

CAN YOU GUESS WHO I AM?

I schedule, council, hire and fire employees...

No, I'm not a Human Resource Specialist.

I work with city, state and national laws...

No, I'm not a lawyer or a police chief.

I plan, perform, hire and schedule performers...

No, I'm not an actor or agent.

I supervise the maintenance of a building or buildings...

No, I'm not a Facility Manager or Head of Maintenance.

I manage the budget; keep statistics, bills and payroll...

No, I'm not an accountant or treasurer.

I do surveys, county and state reports...

No, I'm not a statistician or city clerk.

I write news releases, PSA's, Cable TV announcements; create posters, flyers, and brochures; speak on the radio or TV...

No, I'm not a Public Relations person.

I help to educate citizens in my community...

No, I'm not a teacher or school superintendent.

I teach computer skills and other things in my community and beyond...

No, I'm not a trainer.

I install programs and troubleshoot computer problems...

No, I'm not a technical support specialist.

I purchase supplies, equipment and furniture...

No, I'm not a purchasing agent.

I move or have moved materials, equipment and furniture...

No, I'm not a mover or dispatcher.

I track down information...

No, I'm not a detective.

I watch over the safety of people in our building...

No, I'm not a security guard.

I speak before and work with the city council, legislators and senators...

No, I'm not a lobbyist or politician.

I work on local, state and national committees and with a board...

No, I'm not a CEO.

I'm a bit of all of these things: human resource specialist, lawyer, actor, facility manager, accountant, statistician, public relations person, teacher, trainer, technical support specialist, purchasing agent, mover, detective, security guard, lobbyist and CEO...

I'm a public librarian.

*Peggy Kindschi, Director
Columbus Public Library*



Avoiding Conflict Between the Board and the Director

By Greta Thompson, Assistant Director
Outagamie Waupaca Library System

Probably nothing damages the image of the library more than open conflict between the Library Board and the Library Director. Over a period of time it can undermine the library's plans, services, and staff, blocking any hope of growth and progress. Conflict that everyone pretends does not exist is probably even more destructive, just because it's there but elusive.

Working hard to avoid or end conflict is well worth the effort it takes. As in everything, preventive measures are preferable to repair and healing; but the following principles may help if you find yourself in either situation.

The first and most basic principle is to know your responsibilities and duties as a trustee and to know the director's responsibilities and duties. These are spelled out in Wisconsin Statutes chapter 43.58, and also in *Trustee Essential #2: Who Runs the Library?* (*Trustee Essentials: A Handbook for Wisconsin Public Library Trustees*). Every trustee and every director should review and discuss these responsibilities and duties regularly.

You may find that members of the board have different interpretations of the appropriate roles trustees have in preparing the budget, supervising personnel, or communicating with municipal boards. You may find that the director's expectations of the board are different from the board's understanding of its duties. It is much better

to resolve any differences you have before a conflict arises or before someone's patience is frayed or before someone's misunderstanding leads to a public problem.

It's possible, however, that your different opinions will come to light only when you're in the middle of a heated argument or grumbling behind the scenes. At that point someone needs to call "time" and suggest that the board and the director go back to the roles and responsibilities. Maybe the answer is clear as soon as you review them. Or maybe what becomes clear is that you have an unrecognized difference of opinion that you need to discuss and resolve before returning to the immediate problem.

That can happen fairly easily if each party believes that the other is acting in good faith. It will never happen if the parties do not have good will toward each other, if they do not trust and respect the other. That's not a conclusion to jump to quickly, but if you do reach it in the end, then it's time to part company. It might mean that the director leaves, or it might mean that one or more of the trustees resign. Remember that the definition of insanity is to keep doing what you know doesn't work.

A final principle for avoiding or repairing conflict is to leave

your ego at home. Differences are more fruitfully discussed when everyone recognizes that multiple opinions are possible and legitimate. That the director believes this doesn't mean that the Board, who believe something else, is wrong. It means that they differ. "Our job as the library board of trustees is to ask the municipal board for the money we need to operate a good library." The director may say, "Oh, but we know the municipality won't give us an increase, and they'll just get irritated if we ask for one." Both statements may be true. "That's the trouble with you, you're too timid," a board member replies. The director says, "You go to the village board with this budget then. Don't ask me to." "But that's your job," the board member says. In brief, that's a discussion heading for trouble. A good board and a good director will pause, reconsider their roles and responsibilities, discuss the options, and come to a decision—one of several reasonable possibilities—that leaves both feeling that they can work together productively.



A Policy List for Public Libraries

Here is a list of policies that may be relevant to your library's needs. It is provided to help boards check their policies and needs; not every library will need every one of these policies. The policies are arranged in the form of an outline to underscore how they may relate to one another. Listed under each policy are items that may be considered and covered when making the policy.

Public Services or User-Related Policies

A. Eligibility for borrowing and services

1. Resident and non-resident
2. Interlibrary loan
3. Programming and outreach

B. Collection development policy

1. Mission and goals with community description
2. Responsibility for selection
3. Selection criteria for each format
4. Scope of collection and priorities
5. Selection procedures and vendor relations
6. Evaluation, weeding, and maintenance
7. Censorship, access, and challenged materials procedure
8. Intellectual Freedom Statement, Library Bill of Rights
9. Gifts and donations

C. Circulation policy

1. Loan period and renewal
2. Confidentiality
3. Reserved materials
4. Fines, damages
5. Special collections
6. Audiovisual equipment

D. Reference policy

E. Facilities policy

1. Hours of operation
2. *Americans with Disabilities Act* compliance
3. Security
4. Meeting room use
5. Exhibits and displays
6. Use of library equipment

E. Community relations policy

1. Cooperative borrowing agreements
2. Relations with schools
3. Public relations
4. Volunteers
5. Friends group



Management Policies

Note: The municipality may have policies governing some of the items listed below. This list is a description of what might be included in a management policy. References should be made to applicable municipal policies where relevant and the board should develop its own policies as needed.

A. General

1. Responsibility and authority
2. Budgeting and purchasing

B. Personnel

1. Responsibility and authority
2. Job descriptions and classification
3. Salaries and benefits
4. Hours, sick leave, overtime, holidays, and vacation
5. Hiring and termination
6. Performance evaluation and promotion
7. Continuing education and professional development
8. Discipline and grievances
9. Compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and EEO guide lines

C. Facilities

1. Responsibility and procedures for maintenance
2. Acquisition and ownership
3. Insurance and liability
4. Emergency preparedness
5. Use of equipment, vehicles, etc.

From the *Rhode Island Public Library Trustees Handbook*

<http://www.lori.ri.gov/trustees/trustees.pdf>
(pdf p 33)

Trustees as Advocates

is the topic of a Winnefox-sponsored workshop for trustees that will be held on Wednesday 31 March from 5:30 – 7:30 at the Ripon Public Library.

Rick Grobschmidt, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, will be the presenter.

Trustees from other library systems are welcome to attend. You can find out more and register online at <http://extranet.winnefox.org/calendar/trustees.html> or contact Mark Arend by phone (920-236-5222) or email (arend@mail.winnefox.org) for more information.



TRUSTEE SOAPBOX

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