

ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



AVENUES TO EXCELLENCE II
STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ILLINOIS

I. STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The Library Network and the Role of the Local Public Library

Public library service is provided to the people of Illinois through local tax-supported public libraries, multitype library systems, and the statewide library network, ILLINET.

It is the public library's responsibility to work in constructive ways with other types of libraries and information sources in order to assure its patrons the best possible access to information. The public library should also be ever-mindful of the unique needs and resources of the individuals, organizations, and agencies within its community.

The local public library has a responsibility to select roles as outlined in PLA's Planning and Role Setting in Public Libraries. The shared common goal that is central to the mission of all public libraries is the provision of information in its broadest sense. (See Introduction.) How a local library carries this out will be reflected in the library roles chosen by that local library.

Local Public Library Support

The Library Board has the responsibility to provide sufficient financial support to fulfill the library's chosen roles and to meet or exceed the standards outlined in this document.

Public libraries are supported largely by local property taxes which should be levied at a rate sufficient to provide this support and meet these standards. The Board has the responsibility to conduct referenda for increasing the tax rate when the existing levy proves inadequate and to request additional taxes as permitted by law for special purposes.* If these taxes are not sufficient to provide adequate library service, alternative methods should be considered. These could include combining two or more districts, conversion to a library district and expanding, or contracting for library service with another library.

*Municipal or county libraries in home rule communities should seek advice from system consultants or other sources for the possible impact of home rule on Illinois Statutes relating to library governance.

Governing Authority

The public library is established and maintained according to the provisions of the Illinois statutes. The governing body of the public library is the library board. Board members are appointed or elected (at nonpartisan elections) in accordance with state law. The board shall observe its full legal responsibilities, duties and rights and employ such legal and other services as necessary. Board members shall attend board meetings regularly.

1. Board members and library staff shall be familiar with all Illinois library laws that apply to their library and other Illinois or federal laws which affect library operations, such as minimum wage, unemployment compensation, criminal theft of library materials, Open Meetings Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Home Rule, Library Records Confidentiality Act, etc.

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2. Boards must adopt bylaws, rules, policies, and regulations for their own guidance and for the governance of the library. Such policies should include conflict of interest provisions. (Chapter 81: 4-7(1) and Chapter 81: 1004-11(1).)

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3. Boards must assure that adequate records of library operations are kept and that reports are made annually to the community, the corporate authority, the library system, the Illinois State Library, and other appropriate agencies, as required. (Chapter 81: 4-10 and Chapter 81: 1004-12.)

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4. Library boards must have complete authority, as defined by Illinois Revised Statutes, over the library's budget. (Chapter 81: 4-7(2) and Chapter 81: 1004-11(2).)

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5. Boards must follow statutory requirements as to fiscal year, audit, meetings, reports, and budgeting process. (Various sections in Illinois Revised Statutes depending on the type of library.)

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6. Board members and library staff, or designated representative(s), shall actively participate in the legislative process to effect change that will benefit libraries by maintaining regular communication with local, state and national legislators.

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Board Membership and Development

Current board members should encourage the election or appointment of new board members for their interest in the library, their value in interpreting the needs of all segments of the community, and their interest in establishing and maintaining sound library policy. The board should represent the wide range of population

and community characteristics, and should not be chosen for partisan reasons. There should be continuing programs both for encouraging participation of board members and for identifying new talent for board membership.

All board members have an obligation, with the assistance of the administrative librarian, to keep informed of and involved in library developments, regional system developments, and legislation concerning libraries at the local, system, state and national levels.

7. The board and the librarian shall conduct a meaningful and comprehensive orientation program for each new board member.

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8. Board members shall participate in continuing education endeavors such as system and regional trustee workshops, state and national conferences.

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9. Financial provision shall be indicated in the bylaws or policies and specified in the annual budget for trustee dues to library associations and expenses for attendance at appropriate meetings, conferences, and workshops (including mileage, etc.).

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Board and Administrative Librarian Responsibilities

Board members and the administrative librarian should understand their respective functions, differentiating areas of joint responsibility from those for which the board members or the administrative librarian are solely responsible. When the administrative librarian independently changes or fails to follow established policy, or when the board engages in direct management, both are violating standards of sound administration.

The board carries full responsibility for the library and its policies.

The board selects, appoints, and evaluates the performance of the library administrator who has full professional responsibility for administering library policy, personnel selection and management, development and administration of programs and services and selection of materials.

10. The board and administrative librarian shall jointly study, plan and develop library policies and review them annually.

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11. The administrative librarian or designated representative shall be present at all board meetings and board committee meetings; other library staff shall be encouraged to attend.

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12. Each year the board shall formally evaluate the performance of the administrative librarian. The librarian's input is an integral part of the process.

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STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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