

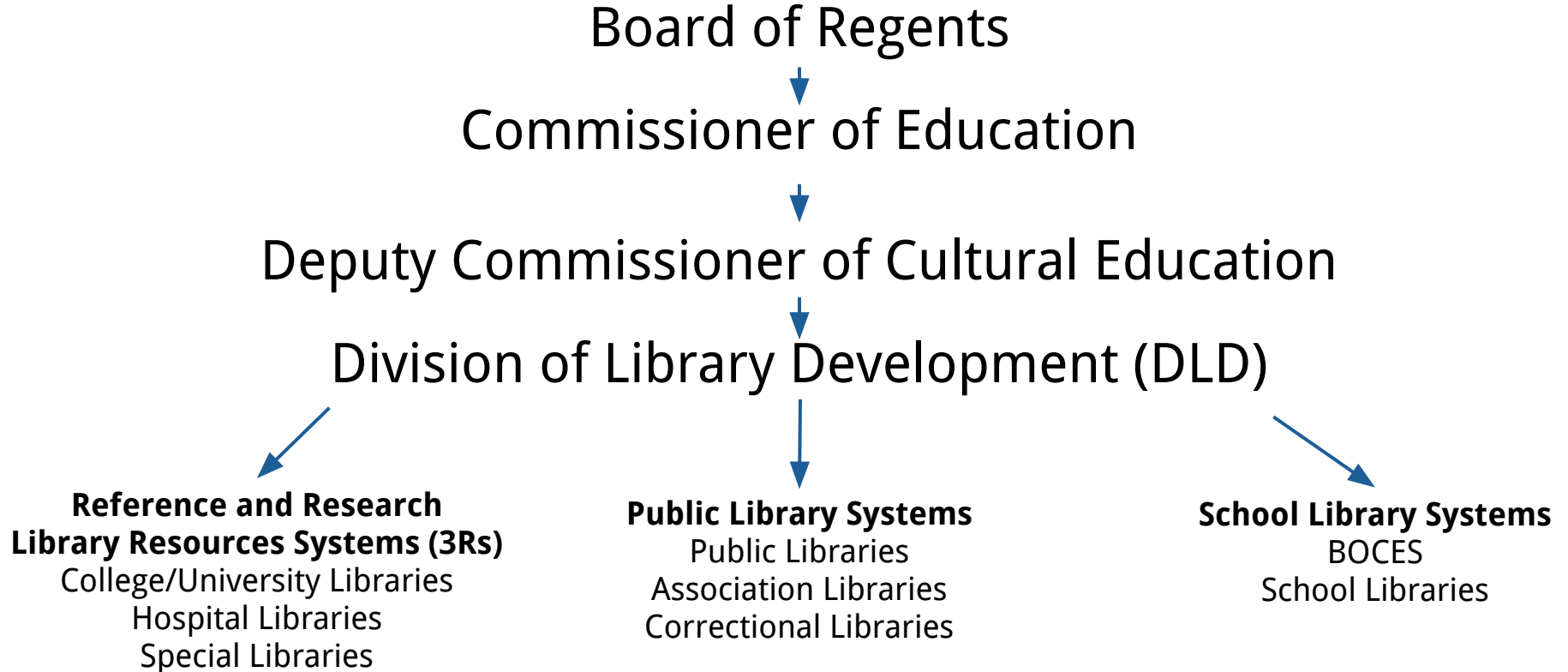


**OWWL
LIBRARY
SYSTEM**

Roles and Responsibilities

with Ron Kirsop

The Library Network in New York State



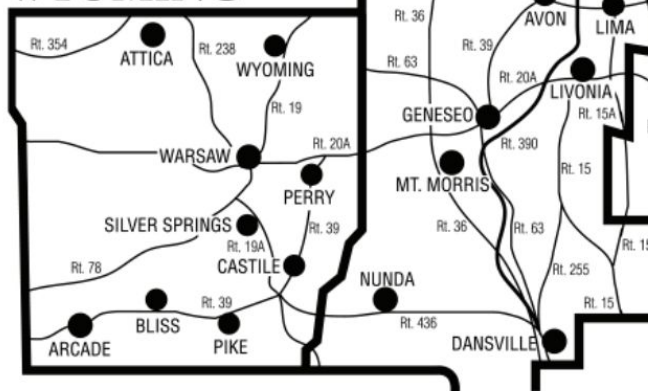
Public Library Systems in New York State



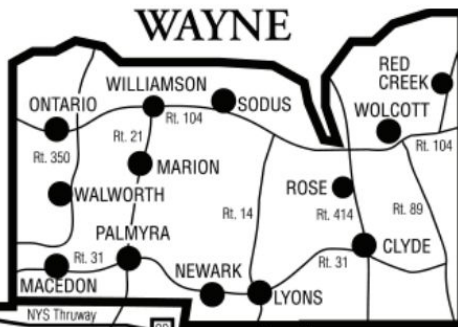


OWWL LIBRARY SYSTEM

WYOMING



LIVINGSTON



ONTARIO

System Services:

- Shared delivery service
- Shared circulation system
- Centralized cataloging and interlibrary loan
- Continuing education
- Funding / advocacy support
- Construction Aid assistance
- NYS Annual Reports
- Consulting on a wide variety of library topics
- Website / email hosting
- Local link to the NYS Library (legal issues, charters, etc.)

Library Types in OWWL Library System

- 19 Association Libraries -
- 13 School District Public Libraries -
- 9 Municipal Public Libraries -
- 1 Special Legislative District Public Library -

Duties of a Trustee

*“The New York State Board of Regents, the institution responsible for the chartering and oversight of education corporations in New York, describes the duties of trustees as those of **Care, Loyalty and Obedience.**” All actions must be taken with these principles in mind.”*

– Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State, page 15

Duty of Care:

A trustee or board member must act in good faith and exercise the degree of diligence, care, and skill that an ordinary prudent individual would use under similar circumstances in a like position.

Duty of Loyalty/Conflict of Interest:

Trustees/board members owe allegiance to the institution and must act in good faith with the best interest of the organization in mind. The conduct of a trustee/board member must, at all times, further the institution's goals and not the member's personal or business interests... A trustee/board member should avoid even the appearance of impropriety... Acts of self-dealing constitute a breach of fiduciary responsibility that could result in personal liability and removal from the board.

Duty of Obedience:

A trustee/board member has a responsibility to ensure that the institution's resources are dedicated to the fulfillment of its mission. The member also has a duty to ensure that the institution complies with all applicable laws and does not engage in any unauthorized activities.

Nine Responsibilities of a Trustee

1. Create and develop the **mission of the library**
2. Regularly **plan and evaluate the library's service program** based on community needs
3. Select, hire and regularly evaluate a **qualified library director**
4. **Secure adequate funding** for the library's service program
5. Exercise **fiduciary responsibility** for the use of public and private funds
6. Adopt **policies** and rules regarding library governance and use
7. **Maintain a facility** that meets the library's and community's needs
8. **Promote the library** in the local community and in society in general
9. Conduct the business of the library in an open and ethical manner in compliance with all applicable **laws and regulations** and with respect for the institution, staff, and public

Minimum Standards of Libraries

Standard #1: Written Bylaws

Standard #2: Long-Range Plan

Standard #3: Report to the Community

Standard #4: Written Policies

Standard #5: Written Budget

Standard #6: Evaluating Effectiveness

Standard #7: Hours

Standard #8: Maintaining a Facility

Standard #9: Programming

Standard #10: Technology to Meet Needs

Standard #11: Access to Current Library Information

Standard #12: Employs a Paid Director

Standard #13: Technology Training for Staff

Standard #14: Community Partners

Legal Structure of Library Boards

- **Charter** – Founding documentation that defines the services area and governing body of the library.
- **Bylaws** – Local rules that define specific specification on how the Board conducts business.
- **Trustees** – Individual members of a Library Board.
- **Officers** – President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer/Finance Officer

Legal Terms for New Trustees

- **Quorum**– Number of Trustees required to conduct business (calculations are made on number of positions on your board including vacancies).
- **Collective Authority** – The board speaks with one voice once a decision has been made. Also, individual Trustees hold no authority/power unless authorized by the full Board.
- **Open Meetings Law** – All libraries must conduct business in an open and transparent way under the provisions of Open Meetings Law. This applies to all Board Meetings and any time two or Trustees gather to discuss library business. Minutes, Public Comment, Executive Session.
- **Freedom of Information Law** – Public Libraries must adhere to Freedom of Information Law and provide requested information to the public.
- **Oath of Office** – The required oath that indicates Trustees will work to benefit their library to the best of their ability.

Board and Director Responsibilities

The **board's role is to govern the library** - to approve policy, secure adequate funding and hire a competent, qualified library director.

The **director's role is to manage the library** - to implement the board's policies on a day-to-day basis, manage the staff and help lead the library forward in the best way possible to meet the needs of the community

Who is Responsible? Board vs. Director Edition

Who creates library positions, establish salaries, and appoint staff?

B for Board | **D** for Director

Who selects, hires, manages, and supervises
the library staff?

B for Board | **D** for Director

Who writes and reviews policies?

B for Board | **D** for Director

Who presents written budget requests to funding agencies and secures adequate funding?

B for Board | **D** for Director

Who develops and implements programs?

B for Board | **D** for Director

Who oversees the selection and ordering of all library materials?

B for Board | **D** for Director

Who conducts the business of the library in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations?

B for Board | **D** for Director

The Critical Partnership

As the library's governing body (and the entity with ultimate accountability for the institution), the board of trustees has the **responsibility to hire a competent, professional and qualified library director as the “CEO”** (Chief Executive Officer) and then to **regularly review and evaluate that person's performance** in moving the library forward. Having hired a director, the board has an **obligation to support the director wholeheartedly within the context of the employment relationship**. Good communication and cooperation between the board and library director and an **appreciation of the interdependency of each other's roles** are prerequisites to a well-managed library. It is critical for the board to **establish and maintain clear lines of communication** with the director. In general, the board's directions and intentions are communicated to the director through the President of the Board or through official actions at a board meeting. **Individual trustees should refrain from issuing specific instructions to the director at board meetings and especially between meetings**. Such individual directions are inconsistent with the concept of **collective board authority** and a library director risks being caught between conflicting intentions, even among well-meaning trustees

The Critical Partnership Breakdown

- Board is the library's governing body
- Responsible for hiring a professional and qualified library director as the Chief Executive Officer
- Must regularly review and evaluate that person's performance
- Is obligated to support the director wholeheartedly within the context of the employment relationship.
- Appreciate and maintain the interdependency of each other's roles
- Must establish and maintain clear lines of communication with the director.
- Individual trustees cannot issue specific instructions to the director at board meetings and especially between meetings because of collective board authority

Trustees and Library Staff

The day-to-day management of the library, including the management of staff, is the library director's responsibility. The director is the only employee overseen by the board. The director is responsible for the management and supervision of all other library employees. **Trustees have a responsibility to know staff at a friendly but professional distance**, to be cordial and supportive and to promote good will. But they must **approach staff relationships with a degree of caution. Usurping the administrative prerogatives of the library director can only undermine that person's position and authority and ultimately lead to misunderstanding and conflict.** Board policies, including a “Whistleblower” policy as required by law, should clearly indicate the process for staff complaints and grievances, and the board should never get involved in such activities outside of this process.

Trustees and Library Staff Breakdown

- Director manages the day-to-day operations including supervising of staff.
- The director is the only employee overseen by the board.
- Trustees are responsible to know staff at a friendly but professional distance
- Staff relationships must be approached with a degree of caution.
- Usurping administrative prerogatives of the director will undermine that person's position and authority.
- The board must have policies to establish a clear process for staff complaints and grievances.

Effective Library Trustees

A trustee must make decisions based on the best information available [and consult appropriate experts]...**Under New York State law, library boards have broad and almost exclusive powers and authority to administer the library.** The board should not only be concerned with the internal operations of the organization, but also alert to the external trends and changes that can affect the library's program of services. Being proactive and open to change is imperative in order to survive and thrive in a world in which change is the only constant.

Checklist for Effective Library Trustees

- ❑ Be **active and informed** about library matters in general and of those affecting your library. **Ask questions** of the directory and study the issues.
- ❑ **Read all board materials** (agenda, minutes, documents under discussion) **prior to the board meeting.**
- ❑ **Attend all board meetings** and be prepared to participate knowledgeably.
- ❑ Question issues until you understand. **Don't be reluctant to vote "No"** on a proposal you don't understand or are uncomfortable about.
- ❑ Be a team player and **treat your fellow board members with respect.**
- ❑ Always have the **best interest of the library in mind** when making decisions.
- ❑ **Support board decisions even if you disagree.** Democracy works by the rule of the majority. Seek reconsideration in the future if circumstances change.
- ❑ Understand the roles of all involved--the board, director, staff, Friends, and patrons. **Respect all opinions;** whether you agree or not.

Checklist for Effective Library Trustees Cont.

- ❑ **Conflicts of interest** by any board member are the concern of all members of the board (Even the appearance of a potential conflict undermines their trust in the entire library as a valued community institution).
- ❑ **Advocate for the library** in every manner possible.
- ❑ **Support competitive salaries** in order to attract and retain qualified staff. Appropriate compensation is a direct measure of the commitment and respect a community has for the institution and its staff.
- ❑ **Annually evaluate the board**, individually and as a whole. This process has proven to be an effective means to improve intra-board communication and bring focus to the tasks at hand.
- ❑ **Understand and respect the role of the director as Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of the library corporation. Support the director's administrative decisions
- ❑ **It's about the library, not about you or any other organization.** Your primary job is to provide the highest quality library service possible for your community, not the cheapest.



OWWL LIBRARY SYSTEM

For any library-related questions, feel free to contact **Ron Kirsop**, Executive Director of OWWL Library System

rkirsop@owwl.org