

Colorado Public Library Board & Trustees Pocket Handbook

Introduction

Colorado public libraries are focal points in their communities. They provide **free and equal access to educational, informational, and recreational materials** and resources in a variety of formats. It is the responsibility of a public library trustee to ensure that the public library's policies support the mission and the community, and provide access and services to all community members.

This pocket guide has been prepared to give library board members a broad view of their duties and responsibilities. It is hoped that it will be used as a basis for discussion by boards and library directors. For further information, consult your library director, the Colorado State Library, or the Colorado Association of Libraries (CAL) Trustees and Friends Division.

Types of Boards

In Colorado, there are two types of library boards of trustees: **governing** and **advisory**. As a general rule, library boards in Home Rule cities/counties are advisory. Library boards in Statutory cities/counties and library districts are governing. A **governing board** of trustees:

- Has fiscal and legal responsibility for the control and management of the library
- Has authority to make policy
- Hires/fires the library director
- Has all the powers enumerated in CRS 24-90-109

An **advisory board**, from municipal or county libraries, generally makes recommendations on policy and/or budget to the local governmental entity and acts as a liaison between the library, local government, and the community. It is responsible for submitting the Public Library Annual Report to the State Library each January. The advisory board has the legal responsibilities granted by the local governing entity.

Some advisory boards may have more authority granted to them due to local agreements, circumstances, and history. Note that **written agreements** with the local governing entity are the best way to assure that a library board continues to exercise the power it believes it has.

Duties of Trustees (See CRS 24-90-109)

1. Adopt library policies and bylaws for, and participation in all **board meetings**.
2. Cause management of library property
3. **Employ a highly qualified library director**. Empower him/her to manage the day-to-day operation of the library. Evaluate the director's performance annually.
4. Secure **adequate funding** and practice responsible fiscal management of the public money.
5. Have authority to enter into contracts.
6. Maintain a current map of library service area.
7. File annual report.
8. **Plan** for the future of the library. Monitor and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the library.
9. Promote library services and **advocate** for the library in the community.

Governing boards are legally responsible for the control and management of the library.

LOCAL PRACTICES VARY – CONSULT YOUR LIBRARY DIRECTOR AND YOUR BYLAWS

Board Meetings

BYLAWS

Bylaws govern how the board governs itself. They include terms of office, election of officers, quorum attendance at meetings, voting, and the board's relationship to the director and staff, etc.

A packet of appropriate *information and the agenda* should be sent to all members in advance of the meeting.

GUIDELINES FOR BOARD MEETINGS

Guidelines need to be created and agreed upon by the board.

- Bring your full attention and participation.
- Stay concise and work within the agenda.
- Share the time with others.
- Stay productive.
- Speak only for yourself.
- Support the *board's* decisions, even if you disagree individually.

Colorado has an Open Meetings Law / Sunshine Law.

Further information may be found at <http://tinyurl.com/COSunshineLaw>

Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual freedom is the **right to have access to information**. It is the right of every individual to decide what information he or she wants (and be able to obtain it).

It is the duty of the board of trustees to protect and defend intellectual freedom. The role of a public library in a democratic society is to ensure free and open access to information and materials as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

Every local public library should have a **written collection development policy** adopted by the governing entity. This policy should include selection criteria for all types of library materials and a procedure for reconsideration of materials in the event of a challenge.

For more information about Intellectual Freedom in libraries, the board and director should review the ALA Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read statement, as well as its own policies.

www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementspolicies.htm

In the event of a challenge to materials, or other Intellectual Freedom issues, assistance is available:

- Colorado State Library: 303-866-6900
- Colorado Association of Libraries (CAL) Intellectual Freedom Committee, www.cal-webs.org/if.html
- American Library Association (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom, 800-545-2433, ext. 4221

The Trustee in the Community

Public library boards and trustees play an important role in shaping the public image of the library. Trustees are among the library's most influential representatives in the community.

The effective trustee should:

- Understand and be able to articulate the **library's mission**.
- Be familiar with and support the library services and programs.
- Keep the **lines of communication** open between the trustees, the director, the community, and local government officials.
- Foster community involvement with the library.
- Maintain a positive relationship with the Friends of the Library and/or Library Foundation.

- Understand community needs, library capabilities, and the necessity to **plan carefully for future library services**.
- Never miss an opportunity/occasion to build goodwill for the library.
- Participate in **local and statewide advocacy**, stressing the importance of public libraries in today's information-rich society.
- Focus on policies and practices that permit a well-run library, not on running the library and staff.

Statewide peer support, advocacy help, and information about library boards and trustees is available at the Colorado Library Association (CAL) Trustees and Friends Division:

www.cal-webs.org/trustees.html

Information on board training through the State Library is available at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/libraryboardtraining>

Resources for Trustees

- **Colorado Library Law and Quick Guides:**
www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/LibraryLaw/Index.htm
- **Library Board Training Information**
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/libraryboardtraining>
- **Colorado Public Library Standards:**
www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/Standards/Index.htm
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs:
www.dola.state.co.us
- Colorado Association of Libraries (CAL):
www.cal-webs.org
- American Library Association (ALA) :
www.ala.org
- Nelson, Sandra. *New Planning for Results*. PLA, 2001. Strategic planning for libraries. Order at www.alastore.ala.org

Board members and trustees should consider membership and participation in the following organizations:

Colorado Association of Libraries (CAL) Trustees and Friends Division:
www.cal-webs.org/trustees.html

Association of Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA):
www.ala.org/alta

Golden Rules for Trustees

- **Leave the actual management of the library to the library director.**
- It is the director's responsibility to employ and supervise the staff, select books and other materials, supervise day-to-day operations, apply policies, and oversee procedures.
- After a policy or rule is adopted by the majority vote of the library board, do not criticize or re-voice your opposition publicly.
- **Respect confidential information.** Until officially released, do not divulge information regarding future board actions or plans.
- Observe publicity and information policies of the board and library. Speak as member of the board, but refer questions about policies to the library director or appropriate library representative.
- Observe **ethical standards** with absolute truth, integrity, and honor, and disqualify yourself immediately whenever the appearance of a conflict of interest exists.
- All actions by the board must be approved by a quorum of the board at a regular meeting.
- Do not hold board meetings without the library director.
- **Complaints from the public and staff are the library director's responsibility.** Continued dissatisfaction and problems should be taken up at the board meeting only if policy revision is necessary or legal ramifications are involved.
- **Assume your full responsibility as a board member.** If you are unable to attend meetings regularly and complete work delegated to you, resign so that an active member can be appointed.

Adapted from the Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook

Colorado Library Laws

The full text of Colorado Library Law is found in the Colorado Revised Statutes. See www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/LibraryLaw/Index.htm

CRS 24-90-102. Legislative declaration. The general assembly hereby declares that it is the policy of this state, as a part of its provision for public education, **to**

promote the establishment and development of all types of publicly-supported free library service throughout the state to ensure equal access to information without regard to age, physical or mental health, place of residence, or economic status, to aid in the establishment and improvement of library programs, to improve and update the skills of persons employed in libraries through continuing education activities, and to promote and coordinate the sharing of resources among libraries in Colorado and the dissemination of information regarding the availability of library services.

QUICK GUIDES:

The Colorado State Library provides several Quick Guides to the Colorado Library Law. These are excerpts in a two-column format: full text, plus a rough, non-legal summary of the statute. They are intended to assist in understanding the meaning of the law, but do not replace your local legal counsel. Please consult with your library's attorney for any necessary interpretations.

- Boards and Trustees
- Capital Facilities Districts
- Colorado Library Law
- Comparison of Library Districts and a Regional Library Authority
- Inclusion Into an Existing Library District
- Internet Protection in Public Libraries
- Method of Establishment
- Privacy of User Records
- Regional Library Authorities (RLA)

Quick Guides are located at

www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/LibraryLaw/Index.htm

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