



Responsibilities of Trustees

The level of quality of a library reflects the level of quality of the trustees who are and have been on its board.

Legal requirements

Since a public library belongs to the entire community, boards of trustees have been created by law to act as the governing body of the library. Library board members are holders of the public trust, so it is not surprising that there are some legal requirements regarding this appointed position. Trustee powers are set out in Section 3375.40 Ohio Revised Code, and are specifically assigned to the trustee acting within the board structure.

All authority resides in the board, meeting and taking action as a quorum. The board expresses its views in the policies which it adopts. A board member should voice his or her opinion and views openly, and each person's opinion should be expressed and listened to carefully before board action is taken. Once the board has adopted a policy officially, it is the responsibility of each board member to accept and support that policy.

In addition to being a policy-setting group, the board is also an advocacy group, supporting the library before the budget commission, the state legislature, civic and cultural organizations, and the public at large.

Library Board Responsibilities*

Providing library services and materials that reflect the community's values and standards is the overriding responsibility of the board.

The library board is accountable to the public to see that the library is operated in an efficient and productive manner. To accomplish this, the board's attention is focused on:

- Establishing policies to provide the direction for all aspects of the library;
- Overseeing the financial operations of the library, including adopting an annual budget, approving the bills, and reviewing the financial documents of the library;
- Planning and evaluating library services;
- Purchasing and maintaining all property owned by the library;
- Appointing the director and the fiscal officer for the library;
- Acting as an advocate for the library in the community as well as in government; and
- Staying informed on issues that impact public libraries.

The library is operated under the administrative guidance of the director who is hired by the board. Hiring of an able administrator is one of the most important duties of the board. The administrator interprets the policies of the board to assure that the needs and expectations of the taxpayers, the patrons, employees, and the budget commission are being met in the best possible way.

*Taken from Ohio Public Library Trustees' Handbook, Ohio Library Council - 2008