



ALBERTA LIBRARY

TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

TRUSTEES

Roles and Responsibilities

- “Imagine the library as a community garden— a place for work, pleasure, and learning. And then imagine the trustees as gardeners, well equipped with all the tools they need for sowing, cultivating, nurturing, and enriching.”



- Rendell, E.G., Zahorchak, G., Zales, C.M., & Cole, B.W. (2005). *Cultivating Pennsylvania's growing libraries: training resource kit for public library trustees*. Retrieved from <http://www.portal.state.pa.us>

Trustees

- Have **legal authority** over the library's policies, rules, and regulations.
- **Oversee** planning, fundraising, and liability protection.
- **Establish** fee structures for non-resident users.
- **Hire** and **evaluate** the library director.
- **Evaluate** the library's performance.
- **Contract** for cooperative services.
- **Control** all funds.

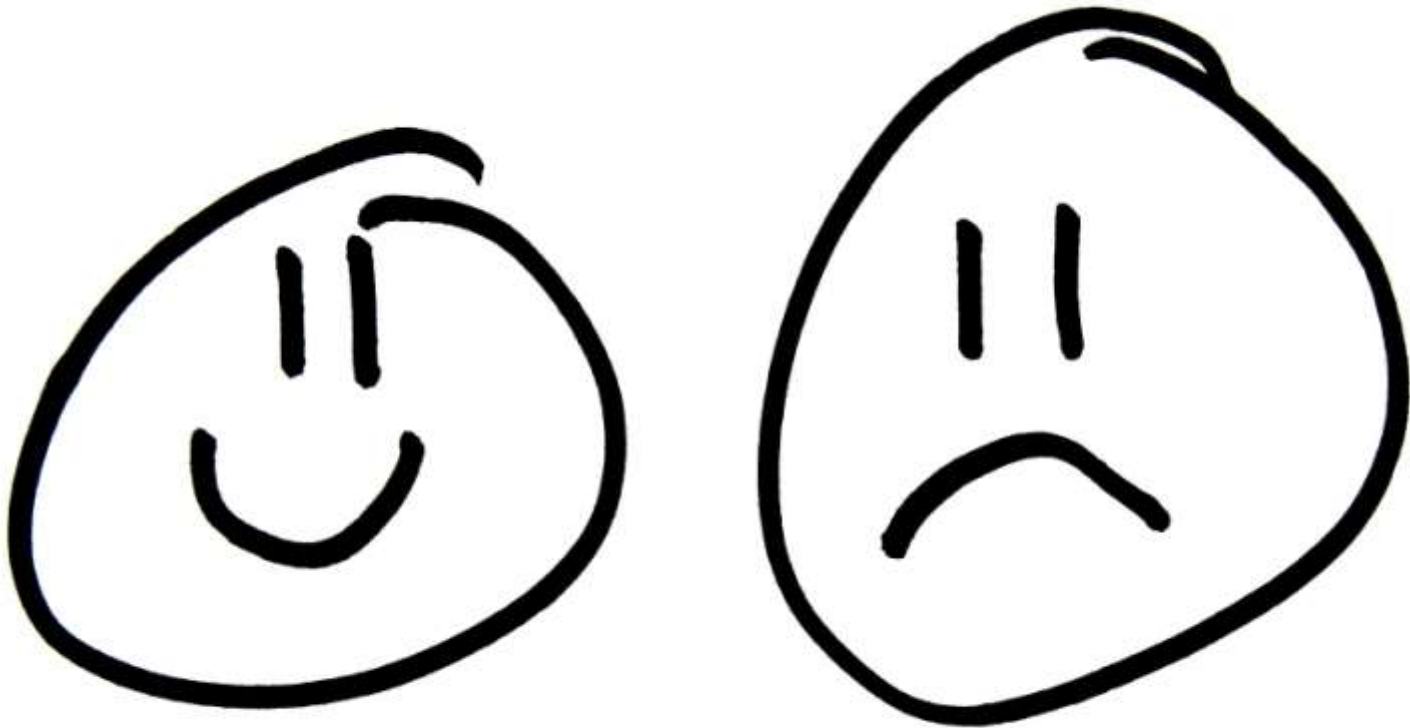


Trustees Do *Not*

- **Manage** the **day-to-day business** of the library.
- **Hire, fire,** or **evaluate library personnel,** apart from the director.
- **Receive preferential treatment** as library patrons.



DOs and DONTs



DO

- **Manage** the affairs of the library system with the **same degree of skill, hard work,** and **care** you bring to your own affairs.

DONT

- **Make** an **advance agreement** with another person or organization **to vote a certain way.**

DO

- **Become better informed** about the business of the board, **including applicable legislation**, and what is required in order to be an effective trustee.

DONT

- Stand to **make a personal profit** from any activity of the board.

DO

- **Keep confidential private information** you learn as a result of your activity as a trustee.

DONT

- Put the **best interests** of the board **before your own or any other.**

What's the Big Idea?

- When trustees are at the board table; they are operating **solely as a library board member.**
- Trustees have a legal responsibility to maintain a free public non-sectarian library. **The primary responsibility of a trustee is the well-being of the library.**



Good Trustees

- **Share their skills** on committees.
- **Understand the community** and its needs.
- **Stay current** on library trends and issues.
- **Exercise discretion** and **respect confidentiality** outside board meetings.
- **Put personal agendas aside** when making decisions.
- **Understand their role** and **how it differs** from the role of the library director.
- **Avoid** conflicts of interest.

Case Study

- Board member John Doe owns 50% of a computer company which is bidding on the contract to supply the library's new computer system.
- Is this a conflict of interest? Why?



Case Study

- Board member Mary Right has a fourteen-year-old daughter who works in the library as a page.
- Should she declare an interest and refrain from voting on the new salary scale for library employees?



What's the Big Idea?

- If you do have a conflict of interest and have stepped back from the discussion or voting, it is a **good idea to have this recorded in the minutes so that it can be seen later that steps were taken to mediate the problem.**



Your Turn

- **What sort of situations could you see arising where a trustee's personal interest could conflict with the library's interest?**
- How do you deal with a conflict of interest?



Role Conflict

- Not all conflicts of interest are related to an individual's personal benefit.
- Some are **role conflicts**, where a **board member might have responsibilities to more than one organization**.
- Probably **the most common example is where a town councillor is also a trustee**.
- Have you experienced these types of role conflicts, as part of a library board or elsewhere? How do you deal with that?

Debts and Obligations

- As a trustee, you are **not personally responsible for the library's debts and obligations.**
- However, you **can be sued for losses** the library experiences **if you breach your duty as a trustee, or if you are negligent and fail to provide a reasonable level of care.**
- What is meant by this?

Negligence

- Has to do with the fact that you have a duty to a person or organization: for example, an on-duty lifeguard watching over a pool patron has a duty to provide a reasonable level of care
- A reasonable level of care also applies to drivers, as well. You have a duty to your fellow drivers and pedestrians to follow the rules of the road, pay attention to your surroundings and take care not to cause harm.
- Also, like drivers, your board should have insurance. Many insurers offer Directors and Officers Liability Insurance.

What's the Big Idea?

- To avoid negligence and be a great trustee, you need to know your board's business. This includes legislation and policy that affect the library, and the Board.
- Libraries are governed by a variety of legislation and regulation and understanding how these documents affect your library is vital for you to make good governance decisions.
- More information is available on the ALTA website and the Public Libraries Services Branch website.



Resources

Understanding Alberta Public Libraries

Standards & Best Practices for Public Libraries in Alberta:

<http://www.albertalibraries.ca/uploads/1103/standardsapprovedfin85821.pdf>

Municipal Council Roles and Responsibilities:

<http://www.librarytrustees.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Parkland-Brochure-on-Council-Responsibilities.pdf>

Standards for Member Libraries within Alberta's Regional Library Systems:

<http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/lcvss/Standards.pdf>

The Alberta Library – Member Libraries:

www.thealbertalibrary.ab.ca/about/members.html

Performance Appraisal and Standards

<http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/encyclopedia/Per-Pro/Performance-Appraisal-and-Standards.htm>

Directors and Officers Liability Insurance:

http://www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca/dando/can_you_afford_it/liability_insurance.asp