

# Chapter 6: The Library Director

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## In this Chapter you will learn about:

- ✓ The role of the library director
- ✓ Hiring a library director
- ✓ Evaluation of library director

## Role of the Library Director

The Library Director is responsible for the overall operation of the library including personnel, collection development, fiscal, physical plant and programmatic functions. The director also acts as a technical advisor to the board. A detailed chart of the roles of the director versus the board role is included in Chapter 1.

### PLANNING

The library board is ultimately responsible for long-range planning; the director is responsible for carrying out the plan. Through the planning process the board may decide that the library needs to expand its programs and services. Your library director has the authority and responsibility to manage the programs.

### ORGANIZING

A library director must organize an internal structure for delivery of library services. Board members may give input about what kinds of staff positions are necessary, yet, as the manager, your library director should be able to create the kinds of positions and internal structure he or she deems necessary.

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### STAFFING

The library director is in charge of hiring, firing, evaluating and disciplining all staff members.

### DIRECTING AND LEADING

A library director motivates and leads the staff. He or she should inspire, give direction and communicate with them. Board members direct and lead ONLY THROUGH the director.

### OPERATIONS

The library director monitors and controls the internal operational activities of the library. For instance, the board approves the annual budget, but the director makes the day-to-day decisions about how the budgeted monies are spent.

## Hiring the Library Director

The single most important decision of the library board is the selection and appointment of the library director. Finding and retaining a good library director is vital to creating excellent library service for your community.

When the need first arises to find another director, the board should use the opportunity to assess the qualifications and skills they will be looking for in the person that will lead their library in the coming years.

The library board is urged to contact the Connecticut State Library for assistance soon after it is determined that a new director search will take place. The following resources also may be helpful:

A two-page check list on hiring a library director.

<http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/pages/checklist-hiring-library>

*A Workbook: Selecting a Library Director*, developed by Friends of the Library Development and Services Library, St. Paul, Minnesota. This workbook gives detailed instructions on the process and includes sample forms that may be used or modified as needed. We highly recommend studying this closely.

[http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/sites/default/files/dld\\_file/Selecting%20a%20Lib%20Director.pdf](http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/sites/default/files/dld_file/Selecting%20a%20Lib%20Director.pdf)

If there is a gap between when the current director will have left and when the new director is appointed it will be necessary to appoint an acting director and to work closely with that person on an ongoing basis to assure smooth operations.

The following is a list of steps that the Board should undertake when hiring a director.

**1. Review the library's mission statement, long-range plans, and short term goals.**

Are they still valid? Make adjustments as needed. Consider any changes in the community that will necessitate any changes in the library mission and direction.

**2. Conduct an exit interview with the current director, if possible.**

**3. Discuss vacancy with the municipality if the situation warrants.**

**4. Review the current job description and amend as needed.**

Do not simply use the job description of the outgoing director. The board may wish to redefine the job, elevate the position.

**5. Review skills and abilities the new director should possess to best achieve the board's goals for the library.**

Solicit input from staff, Friends and other stakeholders. Some of these might be:

- Experience in particular areas such as administration, outreach, programming
- Ability to work with library boards and government officials
- Supervisory ability
- Fiscal skills including budget preparation, administering within a budget
- Policy development
- Customer service
- Leadership
- Dependability
- Management skills
- People Skills
- Good writing and oral communication skills
- Interest in furthering library development

This analysis should result in clear written documents that define the job and desired qualifications.

**6. Budget for the expenses the board will incur for any consultants, ads, travel.**

### **7. Set a competitive range for salaries and benefits to be used in the selection and hiring.**

The board may wish to consult the State Library's Statistical Profile of Connecticut Public Libraries as a useful tool in evaluation of an appropriate salary range. <http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/pages/connecticut-public-librar>. The board may also wish to consult with municipal human resources.

### **8. Draft the Job Description.**

Write a clear job description stating the specific duties of the library director. An abbreviated form of the job description may be used in the job advertisement. Trustees should draw up a list of desirable qualifications that can be used to compose a job announcement such as:

- General education and professional training
- Previous library administrative experience
- Minimum qualifications
- Managerial skills and previous supervisory experience
- Special qualifications required to assist library in automation, or introducing new technologies
- Include information on the following:
  - Area of responsibility for director
  - Specific duties
  - Salary and fringe benefits
  - Period of probation
  - Desirable areas of expertise

For examples of job descriptions in Connecticut Public Libraries see: <http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/pages/sample-job-descriptions-c>

### **9. Form the Search Committee.**

The full board should appoint a search committee who will initiate the search, conduct the interview and selection process, and present a final candidate or candidates to the full board. Besides trustees, others should be considered to serve on this committee. For example, a town or municipal official, a respected community representative, a librarian from a neighboring library and other local partners.

### **10. Advertise.**

Advertise the job opening to as many candidates as possible. Qualified staff members should be encouraged to apply, and the board should stress that the goal is to select the best person for the job. All applicants should receive consideration and due process in accordance with equal opportunity laws. Read ads published by other libraries and compose a carefully worded ad based on the job description. Specify a deadline for the application and designate one

person to receive applications. Request that a resume and reference be submitted. For a list of places where a library board in Connecticut may wish to advertise see: <http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/pages/library-director-search> Also use word of mouth by advertising among friends and colleagues to spread the news of an available position.

**11. Affirmative Action.**

Libraries must abide by federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination in relation to hiring, promotion and all other working conditions of employment. It is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, age, country of origin, individual life style and physical handicap. Policies should demonstrate that the library board makes every effort not to discriminate. Library boards have the responsibility for determining deficiencies in their policies and adopting corrections. It is important to tie the skills and qualifications closely to the job requirements to be sure you are not disqualifying any candidate unfairly.

**12. Evaluation of Applications.**

The committee should develop and follow a process for choosing the best applicants who will be interviewed. It is helpful to develop a uniform evaluation form and scale for evaluating resumes based on the qualifications being sought.

**13. Supply candidates who will be interviewed with additional information about the library.** This would include a current description of the community demographics and a copy of the library's Long Range Plan, Policy Manual and the latest Annual Report.

**14. Interviewing and Selection.**

Develop an evaluation sheet to be used by each member of the interview committee to note the candidates' responses and members' impressions. Allow time between interviews to complete evaluation sheets.

The questions asked of each candidate must be identical and asked in the same order. This not only helps protect against illegal questions, but it also helps to focus the questioning on pertinent questions relating to the applicant's job-related abilities and to compare applicants when the interview process is completed. Follow-up questions are allowed if the clarification is needed.

Freedom of Information Act, FOIA

Under the FOIA C.G.S sec 1-225 *"The meetings of all public agencies, except executive sessions, as defined in subdivision (6) of section 1-200, shall be open to the public."* However sec 1-220(2) states *"Meeting" does not include: Any meeting of a personnel search committee for executive level employment candidates;* " Thus, meetings of the personnel search committee do not have to be open to the public. For other implications of FOIA see also *Evaluation* section below, (page 6-9).

**Illegal questions**

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During the interview, there are specific questions that are considered discriminatory and which the board is not legally permitted to ask.

- Marital Status, sexual preference, maiden name, spouse's name or occupation
- Nationality, citizenship, religion, age, height, weight
- Age of children, arrangement for care of minor children
- Plans to have children, in good health, pregnancy, smoking, physical defects, illnesses, unless related to ability to perform; psychiatric hospitalization
- Military experience, type of discharge
- Arrests, felony or misdemeanor convictions other than minor traffic violations
- Candidate for public office; membership in a labor organization

### **15. Interviews Completed.**

Check the references of top candidates. Usually this is done by phone. A form should be used to record the responses to be later shared with the full committee. The search committee selects the best potential director through adequate discussion, consensus and ranking the candidates based on the resume and application, interview evaluations and references. They then present the top candidates to the full board for the final approval. Some libraries prefer to narrow the candidates down to the top two or three and have the Board choose the final candidate after another round of interviews. The board then decides on a salary offer including any relocation expenses if necessary.

### **16. Final Steps.**

Telephone the top candidate to offer the position. Give the candidate a reasonable deadline to respond with a decision.

Follow up with an information letter and/or contract specifying details of the appointment, duties, salary, benefits, evaluation, starting date, probation period if relevant, etc. Include a second copy for the candidate's signature and identify a return date.

Write all the other candidates interviewed, thanking them and informing them of your decision ONLY AFTER written acceptance has been received and the new director is in place. If the candidate declines, move on quickly to the second choice.

### **17. Welcoming the New Director.**

News releases and photographic coverage should be arranged. An open house or reception hosted by the board of trustees is a courtesy. Orientation by board and staff is to be conducted.

### **Evaluating the Director**

The time and energy spent on the evaluation process is the cornerstone of future library services. There are several good reasons for carrying out a review of your library director:

- A review provides the director with formal feedback on his/her job performance.
- A review can be a tool for motivation, encouragement, and direction.
- A review can provide the board with valuable information about the operations and performance of the library.
- A review can help to establish a record of unsatisfactory performance if there is ever cause to discipline the director or terminate employment.
- A review can give the board and the director a formal opportunity to evaluate the job description and adjust it as necessary.
- A review can assure that the director and the board are working towards the same goals for the library.
- A formal, written evaluation of the director should be done annually.

In addition, for the board and director to work well together ongoing, timely feedback and discussions will allow attention to be focused appropriately throughout the year. Problems are best brought to the attention of the director as they occur, rather than stored up for the annual review. Success, accomplishment, and simple hard work or dedication should be acknowledged as it is observed as well as at the annual review. No one should be surprised at the formal evaluation.

#### **Who Carries Out the Review?**

Though it is the board as a whole that is responsible for oversight of library operations and the activities of the library director, often boards decide to delegate the task of developing a preliminary evaluation of the director to a personnel committee or specially appointed committee of the board. Whether the whole board takes part or a committee does the work depends on the makeup of the board and the time available to board members. Any

experienced managers or human resource professionals among its members may be good choices.

The key here is consistency and deciding ahead of time who will take part. At any rate, the entire board should review, discuss, and approve the final written evaluation.

### **How to Conduct the Review**

At the beginning of each fiscal year, the board and the director should mutually develop goals, objectives with time lines and the criteria upon which the evaluation will be based. Consider, for example, the job description, the mission statement, long and short range goals, and expected personal characteristics.

Establishing objectives can be an exercise in creativity in searching for new ways to improve the library. A form should be developed that evaluates the achievement or roadblocks to meeting these goals.

The board may wish to gather input from staff, Friends, other stakeholders, but beware that any discussion between board members and staff members should be previously agreed to by the director. Such evaluation questions should be in the same format as used to gather feedback from board members.

At the same time the board makes its evaluation, the board may ask the director to do a self evaluation. The ensuing conversation can then be more useful.

Once the evaluation is written up, copies are to be distributed to all board members and the library director. Then a conversation between a board representative and the director will take place, allowing a meeting of minds and, perhaps, adjustments to the evaluation document and/or job description. If issues arise, ask for the director's input on how to proceed.

Remember to provide praise and encouragement for successes and corrective actions for weak spots as needed. For each weakness, suggestions for improvement are in order.

The director should have the opportunity to respond in writing to reviews placed in his or her permanent file. Written comments should always be part of the permanent record with a copy kept at the library. No performance review should ever be placed in a personnel file without the knowledge of the director.

The director should sign the review indicating that he or she has been given the opportunity to read and discuss the evaluation. Signing a review should not be construed as agreement.

### **Freedom of Information Requirements**



Board meetings at which the evaluation of the director is discussed may be held in executive session unless the director requests that it be an open meeting. The Freedom of Information section of the CT General Statutes, sec 1.200(6) state that "*Executive sessions*" means a meeting of a public agency at which the public is excluded for one or more of the following purposes: (A) Discussion concerning the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation, health or dismissal of a public officer or employee, provided that such individual may require that discussion be held at an open meeting;..."

For more information on this requirement, please consult the Freedom of Information Commission at: <http://www.ct.gov/foi/>

### **Follow Up**

Soon after the review, the board or designated committee should have a planning session with the library director to develop the basis for the following year's review.

For further guidance see the Tip Sheet Evaluating the Library Director from the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/altaff/trustees/tipsheets/tipsheet6.pdf>