



The British Columbia Library Trustees Association

# THE EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBER

A HANDBOOK FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY TRUSTEES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



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#### Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

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Public libraries are the cornerstones of our communities – enriching our quality of life and contributing to community development. Public libraries change lives.

They allow access to the world of information and imagination, contribute to literacy development, provide resources for lifelong learning and economic development, and, for many people, public libraries have contributed to their love of reading.

As a representative of your community and as a public library trustee, you are part of the network of individuals working to ensure that libraries continue to contribute to the ideals of a free, democratic society by promoting intellectual freedom and providing free, equitable access to knowledge and ideas.

This handbook has been prepared by the British Columbia Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) to assist you with your role as a public library trustee. It provides information to ensure that board members are fully cognizant of their rights, roles and responsibilities and are able to carry out their mandate on behalf of their communities.

The handbook will be of greatest value to those trustees who have received an orientation to their library/system from their library director and board chair, including:

- An introduction to senior staff and tour of the facilities;
- A manual of current policies and procedures of your library, including bylaws;
- Your library's strategic plan and mission statement;
- A copy of the provincial *Library Act*;
- Copies of annual reports from the previous three years;
- An overview of services considered “core” by previous boards and any innovative programs and services;
- An outline of indicators of library success with trend data for five years;
- A discussion of current trends and issues in public library service provision and delivery; and,
- Data for changing demographics and service needs in your community.

BCLTA also offers a number of other services to support trustees – a full description is found on page 41. Of particular relevance to new trustees is the highly regarded Trustee Orientation Program (TOP). TOP sessions are one day in length, typically on a weekend, and are presented throughout the province by experienced trustees, on request, to individual boards and groups of boards. TOP content is also available online through BCLTA's website at [www.bclta.org](http://www.bclta.org).

Ongoing training and support is a critical need for effective trustees. This responsibility is shared by the municipality, the board (particularly the board chair), and the BCLTA.

This handbook is, of necessity, an overview and introduction. It cannot provide full and sufficient information on any one topic, but rather provides a sense of responsibility, purpose and process. It does not provide detailed advice on different models of governance, but rather addresses common elements. Similarly, boards facing specific situations, such as a search for a new director, establishing a foundation, or planning a new building, will want to seek expert advice. Additional resources are provided within this handbook and should be consulted for elaboration and different perspectives.

## Role and Status of the Board

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The role of the library board is laid out by the provincial government.

The *Library Act* specifies the role, rights and responsibilities of the board; identifies who can be appointed, how, and for how long; how and when the board chair and vice chair are to be selected; how often the board must meet; and budgeting and finance considerations; among other areas.

Every trustee must have a copy of the current *Library Act* and have carefully reviewed the legislative framework for the operation of library boards and libraries in British Columbia. You should have received a copy from your director and have had a discussion with the director and the board chair in response to any questions about it and the implications it contains for the governance and operation of your library.

It is important to know which type of library board you belong to (i.e., municipal, association, regional, etc.) because there are different sections of the *Library Act* which pertain to each “type” of public library.

The *BC Library Act* can be downloaded and printed for one-time personal use from [www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/L/96264\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/L/96264_01.htm) > Laws > Search for *Library Act* or click on the letter “L” and scroll to *Library Act*

It may not be photocopied. It can be purchased from Crown Publications Inc., 521 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8W 1E7. Telephone: 250.386.4636, Website: [www.crownpub.bc.ca](http://www.crownpub.bc.ca).

## ***General Powers and Duties***

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The legal role and status of the board is outlined in the *Library Act*. The examples given here are taken from the current *Library Act* and apply primarily to municipal libraries. Check for any changes or differences for other types of library boards.

The library board:

- May make rules for managing its business and for regulating the use of its facilities and services;
- May appoint any committees of its members that it considers necessary to carry out its business;
- Must appoint a chief librarian (referred to as “director” within this handbook);
- May hire and dismiss employees, enter into collective agreements with employees and set the terms of their employment, including fixing their remuneration and duties;
- May lease land or buildings for library purposes, but only with the prior approval of the municipal council;
- May acquire personal property for library purposes and dispose of personal property;
- May contract, for a term of not more than five years, for professional or other services for library purposes;
- May sue and be sued;
- May have a common seal and may alter or change it; and,
- Must prepare an annual report in the form approved by the Minister and must send copies of the report to the Minister.

### **Regular and Special Meetings**

The board must meet at regular intervals at least six times a year (four times for regional boards). A majority of all the members of the board is a quorum.

The board chair, or any two members, may call a special meeting of the board by notifying, in writing, the other members at least two days before the meeting and stating in the notice the purpose of the meeting.

### **Election of the Chair and Vice Chair**

The board must elect a board chair and a vice chair at its first meeting in each year after appointments are made to the library board. If the chair is not present at a meeting of the board, the vice chair has all the powers of the chair and is subject to all rules applicable to the chair. If neither the chair nor the vice chair is present at a meeting, the members present may elect an acting chair who has, during the meeting, all the powers of the chair and is subject to all rules applicable to the board chair.

### **Absent Trustees**

On receiving a report from the library board, the municipal council may remove a member of the board for cause, including if the member fails to attend three consecutive regular meetings of the board without its written approval, becomes an employee of the municipality or of the board, or ceases to be a resident or elector of the municipality.

## **Budget and Financing**

On or before March 1<sup>st</sup> in each year, the board must prepare and submit to the municipal council its annual budget for providing library service in the municipality. The municipal council must approve, with or without amendment, the budget submitted to it. At the request of the library board, the municipal council may approve an amendment to the approved budget.

The municipal council must include in its annual budget a sum sufficient to finance the library board's approved budget. The municipality must pay to the library board the sum included in the annual budget and the payments must be made on the dates scheduled by the library board and the municipality.

(The rules for regional library boards and public library associations are different from these guidelines.)

## **Free Service**

A library board must not charge for admission to any part of a building used for public library purposes, or using library materials on library premises. A library board must allow residents and electors of any area served by the library board to do the following free of charge: (a) borrow library materials that are normally lent by the library and that belong to prescribed categories of library materials; (b) use reference and information services as the library board considers practicable.

A library board may charge fees for services not required to be provided free of charge, including for the use of services by anyone who is not a resident or elector of an area served by the board.

One recent initiative by the provincial government – called *OneCard* – aims to further facilitate access to resources throughout the province by allowing any resident of BC with a library card from their “home” library system to borrow and return materials free of charge from any library in BC.

The following categories of library materials are prescribed to be lent free of charge:

- Art prints, photographs;
- Audiocassettes, audio compact discs, vinyl records;
- Books with hard, soft or paper covers, Braille books and periodicals;
- CD-ROMs, computer diskettes;
- Maps and charts, microforms, music scores;
- Motion picture films, video cassettes, video laser discs; and,
- Newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals.

## **Enforcement of Library Rules**

A library board may impose fines for breaches of the library rules, suspend library privileges for breaches of the library rules, or exclude from the library anyone who behaves in a disruptive manner or damages library property.

## **Conflict of Interest and Protection against Lawsuits**

Of interest to all board members are Section 53 of the *Library Act*, which addresses conflict of interest, and Section 54, which covers protection against lawsuits.

# Public Libraries in British Columbia

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## *A Brief History*

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- 1859 First library established in Fort Hope
- 1864 Cariboo Literary Institute established  
Mechanics Institute of Victoria established, forerunner of Greater Victoria Public Library
- 1891 *Free Libraries Act* enabled communities to establish libraries supported by local taxes, administered by a locally appointed board of trustees, rather than non-profit societies supported by voluntary contributions and fees
- 1898 Travelling libraries established to serve rural communities
- 1903 First Carnegie Library in BC: New Westminster
- 1911 British Columbia Library Association  
A small group of librarians come together to create a Provincial Library Association. One of their first concerns is to lobby for new library legislation to promote the development and extension of library service in BC.
- 1919 *Public Libraries Act* - Public Library Commission  
Establishes a Public Library Commission, responsible for provincial grants for public libraries, as well as administration of the “Travelling Library”, boxes of books sent out on loan to communities and rural schools, and a books-by-mail system (later called the Open Shelf). It also makes provisions for “public library associations”, allowing for the development of public libraries in smaller, rural areas.
- 1927/28 British Columbia Library Survey  
This survey looks at all types of library service in the province, and notes the difficulty of providing service in such a large geographic area, with sparsely populated rural and remote areas. The outcome of the Survey is the British Columbia Survey Report (1929), a “programme for library progress” in the Province. It shapes both the provincial agency responsible for public libraries in BC, and the development of library services in the Province.
- 1930/34 Library district demonstration project  
Dr. Helen Gordon Stewart is appointed director of the Fraser Valley “library district demonstration”. This project is funded by the Carnegie Corporation, and is intended to demonstrate the feasibility of large regional libraries; it is the first of its kind in the world.
- 1936 Okanagan Union Library and Vancouver Island Library
- 1941 Libraries in British Columbia Report, 1940
- 1945 Programme for Library Development in British Columbia
- 1950 Programme for Library Development in British Columbia, revised
- 1961 University of British Columbia  
A graduate school of librarianship is established.
- 1965 Survey of British Columbia School Libraries

- 1966 Public Libraries in British Columbia: A Survey with Recommendations (Vainstein Report)
- 1968 Library Development Commission
- 1971 British Columbia Centennial Citizens' Conference on Libraries
- 1972 *Public Libraries Act* amended to provide for federated and integrated library systems
- 1975 Greater Vancouver Library Federation
- 1976 Cariboo-Thompson Nicola Library System (serving two regional districts)
- 1977 British Columbia Library Trustees Association  
BCLTA is registered under the Societies Act, February 9, 1977.  
British Columbia Union Catalogue (BCUC)
- 1978 Library Services Branch
- 1983 Greater Vancouver Library Federation
- 1987 New Approaches Task Force  
Ministerial Task Force on Public Libraries
- 1988 British Columbia's Public Libraries : A New Approach  
The Final Report of the New Approaches Task Force on Public Libraries is published. The Task Force was established to review the provision and delivery of public library service in B.C.  
- A plan for a province-wide electronic interlibrary loan network is created.  
- Changes to service delivery by the Library Services Branch are made and direct services such as the Open Shelf and block loans of books are eventually discontinued.
- 1989 ELN  
The British Columbia Electronic Library Network (BC ELN), a partnership between the Province of British Columbia and its publicly-funded post-secondary libraries, is created to assist with collaborative projects, e.g. resource sharing and database licensing.
- 1990 Review of the *Library Act* resulted in Public Library Legislation (1993), a white paper for public review and a new *Library Act* (1994), allowing for no more Public Library Associations or Integrated Systems, and regulations ensuring free basic service (admission, use, borrowing) by local residents (1995)
- 1994 A new Library Act is passed.  
Any new public libraries must be established either as a municipal library or a regional library district. The Act reaffirms and entrenches the value of free public library services by defining core free services.
- 1996 *Library Act* revision
- 2004 New Vision and Provincial Strategic Plan – *Libraries Without Walls: The World Within Your Reach*
- 2009 BC Libraries Cooperative  
Established to manage Sitka's Evergreen Integrated Library System.

## ***Types of Public Libraries in BC***

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Under the *Library Act* there are five main “types” of public library systems in BC

updated February 2011, BC Public Library Services Branch

### **Municipal Libraries (28)**

- Established under Part 2 of the *Library Act*, following the passage of a municipal bylaw.
- Supported primarily by municipal revenues, as well as provincial grants.
- The board is made up of five to 13 members, consisting of the mayor or a delegate, who serves a one-year, renewable term and other non-council members who are appointed by council to serve renewable, two-year terms for a maximum of eight consecutive years.

### **Regional Library Districts (3)**

- Established under Part 3 of the *Library Act* following a written agreement or plebiscite, regional library districts are tax-requisitioning authorities comprised of municipalities and regional districts which represent rural areas.
- A Board of Management is made up of one representative from each constituent municipality or regional district appointed by the municipal council or regional district board.
- The Fraser Valley, Okanagan, and Vancouver Island Regional Libraries serve 59 municipalities with more than one-third of British Columbia's population.

### **Public Library Associations (38)**

- No new PLAs will be established. Those already established are governed by Part 4 of the *Library Act*.
- Membership is open to all residents of the locality served by the library although members must be 18 years of age or older to vote or hold office.
- A board of management is made up of from five to nine members of the association elected by the members to serve a one- or two-year term (maximum eight consecutive years).
- Municipal councils and/or regional district boards providing a grant may appoint a representative to the board.

### **Integrated Public Library System (2)**

- No new integrated public library systems will be established. Those already established are governed by Part 6 - Section 60 of the *Library Act*.
- An integrated public library system is an organization of regional districts or a regional district that provides and maintains a library system .
- There are two integrated public library systems:
  1. The Cariboo Regional District Library System; and
  2. Thompson-Nicola Regional District Library System.

## Library Federations (6)

- Established under Part 5 - Section 49 of the *Library Act*, a federated public library system is an organization of library boards providing common services.
- A federated board is made up of representatives of participating library boards which retain responsibility for local services and support.
- As of winter 2010, there are six federations in BC.
  1. Public Library InterLINK - is the oldest federation in BC dating back to 1994 and before. InterLINK has 18 member libraries in southwest BC.
  2. Kootenay Library Federation - established in February 2006. It has 19 member libraries.
  3. North Coast Library Federation - established in September 2006, this federation has seven member libraries in northwest BC. The federation works closely with the library at Northwest Community College.
  4. North Central Library Federation - includes 10 public libraries from Valemount to Burns Lake and 100 Mile House to Mackenzie. It came into being in July 2007.
  5. North East Library Federation - situated in the northeast part of the province. It has seven member libraries and was established in October 2007.
  6. IslandLink Library Federation - is the newest federation, established November 2008. It has 4 member libraries.

## ***Other Types of Libraries***

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In terms of the context for public libraries, it is important to be aware of other types of libraries in BC.

**Academic Libraries** comprise college and university libraries. Professional staff typically hold a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association. This degree is recognized by the Canadian Library Association. Librarians and other library workers typically belong to the BC Library Association (BCLA).

**School Libraries** are staffed by “teacher-librarians.” Public schools engage qualified and experienced teachers who hold an additional diploma in teacher-librarianship. Some schools engage teachers with no particular training in teacher-librarianship or clerks and volunteers. Some teacher-librarians may hold an MLIS degree. In some private schools, professional staff may hold only the MLIS degree and no teaching qualification. Provincial support for school libraries has declined dramatically over the past 20 years, resulting in coalitions of parents, trustees, publishers, and public libraries, among others, working to rectify the situation. Needless to say, the resulting demand on public libraries has also been dramatic. Further information detailing teacher-librarian impact on student achievement and the impact of budget reductions is available in the 2003 report *The Crisis in School Libraries: The Case for Reform and Reinvestment* funded by the Department of Heritage and the Association of Canadian Publishers. The report is available at [www.peopleforeducation.com/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=999](http://www.peopleforeducation.com/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=999). Teacher-librarians typically belong to the BC Teacher-Librarians’ Association (BCTLA), a provincial specialist association of the BC Teachers’ Federation.

**Special Libraries** are found primarily in government departments, not-for-profit agencies, and corporations like law firms, banks, and mining companies. (A “special” library serves a narrow and specialized clientele, but is also any library that is not academic, public or school.) These libraries or information centres range from solo operations to large staffs, from professional librarians with library technicians and clerks to volunteers. Special librarians in BC typically belong to the Special Libraries Association, an international association, and its Western Canada Chapter. There are also many associations for special librarians based on their particular area of specialization (e.g., law, health science, music).

In addition to **professional librarians** with the two-year MLIS graduate degree, and **teacher-librarians** with a teaching degree and a one-year diploma in teacher-librarianship, trained library staff might include **library technicians** who hold a two-year post-secondary certificate from a community college (but almost 50 per cent of library technicians also hold a university degree). Smaller public libraries in remote communities may have staff members who hold the **Community Library Certificate** from the Public Library Services Branch.

## ***The Public Library Services Branch***

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*Our libraries are a great investment in community, learning and literacy. They open doors of opportunity for minds hungry for knowledge and adventure. They are the front lines of the effort to make British Columbia the most literate place in the world.*

— Premier Gordon Campbell, 2004

The role of public libraries becomes even more significant in the information age. Public libraries offer accurate information that is easily accessible. They have led the way in adopting and adapting new technologies. In the past 25 years, libraries have computerized their cataloguing, streamlined checkout procedures, provided electronic delivery of information, and facilitated public access to the Internet.

### **Fast facts**

- In BC, public library services can be accessed at any one of the 243 public library facilities.
- Many electronic services can be accessed from anywhere you can connect to the Internet.
- Responsibility for management and control of BC public libraries rests with 71 locally appointed library boards, accountable under the Library Act for \$202 million in annual revenue.
- 6 library federations coordinate regionally focused library services.
- Local governments fund the lion's share of public libraries' annual operating budgets.
- All BC public libraries established under the Library Act are eligible for provincially funded annual per capita operating grants. Total Public Library Services funding to libraries and library associations was \$13.9 million in 2010/11.
- 98.8% of BC's population is served by public libraries.
- 60% (over 2.6 million people) of BC's residents have active library cards.
- Over 56 million items were checked out of BC public libraries in 2009, and almost 3.5 million questions answered.

### **About the Branch**

The Public Library Services Branch exists to provide leadership and support to public library authorities and to sustain the vital role of public library services for all British Columbians.

The major roles of the Branch are:

- provide relevant support programs to public libraries;
- administer and ensure compliance with the *Library Act*;
- assist libraries in implementing new technologies;
- facilitate resource sharing among all types of libraries;
- build partnerships with local government, the private sector, and community groups; and,
- guide libraries in identifying and securing revenues from new sources.

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Visit the PLSB website at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/)

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## **Programs and Services for Public Libraries**

### **Access Copyright License**

PLSB administers the Access Copyright license which provides compensation for publishers and creators of works while allowing libraries to legally serve the photocopying needs of their patrons.

### **BC Libraries Cooperative**

PLSB has partnered in the establishment of the BC Libraries Cooperative which oversees the implementation and development of Sitka/Evergreen in BC libraries.

### **BC OneCard**

BC OneCard allows BC residents traveling in the province to use the services of public libraries wherever they go. A customer only needs a valid public library card from their home community – and current identification – to sign up as a BC OneCard member in another community. This entitles them to use, borrow, and return items from any public library in BC.

### **BiblioCommons Implementation**

The PLSB is supporting/facilitating the implementation of BiblioCommons, a web interface using Web 2.0 concepts, layered on top of public library catalogues. BiblioCommons is now being implemented at virtually all the large libraries in BC. New Westminster was the first BC library to go live.

### **Child and Youth Reading Clubs**

The branch provides annual funding and staff support to BCLA's annual provincial reading clubs which promote child and youth literacy.

### **Community Library Training Program (CLTP)**

The purpose of this web-based distance education program is to help BC public library staff and volunteers develop the skills they need to serve their communities. On average, 130-150 students attend CLTP courses each year. PLSB offers 2-3 courses per term, 3 terms per year.

### **Consulting Services**

PLSB staff provide consulting services to librarians, library staff, and library trustees representing 77 Public Library entities (243 service points) across the province. Consulting services are provided by phone, by e-mail, and in person. Library boards frequently request that PLSB staff attend Board meetings to present information on behalf of government.

## DAISY Book Provincial Collection

The BC provincial DAISY book collection consists of approximately 400 titles, with 800 items, available to BC public library users with print disabilities at 31 participating public libraries. The collection is also available to all BC public libraries via Inter-Library Loan (ILL). The collection is intended to supplement non-print materials at local public libraries.

## Database/Audiobook Licensing and Training

In cooperation with other agencies such as the Electronic Library Network (BC's post-secondary libraries) and a national network of libraries called Consortia Canada, the Branch negotiates reference and audiobook licences on behalf of B.C. public libraries to get the best price and terms. PLSB also provides regular training sessions for library staff, primarily via free online "webinars".

## Grants Administration

The PLSB staff administer various grant programs on behalf of the Province and in support of BC public libraries. Grant programs administered by PLSB include:

- Annual operating grant - The Branch distributes annual per capita operating grants to public library boards. These grants are based on population served and are provided to all libraries established under the provincial Library Act.
- Resource sharing grant - BC public libraries receive an annual grant to support the lending of materials between libraries.
- Literacy/equity grant - BC Public Libraries receive a literacy grant to support the promotion of literacy and life-long learning.

## Governance Review

The PLSB is responsible for the ongoing review of the Library Act. The Library Act was last revised in 1996.

## InterLibrary Loan (ILL)

Libraries in British Columbia co-operate with one another to share library resources. Each year, British Columbia's public library users borrow over 122,000 books from libraries outside of their communities. In partnership with the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) and the BC ELN, the PLSB Inter-Library Loan (ILL) Program supports province-wide public library ILL by co-funding "Outlook Online" and by providing grants to public libraries to assist with the cost of supplying items requested through ILL.

## LawMatters

LawMatters is a collaborative partnership between the BC Courthouse Library Society, public libraries, and the Public Library Services Branch to fund and distribute basic legal collections to public libraries and to train library staff to help the public find legal information.

## Library Federations

PLSB encourages, facilitates, and supports library federations to maximize cost-effectiveness and library service delivery within regions of BC.

## Outlook Online

Outlook Online is a union catalogue of BC public and academic library holdings. Public library records account for 75% of the total records. This is a cooperative project administered and

funded by the PLSB and BC ELN.

### Professional Collection

The Public Library Services Branch maintains a small collection of approximately 900 titles of monographs, serials, and videos on various topics related to public libraries and librarianship.

The Professional Collection is for the use of Branch staff and for BC public library staff and board members. Items, including videos, may be borrowed by public libraries through InterLibrary Loan, using OutLook Online. Requests for materials that are received by email or telephone will be entered into OutLook Online and handled as an interlibrary loan.

### Public Library Online Templates [PLOT] Program

The PLOT Program provides participating BC public libraries with a complete website and content management solution centrally hosted on PLSB servers. This program offers high functionality and expanded service for patrons, a high level of customization for libraries, and central control of content where appropriate. It also provides libraries with the infrastructure they need to ensure full participation in provincial initiatives.

### Sitka/Evergreen Open Source Integrated Library System (ILS)

Implementation of the Evergreen ILS will ensure that all BC public libraries can participate fully in provincial initiatives such as BC OneCard, licensed databases, and downloadable audiobooks. By providing a means to share patron data between libraries, this standards-based ILS extends the possibilities for multi-type library cooperation and streamlines the user experience across libraries. More than 60% of BC Libraries are now participating in SITKA.

### Statistics

The Branch compiles statistical and financial data summarizing the activities of BC public libraries. The data is collected using an internet-based survey and is published annually online. BC Public Libraries Statistics for the last few years are available online at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/reports.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/reports.htm)

## Operating Grants to Public Libraries

All BC public libraries established under the *Library Act* are eligible for provincial funding. Support is conditional on compliance with the terms of the *Library Act*. Funding may be withheld or reduced if the amount allocated exceeds local supports. Annual funding provided to public libraries by the Province must be used to purchase library materials or to defray general operating expenses.

(Note the importance of accurate population data in determining your operating grant.)

The following table details the funding formula used to calculate annual per capita operating grants for public libraries.

LIBRARY TYPES BY POPULATION* GROUP	X	PER CAPITA GRANT RATE		=	GRANT AMOUNT
Public libraries serving a <b>Population</b> less than 12,000 (34 Public Library Associations and 8 municipal libraries)	x	Urban RDs	\$3.00	=	\$\$\$
		Rural RDs	\$3.20		
Public libraries serving a <b>Population</b> from 12,000 to less than 35,000 (4 Public Library Associations and 7 municipal libraries)	x	Urban RDs	\$2.50	=	\$\$\$
		Rural RDs	\$2.70		
Public libraries serving a <b>Population</b> of 35,000 and over (11 municipal libraries)	x	Urban RDs	\$1.86	=	\$\$\$
		Rural RDs	\$2.20		
Regional Library Districts (3)					
Rural populations	x	Urban RDs	\$3.90	=	\$\$\$
		Rural RDs	\$4.10		
Municipal populations	x	Urban RDs	\$1.89	=	\$\$\$
		Rural RDs	\$2.20		
Regional District Integrated Public Library Systems (2)					
Rural populations	x		\$4.10	=	\$\$\$
Municipal populations	x		\$2.20	=	\$\$\$

### \*Notes:

- Population figures sourced from current annual estimates provided by BC STATS. Where annual estimates are not available, population figures are sourced from 2006 Census data.
- Urban Regional Districts (RDs) for the purpose of public library operating grants include Capital, Central Okanagan, Fraser Valley, and Greater Vancouver Regional Districts. All other Regional Districts are considered Rural RDs.

Source and updates available at <http://servicecentre.bclibraries.ca/servicecentre> with a login. Contact the PLSB Victoria Office at 1-800-663-7051 or [PLSB@gov.bc.ca](mailto:PLSB@gov.bc.ca)

# Board Effectiveness

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Effective boards demonstrate particular characteristics.

They know their **mission** and purpose. Successful boards connect with the community agenda for improving the quality of life of residents. They act in ways that demonstrate they are in the “business” of community development, not simply providing library or information services.

In this framework, effective boards **plan** strategically and go after the necessary resources to realize their plans. Planning for the future is a focus of board work, not simply hearing reports of what happened last month.

Effective boards select their **director** with care. They understand what they need to achieve, what competencies and personal qualities will be necessary to achieve their goals, possible barriers to success, and how they will support their director. The board’s strategic plan forms the annual approved work plan for the director. Evaluation of performance is done regularly in a fair, objective, and transparent manner as a means of feedback and professional growth.

**Roles and relationships** are clear. The board knows its role (the what) and the director knows his or her role (the how). It is important to remember that the director provides advice to the board and the board provides direction to the director. The board chair works effectively with the mayor, individual trustees work effectively with members of council, and the director works effectively with the municipal manager. Roles with community leaders and business leaders are articulated.

The board determines “the what” through strategic planning and direction-setting exercises and **monitors and evaluates** carefully. The board is accountable not only for smooth operations and fiscal responsibility but overall impact by leveraging library resources for community development. The concern is less with numbers than outcomes, less on books circulated than development of literacy.

The board maintains its **legal and ethical integrity** by knowing the legislative framework for its actions, acting on principles for financial integrity and espousing a code of ethics and conduct.

The board is committed to its own **high public standing** by raising the profile of the board chair, highlighting biographical statements and photographs of trustees on the website, and providing business cards for trustee use. Liaison activities with community agencies and branches are valued. Identification and recruitment of new trustees is undertaken in a planned and deliberate manner to develop a board representative of community demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, location), required expertise (e.g., education, finance, legal, marketing, technology) and experience (e.g., community boards, leadership, literacy, community development) essential to success.

The board assesses its own performance on a regular basis, discusses results, and commits to its own growth as a force for community development.

At a minimum, there are three core board functions:

1. Set strategic directions;
2. Hire/evaluate the director to implement #1; and,
3. Ensure monitoring and auditing of implementation and outcomes (the what, not the how).

In other words, start with the end in mind and plan to succeed in moving the organization forward.

**Stated somewhat differently, the Institute on Governance suggests these characteristics of effective boards:**

- Vision: planning the future (you have a bold vision for the library's contribution to community development);
- Destination: having clear goals and a road map (the board has the goals and objectives to realize the vision);
- Resources: acquiring the necessary resources (and working with the director to allocate those resources to achieve the stated goals);
- Monitoring: assessing progress and impact of services and programs (not simply numbers but also the outcome or impact on community development); and,
- Accountability: auditing, determining efficiency, reporting to stakeholders.

**The keys to board success are:**

- Strong board and staff leadership;
- Positive working relationship with the director;
- Role clarity between the board and director;
- Agreement on values, mission, objectives;
- Respect for norms, policies, teamwork;
- Good board development practices;
- Regular assessment of the board, the director, and the library;
- High levels of trust, and low levels of interpersonal conflict;
- Constructive resolution of conflicts and conflicts of interest;
- Balance between stability and flexibility, innovation and enterprise;
- Consensus or near-consensus decision-making; and,
- Effective management of meetings and board work.

**Conversely, boards in trouble tend to exhibit these characteristics:**

- Excessive turnover of directors and trustees;
- Difficulty recruiting credible trustees;
- Role confusion between the board and director;
- Low attendance/participation at meetings;
- Poor management of meetings;
- Factionalism or underground communication;
- Unresolved conflict;
- Failure to address conflicts of interest;
- Decision deadlock;
- Disrespect for organizational norms and policies; and,
- Poor communication with funders and key stakeholders.

## ***Board Structure***

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There are many ways to structure your library board. The most appropriate committee structure for your board is one that facilitates the board carrying out its roles and responsibilities without becoming focused on operations. The board's role is to provide an oversight to management, not duplicate its functions. As well, the board structure should also reflect the unique functions and responsibilities of the board itself.

Having said this, many library boards structure their committees around a combination of operational and board functions. Most boards have three to four committees, which may include the following:

**Finance and Audit:** Focusing on appropriate policies, procedures and controls to maintain fiscal integrity and reporting; oversight of regular external audits, including in-depth examination of particular areas.

**Human Resources:** Focusing on the performance review for the director (including establishing annual goals, preparing the review, etc.); providing personnel policies.

**Facilities:** Providing the director with direction and setting priorities for significant maintenance and capital projects with a long-term perspective.

**Public Relations/Advocacy:** Ensuring policies are in place to develop community support; identifying the role of the board with various stakeholders; developing an advocacy plan for the board (e.g., developing relationships with appropriate key stakeholders).

**Governance:** Focusing on board effectiveness, annual assessments of board performance, trustee orientation and training, recruitment of new trustees.

**Policy and Planning:** Focusing on policy gaps, policy reviews on a regular basis, and the planning function of the board.

**Program Monitoring and Impact:** Focusing on the effect of the resources allocated to specific programs, ranging from a summer reading program for children to support for home-based businesses; working with staff to evaluate outcomes and impacts in different areas over time.

Clear terms of reference for each committee should be part of your board's policy manual.

## ***Role of the Chair***

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If the board has three primary roles:

1. Set strategic directions;
2. Hire/evaluate the director to implement #1; and,
3. Ensure monitoring and auditing of implementation and outcomes (the what, not the how)

Then it should follow that the board chair also has three primary responsibilities which mirror these board roles:

1. Effective and efficient board governance, including structure, planning, work plans and meetings;
2. Supervision of the director; and
3. Public face of the board and the system and its impact on the community.

### **Position Profile for the Chair**

If one were recruiting a new board chair, here is what the posting criteria might look like:

- You want to make a mark or make a difference.
- You thrive in complex environments. You are respectful of individual differences, committed to quality, and to moving the system and your team forward.
- You take the broad view: you seek to position the library as an agent for community development.
- Passionate, articulate, committed, accountable... You welcome the opportunity to interact with community leaders and representatives to tell the library's story and to connect political and social agendas. You are comfortable with parents' groups and the chamber of commerce.
- Ideally, you are experienced in your community's affairs and see building community assets by focusing, repositioning, and leveraging the library's resources for the good of all.

Daunting? Yes, but critical to board and library success. The board chair leads, trains, delegates, readily accepts challenges, acts with integrity and for more than individual good, and is the spokesperson for the board and the library.

Effective board chairs are committed, keep their word, maintain an effective structure for the board's work, show respect and consideration, provide helpful information, facilitate interactions, control management's job without meddling, evaluate the organization, and see that the board speaks with one voice. Only the board chair speaks on policy matters for the library, not individual trustees, and not the director other than for day-to-day management issues.

## The Training Function

Trustees in British Columbia identified the following areas for essential training to be able to do their job effectively. They suggested that primary responsibility for either leading the training or organizing the training rested with the board chair.

Therefore, board chairs should ensure their members have current and accurate information and opportunities to learn more about:

- Board authority, measures of integrity, organization and structure, roles, and effective meetings;
- Role of the director with the board, performance measures for the director, supervising the director, evaluating the director, succession planning, hiring the director, management reviews of specific areas (e.g., organizational culture, communications, human resources policies and practices, financial reporting);
- Planning processes, determining mission and purpose, goal-setting;
- Policy-making and development;
- Roles and relationships with council/city hall, community groups, the business community, friends groups/volunteers;
- Role of the councillor on the board;
- Dealing with the media;
- Funding, fundraising, auditing finances;
- Monitoring and evaluating the library's performance and key success factors;
- Enhancing the public standing of the board; and,
- Trustee recruitment, selection, and retention.

In other words, every board member should be knowledgeable about current board practice and alternatives, and comfortable in participating fully in:

- Board governance/structures;
- Policy and planning (strategic planning, annual goals and objectives);
- Roles and relationships (director, municipality, community groups);
- Director performance;
- Finance and fundraising;
- Monitoring/auditing; and
- Board assessment/profile and renewal.

The board chair is also responsible for ensuring there is a succession plan for the chair's position by providing leadership opportunities for committee chairs and the vice chair.

## ***Trustee Guidelines***

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- Be committed to the growth and health of the community and the needs of the people served by the library.
- Allocate sufficient time from your business and personal life to fulfill your trustee responsibilities.
- Read all documents prior to meetings, noting comments or concerns.
- Attend all board and assigned committee meetings.
- Participate in discussions and decisions during board meetings.
- Be familiar with the *Library Act* and relevant local and provincial legislation.
- Be familiar with the library's policies and services.
- Understand the financial needs of the library's operation.
- Request additional information or clarification about issues as needed.
- Be knowledgeable of the library's financial base and sources of funding.
- Get a written professional opinion when required.
- Disclose any conflict of interest.
- Abide by decisions duly made by the board.
- Ensure confidentiality of "in-camera" board meetings.
- Assist in the support and orientation of new board members.
- Relate the library and its programs to the community by being a library advocate.
- Commit yourself to learning.

### **Ask yourself these essential questions:**

- Am I willing to invest the time to create an identity for our board and a sense of teamwork?
- Am I willing to work with the board to move deliberations and operations to the level of setting policy, goals, priorities, processes and frameworks, and monitor implementation?
- Am I willing to delegate to staff the means of implementation?
- Am I willing to avoid micromanagement and administration?
- Am I willing to be fair and constructive in feedback to the director?
- Can I acknowledge that the director directs the staff, not the board?
- Am I willing to invest the time in planning meetings to ensure success?
- Am I willing to invest in improvement (e.g., feedback, retreats)?
- Am I willing to model the behaviours that the board values (e.g., consensus building, starting/finishing on time, moving the agenda forward)?
- What is the current relationship among the chair, director, and the board? What should it be? How do I know?

## ***Code of Ethics***

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As a trustee you may be required to sign your board's own code of ethics or your municipality's code of ethics. Below is a code of ethics suggested by the Canadian Library Trustees Association for public library trustees and boards:

As Canadian Public Library Trustees,

1. We value the opportunity to serve the community we represent as trustees, and support and promote our public library systems and the benefits of public library systems.
2. We believe in the freedom to speak, read, hear, and view ideas and information, and we support unfettered access to all ideas and information. We recognize that libraries connect people to ideas and information, and that all library users are free to form, hold, and express their own beliefs.
3. We give full consideration to the learning and information needs of all members of the community, and reach decisions affecting our public library systems after taking into account the visions of our fellow board members in public meetings.
4. We join with our fellow trustees and board members, our staff, and the public in the continuing study of the nature, value, and direction of our public library systems and how they best serve our communities, in order to help facilitate needed changes and growth.
5. We understand that libraries must change to meet the changing needs and demands of a constantly changing society and community, and we seek to follow legal, professional, and ethical procedures to bring about desired and necessary changes in our public library systems.
6. We seek to comply with all federal, provincial, and local laws and regulations regarding public libraries.
7. We know and understand that our major responsibilities include making decisions on policy and planning; budgeting; hiring and evaluating the library director; and our public library systems' effectiveness in service to our public.
8. We accept the opportunity to work with our public library systems' library directors and with local, provincial, and federal elected and appointed officials to ensure adequate funding for our public library systems so that they and we may best serve our communities.
9. We have vested our library directors with the responsibility for handling all staff, patron, and vendor problems and complaints. However, if the library system administration should fail to resolve those problems or complaints, we will participate in acting on them in board meetings.
10. We understand the importance of participating in official board discussions and decisions, and we recognize that the authority rests with the whole board, assembled in public meetings.
11. We understand that individual board members should not make public statements or take individual actions which may compromise the board's integrity.
12. When we are representing our boards, we do not promote the interests of special individuals, interest groups, organizations, or political views which may be in conflict with the role of our library systems to serve everyone in our communities.

13. We will avoid situations where personal advantage or financial benefits may be gained at the expense of other library users.
14. We will declare any personal conflicts of interest and avoid voting on any issue that involves a personal conflict of interest.
15. We will respect and maintain the confidentiality and solidarity of the board's proceedings and not discuss these proceedings outside board meetings except with other trustees.

Canadian Library Trustees Association

# Effective Meetings

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A meeting is a purposeful formal gathering of organizational members to determine and undertake tasks to advance the agenda, maintain functions and processes, and build the group's capacity to act in the future. Meetings are concerned with people and processes to develop and advance the organization's goals.

## Some Reasons for Meetings

- Disperse information (cannot be the only reason!);
- Solve problems;
- Plan/strategize tasks;
- Air concerns;
- Invest in board growth and learning;
- Motivate staff;
- Make/validate decisions;
- Create new options, visions, directions;
- Establish new governance procedures;
- Evaluate works in progress; and
- Celebrate successes.

Meetings occur in the context of the board's mission, vision, values and strategic plan; it is the strategic issues and plans that should drive the agenda and the board's work.

Does the board have commonly agreed upon norms or ground rules? Examples might include: arrive on time; be informed; come prepared; participate; ask questions; give opinions; never make personal comments about someone; be respectful, trusting, caring; keep the board business in front of the board and personal business outside; focus on ideas and issues, not people; be honest; communicate authentically; comment succinctly and on topic; allow others to finish speaking; seek first to understand; assist the board chair whenever possible; volunteer for follow-up tasks; have the board chair summarize what has been accomplished; finish on time. These examples are merely illustrative. Ground rules belong to the group and need to be articulated, written, and reviewed at least annually, or when any new member joins the board.

## Meeting Goals

Before each meeting it is important to ask: What do we want to accomplish? Put it in writing.

Is this meeting necessary? Explore alternatives to face-to-face meetings, such as:

- Committee meetings (instead of the full board);
- Distribution of information by posting copies of minutes, letters, reports on a board-only section of the website, or by producing a bulletin or newsletter;
- Informal workshops, e.g., brown bag lunches or suppers;
- Electronic communication, such as teleconferences, email, round robin memos, wikis or blogs;
- Telephone calls, informal conversations, (a)synchronous chat, voicemail for board members; and
- Executive summaries.

# CONSIDERATIONS

## **The Role of the Chair**

The chair leads the board through regular meetings to achieve goals and objectives. The board chair is responsible for the agenda, in consultation with the director and board members. The chair is responsible for ensuring that the meeting starts and finishes on time. The chair ensures all issues are aired and discussed respectfully. The chair ensures the agenda is the focus for discussion.

## **The Agenda**

As noted above, the board chair is responsible for the agenda, in consultation with the director and the board members. Committee reports should be in a standard format; one sheet (two pages) maximum; do not provide for oral reports (do not cater to lack of preparation if something can wait until the next meeting); consider colour coding material; plan for a private/executive/ in camera session at the beginning or end of the regular meeting; investigate and use fully a consent agenda (see below); articulate at the beginning of the meeting relevant ground rules, organization of the agenda; identify at the beginning of each item (or on the agenda) how much time is allocated and when questions will be taken; keep to the topic being addressed on the agenda. A useful idea is to print your library's mission statement on the bottom of every page of the agenda.

## **Consent Agenda**

Those items that are simply informational and non-controversial are placed on a consent agenda – e.g., the director's report. These items are approved through one motion ("move to approve the items on the consent agenda"). Although any board member may ask that an item be removed from the consent agenda – no reason need be given – it is simply added at the end of the regular agenda for disposition at that time and all remaining items approved. There is no discussion of any item on the consent agenda.

## **Dissemination of Agenda and Supporting Materials**

Distribute all supporting materials (e.g., minutes, reports related to decisions required) in advance of the meeting, preferably one week in advance, to all those affected.

## **Announcement of Meeting**

Include the date, time, and location. Post agendas and minutes of the last meeting (print and electronic copies). Enhance your public profile and accountability by ensuring that all information is available and easily accessible on your website.

## **Minutes**

Include the decisions made and actions taken only. Indicate who is responsible for action and by what date. Maintain a pending list and a tracking list (track disposition of decisions).

## **The Facility**

Plan the seating, ventilation, lighting, temperature, and equipment. Consider whether to have a boardroom, horseshoe, or U-shape style table. Consider the seating of the board chair, director, and secretary. Ensure there is seating for a gallery of observers and guests (provide both seating and materials even if no one usually comes – this is a public meeting of a public body spending public funds).

## **Meeting Management**

Parliamentary procedures are used because they provide meetings with four fundamental principles:

1. Justice and courtesy for all;
2. Do only one thing at a time;
3. The majority rules; and,
4. The minority has the right to be heard.

Robert's Rules of Order are most commonly used.

## **Meeting Evaluation**

As a quick check after the meeting, you may wish to informally evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting by asking: How will the quality of life in our community have been improved as a result of our meeting here tonight?

## ***Responsibilities of the Board and the Director***

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Many titles exist for the person in charge of the library. British Columbia's *Library Act* uses the term "chief librarian" (Ontario has legislated the term CEO), while some cities (e.g., Vancouver) use the term "city librarian." More common is the title of "director," implying "director of library services," similar to other city department heads who carry that title. The term used in this document for consistency is director.

Regardless of the term used for the role and job description, **the board has but one employee.** The director is the interface between the board and the staff, serving as secretary to the board and director of the staff. The director ensures that the library is operated according to the board's plan, policies, and priorities. The relationship with the director must be a constructive, creative partnership if the board is to fulfill its mandate.

When the board, or worse, individual trustees, become involved in the management of the library, they confuse roles and responsibilities and remove clear lines of authority and accountability. More successful boards grant appropriate authority and power to the director and provide support for the carrying out of their mandate. Their mandate is prescribed and proscribed by written strategic plans and directions, policies and approved annual work plans.

It is important to note that individual trustees have no authority except insofar as they form part of a board. Only the board chair speaks for the board; only the chair gives direction to the director on behalf of the board.

Effective boards recognize this partnership between the board and the director. The board will never be successful without a successful and supported director. The director will never be successful if the board chooses to interfere in his or her sphere of influence. This is not to suggest, however, that informal communication is not important between the director and individual trustees.

Directors have three primary audiences: the board, the library, and the community. Typically, the job is divided almost into three equal slots of time. When evaluating the director, the board needs to collect evidence from time to time from the library and the community. This needs to be done during periods of formal evaluation and with integrity, fairness and objectivity.

It is reasonable to expect that most boards will have policies on succession management and procedures in place to develop senior staff to fill in for the director from time to time and enable them to assume directorial responsibilities.

**Board:** Trustees are guardians of a "public trust" (hence "trustees") to ensure that the library provides relevant, comprehensive, and efficient service to the community it serves. The board represents the community and sets strategic directions and policies on its behalf, employs a director to implement its plans and priorities, and monitors and evaluates that implementation.

The board works closely with its one employee, the director, through mutual trust and respect, recognizing mutual rights and responsibilities and professional expertise.

**Director:** The director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the library to fulfill the library's mission, and acts as an advisor to the board in planning, policy development, evaluation of program effectiveness and impact, and other matters. (Note: The director advises the board, not the reverse.) The director is the link between policy and operations.

## ***Operational Roles and Responsibilities***

<b>OPERATIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>		
	<b>BOARD</b>	<b>DIRECTOR</b>
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	Employ and evaluate a director	Has a delegated authority to hire, manage, and evaluate staff within approved policies
	Approve policies	
	Recruit, orient, and support new board members	
	Develop board as an effective team	
	Evaluate board effectiveness	
Provide learning opportunities for board development		
<b>FINANCE</b>	Secure adequate funds to carry out the library's programs and services	Prepare regular financial reports
	Approve the budget	Prepare an annual budget in consultation with the board
	Present budget to council	
	Audit finances	Monitor the budget
	Provide funds for facilities and equipment to enable the library to serve the community	Manage the facility and the equipment
<b>SERVICES AND PROGRAMS</b>	Determine and adopt written policies to govern the operation of the library	Carry out the policies of the library as adopted by the board
	Provide appropriate oversight for current operations	Implement day-to-day operations

**TRADITIONAL UNDERLYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

	<b>BOARD</b>	<b>DIRECTOR</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE</b>	Develop vision and values for the future of the library	Work with staff and board on developing vision and values for the future
	Determine the mission of the library and set the rate of progress to fulfill the mission	Plan programs and services to fulfill the library's mission and mandate
	Review mandates, mission, and values	Review mandates, mission, and values
	Identify strategic challenges and set strategic direction	Advise the board on strategic challenges
<p align="center"><b>ADVOCACY</b></p> <p>Building understanding and support among the public, library users and networks of influence in order to secure sustainable resources to carry out the library's mission, programs and services</p>	Act as the community face for the library	Act as the professional face for the library
	Support and participate in a planned public relations program	Develop and maintain an active program of marketing and public relations
	Report regularly to governing officials and the general public	Report regularly to the library board, government officials and the general public
	Develop relationships with key external stakeholders	Develop relationships with key external stakeholders
	Secure the community's support and appreciation for the advancement of the library's mission	Secure the community's support and appreciation for the advancement of the library's mission

# Board Responsibilities

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## *Strategic Planning*

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Each library should have a strategic plan to guide both its short-term and long-term direction. The strategic planning “cycle” is the time each library takes to move through major phases of planning and implementation. The length of time varies from library to library. For most, a complete planning cycle lasts three years.

### **Plan to Plan**

Identify who the participants will be in the planning process; clarify and define their main roles and responsibilities. What is the role of the board’s planning committee? The director? The senior staff?

Ensure that the entire board supports and commits to the planning process.

### **Develop a Focus**

Collect information about the library and the community it serves. Through environmental scanning determine the strengths and weaknesses of the library, its resources and capabilities, as well as the opportunities and threats in the broader community. These can be political, economic, social/cultural, and technological. Be sure to build on prior strategic plans, customer satisfaction surveys, focus group discussions, and suggestions from clients. Incorporate board member knowledge of the community, its needs, and priorities.

Remember that **you are in the business of community development**. You want to improve the quality of life that residents enjoy. You do this through library service, but that library service needs to serve a demonstrable community need with demonstrable impact. This might, for example, be literacy through popular collections and programs, student achievement through homework and research assistance, economic development through e-resources and programs for home-based businesses, or social development through book clubs and community forums.

Articulate the **core values** for the board and the library. Remember you are also an employer and may wish to include your values as an employer of choice.

Articulate your bold vision for the library in the community.

Develop a **mission statement**. The mission statement is a concise expression of the library’s purpose. It specifies the fundamental reasons for the library’s existence. The mission statement establishes the scope of the library’s activities for the current planning cycle and acts as a foundation for other planning phases. It says what we do, for whom, and (sometimes) how well. It should be inspiring.

Brief, simple, and direct, the mission statement is especially well-suited to communicating the library’s role choices in non-technical language and the library’s “business” to staff, elected representatives, and the community at large.

Clarify the library’s **roles**. Determine which roles will receive a major commitment and which are to be supported only minimally.

## **Establish Strategic Directions. Write Goals and Objectives**

You should have four to six major strategic directions or goals. Goals are long-range and represent a vision of excellence in service and impact. Objectives are specific, time limited, and measurable or verifiable. Taken together, goals and objectives provide a framework for implementing and evaluating your strategic plan. Clear responsibility and accountability should be assigned for each objective. Many will be assigned to the director who will later assign responsibilities to staff.

## **Take Action**

Board and staff may identify possible activities to implement the goals and objectives as appropriate and select the activities best suited to the library's circumstances and resources.

As these activities are implemented, the planning perspective shifts. The staff implement, monitor, and evaluate the activities. The board, with staff, monitor that objectives are met. Note that achievement of objectives is not the same as simply completing activities.

## **Approve the Strategic Plan**

Most library boards are responsible for approving the strategic plan. A formal report is an excellent opportunity for communication with the board, staff, elected officials, and the public.

## **Review Results**

Strategic planning is a process, not an event.

The strategic plan should drive the board's agenda and the director's work plan. Continual monitoring and adjusting will be necessary with new strategic directions being developed and specific objectives articulated and assigned.

At least every three years, the library is ready to begin a full review and planning cycle, typically through a retreat.

Review the plan, activities implemented, the extent to which goals and objectives have been accomplished, roles, and the mission statement.

The results of these reviews are summarized, producing a set of recommendations for the next planning committee to use in the new planning cycle.

## **Setting Strategic Priorities - Roles of Public Libraries**

Libraries serve many purposes. Each purpose calls for different planning criteria. We ask for each of these purposes...

*What is the library trying to do?*

*Who is the library trying to serve?*

*What resources does the library need to achieve these ends?*

The library cannot be all things to all people. Typically, one primary role is selected and two secondary roles. Below are eight potential areas in which a library can set its strategic focus:

### **Community Activities Centre**

The library is a focus for community activities, meetings, and services.

### **Community Information Centre**

The library is a clearinghouse for current information on community organizations, issues, and services.

### **Formal Education Support Centre**

The library assists students of all ages in meeting educational objectives established during their formal courses of study.

### **Independent Learning Centre**

The library supports individuals of all ages pursuing a sustained program of learning independent of any education provider.

### **Popular Materials Library**

The library features current, high-demand, high-interest materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.

### **Preschoolers' Door to Learning**

The library encourages young children to develop an interest in reading and learning through services for children, and for parents and children together.

### **Reference Library**

The library actively provides timely, accurate, and useful information for community residents.

### **Research Centre**

The library assists scholars and researchers to conduct in-depth studies, investigate specific areas of knowledge, and create new knowledge.

*Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries: A Manual of Options and Procedures.*

Chicago: American Library Association, 1987.

## **Statement on Intellectual Freedom**

All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's *Bill of Rights*, and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available the entire library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.

Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Both employees and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles.

Adopted by the Canadian Library Association, 1974.

Amended November 1983 and November 1985.

## ***Policy-making***

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One of the primary roles for a board is the development, review and monitoring of implementation of policy, providing the framework for library management and operations. Policy also ensures continuity beyond the term of the board.

A policy is a formal expression of opinion that clarifies the board's expectations of what is to be done. In the long and short-term, a policy identifies the future outcomes the board hopes to achieve.

Unwritten policies may exist through practice and precedent, but these are subject to various interpretations by board and staff. Written policy documented in a policy manual guides future discretionary actions of the board, director, and staff in a more consistent manner. Policies thus guide the director in the implementation of board decisions, provide direction and consistency in service to the community, reduce uninformed decision-making in response to problem situations, and protect the rights and assure fair treatment of clients and staff.

Policy development includes:

- An identification of the need, statement of the condition or problem, past or present, that requires policy consideration;
- An understanding of how a policy will contribute to the accomplishment of the library's mission, goals and objectives;
- A review of all existing policies related to or affected by the proposed policy decision;
- A listing of policy options available with an analysis of the long and short-term effects of enacting new policy, potential side effects of passing the policy, costs involved, relevant legal ramifications; and,
- A concisely worded statement documenting the policy decision.

Policies should be fair, communicated in a positive manner, clearly and concisely stated, and perhaps provide for exceptions.

Various approaches exist for policy development and review, and the terminology used. Essentially **policy** is a generic term for defining preferred practice and expecting compliance approved by the board; **regulations** are written rules that describe what needs to be done to implement the policy, also typically approved by the board; **procedures** are developed by the director for implementation by staff and may allow for exceptions and flexibility; **guidelines** are more philosophical and general descriptions of best practices and are approved by the director.

**Bylaws** are the basic rules relating to the board as an organization. At a minimum, these include the official name of the library; legal authority of the board; officers (how selected, term of office); meetings (when held, quorum); committees; amendments; and other provisions.

A policy is usually approved by simple majority; bylaws by a two-thirds majority.

## **Policy Development and Review**

Policies should exist at least in these broad areas (a few examples are provided for each):

- Governance (role of board chair, orientation and training, code of ethics);
- Human resource management (roles, procedures, salary, wages, benefits, volunteers);
- Financial management (financial policies, audits, sponsorships, fundraising);
- Resource collection management (collection development goals, intellectual freedom, reconsideration procedures, community information, local history, interlibrary lending, Internet acceptable use);
- Customer programs and services (customer service, programming, youth services, facilities use, borrowing policies);
- Relationships with branches/member libraries (particularly in regional systems, local decision-making); and,
- Relationships with other libraries, agencies and institutions (friends groups, foundations, schools, resource sharing).

The board will have a comprehensive policy manual with each member having a copy and easily available to staff and users. A regular process for policy review will itself be a board policy. The relationship of board policies to related groups such as friends groups or foundations should also be specified.

## ***Financial Responsibilities***

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Public library trustees are legally responsible for securing and auditing library finances. Trustees set the priorities for the expenditure of these funds through strategic planning, priority setting, and budget development, all in consultation with the library director.

### **The financial responsibilities of the board are to:**

- Have knowledge of the library's financial base and funding agencies;
- Be aware of supplementary sources of revenue;
- Understand the financial needs of library operations;
- Acquire funds needed for growth and expansion;
- Understand the legal regulations and reporting requirements for library funding;
- Review and formally adopt the budget;
- Present the budget to funding authorities;
- Authorize expenditures within the budget;
- Act in an open and transparent manner at all times; and,
- Ensure appropriate auditing of revenue and expenditures.

There will be some variance from board to board depending on roles and relationships and different governance models.

**Regardless of the governance model, however, each trustee requires basic competency in reading and understanding financial statements.**

**Training should be provided each year for new and continuing trustees by the director, library or municipal financial officer, a board member with particular expertise or an external consultant.**

Although mentioned elsewhere, it bears repeating here that the board will have in place appropriate policies and procedures for budget development and presentation, monitoring and auditing of revenue and expenditures, and fiscal oversight. The emphasis here is on policy to ensure compliance and oversight, not on day-to-day, or month-to-month, budget control and review.

## ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

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The board ensures that the programs and services of the library are achieving what they are intended to achieve. This means that the board is clear about its directions and goals, has objectives that are measurable, assigns accountability, and has in place a process for gathering data for evidence-based decision-making.

This requires that the board be strategic and that trustees recognize the importance of their role as constructive critics.

### **To take a common example:**

Most public libraries have a summer reading program and receive reports of activities and participants.

However, what is the purpose of the summer reading program? Has it been defined? If not, how do you know that the resources allocated to this program are warranted? What alternatives exist? How do we measure success?

Is the purpose:

- To support literacy in the community? How did it do that? How do we measure this? or
- To attract children who do not typically use the library? Who are those children? What does our circulation system tell us about our younger users? Where do they live? Did we attract more children from further afield? What percentage of the target population did we reach? How does that compare to last year? The last five years? or
- To encourage a love of reading? How did we determine the current level of reading interest? How do we know if we have achieved this goal? If circulation increased, how does that compare to the population increase? or
- To enhance student achievement by carrying reading skills over the summer? Did we discuss results for participants vs. non-participants with the schools? Teachers? Do participants do better in school? Or do better students participate in our summer reading program? Is that our intent?

Depending on the ***purpose***, we can determine to whom we market the program and how we market the program, what activities best support the purpose, and what data will be necessary to provide evidence of success.

Boards are moving their focus from inputs and outputs to outcomes.

Inputs are the resources we derive from funders and the uses to which we allocate them.

Measures of input (e.g., amount per capita received from council) have traditionally been used to compare libraries, yet they do not reflect what is done with the money. The best-supported library could very well be the least efficient and effective per dollar invested.

Also commonly collected are measures of output such as the circulation of materials, often taken to a per capita level and a "per hour open" level. Similarly, reference transactions are counted. But what do these tell us? Were the books circulated read? Did they affect literacy or student achievement? Were the reference questions answered accurately? To what effect?

While these measures are still important, more common today is the challenging focus on **outcomes or impact**. For example, if the library is targeting home-based businesses, the measures are not inputs (dollars assigned to the service, grants from the chamber, number of electronic database subscriptions) or outputs (number of participants in programs, number of users of electronic databases), but rather outcomes (dollars saved on marketing research consultants, improvements in business plans, improvements in business development and revenue, increased employment). This shift is from investment and use to return on investment. How did this program affect economic development in our community?

A culture of assessment is established by the board. The questions are critical and important. The board with staff determines what will be examined, when, and how.

Even small libraries have found a focus on examining one service area per year to be a useful and productive exercise.

Boards have grown in their capacity to focus on community development and to plan strategically. The monitoring and evaluation function is the final piece of planning before beginning the cycle again.

## ***Annual Reports***

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The annual report represents your snapshot of the effectiveness of the library in meeting its program and financial objectives. Library staff prepare the annual report under the direction of the board.

The annual report is typically provided to elected officials, stakeholders, funders, and the public. It will be provided in full printed form and full electronic form on your website (with appropriate print references and electronic links), and perhaps in abbreviated form such as a brochure or a newspaper advertisement.

**According to the BC Auditor General, these principles apply to the annual reports of not-for-profit agencies:**

1. Explains the public purpose served;
2. Links goals and results;
3. Focuses on the few critical aspects of performance;
4. Relates results to risk and capacity;
5. Links resources, strategies, and results;
6. Provides comparative information;
7. Presents credible information, fairly interpreted; and,
8. Discloses the basis for key reporting judgments.

The board needs to address some critical questions before beginning the preparation of the annual report. Remember: this is the board's report to the community.

- What is the primary purpose to be served by the annual report?
- Where does the annual report fit as part of your accountability plan?
- Who is the audience? Is there more than one?
- What is the budget for development and distribution?
- Who is on the project team? What are their timelines?
- Where does the annual report fit as part of your communications plan?
- What image are you projecting?
- How will the report be disseminated? On your website and in print? Through the news media, to service groups, to the chamber, to council? Mailed or in-person?

The annual report has two primary components:

1. General information about the library and its priorities; and,
2. Financial information.

Information about the organization includes management's discussion of implementation of the library's mission, the board's strategic directions, goals and objectives, market position (evidence for your image in the community), market share (percentage of different segments of the community who are users), and comments about significant contributions of people who work for the library. Comments may include indicators of resources (collection development and use), expertise of staff and contributions to the community, the library as place (nature and extent of use of the physical space), and the library as a symbol for the marketplace of ideas and community development. What evidence is there for impact on the quality of life of residents? Honesty should be assured throughout and trends noted over time.

**Financial information includes:**

1. Statement of management responsibility and declaration that statements were prepared by management – discusses the board's role in assuring accuracy and integrity as well as overall responsibility for financial statements;
2. Review of current operations and a summary of historical key financial figures and ratios; and,
3. Comparative financial statements, in order:
  - Balance sheet;
  - Statement of revenues and expenses;
  - Statement of retained earnings;
  - Statement of cash flows; and,
  - Explanatory notes and schedules for clarification and additional detail.

The audit statement includes an “unqualified audit” opinion as to whether the library's statements are in accordance with prescribed accounting practices.

It will be clear that management assumes responsibility for the financial statements as well as the auditors.

## ***Board Development***

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While many boards devote time and resources to staff development, board development does not always get the same attention even though it can result in more effective and efficient boards. The broad topic of board development includes board recruitment, succession planning, goal setting, board education, and board evaluation.

Most of these topics have been discussed briefly in previous parts of this handbook. This section will touch on the two remaining topics: board education and board evaluation.

There are a number of ways for board education to occur and the BCLTA is a key partner in this area. The BCLTA provides member boards with bulletins, newsletters, a website, workshops, and conferences all focusing on topics relevant to public library trustees. Other ways to facilitate board education include:

- Developing skills in policy development;
- Inviting guests/experts to speak at board meetings or workshops;
- Meeting/partnering with other boards on special projects;
- Hiring consultants or experts to work with your board on a particular development issue or task (e.g., strategic planning);
- Board members attending conferences;
- Further developing your presentation and networking skills; and,
- Becoming involved in provincial and national trustee organizations.

Many boards conduct an **annual board evaluation** as part of their governance responsibilities. The evaluation seeks to help a board answer the questions: What are we as a board now doing well and what can we do better? There is a sample board evaluation tool in the “Resources” section of the BCLTA website at [www.bclta.org](http://www.bclta.org).

# British Columbia Library Trustees Association

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## Our Mission:

*To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries.*

The BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) was registered in 1977. It represents more than 65 library boards and more than 650 trustees who volunteer their time on library boards throughout the province. Member boards exercise their votes at the annual meeting and their individual trustees are eligible to run for the BCLTA executive which meets regularly throughout the year.

## What Does BCLTA Do?

Guided by our mission, we strive to provide a range of services to trustees and boards to assist them with being leaders in BC's library community. BCLTA also fills an important strategic role in providing organized representation to the provincial government for library trustees, and undertaking advocacy work on behalf of trustees and public libraries with various levels of government and the public.

As a BCLTA member you enjoy these benefits:

- **Organized representation to the provincial government:** BCLTA represents the membership as “one voice” when meeting with the Minister responsible for libraries on an annual basis.
- **Open Door Newsletter:** BCLTA publishes the Open Door newsletter two times per year. Content is trustee-focused and includes information and updates on provincial and federal issues and events; an opportunity for trustees to share their success stories and challenges so others may learn from their experience; recognition of outstanding trustee contributions and information on trustee education programs.
- **Bulletins:** BCLTA publishes bulletins to our membership on an on-going basis to keep trustees informed of current issues. The topics cover everything from upcoming trustee events to a call to action on provincial or national issues. Typically these bulletins are sent electronically to board chairs, appointed liaisons and directors for distribution at the local level.
- **Trustee Education Programs:**  
Trustee Orientation Program (TOP)  
The highly regarded Trustee Orientation Program is BCLTA's flagship training program. This full day course introduces trustees to the provincial context for public library leadership, including legislation and services, community advocacy, current issues and strategies for success. It also provides a forum for sharing information and ideas with other board members. For further details regarding course content, or to book a TOP session, look under “Trustee Development” on our website. To complement the classroom TOP sessions, we also have an online version of TOP. BCLTA also offers TOP courses at the annual conference.

### Taking the Lead

Formerly *Chairing the Board, Taking the Lead* is an advanced training program for new, existing, and prospective library board chairs, focusing generally on board and meeting effectiveness as well as the unique roles and responsibilities of the board chair. Topics such as Robert's Rules of Order, SOFI reporting, strategic planning, and CEO evaluation are covered in detail and group discussion/problem solving is encouraged.

**The Effective Board Member:** The BCLTA trustee handbook is primarily an education and resource tool designed as a comprehensive resource for public library trustees in British Columbia. The handbook covers a wide range of basic information required by trustees – including a history of Library Boards in BC, an overview of the PLSB, effective meeting management, roles of the trustee, and resources available to trustees. If you don't already have a handbook, you can download a copy via [bclta.org](http://bclta.org) > Trustee Development > The Effective Board Member Handbook.

**Conference:** The BCLTA conference is held annually either as a stand-alone or in partnership with BCLA and other organizations. It provides an excellent networking and education opportunity for members. Theme speeches, issues, forums, award ceremonies, an annual general meeting, and social events are planned for trustees by trustees

**Website [www.bclta.org](http://www.bclta.org):** Our website is a great resource for trustees and is updated regularly. There are links to printed resources and relevant websites, updates on training programs, archives of our newsletters and bulletins and much more.

Voting rights and eligibility to run for the BCLTA Executive.

Representation on the Canadian Library Trustees Association Executive and other library associations.

Annual representation at the Union of BC Municipalities Convention.

**Eligibility for BCLTA Awards:** BCLTA has three categories of annual awards to recognize outstanding trustees and other organizations that contribute to our libraries – the Nancy Bennett Award, the Super Trustee Award, and the Library Advocate Award.

Our organization exists to support our members so please contact us if you have any questions. The most up-to-date contact information is on our website at [www.bclta.org](http://www.bclta.org) in the “About BCLTA” section.

# Canadian Library Trustees Association (CLTA)

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## (A Division of the Canadian Library Association)

CLTA fosters excellence in public library service, and stimulates and supports excellence in public library trusteeship by:

- Promoting and supporting cooperation and communication among library trustee associations and other library-related organizations within and outside Canada;
- Encouraging public library trustees to participate in association activities and address national issues;
- Representing the interests of public library trustees to government and the public; and,
- Developing and coordinating training and education programs, providing forums for meaningful discussion and the exchange of ideas for public library trustees.

For membership information, consult the CLTA website at [www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=CLTA](http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=CLTA).

## Glossary of Terms

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ABCPLD	Association of Public Library Directors of British Columbia
ALTA	Alberta Library Trustees Association
BCLA	British Columbia Library Association
BCLTA	British Columbia Library Trustees Association
BCTLA	British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association, a provincial specialist association of the BC Teachers' Federation
CLA	Canadian Library Association
CLTA	Canadian Library Trustees Association
CULC	Canadian Urban Libraries Council
Director	Refers to the library director; also known as library CEO, chief librarian, or city librarian
FVRL	Fraser Valley Regional Library
GVPL	Greater Victoria Public Library
Public Library InterLINK	The co-operative federation of 18 public libraries in the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, and Fraser Valley
LAC	Library and Archives Canada (formerly the National Library and the National Archives)
PLSB	Public Library Services Branch, currently within the provincial government's Ministry of Education
PNLA	Pacific Northwest Library Association
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification
SLA/WCC	Special Libraries Association Western Canada Chapter
SLAIS	School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia
UBCM	Union of British Columbia Municipalities
VPL	Vancouver Public Library

## Resources You Can Use

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There are many useful resources available to BC trustees at both the novice and experienced levels. These are some of the better and more easily accessible ones.

Alberta Library Trustees Association Resource Centre

[www.librarytrustees.ab.ca](http://www.librarytrustees.ab.ca), follow link to Resource Centre

A well-organized website with many links to resources selected specifically for trustees.

BoardSource

[www.boardsource.org](http://www.boardsource.org)

A treasure trove of resources for not-for-profit boards, based on research and evidence.

Many resources are freely available and others are for sale.

BoardSource (2005). The source: *Twelve principles of governance that power exceptional boards*.

Washington, DC: BoardSource. Discussing just one of these 12 principles each month would provide an exceptional professional development program for your board. Consider a different “lead trustee” each month.

British Columbia Library Trustees Association

[www.bclta.org](http://www.bclta.org)

Resources from your provincial association. Links to provincial, national, and international associations.

British Columbia Public Library Services Branch

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/)

Many services are available to public libraries and boards. The annual statistics alone allow for points of comparison and conversation.

Library Board Development Kit

Focuses on board development

<http://www.sols.org/publications/kits/boarddevelopmentkit2010/index.htm>

Dalhousie University Non-Profit Sector Leadership Program

<http://collegeofcontinuinged.dal.ca/Continuing%20Management%20Education/Non-Profit%20Sector%20Leadership/>

A wealth of free resources available for use and adaptation with credit to the program.

Mount Royal (Alberta) College Institute for Nonprofit Studies

[www.mtroyal.ab.ca/nonprofitinstitute/](http://www.mtroyal.ab.ca/nonprofitinstitute/)

Less specific in terms of tools provided, this program nevertheless provides literature reviews and information from studies of effective boards.

Institute on Governance

[www.iog.ca/](http://www.iog.ca/)

This national non-profit organization provides many resources, including sample policies, for volunteer boards.

Ontario Library Services

[www.library.on.ca/links/clearinghouse/](http://www.library.on.ca/links/clearinghouse/)

Includes links to useful resources. Click on board development resources and strategic planning resources in particular.

**NOTES:**

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