduction

Welcome to the Montgomery County Library District! Serving as a Library Board member is an interesting, challenging and rewarding job. The opportunity to make a difference in your community is limited only by your abilities, knowledge, training, and desire. This will provide you with some of the basics of being a Library Board member in Pennsylvania.

This guide contains best practices, sample roles and responsibilities, job descriptions, and scenarios. While there are many similarities to all Libraries and Library Boards, none is exactly the same. For specifics, including job descriptions, levels of authority, and roles, Board members need to work with their Library Director on the specifics of their position, roles, authority, and responsibilities.

Note that this handbook is built upon one created by the Seneca Library District and the Manual for Library Directors put out by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries as part of an IMLS grant. The information provided, while authoritative, is not guaranteed for accuracy and legality.

Library Board and Director Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities and duties of the Library Board and Library Director may appear to overlap. Understanding the difference in functions assures teamwork and better library service.

The Library Board's role is to govern the Library – to approve policy, secure adequate funding, and hire a competent, qualified library director.

The Library Director's role is to manage the Library – to implement the board's policies on a day-to-day basis, manage the staff, and help lead the Library forward in the best way possible to meet the needs of the community.

In some cases, as when the Library is a department of a township or other municipal agency, the Library Board will be an advisory board. These boards do not have governance or fiduciary responsibility for the Library, or the direct supervision of the Director. However, most other roles and responsibilities are the same.

Remember – The Library Director is the equivalent of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Library. The Director works in partnership with the Library's Board of Trustees. The Board and Director collaborate in creating quality Library service for the community.

This partnership means working together in a variety of ways – from developing policies to generating a long-range plan for the Library – these overlaps are an opportunity to strengthen the board/director relationship.

Mission of the Library in the Community

The Library's Mission Statement is the overarching guide for all decisions made by the Library Board and Library Director. The Mission statement must be at the heart of all policies, program, and library activities.

Library Board:

- Determines the mission, goals, and objectives of the Library and methods of evaluating progress toward meeting those goals and objectives.
- Reviews goals and objectives annually and evaluates progress.
- Uses the Mission as a basis for creating policies and plans.
- Communicates the Mission the community, governmental authorities, and stakeholders.

Library Director:

- Gathers data about needs/desires of community residents and shares the information with the Library Board.
- Provides assistance and direction to the Board in setting goals and objective and determining methods of evaluation.
- Provides information and opinions on how the Library is progressing.
- In collaboration with the Library Board, creates a Mission Statement for the Library that will govern all decisions.
- Communicates the Mission to the Library Staff, the community, governmental authorities, and stakeholders

Roles in Action:

The Library Mission states that the Library is to be user-friendly and a place where people feel welcome.

It is the Library Director's responsibility to make it happen. It will involve setting expectations regarding attitudes of staff toward the Library users, training for staff, and establishing Library practices and procedures that make users feel welcome and satisfy their needs.

It is the Library Board's responsibility to communicate and advocate this to the community and local, state, and national government representatives, and other stakeholders.

Governance, Management, and Working in Partnership

Governance is the framework (policies, planning, budgeting) approved by the Library Board to guide the Library Director. Management is running the day-to-day operations of the library and is the responsibility of the Library Director.

The Library Director is 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 decision 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.

Library Board:

- Sets parameters (policies) within which the Library operates.
- Delegates all library management responsibilities to the Library Director.
- Monitors the Library Director's effectiveness in providing library services to the community.
- Requests from the Library Director all information necessary to fulfill the Board's governing responsibility.
- Speaks with one voice when delegating, giving direction, and requesting information from the Library Director.
- Attends all Board and committee meetings to which they are assigned. Carry out all special assignments properly.
- Ensures adequate funding to fulfill the Library's goals and objectives.
- Works in partnership with the Library Director, respecting the knowledge the Library Director brings to the table.

Library Director:

- Carries out the day-to-day functions (procedures) of running the Library within the parameters (policies) set by the Library Board.
- Reports to the Board accurately and completely about how the library is being managed, including problems, plans, progress.
- Serves the Library Board as a whole.
- Attends all Board and committee meetings except those meetings or parts of meetings in which the Director's salary and tenure are discussed.
- Works in partnership with the Library Board, has open communication avenues, and shares professional knowledge to assist in Library Board decisions.

Roles in Action

The Library Board adopts a goal that addresses the issue of access to the Library, thereby setting an expectation for the number of hours open or other services.

The Library Director decides how many and what hours are feasible within the budget and balances staff resources with the expertise needed by the facility. The Library Director should keep the Library Board informed of what has been put into practice.

A similar process will govern decisions about services such as storytimes, computer access, outreach services, etc.

Policies

Library policies are developed by the Library Board to carry out the Library's mission, goals, and objectives and to provide a guide for the Library Director in the day-to-day operations of the Library.

Library Board:

- Adopts bylaws for Board procedures.
- Determines and adopts written policies to govern the operation, use, and programs of the Library.
- Reviews policies and bylaws on a regular basis, especially as part of the orientation of new members.

Library Director:

- Recommends needed policies to the Board; studies and presents examples and sources of information.
- Provides the Board with recommendations and materials for study.
- Carries out policies as adopted by the Board.
- Communicates policies to staff and public.

Sample of Needed Policies (a more complete list of recommended policies is found in Appendix A)

- Cash management
- Bid and procurement
- Conflict of interest
- Compensation and fringe benefit
- Whistleblower
- Records Retention and Destruction
- Mandated Reporter (Compliant with Act 105 of 2013)
- Acceptable Use
- Confidentiality
- Children's Internet Protection Act
- Collection Development/Maintenance
- Facilities Use/ Behaviour

These 4 policies are needed when applying for most grants, and specifically for IMLS/Federal grants

Roles in Action

The current Library's collection development policy has not been updated since 1980. With the emergence of online resources and ematerials, the Library Director notices the need to update the policy.

The Library Director gathers data and examples. They then creates a proposed updated collection development policy. The Library Director shares the need for an updated policy and presents the proposed updated collection policy to the Library Board for review and discussion.

The Library Board approves the collection development policy.

The Library Director uses it to make decisions regarding materials to purchase, withdraw, and maintain. The Library Board's responsibility is only with creating the policy, not implementing it through approval of purchases, expansion of collection types, or other day-to-day collection decisions.

Budgets and Funding

Oversight of financial resources is crucial to guarantee a positive financial picture, both now and in the future. The Library Board is fully and legally responsible for the proper ethical management of Library funds, i.e. fiduciary responsibility. That means the Library Board oversees the creation of the Library's annual budget in alignment with strategic goals, manages expenditures in good faith, and regularly works to ensure that the Library has sufficient operating and reserve funds.

Public libraries have a duty to be accountable for expenditures. The majority of income comes from local and state government entities, contributions and donations, and grants. Therefore, it is important that the Library identify the community's needs and gear the budget to meet those needs. The budget projects expected results; it serves as a planning tool, which helps the Library evaluate its objectives and quantify the sources and uses of funds that are needed to meet those objectives.

All Library Board members should be aware of the general standard of fiduciary duties, which is to handle the affairs of others, minimally, with at least the same care and prudence they apply to their own responsibilities.

Budgetary data provides an efficient and effective means of communicating a Library's needs and abilities. A Library can use its budget to demonstrate the need for additional aid from local, state, and federal resources. A Library can also use budgetary information to inform the public of the services it offers, the improvements it intends to make, and the need for additional funds.

It is the responsibility of the Library Board to secure funds from a variety of sources, including funds from local government, corporations, individuals, and grant sources. Proactive solicitation of funds ensures a strong, vibrant, healthy Library in the present and positive growth in the future.

Library Board:

- Works with the Library Director to formulate a budget adequate to carry out the Library's goals and objectives.
- Works to secure adequate funding for operating expenditures through fundraising, personal donations, annual giving campaigns, and building relationships with governmental agencies and community members.
- Works with the Library Director to present and explain the budget to funding agencies, public officials, and the general public.
- Regularly monitors revenue and expenditures via monthly financial reports.
- Understands the source of all funds and any requirements or stipulations attached to the funds.

Library Director:

- Prepares and presents a proposed annual budget in consultation with the staff and Library Board that is adequate to carry out the Library's goals and objectives.

- Supplies facts and figures to the Board to aid in interpreting the Library's current and future financial needs.
- Work with the Board in interpreting the budget and Library's financial needs to government officials and the public.
- Work to secure adequate funding for operating expenditures through grants and building relationships with governmental agencies and community members.
- Understand the source of all Library funds and any requirements or stipulations attached to the monies.
- Expend funds within budget guidelines.

Roles in Action

Based on data collected from circulation records, a door people-counter, and comments from the community and staff members, and with the knowledge that the mission of the Library is to be user-friendly and customer centered, the Library Director needs to hire another part-time Circulation Clerk in the next budget cycle.

The Library Director works with the Board's Finance Committee to create a proposed budget for the next fiscal year that includes an increase in personnel expenses. This expense increase means that income must also be increased.

The Finance Committee agrees with the proposed new budget and the Library Director presents it to the entire Board. The Library Director explains the increase and the needs to increase the revenue to offset the added expense.

The Chair of the Finance Committee supports that the proposed budget is what is needed to adequately carry out the Library's goals and objectives.

The Library Board accepts the proposed budget and the Board revises their annual campaign strategies; they update the names on mailing lists and devise a plan to reach out to the people on the list at least three times through the year. Each "ask" for funds is accompanied with a personal note from a Board member and a Library newsletter created by staff highlighting how funds are being used and the great programs and events happening at the library.

The Library Board will monitor the revenue generated from these appeals every month when financial statements are reviewed during Board meetings and determine if additional fundraising efforts are needed.

Three Key Fiduciary Duties

When Library Board members accept a position on the Board, they are automatically accepting three specific fiduciary responsibilities: The Duty of Care, The Duty of Loyalty, and the Duty of Obedience. From a legal perspective, Board members not knowing all of the nuances of their responsibilities does not preclude them from being responsible for them. Library Board members who fail to fulfill their fiduciary duties, either intentionally or unintentionally, may be found guilty of a breach of their fiduciary responsibilities. They should avoid this problem at all costs, as it leads to a negative impact on the Library and may also lead to personal liability issues.

- **The Duty of Care:** Board members must use the level of care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in a similar position and under similar circumstances. It requires good attendance at Board meetings and active participation during meetings. Board members must be willing to get acquainted with all the important information that their role requires and give the board the same care and concern they would give their personal matters. Board members should also remain aware of library trends, as well as remain alert to potential concerns and problems. They should also ask for more information as appropriate and investigate irregularities and/or violations of governance or Bylaws.
- **The Duty of Loyalty:** Board members must act in the best interests of the Library, putting it above their own. Board members may not profit directly or indirectly from the organization in relation to their position on the Board. If there is a known conflict of interest, Board members must candidly and openly disclose it and refuse to participate in discussions and votes concerning the conflict of interest. They may never use information obtained as a member for personal gain.
- **The Duty of Obedience:** Board members have a duty to make decisions that serve the purpose of, and adhere to, upholding the Library's mission and values. They must abide by the Library's Bylaws and Charter. All Board members must be familiar with the policies and follow them consistently.

Personnel

Library staff members are the most important resource of the organization. It is vital to treat staff members with respect and to provide them with competitive salaries, benefits, continuing education opportunities, and the tools to do their jobs effectively. It is important to remember that the Library Board has one employee: the Library Director. All other staff are hired, supervised, and evaluated by the Library Director.

Lines of communication between the Library Board, Library Director, and other personnel should be transparent and easily understood. The Board President will have the most direct line of communication with the Library Director. Between monthly board meetings, the Library Director and Board President should meet, have phone conversations, or communicate electronically to prepare for the next board meeting and to discuss issues important to the Board. Individual trustees can channel communication to the Library Director through the Board President in between meetings. Remember, since the Library Director is the Board's only employee, there should be no reason for Board members to communicate directly with other Library personnel concerning Library matters.

The Library Board is a collective authority. No individual trustee, regardless of their position on the Board, has the authority to speak or act on behalf of the Library unless they have discussed the situation at a Board meeting.

Library Board:

- Employs a competent and qualified Library Director.
- Creates and updates the Library Director's job description.
- Creates yearly goals and expectations for the Library Director, with their input into the creation of those items.

- Conducts an annual performance review/evaluation of the Library Director based on the agreed upon goals and expectations.
- Refer all staff concerns/grievances and communications to the Library Director, unless such grievances are directly regarding the Library Director. In that case, the Personnel Committee would handle the matter.
- Approve policies for staff development, including but not limited to staff training, attendance at conferences, workshops, or classes, and policies concerning travel reimbursements.
- Establish overall personnel policies such as guidelines for salary and benefits and hiring practices.
- Provide adequate compensation and reasonable benefits for all employees.
- Provide agreeable working conditions and opportunities for professional growth.

Library Director:

- Employs qualified and competent Library staff.
- Creates job descriptions for all Library staff positions.
- Conducts annual performance reviews with each Library staff member.
- Investigates and resolves all staff concerns/grievances.
- Creates staff development policies based on staff needs and available budget to be presented to the Library Board.
- Works with the Library Board to ensure competitive salaries and benefits, personnel policies that protect and support Library staff, and budgets that reflect dedication to staff continuing education needs.
- Keeps Board informed regarding legal issues, grievances, and staff changes.

Roles in Action

- 1) A Library staff member is unhappy about being scheduled to work on Thursday evenings. The staff member contacts one of the Board members and complains about his new schedule.
The Board member immediately stops the conversation and tells the staff member that work schedules and other day-to-day matters are the sole responsibility of the Library Director. The Board member explains that any issues or concerns the staff members has about their schedule or other day-to-day issues must be worked out with the Library Director.
- 2) The Library Board does an annual review for the Library Director. As a result of the review, the Board and Director jointly set goals and expectations for the coming year.
The annual performance review of the Director the following year is based on how well those goals and expectation have been achieved.
The Director will carry out annual reviews of the staff, set goals for staff performance, and determine staff training needs.

Library Board Member Qualifications, Duties, & Job Description

All Board members should have job descriptions. These outline the responsibilities for potential and new members and help remind current members of their responsibilities.

Qualifications for Board members can change depending on the strengths and weaknesses of current Board members. Some of the following may be considered mandatory for every Board member, some may be qualities you want to have spread over several members.

Board officers (President/Chair, Vice President/Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) will have specific duties and roles that are outlined separately.

Duties and responsibilities also vary depending on the authority of the Library Board. Advisory boards represent the community and the community's needs. They do not have the power to hire the Director or make policy. Governance boards, as noted in the previous section, have the authority to approve policy, secure adequate funding and hire a competent, qualified Library Director. Duties assigned to Board members will depend on whether they are an advisory or governance board.

Sample Qualifications

- Interest in libraries and community
- Excellent written and verbal communication
- Public speaking
- Effective at leading meetings
- Ability to build relationships with municipal officials/knowledge of the political climate of the community
- Advocacy
- Project management
- Planning experience
- Committee management
- Available time to devote to Board and Library activities and events

Sample Duties/Responsibilities

- Attend and participate in all regularly scheduled and special Board meetings and participate appropriately by:
 - Reading minutes and other materials in advance of meeting
 - Serving on committees as assigned by Board President
 - Lending expertise and leadership to the Board
- Attend Library functions as appropriate
- Know and abide by Library Board Bylaws
- Attend local municipal meetings as Library representative
- Have a library card and uses the Library regularly
- Keep current with library trends by reading library literature, joining appropriate organizations, attending professional meetings, talking with other libraries' Board members and trustees

- Hire and evaluate Library Director
 - Write a well-defined Library Director job description
 - Supports the Director and respects their expertise
 - Acknowledges the Director is the Board's only employee and all other staff are under the direction of the Director
- Assist in strategic planning
- Secure adequate funding for the Library's operations and capital needs through fund drives, capital campaigns, personal donations, and other fundraising activities
- Maintain a clear picture of the Library's financial situation by:
 - Assisting in budget preparation
 - Representing the Library at local municipal budget meetings
 - Requesting funding from outside sources when necessary
 - Regularly reviewing financial reports of current income and expenses
- Establish policies that comply with all laws
- Abide by majority decisions reached by the Board and publicly support those decisions
- Advocate for the Library through contacting elected officials, media and the public, and developing public awareness and support for the Library
- Regularly self-evaluate personal and Board performance and determine areas where improvement is needed

Sample Job Descriptions

This is a framework for creating member and officer job descriptions. These should be evaluated regularly and updated as needed to reflect qualifications and duties, and Bylaws.

Non-Officer Sample Description

JOB TITLE:	Library Board member of [<i>Library Name</i>]
ACCOUNTABLE TO:	Library users and the community the Library serves, elected officials as applicable
REPORTS TO:	The Library Board via the Board President
PURPOSE:	<p>[<i>Governance Board</i>] To serve as a voting trustee responsible for the governance of the [<i>Library Name</i>], to establish policies and plans to ensure the Library's relevancy in the community, the availability of sufficient resources and leadership, fiscal viability, to advocate for the Library, and to appoint a Director to direct the Library's day-to-day operations in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>[<i>Advisory Board</i>] To serve as voting trustee of the [<i>Library Name</i>], community representative and voice in library planning, to establish policy to ensure the Library's relevancy in the community, to advocate for the Library.</p>
RULES OF GOVERNANCE:	[<i>Library Name</i>] Bylaws, The Pennsylvania Public Library Code, Roberts Rules of Order

TERMS OF OFFICE: A Board member serves for a term of [#] years, in accordance with the Bylaws. [This may also address consecutive terms as defined by the Bylaws.]

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES: [As chosen by the Board and Director]

Board President Sample Description

Suggested changes/additions are:

JOB TITLE: Library Board President of [Library Name]

REPORTS TO: The Library Board

TERMS OF OFFICE: A Board President serves for a term of [#] years, in accordance with the Bylaws. [This may also address consecutive terms, and continued membership after service, as defined by the Bylaws.]

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES: [As chosen by the Board and Director]

- Presides at all Board meetings, sets times and locations, prepares agendas
- Serves as chief spokesperson for the Library Board
- Creates committees and appoints members as necessary
- Communicates as necessary with the Library Director

Board Vice President Sample Description

Suggested changes/additions are:

JOB TITLE: Library Board Vice President of [Library Name]

REPORTS TO: The Library Board

TERMS OF OFFICE: A Board Vice President serves for a term of [#] years, in accordance with the Bylaws. [This may also address consecutive terms, and continued membership after service, as defined by the Bylaws.]

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES: [As chosen by the Board and Director]

- Presides when President is absent
- Accepts responsibilities as delegated by Board President

Board Secretary Sample Description

Suggested changes/additions are:

JOB TITLE:	Library Board Secretary of [<i>Library Name</i>]
REPORTS TO:	The Library Board
TERMS OF OFFICE:	A Board Secretary serves for a term of [#] years, in accordance with the Bylaws. [This may also address consecutive terms, and continued membership after service, as defined by the Bylaws.]
MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES:	<p>[<i>As chosen by the Board and Director</i>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presides over meetings when the President and Vice President are absent• Prepares written agenda and ensures that it is publicly posted in accordance with applicable laws [<i>usually 48 hours before the Board meeting</i>]• Prepares and maintains a list of all Board members and their contact information• Responsible for recording meeting minutes• Manages all records created by the Board

Board Treasurer Sample Description

Suggested changes/additions are:

JOB TITLE:	Library Board Treasurer of [<i>Library Name</i>]
REPORTS TO:	The Library Board
TERMS OF OFFICE:	A Board Treasurer serves for a term of [#] years, in accordance with the Bylaws. [This may also address consecutive terms, and continued membership after service, as defined by the Bylaws.]
MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES:	<p>[<i>As chosen by the Board and Director</i>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitors the Library's budget• Works with Library Director to make regular financial reports to the Board

Ethics Policy & Conflict of Interest

Ethics and The Duty of Loyalty

The Library is dependent on the trust of its community to successfully achieve its mission. As part of The Duty of Loyalty, it is crucial that all Board members conduct business on behalf of the Library with the highest level of integrity avoiding impropriety or the appearance of impropriety.

Guiding Principles

- Board members should uphold the integrity of Library and should perform their duties impartially and diligently.
- Board members should not engage in discrimination of any kind including that based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or belief system.
- Board members should protect and uphold library patrons' right to privacy in their use of library resources.
- Board members should avoid situations in which their personal interests, activities, or financial affairs are, or are likely to be perceived as being, in conflict with the best interests of the Library.
- Board members should avoid having interests that may reasonably bring into question their position in a fair, impartial, and objective manner.
- Board members should not knowingly act in any way that would reasonably be expected to create an impression among the public that they are engaged in conduct that violates their trust as Board members.
- Board members should not use or attempt to use their position with Library to obtain unwanted privileges or advantages for themselves or others.
- Board members should not be swayed by partisan interests, public pressure, or fear of criticism.
- Board members should not denigrate the organization or fellow Board members in any public arena.

Therefore, to preserve and uphold the Library reputation as an organization of unimpeachable integrity, each Board member will sign a *Conflict of Interest* and *Ethics* Statements at the commencement of their service with Library. See Appendix B & C for sample statements.

If any Board member appears to be in conflict with the Guiding Principles, they will be asked to meet with the Board President to discuss the issue. The President will make a recommendation to the full Board based upon their findings.

Relationship with Friends of the Library

Friends of the Library organizations have a definite purpose in helping libraries give the best service possible. Friends groups extend the circle of contacts in the community begun by Library Board members. Often, it is from these supporters of the Library that Board members are chosen. And, for libraries that are departments of a municipality, Friends groups can play a key role as a 501(c)3 group when it comes to fundraising and advocacy.

The Friends show their enthusiasm, eagerness, and assistance in a variety of ways. An independent Friends' group, freely choosing to support the Library, can be much more effective in gaining widespread community support than one that is acting as a surrogate of the Board. Their efforts, programs, and activities are supplementary and supporting to the Library, and an effective Friends' group can enhance and enrich what the Library offers to its users. Good Friends groups cooperate with both the Board and the Director but interfere with neither. Library Board members and staff should be encouraged to be members of the Friends.

Friends groups set their own purposes, consistent with the needs of the Library. It is the responsibility of the Board to work closely with the Friends, encouraging them and informing them of the Library's policies and programs. Part of this may be to invite a Liaison to the Board as a non-voting Board member. In turn, the Board should keep itself informed of Friends' programs and activities. This two-way communication can be a valuable part of the total public relations efforts of the Library.

When Friends volunteer to help the Library, it is with the assistance and cooperation of the Board, Director and Library staff. All should have a part in the planning, promotion, and execution of the project or event. The Board and Director should discuss with the Friends how much time, money, and personnel can be expended on the activity.

Staff and Board members should be encouraged to belong to Friends groups. However, current staff and Board members should not be officers in the Friends group in order to avoid the appearance of any conflict of interest.

Sample List of Friends' Activities

- Assisting with services
- Funding and volunteering at Library programs
- Acting as tour guides or docents within the Library
- Developing or outsourcing attractive brochures for Library events
- Purchasing equipment or furniture
- Hosting special functions at the Library, usually for fundraising
- Landscaping and general maintenance
- Scholarships and staff development assistance
- Supplying and arranging exhibits
- Advocacy and communication to municipal governing authorities and state and national legislators
- Campaigning and fundraising for expansion, renovation, or new construction

Organizing Friends Groups

Where no Friends group exists, the Board and Director may decide that one is needed and be instrumental in organizing such a group, or a group of citizens may approach the Library to suggest the formation of one. The Board and Director should be involved in setting forth the guidelines, roles, and structure of the Friends group. An early understanding of the relationship of the Friends to the Board, the Director, and the staff can be established, reducing the possibility of later jurisdictional problems.

United for Libraries has created a Toolkit for the creation and revitalization of Friends groups:

- <https://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/friends/orgtools/libraries-need-friends.pdf>
- <https://www.ala.org/united/friends/orgtools>

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Public Library Structure in Pennsylvania

Local Libraries

Public libraries play a key role in their communities as centers for lifelong learning and community hubs. They offer educational and cultural enrichment opportunities for all residents of their service areas by providing relevant materials, services and programs. Lifelong learning is for all ages – from infants to senior citizens.

Toward that end, the local public library has the responsibility for providing a basic collection of up to date materials in a variety of formats. A local library's collection development policy will dictate what items are collected. These might include books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, audio recordings, computer related materials and services (including Internet access and database searching tools), pictures and microforms, eBooks, eAudiobooks, and digital magazines. Some libraries have invested in "non-traditional" items such as museum/attraction passes, power tools, cooking/baking tools, and more. The collection of each local library also includes the resources available through the state's POWER Library databases and other online resources provided by the System or District.

Public libraries provide a variety of services such as reference, interlibrary loan, children's activities, services to the underserved and programs for all ages. The local library looks to its community for what service needs are required and plans for growth and a successful future. The district library centers, and in some cases county library systems, each play a role in the success of the local libraries in their geographic areas of responsibilities. The District Center is a resource for Library Directors.

Libraries with Branches

A main library with branches is considered one library. The library may have a Chief Executive Officer and/or Library Director, and Branch Managers. They are governed by one board or in some cases, an advisory board if the library is a part of county or city government.

There are, in Montgomery County, branch libraries with advisory boards, such as the branches of Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library (MC-NPL) and Lower Merion Library System.

Federated Library Systems

Library systems are groups of libraries within a county that join together for financial support and to improve the level of service provided to all users within their service areas. Thirty-three of Pennsylvania's 67 counties are served by a county library system, none of which is in the Montgomery District. Examples of services offered by systems are: coordinated activities to increase financial support for system members, countywide automation, Internet access, and other technology support, coordinated planning for and evaluation of services, resource sharing among the libraries in the system, in-service training for system library staff and trustees and services to the localities in the service area that do not have designated local libraries. Each federated system has a system administrator who coordinates system activities and oversees the system budget. In some cases, a system administrator may also be the director of a library within the system. System members benefit from the expertise of a system administrator who can act as a resource for library directors. The Association of Pennsylvania Public Library Systems (APPLS) supports county system administrators. Each system also has a system headquarters library that has to meet higher standards for collection and hours of operation.

District Library Centers

Currently there are 29 District Library Centers in Pennsylvania. The district center is a strong local library (or could also be a system headquarters) designated by the State Librarian to serve as a source of assistance to the citizens and local libraries within its district. The district centers receive funding to provide support services for the local public libraries in their districts. District services often include delivery, reference, interlibrary loan, continuing education, public relations, and the services of the District Consultant and Youth Services District Consultant, who can be called on to help with any questions about being a new library director and all aspects of youth services.

Other District Center staff members may also provide advisory assistance to local librarians, trustees, municipal officials and interested citizens within the district through periodic visits, district meetings and workshops, but District Consultants have the primary responsibility for this advisory assistance. They also help their local libraries develop strategic plans and assist with the development of a district plan.

The Bureau of Library Development provides advisory services to district centers by assigning a Library Development Advisor as liaison to each of them. As a rule, this “consultant’s consultant” is the first point of contact with the state office. This liaison works with the District Consultant to help channel and interpret information from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries in order to improve services to local communities.

The Montgomery County Library District covers the libraries in Montgomery County, located outside of Philadelphia in the southeast part of the state. Twenty libraries with 35 physical locations make up the district. The Montgomery County-Norristown Library (MC-NPL) is the largest library and is also the District Center. The District Administrator is the Executive Director of MC-NPL.

The District provides delivery service, the “pony,” to all district libraries. This service provides resource sharing across all libraries by allowing materials requested by patrons at any library to receive those materials from any location and to return those items to any location. The pony runs out of MC-NPL.

The District also covers bookmobile services, which are free, full-service mobile library branches for Montgomery County residents. They stock materials for all age groups, and patrons are able to place holds for items in any District library to be picked up at their Bookmobile stop. Two of these mobile branches serve age designated populations: the Books Go Round (BGR) serves preschool and school-age children and the Words On Wheels (WOW) serves seniors. Collections and services in these mobile branches are tailored to these users.

District Services

The Montgomery County Library District employs a District Consultant who is a liaison to the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, and is a resource for library directors, system administrators, boards, municipal officers and other interested individuals and groups. The District Consultant, coordinating with the District Library Directors, builds the District Negotiated Agreement and the County Coordination Agreement, and oversees the budgets for each of those funding sources. The District Consultant also helps orient new library directors, helps libraries through the strategic planning process, provides information and resources of interest to boards and directors, provides continuing education opportunities, and makes periodic visits to member libraries, among other duties.

The District employs a part time youth services consultant who participates in statewide initiatives and develops continuing education opportunities for youth services. The district provides access to thousands of electronic books and audios through Overdrive, as well as other electronic resources and Inter-Library Loan services. The district also provides delivery (pony) of library items to all libraries in the district.

Statewide Library Resource Centers

A Statewide Library Resource Center is a library designated by the Pennsylvania Library Code to receive state aid for the purpose of acquiring major research collections. There are four statewide resource center libraries in Pennsylvania: the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the State Library of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania State University Library. Together they comprise a vast research resource capable of meeting the needs of most Pennsylvanians. Their collections augment those of the local libraries and district centers. Materials are sent to the district centers via delivery services or they may be used at the resource center library.

Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries

The Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) is a department within the Department of Education and leads the development of Pennsylvania's academic, school, public, and special libraries to meet the information, education and enrichment needs of its residents.

Bureau of Library Development:

The Bureau of Library Development (BLD) provides leadership for better library service by:

- Encouraging adoption of good management practices;
- Developing and implementing comprehensive plans;
- Increasing public awareness of quality library services;
- Advising all public libraries and municipalities;
- Advising academic, institution and law libraries;
- Collecting, analyzing and disseminating statistics;
- Encouraging resource sharing among all types of libraries;
- Administering state and federal money.

The Bureau of Library Development

1. Provides a direct consulting and continuing education program to district library centers; local public, school, and academic libraries; state institution libraries and government officials covering all phases of library management and operation;
2. Administers a program of state aid to public libraries and promotes sharing of library resources through a variety of cooperative programs affecting libraries statewide;
3. Coordinates a program of library services to people with disabilities in Pennsylvania through designated Regional Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, operated by the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh;
4. Administers the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds, Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants, and the state Keystone Recreation, and Conservation Act Library Facilities Grant Program.

Library Code and Regulations

The Library Code, passed in 1961, set up a system of local libraries, district library centers, and regional resource centers. It provides state money to support this system and to stimulate local funding of public libraries. The Library Code defines what a library is and how it is governed. Title 22 of the Library Code contains the regulations that further define and implement the Library Code. The regulations have the force of law. They contain basic and minimum standards, library system standards and district library center standards.

The Public Library Code (2012) is a continuation of the Act of June 14, 1961, known as the Library Code. The library regulations at present define how many hours a library should be open according to the population the library serves. However, the new (2012) code specifies that libraries must be open 45 hours per week. The Public Library Code is new, but as of this writing, there are no new regulations to define and shape the code. The Governor's Advisory Council in cooperation with the Office of Commonwealth Libraries are in the process of revising the regulations to fit the new code and to provide some flexibility as library services evolve in the coming years. The Public Library Code and regulations can be found at the following link:

<https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Libraries/LawsRegulations/Pages/default.aspx>

Board members will want to familiarize themselves with the Library Code and regulations. The Code and regulations are complex and the District Consultant can help interpret them.

For a deeper understanding of the history of Pennsylvania Libraries and Library Code & Regulations, Board members can read: *Made Free and Thrown Open To the Public: Community Libraries in Pennsylvania from the Colonial Era through World War II* by Bernadette Lear.

Appendix A – Sample Board Member Commitment Letter

Dear [New Board Member Name],

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to serve on the [Library Name]'s Board. This letter sets out in general terms expectations for both you as a Board member and the Library.

[Library Name]'s mission and vision are: [insert mission and vision]. We are eager for you to bring your perspective and skills to the table, and we look forward to your contributions to the Library and our users.

Your term will begin on [date]. The length of your term is [years]. You may serve for [bylaws term limits].

[Library Name] expects all Board members to:

- *Devote time to your Board service.* We expect you to contribute time to Board activities. This is inclusive of Board meetings, committee meetings, fundraising activities, reviewing documents for Board and committee meetings, and preparation time for these tasks. We cannot do an effective job or meet deadlines without the active participation of our members.
- *Attend Board meetings.* The Library Board holds regular meetings throughout the year. We expect you to make every effort to attend all scheduled meetings, including committee meetings. If you cannot attend a meeting, you should contact the Board President or committee chair as far in advance as possible. Our Bylaws allow for your removal from the Board if you do not regularly attend meetings.
- *Have an active library card and visit the Library regularly.* We expect you to have an active library card and visit the Library on a regular basis to keep up-to-date on collections, the state of the building, and programs or events.
- *Participate in events.* We expect you to attend all special events, such as the annual fundraiser event.
- *Participate in fundraising.* We expect you to participate in fundraising activities such as the annual fundraiser, annual appeal, and other campaigns that we may pursue. Very few of us join a Board because we like to raise money; however all must understand that fundraising is an important part of our responsibilities.

What you can expect from [Library Name]:

- *Orientation to our organization.* If you are new to the Library Board, and/or to our Library, we will arrange for you to have orientation with the Director and the District Consultant. We will also provide you with a brief history of the Library, an overview of our current programs and services, and a tour of the Library. We will provide you with *Getting On Board: Tools for Board Development and Assessment* provided by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and a Board Manual/Handbook, which includes important organizational documents and contact information.
- *Full disclosure.* We will keep you informed of the status of our programs, services, and potential new opportunities. If there is a problem, we will let you know as soon as possible. We will

routinely provide full financial statements and status of the Library. We will make every effort to answer your inquiries in a timely fashion.

- *Meaningful service.* We promise you an active, engaging and challenging experience. We will also try to make it fun. We will do all we can to ensure that your experience on [Library Name] Board is meaningful and rewarding. Please reach out to the Board President if your experience does not meet these standards.

If you are comfortable and agree to the above, and would like to be a [Library Name] Board member, please sign below and return this to the Library's Director.

We look forward to working with you in our ongoing endeavors. Our many thanks in advance for your time, effort, and service

Board Member

Date

President

Date

Library Director

Date

Appendix B – Sample Conflict of Interest Statement

No Board member or committee member of [*Library Name*] Board of Trustees shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of their participation on the Board.

Each individual shall disclose to the Board any personal interest which they may have in any matter pending before the Board and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter.

Members of [*Library Name*] Board and committees shall refrain from obtaining any list of library patrons that results in personal benefit.

Statement of Associations

This is to certify that I, except as described in the attachment, am not now nor at any time during the past year have been:

A participant, directly or indirectly, in any arrangement, agreement, investment, or other activity with any vendor, supplier, or other party doing business with [*Library Name*] that has resulted or could result in personal benefit to me.

Any exceptions to the above are attached with a full description of the transactions, whether direct or indirect, which I have, or have had within the past year, with persons or organizations having transactions with [*Library Name*].

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Please return this signed document to the Library Director.

Appendix C – Sample Ethics Statement

Public Library Board members are accountable for the resources of the [Library Name], as well as ensuring that the Library provides the best possible service to its community.

Every Board member makes a personal commitment to contribute the time and energy to faithfully carryout their duties and responsibilities effectively and with absolute truth, honor, and integrity. Those who accept membership on [Library Name] Board are expected to perform all of the functions of the Board members.

Statement of Ethics

- I shall respect the opinions of my colleagues and not be critical or disrespectful when they disagree or oppose a viewpoint different from my own.
- I shall comply with all the laws, rules, and regulations that apply to me and to the [Library Name].
- I, in fulfilling my responsibilities, shall not be swayed by partisan interest, public pressure, or fear of criticism.
- I shall not engage in discrimination of any kind and shall uphold library patron's rights to privacy in the use of Library resources.
- I will clearly distinguish in my actions and statements between my personal philosophy and attitudes and those of [Library Name], acknowledging the formal position of the Board, even if I personally disagree.
- I will respect the confidential nature of Library business while being aware of and in compliance with applicable laws governing freedom of information.
- I will promote a high level of Library service while observing ethical standards.
- I will avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or financial benefits gained at the expense of Library users, colleagues, or [Library Name].
- I will disqualify myself immediately whenever the appearance of a conflict of interest exists.
- I will not use my position to gain unwarranted privileges or advantages for myself or others from [Library Name] or from those who do business with [Library Name].
- I will not interfere with the management responsibilities of the Director or the supervision of Library staff.
- I will be prepared to support to the fullest the efforts of [Library Name] staff in resisting censorship of library materials by groups or individuals.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Please return this signed document to the Library Director.

Appendix D – Sample Confidentiality Agreement

A new Board or committee member shall execute this agreement concurrent with the assumption of their responsibilities.

The [Library Name] Board and committee members acknowledges the importance of confidentiality with respect to the affairs of the [Library Name]. In light of this acknowledgement, members of the Board agree to keep confidential, during and after service, all potentially damaging information acquired pertaining to the organization and any related activities in the course of their service.

This commitment to confidentiality includes, but is not limited to:

- Information relating to and regarding a donor's identity, giving levels, and personal information
- Information regarding the strategic plan, programs and processes of the Library toward meeting goals, and the Library's competitive position
- Financial information not subject to open records laws including: annual budgets, revenues, expenses, long-term capital expenditures, fund raising, equipment purchases, information regarding the Library's financial condition such as debt, liquidity, reserves and endowment, return on investment
- Performance of the Director and staff including: evaluations, contract and employment conditions, and succession plans
- Contractual and legal details and negotiations involving the Library

It is particularly important that the Board recognize the sensitivity of information regarding donations, capital equipment decisions, real estate purchases, procurement of goods and services, decisions regarding closures or hours changes, grant applications and other strategic plans that may have an impact on the Library's competitive position relative to other library service providers and not-for-profits (both institutional and individual) in the Library's direct service area.

Board and committee members understand that the [Library Name] is a private entity and its right to private Board deliberations is to actively protected by the [Library Name] Board. Board and committee members are to direct any media inquiry on any issue to the Board President or Director, unless otherwise directed through Board consensus.

It is the Board Executive Committee's responsibility to address infractions of this Confidentiality Agreement and to take action to remedy the problem. If infractions persist, the Board Executive Committee, Board President, and/or the Board will ask for the resignation of the individual Board or committee member who has violated this oath and commitment.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Please return this signed document to the Library Director.

Appendix E – Sample Board Assessments

Board members should annually evaluate themselves and the Board as a whole. This assessment allows each member to ensure they are still working for the betterment of the Library as a whole and to see where they can improve. Adapted from Jean Block Consulting (<http://www.jblockinc.com/resources>)

Sample Individual Board Member Assessment

	Excellent	Good	Needs Work	Don't Know/ NA
Governance				
I fully support and accept the mission of the library.				
I have a copy of, and have read, the bylaws. I ensure the bylaws are followed in all dealings and activities.				
I have studied, and use for reference, the PA Getting On Board Trustee manual and handout.				
I know the library laws as they apply to my library.				
I understand, accept, and take personal responsibility for, achieving the annual budget.				
I actively serve on at least one Board committee.				
I ensure that annual goals are met where my personal responsibility has been identified.				
I advocate for the organization within my personal sphere of influence.				
I use every opportunity to inform civic groups and public officials of the services and needs of my library, and its value to the community.				
I have frequent contact with my State Senator and Representative concerning library legislation.				
I support and assist the staff only as requested and required.				
I participate in short and long range planning activities.				
I participate respectfully in Board discussions to achieve informed and fair votes.				
Once the Board votes on an issue, I commit to support the decision.				
I understand that I have no authority apart from the full Board and cannot act on behalf of the Board without being authorized.				
I know when my Library was established and highlights of its history.				

	Excellent	Good	Needs Work	Don't Know/ NA
Administrative				
I attend all regular and special meetings of the Board unless excused in advance.				
I arrive on time for meetings.				
I come to all regular and special meetings prepared, having reviewed minutes, financials, and other documents.				
I attend at least one library conference or workshop every two years.				
I attend and participate in the annual planning retreat.				
I respect the chain of command in all dealings with staff and other Board members.				
Financial Management				
I am thoroughly familiar with the Library's budget and the budget process.				
I am thoroughly familiar with the sources of Library funds from all sources.				
I understand the financial reports.				
I make and recruit annual gifts to meet or exceed the established Board giving policy.				
I attend and secure financial support for all special fundraising activities and events.				
Library Services				
I am thoroughly familiar with the services and collections the Library offers.				
I am thoroughly familiar with the programs and events the Library offers.				
I visit the Library frequently.				
I support the Library Director in efforts to provide excellent service to meet the wide-ranging needs of the community.				
I am thoroughly familiar with the collection development/maintenance policy, including materials challenges.				
I am thoroughly familiar with and fully support the principles of intellectual freedom.				

Things I can do to strengthen my individual Board performance:

Sample Overall Library Board Assessment

	Excellent	Good	Needs Work	Don't Know/ NA
Governance				
We support and accept the Library's mission.				
We review the Library's mission statement, policy manual, and bylaws regularly.				
We ensure that the Library's mission is the guiding principle in all decisions we make.				
We abide by the bylaws in all dealings and activities.				
We understand the Duties of Care, Loyalty, and Obedience.				
We have strong Board development strategies, including a nominating committee, an orientation program, and an annual planning retreat.				
We operate with strong committees who have reporting procedures and accountability, with appropriate membership and expertise.				
We respect and act on the recommendations of committees/task forces.				
We develop and achieve short and long-range strategic goals.				
We regularly monitor and evaluate progress toward strategic goals.				
We sign annual conflict of interest statements, ethics statements and confidentiality agreements.				
We actively advocate for the organization in the community and beyond.				
We effectively report the interest of the community.				
We hold annual self-evaluations.				

	Excellent	Good	Needs Work	Don't Know/ NA
We know, understand, and follow all Board policies and ensure timely reporting to local, state, and federal regulatory bodies.				
We have a bonded Board Treasurer in compliance with the Library Code.				
We understand the principles of intellectual freedom and support the concept of developing and maintain a broad and diverse collection of materials that represent a variety of views and opinions.				
We confine our activities to policy and governance, not management issues.				
	Excellent	Good	Needs Work	Don't Know/ NA
Administrative				
We follow parliamentary procedure.				
We hold effective meetings, following an agenda and time line.				
We come to the meetings prepared to discuss issues on the agenda.				
We have job descriptions for Board members and officers.				
We review minutes and financial statements at every meeting.				
We require written committee reports at every meeting.				
We sign annual commitment letters.				
We respect and follow the chain of command in relationships with staff.				
We hire and supervise the Library Director/Executive Director only and do not get involved with staff management.				
We set annual goals and evaluate the Library Director/Executive Director's performance with agreed upon goals.				
We use comparative data to set salaries and benefits.				

Financial Management				
We set an achievable and sustainable annual budget.				
We understand our fiscal responsibility to ensure sufficient funds for the operating budget of the Library.				
We set and accept fundraising goals for individual Board members.				
We participate in and support fundraising efforts.				
We develop and approve a diverse fund development program.				
Things we can do to strengthen our overall Board performance:				