# DIRECTOR HANDBOOK FOR LOUISIANA PUBLIC LIBRARIES



STATE LIBRARY *of* LOUISIANA

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# DIRECTOR HANDBOOK FOR LOUISIANA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Created by the State Library of Louisiana
and the Director Handbook Committee

*2026 Edition*



STATE LIBRARY
*of* LOUISIANA

Meg Placke, State Librarian

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# FROM THE STATE LIBRARIAN



Dear Public Library Directors,

The State Library of Louisiana saw a need to update and revise the *Handbook for Louisiana Public Library Directors*, which was created in 1992 and revised in 1999. This publication, *Director Handbook for Louisiana Public Libraries,* is the result. It has been extensively revised and takes all the information included in the earlier publication, but separates it into subject chapters, and updates and expands the content.

The first *Handbook* was an invaluable aid for public library directors and trustees. This new *Director Handbook* covers all aspects of running a public library in Louisiana, and will serve as a practical guide to understand how libraries are governed and operated. It is designed to answer your questions about the details of being a public library administrator, and was compiled to serve as a practical guide for you, your board, and your peers. Its intent is to illustrate how and why administrative tasks are generally performed in order to provide something concrete to apply to your library's unique situations. It will serve as a resource to find the relevant agencies, laws, organizations, and resources for more specific information. Whether you are a brand new director, or steeped in years of experience, we hope this publication will prove a valuable source of information on those areas of public librarianship not specifically covered in library school, or in other professional publications and resources.

The new *Director Handbook* works in conjunction with our other publications, the *Orientation Manual for Louisiana Library Directors and Trustees,* the *Trustee Handbook for Louisiana Public Libraries, Public Libraries in Louisiana: A Statistical Report,* and *Library Laws of Louisiana.* It will be a working document, and will be revised on an as-needed basis. The latest version will be available on the State Library's website. The initial document will also be printed, and as changes and updates are made, you will be able to print and insert these in your copy.

Each chapter will also include references to other chapters within the *Director Handbook,* as well as links to information from other government agencies and online publications.

In addition, the Library Development Division at the State Library is here to give you, your staff, and your library board guidance and training about requirements, policies, and best practices in

public libraries. Consultants on staff are always ready to provide help to public libraries and their boards.

Thanks to Michael Golrick, retired Associate State Librarian; Giovanni Tairov, Deputy State Librarian; and Dorothy White, Board of Commissioners, State Library of Louisiana, who took the lead to create this publication. Thanks also to the committee members, who worked long hours editing its content. In addition, thanks to State Library staff members, current and former, for reading, writing, and suggesting information for inclusion: Kevin Calbert, Michele Jones, Katelin LeBeau, Daniel Monteverde, and Brittany Whitfield.

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State Library of Louisiana

# Chapter 1

# PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THE STATE LIBRARY OF LOUISIANA

> "In my opinion, there is nothing that can greater serve the cause of convenience, happiness and uplift of a community than a public library. It places within the reach of every child, as well as older people, the literature which enables them to become informed, and through which they may entertain themselves more delightfully, and to aid their mental and spiritual development.
>
> If I had only a small amount of money to spend on public improvements, I would put it all in a library." – Huey Long, Governor of Louisiana, 1928 to 1932

## THE STATE LIBRARY OF LOUISIANA

**Vision Statement:**

The State Library of Louisiana is a strategic leader in bringing information resources to the people of Louisiana through cooperation with government entities, partnership with other libraries, technology, and superior customer service.

**Mission Statement:**

The State Library of Louisiana inspires and supports literacy and lifelong learning for all Louisianans through access to information, strengthening communities, supporting exceptional library services, and preserving Louisiana's heritage.

**Agency Philosophy:**

The State Library of Louisiana, its staff, and the Board of Commissioners value:

- Equal access to information for all citizens,
- The literary and cultural heritage of Louisiana,
- Intellectual freedom, and
- Reading.

## HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The history of library development in Louisiana embodies both the history of a movement and the creation of the State Library of Louisiana, in that the development of the State Library and public libraries in Louisiana was contiguous.

The Louisiana State Library was created in 1838 and was located in New Orleans. Support for the library varied through the years, and after years of neglect, it was closed in 1911. Some cities supported library societies with membership fees; for example, Lafayette had the Five O'Clock Tea Club beginning in 1897. By 1925, Louisiana had public libraries in Jennings (1889), Shreveport (1923), Lake Charles (1901), Monroe (1916), Baton Rouge (1923), and New Orleans (1843). All were inadequately equipped and funded. Over half the state's population—1.2 million people—had no access to books.

Milton J. Ferguson, the president of the League of Library Commissions, asked Essae M. Culver to travel to Louisiana to conduct an experiment. Mr. Ferguson had secured a three-year grant of $50,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (later expanded to five years) to demonstrate free library service to the people of one state whose service was inadequate, with the hope that this would serve as an example for other states. For obvious reasons, (lack of library access but a clear interest by the people) he chose Louisiana as the demonstration state; and he chose Miss Culver to head the project. He was impressed with the interest shown in libraries in this rural state that was considered to be one of the most 'bookless" of the 48 states. Starting in 1926, the legislature appropriated $2,500 and continued to support the State Library thereafter.

In 1925 the Louisiana Library Commission was created, and Miss Culver led the mission to establish statewide public library service through the demonstration method. Miss Culver commented later that she was "somewhat amazed at her temerity in undertaking so mammoth a task." When she arrived "on a white hot day in July," she found not only a dearth of books, but also no office. She was to serve as both the executive secretary and the entire staff of the Louisiana Library Commission. She refused to be daunted. Space was found in the Old State Capitol, and she borrowed a desk, chair, and a typewriter and set to work, though she confessed later that she "was more than slightly dismayed at the prospect." So uneasy had she felt about this move that she had bought a round trip train ticket just in case this experiment proved a failure.

Miss Culver was welcomed with open arms, and everywhere she went, she found a desire for books all over the state. Because the existing public libraries had inadequate supplies of books to meet the needs of the people of Louisiana, the first service she inaugurated was book-lending by mail to individuals anywhere in the state.

At the first meeting of the Library Commission board with the new executive secretary, it was decided that major efforts would be to establish parish libraries throughout the state, establish a library school, provide library service to the legislature, and create a new public library law.

At this point, Mr. J. O. Modisette, a lawyer in Jennings, offered to help further library development in Louisiana. One of his first tasks was to draft new public library legislation which became law in July 1926. Also in 1926, he became a member of the Library Commission Board; and at his first meeting, he proposed nine practical suggestions to promote interest in and

support for libraries. Then, in 1927, he was appointed chairman. He had a thriving law business, but was also a tireless worker in the cause of books—his business card not only said he was an attorney, it also said "Interested in Public Libraries." A staunch supporter of libraries, he remained on the Commission until his death in 1942.

As it turned out, the demonstration method proved the most effective means to accomplish the Commission objectives, by showing the people of Louisiana what library service could mean to their community. With the initiative coming from the local citizens, and after the police jury passed an ordinance establishing the library, the State Library would set up a parish library.

The guidelines for setting up demonstration libraries were strict: the Library Commission set up the parish library system of a headquarters, branches, and bookmobile. The Commission operated the system for a year, bearing the greater part of the expenses. The local government was responsible for "providing housing, furniture, equipment, utilities, building, and some administrative supplies, and local part-time assistants for branch libraries." The state provided "all books, magazines, most administrative supplies, a professional staff of librarians and full-time assistants, and a bookmobile." If the parish decided to continue to support the library with a dedicated tax—and most did—the Library Commission left the entire book collection and bookmobile on indefinite loan.

The Louisiana Library Commission decided to begin with two demonstration libraries: one in north Louisiana in Richland Parish and one in south Louisiana in Jefferson Davis Parish. Both demonstrations were a great success to the people using the libraries, but at the end of the demonstration period, the Richland Parish Police Jury made an appropriation to continue to support the library, while the people in Jefferson Davis voted down the proposed levy.

Meanwhile, in order to publicize library services, the Commission purchased a bookmobile. The vehicle's exterior sides were painted with images of books on shelves; it was filled with a collection of 500 volumes; and thus embellished and equipped, the bookmobile traveled throughout the state visiting fairs and towns with "its message of romance, inspiration and service [that] was welcomed by the people of Louisiana."

Five years of the Carnegie project elapsed, and despite the disastrous effects of the Mississippi River flood of 1927 and the onset of the Great Depression, the Commission produced impressive results.

- Parish library systems had been started in Richland, Concordia, and Webster parishes.
- Citizens in 23 other parishes had decided they wanted library services too and expressed interest in trying out the demonstration method.
- Perhaps most importantly, the state legislature had begun to fund the Library Commission's work.

The success of this project gave the Commission its direction for the next 40 years – to establish public library service in all 64 parishes using the demonstration method. In addition, the report that Miss Culver wrote on the five-year project created something of a sensation in the library world. Copies were requested from all over the United States and even some foreign countries. People came to Baton Rouge to interview Miss Culver and to write about what had happened in Louisiana.

In the 1920s, two other projects advocated by the Louisiana Library Commission were brought into being: the library school was established at Louisiana State University and the Department of Education started a school library development program with a State School Library Supervisor.

In 1932, the Commission moved from the cramped and dilapidated space in the Old State Capitol into nicely furnished quarters on the 18th floor of the new State Capitol.

The public libraries that had been established around the state were a great success and caused people in parishes without libraries to clamor for a demonstration as well. In 1937, Governor Richard W. Leche became interested in providing books to the areas without library service. He wanted to put books in school libraries, but the Library Commission did not believe this was the answer. In order to resolve the issue, the State Department of Education put books for adults into the libraries of 56 high schools in 10 parishes, while the Library Commission put the $10,000 provided by the Department of Education, plus additional funds, into a regional tri-parish demonstration library for Winn, Grant, and Jackson parishes.

At the end of six months, the 119,292 residents of the 10 parishes served by the 56 school libraries had borrowed 14,355 books, while the 31,610 residents of the three parishes served by the demonstration library had borrowed 101,236 books. Unfortunately, only Winn parish voted to continue the local tax.

A change in the organizational structure of the Commission took place in 1938: the demonstration library work was placed under the Extension Department, and a qualified librarian was hired full time to supervise demonstrations and to give advice to established libraries.

From 1939 until it was disbanded in 1942, the Works Project Administration (WPA) played a crucial part in library development in Louisiana. The WPA worked in conjunction with the Commission to establish small libraries around the state and to provide staff for established and demonstration libraries. This included trained librarians to supervise clerical workers, book repairers, and bookmobile drivers all funded by the WPA. In addition, WPA money bought books for the libraries.

The WPA had worked closely with the Commission to fit in with the Commission’s plan for library development in Louisiana and to further its goals of library service. When the entire

state WPA disbanded, it had little effect on the public libraries, and no libraries were closed as a result.

The first state aid bill for public libraries was passed in 1940, with a $400,000 biennial appropriation, separate from the Commission's appropriation; however, this was vetoed by the governor because of insufficient funds.

Another setback in 1940 occurred when the Commission had to give up its offices in the new State Capitol for the cramped and unsatisfactory quarters of the old Hill Memorial Library on the capitol grounds. Lack of space meant that the preparation of books for the demonstration libraries was slowed down considerably, and several special collections that were offered to the Commission were refused.

With the onset of World War II, libraries became even more important to the people of Louisiana. Not only did they need to provide books for soldiers at training camps who were looking for a wide variety of information from technical training books to recreational reading, but also for the general public who wanted information on such diverse topics as the countries where the soldiers were going, or women preparing themselves for war-time jobs.

An important new service was begun in 1943, the Library Service for Colored People. The name was changed to the Negro Reference and Loan Library the next year. Given the lack of space at the Commission, the service was housed at Southern University in space offered by the University's President, Dr. F. G. Clark. Use of the branch grew steadily, and it was moved to the new State Library building upon completion in 1958. It was again renamed, this time as the Negro Services Department, and in 1964, it was incorporated into the Reference Department.

In 1946 the legislature enacted a law changing the name of the Louisiana Library Commission to the Louisiana State Library, and Sallie Farrell began working at the State Library as a field representative. A native of Mississippi with Louisiana roots, she graduated from the library program at the University of Illinois. In 1954, she became the Director of Field Services, that is, the person who worked with local officials and interested citizens to get the libraries started.

In 1947 a significant and unusual demonstration library began that was unlike previous demonstration projects. The Department of Institutions requested a library at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. It was set up with a headquarters and branch libraries in each of the inmate camps, and was a great success. The inmates used the library stocked with fiction and non-fiction enthusiastically, and they also borrowed books just as if they were patrons at the parish libraries. It was hoped that the library would be supported at the end of the demonstration by the Department of Institutions. Although penitentiary officials agreed that the library was a success, they were unable to support the library financially, and the State Library withdrew the books and closed the library.

In 1954, the State allocated $2 million to construct a new State Library building on the site of the old Hill Memorial, and in November 1958 the project came to fruition when the move into the new building was completed.

**Essae M. Culver**

In 1962 Miss Culver retired. By this time the Louisiana State Library had succeeded in creating autonomous, locally supported library systems in 51 of the state's 64 parishes. Miss Culver was a very interesting person in her own right; and she certainly had a remarkable career with a large impact on the library profession, not only in Louisiana, but also all over the country.

Throughout her extraordinary career, Miss Culver was beloved by the people around the state of Louisiana. She was a dynamic leader, who was well respected and admired by her colleagues around the United States, as well as in Louisiana.

- She spearheaded the creation of the LSU library school, when in 1926 she established a summer training course for 21 young ladies.
- She is credited with reviving the dying Louisiana Library Association when she served as its president in 1928-29.
- She is said to be the first woman heading a southern library to serve as the American Library Association president in 1940-41.
- She was the first woman to receive an honorary doctorate from LSU in 1959.
- The Louisiana Library Association's most coveted and prestigious award is named for her: The Essae M. Culver Distinguished Service Award.

**Sallie Farrell**

After Miss Culver retired, Sallie Farrell was appointed the new State Librarian. She had excellent, relevant experience—as the head of Field Services, she was directly involved in the establishment of library systems in 44 parishes, including the three demonstration libraries that she set up and directed—in Winn Parish, Rapides Parish, and Calcasieu Parish. She had great personal charm and a love of people, and could convey the value of public library service to all those people who had to be convinced if library service was to happen. Miss Farrell would become known as "the super salesman of Louisiana libraries."

One might think that following Miss Culver would prove daunting, but Miss Farrell had no trouble making a place for herself in Louisiana library history.

- She oversaw the establishment of library service in the last 13 parishes without it.
- She chaired the LLA Federal Relations Committee and played an important role in getting Congress to pass the Library Services Act (later to become the Library Services

and Construction Act) both by working behind the scenes and by testifying several times before congressional committees.

- She directed the establishment of multi-parish library systems like Trailblazer and Green Gold, which served to expedite interlibrary loan and continuing education in specific regions of the state.
- At the height of the Cold War, she traveled to the Soviet Union with six other leading librarians to represent ALA in an exchange mission.
- She cooperated with leaders in the Department of Corrections and in the Department of Hospitals to establish libraries in hospitals, prisons, and other state institutions.
- She oversaw the creation of a comprehensive long-range plan for state, public, and institutional library services.
- She used her charm and political savvy to promote state laws supporting libraries.
- And, of course, in 1971 she won the Essae M. Culver Distinguished Service Award.

In 1969 permanent public library service in every parish became a reality with the opening of the Jefferson Davis Parish Library headquartered in Jennings: Jefferson Davis Parish was one of the first two parishes to host a demonstration library and the first parish to fail to pass a millage to support the library, and it was the last parish to host a demonstration and then pass the millage.

Sallie Farrell commented after the dedication of the Jefferson Davis Parish Library, “Now that our commitment to the establishment of public libraries is discharged, our efforts will be directed to the improvement of these libraries through cooperative and coordinated endeavors.” She went on to say, “Although we take justifiable pride in local library service being available to every Louisiana citizen, we are not unmindful of the job ahead. Now we will be concerned with devising ways for better utilization of total library resources and personnel.”

After the demonstration libraries were set up and funded locally, the work of the Library Development Division changed its focus. The consultants continued to visit every public library in the state, and had numerous telephone consultations with directors and trustees, covering many topics, such as tax elections, bookmobiles, book selection, personnel administration, and management.

In order to help the State Library serve the public libraries in the best way, the State Library in 1966 asked John and James Humphry to conduct a comprehensive survey of the Louisiana library system. The Humphry report, *Library Service in Louisiana: Keeping Pace with Progress in the State,* gave these major recommendations:

- the establishment by the State Library of pilot library systems,
- a statewide survey of library resources,
- expansion of the rapid communications network, and
- expansion of the State Library Processing Center.

The Humphry report recommended that seven systems be created around the state. For a list of the systems created as well as current systems in existence, see the Appendix "Library Consortia in Louisiana."

While the State Library was established as an independent state agency in 1925, the reorganization of the state government's executive branch was mandated by the 1974 constitution. The State Library became an Office in the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. At that time, the Board of Commissioners, made up of five gubernatorial appointees, became advisory but retained the authority to appoint the state librarian who must meet the qualifications set forth in state library law.

**Tom Jaques**

In 1975, Sallie Farrell retired and Thomas F. Jaques was appointed State Librarian. Early in his tenure he wrote about the goals of library development, "We're grateful for the past. Its accomplishments have placed Louisiana's library program on a firm foundation. Now we must search with vitality and imagination for ways to expand the horizons of service. A strong State Library, providing effective leadership, is essential to this effort."

Before Mr. Jaques came to the State Library, he had been an administrator at the Rapides Parish Library, followed by a position as assistant director for library development at the Mississippi Library Commission—comparable to our State Library. And like his predecessor, Miss Farrell, Mr. Jaques proved to be a great communicator and salesman, a superb spokesman and advocated for state and public library interests.

When Mr. Jaques became the State Librarian, all parishes had public libraries. He saw a need for libraries to become interconnected, share resources, and make access to information widely available to all citizens of the state.

Under his leadership, the State Library accomplished wonders:

- Library Development created a statewide summer reading program.
- Lasernet, the nation's first statewide automated interlibrary loan network on laser disc was created. Known today as LoanSHARK, it is a web-based union catalog of Louisiana public library holdings with online transaction software begun in 2001.
- He created a statewide network for book delivery.

- Under his leadership, the Louisiana Center for the Book, which promotes books and reading, literature, and culture, was created in 1994 and began a series of successful events. The first Louisiana Book Festival was held in 2002.
- He oversaw the development of public access Internet stations at all 328 public library sites in the state.
- The State Library began the program for payment of the public libraries' connectivity charges for their wide area networks and their Internet service providers.
- State aid grants to public libraries for technology enhancement and collection development were created.
- An $8,000,000 renovation and expansion of the State Library building resulted in some 50,000 additional square feet.
- The State Library improved the available technology at public libraries in the state through the Louisiana Libraries Connect project.
- He oversaw and coordinated the Gates Library Foundation donation of $7.25 million in 1998 to the Louisiana public libraries.

In 1984, the Louisiana Library Association paid tribute to Mr. Jaques' successful performance as State Librarian by awarding him the Anthony H. Benoit Mid-Career Award, and in 1990, he won the Culver award.

**Rebecca Hamilton**

Tom Jaques retired in 2005, and Rebecca Hamilton was selected as State Librarian. Prior to becoming State Librarian, Ms. Hamilton served as the Library Director for the St. Mary Parish Library and as the Associate State Librarian.

Two months after she was appointed, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had a major impact on public libraries in Louisiana. In the aftermath, the State Library worked in partnership with Solinet (now Lyrasis) to help public libraries recover from these devastating storms. In addition, the State Library worked with the following agencies to coordinate grants to the affected libraries.

- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's $12.2 million grant helped libraries establish temporary facilities, provided support for the planning of damaged or destroyed libraries, and paid for new computers in rebuilt public libraries.
- The Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund made $5 million available to support new construction and recovery.

The post-Katrina infrastructure work meant that in 2008 when Hurricane Gustav hit Baton Rouge hard, the State Library was able to provide stable and reliable internet service to the workers and safety officers in the Capitol Complex. In 2010, the State Library received word

that they had been awarded an $8.8 million grant from the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). “Louisiana Libraries: Connecting People to Their Potential” project provided more than 760 computer workstations for every public library in the state, established wireless hotspots, and provided four mobile computer and training labs to provide enhanced broadband training opportunities in order to deliver targeted Internet and job skills training

During the COVID crisis, the State Library received over $420,000 in recovery funding that was distributed directly to all public libraries in Louisiana.

**Meg Placke**

In 2022, Meg Placke was appointed interim State Librarian. After a nationwide search, the Board selected Meg Placke to serve as State Librarian in September 2023. Prior to that selection, she was the Assistant Director at Lafourche Parish library, and at the State Library, she served as Interim State Librarian, Deputy State Librarian, Associate State Librarian, and as the E-rate Consultant in Library Development.

Ms. Placke immediately began to fill long term vacant positions on State Library staff, with the result that 12 positions were filled within her first year.

She worked with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation to provide better access to telehealth services around the state with a grant of $50,000. Eleven library systems now offer free telehealth services, including medical equipment such as portable EKG monitors and private booths in libraries for people to meet virtually with their doctors.

The State Library created a new publication, the *Orientation Manual for Louisiana Library Directors and Trustees,* and distributed it to all directors and trustees. The State Library has also worked with a committee of library directors around the state to edit this new edition of the *Director Handbook* and is in the process of updating the *Trustee Handbook* and the *Standards for Louisiana Public Libraries*.

Ms. Placke also updated the *Louisiana Library Laws* volume which had not been updated since 2010.

Under her leadership, the State Library created the *Check Out Louisiana State Parks* and *Check Out Louisiana Museums* programs, as well as a Literacy and Learning Lab housed in the State Library. In addition, a Braille flag was installed in the first floor reference area, which features the American flag rendered in raised braille dots, as well as the Pledge of Allegiance in braille.

# PUBLIC LIBRARIES TODAY

## CURRENT STATUS

By 1968, all 64 parishes had public library service. Today, Louisiana supports 68 public library systems providing statewide coverage: sixty-one of these are parish-wide; one is a system for two parishes; two are city libraries in parishes that also have parish libraries; and one parish does not have parish-wide service, but instead has three municipal libraries and one district library that serves three towns and their outlying areas. These systems have a total of 335 locations and 28 bookmobiles.

While the State Library led the development of the public library system on request, each local library was created by the parish governing authority, and public libraries are still governed and funded locally. Funding for Louisiana libraries ranges from very well-funded to very poorly funded. All but a few libraries are funded with a dedicated property tax: this makes their funding very stable, if not generous. The other libraries are funded by a partial property tax and/or a sales tax. The State Library provides strong supplemental support to all 68 systems through its statewide projects and initiatives, including educational and informational databases with access through the public libraries, an interlibrary loan system, continuing education, children's services, and consulting services.

## IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Local public library directors depend on the State Library for information, advice, and leadership. Within the 68 library systems, 17 systems employ no one with a library degree, and 4 systems have only a part-time degreed director. Public library directors are eligible to be certified when they have a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS). While 37 directors are certified, 31 directors are not certified, and of those, only 14 are eligible to be certified. Over the years, directors' highest level of education has ranged from a doctorate to only a high school diploma. The inability of library boards in rural parishes to offer competitive salaries is the primary reason for the number of non-MLIS directors.

The State Library still exists to provide support for public libraries, including:

- Coordinate a statewide delivery system for parish and regional libraries,
- Coordinate interlibrary loan services to provide the best free library service possible,
- Consultative advisory services to public libraries administrators,
- Coordinate federally required statistical reporting,
- Administer federal and state funds for libraries, and
- Coordinate and offer continuing education activities to benefit public library staff.

The State Library provides Louisianans access to more than eleven million items through its own excellent collection and electronic resources combined with a statewide online lending network of public libraries, and remains committed to creating ever-increasing opportunities for citizens to experience the value of libraries and reading.

**STATISTICS**

The State Library of Louisiana maintains a web page in LibGuides with links to library statistics, with comments, for libraries.[1]

All years of *Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report* are located in LibGuides under Library Statistics, Public Libraries in Louisiana: A Statistical Report.[2] The table General Information lists all public libraries, along with the year founded, system membership, number of branches and bookmobiles, and other information.

## STATE LIBRARY TODAY

Every library director should understand the vital, supportive role of the State Library and its capacity to contribute to the excellence of local library service. Because of the State Library, directors and trustees need not operate in a vacuum or feel isolated no matter how remote their libraries are.

The State Library provides support through its services and special programs, not in financing local library operations. It has entered state folklore that parish libraries have fiscal ties to the State Library so that if local support fails, the State Library will step in and assume the library's financial obligations. This has no foundation in fact. Parish libraries are financially independent of the state and require local support for existence.

The State Library of Louisiana focuses its services and resources on seven fundamental priorities:

1. **Service to Public Libraries and Agencies:** Serve state government and public libraries by collecting and disseminating public information and providing reference services and library materials;
2. **Economic and Workforce Growth:** Assist public libraries as they continue to be engines for economic growth, educational opportunity, and workforce development in their communities;
3. **Library Development and Advocacy:** Provide training and consulting to public libraries to support and assist their local advocacy efforts within their communities;

4. **Accessible Services:** Meet the informational needs of our blind and physically-handicapped citizens across the state helping them to learn and navigate new technologies and new ways to obtain information;
5. **Institutional Outreach:** Meet the informational needs of incarcerated populations;
6. **Preserving Louisiana Cultural and Historic Heritage:** Expand the scope of the Louisiana collection and continue to provide extraordinary reference services while working to enhance, preserve, and promote the collection; and
7. **Statewide Literacy:** Continue to refine a coordinated program to promote literacy among all ages, especially early childhood, and a lifelong love of reading among Louisianans.

## CURRENT MAJOR SERVICES OF THE STATE LIBRARY

### Talking Books and Braille Library (TBBL)

This program remains a free service to residents of Louisiana. It currently serves more than 6,000 users of all ages in their homes and in institutions, including those who cannot easily read standard printed materials due to a visual impairment, physical disability, or a reading disability whether it is permanent or temporary. Access to digital media is provided through adaptive equipment. The program is affiliated with the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS). Services include information access and talking book-lending, literacy programs, and outreach services. TBBL offers large print materials, digital audiobooks, descriptive videos, Braille materials, and NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD). TBBL's contact information is: Email: tbbl@state.library.us, Local Phone:(225)342-0035, Toll-free: (800) 543-4702.

### Louisiana Collection

The State Library supports the preservation and digitization of important Louisiana historical and cultural collections. Library staff receive and process donations of important Louisiana historical and cultural significance and then catalog items making these accessible to users. Items are also being digitized and added to a digital repository, the Louisiana Digital Library (LDL) The LDL provides free online access statewide and beyond to historic materials, increasing their discoverability and usability while ensuring that the items are protected from damage.

### Public Documents Depository

The Louisiana Public Document Depository Program, established in 1948, provides free access to public information published by the state government. State agencies are mandated by statute to provide copies of all public information they produce to the Recorder of Documents Office, which is part of the State Library. The Recorder's Office distributes documents to depository libraries across the state, including the State Library, which is a historical depository. This means the State Library receives and retains in perpetuity at least one copy of all tangible

public documents. The Recorder's Office also receives public documents produced electronically and retains those in an online digital archive, maintained in perpetuity offsite. The library performs original cataloging and processing of all of these public documents in all formats in order to make the information readily findable and accessible to users.

**Continuing Education and Consulting**

The State Library provides continuing education and consulting for all segments of public library service.

A strong and effective program of continuing education of librarians includes a steady supply of timely, relevant offerings as well as access to online training opportunities which can be used at a time and location convenient to Louisiana library staff, administrators, and trustees. Louisiana librarians work in an environment where learning never stops. It is important for the State Library to identify and deliver training opportunities which provide professional support to assist librarians, staff, trustees and others in effectively improving services, understanding technologies and developing policies.

Support for public libraries is also provided by the State Library through consultations, site visits, and assistance and support as requested on library policies, law, procedures, best practices, and so on. The State Library also produces publications, guides, manuals, and templates for use by public libraries, including the *Director Handbook*, *Trustee Handbook*, *Orientation Manual for Louisiana Library Directors and Trustees*, and *Louisiana Library Laws*.

- Training
  The State Library also provides advice and technology support to the public libraries as it is critical for libraries to maintain and expand their libraries' IT infrastructure and services. State Library staff offer much needed IT training, consulting, and IT support and assistance to public libraries.

- E-Rate
  The Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund makes discounts available to eligible schools and libraries for telecommunication services, internet access, and internal connections. The State Library provides support for every public library system in filing E-rate applications.

**Resource Sharing**

Resource sharing provides equitable access to information for all citizens, by providing access to collections and resources beyond what is owned by a local library. The Interlibrary Loan (ILL) system (LoanSHARK) is used by all public libraries and provides access to OCLC's Worldshare, an international sharing system that enables public libraries access to materials worldwide. The State Library also provides courier service and delivery to public and academic libraries throughout the state.

**Statewide Electronic Resources**

Electronic resources supported by LSTA funds are available to all Louisiana residents. The State Library manages the statewide electronic resources providing access to job assistance, language learning, consumer information, health and medical information, newspapers, magazines, children's and teens books, and so on. This includes Homework Louisiana, which is an online, after-school tutoring program available to all students in Louisiana from kindergarten through basic college level, as well as adult education in more than 60 subjects, including preparation for the GED. In addition, services offered include test preparation, and job search assistance and resources. As such, it is a well-used and popular service.

**The Louisiana Center for the Book**

The Louisiana Center for the Book (LCB) was established in the State Library of Louisiana in 1994 for the purpose of stimulating public interest in reading, books, and libraries. It is the official state affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

The Center works to accomplish its mission in three ways:

- By developing, sponsoring, and coordinating statewide reading enrichment programs for children
- By identifying and nurturing the objectives of Louisiana's writers, publishers, and others involved in the creation and promotion of books
- And by encouraging Louisianans to read by presenting or sponsoring public presentations by accomplished authors, enabling the public to interact with living authors, particularly at the Louisiana Book Festival, and annual programs such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, and National Poetry Month events.

The ***Louisiana Book Festival*** (LBF) was established as a project of the Louisiana Center for the Book in the State Library. The LBF is an annual, free literary event that takes place around the Capitol and the State Library in Baton Rouge. The LBF is the Louisiana Center for the Book's primary event in achieving its mission to promote literacy, reading, and education and to showcase Louisiana authors, publishers, and books about Louisiana or set in Louisiana. It also includes culinary arts, visual arts, and Louisiana music. It has become an internationally-known festival and is a credit to the literary heritage of Louisiana.

Each year the Center for the Book hosts ***other annual programs*** to celebrate Black History Month, Women's History Month, and National Poetry Month. The Black History Month and Women's History Month programs are presentations by Louisiana authors on the topic. The National Poetry Month program, *Just Listen to Yourself,* is a panel of Louisiana poets hosted by the Louisiana Poet Laureate.

**Check Out Louisiana Program**

The *Check Out Louisiana State Parks* and *Check Out Louisiana Museums* programs are popular statewide initiatives that invite public library cardholders to explore Louisiana's natural beauty and cultural treasures through free day passes. Offered through partnerships with Louisiana State Parks and a growing network of museums, these programs encourage outdoor recreation, family outings, and lifelong learning by making it easy to discover new places and experiences. These programs highlight the State Library's commitment to developing programs that enrich lives, celebrate Louisiana's heritage, and showcase the vital role public libraries play in connecting people to knowledge, culture, and one another.

**LSTA: Library Services and Technology Act**

The State Library requests and administrates Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds. It does not hold back any LSTA funds for administrative costs, and uses all LSTA funds for statewide initiatives for public libraries, with two exceptions: the Talking Books and Braille Library, which provides free public library service to Louisiana residents of all ages who cannot easily read standard printed materials, and the Louisiana Book Festival, which is held in Baton Rouge, but brings in residents from around the state.

**Broadband and Technology Support**

Louisiana is unique in that it has offered dedicated (non-dial-up) Internet access at every public library facility since 1998. Today, every library in Louisiana continues to provide broadband for patron use. Broadband Internet access is a foundational public library service in Louisiana, where only 60.5% of Louisianans have broadband Internet at home and 19% have no connection anywhere

**Literacy**

Education levels and endemic poverty continue to be critical issues in Louisiana. The State Library is committed to promoting literacy and lifelong learning. The State Library: (1) coordinates the statewide Summer Reading Program; (2) provides summer reading program training statewide; and (3) also purchases materials and supplies to implement the programming. This enables local libraries to offer events throughout the summer months for Louisiana residents of all ages.

The State Library also houses a Literacy and Learning Lab, which is designed for elementary school students with a particular focus on emerging readers. The Lab offers hands-on and technology-based learning activities that support the start of a lifelong love of reading.

**Reading Programs**

The State Library supports **summer reading programs** at public libraries across Louisiana for everyone from children to adults. Themes vary, from the first year's theme of "Reading and All That Jazz" to 2025's theme, "All Jazzed Up".

Anyone may participate in Summer Reading programs by reading books, attending programs at their local library, and accessing digital library resources. The goal is to create lifelong readers.

Families and individuals should check with their local public library to learn about the Summer Reading incentives and programs available in their community.

The **Louisiana Readers' Choice Awards** program was founded in 1999 with the first award given in 2000. Louisiana's young people have read nearly 1.5 million books and cast over 460,000 votes in the 25 years since the program began.

The purpose of the program is to foster a love of reading in the children of Louisiana by motivating them to participate in the recognition of outstanding books. The lists are well-balanced selections of high-quality fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

Now entering its 26th year, the program continues to encourage Louisiana's youth to read for pleasure. For more information, contact the Youth Services Consultant at the State Library.

The State Library also provides **early literacy training and resources** for library staff, so that they can implement early literacy programming in their libraries.

**Annual Report—*Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report***

Public library statistics have always been part of information gathered by the State Library. The requirement for reporting is included in the state statutes (La. R.S. 25:216). These statistics have been compiled and published since 1954. Louisiana has participated in the national Public Library Survey since its inception in 1988. Currently a library consultant is responsible for collecting the data from each public library system and reporting to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The state compilation is published in hard copy. An electronic version of *Public Libraries in Louisiana: A Statistical Report* and the data tables in Excel are available on the State Library web site.[3]

**Institutional Library Services**

The State Library partners with the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections to provide support and strengthen prison libraries. One prison has limited services of a degreed librarian, none of the rest of the prisons has a degreed librarian on staff, and all prisons rely on those who are incarcerated assigned to work in the library. State Library programs include the following:

- Staff training within each prison.
- Services through the Talking Books and Braille library.
- References services and interlibrary loan services provided to eight state prisons in Louisiana.
- Provide training and technical support for their collection.

- Coordinate and assist public libraries in providing services to people who are incarcerated.
- Provide interlibrary loan and reference services to eight state prisons in Louisiana.

**Communications**

Public libraries have strongly expressed a need for enhanced communication, promotion, and marketing of statewide library services and resources. While the State Library and public libraries provide many initiatives, programs, and services, many people in the state are not aware of what is available in Louisiana's libraries, such as the statewide electronic resources, Homework Louisiana, summer reading and other literacy programs, TBBL, and the Louisiana Book Festival. The State Library develops and implements coordinated communications and online media programs for public libraries that will raise awareness of statewide initiatives, programs, and activities.

**Strategic Partnerships**

Local communities need a library that is well-integrated into community-based activities and decisions. Libraries have a safe, trusted reputation, and strong communities will work with their library to coordinate, cooperate, collaborate, and communicate to address community needs. Libraries should coordinate library users and non-users, decision makers, and community partners to help their community. In our changing world, it is critical for libraries to share resources and knowledge.

The State library is actively working to

- Develop strategies and a plan for the future direction of not only the State Library, but also public libraries within the state.
- Address the changing roles of libraries.
- Partner with other state agencies to make effective use of library services by their respective clientele.
- Assist libraries to identify and develop partnerships and collaborative efforts in their community.
- Encourage public librarians to become civic leaders, and position the library as an essential, neutral community hub.

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## ENDNOTES

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# Chapter 2

# THE NEW LIBRARY DIRECTOR

## WANTED: A LIBRARY DIRECTOR

> *Position Summary*: The library director is responsible for the overall smooth operation of the library, including the supervision of staff, the creation of a cordial and friendly atmosphere in the library, marketing the library, acting as an ambassador to the community, outreach, and advocating for the library. In addition, the library director evaluates existing services and develops new services, oversees the collection, policy, and program development, drafts a library budget, records maintenance, schedules personnel, and delegates library tasks.

That is a typical job description for a library director, but you may be asking, what does it mean? Particularly in Louisiana, where many challenges are facing public library directors today, being a director can be a difficult task, though ultimately rewarding.

You already know that as a library director you have a profound responsibility to the citizens you serve. Through your leadership, the library system you serve will reach beyond the library walls to provide cutting-edge library service that fills the needs of all groups of citizens that your library serves. Your library board has selected you because you were the best candidate and they see you as a leader. Through your work, you will prove them right.

The structure of Louisiana Public Libraries was created by law in 1925, with similar library funding structures and similar local governance. As a director, you will share countless challenges, needs, solutions, and experiences with other administrators within Louisiana's public library community. And within this community, you have plenty of colleagues to whom you can turn for advice, mentoring, and networking. In addition, the State Library of Louisiana is a primary resource for directors and trustees. As a state agency, it is responsible for statewide library leadership and development; its staff includes librarians with expertise in a variety of subjects, and they are all available to help you and your board.

## BEFORE STARTING THE JOB

The State Library has published a general guide for new directors and trustees. The *Orientation Manual for Louisiana Library Directors and Trustees*[1] is the first thing you need to read.

For an overall view of running a library, this publication, the *Director Handbook for Louisiana Public Libraries,* will prove invaluable to you. A new director should also read various materials for an overview of the library, including annual reports, the budget, board meeting minutes,

long-range plans, organization charts, circulation statistics, salary schedules, job classifications, and job descriptions.

For a broader view, you can also review professional literature, as well as talk with other public librarians. A number of directors meet informally with other directors in their area: for example, a director will host a meeting at their library, and then the group goes to lunch.

Local newspapers, chamber of commerce literature, local government websites, community centers, local event websites, social media, and so on will provide community information. Of course, when gathering library and community information from such sources, you must reserve judgment about what is learned until it can be personally validated.

## SUGGESTED FIRST FEW DAYS ACTIVITIES

The first few days on the job will set the tone for a library director's administration. Here are some suggestions to help with your orientation.

- Get to know your staff. Do you remember what it was like to have a new boss? Your staff feels much the same way you might. Reassure staff to eliminate any fears they may have about arbitrary or unfair changes. Try to remain neutral and avoid any negative comments about the way things were done in the past. It's also a good idea to not become involved in staff disputes. Be cordial and maintain professional relations with staff from your first day.
- Tour the building with staff and schedule time to work with them. It will give you a good feeling for how things are done. During this period, you should be spending time acquainting yourself with the staff, the community, and your library.
- Listen! Ask questions and really listen to the answers. Until you develop a feel for the library and hopefully a good working relationship with your staff and board, you don't want to make any major changes.

## SUGGESTED FIRST MONTH ACTIVITIES

Here are some suggestions for your first month:

- Discuss the rationale for current operations and routines with each department or branch head. If an acting director was appointed during the interim, then you should review library plans and problems with that individual.
- Visit every branch library.

- Read through the past director's files and correspondence. It will give you an idea of what has been going on in the past. Hold on to these materials for a year (or longer, if your records retention policy requires), until you are sure you no longer need them.
- Review the long-range plan, policies, and financial operations, including budgets, bookkeeping, financial reports, payrolls, and purchase orders.
- Get to know your board members. Read through board meeting minutes to get a historical perspective and to have an idea of how much information board members expect.
- Schedule meetings with community stakeholders, such as local government officials, school administrators, and representatives from local organizations.
- Create a calendar with important dates, such as contract dates, insurance expiration dates, dates of local significance, and deadlines.
- Assess the library's technology infrastructure, digital resources, and online presence.
- Contact Library Development at the State Library of Louisiana to be sure your contact information is correct. They will add your name to the State Library's electronic distribution lists. The consultants are also a valuable source to answer any questions you may have about your library.

## ASSESSMENT OF LIBRARY OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

Beyond the first month's activities, conduct a thorough review of current library operations, services, and programs to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, and potential innovations.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Leadership roles can be demanding. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance, managing stress, and avoiding burnout are critical for new directors adjusting to their new role. New directors are eager to prove themselves, and they often put a lot of strain on themselves and their staff. It is worth mentioning that even in private life, both in reality and online, a director's actions will be perceived as not private actions but as those made by the library director. Maintaining a good personal image in the community is paramount. Participating in community organizations (such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and so on) and local cultural events is a good way to foster relationships and build the reputation of the library while also exploring new hobbies or interests.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

When change is necessary, the new director should make sure to discuss proposed changes with all affected staff members before implementing the changes as diplomatically as possible. Remember, the changes that you implement will only be effective with proper planning. Follow these steps when making any changes: assess the need, develop a strategy, and secure buy-in from stakeholders.

Communicating change progress can help you manage the transition. Make sure to offer training and support when required and address resistance. Lastly, changes can be reinforced by celebrating successes, addressing failures, and ensuring that new practices can be sustained over time.

When meeting with staff, keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions; listen carefully without making immediate judgments.

The new director can build a support group by calling on other area librarians and State Library consultants, as well as by attending professional meetings.

Unfortunately, there is no one right way to orient the director to the job. Basically, you will need to establish an effective management philosophy and style beneficial and acceptable to the public, the library board, and staff members.

## CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Although Louisiana state law no longer requires that the director of any public library in Louisiana must be certified by the State Board of Library Examiners, Louisiana Revised Statute (La. R.S. 25:215) states that the public library board of control has the power to hire the library director, and the library boards can make certification a part of their job description. Louisiana law (La. R.S. 25:222) creates the State Board of Library Examiners (SBLE) and sets forth the authority of the State Board of Library Examiners "to establish rules . . . and requirements for those seeking certification." The board is appointed by the State Library of Louisiana Board of Commissioners, to consist of "three experienced and trained librarians" who must hold examinations at least once a year to test applicants for certification.

### TYPES OF CERTIFICATION

The State Board of Library Examiners issues three types of certification:

1. executive,
2. temporary, and
3. provisional.

The examination covers the following aspects of public library service:

4. library organization and administration,
5. library budgets and financial operations,
6. standards for library service,
7. Louisiana law, and
8. current status of library development in Louisiana.

The examination is given in two parts, a written examination and an oral examination. The oral examination is an interview with the candidate and is usually given on the same day as the written examination.

The examination is given as often as quarterly, or whenever the board has applicants. Study materials for the exam are sent upon request to anyone who is considering taking the exam. An application to take the examination can be requested through Library Development. Please send these requests to the State Board of Library Examiners, c/o Library Development, State Library of Louisiana, P.O. Box 131, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, or e-mail Library Development at libdev@library.la.gov.

State Library consultants can be contacted for assistance on how to apply and prepare for the certification examination, as well as for an explanation of the continuing education requirement for renewal.

**RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Executive certification is issued for five years. In order to renew an Executive Certificate, the certificate holder must (1) make a written request to the State Board of Library Examiners in which you state your professional experience since the certificate was last issued or last renewed, and (2) show evidence of continuing education.

If you have any questions about certification or re-certification, please send your questions to the State Board of Library Examiners, c/o Library Development, State Library of Louisiana, 701 North 4th St., Baton Rouge, LA 70802, or e-mail Library Development at libdev@library.la.gov or call Library Development at 225-342-4931.

## PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The **Louisiana Library Association (LLA)** is the state's professional organization for librarians. It provides additional opportunities for professional public librarians' growth and training. For more information, visit their website at www.llaonline.org.

The national organization for librarians is the **American Library Association (ALA)**. The mission of the American Library Association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. ALA is large and complex. State Library staff can help guide you to the part of the organization which will be most useful or can answer your questions. We encourage you to join ALA. For more information, visit their website at www.ala.org.

The **Public Library Association (PLA)** enhances the development and effectiveness of public library staff and public library services. In collaboration with ALA, its parent organization, PLA strives to help its members shape the essential institution of public libraries by serving as an indispensable ally for public library workers. (www.ala.org/pla)

Louisiana is a member of the **Southeastern Library Association (SELA)**. Begun in 1920, SELA is a unifying force strong enough to influence legislation and to attract foundation and federal funds for regional library projects. SELA now holds joint conferences every two years with the library associations of its various member states. Its official journal is the *Southeastern Librarian.* SELA objectives, as stated in the 1988 Southeastern Library Association Handbook, are to "promote library and information services in the southeastern region of the United States through cooperation, research, and the encouragement of staff development." (www.selaonline.org)

The **Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ASRL)** is a professional network dedicated to the positive growth and development of libraries serving rural and small communities. An affiliate of ALA, the Association holds annual conferences, leadership institutes, monthly training and networking series for professional development. (www.arsl.org.)

The mission of the **Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS)** is to support and encourage library staff and leadership to provide quality bookmobile and outreach services to meet diverse community needs. Their website is at abos-outreach.com.

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## ENDNOTE

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# Chapter 3

# RESPONSIBILITIES

"The public library is a center of public happiness first, of public education next." – John Cotton Dana

## LOUISIANA REVISED STATUTES ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The library board governs all aspects of a public library. Trustees on most Louisiana public library boards are chosen by the parish governing authority, either the Police Jury or the Parish Council. A few libraries are municipal libraries. This is determined by library law, Title 25 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes. The State Library of Louisiana updates *Library Laws of Louisiana* as laws affecting libraries are enacted or amended. For help finding a specific law, contact the Library Development Division at the State Library, 225-342-4931, or email libdev@library.la.gov. You can also visit the Library Laws page on the State Library's website.[1]

Explanations of specific federal and state laws, as well as state rules and regulations, will be found in Chapter 7, Law and Legal Questions.

La. R.S. 25:211-212 details how public libraries are established. The municipal or parish governing authority creates and passes an ordinance to establish, equip, maintain, operate, and support a public library and its branches.

La. R.S. 25:214-215 governs library board appointments and the duties and powers of the board. Trustees are appointed for staggered five-year terms. The president of the police jury serves as an ex-officio member of the board. The president of the police jury has the right to designate another member of the governing authority of the parish to serve as ex-officio.

The board hires the library director to manage the library, that is, to run the library's day-to-day operations.

## DUTIES OF A DIRECTOR, LIBRARY BOARD, AND LOCAL GOVERNING AUTHORITY

The responsibilities of the library director, board and the local governing authority are interdependent, not discrete. The basic pattern of these interdependent responsibilities is provided for in the Louisiana Revised Statutes. The pattern may vary from parish to parish.

The chart, *Duties of a Director, Library Board, and Local Governing Authority,* shows a comparison of responsibilities and is a separate document in the appendices. It includes a detailed description of each item.

1. Overview—general list of responsibilities
2. Policy Making
3. Administration of the Library
4. Personnel
5. Collection Development
6. Finance
7. Library buildings and property
8. Library Board
9. Public Relations
10. Continuing Education
11. Planning for the library's growth

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE LIBRARY

The library director has direct responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the library within the framework of the board's plan, policies, and budget. A director employs and supervises staff, prepares a preliminary budget, maintains an active program of public relations, and is responsible for the selection and ordering of all books and other library materials, print, non-print, and electronic. In addition, the director is responsible for the buildings, contents, and property under the library's jurisdiction. The director makes sure that the board members carry out their duties as required. Planning for the future library needs is critical, including guiding the board in adopting short and long-term plans for the library's growth.

The library director carries out the decisions of the library board, and interprets and enforces policies adopted by the board. The director is the public face of the library at all times, and must remain politically neutral in representing the library in the community.

**REPORTS–INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL**

Libraries keep various statistics and financial information throughout the year. This information can be used both internally and externally for comparison purposes. Internally, a library's statistics can be compared to previous years' statistics to track the library's performance over time, to measure its success in achieving established goals, and to set service and management priorities. Externally, these statistics can be used to compare the library to other libraries of similar size and environment. Along with the *Standards for Louisiana Public Libraries*,[2] the

library can determine the library's place in the overall state picture, plan for the future, and justify actions and budgets.

Public libraries are required to make the following reports to the appropriate agency.

1. Annual Report

   The State Library is empowered under La. R.S. 25:216 to require all public libraries in the state to file a yearly report on library use and library finances. The Library Development Division distributes information and instructions on filling out the online reporting form, and ensures that all public libraries complete this in a timely fashion. This is commonly called the Annual Report and is usually distributed toward the end of January each year for reporting the previous year's data. The deadline for completing the Annual Report is April 1.

   The Annual Report includes data in the following sections: general information, services, electronic resources, programming, circulation, collection, staffing, operating revenue and expenditures, and capital revenue and expenditures.

   The public library annual reports are also used by the State Library to report statistics to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, the American Library Association, and the Public Library Association, as well as to prepare accountability reports for the state and federal governments.

   The information provided in the annual reports is presented in the State Library publication, *Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report*[3]. This publication is distributed annually to all public libraries and trustees. It also includes individual and statewide percentage breakdowns.

   The National Center for Education Statistics collects data on the nation's academic and school libraries. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the federal agency which collects public library statistics on a national level. The program for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data on the nation's over 9,000 public libraries is the Federal/State Cooperative System for Public Library Data. The IMLS Public Library Survey provides a standardized mechanism for the collection of comparative, reliable data from all public libraries and for producing comparative analyses by size, state, and so on. IMLS releases the national public library statistics and drafts narrative reports. These are included in the Data: Library Search and Compare found on the IMLS website.[4]

2. Monthly statistics

   The State Library requires that public libraries provide their statistics for public computer use and wireless sessions every month. The State Library encourages libraries to record statistics monthly for use locally and to make it easier to fill out the annual report. You can also collect any statistics you find useful, even though it may not be

required in the annual report. Some additional valuable statistics may include space usage, special item checkout, and in-house activities. Templates for local data collection are available from Library Development at the State Library.

3. Board of trustees

   As a library director, you should report to your board on all new information that is essential to fulfilling their duties as board members. The kinds of information you should report include:

   - Statistics
   - Programs
   - Staffing changes
   - New services

4. Reports to police jury/parish council

   As a library director, you should report to your police jury or parish council on new and ongoing programs and activities.

5. Grant reports

   If your library has received any grants, you should be careful to make any required reports in a timely fashion.

**BOARD**

The library board governs the library: it establishes rules and regulations for its own government and that of the library, not inconsistent with law. The board employs a librarian, approves the hiring of staff recommended by the director, and sets their salaries and other compensation. While the director does the day-to-day running of the library, the director answers to the library board. Chapter 4, Library Board of Trustees, details how the library board functions.

**BEST PRACTICES**

The Louisiana Legislative Auditor has compiled the Best-Practices-in-Government-Checklist[5]. It is intended to be useful both to auditors in assessing internal control and compliance, and to Louisiana government entities desiring to perform a self-assessment. These questions were prepared from the recurring deficiencies found during the legislative auditor's advisory services provided over several years. The checklist will help identify control weaknesses, non-compliance with state laws, and poor business practices. Legislative Auditor states that it is not intended to be all-inclusive.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE MAKING**

Policies are documents that provide the rules for how the library is run, and procedures describe how things are done. Policies are drafted by the library director and approved by the board. A procedure manual is written by the director and staff, and does not require board adoption. Chapter 6, Library Policies and Procedures, has a discussion of policies, a detailed list of policies, and a discussion of procedure manuals.

**PLANNING**

Planning may seem to be a luxury in the face of the busy, day-to-day operations of a library, and a director may feel that they have no time to plan. However, through planning, you gain invaluable knowledge about your community and its needs, and the library can provide programs and services that are best suited to your community.

Chapter 7, Strategic Planning, covers strategic planning for your library's growth.

Chapter 8, Disaster Planning, includes details on what a library does both before and after a disaster hits.

Chapter 18, Facilities, covers all aspects of planning for a new building.

Chapter 20, Technology, lists how to plan for future growth of your technology needs. It also covers cybersecurity, which does not just concern patron privacy and the confidentiality of library records. Many libraries also have other types of sensitive or restricted data. One of the biggest risks to the data a library maintains is a cyberattack. These attacks can be of many different types, but one of the most common and disastrous is a ransomware attack. Chapter 20 discusses steps libraries can take to better protect the library from a cyber-attack.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING**

A library must establish and maintain open, two-way communication between the library and the public. Good public relations are critical to a library's success. Marketing is the plan to execute and evaluate a program to promote the public library to its citizenry. Public Relations and Marketing information is included in Chapter 10.

**BUDGET AND FINANCE**

To provide quality library services, the public library must adequately fund library activities. The budget cycle, including planning, spending, and reporting, takes a significant amount of a library director's time. In larger libraries, staff may include a business or finance officer, but in smaller libraries, the director has the sole responsibility for the budget.

More detailed information on budgeting and budget practices is found in Chapter 13, Finance, and Chapter 14, Budget. Other chapters in this handbook will also cover aspects of the budget.

**FACILITIES**

A director must always evaluate the current public library facilities as well as anticipate and plan for future library needs. Public library buildings no longer just "store books." Public libraries now stress diversified services and promote the library as a place for information, self-education, entertainment, and a neutral place for people to gather. Chapter 18, Facilities, will give you guidance on maintaining current facilities and planning for new facilities.

**PERSONNEL**

One of the most difficult tasks of the library director is personnel management. Your staff is the "face of the library," and many consider them to be the most important asset of the library. Chapter 21, Personnel, has a great deal of detail about all aspects of personnel management.

Chapter 22, Professional Development, lays out information on staff development. Continuing education is critical for the library staff, director, and the library board.

**COOPERATION WITH OTHERS**

Throughout this handbook, we emphasize cooperation with your community as well as other libraries and public institutions, particularly your schools. But this cooperation is vital in other areas: your elected officials and the parish governing authority, your library support groups, and your local community organizations. Many libraries also belong to a regional library group, both formal and informal, and the importance of your interactions with your colleagues in other public libraries cannot be overstated.

## ENDNOTES

[1] State Library of Louisiana. (n.d.). *Library laws of Louisiana*. https://library.la.gov/services/for-libraries-librarians/library-laws/

[2] Louisiana Library Association, Public Library Section (2010) https://library.la.gov/media/24aatl4g/standards_2010-3-1.pdf

[3] State Library of Louisiana. (n.d.). Public libraries in Louisiana: A statistical report. LibGuides. https://slol.libguides.com/LibraryStatistics/PublicLibrariesinLouisiana

[4] Institute of Museum and Library Services. Data: Library Search and Compare. https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data

[5] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (n.d.). *Best practices in government checklist*. https://cms.lla.la.gov/assets/documents/Best-Practices-in-Government-Checklist-Jan-2012.doc

# Chapter 4

# LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert." – Andrew Carnegie

## DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BOARD

As a library director, you hold a significant responsibility to the governing board, serving as the primary liaison between the board and the library's operational management. Your primary duty is to implement the board's strategic vision and policies effectively. This entails translating the board's directives into actionable plans, policies, and initiatives that align with the library's mission and serve the community's needs.

Beyond managing the day-to-day operations of the library, the director provides timely and accurate information to the board about the library's work in and for the community. This includes presenting comprehensive reports on library activities, financial health, and program outcomes. By keeping the board well-informed, you will enable the board's informed decision-making that will support the library's long-term sustainability and growth.

Board members are appointed as volunteer community members to ensure oversight of library operations and financial management. As a director, you are responsible for the library's compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. This involves overseeing policy development, budget management, and adherence to ethical standards in library operations. By maintaining transparency and accountability, you will establish trust and confidence among board members and stakeholders alike, reinforcing the library's role as a trusted community resource.

Under La. R.S. 25:215, the library board hires the library director to run the library's day-to-day operations. The library director is given the authority by the board to hire staff. The board sets salaries and compensation.

The director's responsibility is to keep the board informed of all high-level matters that involve the library. Policies of the library are drafted by the director and approved by the board. The director presents a proposed budget to the board for their approval.

For board meetings, the director usually serves as secretary for the board as a non-voting member. The director drafts an agenda and prepares a board packet to be sent out in advance to the entire board. The director then writes and sends the minutes to the board after the meeting, to be approved at the next board meeting.

Other responsibilities of the director are discussed in detail in this handbook. It is important to remember that we have 68 library systems in Louisiana, and none of them are run exactly the same way. For example, a few directors have contracts, but not all.

## REVISED STATUTES GOVERNING LIBRARY BOARDS

The library board governs all aspects of a public library, as provided in La. R.S. Title 25. The State Library published a new edition of *Library Laws of Louisiana*[1] and continues to update it after each legislative session. Contact Library Development in the State Library of Louisiana for more information, 225-342-4931 or e-mail libdev@library.la.gov.

La. R.S. 25:214 says that the governing authority of the parish or municipality, in the ordinance creating a public library, shall name and appoint five to seven citizens of the parish to serve on the library board. Trustees are appointed for staggered five-year terms. By statute, the president of the police jury/parish council serves as an ex-officio member of the board. They have the right to designate another member of the governing authority of the parish to serve in his/her place.

La. R.S. 25:214.2-5 authorizes the governing authority of Rapides Parish Library, Lincoln Parish Library, and Livingston Parish Library to appoint two additional members, and the governing authority in Vermillion Parish Library to appoint one additional member.

La. R.S. 25:215 establishes the duties and powers of the board. The board of control has the authority to establish rules and regulations for its own government and that of the library not inconsistent with law; to elect and employ a librarian; and upon the recommendation and approval of the latter, to employ staff and fix their salaries and compensation.

In 2024, R.S. 25:215 further defines the board's powers in employing a librarian by specifying the board of control may hire a library director and establish qualifications for the position. The board of control may, but is not required, to provide that a certificate or permit from the State Board of Library Examiners is a qualification for the library director position. The board of control may provide that the library director shall serve as the head librarian. The requirement in Paragraph (1) of this Subsection for certification by the State Board of Library Examiners is not applicable to a head librarian who is also serving as a library director.

Several revised statues outline required training for library boards. La. R.S. 42:1170 specifies Ethics Training, La. R.S. 42:343 specifies Preventing Sexual Harassment training, and La. R.S. 42:1267 specifies Cybersecurity Training.

## BYLAWS OF THE BOARD

Bylaws of the Board should include:

1. Name of organization
2. Membership
   - Appointment/approval of a Board Member
   - Removal of a Board Member
   - Terms of Board Members
   - Membership Dues in Professional Associations
   - Conflict of Interest
   - Resignation of board member
3. Officers
4. Meeting Procedures
   - Order of Business
   - Taking and Reporting Minutes
   - Reimbursement for Travel Expenses for Board Members
5. Committees
6. Parliamentary Authority
7. Amendments

The format of the bylaws should include the date the bylaws were adopted, and when the bylaws are updated, add the date of the adopted update. When numbering the pages, include the total number of pages. (for example, Page 2 of 4)

If you would like to see samples of bylaws from other libraries, contact Library Development at the State Library, phone 225-342-4931 or e-mail libdev@library.la.gov.

## BOARD MEETINGS AND MINUTES

Library board meetings are the official business meetings at which your library board makes the policy and financial decisions for your library system. The Louisiana Legislative Auditor has a lengthy FAQ on the open meetings law[2], and includes information on the meeting and minutes. It includes revisions to the law for each question through the 2024 legislative session.

### GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Boards need to be as positive as possible and to deal only with appropriate issues. Board bylaws provide the general structure for the board's work. Bylaws should cover guidelines for the meetings of the board, the officers of the board, the library director, resolutions, committees of

the board, order of business, and amendments to the bylaws. (See the *Handbook for Louisiana Library Trustees* for further details of bylaws.)

La. R.S. 25:215 A (1) requires an annual organization meeting to elect a chairperson and other officers. The terms and officer elections should be outlined in the bylaws. Rotating leadership responsibilities can create a stronger board.

Meeting in different libraries throughout the community or system creates high visibility and gives trustees the chance to become acquainted with the library staff, the buildings, and the collections throughout the library system.

Meetings should be scheduled regularly, as determined in the bylaws. Select specific dates, times, and places as much as six to twelve months in advance.

Follow *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* when conducting board meetings. *Robert's Rules* is widely recognized as the framework for managing discussions and guiding group decision-making. While the rules appear lengthy and detailed, having a set of agreed-upon guidelines makes meetings run more smoothly. You can purchase *Robert's Rules* from any book vendor. In referring to *Robert's Rules* in the bylaws it is recommended that you use the phrase "current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*." (Doing this means that you will not have to amend the bylaws when a new edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* is published as happened recently.) A condensed version of *Robert's Rules of Order* was put together by the University of Louisiana Monroe[3].

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Board committee meetings need to be held prior to the board meeting in order to save time. Committees of the board make recommendations to the whole board in order for the board to make a decision for the library. Remember, the director is present at board meetings in nearly all libraries and may act as the secretary, which should be stated in the library's bylaws.

**OPEN MEETINGS LAW**

The open meeting or "Sunshine" Law applies to your library board meetings and board committees. (La. R.S. 42:12-28) Never forget that the community "owns" the library and that the trustees govern on behalf of the citizens. The media and citizens are always welcome.

You can announce the regular board meetings as set by your bylaws with written public notice in January for the whole year. For regular meetings, special meetings, or rescheduled meetings, written public notice must be given no less than twenty-four hours before the meeting. Written public notice includes publishing the notice in the official journal or posting notice at the library and wherever the meeting is held. All decisions must be formally adopted in an open board meeting to be legally binding. The exceptions to the open meetings law are listed in La. R.S. 42:17.

Note that Act 617 of the 2024 Regular session, La. R.S. 42:19(A)(2)(b), requires that you must give notice to members of the public and the media who request it, and it must be given at the same time and in the same manner as notice is given to the Library Board.

The Legislative Auditor's Open Meetings Law FAQ[4] goes into detail about the laws governing executive sessions of the board.

## GETTING ORGANIZED FOR THE MEETING

### Agenda

Before the board meeting, the director should do the following:

1. plan the meeting carefully;
2. discuss with the president items to go on the agenda for all members;
3. prepare the agenda in advance;
4. prepare the minutes of the previous meeting;
5. mail or distribute the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, and other information in advance, generally at least a week; and
6. publish or post public notice of each meeting at the place of the meeting and the library's official office.

### Public Comment

When preparing the agenda, add time for Public Comments, according to La. R.S. 42:14, which requires a public body to provide an opportunity for public comment at any point in the meeting prior to action on an agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken.

The public body may adopt reasonable rules, regulations, and restrictions regarding such comment periods. For example, the Chair may invite a motion to limit each speaker to a reasonable amount of time to speak (e.g., 3 minutes, 5 minutes, etc.). That motion will require a second and a favorable vote.

Let your board know that the board does not respond to the public comment during the meeting. Otherwise, it turns into a town hall meeting, which the board meeting is not.

Public comments may be made in two different ways during a meeting. One way is to open the meeting (after roll call) with a public comment period. That is, each member of the public who wishes to speak must say what they want to say at the beginning of the meeting, within whatever parameters are adopted by the public body. The Attorney General's office recommends this way in its trainings on open meetings laws.

Another way that public bodies accept public comments is for each agenda item to allow for public comment *after* the motion and second, and *before* discussion and vote is taken. So, the order becomes Motion, Second, Public Comment, Discussion, and Vote.

**Sample agenda**

A sample board meeting agenda can be found on the Concordia Parish Library website under About Us, Board Meetings.[5]

**Sample Agenda format, including Robert's Rules of Order suggestions**

The agenda must include:

- Library name and purpose of meeting
- Meeting date, start time, and end time
- Meeting location

Standard Order of Business:

- Call to order
- Roll Call
- Public Comment (see discussion above on public comment)
- Approval / Amendment of Minutes
- Approval / Amendment of Agenda
- Director's Report
- Reports of Committees (if any)
- Unfinished Business (if any)
- New Business (if any)
- Announcements
- Adjournment

A copy of the Open Meetings Law must also be posted on the public notice at the location of the meeting. We recommend you also publish at the bottom of the agenda. Here is how it should be worded:

This meeting is held in accordance with Louisiana's Open Meeting Law, La. R.S. 42:11 et seq. In accordance with La. R.S. 42:14, public comments will be allowed. Public comment must be related to an agenda item. Public comments may be submitted in writing.

**MEETING PROCEDURES**

During the meeting, the director should assist the board in focusing on issues at hand; following the agenda and establishing order of business as stated in the bylaws; and establishing action items. At the end of the meeting, the director should see that the next meeting is announced, and that the meeting is adjourned officially.

**Broadcasting and Recording Meetings**

La. R.S. .42:23 requires that the proceedings of all or any part of a public meeting may be video or tape recorded, filmed, or broadcast live. The public body shall, however, establish standards for the use of lighting, recording, or broadcasting equipment to ensure proper decorum in a public meeting. The Attorney General has stated in AG Op. No. 08-0211[6] that public bodies are required to allow recording even if they provide recording themselves, but may regulate where the media may be located to facilitate order and safety. The board should decide in advance if they want to broadcast the meetings. This is not required by law, but is decided by each library. When the meeting is recorded in any format, it becomes part of the public record.

Some libraries do broadcast their meetings. It is not required by law for a library to broadcast their meetings, but the library can decide to do this. Act 539 of the 2024 Regular Session amends La. R.S. 42:23 to require the following public bodies to broadcast their public meetings live via television or the internet:

- Parish Governing Authorities, including the parish governing authority's committee meetings, in parishes of twenty-five thousand or more;
- School Boards, including the school board's committees, in parishes of twenty five thousand or more; and
- Municipal Governing Authorities; including committee meetings except for those whose members are volunteers, in municipalities of ten thousand or more. This provision also mandates that the above entities include sufficient information on its written public notice for the public to locate the broadcast for viewing. The requirement to broadcast does not include executive sessions.

**Executive Sessions**

Remember that a library board meeting is open to anyone. Reasons for executive sessions are listed in La. R.S. 42:17, which lists exceptions that apply to public libraries in the open meeting law.

1. Discussion of the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of a person, provided that such person is notified in writing at least twenty-four hours before the meeting and that the person may require that the discussion be held in an open meeting,
2. Strategy sessions, negotiations, or prospective litigation when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect.
3. Discussion on security personnel, plans, or devices.
4. Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct.
5. Cases of extraordinary emergency.

**Taking and Reporting Minutes**

All public bodies, including public libraries, must keep written minutes of their open meetings as outlined in R.S. 42:20. The minutes should include several key elements, including the date, time, and place of the meeting; the names of the members who were present or absent; the substance of all matters decided; and, if requested by any member, a record of individual votes. Additionally, any other information that the public body deems important can be included.

The secretary of the board takes minutes during the meeting. Minutes are a record of the action items only—minutes should not be a description of everything that is said during the meeting. The AG stated in AG Op. No. 11-0275[7] that minutes need not be verbatim transcripts of the meeting and that summaries satisfy the requirement.

**Sample Minutes**

A sample of the minutes from the Concordia Parish Library Board meeting can be found on the library's website[8].

**AFTER THE BOARD MEETING**

After the meeting the director should send a draft of the minutes to the board members, follow through on action items, and begin planning the next meeting. Minutes are an official public record and are written by the secretary and adopted by the board at the next meeting. You may want to send your minutes to the governing authority. All minutes are public documents and subject to public records requests unless specifically exempted. Minutes are listed in your public records retention schedule and are kept in perpetuity.

**Publication Of Minutes**

The minutes are considered public records and should be made available to the public within a reasonable time after the meeting (La. R.S. 42:20), except where such disclosure would be inconsistent with certain other statutes (La. R.S. 42:16-18).

All political subdivisions are required to publish their minutes in the official journal, including the public library. If the library has a website, the library must post a copy of the minutes to their website within 10 days of publication in the official journal. The minutes published on the website should remain on the website for at least three months, or the library may keep them on the website indefinitely. Publishing on the library website is in addition to, not a substitute for, publication in the official journal. However, if the public body's website is inaccessible due to any type of technological failure, this is not considered a violation of the statute.

## REPRESENTING THE BOARD AND MEDIA INTERACTIONS

The board president is the only person who should speak for the board. For more information on public relations and the media, please read Chapter 10, Public Relations and Marketing.

Board members must remember that it is crucial to represent the board with professionalism and strategic finesse, particularly when interacting with the media or the public. No one board member should act alone, but keep in mind that he/she represents the entire governing body. It is expected that there may be differences in opinion among board members. However, as a governing body, the board should always strive to represent a unified body whose responsibility is to ensure the smooth operation of the library.

First and foremost, each board member should become intimately familiar with the library's mission statement, vision, and goals. Being well-versed in the library's mission, vision, and strategic objectives allows board members to align their communication with the library's overall purpose.

Media training can be a valuable tool in developing the skills needed to handle interviews effectively, craft clear and concise messages, and stay on point. While a chairman may often serve as the spokesperson, designating alternate spokespersons who are equally well-prepared and knowledgeable ensures continuity and preparedness.

Equally important is to craft a consistent and positive message about the library, as well as the board. Board members should work with the library staff to develop key messages and talking points that resonate with the library's mission and current initiatives. Always frame the library's actions and decisions positively, emphasizing the benefits to the community and the library's role in promoting education, literacy, and community engagement. Transparency and honesty are crucial, as they build trust with the community and the media.

Both the board and the library director should plan to spend a considerable amount of time as an investment in building positive relationships with local journalists and media outlets. Understanding media interests and deadlines and being responsive to their inquiries can significantly enhance media relations. Whether delivering a positive message about the library or responding to a crisis situation, having prepared statements ready ensures you are not

caught off guard and can provide accurate information swiftly. Press releases are a powerful tool to announce major decisions, events, or changes, allowing you to control the initial message and provide comprehensive information.

During media interactions, aim to stay on message and provide clear and concise answers. Avoid library jargon and ensure your responses are easily understandable to the general public. When faced with difficult questions, remain calm, acknowledge the concern, and provide as much relevant information as possible. If you cannot provide an immediate answer, commit to finding out the required information after the interview, and always follow up!

After media interactions, reviewing the coverage helps understand how your message was portrayed. This will allow you to notice crucial nuances and allow you to refine future communications. Following up with journalists to provide additional information or clarify misunderstandings, if necessary, is a proactive step. Paying attention to public feedback and concerns arising from media coverage and addressing them promptly helps improve future communication strategies.

## SOURCES

Reed, Sally Gardner. The complete library trustee handbook. New York: Neal-Schuman Pub., 2010. State Library Call Number: 021.82 Ree 2010

## ENDNOTES

[1] State Library of Louisiana. (n.d.). *Library laws of Louisiana*. https://library.la.gov/services/for-libraries-librarians/library-laws/

[2] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (n.d.). *Open meetings law FAQ*. https://app.lla.state.la.us/llala.nsf/baadb2991272084786257ab8006ee827/$file/open%20meetings%20law%20faq.pdf

[3] University of Louisiana at Monroe Staff Senate. (n.d.). *Robert's rules of order: Parliamentary procedure for meetings* [Handout]. https://www.ulm.edu/staffsenate/documents/roberts-rules-of-order.pdf

[4] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (n.d.). *Open meetings law FAQ*. https://app.lla.state.la.us/llala.nsf/baadb2991272084786257ab8006ee827/$file/open%20meetings%20law%20faq.pdf

[5] Concordia Parish Library. (n.d.). *Board of control: Agenda and minutes*. https://concordialibrary.org/board/

[6] Louisiana Department of Justice. (2008). *Opinion No. 08-0211*. https://links.lla.la.gov/go.nsf/getAGO?OpenAgent&agokey=08-0211

[7] Louisiana Department of Justice. (2011). *Opinion No. 11-0275*. https://links.lla.la.gov/go.nsf/getAGO?OpenAgent&agokey=11-0275

[8] Concordia Parish Library. (2024, November 22). *Public budget meeting minutes approved Wednesday, October 16, 2024 (Ferriday Library Program Room, 2:00 p.m.)*. https://concordialibrary.org/2024/11/22/public-budget-meeting-minutes-approved-wednesday-october-16-2024-ferriday-library-program-room-200-p-m/

# Chapter 5

# LIBRARY SUPPORT GROUPS

"Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities." – R. David Lankes, School of Information, University of Texas at Austin

## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Friends of public libraries are organized for a variety of reasons. While there are differences in activities, the basic purposes for organization are to support and promote institutions that are vital to the well-being of society, but which are largely taken for granted.

Friends bring together citizens who are acutely aware of libraries as a public good and, as such, have a committed interest in their development and use. Because they are not responsible for the library as are trustees, the director, and library staff, these citizens can provide an unbiased assessment of the library and serve objectively to enhance the library and promote its use.

In addition to promoting the resources and services of libraries for the benefit of the public and serving as a forum for the expression of the community's library needs, Friends organizations provide two main functions. They provide advocacy for libraries at the local, state and federal levels in regard to legislation and funding, and they seek to improve and extend the resources and services of libraries by augmenting public funds.

Friends groups seek to increase and enrich library resources and services through gifts, endowments and bequests, and through other fundraising activities. They are not organized to assume city, parish, state, or federal obligations to finance libraries, but rather seek to supply the extras that turn adequate libraries into superior ones.

The organization of a Friends group follows a general pattern. The elected officers -- president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer -- along with a board of directors representing the library community, govern the business of the organization. Friends adopt a constitution with bylaws and usually acquire federal nonprofit tax status (501c3). Contact Library Development at the State Library for a generic example of bylaws, *Friends of the [Library Name] Bylaws*. Phone 225-342-4931, email libdev@library.la.gov.

Here are some resources you may want to use.

1. Louisiana Secretary of State, Louisiana Nonprofit Corporation Filing Instructions[1]
2. Louisiana Alliance for Nonprofits, Starting a Nonprofit[2]
3. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 12th edition*, 2:8 - 13 and §56.

While sharing concerns and goals, Friends and trustees have very different areas of responsibility. Trustees are legally and officially responsible for the operation of the library. Friends have no policy-making role. Trustees govern the library and keep Friends informed by providing liaison between the two entities. Friends support board decisions and coordinate their activities according to library policy guidelines. Operating in an atmosphere of cooperation and respect, Friends and trustees can make their library the vital, responsive agency it should be.

As a nonprofit, a Friends group must comply with the following reporting and filing requirements:

**Annual Report**:

- Filed with the Louisiana Secretary of State. File Annual Report[3]
- Due annually, by the anniversary date of incorporation.

**IRS Form 990**:

- Filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Annual Filing and Forms[4]
- Due annually, by the 15th day of the 5th month after the end of the fiscal year.

**Charitable Registration**:

- Due annually, within five months of the end of the fiscal year.
- Filed with the Louisiana Department of Justice. Charity Registration Page[5]

**Sales Tax Exemption Renewal** (if applicable):

- Filed with the Louisiana Department of Revenue.
- Due every five years.
- Louisiana Department of Revenue Sales Tax Exemptions for Nonprofit Organizations[6]

These filings ensure compliance with both state and federal regulations for nonprofit organizations.

Additional resources:

1. Reporting Requirements for Not-for-Profit Organizations[7]
2. La. R.S. 24:514
3. Louisiana Nonprofit Compliance[8]

**Cooperative Endeavor Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding.**

Cooperative endeavor agreements and memorandums of understanding are sometimes used with Friends groups. More detailed information can be found in Chapter 13, Finance, where the details of these agreements are discussed. For examples of a cooperative endeavor agreement, or memorandum of understanding, contact library Development Division at 225-342-4931 or email libdev@library.la.gov.

**Resources**

We encourage you to read:

- The American Library Association website, Organizational Tools for Friends Groups, which has information on all aspects of friends groups.[9]
- Friends of Tennessee Libraries, Tool Kit for Building a Library Friends Group[10]
- Fairfax County Friends of the Library Handbook[11]
- North Dakota State Library Public Library Director Toolkit: Friends and Foundations[12]
- United for Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, supports library trustees, advocates, Friends groups, and foundations with Organizational Tools for Library Foundations. It provides education, resources, and advocacy to strengthen libraries and enhance their services. Offerings include programs, webinars, toolkits, and networking opportunities to help members effectively support and advocate for their libraries.[13]

## FOUNDATIONS

While the friends groups may handle the day-to-day fundraising typical of libraries, foundations are generally established to solicit major contributions for projects beyond the scope of normal library activities. As funding needs continue to increase, public libraries need to seek new revenue sources beyond local government sources. A library foundation is a legal entity separate from both the friends and the Library Board of Control which is formed for the purpose of enhancing and expanding library programs and services. Foundations are usually established in larger libraries, though any library can establish a foundation. Foundations tend to be more complicated than Friends groups because of the number and variety of tax laws and regulations under which they operate.

It is important to understand the distinct roles Friends groups and library foundations play in supporting libraries. Friends groups are grassroots organizations typically composed of volunteers passionate about their local library. They engage in community outreach, organize fundraising events like book sales or membership drives, and advocate for the library's

importance within the community. Library foundations, on the other hand, operate at a higher strategic level. They are typically established to secure significant financial resources through major gifts, grants, and endowments. Foundations focus on long-term financial stability for the library by managing substantial funds and investments. They often fund capital projects, such as building renovations or technology upgrades, and support innovative programs that require substantial financial backing. Additionally, foundations manage endowment funds that provide ongoing income to support the library's operational needs and future growth. Foundations also excel in grant writing, securing funds from various sources to support initiatives like educational programs and community outreach efforts.

A library's friends group and their foundation work cooperatively. A foundation's primary function is to secure financial and in-kind donations for programs, services, collections, and capital projects. A diversified fundraising plan can include strategies around gifts, planned giving, legacies, and grants. The foundation offers donors a familiar and reliable vehicle for tax-deductible contributions in support of the library.

For all these reasons, libraries are advised to thoroughly research the pros and cons of establishing a foundation versus working with their local community foundation. Contact Library Development for libraries in Louisiana that have established foundations.

We encourage you to read the American Library Association's Organizational Tools for Library Foundations.[14]

## VOLUNTEERS IN LIBRARIES

Volunteer programs in libraries should be given consideration for two important reasons. If they are planned and administered well, they can enrich the library by freeing or enabling regular staff to reach beyond what they are normally able to do. Such programs also perform the invaluable public relations function of increasing the network of library supporters in the community.

Volunteer programs in libraries can be either a boon or a bane depending on how they are planned and administered. Whether they develop as a reaction to a crisis such as lack of funding to support adequate staffing levels or as a desire to enhance the library's ability to serve the community, there is a need to plan wisely for volunteer use.

The level of planning for volunteer programs will depend on the size of the library and the tasks to be undertaken. The first step in planning for any size library is to make sure your staff understands how volunteers can assist them, and that the board and staff are in complete agreement for volunteer help. Without this agreement on the use and role of volunteers in the library, a volunteer program is doomed to failure.

Other important steps to the success of any size volunteer program are the appointment of library employees to act as the volunteers' supervisors or first line of contact, and the appointment of an individual to coordinate the volunteer program. For small programs, the director can serve as volunteer coordinator. For larger programs, the director should consider appointing an existing staff member, hiring someone, or recruiting a volunteer with administrative experience to serve in this position.

Steps in planning volunteer programs include the following:

1. enlisting full board and staff cooperation,
2. reviewing with board and staff all library activities to see if a volunteer work program would be of help to the library in meeting goals and objectives,
3. assessing activities and specific tasks to see where volunteer assistance could most properly be utilized,
4. appointing a volunteer coordinator,
5. preparing job descriptions for tasks appropriate for volunteers,
6. establishing first line supervisors for each volunteer,
7. establishing evaluation measures for continual feedback on volunteer job performance,
8. preparing policy and procedure guidelines for volunteers,
9. developing orientation and training programs, and
10. planning formal recognition programs.

While recruiting volunteers can be difficult, retaining them is often a greater problem. Recruitment and retention of serious, capable and dependable volunteers is facilitated by a planned business approach to volunteer work. It indicates to the volunteer the library takes its responsibilities seriously and has respect for the volunteer's time, talents and motivation.

Most volunteers enter the library with no idea of library operations. Volunteers appreciate knowing exactly what is expected of them and what they are to accomplish. They appreciate training before embarking on their assignments and supervision all along the way. They need an introduction to the library, including the physical facility (parking, restrooms, breakrooms, telephone use, etc.) and library policies and procedures (confidentiality of records, patron interaction, staff relations, promptness, absences, dependability, hours, holidays, timesheets, liability).

Volunteers can be recruited from library users, acquaintances, or community agencies. An application form to take information from interested individuals and an interview with the director or volunteer coordinator will indicate a business approach, ascertain skills and interest

of the individual, and help in placement. Entering a contractual agreement with the volunteer utilizing a form which spells out volunteer responsibilities and library responsibilities will also formalize the process and indicate to volunteers the importance of their work.

To avoid burnout, volunteers should be scheduled for no more than three hours one day a week. The minimum commitment should be for six weeks.

Keep volunteers to a minimum to avoid staff conflict and the idea that libraries can be run on a part-time basis rather than with regular paid professional and skilled workers. When a volunteer has finished an assignment, end the volunteer cycle with the provision that the volunteer may be recalled for another assignment. Recall only the best.

Thank volunteers both personally and through formal recognition programs. Volunteers need to feel satisfied with and appreciated for their contributions. A volunteer who experiences a positive working relationship with the library and feels appreciated will speak highly of the library in the community.

Many activities are appropriate for volunteers, including the following:

1. care of the collection including sorting, mending, shelving and straightening books,
2. working with children's programming including storytelling,
3. assisting in branches,
4. helping with outreach programs,
5. preparing displays and exhibits,
6. assisting with the automation process inputting files into the computer and bar coding,
7. compiling reading lists,
8. working with genealogists,
9. helping with inventory,
10. providing hospitality and decorations for special occasions such as open houses, end of summer reading program parties, etc.,
11. working as a literacy tutor,
12. providing help in maintaining the vertical, picture and pamphlet files, and
13. assisting with surveys.

Typically, volunteers do not have access to circulation functions, for example, a volunteer cannot check out or check in books, or perform any financial transactions, such as waiving fines.

**Volunteer Applications**

The following is a suggested volunteer application. It must include contact information, and you may want to include other questions.

1. Full name
2. E-mail
3. Phone number (home, cell, work)
4. Preferred method to be contacted (phone, text, e-mail)
5. Street Address, City, and Zip Code
6. Check if you are under the age of 18
7. Emergency contact, phone, (home, cell, work) and relationship.
8. Which branch and what hours you are available.
9. The main reason I would like to volunteer is:
    - To volunteer my time
    - To satisfy academic/organizational service requirements
    - To participate in a Teen Advisory Council
    - To fulfill court-ordered community service
10. Examples of areas in the library for which volunteers are accepted.
    - To be a homework helper
    - To help keep library materials properly shelved for patrons
    - To share my technology skills
    - To offer my multilingual skills
    - To be a Reading Buddy and listen to children practice reading out loud
    - To be a volunteer mentor and help students in the career program
    - Other:

**Background Checks**

You should conduct a background check on volunteers. Background checks on all potential volunteers should particularly focus on criminal history, relevant to the roles they will perform. Red flags include serious criminal offenses, especially those related to violence or theft, and criminal offenses involving children or sex offenders, which are an immediate disqualifier for any position. For more information on background checks, see Chapter 9, Law and Legal Questions.

## INVOLUNTARY VOLUNTEERS—COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service work is a court assignment of community service involving a specific number of unpaid hours of work for the community which is to be performed within a designated period of time. Community service work can be ordered by a judge for many reasons: in addition to fines, jail sentences, and monetary restitution, or as a sole sanction, or as a way to work off their fine at the minimum wage rate. Community service is performed at public and non-profit agencies, such as libraries.

Public libraries are not required to allow court-ordered community service volunteers. Some libraries allow court-ordered community service hours from adults 18 years and older, but not from teens. You do not have to accept an application from a court-ordered community service person. All court-ordered volunteers must be approved prior to volunteering. In addition, you should have in writing exactly what the court requires from the library to document the community service.

In addition to a completed library volunteer form, the library should require:

- Written documentation from the courts, probation officers, and/or lawyers stating that the person is required to complete court-ordered community service hours, as well as the specifics of the offense.
- A copy of a photo ID, along with a dated form for the person to fill out and sign, including the following information and questions: offense, case number, hours needed, completed by (date), presiding judge, judicial district/court, supervising/probation officer, phone (home, cell, work). Is this your first offense (yes or no). Please list any other offenses you have been charged within the last two years: _____
- If you allow court-ordered community service hours from teens, you should include the parent/guardian name and signature.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY

Volunteering is a great way for community members to give back to the community. Sometimes people are not sure how to find volunteer opportunities, or to find the right particular one. Libraries can keep a directory (usually web based) of community groups and agencies who are looking for volunteers, with their websites, contact information, and name of person to contact.

## PAC FOR TAX ELECTION

A Political Action Committee, or PAC, is a tax-exempt 527 organization[15] that pools campaign contributions from members and donates those funds to campaigns[16] for or against candidates, ballot initiatives[17], or legislation[18]. Also see Chapter 15, Tax Elections

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# Chapter 6

# LIBRARY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

"My policy on cake is pro having it and pro eating it." – Boris Johnson

## POLICYMAKING IN YOUR LIBRARY

### PURPOSE

The purpose of library policies is to provide guidelines for the smooth operation of your library. Policies are statements of principles that detail how the library will act in a particular aspect of its operation. Policies regulate and direct actions and conduct. In the absence of a particular policy, the library will follow existing legislation and regulations of the state and parish.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Policies should consider these factors:

- History of the library and community
- Objectives of the library
- Organizational structure
- Financial support of the library

In addition:

- Policies should be consistent and in compliance with any laws, Federal and state.
- Policies should be compiled and organized into a manual to allow ready access.
- Board members should have a complete copy of the policy manual.

Policies should be able to stand alone, and include the date of the original adoption as well as any subsequent reviews or revisions. Superseded policies should be kept as part of the library's records retention.

### DISTRIBUTION AND POSTING

Staff should each receive a copy of the personnel policy manual and sign an acknowledgment of receipt at the time of employment. Any updates of the policy manual should be posted and/or distributed to all staff.

Each trustee should have a copy of the policy manual and must be familiar with its contents. Library policies should provide an appeal mechanism for patrons or staff even if that

mechanism is informal, such as a conversation with the director. Policies must be enforced impartially and consistently.

For patrons, public library policies ensure a safe, welcoming environment through rules on behavior, computer use, and circulation. A printed copy of the policy manual should be available at each service desk. In addition, a copy of the policy manual should be available on the library's website. Some policies should be distributed individually, for example, when a person books a meeting room, they should receive a copy of the policy and on the meeting room request form, they should sign that they have read the policy and agree to abide by the policy.

**PERSONNEL**

The library director is responsible for hiring, training, and supervising a competent workforce, and the staff then enforces the library's service policies. Your staff is, in essence, the face of the library. The library staff is the most effective public relations tool the library has. Staff should also receive training in the library's patron policies to ensure good service and fair treatment of all patrons. Personnel policies should include current library job descriptions that contain a reference to desired customer relations skills.

**COMPLAINTS**

Policies should include a process through which the board can respond to any complaints from the public. All policies adopted by your library must comply with the law. Your library's legal counsel should review all policies before being adopted. Each policy should include the date of the original adoption, as well as any review and/or revision. You should have a copy of the policy manual in which your library policies are compiled, organized, and available for ready access.

## POLICIES VS. PROCEDURES

Policies are the rules of a library; they are high-level guidelines that dictate the library's principles and overall approach to services and operations, while procedures describe how things are done. Policies are approved and adopted by the library board, and set the direction for the library's services.

Procedures describe in detail the process to implement a policy, rather than the result. They are written in sequential order, assign responsibilities, and describe the specific actions staff must take to carry out policies. Procedures are written by staff. can be frequently changed, and do not require board approval. Administrative procedures guide the delivery of library services.

# LIBRARY POLICIES AND POLICY MANUAL

## KINDS OF POLICIES

### Internal and External Policies

As a library director, it is essential for you to understand the distinction between internal and external policies and the critical role each plays. Internal policies are designed to guide the operations and behavior within the library. These include staff conduct, internal communication, use of resources, leave guidelines, financial guidelines, disposition of public property, and many more. Such policies ensure a consistent and efficient workflow, promoting a professional and ethical work environment. Internal policies set specific parameters for library operation and help staff understand their roles, responsibilities, and the expectations placed upon them, which is crucial for maintaining order and delivering high-quality services to the public.

On the other hand, external policies directly impact how the library interacts with its patrons and the broader community. These policies cover areas such as library membership, borrowing privileges, fines, internet usage, and patron behavior. External policies are crucial for setting clear expectations for patrons, thus providing equitable access to library resources, and maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. All library staff must be intimately familiar with these policies and be prepared to communicate them clearly to the public so your library can maintain a positive relationship with its patrons, while encouraging public trust and active utilization of library services.

### Kinds of information that can and cannot be collected from patrons

See also Chapter 9, Law and Legal Questions, under confidentiality.

When it comes to collecting information from patrons, it's important to strike a balance between gathering enough data to provide excellent service while respecting patron privacy. Your policies should reflect this concern for privacy—from circulation records, to internet use, to meeting room requests, and in any policy where the library could potentially collect information from a patron.

Traditionally, when creating a patron account, libraries collect the patron's name, contact details, date of birth, and responsible parties if creating an account for a minor. Some libraries enable a patron's borrowing history, while most turn it off by default. This data helps frontline staff manage library accounts, notify patrons about due dates or reserved materials, and tailor library services to meet your community's needs. Please remember that the Louisiana Revised Statute La. R.S. 44:13 provides strict guidelines about what kind of information, and under what circumstances can be disclosed about a patron's library usage.

Patron confidentiality is paramount. Keeping patrons' records private is your legal obligation as a librarian and a public servant. This means that your library must have robust policies in place

to ensure that patron information is kept secure and only accessed by authorized personnel for legitimate purposes. Any data collected should be used solely to enhance library services and not shared with outside parties without the explicit consent of the patron, except as required by law.

**ESTABLISHING NEW POLICIES**

Establishing a new policy is a thoughtful and collaborative process that involves your library board, staff, and even patrons. To develop a policy, there are several basic steps for the library to take:

1. Assess the need for a new policy. Does the library have a policy in place that covers the situation? Does the library need a policy on this matter? Is anyone in the library developing a policy on this topic?
2. Research best practices. Do a literature search. Look at how other libraries handle similar issues. The Library Development Division at the State Library keeps policies from libraries across the state.
3. With this information in hand, draft an initial policy, making sure it's clear, concise, and aligns with your library's mission and strategic goals.
4. Depending on the policy, especially those involving personnel or labor laws, consult with your legal counsel to ensure the draft complies with all relevant laws and regulations. Once the policy draft passes the legal check, share this draft with your board and your administrative team or department heads for additional feedback. You can also ask for input from affected offices, library users, and other groups.
5. After incorporating their feedback, add the policy discussion to the board's meeting agenda. The changes to the policy must be discussed in a public meeting to ensure transparency and community involvement. Do your homework so you can competently explain the need for the policy change or for a new policy to be adopted.

Once the board approves the policy, the implementation phase begins.

1. Issue the policy by distributing copies to appropriate offices.
2. Depending on the type of policy, staff training sessions may be required to ensure everyone understands the new policy and knows how to apply it. Similarly, when new policies are adopted, remember to explain the policy in writing, addressed to the entire staff as a memo.
3. If a new policy affects public-facing services, remember to announce the changes to the public through various communication channels, keeping everyone informed.
4. Develop procedures as quickly as possible.

5. Finally, remember that your policy manual is a living document. Policy effectiveness should be monitored continuously, with regular reviews scheduled to keep it relevant and effective.

**Format of Policies**

Your policies should follow a consistent format that includes the following items.

1. The name of your library and if pertinent, the name of the specific library department that is responsible for issuing the policy.
2. Title of policy, which should be short but clearly states what is the content.
3. Date policy will go into effect.
4. Version number–the initial policy is version 1, and you should increase the version number every time you revise the policy. Each version number should be dated.
5. When numbering the pages, include the total number of pages. (Page 2 of 4)
6. Concise statement on the purpose of the policy.
7. Detailed policy text, which should be simple, straightforward, and easy to understand.
8. Statement of who or what the policy applies to and the consequences of non-compliance, if applicable.
9. Definitions of any specialized language used in the policy.
10. Contact information of the specific position title (not an individual's name) for interpretations or resolutions of problems.
11. List policy authority if the policy has been issued on the basis of an outside authority, for example, the Louisiana Revised Statutes.
12. Include any forms referenced in the policy, for example, request for reconsideration of library materials.
13. List the procedures that carry out the intent of the policy.

The State Library of Louisiana offers a webinar on how to write policies and procedures. In addition, Stephen Henson has written an excellent article on Developing and Writing Library Policies and Procedures.[1]

**POLICIES REQUIRED BY LAW**

**Federal Law**

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the Internet. Schools or

libraries that receive discounts for Internet access or internal connections through the E-rate program are required to adopt and implement an Internet safety policy. For more information, see Chapter 20, Technology.

**Louisiana Law**

While Louisiana public libraries are required to follow the law as are all public agencies, you may or may not have a policy reflecting the requirements of law. One Louisiana law, however, does require a written policy.

La. R.S. 25:225 requires public libraries to adopt and implement policies limiting minors' access to sexually explicit materials . It mandates a library card system for parental consent on content access, a formal material reconsideration process, and provides penalties for noncompliance.

**Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) Requirements for Policy**

Louisiana's Statewide Agreed-Upon Procedures (SAUPs) are mandatory, annual compliance tests mandated by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) for local governments per the Audit Law, La. R.S. 24:513. To be in compliance, the library must have written policies and procedures in place addressing all financial and business functions, including but not limited to budgeting, purchasing, disbursements, receipts, payroll, personnel, contracting, travel and expense reimbursements, ethics, debt service, disaster recovery, and credit, debit, or fuel cards, as applicable. For more information, see Chapter 14, Budget, The Audit.

**SUGGESTED MINIMUM POLICIES YOUR LIBRARY SHOULD HAVE**

In some cases, a policy may be affected by existing law. You can always refer to the law in your policy or shape your policy around existing law.

At a minimum, you must follow Federal and state law. Be aware that your policies may be affected by existing laws. With that in mind, you should have policies for:

1. Circulation—who can borrow, library cards, fees and fines, loan periods, as well as confidentiality of library records.
2. Collection Development, including request for reconsideration of library materials and requests for purchase.
3. Patron code of conduct, including:
    - patrons are expected to behave in a respectful and considerate manner while on library property or while receiving library services,
    - prohibited activities, such as no smoking, no pets except service animals, no disruptive behavior,
    - requirements for proper attire including shoes and shirts), and

- restrictions on food and drink.

4. Safety and security, that is, weapons are prohibited and the library reserves the right to inspect bags.
5. Unattended children in the library and expectations for supervising children.
6. Computer internet acceptable use policy, including:
    - time limits,
    - prohibited illegal activity,
    - use of, distribution, and copying of copyrighted materials and intellectual property,
    - restrictions on altering hardware or software, and
    - if you allow adults to request filters be disabled.
7. Operational policies, including meeting rooms (not available for commercial use or fundraising activities, allow/prohibit social gatherings, etc.), filming/photography restrictions, etc.
8. Closing and Emergencies (patrons must leave at closing time or during emergency evacuations.)

**A CHECKLIST OF POSSIBLE POLICIES FOR YOUR LIBRARY**

Every library is unique, and a policy manual should be written for your specific library. This checklist is offered as a guideline of typical library policies.

**Organizational Policies and Documents**

- Financial
- Gifts and Donations
- Reserve Funds
- Records Retention

**Operational Policies**

- Audits
- Bylaws
- Board
- Friends of the Library
- Disaster Policy and Procedure
- Disposition of Surplus Property
- Emergency policy and procedure
- Ethics

- Financial and Audit Investments
- Insurance
- Library Facility and Contents
- Liability Insurance
- Other Insurance, including Vehicles, Performance Bonds, etc.
- Inventory / Fixed Assets
- Retention and Disposal of Library Records NOTE: add Sec. of State info/link

**Service Policies**

- Bookmobile and outreach, including who does bookmobile serve
- Circulation Regulations; to include kinds of library cards, age restrictions, parental controls, computer permissions, Geographical Service area, lending rules including non-resident borrowing
- Confidentiality of Circulation Records
- Cooperation with Other Libraries and Public Institutions
- Copy Machine and Copyright
- Distribution of Free Literature
- Electronic Information, including internet use, library equipment use, data privacy, social media, and wi-fi network use
- Fees for Service
- Fines
- Genealogy
- Gifts
- Intellectual Freedom Statement
- Interaction Between Staff and Public / Patron Behavior
- Interlibrary Loan
- Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement
- Materials Selection/Collection Development
- Patron Complaints
- Problem Patrons
- Programming
- Public relations
- Request for Reconsideration of Library Material
- Weeding

**Facility Policies**

- Accessibility/ADA statement
- Exhibits and Displays
- Inclement weather/closing

- Meeting Room
- Property Management and Maintenance
- Study Rooms
- Unattended children
- Vulnerable adults

**Personnel Policies**

- At will employment
- Appointment of Staff / Recruitment and Selection
- Civil Service (if applicable)
- Coffee Breaks and Lunch
- Continuing Education
- Development and Training of Staff
- Disciplinary Action
- Extreme Weather or Transportation Condition
- Grievance Procedure
- Health and Dental Insurance
- Unemployment Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Holidays
- Lateness
- Leave
- Sick Leave
- Sickness in the Family
- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Vacation / Annual Leave
- Personal Leave
- Leave With Pay
- Leave Without Pay
- Jury Duty / Court Appearance
- Bereavement Leave
- Military Leave
- Maternity / Paternity Leave / Family Medical Leave
- Disability Leave and Benefits
- Performance Evaluation
- Personnel Records
- Political Activity
- Promotion, Transfer, Reassignment
- Probation / Suspension

- Professional Meetings/Workshops
- Professional Memberships
- Retirement and Social Security
- Salary
- Payment schedule
- Overtime and Off-Time Compensation
- Scheduling / Schedule Changes
- Staff Obligations / Staff Privileges
- Attitude toward Public / Staff
- Personal Appearance
- Conflict of Interest
- Other Employment
- Gratuities and Gifts
- Use of Telephone
- Staff Loan Policy
- Security of Personal Items
- Collections / Solicitations
- Parking
- Other
- Termination of Service
- Travel and Reimbursement
- Volunteers (includes involuntary volunteers)
- Work Week
- Worker's Compensation

## LIBRARY PROCEDURES AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

**INTRODUCTION**

While policy creates the rules for a library, procedures provide detailed instruction on how the library will implement policy. A procedure lists steps to follow to accomplish a specific library task. Procedures can change quickly to reflect changes in equipment, personnel, or technology. Written procedures are much more accurate than oral tradition of someone saying “this is how we’ve always done this.” A well thought out procedure manual will standardize library operations, decision-making processes, and service delivery within the library. In addition, the procedure manual is a vital tool for ensuring that staff members have clear guidelines on the library's operational processes, policies, and best practices.

Overall, procedures are tangible, precise, exact, specific, and factual. Procedures should be succinct and to the point.

## THE ROLE OF PROCEDURES IN LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Having written procedures can accomplish a number of specific things.

1. **Consistency and Quality Assurance:** procedures ensure that all staff members perform tasks in a consistent manner, leading to reliable and high-quality service for library users. The quality of work is improved by reducing errors. It costs time and money to correct errors that occur in the day to day functioning of a library.
2. **Efficiency and Productivity:** clear procedures can streamline operations, reduce redundancy, and increase productivity by providing straightforward guidelines on how tasks should be performed. Creating a consistent way of doing things in your library will increase productivity.
3. **Training and Onboarding:** a well-documented set of procedures aids in the training and onboarding of new staff, ensuring they quickly become competent and effective in their roles. In addition to serving as a guide for new employees, a written procedure will be an aid for experienced employees who are cross training.
4. **Complex Procedures:** procedures can serve as a guide for complicated or little used procedures where staff may not remember how to do something.
5. **Accountability and Performance Evaluation:** Procedures establish clear expectations, making it easier to hold staff accountable and evaluate performance based on established standards.

## DEVELOPING A PROCEDURE MANUAL

As with policies, establishing a new procedure is a thoughtful and collaborative process that involves your library staff. To develop a procedure, you should follow several basic steps.

1. Assess the need by starting with identifying the areas within library operations that require standardized procedures, including circulation, cataloging, reference services, and facility management. Consider the following: does the library already have a procedure that covers the situation? Does the library need a procedure written out? Are any staff already working on writing a procedure on this topic?
2. Research best practices. Do a literature search. Look at how other libraries handle similar issues. Check with the Library Development Division at the State Library for more information.
3. The importance of involving staff in the development process cannot be emphasized enough. Staff will help to ensure the procedures are practical, relevant, and benefit from collective expertise.

4. Provide guidelines to your staff on writing clear, concise, and easily understandable procedures, including the possible use of step-by-step instructions, flowcharts, and checklists.
5. The buddy system works well–two people work together, with one person does the action to be documented and the other takes notes. The first person orally describes the process while doing it, and the second person is also recording exceptions and problems. The team should include any tools or equipment needed in the procedure. The main focus of the written procedure should be the text. Drawings, illustrations, etc. are useful, but should not substitute for text.
6. After the draft procedure is written, the team should ask someone else to follow the procedure. If the tester gets stuck, they should ask questions and explain the problem, but the writers should not offer help. The point of this is for the writers to be able to revise the procedure using the feedback from the tester.
7. After the final edit, the procedure should be included in all copies of your procedure manual. As with your policies, make sure to include version number and the date that the procedure is issued or becomes effective.
8. Depending on the type of procedure, staff training sessions may be required to ensure everyone understands the procedure. Remember to let your entire staff know about the new procedure.
9. The procedure manual should be easily accessible to all staff, through printed and digital formats, and you should ensure it is user-friendly.
10. Finally, like the policy manual, remember that your procedure manual is a living document. The effectiveness should be monitored continuously, with regular reviews scheduled to keep it current and up to date.

**Format of a Procedure Manual**

Your procedures should follow a consistent format that includes the following items.

1. The name of your library, the name of the specific library department, and the title of the supervisor of that department.
2. Title of the procedure, which should be short but clearly states what is the content.
3. Date procedure will go into effect.
4. Version number–the initial policy is version 1, and you should increase the version number every time you revise the procedure. Each version number should be dated.
5. When numbering the pages, include the total number of pages. (Page 2 of 4)

6. Concise statement on the purpose of the procedure.
7. The procedure text should be simple, straightforward, and easy to understand. Any specialized language used in the procedure should be defined.
8. Write the procedure as a numbered list. Include subroutines.
9. Limit each step to one task.
10. Write the procedure in the active voice.
11. Write each step as a positive command. Any explanation should be after the command.
12. Tell the reader when they have completed the procedure.
13. Use "note," "caution," and "warning" in a consistent manner. A note is a suggestion for how to carry out a task. A note does not include any steps nor does it include safety information. A caution indicates potential for damage to equipment. A warning indicates the potential for serious injury or possibly death to persons.
14. Anticipate problems and address them in the written procedure. Obviously, you cannot anticipate everything, but you probably will know likely things that can go wrong.
15. As with your policies, if this procedure is based on requirements of an outside authority, note that authority.
16. Include any forms referenced in the policy, for example, request for reconsideration of library materials.

People who are new to procedure writing often puzzle about the appropriate length of a procedure. Like most written pieces, a procedure has no set length. It should be as long as it needs to be to accomplish its goal. However, shorter procedures are usually better than longer ones. For the writer, a shorter procedure is easier to develop, write, and maintain. For the reader, several two to four page procedures are less intimidating and easier to use than a 15-page one.

**MAINTAINING AND UPDATING THE PROCEDURE MANUAL**

We cannot stress enough the necessity of periodically reviewing and updating the procedure manual to reflect changes in library operations, technological advancements, and feedback from staff.

**POSSIBLE PROCEDURES FOR YOUR LIBRARY**

As we mentioned earlier, procedures are detailed, step-by-step instructions on implementing your library's policies. They describe the specific actions staff must take to carry out policies. Specific procedures should be tailored to the unique functions and responsibilities of each

library department. These procedures ensure consistency, efficiency, and preparedness across the entire organization.

For example, a circulation department must establish clear procedures for creating or deleting patrons accounts, managing the lending of materials, or adding minors to a responsible party's account. Often, circulation procedures include screenshots of the ILS software, along with the step-by-step instructions. Procedural guidelines also include information on how to check out and return items, handle overdue fines, process holds and reserves, and manage lost or damaged materials.

Similarly, emergency procedures should be part of each library's operation and should include both emergency preparedness and emergency response. Each department needs a plan for how to respond to emergencies such as fires, floods, or other natural disasters. These procedures might include evacuation routes, roles and responsibilities during an emergency, and communication protocols.

Other emergency procedures should include security responses, for example, how staff should handle an active shooter, or what to do when a patron becomes violent.

Your library should also have clear procedures for responding to law enforcement inquiries about patrons' accounts. The reference desk or information services department, for example, needs to know how to handle such requests in compliance with privacy laws and the library's confidentiality policies.

Please remember, these are just a few brief examples of various procedures you should have in place to ensure that your library system is well-maintained and organized so patrons can confidently rely on your services to be available and accessible when needed. Having detailed procedures for many such scenarios will prepare your staff members to respond both professionally and confidently when required.

For individual descriptions of procedures and forms, see chapters in this manual on those topics.

## RESOURCES

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Layne, Stevan P. The Cultural Property Protection Manual: The "How to" Guide for Managers/Administrators. SLOL call number 363.34525 Lay 2002.

For more detailed information, contact Library Development at 225-342-4931 or email libdev@library.la.gov.

## ENDNOTES

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# Chapter 7

# STRATEGIC PLANNING

"If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else." – Yogi Berra

## PLANNING FOR THE LIBRARY'S GROWTH

The creation, expansion, or retrenchment of any activities within a library system are usually the result of our reaction to specific influences, events, people or disasters. We are trained to be responsive to our communities by customizing collections, services and programs to the individuals and groups we serve.

Managing busy and important institutions like the libraries of Louisiana is challenging and occasionally burdensome. Sometimes, day-to-day operations get complicated. Unexpected situations lead to crisis management, and knee-jerk reactions to immediate problems. In addition to these difficulties, the competitive environment in which we exist adds to our anxieties. We manage our institutions with seemingly fewer and fewer resources, a staff that is too small, and buildings that may not work.

These problems facing public libraries today have no easy answers. Leading a modern public library requires innovative thinking and a public servant attitude. Solutions will be found through collaborative approaches that involve both the library and its citizenry.

In order to achieve these goals, you can use a systemic planning process that answers three basic questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

This process includes strategic planning, which defines the library's overall direction and goals, and long range planning, which projects resources and activities over a specific period to support these goals.

### WHY SHOULD YOU PLAN?

Setting goals and objectives following an analysis of an organization is a familiar management concept. Some managers have used this process for many years. The books listed in "Published Sources" at the end of this chapter are library-specific and designed to help you through the stages suggested above. In the midst of a busy day, week, or month, you may think that planning is a luxury. However, the purpose of planning is to gain a thorough knowledge of your

community and its needs, so you can establish programs and services that are best suited and most supported by the community. The aspects of the planning process that involve segments of the community have been shown to have paybacks with greater community support and understanding, successful tax elections, more precise budgeting, the creation of shared goals, and teamwork.

**HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED?**

The investment of time is, indeed, considerable. The planning process may take anywhere from a few weeks to a year. But as new information emerges throughout the process, the project will develop momentum as administration, staff, and community participants work together. This process of examination, review, collaboration, and planning is not passive; nor does an organization cease other developments during the process. Planning manuals treat the different data gathering elements, surveys, and other input as stages in a long process, recognizing the day-to-day commitments of a library.

**CAN IT WORK?**

Planning requires an open mind about our knowledge of the local community. Although librarians learn the names and habits of patrons and neighborhoods, the object of marketing and planning is to examine the total community. Libraries undertaking the planning process invariably learn about new facets and activities in their community. And this is done with the community itself involved. It may be that the chief benefit of the planning process is this involvement, which can generate interest in the library by other community leaders and potential library users. By hearing the ideas from a new spectrum of thought, and by developing library activity with new people and information, the planning process may help to target services with greater success, prepare for the future, and save effort in the long run.

**LOUISIANA LIBRARY EXAMPLES**

New Orleans Public Library created a 10 year strategic plan, *Creating a Library Lifestyle, New Orleans Public Library, 2022 - 2031*.[1]

East Baton Rouge Parish Library created a strategic plan and regularly updates it.[2]

Bossier Parish Library created their strategic plan for 2021-25.[3] It is a one-page document and is available on their website, along with a page to explain their mission, vision, and focus.[4]

## HIRING AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANT FOR ALL OR PART OF THE PROCESS

Getting started on your strategic planning process? The decision to hire an outside consultant is not a trivial decision. Here are some things to consider and questions you can ask a prospective consultant.

- A consultant can bring a fresh perspective and objectivity to your plan.
- A consultant may have a broader understanding of your organization, which may be caught up in the filter of "this is how we've always done this."
- A consultant can manage the process when you have a limited number of staff, or your staff don't have either the time or the expertise.
- Look for a consultant with experience serving libraries with similar communities, resources, and challenges.
- Ask for references when you narrow down the search.
- Write a list of the things you want the consultant to do for you. (Example: set timeline, develop community survey, facilitate focus groups, draft goals, draft plan, etc.)
- Reach out to other directors for recommendations.
- While you are not required to advertise, receive bids or engage in competitive negotiations for contracts for professional services, sound practices include seeking quotes, using an RFP process, and simply following the Public Bid Law.
- Library Development at the State Library can help you find specific requirements and directories of consultants.

**QUESTIONS FOR YOUR LIBRARY TO CONSIDER BEFORE HIRING A CONSULTANT**

**Funding**

- What is your budget? Is your budget flexible?
- Would you like to have a paid consultant manage your entire process?
- Do you have local experts in your community?
- Some libraries use both a paid consultant and State Library consultants.

**Involvement**

- How engaged or involved do you want to be in the process?
- How much support do you want?

**Communication**

- How often do you want to meet with the consultant?
- How often would you like updates from the consultant?
- How do you prefer to communicate: in-person, virtually, phone, text, or email?

**QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING A CONSULTANT**

1. What's your experience with strategic planning, specifically with public libraries?
2. Do you have a standard process? How much do you customize your approach?
3. How do you organize your process?
4. What are your strengths as a consultant? Do you have special experiences that makes you a good fit for our library?
5. Please describe a recent strategic planning process that went well.
6. Could you please share an example of a difficulty you experience in a recent strategic planning process?
7. Are you currently offering virtual or in-person facilitation of focus groups/community forums?
8. What are your preferred communication methods?
9. How many libraries do you provide consultation for each year? What's your availability?
10. Are you a solo consultant or do you work with a team of consultants?
11. What do your services cost? Is that cost inclusive of everything (hourly or project fee, travel expenses, per deliverable, and so on.)? If not, what are your rates for these common additional needs?

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Read samples of a Request for Proposal (RFP)for a Strategic Planning Consultant. Even if your library is not required to write a formal RFP, they can give you some structure and ideas of what you will need to consider when looking for assistance. Here is an example from St. Tammany Parish in 2021: Request for Proposal: Strategic Planning Consultant.[5]

Joy Fuller's *Strategic Planning for Public Libraries* includes a section on "Evaluate the Need for External Support", pp. 7-8.

Library Strategies is a nonprofit organization that partners with library organizations nationally and internationally to cultivate their potential so that they can better serve and strengthen their communities. They created a list of Dos and Don'ts for RFPs.[6]

# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

## BEGINNING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

To begin the process of strategic planning for your library, you have to get the board on board. Your board will establish the library's mission, vision, and values. It should, therefore, outline reasons for the strategic planning process. The director and the board will select the strategic planning team, which will create a project plan, define team roles and responsibilities, and create a communication plan.

## ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY'S SITUATION/SURVEYS

This part is the core work of strategic planning. The team will gather and analyze data that shows the areas the library should address in its plan. Here is a list of things that may be part of this phase.

- Needs assessment
- Community assessment
- Surveys
- Community meetings
- Internal staff meetings

At this point, you will also begin the process of stakeholder engagement.

## STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING

This is where you develop an actual plan, using the information and insights you collected in the previous phase. The plan will include the library's mission, vision, values, goals and objectives, and strategic priorities. It will also include a communication plan. Staff buy-in should be considered at this point.

## STRATEGIC PLAN DRAFT

After you have a draft of your strategic plan, you will need to decide who reads and edits the plan. The strategic planning team will read the draft, but you should also ask at least one person who is not on the team to review the plan. Your board should also review the draft, and after any revisions, vote on adopting the final version.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN AND MONITORING

After the plan is adopted, the library shifts from planning to taking action. The action plan will define the objectives and initiatives to fulfill the strategic plan's goals and objectives. It will also outline how the plan will be monitored and measured. You should make sure to periodically communicate the progress both internally and externally

**EVALUATION**

Some libraries evaluate their strategic plan annually, while other libraries may create a multi-year plan. An evaluation of the plan's implementation or outcomes will ensure that the library is still on track with the stated intents in the strategic plan. Any new programs or initiatives should be integrated into the strategic plan to make sure the new program is aligned with the library's overall goals and objectives. An evaluation of the overall plan will ensure that the community's needs and concerns are still being addressed.

**REVIEW AND REVISION**

Every time the strategic plan is reviewed, the library should decide if the plan needs to be revised, and to what extent.

## SOURCES

Fuller, Joy L. *Strategic Planning for Public Libraries.* Public Library Association, 2021. (SLOL 025.1974 Ful 2021)

Sandra Nelson. *Strategic Planning for Results.* Public Library Association, 2008. (SLOL 025.1974 Nel 2008)

## ENDNOTES

[1] New Orleans Public Library. (2021). *Creating a library lifestyle: 10-year strategic plan, 2022–2031*. https://nolalibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LibraryLifestyleFINAL.pdf

[2] East Baton Rouge Parish Library. https://www.ebrpl.com/about/future-goals/

[3] Bossier Parish Library. (n.d.). *Strategic plan one page*. https://www.bossierlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Strategic Plan One Page_0.pdf

[4] Bossier Parish Library. Mission, Vision, and Focus. https://www.bossierlibrary.org/about/mission

[5] St. Tammany Parish Library. Request for Proposal: Strategic Planning Consultant. https://www.sttammanylibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2021/03/RFP-for-Strategic-Planning-Consultant-FINAL.pdf

[6] Library Strategies Consulting. (2021, July 26). *Dos and don'ts for RFPs*. https://librarystrategiesconsulting.org/2021/07/dos-and-donts-for-rfps/

# Chapter 8

# DISASTER PLANNING

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" – Benjamin Franklin

## DISASTER PLAN

“Hell” or “highwater” may not darken your library door, but wise is the administrator who thinks in terms of “when” rather than “if” disaster strikes! In Louisiana, most disasters take the form of flood, hurricane, or tornado. However, national events warn that man-made disasters such as fires, explosions, and criminal intrusion threaten civic operations at all levels through destruction of records and materials.

When building a disaster plan from scratch, it is best to start small, concentrating on the most basic procedures, and then expanding to include further concerns during yearly revision sessions. And while a disaster plan designed for another library may serve as a guide, don’t assume it can be simply modified for your particular building, staff, and *modus operandi*.

A comprehensive disaster plan should contain two major parts: the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

### EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (EOP)

The EOP is a plan for how the library will function during the mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery phases of a given emergency, or the emergency response to an event/incident. Any plan should consist of three parts: prevention, response, and recovery.

#### *Prevention*

Preparedness begins with a thorough survey of the library building or buildings to determine potential problems. A well-maintained building will aid in preventing many conditions that lead to disaster. It is helpful to devise a checklist to be used for an annual inspection of fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, exit accessibility, and disaster supplies. Staff responsible for the inspection should send a memorandum to the director identifying problems and recommending solutions.

When the plan has been written, make all staff members aware of its existence. Conduct in-house training sessions in which ground plans are reviewed, disaster equipment is located, and response and/or recovery techniques are discussed. Administrators and staff responsible for directing disaster operations should have a copy of the plan at their desk and at home. Copies of records vital to library operations and building blueprints should also be stored off site.

***Response***

The disaster response section of the plan should begin with an outline of basic emergency procedures for library staff to follow immediately at the onset of the disaster. For fire and water, the basic steps are similar:

- In a water emergency, stop the flow, generally by turning off the supply or plugging the leak. Know where your main shutoff valve is located!
- In case of fire, the person discovering it must sound the alarm, call 911, or the appropriate agency, and initiate evacuation of the building.
- In case of fire, the response team can gather supplies while waiting for permission to reenter the building. Upon access, they can begin packing damaged materials according to the priorities noted in the ground plan.
- With both, the next step is to contact the response team, the disaster recovery contractor, and the insurance company.

***Recovery***

Once your plan-writing team has covered basic emergency procedures, move on to the long-term questions of how to deal with existing damage, prevent further problems, and restore essential services as soon as possible. Know exactly what your insurance covers and what the company expects the library to handle.

The plan should also explain what to do with damaged materials and how to make sure nothing is further damaged. In the worst cases, when damage is so severe that you must close the building, the disaster plan should make provisions for the relocation of staff and collection so that some form of service is reinstated as soon as possible. Telephone numbers of disaster recovery resources, as well as backups of vital files and blueprints, should be stored off-site. Information on logon procedures, passwords, and phone numbers should be updated regularly and readily accessible.

No plan can cover every emergency, but surprisingly, much can be anticipated simply by sitting down with all the appropriate people and thinking through what might happen “when” a disaster strikes and how it would affect the library’s functioning.

**CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN (COOP)**

The COOP is your emergency operations plan after the initial response to an incident. The COOP outlines how the organization will continue to provide services until full operations are restored. The COOP includes a strategy for a succession plan for key leaders if they are not able or available to carry out duties (for instance, if they are stranded away from the organization or have a communications interruption), as well as a delegation of authority plan for policy and decision making.

### EOP AND COOP RESOURCES

- Continuity Resource Toolkit (FEMA)[1]
- Developing And Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans (FEMA)[2]
- Continuity of Operations Plan (brochure)[3]

## WRITING THE DISASTER PLAN

### OUTLINE

**I. Introduction**
- a. Purpose of the plan
- b. Kinds of disasters to plan for
- c. Types of materials in the collection

**II. Prevention**
- a. Upkeep Checklist
- b. Map of on-site emergency equipment (e.g., Utility shutoffs, fire extinguishers, alarms)
- c. Emergency telephone numbers.
- d. Basic supplies on hand with location (e.g., plastic sheets, tape, camera)
- e. Schedule of training sessions
- f. Revision schedule

**III. Response**
- a. Assignment of staff responsibilities
- b. Marking priorities for salvage on plans and in library
- c. Handling and/or duplication of essential files
- d. Directory of staff
- e. Directory of resource personnel and services

**IV. Recovery**
- a. Steps to be taken immediately following a disaster
- b. Re-entry (Work with local officials for procedures)
- c. Assessment of damages
- d. Communications
- e. Preparations for salvage and treatment (e.g., where to set up work area)
- f. Treatment procedures for types of materials
- g. Public Relations

**V. Appendixes**

Floor plans, evacuation procedures, location of fire extinguishers, checklists, etc.

## COMMUNICATION PLAN

Include a detailed communication plan outlining how staff will communicate during and after a disaster. This should include contact information, communication methods (e.g., phone trees, email, messaging apps), and procedures for maintaining communication if usual channels are disrupted.

Detail how the library will communicate with the public, stakeholders, and emergency services during a disaster. Consider including a public information officer (PIO) role to handle media inquiries and public updates.

## DATA BACKUP AND IT SERVICES RECOVERY

Today's public libraries rely heavily on technology; from payroll processing to circulation or catalog, your staff as well as public expect the library to protect the existing data and recover it when needed in a short time.

The library's IT director should work with the library administration to specify the methods and schedules for regular backups of all critical digital data, including catalog databases, patron records, and other essential digital resources. The use of secure cloud storage and off-site backups help ensure data can be restored even if the physical library is compromised.

Your IT team should detail the steps for restoring IT services, including servers, computers, and network systems. Include contacts for IT service providers and the process for prioritizing the restoration of systems critical to operations. Their written plan should be available to all library administrators.

## SELECTING A CONTRACTOR FOR DIGITAL STORAGE OR CLOUD BACKUP

When selecting a contractor for digital storage, digital archiving of documents, or cloud backup services, you should focus on finding a provider who understands the specific needs of libraries and can offer secure, reliable, and cost-effective solutions. Start by asking colleagues in other library systems or professional organizations for recommendations. If your library does not have in-house IT staff, it is crucial to work with a qualified contractor who can implement a secure and reliable cloud backup system. Selecting the right contractor may feel daunting, especially if you're not tech-savvy. A good first step is to contact the Library Development Division and the IT department of the State Library of Louisiana, as they may have informal knowledge or historical insight into contractors used successfully by other libraries. While they may not maintain a formal list of vetted vendors, they can often point you toward helpful contacts or offer guidance on what to look for in a reliable IT provider.

If you need to conduct your own search, consider asking potential contractors the following key questions:

- Do they have experience working with libraries or similar institutions?
- Can they provide references from organizations with comparable needs?
- Can they explain their services in plain language? A trustworthy contractor should welcome your questions and offer clear, understandable answers without pressuring you into decisions.
- Who owns the data stored in their system? Ensure that your library retains full ownership of its data.
- Ask how they protect private or sensitive information from unauthorized access or breaches.
- What happens if there's a system failure or data loss? Make sure the contractor offers robust recovery options, including regular backups and a clear plan for restoring data quickly in emergencies.
- Do they offer ongoing support and training for staff?
- How accessible is their customer service team when issues arise? Make sure that the escalation procedures and support tiers are clearly explained and quoted.
- Can they provide clear pricing details, including any hidden fees for services like upgrades, additional storage, or support requests that come in after regular work hours?

For more guidance and support, check with the State Library of Louisiana's Information Technology Department. The state library staff can provide expert advice tailored to public libraries and may offer additional resources to help you make informed decisions. Phone 225-342-3390 or email it@library.la.gov.

Cybersecurity planning is covered in Chapter 20, Technology.

## WORKING WITH YOUR PARISH OFFICES

As a public library director, you are entrusted with ensuring the safety and well-being of patrons, staff, and resources. In times of crisis or emergencies, your library must be prepared to respond swiftly and effectively. This is why working closely with your parish's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness is crucial. GOHSEP has a list of Parish office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (OHSEP) contacts.[4]

As a local community leader, you must develop and maintain a strong partnership with the Emergency Preparedness Office. It will allow you to stay informed about potential threats,

hazards, and emergencies that may impact your library and the community as a whole. By being in the loop, you can proactively implement measures to mitigate risks and ensure the continuity of our library services.

In the event of a disaster, your ability to access emergency resources and support from this office is invaluable. Your parish's first responders team may be able to provide you with essential supplies, such as generators, emergency kits, and other equipment, to ensure that the library can serve as a safe haven for those in need.

Moreover, building rapport with first responders and emergency personnel is vital. Through regular communication and collaboration, you can establish protocols and procedures that facilitate a seamless response during emergencies. This includes coordinating evacuation plans, identifying safe zones within the library, and ensuring that our staff receives proper training in emergency management.

By working closely with the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, you will contribute to the broader community's resilience. Your library can serve as a hub for disseminating critical information, providing resources for recovery efforts, and fostering a sense of unity and support during challenging times.

When communicating with your local emergency preparedness leaders, inform them that public libraries are often designated as "second responders" and can be part of the second response team in emergency situations. This designation is typically made by local and state emergency management agencies, as well as organizations like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Library Association (ALA).

Here are several reasons why libraries are considered second responders:

1. Libraries serve as community gathering places and information centers. During emergencies, they can provide a safe haven, distribute essential information, and offer resources to aid in recovery efforts.
2. Libraries are trusted public institutions, and their staff members are seen as reliable sources of information and support. This makes them ideal for disseminating accurate and up-to-date information during crises.
3. Many libraries have access to computers, internet connectivity, emergency wi-fi, mobile hotspots, and other technologies that can be invaluable during emergencies when communication channels may be disrupted.
4. Libraries house a wealth of information resources, including books, databases, and other materials that can aid in research, fact-checking, and decision-making during emergencies.

5. Libraries often have established relationships with diverse community groups, making them well-positioned to reach out to and support vulnerable populations during emergencies.
6. Libraries can help maintain a sense of normalcy and continuity of operations within a community by continuing to provide services and resources, even in the aftermath of a disaster.

By designating libraries as second responders, emergency management agencies acknowledge their vital role in supporting communities during and after emergencies. This designation also allows libraries to access specialized training, resources, and funding to better prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Finally, partnering with your local Office of Emergency Preparedness will allow you to stay updated on best practices, regulations, and guidelines related to emergency preparedness. As a proactive library director, you can learn from the expertise of first responders and adapt your Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans accordingly, ensuring that your library remains a safe and reliable resource for our community, even in the face of adversity.

## WORKING WITH NON-GOVERNMENT COMPANIES AND NON-PROFITS

When a disaster exceeds what your staff can handle alone, several categories of outside help are available. Knowing the landscape in advance will save critical time when you need to act quickly.

Professional library associations offer continuing education, peer networks, and discipline-specific guidance that can be valuable both in preparing for and recovering from a disaster. National associations such as the American Library Association (ALA)[5] and the Public Library Association (PLA)[6] periodically offer disaster-related webinars, conference sessions, and published guidance. Association membership connects you to colleagues who have managed similar incidents and can offer practical advice drawn from experience.

Preservation and conservation professional organizations serve a more specialized role and are particularly useful when a disaster involves damage to collections themselves. The American Institute for Conservation (AIC)[7] and its affiliated Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC) maintain a directory of credentialed conservators that you can consult to find qualified professionals for treatment of damaged materials. The Society of American Archivists (SAA)[8] maintains a Preservation Section with published resources on emergency preparedness and salvage. If your library has significant local history, genealogical, or archival holdings, these organizations are an important reference point alongside the broader library associations.

Document conservation nonprofits specialize in the recovery and stabilization of damaged books, manuscripts, photographs, and archival materials. Many provide free online resources, telephone consultation, and referrals to vetted recovery vendors. They are typically the best first call for questions about salvaging specific collection items, particularly rare or irreplaceable materials.

Disaster remediation specialists are for-profit companies that handle large-scale water extraction, drying, mold remediation, and structural cleanup. For disasters beyond the scope of in-house response, a remediation company is usually necessary. You should identify two or three reputable firms in your region in advance, confirm whether your parish or municipality has pre-negotiated contracts, and understand how emergency procurement rules apply.

Federal and state emergency management partners coordinate the broader response infrastructure that libraries operate within. In Louisiana, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) leads state-level coordination, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers federal disaster assistance. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the federal agency that supports libraries and archives, and historically has funded disaster preparedness and recovery work through competitive grant programs and coordination with the Heritage Emergency National Task Force.

We encourage you to build relationships with providers in each of these categories before a disaster occurs. A vendor or partner you've already spoken with is far more responsive in a crisis than one you're calling for the first time.

## RESOURCES

**State Resources**

- State Library of Louisiana[9]
- Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency preparedness (GOHSEP): Get a Game Plan[10]
- Louisiana Department of Health: Emergency Preparedness and Response[11].
- Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Guide (GOHSEP)[12]

**Federal Resources**

- Federal Emergency Management Agency[13]
- Disaster Assistance Improvement Program (DAIP)[14]

## ENDNOTES

[1] Federal Emergency Management Agency. (n.d.). *Continuity Resource Toolkit*. https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/continuity

[2] Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2010). *Developing and maintaining emergency operations plans: Comprehensive preparedness guide (CPG) 101, version 2.0* (CPG 101 v2). U.S. Department of Homeland Security. https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/CPG_101_V2_30NOV2010_FINAL_508.pdf

[3] Federal Emergency Management Agency. (n.d.). *Continuity of operations: An overview* [Brochure]. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/org/ncp/coop_brochure.pdf

[4] Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Parish OHSEP Contacts. https://gohsep.la.gov/about/contact-us/parish-ohsep-contacts/

[5] American Library Association. https://www.ala.org

[6] Public Library Association. https://www.ala.org/pla

[7] American Institute for Conservation. https://www.culturalheritage.org/home

[8] Society of American Archivists. https://www2.archivists.org

[9] State Library of Louisiana. https://library.la.gov

[10] Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. https://getagameplan.org

[11] Louisiana Department of health. Emergency Preparedness and Response. https://ldh.la.gov/emergency-preparedness-response

[12] Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency preparedness. EmergencyPreparednessGuide_2024.pdfhttps://gohsep.la.gov/media/epguide/EmergencyPreparednessGuide_2024.pdf

[13] Federal Emergency Management Agency. https://www.fema.gov

[14] Disaster Assistance Improvement program (DAIP). https://disasterassistance.gov

# Chapter 9

# LAW AND LEGAL QUESTIONS

"The three most important documents a free society gives are a birth certificate, a passport, and a library card". – E.L. Doctorow

## FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS

The following are laws that affect libraries. Local government entities, such as the library, are required to comply with state and federal laws. A detailed discussion of Louisiana library law and how it affects libraries will be in the applicable chapters.

### FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT OF 1938 (FLSA)

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards affecting employees in the private sector and in Federal, State, and local governments.

Louisiana Revised Statutes, Title 23 (Labor and Workers' Compensation) addresses employment law comprehensively, including nondiscrimination and equal opportunity protections, at-will employment and right-to-work provisions, wage and hour requirements, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, workplace safety standards, whistleblower protections, and regulations governing hiring, termination, leave, breaks, and child labor.

For labor law guidance, consult the Louisiana Workforce Commission's *Labor Laws Information Resources.* The site also provides downloadable federal and state-mandated posters applicable to libraries.[1]

### EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1963

The Equal Pay Act[2] requires that men and women in the same workplace be given equal pay for equal work. The jobs need not be identical, but they must be substantially equal. Job content (not job titles) determines whether jobs are substantially equal.

Louisiana Law (La. R.S. 23:332) prohibits intentional employment discrimination. Louisiana does not have what is commonly known as an "Equal Pay Act," a law specifically requiring that men and women be paid equally for equal work.

### CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964[3] ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It prohibits discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs. It strengthens the

enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools. It is the benchmark civil rights legislation, and it continues to resonate in America.

Louisiana relies mostly on federal civil rights protections, but state law does address the matter of housing and employment discrimination on the basis of one's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The role of the Louisiana Commission on Human Rights[4] (LCHR) is to enforce specific laws pertaining to discriminatory practices in the state of Louisiana.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) OF 1966**

The Freedom of Information Act[5] (FOIA) is based on the principle of openness in government and generally provides that any person has a right, enforceable in court, of access to Federal agency records, except to the extent that such records (or portions thereof) are protected from disclosure by one of nine exemptions or by one of three special law enforcement record exclusions. Under the spirit and provisions of the FOIA, Federal agencies are to make their records available to the public to the greatest extent possible.

Louisiana FOIA laws are: (1) the Louisiana Open Meetings Law[6], which states that "No person shall be denied the right to observe the deliberations of public bodies and examine public documents, except in cases established by law" and (2) the Louisiana Public Records Act (La. R.S. 44.1-44.41), also known as Louisiana's Sunshine Laws. The Public Records Act was enacted by the legislature in 1940. This law ensures anyone can request public records and a purpose does not need to be stated, with no restrictions on what can be done with the public documents once a records requester has them in hand. For additional information, please see the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Public Records Law[7] publication.

When it comes to requests for public records, La. R.S. 44:32(D) states that the custodian must respond within **five** business days to notify the requester whether the record is public or not, or to provide a written explanation if the record is not public or if an exemption is claimed. Weekends and holidays are excluded from this five-day countdown.

La. R.S. 44:35: This statute generally requires the custodian to provide the requested records or a written response within five working days from receipt of the request, especially if processing the request will take longer than five days or if the custodian intends to withhold a record.

We recommend that custodians of public records consult with their legal counsel in responding to public records requests.

**AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT (ADEA) OF 1967**

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967[8] (ADEA) protects certain applicants and employees 40 years of age and older from discrimination on the basis of age in hiring, promotion, discharge, compensation, or terms, conditions or privileges of employment.

Louisiana Law (La. R.S. 23:332) prohibits intentional employment discrimination. La. R.S. 23:312 prohibits age employment discrimination to those who are at least 40 years of age or older.

**COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976**

Copyright, a form of intellectual property law, protects original works of authorship, including literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works, such as poetry, novels, movies, songs, computer software, and architecture. Copyright does not protect facts, ideas, systems, or methods of operation, although it may protect the way these things are expressed. The Copyright Act of 1976[9], which provides the basic framework for the current copyright law, was enacted on October 19, 1976. The 1976 Act was a comprehensive revision of the previous copyright law.

Louisiana does not have any copyright laws.

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH) ACT OF 1970**

The OSH Act of 1970[10] was enacted to assure safe and healthful working conditions for working individuals. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standards include:

- rules that prescribe methods employers must use to protect their employees from hazards,
- classifies potential chemical hazards and communicates information concerning hazards and appropriate protective measures to employees, and
- develops workplace safety and health standards based upon research, demonstrations, experiments, and other related information as appropriate.

Louisiana is under federal OSHA jurisdiction which covers most private sector workers within the state. State and local government workers are not covered by federal OSHA.

**AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990 (ADA)**

Disability rights are civil rights. The Americans with Disabilities Act[11] is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on disability in all areas of public life, including employment, education, transportation and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

Louisiana's Office of State ADA Coordinator[12] serves as a resource to state agencies and the general public related to the ADA's provisions on employment and reasonable accommodations, general nondiscrimination requirements, program accessibility, and effective communication.

**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT OF 1993 (FMLA[13])**

The FMLA entitles eligible employees[14] of covered employers to take up to 12 weeks unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.

Like employers in every state, Louisiana employers must follow the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). You may be governed by your parish HR policy.

**UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT OF 1994 (USERRA)**

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act[15] (USERRA) is a federal law, passed in 1994, that protects military service members and veterans from employment discrimination on the basis of their service, and allows them to regain their civilian jobs following a period of uniformed service. USERRA applies to both public and private employers.

Louisiana law specifically adopts all terms of Federal USERRA law.

**DIGITAL MILLENNIUM COPYRIGHT ACT (DMCA) OF 1998**

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act[16] is a federal law that is designed to protect copyright holders from online theft—that is, from the unlawful reproduction or distribution of their works. The DMCA covers music, movies, text and anything that is copyrighted. Victims of internet copyright infringement can have infringing material removed from the internet – without filing a lawsuit. Louisiana follows Federal law.

**CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION ACT (CIPA) OF 2000**

The Children's Internet Protection Act[17] (CIPA) was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the Internet. CIPA imposes certain requirements on schools or libraries that receive discounts for Internet access or internal connections through the E-rate program – a program that makes certain communications services and products more affordable for eligible schools and libraries.

Schools and libraries subject to CIPA are required to adopt and implement an Internet safety policy addressing:

- Access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet;
- The safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications;
- Unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online;
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and
- Measures restricting minors' access to materials harmful to them.

Schools and libraries must certify they are in compliance with CIPA before they can receive E-rate funding.

- CIPA does not apply to schools and libraries receiving discounts only for telecommunications service only;

- An authorized person may disable the blocking or filtering measure during use by an adult to enable access for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.
- CIPA does not require the tracking of Internet use by minors or adults.

**USA PATRIOT ACT OF 2001**

The USA PATRIOT Act[18] is commonly known as the Patriot Act; its complete name is the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001.

The Patriot Act was enacted following the September 11 attacks and the 2001 anthrax attacks with the stated goal of tightening U.S. national security, particularly as it related to foreign terrorism. It expanded the authority of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and law enforcement to gain access to business records, medical records, educational records and library records, including stored electronic data and communications. The law was extremely controversial. In 2020, efforts to extend the provisions were not passed by the House of Representatives, and as such, portions of the law have expired.

**AFFORDABLE CARE ACT OF 2010 – 2015 (ACA)**

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act[19], referred to as the Affordable Care Act or "ACA" for short, is the comprehensive health care reform law enacted in March 2010. Louisiana has a federally-facilitated Health Insurance Marketplace where health insurance plans are available to consumers.

## LIBRARY LAWS OF LOUISIANA

The State Library has published a compendium of state laws affecting libraries, *Library Laws of Louisiana.* The latest edition is available on the State Library website and is updated regularly.

Specific Louisiana laws affecting libraries are discussed in the applicable chapters; for example, open meetings law is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Library Board of Trustees. Another example is cooperative endeavor agreements and memorandums of understanding– information on these will be found in Chapter 13, Finance.

# PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

## PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATRON RECORDS

In a library, user privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinized by others. Confidentiality exists when a library is in possession of personally identifiable information. Personally identifiable information covers a greater range than "personal identification," such as an individual's name, address, telephone number, social security number, driver's license number, email address, etc. Personally identifiable information connects you to what you bought with your credit card, what you checked out with your library card, and what websites you visited where your web browser saved cookies. More than simple identification, personally identifiable information can build up a picture of your tastes and interests—a dossier of sorts, though crude and often inaccurate.

Public libraries cannot be responsible for someone being seen or recognized in a library, but the library should take steps to protect user privacy when possible. In other words, while someone's face may be recognized, the information they are seeking, regardless of the format, should remain private.

You should adopt a privacy policy in your library, approved by legal counsel, which limits the degree to which personally identifiable information is monitored, collected, retained, disclosed, and distributed. Your privacy policy should be regularly reviewed and updated based on changing technology.

Libraries choosing to use personally identifiable information for any library-related purpose other than for which the it was gathered should consider the following standard "opt-in" practices:

1. Notice should be provided to all users of any library of any use of personally identifiable information.
2. Any use beyond circulation or administration should be authorized only on an opt-in basis. At the time of registration, users should be asked to opt-in to additional and specifically enumerated uses of their information (e.g., for fund-raising appeals). The information of those who decline to 'opt-in' should not be made available for any additional uses.
3. Any time a library decides to extend use of personally identifiable information in ways not already authorized, it must seek user opt-in. Libraries should presume that all non-responders wish to opt out of the new use.

***Library Records***

La. R.S. 44:13 addresses the issue of confidentiality of records of library patrons. La. R.S. 44:13(A) prohibits publicly supported libraries from disclosing patron circulation records, with the following exceptions:

1. a parent or custodian of a minor seeking access to the minor's records;
2. a person acting within the scope of his duties in the administration of the library
3. a person authorized in writing by the patron in question to inspect such records; or
4. a person authorized by court order.

La. R.S. 44:13(B) prohibits disclosure of patron registration records, with the same exceptions listed for L.R.S. 44:13(A).

La. R.S. 44:13(C) specifies that these prohibitions must not be construed as a means of hindering a library from collecting overdue materials or fines.

***Data Privacy and Security***

A director and the library's Information Technology department may also be asked to install tracking and monitoring software or "sniffer software." Sniffer software are programs that monitor online activity and, once triggered by the use of keywords and phrases, can record an online transaction in its entirety. Spyware are programs that record all activity on a computer, such as keyloggers. The records generated by these programs can then be stored for future reference. Even if records are not released unless a law enforcement agency gets a court order, the privacy implications of such a program are significant and serious.

First, installing this software in the absence of a court order or user consent may violate the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA). Second, the records created by these programs are records of library use, and like all other library user records, are subject to state library confidentiality statutes. Third, a library's mission is to provide access to information, not to serve as a surveillance outpost for law enforcement. Just as we do not keep a history of who checked out library materials, we should not collect and store information from our users' online activities.

***Digital Privacy: Confidentiality of Patron Usage Data in Digital Services***

Any database is potentially a target for criminals. Data security should follow state, federal, and governing authority laws. Acquiring the least amount of personally identifiable information for the shortest length of time reduces the risk.

On the other hand, libraries depend on data for decision making, including budgeting, programming decisions, and what services the library provides. In order to reduce the risk, you should resist collecting data "just in case", avoid collecting data that could be used improperly to

inflict harm on individuals, work with vendors to ensure user privacy, and make sure that data collected is not linked to specific individuals.

### PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL INFORMATION

La. R.S. 44:11 provides for the confidentiality of certain information in a public employee's personnel records:

1. an unlisted or private home telephone number;
2. a home telephone number whose confidentiality the employee has requested;
3. a home address whose confidentiality the employee has requested.

## LEGAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT, AND WHEN TO SEEK LEGAL COUNSEL

### REQUESTS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

Before a law enforcement officer comes to the library to request information, your library should have established policies and procedures for this event. The board should designate the person or persons who will be responsible for handling these requests. Usually, this is the director and the library's legal counsel. In the procedure manual for staff, these names should be listed along with cell or home telephone numbers for staff to call if they are not present in the library. You should also include a list of library employees who are authorized to respond if the director or legal counsel is not available.

The policy and procedure should state the library's confidentiality policy along with Louisiana confidentiality law. All library employees should be trained on the procedure. Staff must understand that it is lawful to refer law enforcement to the director, and that they do not need to respond immediately to the request, but refer the request to the director. The American Library Association has published guidelines[20] on how to respond to law enforcement requests for library records.

We urge you to have detailed procedures for your staff to follow.

### BACKGROUND CHECKS

Background checks are crucial for ensuring safety and security. The library board should conduct a background check before hiring a director. Your library should be doing background checks for all personnel hires and similar procedures should apply to volunteer workers.

Background checks on all potential volunteers should particularly focus on criminal history, relevant to the roles they will perform. Red flags include serious criminal offenses, especially those related to violence or theft. Include sufficient personal information such as full name, date of birth, and address to facilitate an accurate check.

Credit checks are legal in some jurisdictions but are generally subject to specific regulations and permissible purposes, such as for certain financial or security-sensitive positions. In the context of volunteers or general personnel hires, credit checks are less common and typically not necessary since volunteer roles should not involve financial responsibilities, therefore, credit history is not directly relevant.

Criminal offenses involving children or sex offenders are an immediate disqualifier for any position, both library employees and volunteers, because the library's work involves contact with vulnerable populations. Thorough background checks that include checks for offenses relevant to child abuse, exploitation, or sex offenses are crucial and will ensure the safety of all stakeholders, especially in settings like libraries where interactions with children may occur.

As a library director, you have many options to conduct background checks: you can collaborate with local law enforcement or hire a reputable company specializing in background screenings. We recommend that background checks are conducted before finalizing appointments to mitigate risks effectively.

**ILLEGAL BEHAVIOR IN THE LIBRARY**

If your library board decides to install surveillance cameras, it is essential that you create a policy. Such policies should state the cameras are to be used only for the narrow purpose of enhancing the physical security of the library, its property, staff, and users. Policies should include:

1. protocols for posting signs and giving notice about the presence of surveillance equipment,
2. storage of data and/or media in a secure location, and
3. routine destruction of data as soon as permitted by law.

Your library should have a library user behavior policy and an internet use policy which clearly state that illegal activity is prohibited and what steps will be taken by staff when illegal behavior or activity in violation of policy is observed. Casual monitoring by staff of content in any format being used is inappropriate. If staff do observe illegal activity, they should follow the procedure manual about the steps to be taken, including reporting to law enforcement. If you have surveillance cameras and you believe the camera has recorded illegal activity, you should preserve these images and turn them over to your legal counsel, who can turn over to law enforcement in accordance with the law.

**Vandalism and Theft**

Libraries can sometimes be targets for vandalism and theft, whether it's damage to library property, stolen materials, or even theft of personal belongings. You should have clear policies on how to handle these situations, including when to report incidents to law enforcement, how to document the events, and how to preserve evidence such as video footage or witness

statements. It's also important to communicate to staff and patrons the steps being taken to ensure safety and security. For example, if your library exhibits art or other valuable creative works, you should consider establishing the art displays policy that clearly defines the library's liability or responsibility.

**Drug Use and Possession**

Libraries can sometimes become spaces where illegal drug use or possession occurs. You should have established protocols for identifying and handling these situations, including training staff to recognize signs of drug use and understanding the legal implications of possession on library premises. Immediate steps should include ensuring the safety of staff and patrons, reporting to law enforcement, and managing any health risks associated with drug paraphernalia left behind. We also recommend training regarding fentanyl use and overdosing because handling patrons under the influence of fentanyl can be dangerous to staff's health or life.

**Assault and Harassment**

Incidents of physical assault or harassment, whether between patrons or involving staff, must be addressed promptly. Your library should have policies detailing how to respond, including contacting law enforcement, providing support to victims, and potentially banning individuals involved from library premises. Your parish's legal counsel or the sheriff's department can offer guidance on the appropriate steps to take, especially if the assault or harassment is serious.

**Child Protection Issues and Reporting Obligations**

Libraries are community hubs where family-friendly events take place and children often gather. You should have clear policies for handling situations where children may be at risk, such as unaccompanied minors in the library for extended periods or how to respond to suspected child abuse. Staff should be trained to recognize signs of neglect or abuse and know the appropriate authorities to contact. Additionally, there should be guidelines for how staff should interact with minors to avoid any situations that could be construed as inappropriate or illegal.

In Louisiana, certain professionals are designated as "mandatory reporters," meaning they are legally required to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. While librarians, including youth librarians, are not specifically listed as mandatory reporters under Louisiana Children's Code Article 603[21], they fall under "Organizational or youth activity provider" in the law and are considered mandated reporters. While there are no legal requirements for training, most libraries do require employees to take the mandated reporter training.

To support these obligations, all library staff who interact with children or oversee youth services—including youth librarians, programming staff, outreach personnel, and any employee regularly working in public service areas—should complete Louisiana's mandated reporter training, even though it is not legally required. This training equips staff to recognize and respond appropriately to signs of abuse or neglect and helps ensure the library remains a safe

environment for minors. Library administration should maintain documentation of completed training and provide regular refreshers as part of ongoing professional development.

It is imperative that you have established procedures in handling suspected child abuse or neglect situations, and consult with legal counsel or relevant authorities to understand your library's specific obligations for reporting and compliance with any local or state requirements related to reporting suspected child abuse.

For more detailed information, contact Library Development at 225-324-4931 or email libdev@library.la.gov.

**Fraud and Identity Theft**

With increasing digital services, your library may encounter situations involving fraud or identity theft. This could include patrons using library computers for illegal activities such as phishing, hacking, or unauthorized access to personal information. Your library must have public technology access and internet usage/access policies, which should also discuss monitoring all network activity and reporting suspicious activities. Guidance on preserving digital evidence and reporting to relevant authorities is crucial.

**Loitering, Unauthorized Access, and Trespassing**

You may also occasionally face issues with individuals accessing restricted areas or staying after hours without permission. You should establish protocols for handling trespassing, loitering, unauthorized access, including when to involve law enforcement and how to secure the premises.

## OTHER LOUISIANA REGULATIONS

### ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

The Louisiana Administrative Code[22] is the state-certified publication that provides a set of rules which have been formally adopted or amended by state agencies through promulgation in the *Louisiana Register*. Rules are compiled according to topic and are arranged in a codified format (titles, parts, sections, etc.) so that new or amended rules can be easily referenced and researched.

### ATTORNEY GENERAL (AG) OPINIONS

Attorney General opinions[23] are simply that—an opinion on legal questions relating to state law. While they provide legal advice, they are not law, and are advisory only. They present an opinion by the Attorney General on how the AG's office believes a judge will rule. They do not have the force and effect of the law, and they are limited to the facts presented by the official or officials requesting the opinion. The opinions may be changed or recalled by subsequent

court decisions or legislation. Opinions of the Attorney General, while not binding, carry great weight. The Attorney General will not furnish opinions to private individuals except on questions related to dual office holding or dual employment.

Requests for opinions must be in the form of a letter, signed by an individual, and addressed to the Attorney General. Requests may be submitted via mail, fax, or email. Before you submit a request for an AG opinion, please call Library Development and discuss it. Library Development has a list of AG opinions affecting libraries, and are happy to share with you.

**LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR**

The Louisiana Legislative Auditor is the state agency that provides audit, investigative, recovery, performance, local government, actuarial, and economic services to state and local government entities in Louisiana.

The Legislative Auditor's purpose is to help ensure that the government is responsive to the needs of the people of Louisiana – a government that is accountable, efficient, and effective. As one of the Legislature's most objective resources, their office provides independent assessment and proactive guidance, resulting in accurate reporting of the fiscal condition and performance of government and the sources and uses of its financial resources. The Legislative Auditor Office is an excellent resource in matters ranging from local fiscal issues to the State's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). The website has many documents that will help public libraries, including documents on best practices[24]. These include topics such as bid law, open meetings, public records, and so on.

## GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE/LINES OF AUTHORITY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Generally, the power flows from the state to the local governing authority to the library board of control to the director.

Louisiana Revised Statutes La R.S. 25:211 and La. R.S. 25:212 empower the police jury or other local governing authority to establish a public library by passing an ordinance.

La. R.S. 25:213 enumerates methods by which the governing authority may raise money to acquire sites and construct library buildings: anticipation of revenues, bond issues, special tax, and use of maintenance tax.

La. R.S. 25:214 calls for the governing authority to name a five to seven member board of control, specifies the members' terms of office and names the police jury president or other top local official an ex officio, voting board member.

La. R.S. 25:215 enumerates the board's duties and powers, notably the "authority to establish rules and regulations for its own government and that of the library"...to hire a head librarian and to fix staff salaries and compensations.

La. R.S. 25:217 empowers the local governing authority to hold an election to secure an operating and maintenance tax for the library's exclusive use.

La. R.S. 25:220 provides a method for payment of library expenses each month: The board of control or its designated representative, usually the president, approves the expenses, and the governing authority pays them out of library funds.

Finally, La. R.S. 25:221 empowers the board to accept upon the library's behalf gifts made without conditions but requires governing authority approval of gifts conditionally made. In addition, La. R.S. 25:221 calls for the library director to expend or invest such gifts with board approval.

Thus state law provides the theory of the library's governmental structure and sketches lines of authority. In reality there are exceptions to the basic pattern, some provided for by modifications of the law and some de facto. What follows are three examples, varying in significance, of these exceptions: La. R.S. 25:214 has been expanded to permit four parishes to have a larger board. La. R.S. 25:215 has been expanded to transfer certain libraries' accounting/bookkeeping functions from local governing authorities to the libraries thus assuring the latter fiscal independence. Finally, some parishes have replaced police juries with local governments based on electorate-approved home rule charters. It is considered that these local governments enjoy independence at the expense of their ties to state government. As a result, certain library boards, which are still referred to as library boards of control, have lost their nearly autonomous status to become advisory boards existing at the pleasure of the home rule charter based governments.

**Duties of a Director, Library Board, and Local Governing Authority**

"Duties of a Director, Library Board, and Local Governing Authority" is an appendix in this handbook. It is a chart of responsibilities that briefly lists the responsibilities of the director, library board, and the local governing authority. It is arranged by topic, including general responsibilities, policy making, administration, personnel, collection development, finance and budget, library buildings and property, library board, public relations, continuing education, and planning.

## LEGAL ISSUES IN DIGITAL SERVICES AND E-LIBRARIES

### CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATRONS' RECORDS, EBOOK PROVIDERS

As digital services become increasingly central to library operations, you, as a director, must ensure that all electronic services comply with applicable laws and uphold patrons' rights. One of the most critical obligations is maintaining digital privacy and confidentiality. La. R.S. 44:13 protects the confidentiality of library records, which includes digital usage data such as e-book circulation logs, database access, digital reference interactions, and browsing histories. You must ensure that digital platforms used by the library adhere to this statute by limiting data collection, securing storage, and restricting access to authorized personnel only.

## COPYRIGHT AND LICENSING

Unlike physical books, e-books and digital content are primarily governed by licensing agreements, rather than ownership. When considering providing access to e-books or databases, carefully review the vendor's agreement to understand usage limits, simultaneous user restrictions, renewal terms, and permissions for off-site access, etc. Contracts should also clearly state that patron data is not to be used for commercial purposes or shared without consent. Additionally, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and broader U.S. copyright law require that libraries refrain from unauthorized duplication or distribution of digital materials, even for educational or public purposes. Misunderstanding licensing terms or using copyrighted materials improperly, even unintentionally, can result in legal exposure.

As a director, you are expected to implement clear internal policies that require relevant staff to undergo copyright and digital licensing training. Remember to consult with legal counsel when negotiating or interpreting vendor agreements. It also helps to conduct routine audits of digital services, combined with staff awareness of confidentiality obligations under Louisiana law.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR LICENSING AGREEMENTS

**Access vs. Ownership**: E-books and other digital resources are typically licensed, not owned. This distinction affects how the content can be used and shared. Library directors should carefully review licensing terms, considering the duration of access, the number of simultaneous users allowed, and any geographical or demographic restrictions.

**Digital Rights Management (DRM)**: DRM technologies restrict how digital content can be accessed, copied, or shared. While DRM can help protect copyright, it can also limit how libraries serve their patrons. Directors should negotiate for DRM-free content when possible or ensure the DRM does not unduly hinder access.

**Fair Use and Copyright Exceptions**: Understanding the boundaries of fair use is critical. Libraries must be able to provide access to materials for purposes like research, education, and archiving. Licensing agreements should respect these exceptions and not impose additional restrictions.

**Consortium Agreements**: Libraries may join consortia to negotiate better licensing terms and pricing. These agreements can provide more extensive access to digital resources and reduce costs.

## COMPLIANCE WITH ADA FOR DIGITAL RESOURCES

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that public services, including libraries[25], be accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes digital resources.

**Accessible E-books and Digital Content**: E-books and digital content should be available in formats accessible to all patrons, including those with visual, auditory, or cognitive disabilities.

This may involve providing audiobooks, text-to-speech capabilities, and alternative text for images.

**Web Accessibility**: The library's digital services, including websites, databases, and online catalogs, must comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). These guidelines ensure that digital content is perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for all users.

**Assistive Technologies**: Libraries should support assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnification software, and adaptive keyboards. Providing training for staff and patrons on how to use these technologies can also enhance accessibility.

## ETHICS

Public library trustees, directors, and staff must answer questions on matters of ethics to the State Board of Ethics. In fact, La. R.S. 42:1161 obligates every public agency head to file confidential reports with this board on any matter which he believes may constitute a violation of the ethics code. The board, by issuing advisory opinions, helps safeguard public employees (including unpaid board members) from violating state conflict of interest and other laws. The board will render formal advisory opinions upon written request; commission staff members accept telephone calls and will provide informal oral opinions.

Examples of conflict of interest violations about which the board would concern itself include these:

- a library's contracting with a board or staff member's business for the provision of goods, services, or supplies,
- a library's hiring a board member's or administrator's immediate relative (nepotism—La. R.S. 42:1119(C)(2) makes provisions for relatives already working in the agency), or
- a board or staff member's accepting gifts or outside income offered because of the library connection.

Library trustees and staff would probably agree upon the importance of avoiding even the appearance of impropriety in matters of ethics, of striving to conform not only to the letter of, but also to the spirit of Ethics Board guidelines, directives, opinions, and rulings.

### PARTIES, GIFTS, DONATIONS

A summary of the gift restrictions (Ethics Publications Information Sheets)[26] contained in Louisiana's Code of Governmental Ethics is updated annually by the Louisiana Board of Ethics (Ethics Publications).[27]

**LIBRARY CODE OF ETHICS**

Traditionally, the Louisiana Library Association adopts the ALA Code of Ethics[28]. For the trustee code of ethics, see Public Library Trustee Ethics Statement[29].

**ETHICS OPINIONS**

Copies of Ethics Board opinions are available from the State Library. They are also available from the Louisiana Ethics Administration Program, and includes links to their documents that are full-text indexed and cataloged by the department's attorneys. For the text of the Code of Governmental Ethics, see La. R.S. 42:1101 et seq.

**RESOURCES FOR STATE ETHICS LAWS**

The Louisiana Ethics Administration[30]. has publications on its website, including a searchable Opinions issued.

The Code of Governmental Ethics is available on the Secretary of State's website.[31]

## ENDNOTES

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# Chapter 10

# PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

"Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities." – R. David Lankes, University of South Carolina

## INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic information landscape, public relations and marketing are essential tools for libraries to connect with their communities, promote their services, and advocate for their value. This chapter provides guidance for library directors on developing and implementing effective PR and marketing strategies.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE: PUBLIC RELATIONS VS. MARKETING

Public relations and marketing are terms that are often used interchangeably by people who assume they mean the same thing, but this is incorrect. They do have characteristics in common in that the aim of both is to present accurate information about your library and to promote good feelings about your library.

Public relations is about enhancing the image of the library, in which libraries establish and maintain open two-way communication between the organization, the governing authority, and the public. Good PR communicates stories and news items to create the library's image. PR uses the news media to circulate press releases, set up photo opportunities to show the great things that the library is doing and engage in social media. Public relations promote the services of your library while emphasizing the value of your library to the community.

Traditional marketing promotes products, and in the case of the library, this includes programs, services, and resources your library provides. Promotion can include free media placement as well as paid advertising, an active social media program, or signage in the community.

*To illustrate the difference:*

- A library hosting a 'Meet the Author' event and inviting local media to cover it is an example of public relations. This generates positive news coverage and showcases the library's role in the community.
- Creating a social media campaign to promote the library's summer reading program is an example of marketing. This campaign targets specific demographics and aims to increase program participation.

Libraries belong in the spotlight of our communities. It's our responsibility as the manager to make it happen!

## THE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S IMAGE

The library director is responsible for promoting library services and programs and nurturing a good association with the public. Community use of the library relies in part on the public's image of what the library can offer. Offering good service and promoting relevant library activities is essential. Service is the core of your library. Your library must meet patrons' needs with speed and accuracy and anticipate community concerns.

Public relations begin in the library itself. Developing that image of libraries depends on principles of packaging. Investing in staff training for excellent customer service and effective communication is crucial for building a positive library image. Staff should be equipped to handle inquiries, resolve issues, and create a welcoming atmosphere for all patrons. Care should be given to the manner of speaking, answering the telephone, and responding to the endless questions that flow in.

The library's physical space also plays a significant role in shaping public perception. A well-maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and accessible environment encourages library use and creates a positive impression. Proper maintenance of collections, adequate directional signs and explanatory placards will increase good will. Library users should enjoy their visits to the library. Bright colors, simple directions, professional people, comfortable surroundings, willingness to serve, sensibility, style, simplicity, and smiles will give your library a positive image.

The library's most powerful avenue for image is the word-of-mouth advertising given by the satisfied patron; it is also the least expensive!

### BRAND MANAGEMENT

A strong library brand is very important. It reflects the library's mission, values, and the services it offers, including visual identity and messaging consistency across all platforms. All PR efforts should be coordinated across the library system.

- **Brand Style Guide:** Develop a brand style guide that outlines the library's logo usage, color palette, typography, and messaging guidelines. This ensures consistency in all communications and strengthens brand recognition.
- **Key Messages:** Identify key messages that communicate the library's core values, mission, and unique offerings. These messages should be integrated into all PR and marketing materials.

**TRUSTEES ROLE**

Public relations is of vital interest to trustees. Board actions affect the public's concept of the library. Trustees should not be inhibited by public opinion but should take action for the public good and inform the public. Trustees and the director should work closely together in developing the trustee's role. Some specific suggestions for trustees to assist are speeches on library topics at public meetings; board studies on library equipment or building problems; and contacts in the community with leaders and organizations. Trustees should be active members of the community, so they can also be sensitive to community needs. Trustees can enhance library relations with outside channels in a very positive manner.

**STAFF ROLE**

Fostering a good relationship between staff and the public should be a high priority. Competent, courteous staff who make library users feel welcome by creating a positive environment is invaluable, both in person and on the telephone. It is critical that staff be aware that any official communication should be directed to or come from library administration.

Encourage staff to actively participate in PR and marketing efforts. This can include sharing library news on social media, creating displays, and promoting programs to patrons.

- Circulation staff can promote upcoming programs during checkout interactions.
- Reference librarians can create lists, displays, and recommend resources related to library events.
- Staff can create book review or service demo videos on social media (or even just photos of new arrivals).

## STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Generally, media relations and public relations are handled by the director. Directors can assign someone on staff to handle the promotion of events and programs. You may consider hiring a Public Information Officer or Communications Coordinator as a full-time position. An individual with prior experience in TV or other news media outlets will be a valuable asset to the library. Simply put, your library needs a public relations professional who is experienced in communicating with a large variety of people on behalf of your organization.

Today's libraries utilize a variety of PR and marketing strategies, including community partnerships, events such as author talks or workshops, and digital marketing campaigns through email newsletters and social media advertising.

When do you need to hire a professional public relations firm? Some companies partner specifically with libraries to cultivate the library's potential to better serve your community.

Consulting projects are varied, from topics like Friends and Foundations training to strategic planning guidance.

The American Library Association has detailed information and guidance on a number of topics related to public relations.

- Advocacy, the value of libraries, and return on investment resources at ALA.[1]
- PLA marketing strategies, social media and digital content creation, and templates.[2]:
- ALA public relations resources and guides, writing for PR/marketing, computer/internet programs to create marketing materials, free/low cost marketing images, and book displays and signage.[3]

## LIBRARY MARKETING PLANS

In order to create effective marketing, you should create a marketing plan. As with your strategic plan, a marketing plan is a living document that supports your library's vision and mission statement. It is a tool you can use to guide the library through the process of marketing. A marketing plan helps you present a unified message to your community. Slogans, a logo, your website, social media, and programming should all be included in your marketing plan. Keep a folder of "good ideas" that you may want to implement in the revised plan.

A library marketing plan should include:

1. An executive summary outlining the plan's purpose and goals.
2. A situation analysis examining the library's current marketing environment.
3. Target audience identification.
4. Marketing objectives and strategies.
5. Tactics and action plans.
6. A budget and timeline.
7. Evaluation metrics to measure success.

## PUBLICITY AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Making citizens aware of library resources requires constant and imaginative effort. The library's annual report can be an effective promotional tool. It should include financial, circulation, and reference statistics, photos, and short features on the past year's

accomplishments and activities. Your taxpayers have a right to know. Give them a clear and concise concept of the workings of the library.

**PRINT COLLATERAL**

Bookmarks, flyers, newsletters, and social media posts that are done with imaginative preparation can be used to promote special happenings, services, or operating hours and address of the library. Booklists in certain subject areas or lists of new books or videos with short annotations are great promoters. Bulletin boards and posters can be a very versatile means of publicity. They can stimulate interest in selected books or subjects and call attention to resources, services, or programs. Displays or exhibits can reach a wide audience by informing users and potential users of what is available in the library. Book reviews or service demo videos on social media (or even just photos of new arrivals) can reach another audience. Remember to celebrate and capitalize on National Library Week and National Library Card Sign-Up Month.

Campaigns for funding are another tool to create public awareness. A clear and consistent effort has to be made to inform your community about your library's financial facts and its needs. Public relations outside the library is absolutely essential for lively libraries. A good working relationship with your Chamber of Commerce will help you connect with the business community, as well as identify happenings and interest points in your area.

**OWNED MEDIA**

Be sure to maximize the use of your owned media. Owned media consists of the online content your library creates and publishes to your website, social media, broadcast emails, blogs, and video channels. While meaningful and relevant content takes time to plan and create, owned media is a critical and cost-effective component in today's marketing and public relations landscape, having relatively little or no hard cost compared to other outlets.

**SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

In today's interconnected world, public libraries are increasingly recognizing the transformative power of digital platforms to extend their reach, engage communities, and showcase their evolving relevance. Social media has emerged as a critical communication tool, offering libraries unprecedented opportunities to connect with patrons across diverse age groups and backgrounds.

Social media users now refer to their social news feeds and timelines more regularly than visiting websites. It is important to invest the effort in cultivating your social channels to build followers, and gain visibility by having your posts cycle through their news feeds. In your social media postings, be sure to use eye-catching graphics, incorporate video where possible, and provide links to more detailed information. Also be aware that traditional news outlets commonly scan social media for story leads.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok represent powerful extensions of the library's outreach strategy. These channels are particularly effective in connecting with younger audiences who may not traditionally engage with library services. By crafting dynamic, engaging content, you can transform your library's online presence from a static information repository to an interactive community space.

However, this digital landscape is not without challenges. The open nature of social media platforms means you must be vigilant about content moderation. Trolling, inappropriate comments, and potential misrepresentation can quickly undermine the carefully cultivated image of a welcoming, inclusive community resource. Effective social media management requires a proactive approach—establishing clear commenting guidelines, monitoring interactions, and responding professionally to diverse user feedback.

Successful library social media strategies go beyond merely posting announcements. They involve creating content that entertains, educates, and inspires. This might include book recommendations, behind-the-scenes glimpses of library operations, staff highlights, community event promotions, and interactive features that encourage user participation.

The key is authenticity and consistency. A library's social media voice should reflect its core values: learning, community engagement, inclusivity, and accessibility. Your library can demonstrate that it is a dynamic and responsive institution at the heart of community life by embracing digital platforms strategically.

**EARNED MEDIA**

Develop earned media exposure by cultivating relationships with local media outlets. Develop a contact list of local reporters, editors, and producers, establish regular communication, and provide them with newsworthy stories about the library, invite them to library events, and offer library resources to support their reporting. Where possible, tailor the library's press releases to the specific interests of different media outlets and offer exclusive interviews or behind-the-scenes access.

Find out about deadlines for different news outlets and their preferred format for material, and offer to provide filler materials to the outlet when needed. Radio stations will air public service announcements that are typically less than 30 seconds long. Offer to participate in interviews and talk shows on pertinent topics. Don't forget local radio shows and morning television shows, as producers are often looking for local organizations to appear on a regular basis.

Local television stations should receive media releases and stories with human interest and visual appeal. Larger public libraries have TV production studios for the production of spots or short subjects. More and more, as news agencies lose staff, they are willing to accept high-quality handout material from organizations.

Media outlets usually maintain a public-facing, community calendar of events. This is a perfect way to promote upcoming programs and special library events. Research the publications and

media outlets in your area, connect with the editorial staff responsible for promoting community events, and provide regular submissions. There's always something going on at the library, and community event calendars are a great (and free) way to spread the word and promote attendance for your activities.

### SURVEYS

Libraries can also profitably capitalize on surveys as a public relations device. Surveys provide your library patrons the opportunity to express their needs and opinions of their library. This keeps the director abreast of public perceptions and encourages improvements to personnel, strategic planning, operations and financial support that will produce a better library.

## PROGRAMMING

Programming in the library offers the public an opportunity to see the lively, welcoming side of service that many people may not expect. Refer to Chapter 12, Programming, for more information.

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

The library should be represented in various community activities. The library director should offer to address community meetings, and library staff should offer to enhance community events with library card signups, crafts, storytelling, games, and marketing materials on library services that relate to the event. Speaking engagements offer the opportunity for a "commercial" about the library, new services, or upcoming programs. Always provide a handout, such as bookmarks, brochures, booklists, or flyers on future events. If the library's budget allows, give out promotional items with the library's logo. Getting out of the library gives you the opportunity to meet people who do not use the library.

The library should be ready to co-sponsor or supplement non-sponsored programs with bibliographies, information services, and displays and to lend book collections to special groups and organizations. Brochures on city and parish officials and community groups would be another way to reach the public. Also, a successful way to attract and hold the support of community groups and agencies is to ask them for specific assistance in promoting a program or project. It could be the garden club working to develop a better garden collection or planting shrubs for Arbor Day; Boy Scouts moving shelves and books; church youth groups preparing exhibits in the churches for National Library Week; or the AARP promoting the Blind and Physically Handicapped materials and services. Citizens who become involved make life-long friends of the library. (See section on Friends in Chapter 5, Library Support Groups).

The library can also participate in community activities and events–for example, parades, festivals, or farmer's markets. For more suggestions, see Chapter 11, Outreach, and Chapter 12, programming.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS**

In recent decades, public libraries have increasingly collaborated and partnered with schools, businesses, non-profits, and other community organizations. This collaboration can amplify the library's reach and effectiveness in public relations and marketing efforts, as well as offer services to innovate and reach more needs of the community.

If you do not already have a good working relationship with schools in your parish, the director should establish one. The library can offer cooperative efforts with school librarians, such as class visits, teacher loans, reserves for school assignments, summer reading programs, and library tours. Libraries also work with daycares and Head Start programs offering story times and other programs.

Also, an effort should be made to identify other youth groups, such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and to gain knowledge of their aims and programs. You should be aware of parent groups such as the PTA, Teen-Parent Support Groups, and others.

Family literacy is another area for outreach. Some programming should be geared to the entire family. Programming might include a special Family Reading Night or a program on books to read aloud or books on parenting.

Successful examples include:

- Partner with local schools to offer library cards to students.
- Collaborate with businesses to host community events or provide library resources at their locations.
- Team up with non-profits to offer programs addressing community needs.

## ELECTED OFFICIALS

The importance of knowing and having face-to-face meetings with your elected officials, both local and state, cannot be stressed enough.

**Building Relationships:** Cultivating relationships with elected officials, both local and state, is crucial for libraries. These officials play a key role in library funding, policy decisions, and advocacy. Face-to-face meetings provide an opportunity to establish personal connections, build rapport, and foster a sense of trust. Do not wait until the last minute to bring library-related matters to elected officials. Cultivating a relationship with them is a process that should be ongoing. It takes both time and concerted effort.

**Communicating Library Value:** Meeting with elected officials allows library directors to directly communicate the library's value and impact on the community. Sharing statistics, success stories, and patron testimonials can help demonstrate the library's essential role in education, literacy, and community development.

**Advocating for Library Needs:** Face-to-face meetings provide a platform to advocate for the library's needs, including funding requests, legislative support, and policy changes. Building relationships with elected officials can help ensure that the library's voice is heard and its interests are represented in the decision-making process.

**Staying Informed:** Meeting with elected officials helps library directors stay informed about current political priorities, legislative initiatives, and potential funding opportunities. This knowledge can help the library align its strategic goals with broader community objectives and secure resources to support its mission.

**Building Partnerships:** Establishing relationships with elected officials can lead to partnerships and collaborations on community initiatives. Libraries can serve as valuable resources for elected officials, providing information, programming, and community outreach support.

**Enhancing Library Visibility:** Meeting with elected officials raises the library's visibility and profile within the community. It demonstrates the library's engagement in civic affairs and its commitment to serving the public good. Regularly invite elected officials to participate in all library events.

**Tips for Effective Meetings:**

- **Be prepared:** Research the officials' backgrounds, interests, and priorities.
- **Be concise and focused:** Clearly communicate the library's key messages and needs.
- **Bring supporting materials:** Share statistics, testimonials, and visual presentations.
- **Follow up:** Send a thank-you note and maintain ongoing communication.

By actively engaging with elected officials, library directors can build strong relationships that benefit the library and the community it serves.

## MARKETING DO'S AND DON'TS

Effective marketing is crucial for public libraries to engage communities, showcase their value, and attract diverse patrons in an increasingly digital and competitive information landscape. By adopting strategic marketing approaches that balance traditional outreach with innovative digital techniques, your library can effectively communicate its mission, highlight valuable resources, and demonstrate its role in supporting community education, personal growth, and social connection.

The following guidelines will help you make better decisions when developing impactful, inclusive, and dynamic marketing strategies that resonate with varied audience segments and promote your library as an indispensable community asset. These guidelines will also help you avoid making costly marketing mistakes that can damage both the library's image and your reputation as a library director.

**Do:**

- **Know your audience:** Understand the demographics, interests, and needs of your community. Tailor your marketing messages and strategies to resonate with different audience segments.
- **Highlight the benefits:** Focus on how library services and programs benefit the community. Emphasize the value of library resources in terms of education, literacy, personal development, and community engagement.
- **Use clear, concise language:** Avoid library jargon or technical terms. Communicate in a way that is easy for everyone to understand.
- **Be consistent:** Maintain a consistent brand identity across all marketing channels. Use a unified message and visual style to reinforce the library's image and values.
- **Embrace digital marketing:** Utilize social media, email and text message marketing, and the library's website to reach a wider audience and promote programs and services.
- **Collaborate with community partners:** Partner with local organizations, businesses, and schools to expand the library's reach and impact.
- **Track your results:** Monitor the effectiveness of your marketing efforts. Analyze website traffic, social media engagement, and program attendance to measure impact and identify areas for improvement.

**Don't:**

- **Rely solely on traditional methods:** Don't limit your marketing to print materials and traditional broadcast media. Explore digital channels and innovative approaches to reach new audiences.
- **Make false or misleading claims:** Ensure that your marketing messages are truthful and accurate. Misleading information can damage the library's credibility.
- **Underestimate the power of word-of-mouth:** Encourage patrons to spread the word about the library's offerings. Positive word-of-mouth marketing can be highly effective.
- **Forget to evaluate and adjust:** Regularly evaluate your marketing strategies and adjust based on the results. Stay flexible and adapt to the changing needs of the community.

- **Ignore accessibility:** Ensure that your marketing materials and online platforms are accessible to people with disabilities.

## WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T DO FOR TAX ELECTIONS

Louisiana law guides what libraries can and cannot do for a tax election. See Chapter 15, Tax Elections, for detailed information.

## CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Having a crisis communication plan ready is like having a fire extinguisher – you hope you never need it, but when you do, you'll be incredibly grateful it's there. Think of it this way: a crisis can hit your library at any time. It could be a natural disaster like a flood or fire, a cyber security breach, a public health emergency, an act of vandalism, or even a social media controversy. In those moments, clear communication is key.

Your library's crisis communication plan should outline exactly how you will communicate with everyone involved – your staff, your patrons, the media, and local officials. Here are the questions you need to answer to create a functional and useful crisis communication plan:

1. Who's the designated spokesperson?
2. What are the key messages you want to get across?
3. How will you reach people quickly?
4. Do you have contact lists ready?

Think about all the ways you might need to communicate - phone calls, emails, text alerts, social media updates, press releases. Having these procedures laid out in advance will help you stay calm and in control when things get chaotic.

And speaking of staying calm, your spokesperson needs to be someone who can keep a cool head under pressure. Not every library can afford a dedicated communications director position. Therefore, as a library director, you need to be prepared to step into the spotlight. Therefore, consider getting media training and practice being on camera. When the time comes, you should be able to deliver information clearly and factually without adding to the confusion or anxiety. Remember, people will be looking to the library for guidance and reassurance during a crisis. A confident and reassuring spokesperson can make all the difference.

Finally, don't forget that *how* you communicate is just as important as *what* you communicate. Be empathetic, transparent, and responsive. Acknowledge people's concerns, provide accurate

information, and keep them updated regularly. By communicating effectively during a crisis, you can help minimize damage, maintain trust, and ensure the library continues to be a source of support for the community.

**COMMUNICATION DURING A NATURAL DISASTER**

For detailed information, see Chapter 8, Disaster Planning.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Public Library Association. (n.d.). *Advocacy*. American Library Association. https://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/public-relations-marketing/advocacy

[2] Public Library Association. (n.d.). *Marketing strategies*. American Library Association. https://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/public-relations-marketing/marketing-strategies

[3] Public Library Association. (n.d.). *PR resources*. American Library Association. https://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/public-relations-marketing/pr-resources

# Chapter 11

# OUTREACH

> "Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest." — Lady Bird Johnson

The commitment of public libraries to serve the public, wherever that public might be, has led to the development of a wide range of outreach services. As the director, you must determine the scope of your outreach program in your own community. The questions we must ask ourselves as librarians are:

- How can we ensure that our communities have access to the diverse range of library services they need and deserve?
- How do we discern the precise needs of our communities?
- How do we facilitate the best transmission of those services and resources to meet those needs?

To offer outreach services, librarians must evaluate their own area by assessing the educational levels, the economy, and the needs, interests, languages, and attitudes of their community. Librarians must remain vigilant regarding the community's composition and needs. For example, factors such as a change of transit routes, the closing of a hospital, an influx of apartment dwellers, an increase in the average age, or a change in the community's cultural makeup would likely have critical impacts on a community's composition and, relatedly, its library resource needs. Public libraries have an enduring commitment to provide resources and services for everyone.

Libraries today serve increasingly diverse populations, requiring a flexible approach to outreach. Programs must adapt to different groups, whether through delivering materials directly to community centers or offering virtual programs accessible from anywhere. Collaborating with local organizations, schools, and government agencies is key to extending the library's reach. Partnerships amplify and multiply a library's resources and services as well as the number of individuals they serve. The vastness or limits of your outreach will depend on your parish's needs, your board's policies, and your library's financial situation. Thoroughly exploring all opportunities for outreach is necessary to ensure both adequate service levels and community support.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Libraries thrive when they are deeply embedded in their communities. This includes partnering with local nonprofits, cultural institutions, and businesses to extend the reach of library services. From collaborating with schools to developing literacy programs, coordinating with social services to provide resources for underserved populations, or hosting community-wide events like a community read, libraries can act as hubs for engagement. Special events such as author talks, workshops, or joint programs with local organizations allow libraries to build meaningful connections. Libraries also participate in large-scale community events, such as fairs and festivals, but also small-scale community events, such as farmers markets and parades. For more ideas on programming, refer to Chapter 12, Programming.

## GRANTS FOR OUTREACH

The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) acts as a steward and supporter of Louisiana's diverse and vibrant culture and history. LEH is dedicated to ensuring access to the humanities for people of every generation and from every walk of life. As such, LEH offers grants that support humanities-themed programming and initiatives at nonprofits across Louisiana. Eligible projects include public humanities programs that involve audience participation and discussion; documentary photography, podcast, and radio projects; humanities-based festivals and exhibition development; digital humanities projects including websites and online documentation of Louisiana history and culture; speaker series; assistance with publication projects and humanities-based educational initiatives; and more. For more information, visit the LEH website[1].

For additional grant sources, consider organizations like the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and national literacy groups like the American Library Association (ALA) as potential partners. Private local and state organizations ranging from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation to the Dollar General Fund also offer support. Hyper-local support organizations, trusts, and other benefactors may also be a source of support. Lastly, the National Library of Medicine has a few grants that relate to outreach specifically about (consumer) health info literacy.[2]

## OUTREACH SERVICES

Outreach services include any activities that occur outside of the traditional library setting. Typically, they fall into one of three categories: information, community relations, or service delivery. The following are examples of outreach programs in libraries.

**SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND TEENS**

Outreach to children may include special children's programming throughout the year, a library-sponsored storytelling event in a recreational area, a puppet show by the bookmobile staff at a central stop, or service to daycare centers.

Outreach to teens may include visits to schools with a presentation or book talks, or a short visit (infomercials) designed to simply advertise the library's many free materials, services, and programs.

**SERVICES TO ADULTS**

Outreach to adults often includes visits to organizations to make presentations or to provide information on the library's materials, services, and programs. Some examples are:

- Local area book clubs
- Civic groups such as the Rotary Club, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, etc.
- Women's groups
- Professional organizations
- Adult education classes
- English as a Second Language classes
- Instructional classes/training sessions

**SERVICES TO OLDER ADULTS**

Older adults are a growing sector of our population. Many residential areas, such as retirement homes, have been designed for them. This group may be less mobile or homebound and often need special delivery service, or may need special interest materials, or may desire special programming on topics such as Social Security or Medicare.

**SERVICES TO NEW READERS**

Many Louisiana libraries are involved in literacy programs. Providing new reader materials is the first step in assisting adults who are improving their basic skills and understanding in reading, writing, speaking, and computing as they gain new knowledge. Often the library is the agency that provides training sessions for tutors, provides space for a tutor and student to work, provides the teaching materials for the student and tutor, and even locates a tutor for the patron who needs help in learning to read. In some areas there are well-established programs conducted by literacy action groups, or Council on Aging, or United Way, that use the library as a site for their programs, but in many areas the public library is the only agency offering these services.

Family Literacy Programs can be valuable additions to library outreach efforts. Confirm the existence or absence of such programs in your community and, if applicable, consider integrating them into your library offerings. Literacy programs generally fall into one of these areas:

- Early childhood and children's literacy
- Teen literacy
- Adult Literacy
- English Language Learners – ELL
- Digital Literacy
- Financial Literacy

The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities coordinates Prime Time programs when they partner with libraries, schools, and various community-based organizations to implement these programs in all Louisiana parishes. Prime Time Family Reading brings caregivers and their six- to 10-year-old children together to explore notable books and big ideas through reading and discussion. The program focuses on the humanities, and books are chosen for discussion around themes such as caring, inquiring, and sustainability to facilitate meaningful conversation among family members. When a library hosts a prime time program:

1. it is free for children ages six to ten and parents, grandparents, or other caregivers,
2. it includes 90-minute sessions in the evenings once per week for six weeks,
3. it includes complimentary books for families,
4. storytellers read beautifully illustrated, award-winning children's books filled with culturally diverse stories, folk tales, and historical accounts from around the world, and
5. discussion leaders guide participants to personally connect with literature and think beyond who, what, when, and where with open-ended questions that inspire critical thinking.

Visit the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities website for more information on Prime Time.[3]

**BOOKMOBILE SERVICES**

Bookmobiles remain an important part of outreach, especially in rural or underserved areas. They bring books and resources to communities that lack a local branch, support schools without libraries, and serve senior living communities or other residential facilities. Bookmobiles complement library branches by acting as mobile community centers, bringing programs, resources, and staff directly to people in their neighborhoods. Bookmobiles also

promote the library's presence in the community, sparking interest in library services and encouraging future use.

A bookmobile can provide temporary service until library facilities can be erected, which can also help determine the best locations for future permanent sites.

A bookmobile can advertise the library dramatically and can enhance your public relations program. For example, your bookmobile may make an appearance at a festival, fair, parade, or other community events.

Bookmobiles do not replace and are not a substitute for a well-planned adequate branch, but bookmobiles do allow your library to personally deliver library materials to those who might otherwise not have access to library services. In addition, the bookmobile can offer services in places that may not have the population size or density to justify a physical location.

**HOMEBOUND SERVICES**

Homebound services extend library resources to patrons unable to visit the library due to age, disability, or illness—whether temporary or permanent. Although these services are often associated with elderly patrons, people of any age may qualify for these services. Homebound services can include personalized deliveries, technology training, and phone or online check-ins to help patrons remain connected to the library. Books by Mail Service can be a great service to those homebound or geographically isolated. Books and AV resources can be included in this service. These services may run in tandem with bookmobile services or operate independently, providing a personalized and inclusive experience.

**SERVICES TO INSTITUTIONALIZED POPULATIONS**

Library outreach should extend to those in institutional settings, such as correctional facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, mental health facilities, and shelters. These communities often face significant barriers to accessing information and resources, and library services can help bridge the gap. Deposit collections, mobile programs, or digital services bring books, information, and educational resources to those unable to access traditional library spaces. Specialized programming, such as book discussions, literacy initiatives, or skill-building workshops, foster personal development and offer connection to the broader world.

The Performance-Based Standards and Expected Practices for Adult Correctional Institutions, (5th Edition) were set up by the American Corrections Association as a baseline for required library services at correctional facilities. The ACA indicates that each facility should provide library service that supports educational programs, promotes reading skills, enhances leisure activities and maintains awareness of circumstances in the community at large.

While only one Louisiana correctional facility has a librarian on staff, in the other correctional facilities, the library director in the parish serves as the librarian of record for the facility. The State Library provides support for Institutional Libraries, and can advise public libraries on how

to provide services. Contact Library Development, 225-324-4931, or email libdev@library.la.gov.

**INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES**

Librarians must ensure that outreach services include those with varying needs. Services for new readers, non-native speakers, and those with physical or developmental disabilities should include access to appropriate materials and technology, such as large-print books, audiobooks, or accessible digital resources. Programs can be designed to cater to different learning levels, ensuring that literacy and education are accessible to everyone. For more information, see Chapter 12, Programming.

The State Library's Talking Books and Braille Library (TBBL) offers specialized services to Louisiana residents of all ages who are visually impaired, legally blind, have reading disabilities, or are unable to handle traditional books. TBBL is an affiliate of the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled and provides access to over 164,000 audio and braille books, 25,000 large-print books, and playback machines for individuals with permanent or temporary disabilities. For more information, contact TBBL at (225) 342-4942 or email tbbl@library.la.gov.

## RESOURCES

*ABOS*, Association of Bookmobile & Outreach Services, http://www.abos-outreach.com/.

Diamant-Cohen, Betsy, editor. *Children's Services: Partnerships for Success*. ALA Editions, 2010.

Kulpinski, Dan. *Partnership for a Nation of Learners: Joining Forces, Creating Value*. Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2009.

*NLS,* National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, http://loc.gov/nls/.

Snow, Jess. *Outreach Services for Teens: A Starter Guide*. ALA, 2020.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. https://leh.org/

[2] National Library of Medicine. *Funding opportunities* [NNLM]. https://www.nnlm.gov/funding/rfa

[3] Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. *Prime Time Inc.*. https://leh.org/our-work/education/prime-time-inc/

# Chapter 12

# PROGRAMMING

> "One of the reasons that I take such joy in being a trustee of the New York Public Library is the love of reading that I found as a child in the Saturday morning library events for preschoolers and first and second graders as I was growing up in Augusta, GA." – Jessye Norman

Programming in your library is an essential service that meets the informational, educational, and recreational needs of your community, helping adapt to their changing needs. The library's presence extends well beyond the building and programming is one way of making that known, which increases engagement and strengthens community ties. Effective programming meets the needs of your current patrons and draws in those that may not be engaged in or aware of the library's services yet. Programming can also include events outside the library in which the library participates. It can help the library to "be present" and will bring the library out into the community.

## SUMMER READING PROGRAMS

One of the most important programs offered in libraries is the Summer Reading Program (SRP). It has been a cornerstone of public library services for decades, and all Louisiana libraries offer some kind of SRP. The first statewide SRP in Louisiana took place in the summer of 1970. Summer Reading Programs were first designed, and still are meant to, prevent the "summer slide" or loss of learning that happens when children and teenagers are out of school for the summer. Reading during this time helps to maintain, or even improve, literacy skills and can help youth remember other things learned throughout the school year. While the program was first developed to keep children reading, it has expanded to include all ages and includes a wide range of events that encourage a community-wide culture of reading and lifelong learning.

While the Summer Reading Program is historically the biggest and most well-known public library program, it is by no means the only programming you should be doing during the year. Often, libraries focus on young children and seniors and do very little for teens and young to middle-aged adults. It is important to include a variety of program types directed at different age ranges.

# DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING

When planning library programming, it is important to consider the developmental stages of your audience. Drawing distinct age lines ensures that the activities, resources, and content offered are appropriate for the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of each group. Children, teens, and adults all engage with content differently, and tailoring programs to specific age groups helps to make them more relevant and have a greater effect. For example, young children benefit from interactive, hands-on activities that support early literacy and motor skills, while older children and teens may enjoy programs that encourage creative thinking, self-expression, and collaboration. Adults and seniors, on the other hand, may appreciate programs that focus on life skills, hobbies, lifelong learning, or pure entertainment.

It is also important to recognize that different age groups may not feel comfortable in a program with too much age variety. Teens, for instance, may prefer not to attend programs alongside younger children, as the activities and interests may feel too different. Similarly, adults may be less inclined to participate in programs with teens, especially if the content or atmosphere is more geared toward younger audiences. By offering age-appropriate programming, libraries can ensure that everyone feels comfortable and engaged, creating a more welcoming space for all.

## PROGRAMS FOR MIXED-AGE AUDIENCES

Designing programs for mixed-age audiences requires a different approach than running separate events for preschoolers, teens, and seniors. Programs for “all ages” do not mean that “all ages are scattered through the same room.” A true all-ages program creates a single shared experience while offering meaningful options for different developmental levels. To make this work, consider reviewing and adopting the Layered Choice Intergenerational Framework (LCIF). LCIF is a hand-tool for planning: it asks you to declare one shared purpose, to map participant roles instead of only age bands, and to design layered activities so everyone can contribute at a level that suits them.

## ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Inclusion must be an operational commitment, not an aspirational side-note. In your library’s program planning and approval forms, include a practical accessibility section that staff must complete: confirm a quiet/sensory corner is available and stocked, provide large-print and plain-language handouts, plan for at least three modes of instruction (visual, spoken, tactile), offer a registration option to request accommodations, and list whether captioning, interpreters, or tactile alternatives are required. Staff are encouraged to treat accommodation requests as routine and to publish a single “contact us for accommodations” line in all promotional copy to normalize the practice.

## TYPES OF PROGRAMMING

To cater to diverse community needs, consider incorporating the following types of programming into your library's schedule:

**Book and Reading Centric Programs** like storytimes and other literacy-based programming, book discussions or clubs, author visits, reading challenges (in addition to SRP), and even community-wide reading of the same work.

**Cultural and Artistic Programs** that include hosting performances, screen films (with an appropriate license), art programs from needle arts to painting, as well as crafts. Libraries often seek grants to sponsor artistic and music performances. For detailed guidance on public performance rights, refer to the American Library Association's Resource Guide on Copyright for Libraries: Videos/Movies.[1]

**Educational and Skill-Building Programs** that have hands-on demonstrations, STEM-focused activities, or instructional classes (such as job skills training or computer literacy classes). If your library has a makerspace, there are endless programming possibilities for that.

**Self-Directed Activities** are a great solution if you do not have the staff or time to offer a robust programming schedule. They may include activities that patrons are meant to do alone in the library, like having a community puzzle table or scavenger hunt. Self-directed activities can also be make-and-take style crafts to do at home. There is a wide range of possibilities, and anything you do to engage your patrons without a staff member present counts.

**Community Engagement Programs** are generally more large-scale and are focused outside of the library building. A community read is a good community engagement builder, particularly if you partner with other local organizations. You may want to attend fairs, festivals, and other kinds of community gatherings with a small activity and some information about your services. For more detail, see Chapter 11, Outreach.

Community engagement is vital to growing your library's community of patrons. Being out in the community not only makes your presence known, but also allows library staff to gain insights into the community's evolving needs. Collaborations with local organizations, businesses, and schools can extend your reach. For more information about community engagement, please see the outreach chapter.

To maximize the impact of your programming efforts, consider the following best practices:

1. Use your mission statement as a guidepost to set goals for programming. Your goal may be to increase literacy, engage underserved patrons, or provide a welcoming atmosphere.
2. Have a promotion and marketing plan in place to make sure the community knows what programs you are hosting. This could include social media, online or print calendar, news outlets, or a newsletter of your own.

3. Set a budget for your programs including what you expect to spend on supplies and performers/presenters each year.
4. Work with the community on the timing of your programs. Teens may be more willing to attend programs after school while working adults likely prefer programs in the evening. Consulting community, school, and church calendars can aid in the successful date selection for large, planning-heavy programs. Being flexible with days, times, and content goes a long way to building the trust of patrons.
5. Make sure you are offering programs that are accessible and provide a way to ask for accommodation.

## SAFETY

Safety and child protection should also be part of program planning. Your library's programming guide should use concrete language about sign-in and sign-out procedures for minors, the minimum number of staff running programs, background checks for volunteers and presenters when required, incident-reporting protocols, and standard photo-release wording for promotion.

## MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

To ensure library programming meets the needs of the community and demonstrates tangible benefits, it is essential to incorporate regular assessment. Surveys, both online and in-person, can capture participant feedback on the quality, relevance, and accessibility of programs. Attendance metrics, including repeat participation rates, can offer insight into program popularity and effectiveness. Informal methods, such as conversations with attendees, can uncover nuanced suggestions for improvement. By analyzing this data, the director and the library's programming team can refine the library's offerings to better align with community needs, secure funding by demonstrating program impact, and foster stronger connections with stakeholders.

In conclusion, staying positive, adaptive, and committed to programming can profoundly impact your patrons and the ever-changing needs of your community. By implementing best practices and actively engaging with your community, you can ensure your library's programming remains fresh, relevant, and accessible to all. Take the next step: assess your current offerings, seek feedback from patrons, and explore innovative programming ideas that will enrich the lives of everyone in your community.

## RESOURCES

Here are a few valuable resources that can help you plan, execute, and evaluate effective programming. The tools, guides, and websites listed here offer a range of practical support, from templates for organizing events to platforms that provide inspiration for new programs. By leveraging these resources, your library can enhance its offerings and ensure that programming meets the diverse needs of its community.

You can also contact the Library Development Division at the State Library for more detailed information. Email libdev@library.la.gov or call 225-342-4931.

*ALSC*, Association for Library Service to Children, http://www.ala.org/alsc.

*Every Child Ready to Read*, everychildreadytoread.org.

Loop, Karis. *Seamless Youth Services for Every Age and Stage*. ALA Editions, 2019.

Lotts, Megan. *Advancing a Culture of Creativity in Libraries: Programming and Engagement*. ALA Editions, 2021.

Price, Chelsea. *209 Big Programming Ideas for Small Budgets*. ALA Editions, 2021.

*Programming Librarian*, programminglibrarian.org provides free program guides, planning worksheets, and marketing templates tailored to library needs.

ReadWriteThink, https://readwritethink.org, offers free tools for literacy activities.

The Library of Congress Teachers page, https://loc.gov/teachers, features ready-made educational resources for school-age programming.

Edwards, E. (2019, September 27). *Intergenerational programming in libraries: Building bridges between age groups while increasing community engagement*. *ILA Reporter*, 37(5). Illinois Library Association. https://www.ila.org/publications/ila-reporter/article/119/intergenerational-programming-in-libraries-building-bridges-between-age-groups-w

North Dakota State Library. (2022, December 29). Intergenerational programming. North Dakota State Library Blog. https://ndstatelibrary.wordpress.com/2022/12/29/intergenerational-programming/

## ENDNOTES

[1] American Library Association. (n.d.). *Copyright for libraries: Videos/movies*. https://libguides.ala.org/copyright/video

# Chapter 13

# FINANCE

> "Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation." – Walter Cronkite

The primary goal of a public library is to provide quality library service to its public. A major part of meeting this goal is the ability to adequately fund activities. Budget and finance represent a significant part of a library administrator's time. Although planning the budget may be a seasonal activity, its effects are felt throughout the year.

Library administration textbooks usually devote a chapter to budget and finance. Library school management courses may cover funding sources and the theory of budgeting. Reality often hits when a director is faced with planning the first budget. Experience, once again, proves to be the best teacher.

This section of the handbook will offer definitions, requirements, and ideas for the library administrator to adapt to the situation in an attempt to make understanding library finances and the budget process easier. This chapter shows how the library is funded. The specifics of preparing your library's budget are covered in detail in Chapter 14, Budget.

## STEPS TO ORIENTING YOURSELF TO THE LIBRARY'S FINANCES

A new director can soon be overwhelmed by the complexity of the library's finances and budget. As a library director, you are responsible for managing public funds. Once you address the steps below, read through this handbook, and experience planning a budget, you will be an "expert" at library finances.

1. Find out your revenue sources. What is your ad valorem tax (or property tax)? What funds do you receive from your local governing authority? What funds do you receive from grants? Know when these revenues are received each year. Look at the amount of fines, photocopy monies, and other self-generated revenues received by the library. Determine which revenues are recurring and which are non-recurring. Know how these are deposited and how they are accounted for. Determine the limitations, if any, on the use of library revenues.

2. Review the prior year and current year budgets. Review past annual reports to the State Library. Review the current and past audits. This will provide a good foundation when you are ready to prepare your first budget.

3. Review and analyze the library's financial reports. Discuss options with the secretary-treasurer or finance director concerning the timely receipt of reports.

4. Meet with your parish secretary-treasurer or finance director to discuss library finances and the budget. You should seek this person out, rather than wait for this person to come to you. This meeting will give you insight into the relationship between the library board, the parish, and the previous library director concerning finances and budget.

5. Meet with the tax assessor. Most Louisiana public libraries receive a significant portion of their funding from property taxes. The parish assessor is responsible for determining the value of properties within the jurisdiction, and directly influences the amount of revenue the library can expect. He/she has the most knowledge about the process and can provide you with the most accurate revenue estimates. A meeting could help the director understand trends in property valuations and how they might impact the library's budget. Be sure to ask your assessor about reassessment when your millage rate changes.

6. Review current expenditures. For several weeks or months, do some of the invoice coding yourself, or have your bookkeeper review the invoices with you prior to payment. Learn your fixed costs and your variable costs.

7. Review your purchasing procedures. Determine if any contracts for goods or services exist and review them with staff.

8. If you receive tax monies, determine your property tax millage or sales tax percentage and learn when these taxes expire. Your parish assessor can provide you with this information. Learn about any statutory charges which are assessed against the library as a result of tax revenues.

9. Determine if the library receives any grant monies. Identify who monitors grant activity and familiarize yourself with any financial obligations or reporting resulting from the grants.

10. Review payroll practices, including how payroll is submitted for payment, who cuts the checks, and how leave records are kept. Review leave record practices. Auditors always ask questions about salaries, leave benefits, insurance, social security, and any payments made to an employee.

11. Review how your library collects and handles cash. How many service desks are allowed to have money tills, what is the established starting amount each day, what reports are run at the end of each day, where the cash is stored, and how often the deposits are made, where and by whom. You may be required to make deposits daily or weekly.

12. Ask questions of your staff, your parish, your board, your auditor. When you need more information, call a consultant in Library Development at the State Library, or call a colleague.

## MAJOR SOURCES OF REVENUES

Public libraries in the United States receive 85.0% of their total revenues from local sources. Louisiana's public libraries receive 92.4% of their revenues from local sources, including ad valorem taxes, sales taxes, and appropriations from the local governing authority. State revenue sharing, a partial reimbursement for ad valorem taxes which are not collectible due to the State's homestead exemption, accounts for 1.45% of library income. Federal funds from the Library Services and Technology Act are requested and administered by the State Library, which uses all LSTA funds for statewide initiatives.. You may benefit from Federal revenue sharing for national forests in Louisiana, which primarily benefits parishes containing or adjacent to those forests. The USDA Forest Service distributes a portion of its revenues from timber sales, mineral leases, recreation, and grazing to these areas to support local services. Self-generated revenues, such as fines, photocopy revenues, fees for services, and donations, constitute the remaining library revenues.

Revenue information for individual public libraries in the state can be found in *Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report*[1], an annual publication of the State Library of Louisiana. The sections that follow describe and discuss various sources of revenue for Louisiana public libraries. These revenue sources are discussed in roughly the same order as they are listed on the annual report.

### AD VALOREM TAXES

Most parish library systems in Louisiana have an ad valorem tax (or property tax) as the major revenue source for operations and maintenance. Chapter 15 on Tax Elections in this handbook provides information on calling elections, duration of taxes, and restrictions on using public funds when planning tax campaigns.

#### Definitions

*Ad Valorem*, that is, in proportion to the value. This is a phrase applied to certain duties and taxes levied on goods, property, etc. as a percentage of their value.

*Homestead exemption* allows that the first $75,000 of assessed value on an owner occupied home will be exempt from property taxation.

*Mill*—One mill is defined as 1/10 of one cent, or $1.00 tax on $1,000 of assessed value.

A *millage or millage rate* is the tax rate that applies in the calculation of a specific property tax levy. It is based on an archaic monetary unit called a "mil". Millage rates are not expressed as regular percentages, but instead as tenths of a penny.

*Reassessment* adjusts the millage rate upward or downward depending on property value in order to keep the total amount of ad valorem taxes collected by a taxing authority the same as the previous year. Bond millages are not affected by reassessment.

*Roll Forward* and *Roll Backward* may be used by the governing authority to increase or decrease the millage rate to ensure the amount of funds the agency receives remains the same as the previous year.

**What is Meant by Millage Rates?**

Millage is the percentage of value that is used in calculating taxes. A mill can also be defined as 1/10 of 1 percent (1/1000 (.001) of a dollar) and is multiplied by the assessed value after any exemptions have been subtracted to calculate the taxes.

For example:

If a home is assessed at $200,000 and there's a 5-mill tax to fund a public library, here's how a property tax would be calculated with the Homestead Exemption:

1. **Assessed Value:** 10% of $200,000 = $20,000.
2. **Homestead Exemption:** Subtract $7,500 (the exemption) from the assessed value.
3. **Taxable Value:** $20,000 - $7,500 = $12,500.
4. **Library Tax:** Multiply the taxable value by the 5-mill rate (0.005).

Therefore, **$12,500 × 0.005 = $62.50**.

A taxpayer would pay $62.50 per year towards library funding.

It is important for a library director to be able to run these calculations on a fly to explain how library funding works, as well as when preparing for library tax renewals when citizens are concerned about their overall tax burden.

When a property tax proposition is put before the voters, it will be for a set number of mills for a set number of years. This is the maximum millage, against the current assessment, that can be levied by the governing authority for the library to collect. This maximum millage will only be increased, without a vote of the people, if, at reassessment, the property valuation decreases as explained under Reassessment. To determine the gross tax revenues the library will receive, multiply the net assessed value of property in the parish by the library's millage.

**What Causes Adjustments to Millage Rates?**

Changes in millage rates can occur under four circumstances:

1. The voters approve a millage increase.
2. The legislature approves the creation of a special district and grants authority to levy a millage.
3. The Board of Liquidation/City Debt adjusts the millage rate needed to collect the amount required to service its general obligation bonds. When new bonds are issued this millage increases and as older bonds mature this millage rate decreases.
4. Every four years the Assessors must reassess real property. State law provides that the tax collected in the year following a reassessment is adjusted so that it is equal to the tax collected the previous year on the same property tax base. The amount of millage is then adjusted up or down to satisfy this requirement. If the millage is lowered because of an increase in property values, it may be "rolled up" to the prior year's millage after a public hearing and approval by a 2/3 vote of the taxing authority. The Assessors must reassess personal property every year and the Louisiana Tax Commission reappraises public service property every year.

**What Does This Mean?**

The governing authority can levy up to the maximum millage for the library. The governing authority can "roll back" or reduce the library millage if it feels the library is collecting tax monies needlessly or building up too much in savings. Governing authorities have been known to roll back the library's millage, roll forward another parish agency's millage the same amount, and claim "no tax increase" for the people. The library director and members of the board of control must be in attendance at the meeting where the governing authority sets millages for the year.

A library whose millage is levied at the maximum at the beginning of its 10 year tax, and needing the entire amount for ongoing operations, is likely to be in dire straits near the end of its 10 year tax unless the property reassessment changes upwards and the governing authority avails itself of roll-forward.

Contact the parish assessor for answers to questions about assessments, millage rates, and anticipated tax revenues. The parish treasurer or finance director should also be able to help you with millage rates and anticipated tax revenues.

The Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) offers workshops periodically, both virtually and in-person. You must register for a workshop. The workshop provides a detailed explanation and discussion of reassessment, the millage adoption process, and the Open Meetings Law. In addition, guidance is provided on the procedures for the submission of the millage

documentation and the documents to be submitted for review. The LLA website has more information that will be helpful (lla.la.gov)

**Assessment**

The Louisiana Constitution determines how assessment is handled. All property, except public service, is assessed by the parish assessor. All property subject to ad valorem taxation is listed on the assessment rolls at a percentage of its fair market value. The assessed value in each parish varies depending upon what properties are on a parish's tax rolls. The gross assessment includes all properties. The net assessed value excludes those properties covered by homestead exemption. Homes are assessed at 10% of their fair market value; a $75,000 home would be assessed at $7,500. Currently, homeowners receive an exemption from paying parish-wide ad valorem taxes on the first $7,500 of the assessment of their property.

**Reassessment**

The Louisiana Constitution mandates that property be reassessed at least every four years. The current statewide reassessment is 2024. Sometimes, especially when the economy dramatically changes downward, a special reassessment may be called. Reassessment can affect the library's millage. If the library tax is for ten years, there will be at least two reassessments during the span of the tax. Depending on the economy and the political climate, this can hurt or help the library financially.

After a reassessment, the assessed value of properties in each parish could go up or go down. In Louisiana, when the economy declines, a special reassessment can be ordered that provides mandates for local governing authorities regarding millages after reassessments.

*Property Assessment Decreases After Reassessment*

If the property assessment decreases in a parish, the maximum authorized millage is "rolled forward" so that the library's millage brings in the same amount of taxes under the new, lower assessment as it did under the previous assessment. The millage may be increased only to the extent that it will generate the same amount of taxes generated the previous year, nothing more. The governing authority, however, is not obligated to keep the library's millage at the new maximum. During the annual setting of millages, the governing authority can set the millage anywhere from "zero mills" up to the new maximum. If the governing authority keeps the millage at the same level as before the reassessment, the library will lose tax revenues.

Example: A library's maximum millage is 3.01, which brings in $500,000. After reassessment, when property values decreased, that same 3.01 mills might only bring in $400,000. The new millage necessary to generate $500,000 might be 3.6 mills. The new maximum becomes 3.6 mills. The governing authority can set the library's millage anywhere between 0 mills and 3.6 mills.

*Property Assessment Increases After Reassessment*

If the property assessment increases in a parish, the maximum authorized millage will be adjusted downward (i.e., "rolled back") to a level which would bring in no more tax revenues than the library received under the previous property valuation. The governing authority is mandated by the state Constitution to make this "roll back" or adjustment to the millage.

Example: A library's millage is 3.01 and brings in $500,000. After reassessment, when property values increased, that same 3.01 mills might bring in $600,000. To generate only $500,000, the library's millage might need to be rolled back to 2.8 mills. The governing authority must set the Library's millage anywhere between 0 mills and 2.8 mills, although they can take additional action to readjust it upward as explained below.

During this reassessment year only, after performing this mandatory roll back of the millage, the governing authority could, following public hearings and with a two-thirds vote of the governing authority, roll the millage forward - up to a rate not to exceed the prior year's maximum millage.

If the governing authority chooses not to roll the millage forward during the reassessment year, then the new maximum millage is the rate established by reassessment. If the governing authority chooses to roll the millage forward after the mandatory "roll back", then the new maximum millage is the rate they rolled forward. Although this is not a popular move for a governing body, since it raises taxes without a vote of the people, this is a way for a library to receive additional revenues.

- After performing the mandatory roll back of the library's millage from 3.01 down to 2.8 mills, the governing authority holds a public hearing to discuss increasing the millage from 2.8 mills back up to the prior year's millage of 3.01. The library board is able to make a strong case for receiving the extra funds that a millage increase would generate. The governing authority votes with a two-thirds majority to roll forward the millage to 3.01, thus allowing the library to receive an extra $100,000 in tax revenues. This will increase taxes of some constituents in the parish. Thus, a tax increase has been passed without a direct vote by the public. The new maximum millage for the library is 3.01

- After performing the mandatory roll back of the library's millage from 3.01 down to 2.8 mills, the governing authority holds a public hearing to discuss increasing the millage from 2.8 mills back up to the prior year's millage of 3.01. The Library Board is able to make a strong case for receiving the extra funds that a millage increase would generate. The governing authority agrees that some, but not all, of the extra funds are needed; it votes with a two-thirds majority to roll forward the millage to 2.95 mills, thus allowing the Library to receive some extra tax revenues. This will increase taxes of some constituents in the parish. Thus, a tax increase has been passed without a direct vote by the public. The new maximum millage for the Library is 2.95 mills.

- After performing the mandatory roll back of the Library's millage from 3.01 down to 2.8 mills, the governing authority holds a public hearing to discuss increasing the millage from 2.8 mills back up to the prior year's millage of 3.01. The Library Board makes a strong case for receiving the extra funds that a millage increase would generate, but the governing authority does not agree and, by taking no action, keeps the library's millage at 2.8 mills. The Library will not receive an increase in revenues due to an increase in its millage. This is not considered a tax increase for the public. The new maximum millage for the Library is 2.8 mills.

Be careful about tax elections scheduled during reassessment years. If the election is called (and thus the millage is set) before the reassessment figures are in and property values drop, there could be a problem. A millage which appears on the ballot, whether it is a "renewal" or an "increase", and approved by voters, will be the maximum millage available for the library until the next reassessment. "Roll forward / roll back" provisions which will occur after the current reassessment apply only to existing millages. The millage on the ballot is really a new tax, even though it may be a millage amount identical to the current library millage. If the net assessed value in the parish drops after the current reassessment, an existing millage will be rolled forward to generate the same amount of revenue as was generated under the old reassessment. However, a "new" or "renewal" millage which takes effect after reassessment is not subject to "roll forward / roll back" provisions for that reassessment. Assuming a library wants to generate at least the same amount of revenues with the "renewal" millage as the "existing" millage, a library, in a reassessment year where the assessment is expected to drop, should wait until the reassessment figures are completed and existing millage amounts adjusted before scheduling a tax election. The library would then have the information necessary to determine the millage needed to generate the revenues required.

Contact your Parish Tax Assessor or the Legislative Auditor's Office for further clarification about reassessment.

**Net Tax Collections**

The millage rate and the parish assessment provide the library director with the gross amount of tax revenues the library should collect. The sheriff is the ex-officio tax collector in each parish (except Orleans). Tax monies are remitted to the governing authority's finance department or, where a library administers its own funds under La. R.S. 25:215, directly to the parish library. The sheriff will withhold a percentage of gross tax revenues for remittance to various statewide public pension funds as provided in La. R.S. 11:82.

An amount of gross tax revenues may also be withheld and remitted to the parish assessor for operations of that office. The amount withheld is specified in La. R.S. 47:1907 et seq. Since the 1985 tax rolls, assessors in parishes listed under La. R.S. 47:1925.3 have been able to fund their operations with a property tax the assessor can levy for that purpose. Those assessors receive these tax revenues in lieu of the deduction from tax revenues of other agencies.

Some people will not pay their tax bills. A tax sale is eventually held by the sheriff to collect taxes owed. Sometimes tax bills are appealed and reduced. There is an amount, therefore, that will be anticipated, but not collected, each year. This "uncollectible" amount will vary by parish. The net tax revenues received by a library will reflect pension fund deductions, assessor's deductions (if any), and uncollectible taxes.

Tax bills are to be paid on or before December 31st of each year. For example, tax bills due 12/31/2026 are the "2026 Taxes". The library should begin receiving these tax revenues in November 2026, December 2026, or January 2027. The library also receives interest from taxpayers who pay their tax bills late. At various times throughout the year, the library receives "back tax" settlements from those who appealed their tax bills and from tax sales.

Most libraries use current year tax revenues for the next year's operations (i.e., 2026 taxes are used for 2027 operations). Some libraries use current year taxes for current year operations. Examine the library's ad valorem tax collections, deductions, interest, and back tax settlements budgeted and collected for the last few years to better understand this important source of library revenue.

Contact the tax collection division of the sheriff's department for answers to questions about tax revenue distribution.

**Increasing Ad Valorem Tax Revenues**

A library may need additional tax revenues for operational purposes or special projects. Generally, when the need for additional revenues is evident, the library must ask the voters for the funds. The library either asks for an additional (supplemental) millage or asks for an increase, rather than a renewal, of the existing millage. There are only two ways a public library can receive additional ad valorem tax revenues from an existing millage without a vote of the people, although the extra amount of revenues is generally not significant. These are:

1. Additional properties are placed on the parish's tax rolls. The existing millage is not "rolled back" in this instance. Additional properties are added to the tax rolls each year, so, in times of economic growth, a library could benefit from this.

2. Increases occur in the fair market or use value of the property, as determined during reassessment. The existing millage maximum remains the same for that reassessment year, although the millage is "rolled back" (as explained above under "Reassessment") in order to generate the same amount of revenues that the library received during the previous year. The governing authority has the authority to, after public hearings and with a two-thirds vote, roll forward the millage back up to the prior year's maximum millage for that reassessment year only. If the millage is not rolled forward to the prior year's maximum for that reassessment year, then the adjusted maximum millage becomes the maximum until reassessment occurs again. As mentioned above, the governing authority is usually reluctant to roll forward. However, if the parish economy

has grown to the extent that property values under reassessment have significantly risen, the library probably has had an increased demand for services and can possibly justify to the governing authority the need for the additional funds.

A library needing a significant increase in tax revenues should seek the funds in the form of an additional or increased tax from the voters.

The method of levying and collecting ad valorem taxes is defined by the Louisiana Constitution and by the Revised Statutes. The library director has virtually no part in how these taxes are levied and collected. However, because the ad valorem tax is the chief revenue source for most public libraries in Louisiana, it is imperative that the library director monitor the receipt of these funds and ensure that the governing authority sets an adequate millage for the library.

**SALES TAXES**

As defined in the *Police Jury Manual*, a sales tax is one collected on the "sale at retail, the use, the lease or rental, the consumption, and the storage for use or consumption, of tangible personal property and on sales of services as defined by law."

While the majority of public libraries in Louisiana are supported by a millage, a few libraries have other types of funding. Assumption Parish Library, DeSoto Parish Library, and Terrebonne Parish Library are supported by a sales tax. Eunice, Opelousas, and Krotz Springs Municipal Libraries derive their support from dedicated sales tax revenues.

A sales tax may be a more preferable way of financing library operations in a community where the property tax rate is high or when there are several major property owners or businesses that have traditionally opposed property taxes. A sales tax will also react quickly to changes in the economy. This can be an advantage over a property tax during good economic times; conversely, this can be a disadvantage during a recession.

A library may wish to seek a perpetual tax which does not have to be renewed. A proposition can be worded so that the tax has no renewal date. The advantages to this are that a library will not have to endure the time and cost of repeated tax elections and that funding is secure during periods of voter anti-tax sentiment. However, the tax rate of a sales tax cannot be raised without a vote of the people. Collections must be enough to allow for continued operation during depressed economic times and must also allow for growth and expansion. Although careful attention must be given to the future economy and library needs when seeking any tax, this is especially true for perpetual sales taxes.

Once approved by the voters, the library will begin receiving revenues. Sales tax revenues are collected by a uniform tax collector in each parish. This is mandated by the Louisiana Constitution. Tax proceeds are remitted to the library by the tax collector on a monthly basis. Payment is made by check approximately 30 days after it is collected by retailers. A library can expect to pay a predetermined, negotiated fee for tax collections each month and will also share in certain administrative expenses of the tax collector.

Sales tax revenues fluctuate from month to month in reaction to general economic patterns and conditions. It is advisable for a library to enact a budgetary policy which establishes cash reserves that can be drawn upon when tax collections are down. The funds of a dedicated sales tax belong to the library. Funds received, but not expended, during a fiscal year can be accumulated as contingency funds, saved for capital projects, or used to assist subsequent year operations.

**APPROPRIATIONS**

In addition to or in lieu of a dedicated tax for library operations, libraries may receive an appropriation from the governing authority. The Morgan City Public Library receives appropriations from both the city of Morgan City and St. Mary Parish. The Assumption Parish Library, in addition to its 2% dedicated sales tax, receives an appropriation of ¼ of a 1% parish sales tax. This sales tax is shared with three other parish agencies and is administered by the Police Jury.

Non-dedicated revenues appropriated by a governing authority force the library to compete with other agencies for the limited funding available. Priorities for allocating such funds often change due to turnover of elected officials. Pressure from special interest groups can also exert influence on the distribution of such funds. Unfortunately, during government budget cutbacks, libraries receiving direct appropriations often receive more than their share of reductions. This generally results in layoffs, branch closings, and curtailing book purchases. A library in this type of funding situation would probably not be allowed to accumulate a fund balance. Unused funds from a given year would, in all likelihood, revert back to the governing authority. Finally, decisions regarding projects and improvements for the library are, in effect, passed from the library board to the governing authority controlling the allocation. The efforts of a “Friends Group” and every other possible source of support may be needed to gain leverage in obtaining requested appropriations.

**RESERVE FUND/FUND BALANCE**

In a parish library's budget, maintaining a reserve fund or fund balance is a strategic practice that ensures financial stability and operational flexibility. The reserve fund is often composed of incremental revenues that exceed expenses in a given year, set aside at the discretion of the board. Such funds are crucial for handling emergency needs, supporting capital improvement plans, or other designated purposes. A well-managed reserve fund can provide library administration with a buffer against revenue shortfalls and unexpected expenditures, allowing the library to continue its operations without disruption or requests for additional tax revenue from the voters. Additionally, it offers the flexibility to seize new opportunities, such as expanding services or launching programs that align with the library’s mission. Both the library director and the Board should foster transparency and accountability and clearly articulate their plans for the reserve fund. Therefore, when questioned by the governing authority, you can explain the purpose of these funds as part of a broader strategy for long-term sustainability and

community service. A formal policy should be adopted by the board and outline the target reserve balance, conditions for its use, and procedures for replenishment, demonstrating prudent financial management and commitment to the library's future. (See below for Pay-As-You-Go)

## OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUES

### CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

Most library revenue is used for ongoing operations and maintenance. Periodically, a library needs to finance a building program or other capital programs over several years. The options available to a library are to finance the project from existing or new taxes or to issue debt through a bond issue, which the taxpayers must repay. A library can also use funds from existing savings, that is, the reserve fund.

A library director must work with the board and governing authority to determine the best method for that library to finance the capital project. The following paragraphs discuss the possibilities for financing capital projects. Remember, each of these methods require approval or authorization by the State Bond Commission, the parish governing authority, and the voters.

#### Pay-As-You-Go

A library may finance a capital project from its existing property tax if the wording of the tax proposition included provisions for “capital improvements.” If the operating tax levy is limited to “support and maintenance” items, the library must seek legislative approval before using the tax monies for capital purposes (La. R.S. 25:213 (B),(C)). Many public libraries in Louisiana finance their capital improvements in this manner. It requires a commitment by the board and the parish governing authority in allowing savings to occur, and dedicating the savings to the capital project. Unfortunately, the economy, priorities, and attitudes change. The idea of saving to build two new branches may have been approved by a board several years previously; unless the project is underway, funds could be diverted for other library needs as seen by a new board and new governing authority.

The advantage to using an existing property tax is that it does not require additional voter approval. However, there are some disadvantages. The library millage may already be rolled to its maximum and nearly the entire amount may be needed for ongoing operations. Most libraries would need to save funds for several years in order to fully fund such projects. The governing authority may frown upon building savings and may jeopardize the plan by rolling back the library millage.

Consider this example: the building program is projected to cost $2 million. It is a 10 year project. The current millage is at its maximum. The millage yields an average of $250,000 a year over current needs for operations and maintenance. These savings also earn interest, which can

be added to funds earmarked for the project. After two years, there are sufficient funds to begin the project.

Alternatively, a library may choose to finance a capital project with a special ad valorem tax. This method requires approval of the voters and the governing body. In either of the foregoing "pay-as-you-go" plans, projection of revenue inflows and construction costs is crucial. The timing of the project, and its costs, must be matched against available revenues.

**Sales Taxes**

A short-term sales tax is another method used to fund capital improvement projects if the tax base of the parish or city is large enough and the economy is stable. There are several advantages to financing the capital project this way. The library doesn't have to pay interest as it would with a loan or a bond sale. The sales tax monies earn interest while invested and the library is free to use this interest for project purposes. Because of the lead time needed while in the design phase, the sales tax funds would have extra time to accumulate interest earnings before major cash outflows are required.

However, monies may be required for site acquisition, architect fees, and other expenses during the planning stage. If these costs cannot be funded out of existing revenues, the project will be delayed until enough sales tax monies have accumulated.

Other problems can be associated with using a sales tax for capital projects. The tax base in the parish or city may be too small, thereby generating insufficient resources for the project. Also, the legal limit on sales tax may already be reached in the parish; or, the governing authority may be reluctant to let the library "have" the last amount available.

**Excess Revenue Certificates of Indebtedness (Borrowing)**

This method of financing capital projects is, in reality, a loan that the governing authority takes out. This method allows the library to pledge its excess revenues from existing millage towards the repayment of certificates of indebtedness. The tax must be able to be used for capital purposes. In lieu of "saving up" funds from the 10 year millage each year for the project, the library borrows against the savings expected to be generated over the 10 year life of the tax.

Consider this example: using the previous scenario, the library anticipates a $2.5 million savings (or excess revenues) over 10 years. The library would then borrow against this money for the project.

This method provides the bulk of the monies needed up front and allows the library to begin the project sooner than if it had built up savings; and, the project is "protected" from having the funding diverted to other needs. Consult La. R.S. 33:2922 and the governing authority for further details.

**Bond Issues**

Bond monies are used to finance capital projects with long-term debt, not for ongoing operation and maintenance of the library. Bond monies may be used for site acquisition and building or renovating library facilities, including any necessary furnishings, equipment, and initial book collections. A library may also finance its automation project with a bond issue. Bond issues provide the library with a lump sum of money up front. A bond issue allows the library to immediately address capital project needs, without years of waiting and saving. Also, the funds are specifically earmarked for the project and cannot be cut or eliminated during a budget crisis.

Wording of the proposition is critical; it determines the exact use of the bond proceeds. If the proposition says the library will renovate and expand the existing branches and it is later decided to build a new branch in lieu of expanding an existing one, the library must obtain voter approval to make this change. Bond attorneys handle all the particulars of bond issue wording and the issue and sale of bonds. It is important that the librarian work closely with the bond attorney from the beginning. It is imperative that the bond attorney and the librarian have a clear understanding of the proposed uses of the monies to ensure the proposition is properly worded. The librarian and library board should review the proposition carefully prior to placing it on the ballot. Because of the complexities of issuing long-term debt, a bond attorney is essential. The fee schedule for bond attorneys is set by the Attorney General.

Bond issues require passage by a simple majority of the voters. The proposition can be part of any ballot where money matters can appear. Some consideration as to the other items which will appear before the voters might be made before deciding when to call the bond issue election. Conventional wisdom is to avoid elections with many controversial issues or multiple tax matters.

It is necessary to work with architects, consultants, and bond attorneys to determine how much money is needed for the project. Project funding must include consultants', architects', and bond attorneys' fees. There are also costs for getting the bonds rated and for advertising the bond sale. Election costs are an added expense. The proposition should be worded as to provide for all costs associated with the project.

In addition to voter approval, the parish governing authority must approve the bonds. The police jury or parish council must be aware of the situation. The issue must have their support. It is advisable to discuss the matter with each juror long before it becomes a matter in a public meeting. Voters and elected officials are more apt to support a bond issue that is clearly and comprehensively explained, including what will be done, how much will it cost, and how will it improve services to the public. A needs assessment based on what services, resources, and programs are to be provided by the library during the next 10–20 years can form the basis of the justification. Without governing authority approval, a bond issue will not get on the ballot. A bond issue that doesn't have the general support of all parish officials may be just as doomed.

A bond issue, before appearing on the ballot, must be approved by the State Bond Commission. This is discussed in Chapter 15, Tax Elections.

Once the bond election carries, the bond attorney, through the bid process, markets the bonds to stockbrokers who, in turn, sell the bonds to anyone who wants to invest. The bonds are issued at a fixed interest rate (not to exceed that allowed under La. R.S. 39:1424) for a fixed period of time (not to exceed 40 years). Every governing body has a credit rating through Moody's or Standard and Poor's, which rates their ability to repay the debt. This rating will affect the interest rate and the marketability of the bonds.

With the bond sale, the library receives the net proceeds of the sale. Funds are invested until needed. The parish administrative offices generally handle the investment of bond issue revenues. Interest earned by these monies are subject to specific IRS rules concerning arbitrage. Interest earned over and above interest paid to bond holders generally must be remitted to the federal government. This is a complex issue and there are firms whose sole business is to handle arbitrage money. A library or governing authority without knowledge of arbitrage may have the added expense of contracting with one of these firms to handle the paperwork.

The library must have some means of paying interest and principal to the bond holders. Interest payments are made annually or semi-annually. In addition to these interest payments, the bond holders receive a payment of principal each year. Some libraries are able to finance bonded debt repayment from their dedicated library millage. Most often, however, the debt is secured by a special ad valorem tax. A bond issue can also be secured with a sales tax. A tax-secured bond issue proposition that a library places on the ballot consists of two parts. The first proposition authorizes the sale of the bonds. The second proposition affords the means of debt repayment. If bonded debt is financed by a special property tax, enough millage must be levied and taxes collected each year to pay annual or semi-annual interest on the bonds and principal falling due on the bonds. This is the "debt service" account. Unlike operating millages, this millage can decrease or increase, depending upon the parish assessment and funds required to repay the bonds. Finally, a library seeking a bond issue or other funds for capital expansion or automation should also consider recurring operating and maintenance costs associated with the project. Besides supplies, staffing, and book collections needed to maintain the new or renovated facility, thought must be given to the increases likely in utilities, insurance, and building maintenance each year. Often these increased operating and maintenance costs are significant enough to warrant seeking an increase in tax revenues from the voters. This should be part of the planning process. Don't wait until the building is ready to move into before trying to find extra money to run it.

For more information about the State Bond Commission and bond issues, see the Louisiana Department of the Treasure, SBC FAQ and Resources.[2]

For more information bond issues and debt services, see the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Best Practices–Debt Service.[3]

**State Funding for Local Projects by Louisiana Legislature**

A legislator can add funding to the capital outlay bill for projects that benefit local government services and nonprofits in their home districts that typically would not receive state funding. A request for local projects for non-state entities would be submitted by the legislator for inclusion in the capital outlay bill. This request requires a letter of support from either the senator or representative in whose district the project is located in order to be considered for inclusion in the capital outlay bill.

Examples of projects that qualify for inclusion in the capital outlay budget are:

- land acquisition,
- site development and improvement,
- acquisition or construction of buildings or other structures,
- additions or expansion to existing facilities,
- major repair or renovation of existing facilities,
- installation, extension, or replacement of utility systems or major building system components,
- roof replacement; hazardous materials abatement,
- fixed equipment that is connected to building utility systems, and
- initial equipment and furnishings for new buildings.

The Capital Outlay Act includes projects that have been proposed, reviewed and evaluated in accordance with constitutional and statutory provisions and excludes any project deemed not feasible after evaluation.

The Legislature conducts hearings on the proposed plan and makes changes as it moves through the legislative process. After its enactment, the Capital Outlay Section reviews legislative changes and prepares the governor's veto messages (if any).

Once the governor signs the legislation into law, the Section sends agencies letters notifying them of capital outlay appropriations and of the procedures required to initiate funded projects.

**FEDERAL FUNDING**

The Library Services Act (LSA) was passed in 1956 to promote the development of public libraries in rural areas through federal funding. The Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA)

was passed in 1964 to provide federal assistance to libraries for the purpose of improving or implementing library services or undertaking construction projects. In 1995, LSCA was replaced by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), which dropped construction from the available funding. The new priority was the creation of a technological infrastructure. LSTA is now under the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and is generally administered by the state library in each state.

Some state libraries use all LSTA funds as pass-through, individual grants to their local libraries, while other state libraries use the funds for statewide programs. The State Library of Louisiana sets forth the major initiatives and statewide services funded by LSTA in its strategic plan, *A Vision for Louisiana Public Libraries*. The current and past years plans can be found on the State Library's website.[4]

**STATE FUNDING**

In 1992, the Louisiana legislature enacted the Louisiana Public Library Resources Act, (La. R.S. 25:31-33) establishing the Louisiana Public Library Resources program, generally known as State Aid.

The act provides that monies appropriated or otherwise made available through the act are to be used for the improvement of public library resources. The act includes the following specific purposes.

1. To strengthen the central collections of the State Library of Louisiana.
2. To strengthen the collections of individual public libraries.
3. To encourage and enable the sharing of resources between libraries.
4. To develop library collections to meet the needs of specific groups of underserved citizens or citizens without service, such as persons with disabilities, persons who are elderly, or persons with limited language skills.
5. To provide training of staff to maximize collection use.
6. To provide training programs for public use of library resources.
7. To acquire equipment and technology for data location and access.
8. To encourage adequate financing of libraries from local sources; therefore, monies distributed to local public libraries shall supplement but shall not supplant local funds.

While State Aid has not been funded by the legislature for several years, the State Library works to return this line item to the state budget every year. For updates on State Aid and its effect on your library's materials budget and resources, contact Library Development personnel at the State Library.

**STATE REVENUE SHARING**

Louisiana public libraries which receive revenues from ad valorem taxes can receive a partial reimbursement for taxes which are not collectible by the library due to Louisiana's homestead exemption. As required by the state constitution, The State Revenue Sharing Fund provides a minimum of $90,000,000 appropriated annually from the State General Fund. The legislature has the authority to appropriate additional sums to the fund for distribution. Three equal payments are made by the Louisiana Department of Treasury on December 1, March 15, and May 15. The revenue sharing fund is distributed on the basis of population and number of homesteads in each parish in proportion to population and the number of homesteads throughout the state.

State revenue sharing funds should not be confused with state supplemental funding for public libraries. Many local governmental agencies and districts receiving ad valorem taxes share a portion of the State Revenue Sharing Fund. Parish libraries, school boards, road and bridge districts, and drainage districts are among those local agencies eligible for these funds.

In order to reflect changing conditions and needs, the revenue sharing bill is reintroduced each regular session for amendment by the legislature. As a matter of practice, the representatives and senators who represent a particular parish will determine, based on local requests, the inclusion of new millages and distribution of any anticipated excess funds in their parish. The digest accordingly reflects the various local changes made throughout the bill. This approach was considered preferable to the annual introduction of numerous local bills amending a general statute.

**SELF-GENERATED REVENUES**

Libraries may collect fines for delinquent or lost books, charge fees for photocopying, online services, and rental fees from meeting rooms. Policies relating to these fees should be approved by the appropriate governing board (library board or parish council). While tax monies and interest are usually handled for the library by the parish, self-generated funds are actually collected by the library's staff. The library staff is also responsible for depositing these revenues. La. R.S. 39:1212 states that all funds shall be deposited daily, whenever possible, with the parish's (or library's) fiscal agent. The rationale is that the sooner the cash is deposited; the sooner it can be used for either earning interest or for paying bills.

Some librarians have been asked to return fine monies to the Parish's general fund. Several Attorney General Opinions, including 78-553 and 74-476, refer to the provisions of La. R.S. 25:221 when stating that fine money, lost book money, and memorials fall under the independent control of the library board. Copies of these opinions are available from the State Library's Library Development Division. The Legislative Auditor advises that such funds, as well as any interest earned by these funds, are still considered public funds. They should be shown as income within the annual budget and budgeted in the same manner as tax funds. These funds,

therefore, are also subject to audit. Make sure these self-generated funds are handled appropriately.

### INVESTMENTS AND INTEREST INCOME

Each parish deposits funds with a fiscal agent. The fiscal agent must be a bank organized under the laws of the state of Louisiana, another state, or the United States. Visit the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's website for information regarding investments by local political subdivisions and municipalities.[5]

La. R.S. 39:1217.1 generally exempts parishes and municipalities with populations of less than 100,000 from the provisions of La. R.S. 39:1211 - 1242. However, the parish or municipality must still satisfy the security requirements of those sections and of any other applicable state or federal laws or regulations, including those limiting the types of investments.

Funds not immediately needed for operations can be invested to maximize return. There are limits on the types of investments made by a public body in Louisiana. These limits are discussed in La. R.S. 33:2955 and La. R.S. 39:1272.

## SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING SOURCES

As the tax base declines, the economy weakens, and the public becomes more disenchanted with paying taxes, libraries are looking to other sources of income. Usually, this income supplements the library's budget; rarely does outside income replace the need for a "stable" form of tax revenue. Some libraries make specialized library services, such as online database research, self-supporting through user fees. In Louisiana, more often the library looks to gifts, memorials, endowments, foundations, grants, and Friends of the Library organizations for additional income. Fundraising ideas and grant information are discussed in the following two sections.

### COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENTS AND MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

In Louisiana, public libraries may engage in partnerships with governmental entities, non-profits, educational institutions, and private organizations to enhance public services. These collaborations are often structured through Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs) or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), each serving a distinct purpose under state law.

The Louisiana Constitution, specifically Article VII, Section 14(C), provides the framework for CEAs, ensuring that any transfer or use of public funds, property, or resources serves a legitimate public purpose and adheres to the principle of commensurate value. This means that a public library entering a CEA must ensure that the benefits received are equal to or greater than the resources committed. CEAs are commonly used for resource-sharing initiatives such as

joint facility use, digital access programs, or cooperative purchasing agreements, requiring legal enforceability to protect public assets and prevent unconstitutional donations.

Conversely, MOUs are non-binding agreements used to establish collaborative relationships without creating enforceable legal obligations. Public libraries may use MOUs to coordinate services, share information, or define partnerships where no direct exchange of resources or funds occurs. For example, an MOU between a library and a local school district might outline a joint initiative for student access to digital materials, specifying responsibilities such as training staff or cross-promoting services without necessitating a legally binding contract. MOUs are particularly useful when organizations wish to document their intentions without the administrative burden or legal scrutiny required for CEAs. However, because MOUs lack legal enforceability, they are generally not appropriate for agreements involving financial transactions, infrastructure commitments, or other substantial obligations.

The key distinction between these two instruments lies in their legal enforceability and the nature of the obligations created. CEAs are binding contracts, requiring clear documentation of the exchange of value and often necessitating approval from governing authorities, such as library boards or municipal councils. Failure to comply with CEA terms can lead to legal repercussions, including financial penalties or contract termination. In contrast, MOUs serve as informal agreements that articulate shared goals and cooperative efforts without imposing legally enforceable commitments. As a library director, you must carefully assess the scope and intent of a partnership before deciding which instrument to use, ensuring compliance with Louisiana law and fiscal responsibility in managing public resources.

**Cabela's Test**

A critical legal standard in Louisiana for determining the constitutionality of public expenditures under CEAs is Cabela's test[6], named after a Louisiana Supreme Court case and subsequent Attorney General opinions on CEAs. It's used to determine whether the expenditure or transfer of public funds or property is permissible under the Louisiana Constitution, specifically Article VII, § 14. This test outlines three essential criteria: (1) a public purpose must be clearly evident, (2) the transaction must not be gratuitous, meaning the public entity receives commensurate value in return, and (3) there must be oversight and control to ensure the public purpose is achieved.

Cooperative endeavors specify how each organization benefits. It details the specific nature of the agreement, including what is the public benefit. The cooperative endeavor must include either an exchange of money or an exchange of services. For Louisiana public libraries, this means that any CEA must withstand scrutiny to confirm that taxpayer funds and assets are not being given away without sufficient benefit. For instance, if a library enters into a CEA to provide space to a literacy non-profit, the agreement must show that the non-profit's services directly benefit library patrons, such as through free literacy programs or tutoring services, ensuring that the arrangement meets constitutional and statutory requirements.

Cooperative endeavor agreements are used in public libraries with Friends groups, usually referring to book sales. If you want to donate furniture or shelving to another library, a cooperative endeavor is appropriate that authorizes the sharing of equipment between public entities without having to expend funds. Or your local hospital district may donate wheelchairs to the library with a cooperative endeavor agreement.

You may need a cooperative endeavor agreement with another government agency. For example, the parish and the library, through a written cooperative endeavor agreement, may jointly undertake the construction of a library. The parish provides the land, and the library handles the construction of the building.

When looking to engage in partnerships, consult your parish's legal counsel or the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's guidelines to ensure compliance with state regulations and constitutional principles.

Here is the list of additional resources on the subject:

- Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Guidelines on CEAs[7]:
- Louisiana Attorney General Opinions on CEAs and MOUs (search for "cooperative endeavor agreements").[8]
- Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Public Bid Law and Cabela.[9]
- Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Public Funds.[10]

Contact Library Development for samples of cooperative endeavor agreements in libraries. The Louisiana Legislative Auditor's office also has a sample form that you can use for your specific purpose.

**FUNDRAISING**

Fundraising for special projects or for supplementing the budget in specific areas can be done by the library, the Friends, or via legally established entities such as foundations or endowments. The scope of fundraising done by or for a library will largely depend on the need for supplemental funds, the economy of the area, and the time and effort put into the fundraising activities. Many libraries are passively involved in fundraising when they receive memorial contributions. Some libraries, with board and staff support, are able to promote on-going fundraising activities. Other libraries rely on volunteers to coordinate fundraising efforts. A few libraries use professional fundraisers to secure funds for the library. This section will discuss several ways a library can secure outside funding.

See also Chapter 5, Library Support Groups.

**Book Sales**

A common fundraising approach is through book sales. Gift books which are not needed in the library's collection and weeded library materials can be sold in this manner. The books are either stored in the library or warehouse space is rented. Some libraries run their own book sales. In many parishes, the Friends of the Library hold the book sale and the revenues from these book sales are used to fund library projects throughout the year. If the Friends run the sale, any discarded library material can be sold by the Friends as long as the library receives the proceeds from the sale of the discarded materials. An informal opinion of the Legislative Auditor's office indicates that a book sale is similar to a public auction (an approved method of disposing of surplus public assets) in that anyone has a chance to purchase the books. See Chapter 17, Fixed Assets, in this handbook for further information.

Friends-sponsored book sales usually indicate that the Friends have the responsibility for supplying volunteers to sort, move, and arrange books, advertising and promoting the sale, running the sale, and cleaning up afterwards. A clear distinction needs to be made regarding who is holding the sale, who is generating the money, and how the money will be returned to the library.

Books can be priced individually, sold by the inch, or a combination of the two. Occasional, large sales are the norm, although some libraries have special textbook or paperback sales throughout the year. Silent auctions of "special" books can be used to enhance interest and raise significant additional funds. The book sale can be held in the library or space can be rented at a mall or other facility. The book sale coordinator should contact the sales tax collector at the local and state level to apply for sales tax exemption for the book sale.

**Gift Shops**

Also effective, space permitting, is an ongoing gift shop or bookstore set up in a corner of the library or other rent free, utility free space. Shops can be stocked with a variety of necessary or eye-catching items which are bought at wholesale and sold at retail. Patrons always ask for pencils, pens, and paper. Some enterprising libraries sell these, as well as liquid paper. Items of local or regional interest, such as the parish Junior League cookbook, are popular. If school groups visit the library for tours, inexpensive novelty items, such as football erasers and ballerina-topped pencils, which appeal to children are good to stock. Book-related items, such as fancy bookmarks and book plates, are always popular. Some gift shops stock copies of the more heavily demanded civil service test titles, calendars, Christmas ornaments, and donated handmade items. Many libraries also stock summer reading club T-shirts, pencils, and other tie-ins in the gift shop.

If the shop is in an enclosed area, the area must be staffed by the enterprise running the shop (i.e., Friends or library staff). If the shop is in the lobby, it may be possible for the circulation desk staff to handle shop transactions. Regardless, all shop purchases must be recorded

separately from other monies and receipts must be given to customers. Sales tax must also be collected and remitted on items sold.

The biggest drawback to having a library gift shop is that someone must take on the responsibility for the shop: staffing, stocking, and related paperwork.

**Library Foundations and Endowments** (See also Chapter 5, Library Support Groups)

Entities which accept monetary and other gifts on behalf of the library must be federally established as non-profit ventures in order for donors to receive tax write-offs. Establishing a library foundation is useful when acquiring and spending large donations and bequests. Consult with an attorney to decide on acquiring 501(C)(3) tax-exempt status and formalizing the constitution and by-laws for a foundation.

An endowment can be established through the foundation or established as a separate entity. Donations to the endowment are considered "principal" and are invested soundly by the endowment board. Interest earned by the principal is generally given annually or semi-annually to the library for spending in keeping with the purpose of the endowment. For example, a book endowment could provide the library with supplemental funds for the annual book budget. The XYZ Branch Endowment could provide funds for the annual operations of the XYZ Branch Library.

**Memorials**

Most libraries receive, without solicitation, contributions each year for buying books as memorials or in honor of individuals. The library can work with local attorneys, funeral directors, and insurance agents for these professionals to promote the library as a recipient for memorials, for inclusion in wills, or as the beneficiary of insurance policies.

**Other Fundraising Opportunities**

Many clubs and organizations have specific areas of interest in the community and are involved in charitable causes. These groups can be approached for recurring sponsorship of particular materials or programs. For example, the Lions Club could be approached for a donation for purchasing large print books and books on cassette. The Optimists could be asked for an annual donation to purchase children's materials or sponsor children's programming. Associations such as the medical auxiliary, dental auxiliary, and bar association could be asked to annually underwrite the cost of reference materials related to their professions. Many school systems have established "Adopt-A-School" programs which create a partnership between a local business and a particular school. The library could establish a similar program, "Adopt-A-Book", with businesses as well as community organizations.

Whatever the scope of the fundraising activity, the library should establish procedures for acknowledging the donations. Except for the occasional anonymous benefactor, most donors like recognition for their gifts. Publicize all gifts. Use all media available to recognize donors;

place gift plaques in the library; send gift acknowledgements; and take advantage of every photo opportunity.

Talk to *everyone* in the community: tout the library's special programs; brag on the library's increase in usage; *then* mention fundraising activities.

Make the giving process easy for donors. If the effort is organized, the payoff will be greater and the jobs of those involved in the fundraising effort (from soliciting to accepting and spending the funds) will be easier.

Be wary of the gift with strings attached, but try never to refuse a gift. If the library cannot use a piece of equipment being donated, see if the donor is willing to have the equipment sold, with the proceeds going to the library. Sometimes it is worth naming that branch library after a generous benefactor. Note, however, that La. R.S. 42:267 prohibits naming a public building for a living individual. The library board must establish gift acceptance procedures and must follow them.

The library director must be aware of all fundraising efforts on the library's behalf. There will inevitably be conflicts between the different fundraising groups. These groups are all competing for public dollars, and they must remember that the dollars are being solicited for the same purpose: to help the library.

Success in fundraising is often cumulative. Rarely will a library "wake up" one morning to find it has been left a $1 million bequest. Fundraising efforts are never easy; the hardest part is getting started. The winning efforts make the process worthwhile.

**GRANTS**

Billions of dollars in grants are available from private foundations, government agencies, and corporations. The competition for that funding is very keen. Some grantors report a rejection rate upwards of 90%.

Grantsmanship can be defined as the skill of knowing where the money is and how to get it. These skills can be acquired by librarians through study, seminars, and experience. The lack of information, rather than the lack of skills, is usually the reason for rejection of grant proposals. Matching the library's needs with the funding priorities of the granting organization is vital to the successful application. This can be done through the research of available materials. In addition, you must follow the application guidelines and requirements. If not, your grant will be rejected without being considered. Another reason for a grant being rejected is the funding source has other funding priorities at that time.

Louisiana public library directors report that the greatest obstacles to obtaining funds are:

1. lack of time to look for available sources
2. lack of skill in grant proposal writing

3. lack of available funding sources
4. lack of time to contact sources/lack of skill in making contacts with available sources.

The kind of grant pursued by a library will require the director and "grants staff" to develop different contacts and strategies. A brief summary of the most commonly known grant types follows:

**Capital** - Usually made to established organizations to meet future service demands. Includes funding for land acquisition, building construction, and equipment purchase.

**Challenge/matching** - The pledge of a specified sum, to be paid only if the nonprofit raises an equal or otherwise designated amount.

**Conditional** - Similar to a challenge grant, but the grantee must satisfy some condition other than matching funds.

**Earmarked** - Grant made to a third-party for use by a nonprofit just getting organized and that has applied for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

**Endowment** - Funds donated for investment to provide a nonprofit with regular income.

**Funding crisis** - Grants to assist nonprofits experiencing unexpected or temporary financial problems.

**General support/unrestricted** - Funds which may be used for a broad range of organization needs, including general operating.

**Research** - Grants for medical, educational, and other types of research and associated research activities.

**Seed** - Start-up funding for a new program or organization.

**Technical assistance** - Grant awarded to a nonprofit or to a third party to provide needed services.

After deciding what kind of grant is needed, look for a funding source. Possibilities include foundations, corporations, and government, civic, service, and religious organizations. Each source has basic characteristics:

**Foundations** - A nonprofit organization created for the purpose of establishing or maintaining charitable, educational, social, and religious activities for the common good. Because of their special tax privileges, foundations are required to donate 5% of the market value of their assets to charitable causes. The various types of foundations include independent/ family, corporate, community, and operating. The operating foundation is one established by a nonprofit to fund its own programs.

**Corporations** - The grantmaking process differs from company to company. Usually there is a contributions committee comprised of the CEO and other senior management. Learn who does the staff work and ask for criteria and deadlines.

**Community organizations** - These are good prospects for small grants for ongoing programs or special projects for a well-known shared community need. Contact is usually made through the local president or other leader.

**Government** - Government is still big business! Public funding is available for those interested enough to track it down.

**Bank Trust Departments** - Banks and financial institutions manage trust funds of all sizes. In some cases, investment income can be disseminated to charitable causes. The decision-making process includes the donor, family members, and perhaps a trust officer. Trust officers know about the availability of funds and grant eligibility requirements.

After identifying potential funding sources, learn as much as possible about the grant makers. The chamber of commerce, local business and organization directories, yellow pages, and government development offices can be helpful. Request an annual report and funding guidelines from the prospective funders. Make informal inquiries by letter or phone to top prospects. Briefly describe your library, its needs, and offer to send a formal funding proposal. Schedule a preliminary meeting to discuss proposal basics.

Consider sharing a grant with another nonprofit or government agency.

Good research, followed by a good proposal, will gain you consideration. A great proposal may get you the grant. There are numerous books explaining how to write a grant proposal and where to locate funding sources. Plan on investing a significant amount of time to thoroughly research possibilities and to study the components of grant proposals.

- The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities offers grants for non-profits.[11]
- The Louisiana Division of the Arts also offers grants to non-profits through nine regional Arts Councils.[12]
- The State Library also has a collection of electronic resources on grant writing and grants.[13]

## ENDNOTES

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# Chapter 14

# THE BUDGET

"Libraries will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no libraries" – Anne Herbert

## INTRODUCTION

The library budget cycle, including planning, spending, and reporting, takes a significant amount of a library director's time. Most parish library administrators do not have an accounting or finance degree. Some libraries have a business manager or finance officer on the library staff with this expertise. Often, especially in smaller library systems, the library director has sole budget preparation responsibilities and learns this process by experience.

A publicly funded agency's budget is a structured financial plan that details how the agency will allocate its resources to achieve its goals and fulfill its public service obligations over a specific period. It is a tool for planning, prioritizing, and controlling expenditures, ensuring accountability and transparency in the use of taxpayer money. The library's budget is not a wish list of desired projects or expenditures; rather, it represents a formal obligation to deliver the services and outcomes promised to the public. The library's budget must reflect realistic funding priorities and obligations, not speculative or aspirational goals.

Libraries must plan more than a generalized "lump sum" budget; that is, the budget is more detailed than "receive $100,000, spend $100,000". Each director can use various budgeting tools and practices. The line-item budget adopted by most Louisiana public library systems conforms to account codes established by the Legislative Auditor. The Louisiana Legislative Auditor's website offers a detailed overview of Best Practices—Budgeting.[1] Detailed descriptions of other types of budgeting practiced by libraries can also be found in library management books. This chapter will discuss the budget planning process and budget management techniques and information.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET ACT

### BUDGET PREPARATION PROCESS

Each political subdivision of the state of Louisiana is required by law to prepare an annual budget in accordance with the Louisiana Local Government Budget Act (La. R.S. 39:1301 et seq.). This act provides minimum guidelines to libraries. Additional budgetary policies and procedures may be mandated at the local level. La. R.S. 39:1303(C) specifies that the Local Government Budget Act includes home rule charter governmental bodies. The Louisiana

Legislative Auditor's Center for Local Government Excellence (CLGE) regularly offers courses and training (both in person and streaming) on a variety of topics. You can find more information and how to register on their website[2].

The budget document must be presented to the governing authority of the political subdivision and must be made available for public inspection no later than fifteen days before the beginning of the fiscal year. This document must include a budget message summarizing the proposed financial plan, policies, and objectives of the political subdivision. A consolidated statement for each fund, including beginning and ending fund balance estimates, itemized estimates of revenues and receipts, and recommended itemized expenditures must be included. Proposed expenditures must not exceed the total estimated funds available for the ensuing fiscal year (La. R.S. 39:1305). Adoption of a budget where approved expenditures exceed the total of estimated revenues available is prohibited by La. R.S. 39:1305(E). Finally, the proposed budget must include a proposed budget adoption instrument, such as a resolution or an ordinance.

Political subdivisions with proposed expenditures of $250,000 or more must follow the provisions in La. R.S. 39:1306 regarding public input into the budget process before formal budget adoption. This procedure includes public budget hearings with prior notification in the official journal of the governing authority.

If the budget for the ensuing fiscal year is not adopted by the end of a fiscal year, La. R.S. 39:1312 dictates that the political subdivision shall operate with amounts appropriated at 50% of the preceding year's appropriated level.

La. R.S. 39:1311 directs revenues and expenditures to be monitored within the framework of the approved budget. Written notification by the chief executive or administrative officer to the governing authority is required under certain conditions, including when revenues fail to meet the estimated budget figure by 5% or more or when expenditures, within a fund, exceed estimated budget figures by 5% or more.

As the adopted budget is a plan and guideline to follow during the year, state law recognizes that this budget may need to be amended (La. R.S. 39:1310.) Procedures for amending the budget will vary by parish. Amending by transferring funds from one line-item to another without changing fund balance may be up to the library board of control, the library director, or the parish administration in accordance with local laws. Amendments which change fund balance or the bottom line for revenues or for expenditures usually require amending the budget.

Who actually approves and adopts the budget will vary with the library system. Many parish libraries are required to submit their library board approved budget to the parish council, police jury, or parish administration for inclusion in the overall parish budget process. The advantage to this system is that the library's budget hearing is included with the overall parish public

budget hearing. Conflicts may arise, however, when the parish administration and/or governing authority does not agree with the budget approved by the library board.

Other parish libraries prepare their budgets, hold public budget hearings, and adopt the budget by action of the library board of control. This can save the library staff time and paperwork in duplicating efforts for library board approval and parish approval. However, the burden of advertising and fulfilling legal requirements falls on the library director. The advantages to holding a separate library budget hearing are that only one body approves the budget and the possibility of the library ending up in a political controversy between the library board and the parish is reduced.

Finally, once a budget is adopted, the document forms a financial plan for the year. It should be used to manage and monitor library finances, as well as to provide periodic reports to the board.

### CHART OF ACCOUNTS (OR CODES)

The Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) developed the Chart of Accounts[3] specifically for use by Louisiana local government in conjunction with the local Government Budget Act. The Chart of Accounts is updated regularly and both the accounts and account codes are intended to aid local government in implementing modern financial management practices (Reporting for Local Governments).[4]

The State Data Coordinator at the State Library has established a crosswalk to link the account codes with the information required in the Annual Report, which is then published as *Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report*.[5] Not every code will be used by every library, and you will use some codes that are not in the Annual Report.

These codes should be the basis for budgeting, accounting, and reporting for the library. Some parishes may use different codes that you may be required to follow. For more information, contact Library Development at 225-342-4931 or email libdev@library.la.gov.

## PLANNING THE BUDGET

### HOW TO PLAN THE BUDGET

No magical solution can be found to budget planning. Previous and current year information, as well as future needs of the library, are good places for the director to start. If the library has a 3-year or 5-year plan, the budget should reflect these goals. Generally, a library director's goal is to keep costs low while expanding services, or, during lean years, while not reducing services to the public. Anyone who has planned a budget knows that this is not usually an easy task.

Some libraries have an operating budget and a capital budget. Some libraries combine these. A separate capital outlay budget for major projects, such as a branch construction project, may

also be a part of the library's overall budget. Confusing to most librarians is the designation of "books" as a capital expense. The Legislative Auditor considers public library books as tangible assets with a life generally over a year, not unlike equipment and furniture. This is discussed in more detail under Chapter 17, Fixed Assets.

Librarians often wonder if there is a target amount of revenues for the library or a set percentage which should be spent on books, personnel, or other costs. The commonly accepted percentages in a library budget are: 50-70% personnel, 10-20% materials, and the balance for all other expenses. Grant receipts and expenditures must be tracked separately. Consult the most recent *Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report* to see where your library stands in relation to other Louisiana libraries. While you can compare your local budget to national averages, these figures are often not as useful because your local situation will dictate your budget.

**BUDGET PLANNING MAJOR CATEGORIES**

Estimate current year revenues and expenditures, revised based on year-to-date activity. Revenues, especially, may differ from what was originally budgeted.

**1. Salaries and Benefits:** Compute current costs, including all library-paid benefits. Spreadsheet or database software greatly facilitates budget calculations. Check the current cost of living for your area. Prepare several options, such as a 2.5% increase, a 5% increase, cost-of-living increases, merit step increases, and so on. Some boards decide on raises based on the amount of money available after other expenditures, including current payroll, are established in the new budget. The amount of raise (to give or not) may be controlled by your parish or civil service regulations.

**2. Operating costs:** The best estimate of operating costs is to look at current prices, how much they changed over the past year or two, and estimate costs for the next budget year. Sometimes it is helpful to call vendors to see if prices will increase during the next year. Sometimes, however, this just gives a vendor the opportunity to raise his price.

**3. Materials budget:** Determine the average price the library pays for books and other items in your collection. Build in an inflation factor for the next year. Determine how many items will be added to the collection. Evaluate the reference collection, especially where new editions of encyclopedias and other titles will be needed. These items usually cost well above the average price of the book collection. Grant monies and other funds for book purchases should also be included in the budget. Periodicals jobbers often can provide renewal price information for subscriptions. Be sure to add in costs for any new titles when planning for the budget. Evaluate your digital collection and databases. Also, budget monies for any extra supplies necessary to process and circulate items if the book budget has been significantly increased.

**4. Equipment:** Equipment is often the first to be cut at budget time. Justify the library's equipment needs in detail. Whenever possible, indicate how many people will be using the

equipment (such as a computer) and how much time this equipment will save. For example, a $1,500 time clock that automatically calculates time cards may pay for itself within a year in labor savings alone. Use online sources to check current prices. Add shipping to these estimates, and build in a 5% or 10% inflation factor. In cases where equipment will be bid, get an estimate from two to three vendors for budgetary reasons. In some cases, it might be cheaper to rent a piece of equipment than to purchase it. Renting may be more cost-efficient and allow the library to acquire a larger quantity more quickly. For example, a library might only be able to purchase one copier, but could rent two copiers. In addition, renting allows a more frequent rotation of equipment thus allowing you to use more modern or advanced technology.

**5. Facility Maintenance:** Obtain detailed quotes from vendors for all anticipated projects, including carpeting, landscaping, painting, and other facility-related needs. Given that many building requirements may arise unexpectedly during the fiscal year, it is prudent to allocate funds for contingencies. If the library has an established building plan or an equipment replacement schedule, these should be integral to the budget preparation process.

**6. Capital Budgeting:** Separate from operating budgets, capital budgets cover major investments in facilities, technology, and other long-term assets. Include estimates on the costs of planning, evaluating, and financing capital projects. You may decide to finance your building program with the pay-as-you-go method, discussed in Chapter 13, Finance.

**7. Contingency Planning / Reserve Funds:** Address the need for contingency funds and planning for unexpected expenses or revenue shortfalls, ensuring the library's financial stability in case of emergencies or economic downturn. Again, see Chapter 13, Finance.

**8. Travel:** Travel is another area often targeted for cuts at budget time. Remember that the travel category includes the costs of continuing education activities, meetings, workshops, and conferences, as well as travel expenses related to daily library activities. Continuing education is not a luxury, but a vital area of funding for the library director, professional and support personnel, and board members. Consider basic travel expenses that the library incurs for the “day to day” operations, as well as travel expenses and fees for those attending upcoming local, regional, and national functions. A clearly defined travel and reimbursement policy (as detailed in Chapter 22, Professional Development, Travel and Reimbursement) will help ensure clarity and consistency regarding allowable fees, travel expenses, meals, and accommodations.

**WORDS OF WISDOM**

**Effective Communication:** Open and positive communication is essential throughout the entire budget planning and implementation process. The library director must clearly and effectively convey budgetary needs and constraints to the library board, as well as to other key stakeholders, including staff, patrons, governing authority, and the broader community, to ensure understanding and garner support. Engaging the community, through avenues such as town hall meetings, is crucial for making the budget process transparent and inclusive. These

efforts build trust and foster a sense of shared responsibility and investment in the library's future. As the primary source of information for the board and, subsequently, the governing authority, the library director must provide accurate and reliable information about the library's budget. Once the budget is approved, it is imperative that every board member is fully informed of the complete budget and can communicate its purpose to the stakeholders.

**Financial Policies and Procedures**

Your library should develop and maintain robust financial policies and procedures, ensuring transparency, accountability, and adherence to best practices in financial management (see Chapter 6, Library Policies and Procedures).

**Reserve Funds:** At the end of the fiscal year, your library may have an unexpended balance that contributes to the reserve fund. It is imperative to establish a sound investment policy to manage and grow these funds responsibly. Furthermore, both the library director and the board must ensure that these funds are allocated with a clean purpose in mind, with transparency and accountability for their intended use, rather than allowing them to accumulate without a defined objective.

**Budget Preparation**

Here are some additional thoughts and ideas from colleagues regarding budget preparation.

- Recurring costs should not be funded from "one-time only" revenues such as grants or fund balance, without consideration as to where future ongoing funding will come from.
- Personnel costs will consume a significant portion of the budget, as will operating costs such as utilities, telephone, and branch rentals. Some costs are fixed by other agencies and the library has very little control over the amount or whether the service can be eliminated.
- Regularly reassess the library's supply procurement and usage to ensure cost efficiency. Maintain an up-to-date inventory of supplies on hand and those in use. Explore opportunities to reduce printing costs by partnering with the local school board's print shop or other government print shops, which may offer more economical options compared to in-house or commercial printing services. Consider seeking donations from community organizations to offset programming expenses. Additionally, explore cost-saving measures such as participating in cooperative delivery services or utilizing the interlibrary courier services to minimize postage expenses. Digital communication methods, such as email, should be prioritized to further reduce mailing costs.
- Solicit input from the staff and the library board. Depending on the size of the library, each department might submit a formal budget request, including personnel, books, services, and equipment. Priorities should be set by the staff, the director, and/or the board in the event not all requests can be funded.

- When dealing with budget cuts, consider the following. The largest cuts typically affect personnel costs and the book budget. Reductions in these areas may have significant impacts on public perception and service quality. Staffing cuts could potentially alter the public's view of the library's service level, while reductions in the book budget might lead to public dissatisfaction. Additionally, adjustments such as reducing operating hours or closing facilities could be considered, though these measures may present negative perception of the quality of library services.
    - Exploring cooperative purchasing options could be beneficial. Consult with the school board, city, and parish purchasing departments to identify potential cost-saving opportunities. Acquiring items through state contracts may offer financial savings for the library. Additionally, purchasing library supplies that double as office supplies from a local office supply company can reduce both shipping costs and delivery times. Many local office supply vendors offer discounts to government entities, further enhancing cost efficiency.
- Re-evaluate service contracts by comparing available options and services. Evaluate each equipment piece individually. Implement a digital asset management system to track equipment, service history, and costs. Use this data to inform maintenance decisions. Example: leasing copiers and printers using a state contract may be more beneficial than buying them and paying maintenance and toner costs.
    - Prioritize contracts for critical equipment like public computers and high-volume printers. Consider manufacturer warranties in your decisions.
    - Explore cloud-based solutions and leasing options for rapidly evolving technology instead of running it on premises. This can reduce reliance on physical equipment and ensure access to current technology without long-term maintenance commitments.
    - Conduct annual reviews of contracts and equipment performance. Stay informed about new technologies and service models that could benefit your library.
- Consider contracting out services such as lawn upkeep, building maintenance, and security guard services. Weigh the costs of in-house personnel to perform these tasks against the cost and quality of services available through privatization.
- Regularly review your library's telecommunications services. The rapidly evolving tech landscape often presents opportunities to enhance communication capabilities while reducing costs. Consider Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) systems, which can offer advanced features like video conferencing and seamless integration with other digital tools. Compare various providers' plans for both local and long-distance services. Many offer bundled packages that include internet connectivity. For the latest recommendations and potential group purchasing opportunities, contact the State Library for additional information and guidance.

- Prioritize both short-term stability and long-term sustainability in your financial strategy. While using reserve funds to balance the current budget may seem expedient, it's not a sustainable solution. These finite resources can deplete rapidly, leaving underlying fiscal challenges unresolved. Instead, focus on optimizing operational efficiency and building financial resilience. Consider implementing a multi-year budgeting approach to anticipate future needs and potential economic fluctuations. Regularly reassess your financial model to ensure it aligns with your library's evolving mission and the community's changing needs.

## BUDGET PRESENTATION

Budget presentation is often as important as budget preparation. In Louisiana, the library's annual budget is usually formally presented to the library board of control and the Governing Authority. In addition to these formal presentations, the budget might be reviewed with a special board committee or with governmental officials such as the parish treasurer, finance director, or other financial personnel with oversight responsibilities. The size and organization of the library often prescribe the formality and type of budget presentation required, and it is incumbent on the librarian to seek out governmental officials with financial authority to determine their budgetary requirements both in format and in presentation.

The type of budget presentation is usually prescribed by the library's funding source. If the library has its own millage, board approval is often tantamount to council or police jury approval. If the library is in the general fund budget, approval by the governing authority becomes crucial to the library's budgetary success.

### BUDGET PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD

Budget presentation to the board should not be viewed as a once-a-year occurrence; it should be a year-round activity. Library director should reserve a portion of each board meeting to present budget information, which should include reports on revenues received or anticipated, expenditures, encumbrances, and projections. Some boards have formed committees to review library finances on a regular basis, to sign checks, and to assist with the annual budget preparation. Other boards delegate this responsibility to the director and request either monthly or quarterly reports. The librarian should seek to provide the board with the type of presentation and the specificity of information that will help them to understand the budget and to best interpret it to the community.

One board meeting is usually reserved for the presentation of the annual budget. The timing of this meeting depends on the library's budget year and on any time constraints imposed by the governing authority. The format of the budget, as presented to the board, should be one which the board can easily follow and understand. However, the format of the budget, as submitted to the governing authority, is often dictated by the governing authority for conformity among

other departments. The librarian should keep this in mind when preparing the budget and should consolidate formats if possible.

Library directors typically choose from three main budget presentation methods.

- The budget meeting may be held at your regular board meeting. Mail the proposed budget to members 1-2 weeks before the budget hearing, discussion, and adoption meeting. This gives board members a chance to study the budget and come prepared with questions and suggestions. Have extra copies of the budget available at the budget meeting. This will prevent delays when you discover that some board members left their copies at home or didn't receive copies in the mail.
- Other librarians choose to distribute the proposed budget during the budget meeting. This gives the librarian the chance to make sure everyone receives a copy and lets the librarian review budget highlights before board members start reviewing each line-item or asking questions. However, if board members don't see the proposed budget until the budget meeting, the meeting will likely be a lengthy one. Also, the board may not feel comfortable adopting a budget they are seeing for the first time.
- Distribute the budget at a special board meeting called for that purpose. The librarian makes a brief presentation focusing on budget highlights, funding available, special projects, and potential problems that the board should keep in mind when reviewing the budget. The budget meeting, where discussion and adoption takes place, is held several days or a week after the special meeting.

Regardless of the chosen method to present the budget, certain best practices enhance delivery. Here are some suggestions for an effective budget presentation to the board.

1. Data visualization tools effectively communicate complex financial data. Providing both digital and print copies accommodates different preferences. Some directors use collaborative digital platforms for real-time annotation during discussions.
2. Document organization is crucial. Use consistent numbering across sections for easy reference. Include an executive summary highlighting key points and changes. Provide contextual information such as benchmarks against similar institutions or historical trends. Create a "cheat sheet" for your board, listing what you actually purchase with the funds in the specific budget code.
3. After the meeting, distribute a summary of discussions and decisions. Establish a clear process for addressing follow-up questions. Creating an accessible digital repository for budget documents maintains transparency and aids future reference.
4. Discuss the scope of the budget and indicate if percentages have been used in making projections in the various categories. Briefly review current year revenues and expenditures and project current year-end figures. Always discuss anticipated revenues

and fund balance status. A quick review of finances and needs until the next tax election might also be in order.

5. Present the major budgetary components separately such as personnel, supplies, contractual services, library materials, and capital expenditures. Give board members the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and/or suggestions.
6. Identify all proposed new expenditures and explain how these budget items relate to board priorities and library programs and collections. It is often helpful to project the cost of these new expenditures or programs for several years. This will allow board members to view not only the impact on the requested budget, but the impact on future budgets.
7. Incorporate specific board actions and recommendations into the final budget.
8. Receive official board adoption of the budget prior to sending it to your governing authority for approval.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

La. R.S. 39:1307 requires that a public entity must hold a public hearing if the total proposed expenditures are $500,000 or more. The public hearing must be held no sooner than 10 days after publication of a notice that the budget is available for public inspection.

Once the public hearing has been held, you must certify completion of the public process as a notice in the official journal. The notice should include this statement: “This is to certify the completion of the budget adoption process.” You can hold a public hearing for your budget even if it is below this amount. Check with your local governing authority for guidance on local practices.

**BUDGET PRESENTATION TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY**

The necessity for as well as the types of library budget presentations to the local governing authority varies greatly among parishes. Libraries that adopt their own budget may not be required to make a budget presentation to the parish governing authority. Some libraries submit the board approved budget to the governing authority for incorporation in the parish’s budget process without making a presentation to the governing authority. Other libraries are required to discuss the board approved budget with the parish governmental offices and also make a presentation to the governing authority. It is incumbent on the librarian to know the type and length of presentation expected, if any, and to be prepared to respond to questions regarding every aspect of the proposed budget.

Here are some suggestions to help you prepare to present the budget to the governing authority.

1. Encourage either the board president or the board financial officer to make or assist with the presentation. If the library has a business manager or an accountant, this individual should attend the budget review session and be prepared to answer questions.
2. Provide an overview of the library's mission and funding source. This overview should include any percentage increases or decreases on projected revenues and should include specifics about all new personnel and programs requested. Handouts demonstrating library use can be helpful in substantiating a request for additional staff or new programs. Consider distributing a copy of the budget, presentation, or data visualizations to each member of the governing authority right before the presentation. Have a packet of information about the budget available for the press.
3. Understand thoroughly the library's budget proposal and appear forthright and candid in reviewing the budget.
4. Provide an opportunity for questions. Be sensitive and responsive to comments and questions and remember that the emphasis and structure of the budget presentation to the governing authority will often be dictated by time constraints and questions posed by the review committee.
5. Adhere to the time frame allotted for the presentation. The library will probably be scheduled along with other parish agencies, and it is important to stay within the time allowed. An additional meeting may be needed to discuss particular issues or to provide additional information as requested.
6. Budget presentations to the library board of control and the governing authority are significant parts of the entire budget process. An effective budget presentation can make a considerable difference regarding the level of funding received. Consequently, extreme care should be taken to plan presentations that present citizen needs for materials and programs in the most persuasive and positive manner.

## MANAGING THE BUDGET

After the budget is approved, it is the director's responsibility to see that expenditures are in line with the approved budget. Just as there are laws and procedures governing the budget process, there are laws and procedures governing the corresponding expenditures.

### PURCHASING AND BID LAW

Each library should establish purchasing policies and procedures. The Public Bid Law (La. R.S. 38:2211 et seq.) spells out the requirements for contracting for public work and goods and services above certain dollar amounts. Public libraries are bound by this law.

A summary of the general principles and guidelines concerning Louisiana's Public Bid Law is at the Legislative Auditor's website.[6] It includes a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section, an outline of the law that includes key statutes, Attorney General opinions, and case law to facilitate understanding of this area of the law.

You will need to determine the method the library will use for procurement, for example, statewide contract, fax bid, sealed bidding with advertisement, sole source, proprietary, emergency, RFP).

Your local governing authority may have a local purchasing ordinance or procedure which the library staff must follow, in addition to the public bid law. The library director must be aware of these laws and regulations.

Some parishes have a central purchasing process, and the library may be required to participate. Central purchasing has both advantages and disadvantages. Centralized purchasing generally uses a requisition and purchase order (P.O.) system, ensuring a paper trail for all purchases. Bulk purchasing at the parish level may result in better prices for the library. However, many library supplies, and some equipment, are unique to the library (book jackets, library cards, shelving, and so on). The library staff will need patience and perseverance when explaining to centralized purchasing personnel what the items are used for and why, for example, the library cannot use book trucks where the shelves are screwed onto the frame rather than welded. This procedure may be more cumbersome than the library would like. In addition, the library must allow additional lead time for routing requisitions to the parish purchasing department for processing. Acquisition of library materials (including the use of book jobbers and subscription agencies) may require a bid or contract through centralized purchasing unless you use state contract (see below), although the actual selection, ordering, and receipt of these materials is still kept within the library.

Depending on the volume of purchasing, the library may need to institute a purchase order (P.O.) system. Many vendors will bill to public bodies only if a P.O. authorizing the purchase is issued. A P.O. system enables the library to keep track of authorized purchases in an efficient manner. Whatever system is used internally for authorizing and tracking purchases, the director is responsible for seeing that only authorized (and legal) purchases are made in line with the adopted budget. For best purchasing and disbursement practices and recommended policies, see the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's website for a sample Purchasing and Disbursements policy.[7]

A staff member should not be allowed to "pick up" an item such as pencils at the store because he needed them, present the bill, and expect to be paid from library funds. This scenario prevents the library from taking advantage of bulk pricing, takes the director out of the decision-making process, can wreak havoc with the budget, and weakens controls. Make sure both the staff and the board know that all purchases follow the internal procedures which have been established by the board and the director. Circumstances may occur when it is in the best

interest of the library to have a staff member use petty cash to purchase something but only after the purchase has been authorized.

Be aware of state and local conflict of interest and nepotism laws regarding purchasing goods or services from or contracting with relatives of board or staff members (see Ethics section in Chapter 9, law and legal questions). Also, be aware of questionable business practices, such as contracting with a good family friend, which might not violate state ethics laws but could cause a negative opinion of the director and of the library.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND DATA PROCESSING PROCUREMENT**

La. R.S. 38:2234 et seq. allows a political subdivision to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) instead of an Invitation to Bid for the purchase, rental, lease, or lease-purchase of telecommunications and data processing systems. This includes computer equipment, software, and related services, such as maintenance. Equipment and services covered under this procurement process are defined in La. R.S. 38:2236. Several libraries have used this method for procuring automated library systems and system upgrades.

Methods of procurement are defined in La. R.S. 38:2237. It is similar to the bid process. Specifications must be developed, sent to prospective vendors, and advertised for an appropriate period of time in the official journal. In the bid process, the vendor submitting the lowest responsible bid that meets the specifications must be awarded the bid. In the RFP process, the specifications must include a list of criteria with assigned point values which are used in evaluating the responses from the vendors. Such criteria may include price, functionality, vendor reputation, vendor stability, and system expandability. The specifications must also detail the evaluation process. Thus the RFP process allows the library some flexibility in selecting the system which best meets the library's needs, rather than the system which is the cheapest.

During the RFP evaluation process, the library may narrow the list to the two or three highest-scoring systems and invite those vendors in for site demonstrations and further negotiations. You may have some flexibility in modifying the choice of equipment or software, but a library should not deviate significantly from what was in the RFP. It is a good idea to have the library or parish attorney review the RFP packet and sit in on the evaluation and negotiations process.

Louisiana Legislative Auditor provides extensive help and guidance[8] in reference to public bid law.[9] System equipment upgrades or migrations which are over $25,000 are subject to the bid process or, at the library's option, the RFP process. Since compatibility of data (and possibly existing software and equipment) is usually an issue, the bid or RFP may require compatibility with the existing system or data. A vendor can be required to demonstrate this compatibility before being awarded a contract.

Finally, a significant expenditure on telecommunications or data processing items often requires a contract between the selected vendor and the library. Rather than using the vendor's

boilerplate contract, the library should make sure the contract is written to the library's best advantage, especially in areas of vendor performance, library satisfaction, and payment schedules. La. R.S. 38:2237 requires certain language to be placed in the contract. A library ought to consider hiring a library automation consultant to assist with the complex tasks of developing specifications, evaluating responses, and negotiating the contract.

**STATE CONTRACTS**

State contracts are purchasing contracts established and maintained by the Louisiana Office of State Procurement (OSP) within the Division of Administration. OSP is responsible for standardizing, procuring, or supervising the procurement of all goods, services, and major repairs common across state agencies, departments, and political subdivisions. The OSP website has a list of companies that have registered as vendors statewide, typically for a year, to address these needs. On their website, you will find a list of items and brand names currently on state contract. OSP can also answer your questions regarding purchasing, professional contracts, and RFPs.

There is no limit on how much you can spend using state contracts. Since you are not required to issue a Request for Bids and there is no cap amount for total contract spend, the cost of purchase is ultimately limited by your budget. No matter the size of the purchase, it is fiscally prudent to ask the vendor for additional volume discounts and promotions.

Because of economies of scale and bundled buying, the prices available through state contract are usually very competitive. Items purchased on state contract are not subject to the provisions of the public bid law. It is wise, however, to shop around, since contract prices could be as much as a year old. Some vendors offer additional end-of-quarter or end-of-fiscal-year discounts.

You can use the state contract for most book purchases. When communicating with the vendor, make sure the library is getting the appropriate state contract discount. When purchasing library materials through a grant, remember to include supplies and personnel costs. Sometimes, these costs cannot be funded through the grant and must be absorbed by the library. The State Library web page has a list of current library materials and services contracts.[10]

You can use state contract prices for purchasing computer equipment, renting copiers and other office equipment. Computers are among the items that frequently decrease in price during a twelve-month period.

In addition to technology, libraries can purchase furniture, office supplies, and vehicles utilizing state contracts.

For more information and to find lists of vendors, go to the Office of State Procurement website, Agency Resources[11], where you will find detailed information on purchasing through state contract.[12]

**SALES TAX**

La. R.S. 47:301 exempts all political subdivisions of the state from all state sales and use tax and from sales and use tax levied by any political subdivision. This includes all public libraries in Louisiana. Contact all vendors in advance of purchases to establish your tax exempt status and furnish any proof needed.

**BOOKKEEPING AND ACCOUNTING**

Most public libraries in Louisiana order and receive their own goods and library materials. Invoices for payment are usually prepared for payment by the library staff. This involves verifying the invoice, "coding" the invoice with the appropriate budget code, and authorizing it for payment. Usually, the bills are paid and books are maintained by the local governing authority. Some parishes that provide administrative services, such as bookkeeping, charge the library annually for such services. These charges are authorized under La. R.S. 33:1236(35)(a) and cannot exceed 4% of the library's revenues or the actual costs incurred in providing direct and indirect services—whichever is less. Additionally, the law provides that such administrative charges be established by agreement between the governing authority and the library.

Several libraries, under La. R.S. 25:215, have received legislative authority to administer and handle the accounting functions for all of their library funds. Refer to the section in this chapter on "Fiscal Emancipation" for information about the process for obtaining this authority. Contact one or more of the directors of those parish libraries for information on how they handle their own bookkeeping. Some library systems purchase materials on their own, manage their funds, and basically control their budget, even though formal fiscal independence has not been granted. The governing authority may permit this method to save themselves the work.

Accounting records are to be kept in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The modified accrual form of accounting is the basis of accounting for local governments in Louisiana. Refer to the Legislative Auditor's website for more information.

Regardless of who handles the accounting of library funds, the library director should receive the following monthly financial reports: revenues, expenditures, itemized list of checks paid, and investments. The director should review these reports to catch any errors and to monitor spending in line with the approved budget. Regular monitoring of the budget, including reviewing revenues and expenses, will help you understand the library's financial health and avoid surprises at the end of the fiscal year. The director must stay abreast of all financial transactions and keep the board informed about needed changes. Remember, the budget is a guide for spending. Circumstances which occur during the year could require amendments in the approved budget. Some libraries can "move money" between funds with board approval. Some libraries might have to get governing authority approval for this. Any amendment to the budget that will change the fund balance is likely to fall under provisions of the Local Government Budget Act. Check with the board and parish administration to determine the procedures that need to be followed for amending the library budget.

In an emergency situation, the library director must be able to resolve the situation even if funds are not currently in the budget for the said emergency. State and local purchasing laws (La. R.S. 39.1314) discuss what qualifies as an emergency. Have the board approve emergency purchasing procedures. Funds to cover this emergency situation will still need to be found elsewhere in the budget or from the fund balance. The director also needs to report to the board, and possibly the governing authority, on emergency spending.

**APPROVAL OF EXPENDITURES**

La. R.S. 25:220 states that the governing authority is responsible for paying with library maintenance funds, the monthly salaries, expenses, and maintenance costs of the library once these costs are approved by the board of control or designated board member. La. R.S. 25:215 transfers this function to the library in certain parishes, as specified in the law. Some libraries have the board president or the board sign and approve a claim sheet itemizing bills each month before these bills are submitted to the Parish for payment. Because the library board approves the library's budget and reviews financial reports on a regular basis, some boards authorize the director to pay bills as a part of the administrative function. This is usually stated in the by-laws of the board or done by resolution of the board. Check with your governing authority for the details and established procedures if the parish is responsible for paying the library's bills.

**TRACKING SYSTEM**

If the library's bills are processed by the parish, it is essential to have a reliable tracking system in place to ensure timely and accurate payment. Coordination with the parish is crucial for proper authorization of invoice payments and effective budgetary control. Errors can occur during payment processing, such as incorrect coding, inaccurate vendor charges, or being billed for another agency's expenses. Additionally, the parish may not always provide timely accounting of paid bills. The library may be unaware of discrepancies affecting its funds without regular oversight.

To mitigate these issues, the library should maintain detailed records of all invoices submitted to the parish for payment. This includes keeping copies of the invoices noting the submission date, coding information, vendor details, and billed amounts. These records should be regularly checked against the monthly financial reports received from the parish. Conducting these reviews consistently throughout the year is far more effective than attempting to resolve discrepancies at year-end.

**FISCAL EMANCIPATION**

Fiscal Emancipation means fiscal independence from the parish governing authority. If granted, it means that the library board and the director assume responsibility for the administration of and account for the library funds. This includes all functions relating to the following:

- Accounting
- Bookkeeping
- Auditing
- Investments
- Payroll preparation
- Bill paying
- Check writing
- Quarterly payments to the IRS
- Quarterly payments to the Department of Revenue and Taxation
- Reports to the Department of Labor
- Payments to the retirement system

A library may seek fiscal emancipation for a number of reasons.

1. The parish charges too much for bookkeeping—by law, the cap on how much the parish can charge is up to 4% of the library's income (see La. R.S. 33:1236 (35)(a))
2. The library is not comfortable with parish accounting practices that are frequently unclear.
3. The library is not comfortable with parish investment practices that commingle library funds with funds from other agencies.
4. With fiscal independence, the library has the control necessary to ensure that dedicated tax funds will be fully accounted for and realized by the library, and that these and all library funds will be used for the purposes intended.
5. The library will not have to contribute to parish unemployment claims or parish workman compensation claims; the library will only pay unemployment or workman compensation when the library has a claim.
6. Fiscal emancipation is not much more work if the library has been keeping its own set of books all along.

The parish governing authority may object to the library seeking fiscal emancipation for many reasons.

1. The parish needs the income produced by the fee it charges the library for bookkeeping.
2. Parish oversight of public funds is another check and balance measure. The loss of control and oversight, to which by law they are entitled, does not sit well with some parish officials. One reason for this is that, in many instances, parish officials simply do not understand that the library's dedicated tax dollars cannot be used for other parish purposes.
3. By commingling all parish funds for investment purposes, a higher rate of return can be realized.
4. By law, parishes can "borrow" from these commingled funds to pay bills other than the library's bills—as long as "borrowing" is short term and that each agency's funds are fully accounted for—the problem here is that sometimes accountability is not really clear and short term turns into long term.

Fiscal emancipation should not be entered into casually. The library should undertake a study to see if the bookkeeping and accounting functions could be managed in-house and how much it would cost. For instance, staff costs may increase, requiring the addition of new personnel and the need for training existing staff. Implementing bookkeeping software may lead to an increase in associated costs, such as hiring a CPA during the implementation phase or for the end-of-the-fiscal-year review of financial records. On that note, you may consider outsourcing accounting services to a consultant accountant if it is economically and budgetarily feasible.

While many libraries can manage payroll and bill payments with minimal expense, it is crucial for the library bookkeeper to also stay informed about quarterly obligations to the IRS, the retirement system, and Worker's Compensation, as well as the relevant laws governing employee wages and insurance.

Currently, 18 parish library systems are fiscally emancipated, having received legislative authority to administer and handle the accounting functions for all their library funds.

Once you determine that financial separation from the parish is feasible and economically sound, and your parish officials are in agreement, the library board should formally adopt a resolution to seek fiscal emancipation.

**How to Become Fiscally Emancipated**

The two ways to achieve fiscal emancipation are through agreement with the police jury or parish council or through legislative action.

*Through the Parish*

A number of libraries have always "kept their own books" from the time they were established as a parish agency, while others have been given fiscal independence because it is too much

work for the parish bookkeeper. Parish officials can agree to fiscal emancipation informally, or they can act formally by passing an ordinance allowing the library to handle its own finances.

The problem with achieving fiscal independence through the parish is that at any time the parish can rescind this privilege.

*Through Legislative Action*

Fiscal emancipation through legislative action requires an amendment to La. R.S. 25:215, which requires the cooperation of one or more legislators who would be willing to introduce the legislation and support its passage into law. One caveat—legislators usually will not be willing to introduce the legislation if parish officials are not willing to grant the library fiscal emancipation in the first place, a "Catch 22." If the library considers legislative action, it would be wise for library board members to work with parish officials to seek their approval.

Once it has been decided to seek fiscal emancipation, the first step is to put it on the board meeting agenda and have the board vote on seeking fiscal emancipation so that it is in the minutes of the Library Board.

Step two is to secure a formal resolution from the governing body allowing the library to seek the necessary legislative authorization and to pass a motion reflecting their support of fiscal emancipation for the library. It is strongly recommended that Board members should contact their respective representatives in parish government and let them know that the Board is going to request their help in fiscal emancipation. Also, each member of the governing body should be asked to vote in support of the resolution and to pass a motion reflecting their support. Phone calls or letters from Friends of the Library may also help in this regard.

In warning, if the parish government rejects the library's emancipation, it is unlikely that a state legislator will sponsor your bill or see it through the legislative process though this may be attempted again with letters and phone calls to the politicians.

Next, you will get in touch with your state legislator to amend La. R.S. 25:215. Again, trustees and library advocates should contact state legislators and request their support, sponsorship or co-sponsorship to amend the law as in the following example:

The amendment uses standard wording (see La. R.S. 25:215 (b)).

> *"The administration of and accounting functions for the funds of the _____Parish Library are hereby transferred from the _____Parish Police Jury (Parish Council) to the _____Parish Library Board of Control, effective _____(Date)."*

Once the state legislator's sponsorship is obtained, then a "Notice of Intention" to introduce legislation would have to be advertised in the official journal of the parish according to requirements set out in the Constitution. According to Article III, Section 13:

§13. Local or Special Laws; Notice of Intent; Publication

Section 13. (A) Except as otherwise provided in this Section, no local or special law shall be enacted unless notice of the intent to introduce a bill to enact such a law has been published on two separate days, without cost to the state, in the official journal of the locality where the matter to be affected is situated. The last day of publication shall be at least thirty days prior to introduction of the bill. The notice shall state the substance of the contemplated law, and every such bill shall recite that notice has been given.

Notice of Intention

*Notice of intention to introduce a bill in the ____(Year) Legislature for the purpose of transferring the administration of and accounting functions for the funds of the _____Parish Police Jury (Parish Council) to the _____Parish Library Board of Control, effective January 1, _____, is hereby given in accordance with Article III, Section 13, of the Constitution of Louisiana.*

The sponsor will then see the amendment through the legislature. The bill would become law 30 days after the close of the legislative session in which it is introduced.

**Once Fiscal Emancipation is Achieved**

Once the legislation is passed, the library must be ready with the decision about who will be doing the actual bookkeeping and accounting – a contracted CPA or a library bookkeeper. If a CPA is hired, another accounting firm will have to be hired to do the annual audit to avoid conflict of interest.

All staff handling public monies will need to be bonded, including appropriate members of the board and the library director.

The library will have to obtain a Federal Identification Number from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Also known as a Federal Tax Identification number or an Employer Identification number (EIN), this is a nine-digit number issued by the IRS and arranged as follows: 00-0000000. It is unique for your library.

If the library cannot use the bank already approved by the parish, the library will have to advertise for its own Fiscal Agent, that is, a bank that offers the best rates for services and investments. (Note: A parish with a population under 100,000 is generally exempt from using the bid process to choose a fiscal agent.)

The library will have to establish an account at the bank to handle monthly withholding taxes. In addition, the library will have to have checks printed.

The library will have to assume responsibility for its own bonds and investments.

The library will have to follow the provisions of the Local Government Budget Act (La. R.S. 39:1301 et seq.) and assume responsibility for publishing its own minutes, budgets, and notices of public budget hearings.

The library must notify the Parochial Employees Retirement System, the IRS, the Louisiana Department of Revenue and Taxation, the Louisiana Department of Labor, the Social Security System, and the Unemployment Compensation and Workman Compensation Offices of the change in fiscal responsibility. (Each entity will supply the library with the necessary paperwork and quarterly report forms.)

The library will have to notify the local sheriff and/or tax collector that all tax revenues including state revenue sharing funds must be sent directly to the library for deposit.

The library will have to become knowledgeable of the laws governing employees, wages, and insurance.

The first year of fiscal emancipation will be difficult and perhaps confusing, but there will be many rewards, such as:

1. Tax funds will be transferred directly to the library without being diverted to other parish offices.
2. The board and the director will have better knowledge of the library finances.
3. The board and the director will have better control over the budget and the investment of funds.
4. The board and the director will find fiscal emancipation easier than dealing with the local governing authority.

## CONSOLIDATED CASH ACCOUNT VS. LIBRARY MAINTENANCE FUND

Dedicated library funds must be accounted for separately from other funds. Often, a library has a dedicated library maintenance fund account at a bank, with checks, statements, and investments managed separately from other parish monies.

Parish governments may consolidate accounts for all parish agencies which are administered by the parish into one large bank account. Records for individual agencies are accounted for separately in the books of the parish. However, the funds are intermingled in the bank account and investments. The parish government can pool its cash into one account to improve cash management and to provide for a greater return on investments. One disadvantage to this method is that checks cut for a library no longer show the library as payer. One check for telephone service or utilities may be cut to the vendor as payment of invoices for all parish agencies.

Librarians and boards have expressed concern about this practice, fearing that the library will somehow lose its funds to another parish agency. The library director must keep track of library money by monitoring and reviewing the library's investments and financial statements. An audit should catch any improprieties.

## THE AUDIT

The fiscal cycle of a library starts with budget planning and continues with budget monitoring and spending. The cycle concludes with an annual financial report on operations and the audit. When the audit of the library's financial records is complete, the auditor must submit the report to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Office (LLA) which is the agency that oversees the expenditure of public funds in Louisiana.

The audit is a periodic review or check of a public agency with respect to the services provided with taxpayer dollars. The audit must be performed by an independent certified public accountant (CPA), licensed to practice in Louisiana. The Legislative Auditor's office focuses on oversight of local governmental audits performed by private CPAs and investigative audits, rather than actually performing audits for local governments.

Under state law, all parish agencies must be audited at least biennially, with the audit covering both years. Public agencies with an annual budget of $500,000 or more are required to have an annual audit. Agencies may have annual audits by choice. A library may be a part of the governing authority's audit or may contract for its own audit.

If the administration of library funds is handled by the library (as provided under La. R.S. 25:215), the library will contract with a CPA to have its financial records audited. CPA firms that conduct audits for libraries must be approved by the LLA and submit an engagement agreement signed by the library and the CPA firm.

The costs charged by a CPA firm may vary, and it will behoove the library to compare what different firms charge. The CPA firm does not have to be from your library's parish, and you may want to check with directors from surrounding parishes for recommendations. The costs vary by parish and the scope of the audit.

The annual financial report is required of all parish agencies under La. R.S. 24:514: however, the report is not required if the library has engaged an independent public accountant to audit the financial statements. A library may submit its report directly to the Legislative Auditor or may be included as part of the parish governing authority report. If the library reports with the parish, the library director should advise the Legislative Auditor in writing. The report can be submitted in any format which complies with generally accepted accounting principles. The Legislative Auditor provides a packet of forms which can be used to submit the report. The report is due within ninety days after the close of the fiscal year.

Refer the Legislative Auditor's website section on The Audit Law | LLA[13], the Louisiana Audit Law FAQ[14], and What Kind Of Report Does My Agency Need To Provide To The Legislative Auditor?[15] for additional details about the audit and the Legislative Auditor's office.

**HANDLING AN AUDIT**

Whether the auditor is engaged by the parish or the library, the auditor will visit the library. The library director must assist the auditor during the audit and comply with the auditor's requests for checks, invoices, payroll records, contracts, asset reports, and other information in a timely fashion. Under state law, there are penalties for noncompliance with an auditor's request. The director who has followed the steps outlined in this handbook for preparing the budget and managing public funds should be well prepared for the audit.

The auditor will review budget compliance, including receiving and expending funds within budgeted amounts. The auditor will check compliance with state and local laws, such as compliance with the public bid law. The auditor checks to see that appropriate library board action occurred concerning raises, paid leave policies, and other items which affect the finances of the library. Finally, the auditor will review the library's internal controls for managing public funds.

The auditor will usually schedule an appointment with the library director. The visit could take several hours, days, or weeks, depending on the scope of the audit, and whether the official financial and personnel records are kept at the parish or at the library. The librarian should plan to provide the auditor workspace and plan to be available to the auditor to provide information and answer questions. Below are items which an auditor is likely to address while at the library; some items are also required as part of the annual financial report.

1. An auditor will examine minutes of the board meetings, checking for policies which affect finances (leave policies, fines policies), raises which were approved, approval of library-paid travel, and budget approval. Make sure your file of board minutes is up to date and that the minutes reflect all board actions on setting salaries and raises.
2. The auditor may ask to see the library's policy manual. (At a minimum, gather any policies which directly or indirectly concern money.)
3. The auditor will ask to see employee work records (time cards, time sheets) and leave records. Depending on the size of the staff, the auditor will examine all records (small staffs) or will examine a random sample (large staffs). Be sure that all leave paid to terminated employees is documented and is in accord with board or parish policy. The auditor will question any non-salary check paid to an employee and any paycheck which differs from the employee's approved salary.
4. Have copies of all contracts entered into by the library and all grants received by the library available for the auditor. Grant funds will also be a part of the audit.

5. The auditor will question revenues which seem out of line with both the current year budget and the previous year's receipts, or vice-versa. For example, an auditor might question why fines collected increased or decreased over the previous year. This might be explained by demonstrating a board-approved policy which raised the fines or a designated "no-fines" period.

   Remember, although the auditor is looking for anything out of the ordinary, most circumstances can be easily explained by the director. Likewise, the auditor may question expenditures which are not in line with the current year budget and the previous year's expenditures. For example, a library may have an increased 50% spending in utilities because of opening a new branch, or the library may show a 40% decrease in gas expenses, which can be explained by a problem which kept the bookmobile off the road for six months. The auditor cannot tell this from looking at the financial report; the director (or business manager) must be able to answer these questions. Some librarians prepare, for both the board and the auditor, a year-end line item explanation of revenues and expenditures in relation to the budgeted amounts.

A library that is fiscally emancipated will likely be questioned in detail about its handling of revenues and expenditures: timely deposits, investments, fiscal agent, type of fund accounting, and disbursement procedures. Other items which are part of the audit include changes in fixed assets for the year, pending litigation involving the library, and any other claims against the library.

**LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR REQUIREMENTS**

Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire is a required part of a financial audit of Louisiana state and local government agencies. The completed and signed questionnaire must be presented to and adopted by the board by means of a formal resolution in an open meeting.

The completed and signed questionnaire and a copy of the adoption instrument must be given to the auditor at the beginning of the audit. The auditor will, during the course of his/her regular audit, test the accuracy of the responses in the questionnaire. It is not necessary to return the questionnaire to the Legislative Auditor's office.

Seek guidance from your auditor if you have questions about filling it out, or review the previously filed questionnaire.

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# Chapter 15

# TAX ELECTIONS

"Investing in public libraries is an investment in the nation's future." – Bill Gates

## TAX ELECTION PROCESS

The Louisiana Constitution of 1974, Article VI: Local government, §32[1], authorizes a special tax for the support of a public library. It reads:

> "For the purpose of acquiring, constructing, improving, maintaining, or operating any work of public improvement, a political subdivision may levy special taxes when authorized by a majority of the electors in the political subdivision who vote thereon in an election held for that purpose."

The Election Code (La. R.S. 18:402 et seq.) adopted by the legislature pursuant to the state constitution establishes a uniform procedure for the conduct of bond and tax elections.

Many steps must be followed before a tax election, and the responsibility for each may vary from parish to parish. Check with the parish governing authority to ascertain which steps are the library's responsibility.

The first step, of course, is for the library board, with the help of the administration and staff, to make the decision that it is time to call a tax election. Consideration should be given to the amount of money necessary for the library's operation and the number of years that the tax should run. Traditionally, the duration of library taxes is usually ten years. Keeping in mind that the library must share the cost of the election with others on the ballot, the board should work with a bonding attorney to create:

1. the resolution ordering and calling for the tax or bond election, and
2. the proposition as it will appear on the ballot.

The actual wording of the proposition as it is submitted to the voters is very important and should be carefully studied. It is very important that the heading indicates that the proposition is for the library so that voters will not confuse it with the other propositions on the ballot, if any. For example, the heading should read "Library Tax Proposition" rather than merely stating "Parish-wide Tax Proposition". Also, be sure that the purpose of the tax is spelled out by noting that the tax is for the "support, maintenance, operation, and upkeep" and/or for the "construction and improvements" of the parish library system.

Remember, how the proposition is worded will legally limit the use of the tax money. Attorney General Opinion 98-361 states that the proceeds of an ad valorem tax levied for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, and improving a public library and its branches could not be used for the purchase of equipment and books for use by the library.

After the resolution and proposition are written, the Board officially approves the written resolution and sees that it is placed on the governing authority's agenda for discussion and approval. Next, the resolution is officially approved by the governing authority and a resolution approving of the election is generated by the governing authority.

A written (certified copy of the resolution of approval) notice of the election is next sent to the Secretary of State, State Bond Commission, Commissioner of Elections, and each Clerk of Court and Registrar of Voters in the area affected by the election at least forty-five days prior to the election. A copy of the proposition as it is to appear on the ballot must also accompany the election notice. The purpose of this notification is to ensure that each office is fully prepared for the election and can fulfill its legal responsibilities accordingly.

Along with the certified resolution, an application is formally made to the State Bond Commission for consent and authority to hold the election and, should the proposition pass, to levy and collect the special tax or finance the bond as provided in the proposition. Notice to the State Bond Commission should be submitted several weeks in advance of the 45-day deadline for the Secretary of State's office.

A schedule of these deadlines, State Bond Commission meetings, and regular election dates is available on the State Bond Commission's website.[2]

Public notice of the election shall be provided, covering all essential details outlined in the resolution ordering the election. The notice will also include a list of all designated polling places and inform the public that the governing authority of the political subdivision will, in an open session at the specified time and place, canvass the returns and declare the election results. The notice shall be published once a week for four consecutive weeks in the official journal of the political subdivision. Not less than forty-five days nor more than ninety days may intervene between the date of the first publication and the election.

Bond and tax elections may be held only on certain specific days during the year.

In addition, if your proposition fails, you must wait at least six months before putting it before the voters again. You should go out for your tax at least 6 months before the end of your current tax. Louisiana law does not place a limit on how early you can go out for a tax.

For more information on election dates, go to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office in Baton Rouge.[3]

**PLANNING A CAMPAIGN**

Suggestions for planning a campaign:

1. Contact the Library Development staff of the State Library. They can help you plan your campaign, supply you with sample publicity pieces and update you on recent changes in the election law.
2. Meet with library staff members and explain the goals and plans for the campaign.
3. If your library has a Friends group, ask them to get involved to help promote tax election and assist in conducting a campaign.
4. Prepare a fact sheet for general distribution.
5. Prepare informative handouts (brochures, pamphlets, bookmarks) for distribution to patrons.
6. Prepare posters for display.
7. Prepare colorful and informative graphics to be used in the campaign.
8. Prepare social media posts to stay ahead of the tax opposition to explain the tax and the benefits of library services.
9. Plan to conduct town hall meetings to explain the need for the tax to the community members who want to meet with the library in person. Townhall meetings help the best. And you have control over what is being said. The director must be present and not let other individuals speak on his/her behalf. That can end badly.
10. Organize a speakers' bureau made up of board members and library friends. Prepare a library fact sheet to assist speakers.
11. Write letters to organizations offering speakers on the library and its services; ask for resolutions endorsing the library tax.
12. Write similar letters to parish and city agencies, such as the school board, city councils, etc.
13. Contact media outlets and schedule visits with the newspapers, radio and TV stations to ask for their help in promoting the tax election by using:
    - weekly stories on library service
    - specific stories on the various goals of the campaign
    - editorials

- letters to the editor from a variety of interested citizens
- resolutions
- radio, TV, and press interviews with board members, library staff, and interested citizens
- spot announcements on library services and tax campaign
- advertisements paid for by business, industry, or individuals (not the library)

**What You Can and Can't Do**

The State Constitution, Article XI, Section 4[4] reads:

> "No public funds shall be used to urge any elector to vote for or against any candidate or proposition, or be appropriated to a candidate or political organization. This provision shall not prohibit the use of public funds for dissemination of factual information relative to a proposition appearing on an election ballot."

This means that library funds may not be used to promote an affirmative vote on a library tax proposition. They may be used to explain and provide information relative to the proposition, to state what would happen if the tax passes or if it fails, but not to print literature of any type saying "Vote Yes" or "Vote for the library tax". This prohibition also extends to the use of library time by the librarian and staff to promote a favorable vote and the use of library equipment to produce promotional materials.

Friend's groups and Foundations (non-profits) cannot contribute more than 20% of its expenditures towards lobbying, (that is, asking to vote "yes") without risking nonprofit status. They can spend money on informational campaigns without limit. *Measuring Lobbying Activity* details the expenditure test.[5]

**Political Action Committees (PACs)**

Political Action Committees (PACs) can serve as powerful advocates for securing essential resources and advancing critical policy initiatives. PACs can provide crucial financial backing and assistance in advocating for library funding, often rallying support for tax measures and bond issues that contribute to library expansions, improvements, and operational sustainability.

Library PACs can actively engage with voters and communities and foster wider awareness about your library's services, which include improving literacy rates, supporting education, and community development. PACs can mobilize community support during elections or legislative sessions, advocating for adequate financial backing from local, state, or federal governments.

Library sector PACs can wield influence in legislative circles. They work tirelessly to sway policymakers toward policies that protect library resources, ensure intellectual freedom, and facilitate broad public access to information. Their collaborative efforts with other advocacy groups and community organizations often unite voices in support of library-friendly legislation and budget allocations.

You should remember a few critical matters about PACs, especially if you choose to work with one during elections. When your library engages with the Political Action Committee, it enters a realm where strategic benefits and potential pitfalls intersect. PACs bring significant advantages, offering expertise in mobilizing support and advocating for financial backing crucial to library operations and expansions.

However, the involvement of PACs, particularly those from outside the local community, introduces complexities that libraries must navigate with care. One of the primary considerations is public perception. While PACs can amplify the library's voice and influence, there's a risk that community members may perceive external PAC involvement as imposing outside interests or agendas on local affairs. Maintaining transparency about goals, intentions, and the collaborative nature of the partnership is vital to preserving community trust.

Moreover, libraries must ensure that the PAC's objectives align closely with local needs and values. This alignment strengthens the advocacy message and mitigates potential conflicts that could arise if PAC priorities diverge from community expectations.

Crafting effective campaign messaging becomes crucial in this context. Libraries and PACs must work together to communicate the positive impact of library services and funding initiatives clearly and convincingly to local stakeholders. This collaboration should emphasize the library's role as a community asset and highlight how increased support can directly benefit residents.

Ethical considerations also come into play. Libraries must adhere strictly to legal regulations governing PAC contributions and expenditures, ensuring full transparency and compliance with disclosure requirements. Upholding these standards maintains the integrity of advocacy efforts and reinforces the library's commitment to ethical conduct in all aspects of political activity.

While partnering with PACs can enhance libraries' advocacy efforts during local elections, careful management of public perception, alignment of goals with community interests, effective communication, and ethical practice are essential to an effective partnership between your library and a PAC. Both the library board and the director should be prepared to balance these factors thoughtfully so they can effectively leverage external support to advance the library's mission while remaining true to their local roots and responsibilities.

**AFTER THE ELECTION**

After the election, the official results are canvassed and the Proces Verbal giving the results is published once in the official journal.

Also, check to make certain that adjustment in revenue sharing funds are made if needed. The mechanics of ensuring eligibility for revenue sharing funds are simple - contact your legislator (either representative or senator) and request that new millages be included in the next revenue sharing bill. For further information on this matter, contact your State Library consultant and review the section in Chapter 13, Finance, on State Revenue Sharing.

If your Friends group has collected money for the library, and it is used in a tax election, you must file certain forms. Links to these forms are found at the Louisiana Board of Ethics website, under the Recall/Other Persons category.[6]

Also, the Louisiana Board of Ethics publishes filing schedules, based on the date of your election[7], which lists the dates for reporting the contributions from your Friends and how the money was spent for each election date.

**WHAT IF YOUR TAX DOESN'T SUCCEED?**

Not all is lost. You may be able to ask the voters again at the next scheduled election.

Library taxes have failed for a variety of reasons, including general voter anti-tax sentiment, low voter turnout with the anti-tax faction voting heavily, and being on the ballot with unpopular propositions. In 1995, voters approved an amendment to the Louisiana Constitution (Article 6, Section 30 B[8]) providing that the submission of a local tax proposition to the electorate may occur no more often than once within a six-month period except in the case of an emergency.

You will go back to the voters again – older, wiser, and with a more successful result!

## ENDNOTES

[1] Louisiana Legislature. *Louisiana Constitution of 1974, Article VI: Local government, §32*. https://legis.la.gov/legis/Law.aspx?d=206506

[2] Louisiana Department of the Treasury. *State Bond Commission*. https://www.treasury.la.gov/state-bond-commission

[3] Louisiana Secretary of State. *Get election information*. https://www.sos.la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/GetElectionInformation/Pages/default.aspx

[4] Louisiana Legislature. *Louisiana Constitution of 1974, Article XI: Prohibited Use of Public Funds. §4.* https://legis.la.gov/legis/Law.aspx?d=206346

[5] Internal Revenue Service. *Measuring lobbying activity: Expenditure test*. https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/measuring-lobbying-activity-expenditure-test

[6] Louisiana Board of Ethics. *Campaign finance forms*. https://ethics.la.gov/CampFinanForms

[7] Louisiana Board of Ethics. *Campaign finance filing schedules*. https://ethics.la.gov/CampFinanFilingSchedulesArch

[8] Louisiana Legislature. *Louisiana Constitution of 1974, Article VI: Local government, §30*. https://legis.la.gov/legis/Law.aspx?d=206503

# Chapter 16

# INSURANCE FOR LIBRARIES

"You can only buy insurance when you don't need it. When you need it, you can't buy insurance." – Anonymous

## INTRODUCTION

Insurance is protection, although the very mention of the word can cause glazed eyes. But your library needs insurance to guard against loss, liability, negligence, and oversight. Almost everything can be covered by insurance. A library requires contractors and architects to hold insurance when working on library construction projects, and often requires other service providers to obtain liability, performance, and worker's compensation coverage.

The range of insurance available today has expanded to meet the needs of a litigious society. As the danger of liability has risen, the industry has expanded to meet the need, fill the void, or, depending upon your viewpoint, create the demand. Various types of insurance are needed by a library. As the chief administrator, the library director must advise the board on the need for, as well as the cost of coverage.

The true bottom line on many insurance coverages is, of course, how much can be afforded by the library's budget. While insurance is highly individualized and should be tailored to each library's needs, the practical constraints of the budget will determine how much of the necessary insurance can be obtained. The library director and the board must carefully consider the needs of the library against the potential risks when determining insurance coverage.

Some library systems are included in the insurance plan of the governing authority. Other libraries have separate insurance coverage. The director will need to determine the maximum coverage that can be procured and work with the parties involved to acquire this coverage.

Insurance brokers play a critical role in helping libraries navigate the complexities of insurance policies by offering expert advice on coverage options, costs, and potential risks. Engaging with a broker allows the library to access a wide range of insurance products and obtain tailored solutions that meet its specific needs.

Here are some things to consider before purchasing insurance.

1. The first step for a director investigating insurance is to ascertain how the library is covered: what policies exist and the cost of the policies. The "risk management" or

other insurance specialist at the parish level is generally a good person to contact when investigating insurance coverage.

2. Before insurance can be purchased or upgraded, the value of the items being insured must be determined. The general fixed assets list, building construction cost, vehicle value, and book collection value are all items needed when insuring property and liability. The inventory of physical assets must be brought up-to-date before considering insurance. When quoting the policy, the insurance broker will request the director supply the list of all assets and their estimated value.
3. A library is a public building. The risk of the library's liability due to personal injury or loss of property must be assessed. Policies enacted by the library board and decisions made by administrative staff could potentially cause liability problems for a library.
4. It is at this point that risk management can help. Determine which of the library's risks can be eliminated, reduced, or transferred, which losses should be insured against, and which losses can be assumed or self-insured. For example, a library's budget might be able to withstand a potential $5,000 property loss risk (deductible) each year, assuming this risk might reduce premiums over the long-term.

## TYPES OF COVERAGE

Insurance is complex, and the vocabulary can be as esoteric as the vocabulary of any specialized field. The two main areas of insurance for libraries are:

- Liability, which covers the building and grounds, the contents of the building, vehicles, and any accidents on library property, and
- Health insurance for staff, which may be a large portion of the library budget.

The best advice is to know the library's needs and discuss coverage with the library's insurance agents.

Blanket policies cover more than one piece of property and/or property contents, in a single amount or limit. For example, a blanket policy might cover the physical plant and contents of all library branches.

Special endorsements to policies that modify the standard coverage may also be available. These endorsements might include large deductibles, replacement cost coverage, contingent liability (if the building does not meet code requirements), and special pricing (which covers special, irreplaceable collections).

**BUILDINGS AND CONTENTS**

Blanket property coverage on a parish-owned library building will be an expense of the library. Because the title to library buildings resides with the governing authority, the governing authority may carry insurance on the building. Usually, the cost is charged back to the library budget by the governing authority. The library may want supplemental coverage if the insurance carried by the parish is not deemed sufficient.

Plate glass requires specific coverage by endorsement if it is to be insured against breakage by accident or vandalism.

Blanket contents coverage refers to furniture, books, equipment, and other items owned by the library. The general fixed assets list and valuation of the book collection are used to determine the coverage required.

A special type of contents coverage for valuable papers and books is classified as inland marine coverage. A library may want to investigate securing this type of coverage for rare books and manuscripts, special collections, fine arts, and bookmobile contents.

Burglary and theft are not covered in blanket policy packages unless by specific endorsement. Unless a library has an extreme problem with break-ins, this kind of endorsement is usually not cost-effective.

Money and securities must be insured separately from other property. However, if the library can control how much money is left in the building and is making daily deposits of fine and photocopy monies, this type of coverage may not be needed.

**FLOOD**

Flood insurance is protection for specific flood events. Flooding is the most common and costly natural disaster in Louisiana. Flood damage is covered by a separate flood insurance policy apart from your building insurance. If you are in a high-risk area, you may want to consider this coverage.

**MISCELLANEOUS PROPERTY**

Bailer liability is often secured for personal property of others, such as items on exhibit. This coverage may be a separate policy or covered under a blanket policy by endorsement. A transportation floater covers property at outside locations, as well as property in transit.

**LIABILITY INSURANCE**

General liability, or comprehensive public liability, protects the library from injuries to the public on library property, for example, if someone slips and falls. Umbrella, or excessive,

liability coverage is sometimes secured to protect the library in case of a major liability claim. Umbrella coverage is generally a separate policy and is written in multiples of $1,000,000. It offers protection and payment above and beyond the limits set in the general liability policy.

**CYBER LIABILITY COVERAGE**

A newer kind of coverage considers security breaches of networks, ransomware attacks, and additional cyber threats. As libraries have become increasingly dependent on technology, it can be very costly for your IT staff to repair a breached infrastructure. Entire servers may need to be rebuilt, and the library still requires access to technology while this is being done. Temporary servers may need to be purchased and configured.

**VEHICLES**

Vehicle coverage, including comprehensive, collision, and liability policies, are available for bookmobiles, vans, and library automobiles driven by staff. Many libraries are self-insured for the loss of a van or automobile.

**PERFORMANCE BONDS**

Performance bonds, also called surety or fidelity bonds, are guarantees of "faithful performance" in financial matters by the bonded individual. Often, a surety bond is taken out on the library director. Sometimes, a blanket bond which covers all employees is secured.

**ERRORS AND OMISSIONS**

Liability insurance is sometimes secured by libraries to protect the individual decision-makers of non-profit organizations. Known as "errors and omissions", this term is commonly encountered within the context of Directors and Officers (D&O) terminology. By definition, "errors and omissions" denote the mistakes, oversights, or negligence that might be committed by an entity or professional during the execution of their duties. It is the inadvertent failure to do something that should have been done or the unintentional act leading to damage or financial loss. This type of coverage is also called Public Officials' Liability or Malpractice insurance.

**UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

Unemployment compensation is mandatory insurance coverage. This insurance fund compensates former employees who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. There are several methods of handling unemployment insurance in Louisiana.

1. Louisiana unemployment insurance fund: the library pays a quarterly premium based on the library's taxable payroll. The rate is determined by the state and is based on the library's unemployment experience.

2. Self-insurance: the library sets aside a separate percentage of its payroll in a fund to meet future claims. The fund is used to reimburse the State of Louisiana for claims against the library.

3. Reimbursement: the library does not have separate unemployment insurance nor a separate self-insurance fund for unemployment claims. Rather, the library reimburses the State of Louisiana for claims against the library.

For more information, visit the Louisiana Workforce Commission website, Louisiana Works, Unemployment Insurance.[1]

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

Workers' compensation is a mandatory policy to aid employees who have been injured on the job. Rates are set by class of employee (e.g., clerical, administrative) and applied against the library's anticipated payroll. Workers' compensation is audited at the end of each year. The library may receive a credit for overpayment or a supplemental invoice, depending on how the actual payroll matched with the anticipated payroll upon which premiums were based.

**HEALTH OR GROUP INSURANCE**

A library may offer group insurance to its employees for health, life, and dental coverage. Plans for the employee, as well as for family members, may be offered. Stipulations concerning eligibility (such as, employees must be non-temporary and work over 28 hours a week) can be made by the library as long as these are uniformly applied and do not discriminate.

When deciding to offer group insurance to library employees, the library director should determine the insurance costs and coverages. Also, determine what percentage of the coverage is paid by an employee and what percentage is paid by the library.

An attorney general opinion (AG Op. No. 10-0164) has said that parish government may pay 100% of the insurance premium cost for employee health and accident insurance.

It is, however, illegal for a library to give bonus payments to employees who do not participate in the group insurance plan. It is also illegal for employers to give employees direct cash payments to defray the cost of health insurance.

**Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)**

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 or COBRA gives eligible former employees the right to continue their group insurance coverage for a certain period of time, as specified by the act. The library's group insurance policy should address COBRA participation.

It is legal for a public agency to use public funds to pay insurance premiums of its retired employees. Your library should have a policy regarding the participation of retired employees in the group insurance, including details of what percentage is paid by the library and retired employees.

**MEDICARE**

Medicare coverage is required for all employees hired (or rehired) by the library after March 31, 1986. This is a matching payroll deduction. Libraries who belong to Parochial Employment Retirement System in lieu of participating in Social Security do have to include their employees hired after March 31, 1986, in the Medicare system.

As of July 1, 1991, these same libraries which have full and part-time employees not eligible for participation in Parochial Employment Retirement System must participate in the Social Security system for those employees. This includes both the FICA and the Medicare contributions as paid by both employee and employer.

It is advisable for the library director and board to periodically conduct a comparative review of their insurance coverage by consulting with multiple brokers. This process ensures that the library remains informed about the latest policy options and pricing structures, helping them avoid overpaying or being underinsured. Regular reviews also offer opportunities to adjust coverage in response to changes in the library's operations, such as expanded services or new and/or renovated facilities. By keeping insurance policies current and competitive, the director will be able to protect the library's assets and operations more effectively.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Louisiana Workforce Commission. Louisiana Works, *Unemployment insurance*. https://www.laworks.net/UnemploymentInsurance/UI_MainMenu.asp

# Chapter 17

# FIXED ASSETS

"The public library is more than a repository of books. It's a mysterious, wondrous place with the power to change lives." – Elizabeth Taylor

## DEFINITIONS

Fixed assets are long-term tangible property or equipment which the library intends to continue to hold and use and are not expected to be sold within a year. They are generally categorized as property, plant, and equipment, that is, land, buildings, equipment, machinery, or vehicles. In libraries, fixed assets also include the collection and computer equipment. Government fixed assets are those assets acquired by governmental funds, and not accounted for directly in the real accounts of such funds.

The Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) website provides a document on best practices to help local government entities create their own written policies and procedures, *Capital Assets Policy And Procedures*.[1]

LLA also published a copy of their presentation on Capital Assets Management.[2]

## STATE LAW AND RECORDKEEPING

La. R.S. 24:515(B) requires that the library "shall maintain records of all land, buildings, improvements other than buildings, equipment, and any other general fixed assets which were purchased or otherwise acquired, and for which such entity is accountable." Information such as date of acquisition, initial cost, and disposition (if any, along with the purpose of the disposition and the recipient of the disposed goods) must be kept in the records. The auditor examines fixed asset records during the library's audit. (See section on audits in Chapter 14, Budget)

Libraries maintain fixed assets records and add new items annually, while other items are removed. A "running total" of the value of the library's fixed assets is thus maintained.

Items placed in a library's inventory generally have a minimum value in the $250-$5,000 range and have a long-term life. The minimum value can be different for different government agencies. Your library may operate under your governing authority's rules.

Equipment items are labeled with a non-removable property tag which contains the library's name and an inventory or tag number. Some libraries may use property tags which bear the

name of the parish rather than the library. The tag number is recorded for ease of identifying a specific piece of equipment.

Small items under $250, such as calculators, are generally considered "office supplies" rather than as part of the fixed assets of a library. A library can account for such items by either tagging these items and assessing a $0 value to the items, or by simply recording these items as supplies. Some libraries use non-numbered tags to simply "property stamp" such items.

**RECORDS RETENTION**

Libraries generate numerous reports, documents, and other records each year. While it may be tempting to clean out your filing cabinets by throwing away old and outdated records, you should establish a record retention schedule and have it approved by the library board. Depending on the record, you may be required to keep it permanently, or retain the records a certain number of years.

**Secretary of State Requirements**

The Secretary of State, Division of Archives, Records Management, and History can assist in setting up a record retention schedule. The Division will provide an "agency worksheet", which should be filled out by the library and sent back to the Division. Division personnel will then use this information to set up a record retention schedule for the library.

These guidelines are useful when establishing record retention policies:

1. State law requires keeping records a minimum of three years if a formal retention schedule has not been developed and approved for the agency by the State Archives.
2. Records relating to IRS matters (such as W-2 forms, payroll, tax-exempt information) must be kept a minimum of four years. However, records of this nature which fall under the purview of the Louisiana Department of Revenue and Taxation must be retained a minimum of six years, as per La. R.S. 44:36(B).
3. Annual budgets, year-end financial reports, audit reports, statistical reports, and records relating to building construction are among those a library may wish to keep indefinitely.
4. Records are often kept in a variety of formats (e.g., electronic, printed). A library may elect to keep only a printed copy. The format chosen for permanent retention must be in accordance with La. R.S. 44:39.
5. Some library records are also kept by the governing authority (e.g., audit report, budget). If the governing authority keeps such records indefinitely and storage space in the library is at a premium, the library might choose to retain only the past three years' records in-house.

## BOOKS AND OTHER LIBRARY MATERIALS

Library books and other library collection materials are fixed assets. Public library books are considered tangible assets with a life, generally, greater than one year. Even though the cost of an individual book may be under $250, books, as a group, represent a significant value to the library. Other material collections, such as periodicals in paper format, bound periodicals, microfiche, microfilm, paperbacks, DVDs, videocassettes, recordings and audiocassettes, art prints, filmstrips, or software, could be considered as a part of the library's fixed assets. A library should consider the following when deciding if a specific collection is part of the library's fixed assets:

1. the collection is held for the long term and individual items generally have a long life span;
2. the collection represents a significant value in reference to the library's total holdings; or
3. the collection is of a "reference" nature.

In practice, collections established as fixed assets will vary by library. For example, a library with a small video collection might exclude these items from the fixed assets policy; a library with over 1,000 DVDs would likely include this collection in the fixed assets policy. A library might exclude unbound issues of periodicals or periodicals kept less than 5 years from the fixed assets policy, but would include bound issues, since the latter are used for reference, held indefinitely, and represent a significant investment of library funds.

Several methods exist for assessing the value of the book collection for fixed assets purposes. Some libraries use a moving average for additions and deletions for each collection. Other libraries have recorded the actual cost of each item added to the book collection, using this value when the item is discarded. Some libraries establish separate valuations for their reference book collection and paperback collection. The State Library can assist a library director with determining the value of the book collection for fixed asset accounting.

## INVENTORY

A library should periodically inventory its fixed assets. Some libraries do a partial inventory each year, rotating what is done, so that a complete inventory is accomplished over two to three years. Other libraries do a complete inventory of fixed assets annually or biennially.

An annual or biennial inventory of library books is generally impractical in most libraries. Books differ from other fixed assets due to their quantity and their mobility. The library shelf-list in the past was a physical record of materials, but today, most libraries are automated and can easily generate this information. This is considered the fixed assets record of the book collection.

## DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

Generally, a library can legally dispose of obsolete property in several ways. First, items must be declared surplus by formal resolution of either the library board or the governing authority. Items can then be offered for sale to the public via public auction or by advertising for bids on the items. Items are sold to the highest bidder. Items cannot be given to an individual, staff member, or board member. For additional details, see La. R.S. 49:125.

Items can be transferred to another department within the parish or municipality, or donated to another governmental entity (such as a library in another parish) as a transaction between governmental entities. See Chapter 13, Finance, Cooperative Endeavor Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding. For transfer of electronic devices, see La. R.S. 49:125.1.

Library books which are outdated, damaged, or simply no longer needed in the collection should be discarded. According to La. R.S. 25:151, the following are valid methods of disposing of surplus library books.

1. Sell via a book sale or online seller.
2. Give the books to another library or to another parish or municipal agency.
3. Give the books to a non-profit organization.
4. Throw away or recycle the books.

For more detailed information on this, see the section on Weeding in Chapter 19, Collections.

## GENERAL FIXED ASSETS POLICY (GFA)

Louisiana does not have a statute that exclusively governs the management of public libraries' general fixed assets. Instead, general rules for managing and accounting for public property apply, including those outlined in the Louisiana Local Government Budget Act (La. R.S. 39:1301 et seq.) and the Local Government Accounting Standards.

Libraries, as public entities, are required to follow these guidelines for managing general fixed assets. Louisiana law requires public entities to maintain an inventory of fixed assets. This responsibility is generally governed by La. R.S. 24:513, which mandates audits and inventory controls for public entities under the oversight of the Louisiana Legislative Auditor.

To ensure compliance, libraries often adopt fixed asset policies based on Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) principles, which Louisiana public entities commonly follow.

Each library should have a general fixed assets policy established by the library board. A library may choose to follow the GFA policy of the parish; if so, the board should reflect this in their minutes. The GFA policy should address the following:

1. define general fixed assets and establish a minimum dollar value for GFA;
2. define GFA in relation to the library's book collection, listing which collections are included and which collections are not included, along with a justification for excluding the collections;
3. description of the recordkeeping process for each of the GFA groupings (land, buildings, equipment, book collections);
4. description of property tags and what items will be tagged;
5. inventory procedures and frequency of inventory; and
6. procedures for disposition of assets.

A library should periodically review its GFA policy, making revisions when necessary. For example, a library may establish an amount as the minimum value of a GFA, but then choose to update this at a later date. You must then remove from the GFA all items under the new minimum value.

## DISPOSITION OF LIBRARY BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

Library buildings and the property upon which they are built are owned by the governing authority, not the library. When fixed assets, such as furniture, equipment, or vehicles, become surplus, the disposal process must comply with La. R.S. 49:125 (state property disposition) or La. R.S. 33:4712 (local governing authority property disposal). Proper care and management of library assets are implicitly required under Louisiana law to ensure the appropriate use of public funds. Mismanagement can lead to legal and financial consequences under laws such as La. R.S. 14:134, which penalizes malfeasance in office.

### LIBRARY BUILDINGS

When you want to build a new building, the governing authority (with input from the library) selects, purchases, and takes title to the property upon which the building is built, or the governing authority approves and signs a lease. The governing authority advertises for bids and awards contracts for the library building. When the library is completed, the governing authority holds the title to the building. Therefore, the library cannot sell or otherwise dispose of a building that is no longer used by the library. Refer to the Chart in the Appendix, Duties and Responsibilities of the Director, Board, and Governing Authority.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (2014, October). *Capital assets policy and procedures*. https://cms.lla.la.gov/assets/documents/Capital-Assets-Policy-and-Procedures-Oct-2014.doc

[2] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (2022, February). *Day 1, Session 5: Managing capital assets*. https://cms.lla.la.gov/assets/documents/Day1_Session_5_Managing_Capital_Assets.pdf

# Chapter 18

# FACILITIES

> "The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library." – Albert Einstein

When people describe a library, they often only think of a collection of books and media. Public library buildings no longer just "store books", but the administration and board of the library should stress diversified services and promote the library as a place for information, self-education, and entertainment. A director must manage the building itself, which includes evaluating the current public library facilities as well as anticipating and planning for the future library needs.

Whether managing, renovating, or constructing a property, you must balance everything from space utilization and ADA compliance to sustainability and site security. This chapter guides you through maintaining your existing footprint and planning for future growth.

## CURRENT LIBRARY FACILITIES

### EVALUATION OF FACILITIES

Keeping your library in top shape starts with understanding what you have. Taking the time to assess your buildings—both their strengths and their problem areas—helps you stay ahead of repairs and ensures your spaces work well for patrons and staff. In this section, you'll find tips for evaluating everything from the roof to the reading areas so you can address today's issues while planning for the future.

The director should periodically evaluate all buildings, as well as the bookmobile. Include complete details about the library, including the history of the building, square feet, description of all areas, and so on. Describe the physical facilities and note any problems, for example, roof condition, heating and air conditioning problems, the carpet needs replacing, and so on.

Evaluations should also consider the structural integrity of buildings and their usability for patrons and staff. Start with an inventory of all facilities, noting key details such as:

- Building History: year built, major renovations, or upgrades.
- Layout and Space: how each area is utilized, including seating, collections, and meeting spaces.

- Mechanical and Structural Systems: roof, plumbing, electrical systems, and HVAC.
- Compliance: accessibility per ADA standards and compliance with fire and safety codes.
- Aesthetics and Usability: flooring, lighting, signage, and public comfort.

Use a standardized facility inspection checklist to systematically evaluate these aspects, documenting deficiencies and setting priorities for repair or replacement. Encourage staff and patrons to provide feedback on issues like noise levels, insufficient seating, or lack of outlets. By maintaining an up-to-date facility evaluation report, directors can better allocate resources and advocate for necessary improvements.

**Sample Checklists**

We have curated a few sample checklists from which you can borrow when developing your library's facility maintenance documents and standards. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Planning and Evaluation page includes a checklist under the heading "Facility Management."[1] Similarly, the Utah State Library's Building Maintenance Checklist, part of its Utah Public Library Facility Inspection Checklist series, offers another useful model.[2] The Mid-Hudson Library System, on their web page under "Facilities", also has a Maintenance Checklist for Public Libraries.[3] All of these resources are worth exploring.

**FACILITIES MAINTENANCE**

Proactive library maintenance ensures your space remains safe, clean, and welcoming every single day while preventing unexpected breakdowns. A good maintenance plan lets you stay on top of routine tasks and catch potential problems early before they snowball into bigger issues. This section walks you through creating a practical maintenance plan that fits your library's needs and resources.

Proper maintenance also ensures that libraries remain inviting, functional, and safe for patrons. Maintenance plans should include preventive, routine, and emergency tasks. Preventive maintenance reduces long-term costs by addressing wear and tear before it becomes a major issue, while routine tasks ensure the library maintains a clean and professional appearance.

Libraries should develop a comprehensive maintenance plan that includes:

- Regular Cleaning: Addressing high-touch surfaces daily and deep cleaning at regular intervals.
- Systematic Inspections: Monthly checks of HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, need for preventative or reactive exterminator services, etc.

- Seasonal Adjustments: Winterizing outdoor spaces, increasing frequency of lawn care in summer,  or maintaining cooling systems in summer.

Establish partnerships with reliable vendors and contractors for repairs beyond the library staff's expertise. Include provisions for emergency maintenance, such as securing broken windows or addressing plumbing leaks, to minimize disruptions.

**Maintenance Schedule**

A comprehensive maintenance schedule is the backbone of facility management, ensuring tasks are performed consistently and efficiently. Guide your facilities crew to organize their responsibilities into daily, weekly, monthly, and annual intervals. As an effective library director you must streamline operations and anticipate seasonal or long-term needs. This section provides guidance on structuring an effective maintenance timetable to keep library spaces functioning optimally year-round. Use these points to develop your own maintenance schedule. Your custodial and facility maintenance crews should follow these general guidelines.

***Daily***

- Vacuum and mop public and staff areas.
- Empty trash and recycling bins.
- Sanitize desks, keyboards, and restrooms.

***Weekly***

- Inspect fire alarms and exit signage for functionality.
- Conduct minor landscaping and check outdoor seating or signage for wear.
- Restock restroom supplies.

***Monthly***

- Service HVAC systems and change filters as needed.
- Inspect plumbing for leaks or issues.
- Deep clean carpets and upholstery.

***Annually***

- Inspect the building's exterior, including the roof, gutters, and foundation.
- Schedule professional inspections of electrical systems and elevators.
- Schedule professional inspections of fire extinguishers, sprinkler and alarm systems.
- Assess furniture and shelving for potential replacement.

Encourage your facilities manager to utilize digital tools or apps to automate reminders and log completed tasks. Adopting a proactive approach ensures operational efficiency and enhances the library's reputation for cleanliness and safety.

**BOOKMOBILE**

Bookmobiles are valuable tools for extending library services to underserved communities, but they require careful consideration of their financial and operational demands. This section outlines the costs associated with owning and maintaining a bookmobile, along with common challenges and strategies for mitigating them, helping directors decide whether this service aligns with their library's goals and resources.

Keep in mind that owning and operating one comes with significant responsibilities and costs.

**Costs of Ownership**

1. Purchase Price: Custom-built bookmobiles range from $150,000 to $500,000.
2. Maintenance: Annual servicing costs, including repairs for specialized features like onboard generator or wheelchair lifts, can easily exceed $10,000, especially for older vehicles.
3. Operational Costs: Fuel, insurance, and staffing expenses add to the ongoing financial burden.
4. Storage: The Bookmobile will be more secured and the exterior paint and roofing will last longer if the vehicle is kept indoors when not in-use. If the Library does not have a garage large enough for this, a leased space in an RV/Boat or similar storage facility would be an additional cost.

**Potential Pitfalls**

1. Mechanical Failures: Unexpected breakdowns can disrupt services.
2. Limited Lifespan: Despite good care, vehicles may need replacing after 10–15 years.
3. Regulatory Issues: Ensuring the bookmobile complies with vehicle and safety regulations requires diligence.

To mitigate these challenges, you should keep an open mind and consider:

- Exploring alternative outreach methods, like pop-up library kiosks.
- Partnering with community organizations to use their spaces for programming.
- Conducting periodic cost-benefit analyses to assess the sustainability of the service.

# LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECTS

When you, as the director, foresee the need for increased library space, the future can seem overwhelming. Be advised there is plenty of help available from the literature, the State Library, your colleagues in libraries and local government, your trustees, architectural professionals, and your patrons. As with any big change, a consistent public relations campaign throughout the entire process is essential to maintain community support of the building project. Library staff and trustees must be enlisted from the start to continually inform the public of the need, the importance, and the progress of the building project. Building or renovating a library is a community effort involving public dollars, many people, multiple phases, and, yes, a few years of focused effort – a challenge that can provide great satisfaction to all involved.

Although each library building project is unique there are many elements common to renovating your existing library, or building almost any addition or new structure. These elements can be grouped in major phases which outline the journey from the ideas stage to the use of a finished building:

The American Library Association regularly updates their LibGuide, Building Libraries and Library Additions: Public Libraries.[4] The resources section at the end of this chapter has a link to other resources that you may find useful.

## PHASE 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### FACT FINDING AND SOLUTIONS

This phase involves the establishment of space requirements for current library services and collections; the projection of long-term space needs of the community; and, finally, the evaluation of options to answer these needs for at least the next twenty years.

Before a revolt by library users and staff incensed at the crowded conditions of the library, a director should initiate a thorough fact-finding mission. An honest, unflinching approach is required. The information gathered here is used to evaluate the long-range options to solving the lack of space, and to convince board members, local officials and the public of the need for expanding facilities. Also, the needs and options established at this time are used in the "Planning" phase to develop the building program statement. This vitally important statement will guide the architect, the interior designer, and the building contractor through the entire design and construction or renovation of the library.

## THE NEED FOR A LIBRARY CONSULTANT

Library consultants are usually professional librarians with substantial experience in building projects. They can be hired at the onset of a project to assist fact-finding and funding efforts, or brought in later to help prepare the building program statement or to work with architects and contractors. Books in the accompanying bibliography consider the use of consultants. Whether or not a library needs a consultant depends on factors such as the complexity of the project, and the expertise available in the community. Sometimes, a consultant is invaluable because contentious local players in the building process might be more willing to listen to the views and arguments of an outside "unbiased" expert. Often, the various "consultant" skills are handled by experts extant in the local governing authority. Trustees and local businessmen may lend their talents to the project. Or, by calling upon friends, guts, and providence, these skills are somehow executed by the jack-of-all-trades librarian.

## ESTABLISHING CURRENT SPACE NEEDS

The basic types of space in a library facility are collection space; space for user seating; staff work space; meeting room space; study room space; maker spaces and other creative work areas; special use space (area needed for copiers, public access computers, etc.) and non-assignable space (areas such as foyers, hallways, elevators, staff lounge, toilets, mail room, janitor closets, garages for vehicles, and mechanical rooms that are not assignable to library functions). In order to project a community's future library needs a director must first establish the space currently needed to more adequately house the present collections and services. Librarians involved in a long range planning process will have much of the essential information at their disposal.

An accurate inventory of the collection and the current square footage devoted to the basic types of space is an important first step. Measure the floor space used by each of the basic types. This is also a good time to note how the current lack of space or positioning of various operations affects library services. Notice how workflow or patron satisfaction is impaired or improved by the arrangement of desks, displays or other structures. Places with poor lighting, excessive noise, a lack of electrical outlets, or other problems should be noted for future improvement.

The next step is to apply library space planning formulas to the inventory data. These formulas are widely available in library literature, including many of the sources in the attached bibliography. They constitute allowances for the amount of space needed to adequately house the various aspects of the present operation, e.g., allow 30 square feet of floor space per lounge seat or 125 square feet for each staff work station. The resulting estimates of space needed for each of the basic types of library space are compared to the current library arrangement to graphically point out deficiencies in certain areas.

For example, a widely held collection space planning allowance for optimal shelving of books is 10 volumes per square foot of floor space. This is for the average mix of adult books loosely shelved on full-height (84" - 90"), double-sided shelving, including 42 inch aisles for wheelchair passage. Using this figure, the space needed to adequately house 50,000 books -- at 10 volumes per square foot -- would be 5,000 square feet of floor space. If these books are now housed on 3,800 square feet one could use these standards to point out the lack of adequate space. Realize that areas of one-sided shelving, shelves adjusted for oversized materials, etc. will impact the space planning calculations accordingly.

Other publications have similar formulas for the other collection media (periodicals, microfilm, etc.) and all the remaining space types -- user seating, staff work space, etc. A surprising rule of thumb: non-assignable space (foyers, hallways, stairs, restrooms, etc.) accounts for approximately twenty-five to thirty-five percent of most buildings.

Documenting the present space deficiencies is important. This information validates the perceived lack of space and can be used to determine short-term remedies such as aggressive weeding or usurping extra seating space for shelves. The long-term impact of this information comes in determining future needs.

**PROJECTING FUTURE SPACE NEEDS**

In order to project the size of the facility that will adequately serve its users for the next twenty years, the director must use all sources available to answer these questions:

1. How large will the collection be two decades from now?
2. What is the projected population of the community and what will its demographic makeup be (e.g., age and income distribution, education levels, occupations, etc.)?
3. What space will be needed for adequate seating and meeting rooms for the projected users?
4. How many staff members will be required to serve these users?
5. What impact will ADA and similar legislation have on library design and space requirements?

In the past, libraries relied on standards to calculate an optimal size of library facilities. This is untenable for many reasons. Per capita standards cannot account for the differences between communities, though they have the same number of people. Standards are also difficult to apply to the space needs of non-print materials, library automation, and other emerging technologies. To project true community needs, the floor space estimate must be guided by

information from community analysis and planning, from historical library service patterns, and from patron demands.

Once the size of future collections, staff and seating needs are estimated, the library space planning formulas discussed earlier can be used to document the total square footage needed to adequately house library services for the next twenty years. Be sure to plan for all the basic space types, especially the large percentage (25-35%) taken up by non-assignable spaces.

## PHASE 2: EVALUATING OPTIONS

With current and future building needs in mind the director is prepared to consider one or more of the options available to answer these needs:

1. Remodel/renovate the present facility
2. Expand/add to the existing structure
3. Convert another building to library use
4. Construct a new library building
5. Rent a facility

Each of these options should be explored and objectively compared with any viable options to choose the best answer to library space needs. Criteria for comparison should include the physical condition of the current building and site; usefulness of the intended space; accessibility and visibility to the maximum number of users; effect on patrons of the construction period; possibility of future expansion; and the costs to complete and maintain.

### RENOVATION VS. BUILDING NEW

Neither renovating nor building new is inherently “better”; the best choice depends on your budget, priorities, and property. Renovating can be more affordable and a better value, especially if you want to stay in your current location. However, building new offers a blank slate with potential for superior energy efficiency and customization, but can be more expensive and complex upfront.

**Decision process**

*Choose to renovate if:*

- You love your location: You want to stay at your current location and avoid moving.

- You want better value: Renovating can provide more value for your dollar compared to building a new library in a high-cost market.
- You have a historical property: Some libraries with architectural or historical merit are better suited for renovation and repair.
- Your project is mostly cosmetic: You're looking for aesthetic updates rather than major structural changes.

*Choose to expand/make an addition to current building if:*

- The considerations for renovation all apply, but you need more space that your existing building allows. An example of this is the Rosa Keller Branch in New Orleans. The 1918 house now serves as a community center, while a new library building was constructed at the rear and is connected by a glassed corridor.

*Choose to convert another building to use as the library if:*

- A building may become available that would serve well as a new library, but it will need to be gutted and rebuilt as the library. An example of this is the Lincoln Parish Library, which is now located in a former Albertson's grocery store building.

*Choose to build new if:*

- You want a custom design: A new build allows for complete customization to your exact needs and wants.
- You want superior energy efficiency: New construction can be designed with modern, high-performing energy-efficient features that are difficult to achieve in renovations.
- You want to avoid hidden issues: Building new can help you avoid potential safety hazards like electrical problems, plumbing issues, or asbestos found in older libraries.
- You're starting from scratch: If an existing structure is beyond repair or in poor condition, a new building may be more cost-effective than a full restoration.

You should consider several things before making any decisions.

- While renovation can sometimes be less expensive, a major renovation can quickly exceed the cost of building new, especially if structural work is involved.
- The cost of building new versus renovating can fluctuate depending on the real estate market and the cost of materials.
- Renovations can be disruptive and take a long time, but new builds also require a significant investment of time for planning and construction.

### Renovation of Existing Building

A thorough inventory of the physical condition of a building is required as a first step to evaluating all but the new building options. The inventory should be done by an engineer or an architect -- someone with broad knowledge of buildings in order to assess the building's structural soundness; its compliance with building codes and ADA requirements; any asbestos problem; the electrical system; mechanical system; plumbing, etc. A report on the inventory should include problem areas, including their remedies and associated costs, and an informed opinion on how the renovated facility would function through the next twenty years.

Information must be compiled on the other criteria to be compared: the usefulness of the new space; how the design improves or impedes patron access, including disabled users; which location will attract the most users in the coming decades; the possibility of future expansion. One cannot overlook problems such as the migration of users, the awkwardness of a remodeling design, or the amount of scarce parking lost to an addition. Proximity to one's users is important: a poor location cannot be improved by renovation or new construction. Fondness for a building or a neighborhood should be discounted – the purpose here is to objectively choose the option which will best serve the largest number of users in the future.

### Building a New Library

The selection of a building site for a new library is often one of the most problematic issues in a building project. The director can stem the tide of irrational and/or political reasoning by demanding that relevant criteria be used in site selection. These include convenient access for a large number of users; adequate space for building, parking and possible future expansion; favorable topography and soil conditions; availability; and cost. Soil must be tested due to the geological conditions in the state; testing is done by an engineer.

After a thorough investigation of each viable building option, the director can report the findings to the library board. With the director's counsel, the trustees must choose the best building alternative before the project proceeds to the next phase.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS IN BUILDING OR RENOVATING

### Accessibility and Universal Design

Discuss the need for facilities to be accessible to all, following principles of universal design. This should cover not just physical access but also the accessibility of facilities and services to individuals with various disabilities.

**Restrooms**

Public restrooms are essential library amenities, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity, hygiene, and comfort. Modern restroom designs must accommodate diverse patron needs while integrating sustainable and user-friendly features. This section explores how to create accessible, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing restroom facilities that meet contemporary standards. Modern restroom design should prioritize:

**ADA Compliance:** Provide wheelchair-accessible stalls, low-height sinks, and grab bars. Ensure doorways and hallways leading to restrooms meet width requirements.

**Touchless Technology:** Install motion-activated faucets, soap dispensers, and hand dryers for improved hygiene and reduced maintenance.

**Sustainability:** Incorporate water-saving fixtures, such as dual-flush toilets and low-flow faucets.

**Aesthetic and Functional Design:** Use durable, easy-to-clean materials and ensure clear signage for both patrons and visitors.

Routine inspections are essential to address issues like cleanliness, plumbing leaks, or malfunctioning fixtures. Including family-friendly features such as diaper-changing stations can further enhance accessibility.

**Technology Infrastructure**

Very often, library facilities are built without considering future technology needs. Even current technology needs are overlooked. Address the critical role of technology infrastructure in modern library facilities, including network capabilities, digital access points, and considerations for future technological advancements. Adequate infrastructure is crucial for supporting both current and emerging technologies. When building new facilities or renovating existing buildings, consider the ever-growing demands for digital connectivity, power access, and technology-driven programs, ensuring your libraries remain relevant and forward-looking.

Future-proof facilities by incorporating:

- High-speed Wi-Fi networks with ample bandwidth.
- Easily accessible power outlets and USB charging stations in public and study areas.
- Dedicated spaces for technology instruction or makerspaces.
- Flexibility in design to accommodate emerging technologies like AR/VR stations or robotics labs.

Work with your IT department or technology consultants during renovations to ensure proper cabling and equipment placement. Budget for periodic upgrades to avoid outdated systems.

**Safety and Security**

The safety and security of patrons and staff are paramount in any public library. To ensure a secure environment, physical building security measures must be implemented, including access control systems, adequate lighting, and surveillance cameras. Louisiana is very familiar with natural disasters.

When building or renovating a library in Louisiana, you have to start with the reality that hurricanes, flooding, and severe storms are part of the landscape. Safety and security must be central to design. Account for flood zones, elevate structures above flood levels, reinforce roofs and windows to withstand high winds, and install reliable backup power systems. Parking, access points, and emergency exits should support both safe evacuation and efficient post-disaster recovery.

**Space Utilization and Flexibility**

Effective space utilization is key to creating a functional and inviting library environment. We encourage you to work with an experienced interior designer who can help you incorporate flexible furniture and design elements to allow your library to adapt to the changing needs of library users and accommodate a diverse range of activities. Modular furniture, such as movable tables and chairs, allows for easy rearrangement to create different configurations for individual study, group work, or public programs. Multi-purpose spaces, such as meeting rooms that can be transformed into quiet study areas or exhibition spaces, maximize the use of available square footage.

In addition to flexible furniture, consider adding various seating options to cater to different preferences and needs. Comfortable lounge seating can provide a relaxing space for reading or socializing, while collaborative workspaces equipped with whiteboards and power outlets can facilitate group projects and discussions. Technology integration is also essential, with Wi-Fi, charging stations, and computer workstations available throughout the library. Your goal is to create spaces that are both welcoming and conducive to learning and exploration.

**Sustainability Practices**

Libraries are perfectly positioned to set a good example when it comes to sustainability. By using energy-efficient systems, eco-friendly materials, and smart design, you can make your library greener while saving money in the long run. We encourage you to make sustainable choices that benefit your library and your community. Your library can serve as a model of environmental stewardship by integrating green building practices, such as:

- Installing energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems.
- Using solar panels or other renewable energy sources where feasible.
- Employing sustainable materials for renovations and furniture.
- Encouraging recycling and composting programs.

Highlight these efforts to patrons through educational displays or events, fostering community-wide awareness of sustainability.

**Community Engagement in Facilities Design**

When you're planning a new space or updating an old one, don't forget to ask your community what they want. After all, it's their library, and their input can help you create a space that truly works for them. In this section, we'll talk about ways to involve patrons in your planning process and how to use their feedback to guide your decisions. Conduct surveys and host forums to gather suggestions on:

- Preferred spaces for quiet study versus collaborative work.
- Needs for accessible parking and safe bike racks.
- Features like cafes, outdoor seating, or dedicated children's areas.

By involving patrons early, libraries can ensure their spaces align with community expectations.

**Community Spaces and Meeting Rooms**

The need for library spaces is ever-evolving as the community's needs for such spaces transform. We ought to highlight the role of libraries as community hubs and the importance of designing facilities with community spaces, meeting rooms, and event areas that can support a wide range of public programs and private events.

**Outdoor Spaces**

Many libraries are building outdoor spaces for programming or general community engagement. Consider the value and design of outdoor spaces associated with library facilities, such as reading gardens, outdoor programming areas, and connections to community parks or walkways. If your library has room for outdoor spaces, you've got a great opportunity to expand what you can offer. From programming areas to peaceful reading gardens, outdoor spaces can add a lot of value. When working on adding outdoor areas for public use, create spaces that are welcoming, safe, and easy to use. Consider the following ideas:

- Programming Areas: Outdoor venues for storytimes, workshops, or movie nights.

- Green Spaces: Gardens or green roofs that provide beauty and environmental benefits.
- Recreational Features: Trails, reading nooks, or fitness zones in partnership with local parks.

Ensure outdoor areas are ADA-compliant and include weather-resistant seating, clear signage, and proper lighting for safety.

**Maintenance and Operations**

When planning or designing a building, one must think ahead and plan beyond the grand opening. Discuss comprehensive strategies for ongoing facilities maintenance and operations, including routine inspections, long-term maintenance planning, and cost-effective management of library facilities.

**BUILDING PROJECT FUNDING**

Once a library board has completed and evaluated a needs assessment, capital project funding runs through a fairly well-worn legal channel. The mechanics differ depending on whether the project draws on library revenue, voter-approved debt, or the state capital outlay program, but the sequence below reflects how it traditionally plays out for a parish or municipal library.

**Legal Foundation**

The core statute is La. R.S. 25:213. It gives the parish or municipal governing authority (council or police jury) three distinct ways to fund acquiring a site or erecting a building for a public library: anticipating parish or municipal revenues and issuing bonds or certificates based on that anticipation; issuing negotiable bonds and then levying and collecting taxes to retire them, if approved by a vote of property taxpayers in an election called for that purpose; or levying a special tax as provided by Article VI, Section 32 of the Louisiana Constitution and by law.

In other words, your options are: pay-as-you-go through anticipated revenue, voter-approved bond debt, or a dedicated special tax. A fourth path, the state capital outlay program, sits outside La. R.S. 25:213 entirely and is covered in Section 6 below.

The board's general powers come from La. R.S. 25:215(A), which gives the board of control authority to establish rules and regulations for its own government. Critically, La. R.S. 25:220.1 (enacted by Acts 2024, No. 736, effective 2024) confirms the parish governing authority's fiscal control: the parish may exercise budgetary and fiscal control over any public library it created, including the authority to approve, disapprove, or amend a board-adopted budget, and must comply with the Local Government Budget Act, La. R.S. 39:1301 et seq. Your parish council or jury is your legal checkpoint, which we will also discuss later in this chapter.

**Step One — Securing the Board's Support and Approval**

Before the director approaches the parish government, the library board of control has to act. This follows from the board's statutory authority over library governance under La. R.S. 25:215. A formal board resolution endorsing the needs assessment and authorizing the director to pursue funding options accomplishes three things:

- Creates a documented institutional position if the project is questioned later
- Gives the director legal standing when bringing the request to the council or police jury
- Protects the director personally, since the director is then executing board policy rather than acting independently

**Step Two — Permission from the Parish Council or Police Jury**

Because La. R.S. 25:213 places the bonding, taxing, and revenue-anticipation authority in the hands of the governing authority of the parish or municipality, not the library board, the library cannot self-finance construction. The council or police jury has to act, typically through one of the following:

- A resolution directing the parish attorney or bond counsel to begin work on a financing structure
- An ordinance calling a special tax election
- Simple budgetary authorization, if existing reserve or maintenance funds are being used, subject to La. R.S. 25:220.1 fiscal control provisions

Some parishes have already shifted fund administration to the library board by special statute. La. R.S. 25:215(B) lists numerous parish-specific transfers, including Livingston, Tangipahoa, St. Tammany, Allen, Morehouse, Rapides, Bienville, Sabine, Franklin, West Carroll, Beauregard, St. Mary, and DeSoto parishes, among others. The exact procedural path varies parish by parish, so it is worth checking whether a given parish appears on that list before assuming the standard process applies.

**Step Three — Choosing the Financing Mechanism**

Four distinct paths can be used by a library and its parish to fund a construction project, and they are not mutually exclusive. Three sit inside La. R.S. 25:213 and are purely local in character. The fourth, state capital outlay, runs through an entirely separate state statutory scheme and is often layered on top of one of the other three rather than used alone. All four are laid out below at the same level of detail so the board can weigh them side by side.

***Option A: Pay-as-you-go or reserve funds***

Several parishes have specific statutory authority letting the library board redirect a portion of its maintenance millage toward capital projects rather than only operations. These are parish-specific carve-outs in La. R.S. 25:213, not a general rule, so the matching subsection needs to be confirmed before assuming a given parish has this authority:

- La. R.S. 25:213(C) — Livingston Parish, up to $250,000
- La. R.S. 25:213(F) — St. Tammany Parish, for renovations and capital improvements, and for new construction after a site and preparation plan is presented to the public and approved by a majority of the board
- La. R.S. 25:213(D) — Webster Parish, covering Minden, up to $300,000 from surplus and specified revenue sources
- La. R.S. 25:213(E) — Winn Parish, for acquiring sites, erecting or renovating buildings, or capital improvements

This is the fastest and least encumbered path where it is available, since it requires no election and no Bond Commission approval. Its limit is simply the size of the reserve itself, which is why it tends to fund renovations and additions rather than ground-up new buildings.

The named carve-outs above are not the only road into this option. The more common pattern, and the one with the longest track record across Louisiana and elsewhere, is a library that already has a dedicated millage under La. R.S. 25:213(A)(2) or (A)(3) simply not spending the full collection each year and letting the unspent balance build into a fund balance earmarked for capital projects. Major branch construction and renovation has been funded this way entirely from accumulated reserves with no bond debt at all. This option is not confined to the parishes named in La. R.S. 25:213's specific subsections; it is generally available to any library or parish willing to under-spend its millage and bank the difference over time.

A word of caution on how that surplus is handled: under the governmental accounting standard that applies to library fund balances (GASB Statement No. 54), year-end net income that is simply left sitting as undesignated, unassigned fund balance is not protected for capital use. It is the most exposed category in the fund, the first place a parish or city-parish government will look when it wants to redirect library money toward other municipal needs, and the easiest balance for outside officials to characterize as an unneeded surplus rather than a planned reserve. The safer practice, used in board-adopted fund balance policies, is to have the board formally commit or assign the year-end surplus to a named capital or building reserve fund through an annual resolution, rather than letting it carry over as a general, undesignated balance. Once committed, those funds can be placed in an interest-bearing vehicle such as a

certificate of deposit or another instrument permitted for Louisiana political subdivisions under La. R.S. 33:2955, which also requires the library to adopt and follow a written investment policy. None of this happens automatically. The board has to take the formal step of designating the funds and approving how they are invested before the money can be treated as a true capital reserve rather than an unassigned balance sitting at risk.

***Option B: Bond paid by taxpayers (general obligation bond)***

This is the La. R.S. 25:213(A)(2) path: negotiable bonds repaid through a dedicated tax, but only if authorized by a vote of the property taxpayers in an election called and held for that purpose in the manner provided by law. This requires State Bond Commission approval just to hold the election, separate from approval to issue the debt itself. Under Article VI, Section 22 of the Constitution, La. R.S. 39:1410.60, and La. R.S. 18:1285(B)(1)(b), State Bond Commission approval is required for any political subdivision to incur debt, levy taxes, or place certain propositions on a ballot. This route puts the decision directly to the taxpayers who will service the debt. It is the most public of the four mechanisms, and the one most likely to require a sustained communications effort ahead of the election, separate from the legal process itself.

***Option C: Bond where the parish borrows and the library repays***

This is functionally a revenue-backed or limited-tax bond arrangement where the parish is the issuer of record but debt service is tied to library-dedicated funds, often the maintenance millage. The exact structuring depends on local practice and bond counsel's recommendation, so this is a case-by-case legal arrangement rather than a single uniform statutory mechanism.

Independent of bonding, La. R.S. 25:213(A)(3) also allows a special tax under Article VI, Section 32 of the Constitution, which can fund construction on a pay-as-you-collect basis without incurring debt at all, though it is necessarily slower. Where a parish wants tax-supported funding but wants to avoid the bond structure entirely, this is the simpler, debt-free variant of Option C.

***Option D: State capital outlay***

Separate from anything the parish itself can authorize under La. R.S. 25:213, a library can also pursue funding through the State of Louisiana's capital outlay process. This is the same mechanism used for courthouses, recreation districts, water systems, and other local infrastructure that gets a line item in the state's annual construction program. It is governed by La. R.S. 39:101 through 39:128 and by Article VII, Section 11(C) of the Constitution, which requires a five-year capital outlay program of which the legislature enacts the first year into law annually. Because this path runs through a different statutory scheme, a different state agency, and a different calendar than Options A through C, it is covered in full in Section 6 below. It is best understood as a supplemental, state-level revenue source that is typically layered on top

of a local match drawn from one of the other three options, rather than a stand-alone substitute for them.

**The State Bond Commission Checkpoint**

Under Article VII, Section 8(B) of the Louisiana Constitution, no bonds or other obligations may be issued or sold by any political subdivision of the state unless prior written approval of the Bond Commission is obtained. The Commission reviews applications from parishes and other political subdivisions for compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements and for feasibility, including the ability to repay any debt incurred.

There's one more items we need to flag for you and the board since it touches library construction financing directly. Under La. R.S. 25:225 (enacted by Acts 2023, No. 436) on minors' access to library materials, libraries that fail to adopt a compliant policy by the statutory deadline are barred from having the State Bond Commission approve financial packages for their construction projects. If a parish has not confirmed compliance with that policy requirement, it is worth checking before bond counsel work goes too far, because it is a hard stop at the Commission level, not a discretionary one.

**State Capital Outlay in Detail**

Earlier in this chapter we introduced state capital outlay as a funding option. Because it runs through a separate state statutory scheme, a separate state agency, and a separate calendar from the three parish-level options, it is worth walking through in full here.

**How the request gets in the door**

A library, as a non-state entity, cannot submit a capital outlay request on its own behalf. Under La. R.S. 39:101(B)(1)(a), officials of political subdivisions and other non-state entities submit proposed capital projects through the senator and representative in whose district the project is located, using forms provided by the Division of Administration's Office of Facility Planning and Control. The legislator forwards the request to that office. In practice, this is the Letter of Support requirement the Division of Administration describes: a non-state project needs a sitting senator or representative willing to sponsor it into the system before it goes anywhere.

Requests are submitted electronically through eCORTS (the Electronic Capital Outlay Request Tracking System), and the statutory deadline under La. R.S. 39:101(A)(1)(a) is November 1 of each year for the following fiscal year's requests. A copy also goes to the Legislative Fiscal Office and the relevant House and Senate fiscal committees.

**What the request has to contain**

La. R.S. 39:102 sets out what counts as a complete request. It is not a one-page ask; it is a detailed justification package that has to include:

- An analysis of need with corroborative data
- A reasonable estimate of when the project will be needed
- The proposed location and estimated construction cost
- The estimated local match requirement and amount of local funds already committed
- The cost of equipping and furnishing the project
- A space utilization plan for new or additional space
- First-year operating costs and five-year estimated annual operating and maintenance costs, with the method and source of financing for each of those years
- Identification of similar facilities in the area and an evaluation of whether they could meet the need instead
- The project's priority ranking relative to any other capital requests the same entity has submitted

Taken together, this submission package also serves as the feasibility study required under Article VII, Section 11(C) of the Constitution. The Office of Facility Planning and Control determines compliance and reports its findings to the Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Outlay and the relevant House and Senate committees.

**Project size and funding-source thresholds**

The Division of Administration's own guidance narrows what realistically belongs in a capital outlay request. For projects without a self-generated cash source, the only practical funding mechanism is the sale of state general obligation bonds, and the Division limits these to projects with an anticipated useful life of twenty years or more and a value of at least $50,000. A library construction or major renovation project ordinarily clears that bar without difficulty; smaller equipment-only requests may not.

**The local match**

Under La. R.S. 39:112(E), non-state entity projects funded with general obligation bonds require a local match. The statute caps general obligation bond funding of non-state projects at no more than twenty-five percent of the state's cash line of credit capacity in any fiscal year, which

is itself capped at $200 million annually, adjusted for construction inflation since 1994, absent a two-thirds vote of both houses to raise it.

The statute does provide relief in defined circumstances. The Division of Administration may waive all or part of the match for an applicant in a municipality with a population under 9,500 or a parish with a population of 12,000 or less, if that municipality or parish has demonstrated an inability to provide the match unrelated to mismanagement, financial misconduct, or fraud. The commissioner of administration must report annually, no later than February 1, on which projects received a match exemption.

Since July 1, 2024, there is an added obligation: a non-state entity receiving capital outlay funding for acquisition or construction of buildings must also establish, fund, and maintain an escrow account dedicated to the long-term major capital maintenance of the project, on top of the standard match. That is a real, ongoing line item for the library's budget, and it belongs in the financial planning conversation from the start.

**Timing and renewal**

A capital outlay appropriation does not guarantee money in hand right away. Under La. R.S. 39:101(A)(3), any project or component funded in a capital outlay act that is not funded through a cash or non-cash line of credit approved by the State Bond Commission, or is not under contract within that fiscal year, falls out of consideration in subsequent years unless a new request is submitted. La. R.S. 39:101(A)(1)(b) also requires an updated capital outlay budget request every year a project needs additional state funds to be fully funded, or has not had a contract encumbered within the prior twenty-four months. A project is considered abandoned, and exempt from the resubmission requirement, only once no expenditures have occurred in that same twenty-four-month window.

In practice, this means a library project that gets a partial appropriation one year has to keep showing up, with an updated and current justification package, until it is either fully funded and under contract or formally abandoned. This is also where the legislator relationship matters most: a project without an active, engaged sponsor is much more likely to quietly fall off the list.

**Smaller or faster-moving projects**

La. R.S. 39:112(C) allows some flexibility outside the normal November 1 cycle. A request submitted after that date can still be included in the Capital Outlay Act if it otherwise meets all La. R.S. 39:101 and 39:102 requirements and falls into one of several categories, including a non-state entity project under $1,000,000 that has been approved by the Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Outlay, or an emergency project recommended in writing by the commissioner of administration and approved by that same committee. For a smaller branch

renovation, this late-filing path for sub-$1,000,000 non-state projects may be more realistic than competing in the main annual cycle.

**DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE THE ARCHITECT IS HIRED**

Lock the funding mechanism first, not last. A general obligation bond, a millage-funded capital allotment, a parish-borrowed bond, and a capital outlay appropriation each carry different timelines, debt service assumptions, match obligations, and constraints on project scope. Hiring an architect before this is settled risks a design that does not match what can actually be financed.

Confirm site control and zoning before design begins, not during it. La. R.S. 25:213(A) explicitly covers acquiring sites, so title, zoning, and any donation or sale agreement should be settled first.

Verify the parish's debt capacity and bond rating posture with bond counsel or a financial advisor before promising a building program to the board or the public. The Bond Commission's feasibility review will catch shortfalls anyway, but it is far better to know in advance.

Get a written cost estimate range from a construction consultant or cost estimator, not only the architect's eventual number, so the funding ask to the council is realistic from day one.

Confirm compliance with the library materials policy law described earlier, since it can block Bond Commission approval entirely regardless of how sound the financing plan is.

If capital outlay is in play, identify and engage the relevant senator and representative early. Without a sponsoring legislator, the request never reaches eCORTS in a form the Division of Administration will evaluate.

Budget for the post-award obligations, not just the appropriation. The local match and, since mid-2024, the long-term capital maintenance escrow are real and recurring, and should be modeled before the project is presented as fully funded.

Loop in the parish's own capital outlay or facilities staff early, since many parishes maintain a multi-year capital improvement plan the library project needs to slot into for budget sequencing.

**COST ESTIMATION**

How much will the expansion project or new library cost, and how will it be financed? As mentioned earlier, these ever-present questions should be resolved by the time the architect begins substantive work on the library’s design. The project team, must gather accurate cost estimates and secure adequate funding to build a facility that will serve its community well for decades to come.

The process of estimating construction costs often begins early in the project, and obviously grows more accurate as the building plans evolve. Reports on the condition of the building site, the materials chosen for construction, the bid price of the winning contractor, and unforeseen costs all have their impact on the total project cost. It is essential to avoid underestimating costs. One strategy to protect against underfunding is to create a contingency budget for unexpected costs.

Basic costs associated with building projects are land acquisition; construction costs; furnishings and equipment; new or expanded collections; professional fees for architects, consultants and others; landscaping; and expenses associated with moving collections and services.

**Design Fees**

When working with architects on library construction projects, it's important to understand how fees are structured and what the standard approach is for public projects. Most commonly, fees are calculated as a percentage of the total construction cost. This method scales with the project's size and complexity, and it's backed by clear formulas detailed in the Louisiana Division of Administration's 2025 Fee Schedule, which can be found on their website under "Information Related to Design"[5]

Fixed fees are another option—essentially a flat rate for the full scope of work, regardless of time spent or final costs. This approach is often used for remodels and smaller builds. Hourly billing is generally not recommended due to cost unpredictability, unless specified and set in the contract. It is recommended that the fee structure aligns with Louisiana Administrative Code Title 34, Part III, Section 109, which outlines the official compensation formulas for architects working on public projects. For more guidance, refer to endnote 5, "Information Related to Design".

**Site Costs**

Site costs often have to be negotiated and set before funding can be resolved. The current per-square-foot cost of construction is easily obtained from architects or contractors. The architect or interior designer and furniture company staff can estimate costs for interior furnishings such as cabinets, furniture, and floor and wall coverings. The director and architect should work closely with experts in the library automation and communications fields to plan for the costs of the equipment and conduits necessary for current and future technology. The director can estimate the cost of initial or start-up collections of library materials using information from the fact finding phase and knowledge of current materials pricing. A standard fee range for the architect is from eight to ten percent of construction costs. Other professional fees from consultants, lawyers, engineers (if not included as part of the architectural services cost) and the like may add another two to three percent in costs.

**Ongoing Costs After Construction is Completed**

An important and oft neglected part of the overall funding picture concerns the increased operating costs of the completed structure. The impact of increased staffing, higher utilities, more supplies, building maintenance costs, etc. must be factored into future operating budgets to ensure full use of the new building. A thorough operational costs checklist -- as well as checklists for building and automation projects -- can be found in Jay Wozny's *Checklist for Public Library Managers* (Wozny, 1989).

## PHASE 3: WRITING A BUILDING PROGRAM

This phase includes the preparation of a Building Program; the determination of a building committee or team to guide the building process, including the architect; and the funding of the project. Selection of an architect is very important to the building process and should be done as early in the planning process as possible. Equally important is estimating, planning for, and securing adequate funding for the building project. Exactly when each of these steps in the planning process occurs will vary with each library's situation. See also Chapter 7, Strategic Planning.

**BUILDING PROGRAM STATEMENT**

A public library building program statement is a comprehensive document outlining the functional, operational, and physical requirements for a new or renovated library building. It details community demographics, the library's mission, goals, needs, and specific space allocations for collections, seating, staff, and programs, providing a detailed guide for the design and construction process to meet current and future community needs.

The building program statement uses the information from fact-finding to communicate to the architect and others what is required of the intended facility in order to serve its community for decades to come. It must contain enough detail to thoroughly address the design and space needs of every library service. Though consultants or architects sometimes prepare the building program, it is most often written by the director, with staff input. Ample opportunity should be given for the board to review and advise the writing of the document.

Many examples and checklists are available in the literature to assist in the preparation of a building program document. Contact the Library Development Division of the State Library for sample building programs.

A building program usually begins with a mission statement. A brief history of the library can be given, along with its present condition, and what is needed to accomplish future service goals.

Later sections should get specific: describing each space, how it is used, who uses it, and its present deficiencies (lack of space, inadequate electrical wiring, poor access for the disabled, and so on).

The future space and design needs should be detailed. Use text and graphics such as flowcharts and relationship diagrams to show how spaces relate and function. It is important to illustrate which spaces should adjoin each other for efficient workflow or monitoring.

A facility checklist should be provided. This lists all the spaces previously addressed in the building program with the twenty year space requirement for each area, its relationship to other spaces, and what operations or collections will be housed there. Also, the special requirements of each space for energy systems, plumbing, furniture and communications should be listed. A useful addition is a bibliography or appendix of materials that was used to project the area's population patterns and to determine the space needed to serve the projected community.

A summary can reassert the public service goals of the intended facility, and the importance of efficient, flexible space design for the rapidly changing needs of the future.

An invaluable reference book for planning a library building is *Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations,* by William W. Sannwald. The 2024 edition is in the State Library collection.

**BUILDING PLANNING COMMITTEE / PROJECT TEAM**

The building planning committee or "project team" is comprised of the parties most intimately involved in the building project. This group varies in formality from a loose knit group of board members, librarian and architect to a highly structured team. The formal team might include the director, representatives from the library board, the community and local government, a library consultant, the project architect, and the contractor awarded the building contract.

Whatever the makeup of the project team, the members must understand and accept the commitment they are undertaking. Project team membership involves plenty of homework to prepare for the numerous, intensive meetings involved in planning new library space. The members should familiarize themselves with the building program and the design of other libraries in order to make informed decisions on the many pressing details concerning their library. The members should be diligent, intelligent people willing to learn and work together to build a useful, beautiful library.

The project team evolves or is determined at different times in each building project, and is ultimately responsible for the direction and decisions concerning the emerging facility. The core members of a team often come from the formation of a library board building committee. The

committee begins its work by advising the director through the fact-finding phase and the writing of the building program statement.

The building planning committee grows when an architect is selected and with the addition of a library consultant when this is deemed necessary. Closely following these responsibilities are the frequent meetings called to assist and approve the design of the building. Other experts and members of the community may join the project team for the duration of the project or when their input is essential. Some of the other responsibilities include determining the project's total cost and to secure the requisite funding. The team members must keep the public informed of the building's progress. Although specifics vary among parishes, the team develops and prepares for the bidding process and approves or recommends the awarding of the construction contract. The team also arranges for the oversight of the construction, furnishings, and occupation of the library facility. The architect supervises the construction process. The team plans the grand opening celebration of the completed structure.

**ARCHITECT SELECTION**

A key factor in a successful building project is the selection of a qualified architect. This person or a firm must possess the skills, experience and temperament to work with the project team to design and guide the construction or renovation for a functional, beautiful, affordable library.

The selection process varies across the state. In some locales, the architects for public structures are chosen from a pool of certified architectural firms by the head of the local governing authority or a standing architect selection committee. In the committee scenario, the user agency (library) is usually given one vote as a member of the committee. Barring this type of mandatory selection process, the project team searches for the right architect in much the same way as when recruiting for a top-level position. The job is advertised, applicants are screened and interviewed, and references are carefully checked. It is important for the architect to have experience in designing public facilities that serve clients well and operate with reasonable maintenance costs. It is very desirable that the architect has knowledge of libraries and library buildings.

However the selection occurs, the architect chosen must be responsive to the guidance and demands of the project team. This can be greatly facilitated by detailing the exact responsibilities and fees of the architect in a well-conceived contract. Court-tested contracts are available from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). These provide a framework for a document which can forestall many future difficulties by clearly delineating the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved throughout all phases of the project.

## PHASE 4: DESIGN PROCESS

The five stages of architectural services available for a building project:

1. Developing schematics, which include preliminary drawings;
2. Design development;
3. Preparing construction documents, which include both working drawings and specifications;
4. Supervising the bidding process, including evaluation of bids; and
5. Construction administration.

If the parish has an architect or other individual with the appropriate expertise, this individual may be responsible for supervising stages four and five of the building project. Generally, the architect is engaged for all five stages.

**INTERIOR DESIGN SERVICES**

While the architect typically oversees the larger design elements of the building, the interior designer is responsible for shaping the patron and staff experience within the space. Sometimes this service is included under the architect's contract; in other cases, the library may hire an interior designer directly. Either approach can work, but it is crucial to clarify early who is responsible for these services and what their scope includes.

Interior design is more than aesthetics because it involves the strategic placement of furnishings, thoughtful lighting, sound control, and careful attention to how people use the space. The interior designer can assist you with selecting finishes, furnishings, and built-in casework, and help ensure these choices are both durable and functional. You should be prepared to ask questions, request alternative options, and push back on choices that prioritize appearance over practicality. An experienced interior designer will prioritize utility over looks. In other words, the designer should focus on how furniture holds up under heavy use or how flooring choices impact acoustics and maintenance costs. Consider involving staff in the review of interior layouts and finish samples since they can spot issues the professionals can sometimes miss.

**LANDSCAPE DESIGN SERVICES**

Unlike interior designers, landscape designers are rarely included in the architect's contract and must be contracted separately; yet their influence on the final project is significant. Unfortunately, landscape design is often an afterthought, particularly for directors unfamiliar with the construction process. This can lead to sticker shock late in the project, especially if

elaborate plans call for costly features like mature trees, ornamental flowerbeds, or irrigation systems that strain your maintenance budget.

The landscape design should be considered from the outset. Early planning helps ensure the exterior space is functional, attractive, and maintainable. Focus on practical design: clear pedestrian routes, ADA-compliant paths, and native, drought-tolerant plantings that require minimal upkeep. For beautification, focus on hardy perennials to keep the annual maintenance costs down. Be aware that some landscape designers, much like architects, may default to grand, aspirational visions without considering budgetary or maintenance constraints. Don't feel bad about trimming back—literally and figuratively—excessive plantings, complex water features, or hard-to-maintain species in favor of cost-effective and sustainable choices.

**ARCHITECTURAL AND INTERIOR DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

This phase guides the design of the intended building inside and out. Explicit requirements in the Building Program and input from the project team are translated by the architect and other design specialists into the final drawings and specifications for use by the building contractor. Some libraries have held a competition for selecting a building design. A library interested in this alternative to the traditional approach of hiring an architect to design the facility can contact the Library Development Division at the State Library for additional details.

Though the team leadership shifts somewhat from the director to the architect at this time, the director remains heavily involved in the project. This phase is where the best plans and dreams for future library operations are realized through the project team's guidance of the evolving design. The director should work closely with the architect and other design specialists to ensure the special needs of future library operations are addressed. The director should become familiar with architectural symbols and terminology in order to understand the drawings and blueprints which will come out of the design phases. It is helpful if other members of the project team become familiar with the terminology and drawings to assist them in visualizing the evolving library. Check the bibliography for chapters and references on analyzing blueprints.

**Architectural Design**

In some projects an architect may be hired before the architectural design phase to prepare conceptual drawings and even broad cost estimates for constructing additional library space. These provide the director and library board with concrete assistance as they convince the community of the need and possibilities for a new facility. In some cases, the architect also assists in the development and preparation of the building program. Excepting instances such as this, the project architect begins work with a thorough study of the Building Program.

In early discussions with the other members of the project team, the architect becomes completely familiar with the intent of the building program. At this time the architect will often propose a schedule for completion of the three stages of the architectural drawings, and a target date for letting the finalized drawings and specifications out for bid. Throughout these three stages, schematic drawings, preliminary drawings, and working drawings, the architect will incorporate specifications and system designs from building specialties such as energy distribution, mechanical systems, communications, building security, and library automation.

Schematic drawings, or preliminary drawings, are a first stage result of the architect's work with the functional relationships and space needs described in the building program. The schematic drawings produce a rough floor plan of the various library functions; they depict alternatives for how the building might be placed on the site, and how it would look from various angles. The basic skeletal framework of support columns and beams is developed in the schematic stage. In the case of an addition or expansion, the schematic drawings show how the new portion relates and attaches to the existing structure. The schematic stage should include preliminary specifications for the building materials and mechanical systems the architect is proposing for the facility, and possibly a preliminary placement of furnishings. A key ingredient for the end of the schematic stage is the architect's projection of total costs — a more accurate estimation of costs than was previously possible.

Careful study of these drawings by the project members must ensure the design will facilitate staff and patron use of the building. The plans must also be compared with building program space needs to see that adequate space is provided for all the operations and collections of the library. The design is easily molded in this initial stage — strict attention to detail by the team will forestall the need for making changes which become increasingly difficult and expensive to implement in later design stages.

Upon approval of the schematic design by the project team, the library board, and possibly local government officials, the architect begins the design development stage. Working with various engineers or consultants the architect designs the structural and mechanical systems for the building. Development of these and other elements may necessitate numerous changes to the preliminary schematic designs. Doors and windows are more exactly placed in the plans, and all interior partitions are added. The requirements and specifications for building materials and systems such as air conditioning, security, and plumbing grow more exacting, along with a finer estimation of construction costs.

Once again, the director and other project team members must take pains to ferret out design problems at this stage before the plans are approved — design changes of any magnitude are extremely difficult to make after the design development stage is completed.

The final design stage is the development of construction documents, or CDs: working drawings and specifications. These are the blueprints and written details the contractor will use in the construction phase. The work is complex, with the architect coordinating intricate details and specifications from many building specialties. A fine level of detail is required because when approved these final drawings and voluminous specifications must contain enough information to allow a building contractor to reliably bid and construct the entire structure depicted in the design documents.

The project team usually reviews the working drawings in progress, and then performs a thorough review when the documents are completed before approving the final working drawing and specifications. The architect also prepares a final construction cost estimate at the conclusion of this stage

The final, approved construction documents are combined with bidding instructions and appropriate legal forms to make up the bid documents. The architect must cooperate with state and local officials to ensure all legal requirements are met.

**Interior Design**

The goals of patrons and staff are greatly facilitated by quality interior design. The architect is often responsible for interior design, though more projects are using the services of a separate interior designer. The interior design specialist, whether it is the architect or an interior designer, works as part of the project team to design, procure, and oversee the installation of the following: a functional arrangement of comfortable furniture and equipment; appropriate floor coverings, wall coverings, lighting and acoustics; well-designed signage and display areas; and complementary color schemes. The interior designer also assists in the design and purchase of the library's casework — cabinets, built-in counters such as circulation desks, and other immovable furniture.

Starting in the schematic drawing stage, the interior designer uses information from the building program to prepare layout drawings of the interior furnishings. The first goal is to make sure the required furniture and equipment fits in the proposed floor plan. After this is confirmed, the layout and specifications for the furnishings and color schemes are perfected throughout the design stages. At project team meetings, the architect and interior designer present different design packages of layout drawings, material samples, furniture catalogs, etc. for the team to choose from. Along the way, the interior designer prepares cost estimates to inform the decision process.

The interior designer can also save the library money and, with accurate cost estimates, help the director administer the furnishings budget more effectively. An interior designer uses experience with a wide range of furnishings companies to guide cost-effective purchases. These

furnishings will be carpets, furniture, wall coverings and other items that wear well, and thus save on future maintenance and replacement costs. The interior designer can also be of service writing the detailed specifications needed for the state regulated bidding process and local purchasing requirements.

The director and project team must be sure to order any materials, furniture, shelving, and other items (such as a built-in cabinet or safe) necessary in the construction process early enough to ensure that these items arrive when they are needed. The architect and the interior designer oversee the receipt and installation of these items, and they deal with any companies that deliver damaged or incorrect products.

By the end of the design phase the interior design is incorporated in the construction documents. The bid documents, when necessary, will contain separate specification packages for items such as casework, shelving, and furniture.

## PHASE 5: CONSTRUCTION

This phase includes the contract bidding process; the actual construction of the building; the installation of furnishings; and the acceptance of the building. The architect, or designated "clerk of the works", supervises the construction phase.

**BIDDING**

With the approval of the bid documents the design phase is completed. The construction phase can begin with the bidding of the contract. After review by local officials to ensure the plans are in order, the building job is advertised in the area legal journal. The architect may invite contractors with suitable experience to bid on the project. Contractors interested in the job receive a copy of the bid documents. They review the plans, often asking the architect for clarification on aspects of the job. Sometimes a pre-bidders conference, held with the project team, architect, and prospective bidders, is held before the bid deadline. Contractors submit sealed bids by the stated deadline to the proper authorities.

Bids received by the deadline are opened and forwarded to the project team for evaluation. Generally, as the expert in the process the architect examines the bids. Of all valid bids, the architect must recommend the lowest be chosen unless strong evidence from investigation of the company's past work disqualifies that contractor.

The bid is awarded to the lowest qualified bidder and announced to the public. A contract is drawn up by an attorney from the library or local governing authority. It is negotiated and signed by the contractor and the "owner representative" i.e. the legal representative of the

building project. This entity varies -- it can be the director, the library board, or the heads of the local governing authority.

Once the contract is signed, the contractor prepares a schedule coordinating all the subcontract building specialties required for the job -- concrete workers, plumbers, electricians, etc. Construction trailers move in, temporary phone and electricity services are set up, and the construction work begins in earnest.

**CONSTRUCTION BEGINS**

Actual construction begins with the preparation of the building site. This can involve demolishing existing structure; grading of the site; excavation of basement area and trenches for underground utilities; and preparation of the ground for the foundation. In the case of an addition, the existing structure is readied for connection to the upcoming building.

Thus begins an exciting time for the library planners, library staff, and the public as they watch the foundation, walls, and roof take shape. During construction it should be understood that the contractor is in charge of the construction site. Visits to the site should be approved through the architect. Through site visits and meetings with the contractor and other subcontractors the architect supervises the building process, checking the quality of the work and approving the contractors periodic requests for payment of work completed. The local governing authority often adds another layer of oversight by assigning a building inspector for the duration of the project.

While construction proceeds, the director has much to accomplish: coordinate payments to the contractor and professionals; plan for moving materials, equipment, and staff to the new space; hire and train new staff when needed; continue to keep the public informed and interested in the project; and plan for a celebration period when the new structure is put into use. When dealing with a building addition project, a major effort is needed to mitigate the temporary dislocation, hazards, and mess caused by construction for both users and staff.

Invariably, problems arise that necessitate a change in the plans. A specified material or piece of equipment might have been discontinued, or requires a different amount of space than was planned. A remedy is suggested by the contractor or architect, and, since it often costs more than the original plan, any of these “change orders” must be approved by the project team or appropriate body.

**INSTALLATION OF FURNISHINGS**

As the building proceeds, furnishings are installed. The installation of floor and wall coverings, and, sometimes, the casework, are normally covered in the contractor’s bid. The architect, with assistance from the interior designer, will contract with the furnishing companies or local labor

for the installation of other furnishings, such as shelving, furniture, automation equipment, and artwork. As these orders arrive they should be carefully examined for damage and adherence to the order. Remember, these items must be ordered early to, hopefully, arrive when they are needed; furniture and shelving orders have been known to come in late.

**PUNCH LIST**

A punch list is a document that lists the final work items remaining before a construction project is considered complete. Contractors add all work that does not conform to the specifications in the construction contract to the punch list. Items on a punch list typically include minor corrections, alterations, or repairs that are required before the release of final payment.

**ACCEPTANCE OF THE BUILDING**

A point known as substantial completion is reached near the end of the project. This is when the architect and the contractor agree the building is ready to be handed over to the owners.

A substantial completion walk-through (inspection tour) of the building is scheduled with the entire project team and involved local officials. During the tour, all fixtures and electrical outlets should be tested. Any malfunctioning equipment or fixtures, or damaged window panes, wall coverings, floor tiles or any other problems should be noted. The architect prepares a document called a punch list. This is a list of the problem areas which must be remedied by the contractor before the building can be formally accepted. After agreeing to the repairs listed on the punch list, the contractor, architect and owner representative sign it.

During this time, the contractor should supply the project team with a complete set of instructions and warranties on the materials and equipment installed in the project. The contractor should also supply a full list of subcontractors and manufacturers involved in the project in case problems with their work or product arise. The architect should supply a set of drawings and specifications. If there have been changes during construction, ask for a set of “as built” drawings from the architect.

Once the punch list is signed the director can begin to move in. During the occupation period, the contractor works on the punch list repairs. When satisfactorily completed, the building can be formally accepted by the owner representative, and the contractor can be paid the final portion of the contract payment.

**NAMING THE BUILDING**

Louisiana law (La. R.S. 42:267) prohibits naming a public building in honor of a living person. If a library wishes to do so, the specific exception must be written into law with an act of the legislature.

## PHASE 6: OCCUPATION

The final phase involves moving into the finished structure. Depending on the complexity of the move, this exciting phase can be handled by available staff or contracted out to professional movers. A well-conceived plan which everyone is familiar with is essential to a smooth occupation.

Settling into the new building will take months. Be prepared to overcome many minor problems with equipment, staffing levels, and arrangement of the collection. Keep records of problems and their solutions. Work quickly to repair systems still under warranty. Successful adjustments to the climate control system often take a full year.

As soon as practical after the move is completed a dedication ceremony and celebration period should be held. An open invitation should be publicized for the dedication ceremony. All those involved in the actual project should be specifically invited and briefly acknowledged at the ceremony. Keep speeches short; spend more energy on giving attendees a tour of the new facility. Take pictures, pass a good time — everyone involved will deserve it!

### POST OCCUPATION EVALUATION

You will need to assess how well the new or renovated space meets the library's needs, with considerations for making adjustments based on usage patterns, feedback, and evolving requirements.

## RESOURCES

The American Library Association has a LibGuide on Building Libraries and Library Additions, which includes both print and online resources on topics such as building new libraries, renovating existing buildings, design considerations, and managing the project. Within this page, you can also click on the resources specific to public libraries: https://libguides.ala.org/library-construction/general-information

Another ALA resource guide is Building Libraries & Library Additions: https://libguides.ala.org/library-construction/public-libraries. In addition, *American Libraries* publishes an annual "Library Design Showcase", including new and renovated libraries.

The Public library Association also has a page of resources on facilities: https://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/directors-managers-administrators/facilities

*Public Library Space Needs: A Planning Outline* by Anders C. Dahlgren.[6]

*Library Journal* has numerous articles on public library buildings, design, and renovation: https://www.libraryjournal.com/.

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## ENDNOTES

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# Chapter 19

# COLLECTIONS

*The Five Laws of Library Science* – S. R. Ranganathan, 1931

1. Books are for use.
2. Every person his or her book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. A library is a growing organism

## COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

### WHAT DO YOU COLLECT?

#### Traditional Collections

A public library typically collects a wide range of materials, including fiction and non-fiction books, reference materials, audiovisual content, and digital resources. Beyond traditional formats, libraries may also offer magazines, newspapers, and unique special collections like local history archives. The scope of collections should reflect the needs and interests of the community it serves, which can vary widely from one location to another.

#### Fiction Collections for Adults and Children

The size and scope of a library's fiction collection—whether for adults or children—should directly reflect the interests and the demographic makeup of the community. A well-planned fiction collection will include a range of genres, styles, and formats to meet the diverse tastes of patrons. For example, in communities with higher populations of young families, children's fiction, such as picture books, early readers, and middle-grade novels, will require more attention. For adult readers, genres like romance, mystery, fantasy, and literary fiction may be popular, and the collection should be built accordingly.

Libraries must also strive to include diverse voices in their fiction collections. This means ensuring a balance of materials that represent different cultures, identities, and worldviews. Diverse fiction provides readers with opportunities for empathy and understanding through stories they may not encounter in everyday life. Your collection may offer a representation of different backgrounds and family structures to foster a sense of belonging.

Popular fiction trends, such as bestselling novels, award winners (e.g., Newbery or Pulitzer Prizes), and buzz-worthy authors, will often dictate the expansion of a fiction collection. For

adults, current bestsellers and book club picks are important to track. Your collection development department should continually assess circulation data to see which authors, genres, or series are most frequently borrowed and use this information to adjust the collection size.

A library's fiction collection should include a variety of formats beyond print books, such as audiobooks and e-books. Children's fiction may also include interactive books or illustrated editions, while adult fiction collections might offer large print formats for those with vision impairments. Libraries are increasingly incorporating digital resources, allowing patrons to access fiction in a format that best suits their needs.

**Non-Fiction Collections for Adults and Children**

Similar to fiction, the size of the non-fiction collection should be responsive to the educational and informational needs of the community. For example, if your library is located in an area with a high number of students, you may want to prioritize topics that support school curricula, such as history, science, and geography. For children, non-fiction collections often focus on educational materials that align with classroom topics, such as biographies, animals, and space. Adult non-fiction, on the other hand, may need to reflect a broader spectrum of interests, from self-help and DIY guides to business resources and memoirs.

Unlike fiction, non-fiction collections need to stay current with developments in various fields, particularly in subjects like technology, medicine, and science. Outdated or factually inaccurate materials must be regularly weeded and replaced. For both adults and children, your library should invest in up-to-date materials that offer accurate information on emerging topics, trends, and innovations.

Many public libraries develop specialized non-fiction collections based on local demand. For instance, a library in a region with a strong agricultural community might focus on farming and sustainability topics. For children, special non-fiction collections can support hobbies or interests like nature, sports, or STEM topics (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Adult non-fiction can focus on self-improvement, local history, or consumer guides, providing patrons with valuable, practical information.

Just as with fiction, your non-fiction collection should be available in multiple formats, including print, e-books, and audiobooks. Children's non-fiction might include interactive books, interactive online books, or books tied to digital content to engage young readers in a wider spectrum of subjects, like science or history. For adult readers, digital resources and databases may also form a significant part of the non-fiction collection, especially for research and reference purposes.

**Local History Collections**

Libraries act as stewards of local history by maintaining special collections that include photographs, personal papers, and other artifacts significant to the area's heritage. Such collections help preserve the community's identity and provide resources for historians, genealogists, and researchers

**Library of Things**

Many of Louisiana's public libraries have also embraced the concept of a "Library of Things," which include non-traditional collections that serve practical, recreational, and educational purposes within their communities. This kind of collection promotes sustainability by encouraging the shared use of resources and helps patrons avoid the expense of purchasing items they may only need for short-term use.

These special collections cater to specific local needs and often reflect the unique character or interests of the region. It promotes sustainability by encouraging the shared use of resources and helps patrons avoid the expense of purchasing items they may only need for short-term use. These items aid with everyday and specific tasks, such as cake pans for baking, fishing rods for outdoor recreation, or tools for gardening, auto repair, and home projects.

Libraries may also collect materials such as calculators, microscopes, telescopes, or robotics kits. These resources allow students to engage with hands-on learning, providing access to scientific equipment and tools that may otherwise be too costly for individual families to acquire.

Libraries increasingly lend out technology, such as Wi-Fi hotspots, tablets, and laptops, helping bridge the digital divide in communities where access to the internet or devices may be limited. This ensures that all patrons have the opportunity to stay connected and make use of digital resources.

In communities that value culture and outdoor activities, libraries often expand their reach by lending non-traditional items like art supplies, board games, and passes to parks and museums. A prime example is the State Library of Louisiana's Check Out Louisiana program. The program is a joint initiative with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Louisiana State Parks, and Louisiana State Museums.

On the parks side, cardholders at all 68 of Louisiana's public library systems can check out a free one-day pass good for any of the state's 21 state parks and 14 historic sites, along with a "Geaux Explore" backpack stocked with field tools like binoculars, a compass, and a Louisiana amphibians guide.

The museum component works a little differently: cardholders at participating systems can reserve a free digital e-pass to visit partner museums statewide, from the Capitol Park Museum and The Cabildo to the National WWII Museum and Whitney Plantation. Museum participation is rolling. Library systems interested in joining the museum program can find onboarding steps, authentication setup, and an information guide at the Check Out Louisiana Museums: Resources page[1].

**BALANCING SIZE AND BUDGET**

The size of the collections is often limited by the library's budget. As a director, you must carefully allocate funds, ensuring that a balanced and well-rounded collection is maintained across different subjects and genres. For children's collections, which are typically updated more frequently to accommodate developmental reading stages, this may require strategic planning. Adult collections may grow more slowly but require periodic updates, particularly in non-fiction areas where information can become outdated.

Physical space also plays a role in determining the scope of collections. Some libraries may have limited shelf space for large collections and must prioritize high-circulation materials. This might involve reducing the size of rarely used non-fiction sections or consolidating fiction genres. In smaller spaces, digital collections provide a viable solution, allowing libraries to offer extensive e-book and audiobook collections without needing physical storage.

Data-driven decisions are key when determining collection size. Circulation data reveals which items are most popular, allowing libraries to focus on acquiring materials that meet demand. For fiction, tracking the most frequently borrowed genres or authors helps inform future purchases. For non-fiction, data may show which subjects or topics generate the most interest, guiding decisions about which areas to expand or update.

**PURCHASING MATERIALS**

Libraries acquire materials through a variety of methods, including purchases using allocated budgets, donations from patrons, and the solicitation of local authors and artists to include their works in the library's collection. Collaborating with local historians or cultural institutions can also enrich the collection by adding unique materials.

Libraries typically purchase their collection items from reputable library vendors such as Ingram and Baker & Taylor, which specialize in supplying books and audiovisual materials. These vendors offer extensive catalogs and curated collections with broad selections across all genres, formats, and age groups, allowing libraries to build comprehensive collections tailored to their communities.

In addition to large vendors, some libraries also source materials from local bookstores or directly from independent authors and publishers, especially when looking to diversify their

collections with regional works, local histories, or self-published materials. This helps libraries build a collection that reflects the unique culture and interests of the community.

**Ordering Systems and Automation (EDI)**

When ordering collection materials, you must ensure that your vendor offers detailed tracking of all purchases. Thus, you may want to rely on Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems to streamline the purchasing process. EDI enables the automatic exchange of purchase orders, invoices, and order confirmations between the library's Integrated Library System (ILS) and its vendors. This process saves time, reduces errors, and makes collection development more efficient.

With EDI, libraries can:

- Automate Ordering: By integrating EDI with their ILS, libraries can automatically place orders for materials, eliminating the need for manual entry and reducing the risk of errors.
- Track Orders and Shipments: EDI allows libraries to track the status of their orders in real-time, ensuring they know when materials will be delivered and processed for circulation.
- Seamless Invoicing: Vendors send electronic invoices that can be automatically matched with purchase orders in the library's system, making financial reconciliation easier and more accurate.

Many vendors support EDI functionality, which allows libraries to maintain a streamlined and efficient purchasing workflow. Libraries typically work with their ILS provider to set up EDI integration, ensuring that the software supports these transactions.

**Louisiana State Contracts for Collection Materials Purchases**

Louisiana public libraries have the option of purchasing collection materials through state contracts. The state contract for materials purchases provides libraries with access to pre-negotiated agreements with various vendors, ensuring that libraries can purchase materials at discounted rates. The state library coordinates and establishes these contracts to help public libraries acquire materials, services, and resources efficiently and cost-effectively.

By using state contracts, libraries can benefit from the discounted pricing that the state has negotiated with vendors, reducing overall costs for materials. In addition, purchasing through state contracts ensures that libraries remain compliant with state procurement regulations, reducing the risk of legal or financial issues.

**Donations and Local Collaborations**

In addition to purchasing materials, your library may receive donations from patrons or community organizations. Donations can be a valuable way to enhance the collection, particularly in areas like local history or rare items that are not easily obtainable through standard purchasing channels. However, donations must be evaluated carefully to ensure they align with the library's collection development policies and are in good condition for circulation.

It is equally important to decide what the library will not collect. For example, some libraries may choose not to maintain extensive archives, rare books, or certain niche collections due to space, staff expertise, or community relevance. Many libraries do not collect self-published books. No matter what the choice, such collection development decisions should be codified in a collection development policy.

We do not recommend an "open call" for donations. While you may find a treasure, by far, donations are usually trash. You will find yourself inundated (overwhelmed?) with items that are old, musty, mildewed, damp, and not appropriate for a public library.

When dealing with these gifts, it's essential to have a clear policy that covers both physical preservation and digital access. Your collection development policy should address:

- **Assessment and Evaluation**: All unique local items should be formally evaluated to ensure they align with the library's mission and collection goals. The policy should state whether the library will retain these materials for archival value.
- **Handling Local Artifacts:** The policy must outline a decision-making process for handling non-standard materials like photographs. This includes whether to scan them for increased access (digitization) or to primarily focus on long-term physical storage and preservation.
- **Storage and Security:** It should provide guidelines for secure, climate-controlled storage to prevent deterioration of fragile artifacts.
- **Access and Sharing:** It should discuss how these resources will be made available to the public, which may include sharing them through wide-reach platforms like the Louisiana Digital Archive.

The key is to create a policy-driven framework for making decisions about accepting, preserving, and sharing these special materials, without getting bogged down in the deep, evolving details of digital preservation technology, costs, or archival standards in the main handbook.

Your policy should contain a statement that when someone donates to the library, the library decides the disposition of an item and state that it may or may not be added to the collection.

When donating items to the library's collection, patrons will often ask for the donation form for tax purposes. Some libraries issue blank forms allowing a patron to enter the value of the donation, while other libraries do not offer such forms at all. Discuss the implications of offering such forms with the board and your parish attorney.

**Book Rentals**

To meet the demand for popular titles, many public libraries choose to rent or lease books rather than purchase them outright. This strategy allows libraries to provide their patrons with access to high-demand titles without committing to long-term ownership, which can be costly and lead to storage issues once the popularity of the books declines.

When a highly anticipated release hits the shelves, the demand from patrons can be overwhelming. Purchasing multiple copies of the same book might seem like a solution, but once the initial rush subsides, these extra copies often go unused, taking up valuable space and resources. By opting to rent or lease, libraries can meet this short-term demand while maintaining flexibility. Once the interest fades, the books can be returned to the vendor, reducing excess inventory and associated costs. You may opt to keep a few copies from the leased inventory at a reduced cost. In addition, most vendors offer the option to purchase leased titles if they remain popular.

Several vendors specialize in book rentals for libraries, offering flexible terms and extensive catalogs of popular titles. Among the most well-known are Ingram Content Group, and Brodart, all of which provide leasing programs designed to meet the fluctuating demand for bestsellers. These vendors allow libraries to keep up with patron requests without making permanent acquisitions that might become irrelevant after a few months.

Leasing programs can help your library stay responsive to trends in publishing and reader interest, offering patrons timely access to new releases without creating long wait times for when the book may become available.

**COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

Having clear policies is critical to maintaining a balanced, relevant, and accessible collection that reflects the needs and interests of the community. Collection development policies provide a framework for decision-making, guiding library staff in selecting, managing, and evaluating materials. These policies ensure transparency, consistency, and fairness in the curation of resources, and they also serve to protect the library from potential challenges or controversies.

A well-defined collection development policy should address several key areas.

**Selection Criteria**

This outlines the factors considered when acquiring new materials, including relevance to community needs, diversity of viewpoints, quality, currency, and cost. This ensures that selections are made thoughtfully and support the library's mission.

**Community Input and Needs Assessment**

Policies should include mechanisms for gathering feedback from the community, ensuring that the collection reflects local interests, demographic needs, and current trends. This can be achieved through surveys, direct patron requests, or engagement with local groups.

**Reconsideration of Materials**

Your library may face challenges to certain materials in the collection. Having a formal reconsideration process allows patrons to voice concerns while ensuring that the library adheres to principles of intellectual freedom and diversity of thought. This process helps protect both the library and the integrity of the collection. (La. R.S. 25:225)

**Weeding and Deselection**

This policy addresses how materials will be regularly evaluated and removed from the collection based on factors like condition, usage, and relevance. A strong weeding process keeps the collection fresh and useful while freeing up space for new acquisitions.

**Gifts and Donations**

The collection development policy should also include guidelines on how to handle donations, specifying how donated materials are evaluated and whether they will be added to the collection, sold, or discarded. Clear guidelines prevent misunderstandings with donors and help libraries accept only materials that align with their collection goals.

**Formats and Accessibility**

In an age where formats are rapidly changing, policies should address the inclusion of digital resources, e-books, audiobooks, and other media. Accessibility for all patrons, including those with disabilities, should also be a central consideration.

**MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY**

Your library’s comprehensive materials selection policy should include criteria for selecting materials, methods for community input, the process for reconsidering materials, and guidelines for handling donations. The policy should be flexible enough to evolve with the community’s needs but firm enough to ensure the collection’s integrity. Below are key elements that should be included in such a policy.

**Mission and Purpose of the Collection**

The policy should begin with a statement that connects the library's collection goals with its overall mission. This ensures that all decisions regarding materials acquisition are in line with the library's purpose of serving its community.

**Criteria for Selecting Materials**

This section outlines the specific criteria used to evaluate potential acquisitions. These criteria ensure that all selections are made objectively, balancing the needs of the community with professional judgment. Common selection criteria include:

- **Relevance to community needs and interests**: Materials should reflect the interests, informational needs, and educational levels of the library's patrons.
- **Authority and credibility of the author/publisher**: The reputation of the author or publisher should be considered, especially for non-fiction works.
- **Currency and accuracy**: Non-fiction and informational materials must be up-to-date and factually accurate.
- **Diversity and inclusivity**: The collection should include materials that represent different perspectives, cultures, and voices, promoting inclusivity and reflecting the demographics of the community.
- **Literary or artistic merit**: The quality of writing, research, or production should be evaluated.
- **Demand and popularity**: Patron requests, bestseller lists, or trends in popular media can inform selection decisions.
- **Cost and budget considerations**: Materials should be affordable within the library's collection budget.

**Formats and Access**

The policy should specify the types of formats the library collects, such as print, audiovisual, digital, and multimedia. It should also address accessibility issues, ensuring the collection includes large print books, audiobooks, or digital resources for those with disabilities.

**Community Input and Requests**

Libraries serve their patrons, so community input should play a role in collection development. This section of the policy can detail how the library will solicit and incorporate patron requests or suggestions for purchasing materials. The most common approach for handling patrons'

requests is to have a formal request system (online or paper-based) where patrons can suggest titles for acquisition.

**Special Collections**

If the library maintains specialized collections (e.g., local history archives, "Library of Things," materials for home-schooling families), the policy should outline the goals and selection criteria specific to these areas. It may also detail the library's commitment to expanding collections in underrepresented areas.

**Donations**

Donated materials can supplement the library's collection, but the policy should provide clear guidelines for how donations are evaluated. This section of the policy should cover:

- Criteria for accepting or rejecting donations.
- A process for adding donated materials to the collection, which may include subjecting them to the same selection criteria as purchased materials.
- Guidelines for acknowledging donations.
- Procedures for disposing of or passing on unwanted donations.

**Weeding**

(see also Weeding in the Collection Maintenance section below.) A strong collection development policy should address weeding, the process of removing outdated, damaged, or irrelevant materials from the collection. This section of the policy should outline:

- *Criteria for weeding:* Outdated information, poor physical condition, or low circulation can be reasons for deselection.
- *Frequency of weeding*: Guidelines for regular reviews of collection materials.
- *Disposal methods*: Clear instructions on how discarded items will be handled (e.g., sales, donations to other institutions, recycling)

**Reconsideration of Materials**

As required by La. R.S. 25:225, the policy must outline a procedure for handling challenges or objections to materials in the collection. This is crucial for addressing issues related to intellectual freedom and censorship. The process should include:

1. A formal written request for reconsideration from patrons.
2. A review committee that evaluates the material in question against the library's selection criteria.
3. Clear communication with the patron about the review process and decision.
4. A timeline for the review process and any subsequent actions.

**Intellectual Freedom Statement**

The library’s commitment to intellectual freedom should be clearly stated. This section affirms the library’s dedication to providing access to a wide range of ideas and viewpoints, in line with the American Library Association's stance on intellectual freedom. It should emphasize that the library supports the individual's right to access materials, even if those materials might be controversial to some.

## COLLECTION MAINTENANCE

### BOOK MAINTENANCE AND PRESERVATION

Maintaining the physical condition of the library’s collection is crucial for extending the life of materials and ensuring a positive patron experience. Decisions regarding how to protect and repair books should be made with a balance between long-term preservation and high circulation demand.

**Protection at Acquisition**

To maximize longevity, consider the following practices when acquiring materials:

- For books purchased with a dust jacket, the application of Mylar jackets is a common and highly effective practice. Mylar jackets are clear, protective covers that shield the original dust jacket and the book's binding from routine wear, spills, and soil, significantly increasing the item's lifespan.
- For children's materials or other high-use items, purchasing books in durable library binding is often a cost-effective choice. Library-bound books are manufactured with stronger materials and construction techniques than standard trade editions, allowing them to withstand significantly more circulation cycles.

**Repair and Rebinding**

Your library should have a clear policy on book repair and when to discard an item versus investing in a long-term fix.

Staff can employ various repair techniques for minor damage, such as using book repair tape, adhesives, and protective coatings. Kapco covers (or similar laminating film) are frequently used for reinforcing softcover books and protecting graphic or picture book covers.

In most modern public library settings, rebinding is generally discouraged for standard circulating materials. The cost of professional rebinding often rivals or exceeds the cost of purchasing a new replacement copy. Exceptions may be made for high-value items or specific reference materials where a durable, high-quality cover is essential for continued service.

The decision to repair a book should weigh its future circulation potential against its preservation value. For popular books with high circulation, simple and quick repairs should be prioritized to get the item back on the shelf immediately. If the book is too damaged for quick repair, a replacement copy should be purchased.

Materials with historical, local, or archival significance, even if they have low circulation, may warrant specialized preservation treatments or minor, non-invasive repairs to retain their integrity. These decisions should be handled by staff with appropriate expertise or in consultation with preservation specialists.

## WEEDING

Weeding is the systematic process of evaluating and removing materials from the library's collection. It is an essential part of collection management that helps maintain a relevant, attractive, and efficient library. A well-weeded collection ensures that library resources are up-to-date and in good condition and creates space for new materials that better serve the community's current needs. The weeding process should be guided by clear criteria and a structured method to ensure transparency and consistency.

### Criteria for Weeding

Several criteria can be used to determine whether an item should be weeded from the collection:

#### *Condition*

Books or materials that are in poor physical condition (e.g., torn pages, broken bindings, water damage) should be candidates for weeding. Patrons may be less likely to check out worn-out materials, and keeping them on shelves can reflect poorly on the library.

For popular materials that are in high demand but have suffered wear, replacement copies should be considered.

***Age***

Non-fiction materials, particularly those related to fields that change frequently (such as medicine, law, technology, and science), should be regularly reviewed for accuracy. A general guideline is to weed non-fiction books that are more than 5 to 10 years old unless they are considered classics in their field or still provide relevant information.

Older editions of works that have been superseded by updated versions should be removed. This is particularly important for reference materials, where patrons rely on accuracy.

***Use and Circulation***

Low circulation items that have not been checked out within a designated period (typically 3 to 6 years) should be reviewed for weeding. Circulation data can reveal which materials are no longer relevant or of interest to patrons.

If multiple copies (duplicates) of a title are no longer in high demand, surplus copies should be weeded to free up space.

***Relevance and Alignment with the Collection Policy***

Materials that no longer align with the library's collection development policy should be considered for weeding. The policy should reflect the current and evolving interests, demographics, and needs of the community. Items that are no longer relevant to the community may be removed.

***Trends and Cultural Relevance***

Books or media that reflect outdated cultural norms or biases can be weeded to ensure the collection remains inclusive and reflective of modern values, although some may still be retained for historical context in special collections.

***Historical or Local Significance***

Materials with historical, literary, or local significance should be carefully considered before being weeded. Even if they don't meet circulation benchmarks, their cultural or archival value could justify retaining them in special collections. Libraries should use professional judgment and consult with subject experts if necessary.

***Availability in Other Formats***

If a book is available in a more popular format (e.g., digital or audiobook), the print version may be a candidate for weeding, especially if it shows signs of low circulation or physical wear.

## WEEDING METHODS

Some libraries use a continuous weeding process where staff review materials on an ongoing basis as they are shelved, reshelved, or circulated. This method keeps weeding as a regular task and ensures that outdated or damaged materials are removed promptly.

Libraries may also choose to schedule weeding projects at regular intervals, anywhere between every one to five years, to review the entire collection or specific sections. Different sections of the collection can be weeded at different times. For example, children's collections might need to be weeded more frequently than adult non-fiction due to their faster turnover and wear rates.

### Weeding Tools and Systems

#### *CREW Method*

One of the most well-known weeding methods is the CREW (Continuous Review, Evaluation, and Weeding) method. This system provides specific criteria for various types of materials, focusing on their age, condition, and usage. To obtain a copy of the CREW guidelines, contact Library Development and Networking Division at ld@tsl.texas.gov. The guidelines include the acronym MUSTIE to determine what should be weeded:

M = Misleading (factually inaccurate)

U = Ugly (poor physical condition)

S = Superseded (by a newer edition or better source)

T = Trivial (of little literary or scholarly merit)

I = Irrelevant (no longer relevant to the needs of the community)

E = Elsewhere (easily available elsewhere, like an e-book or another library)

#### *Circulation and Usage Data*

Most Integrated Library Systems (ILS) allow libraries to run reports that identify items with low or no circulation within a given time frame. These reports can be used to flag items for review.

#### *Patron Feedback*

While circulation data is useful, it's also important to consider patron feedback. Materials may not circulate due to visibility issues or shelf placement. A book may be relevant and desired, but if patrons can't find it easily, it may appear underutilized. Displaying or promoting certain items before deciding to weed them can be helpful.

**Frequency of Weeding**

Weeding should be an ongoing process, but specific timelines depend on the collection and usage patterns.

- Children's Collections: Should be reviewed at least once a year. Children's books tend to wear out faster due to high circulation and handling. Additionally, children's materials should reflect current educational standards and trends.
- Fiction Collections: Adult and young adult fiction should be reviewed every two to three years, as trends in literature can change quickly. Books that have not circulated in two to five years should be evaluated for removal unless they have significant literary merit or local importance.
- Non-Fiction Collections: This should be reviewed more frequently, especially in fast-changing fields like science, technology, and health. Libraries may opt to review sections of their non-fiction collection annually based on subject matter.

**Disposal of Weeded Materials**

Once items have been weeded, libraries have several options for disposal (La. R.S. 25:151):

***Library Book Sales***

Weeded materials in good condition can be sold in library book sales to raise funds for future acquisitions. The books can be given to a Friends of the Library group for sale provided the Friends give back the proceeds of the sale either directly or indirectly (in the form of equipment or new books). The Friends typically handle the sales unless your library has statutory permission to sell. This could be considered a cooperative endeavor and can be formalized with an agreement, or informally noted via acknowledgement of agreement. This agreement should be between the board, director, and/or governing authority and the Friends group.

***Online Book Sellers***

Some Friends groups contract with online booksellers to sell the weeded materials. Because these companies are for profit, the library cannot deal with them directly.

***Other libraries or another parish or municipal agency***

Books that have been weeded can be made available to be claimed by another library or another parish or municipal agency, such as a hospital, correctional facility, adult education program, youth organization, and so on. Giving the discarded books to a quasi-public or non-profit agency which receives some public funding or grants is legal.

***Recycling***

Damaged or outdated materials that are unsuitable for sale can be recycled responsibly, especially paper-based materials. As an alternative interpretation to recycling, the library may consider offering other libraries or local agencies to obtain your “discards” for adding to their own collections. They can also be offered to the community at large, if your library has no Friends group to handle book sales.

***Discarding***

As a last resort, some items may need to be discarded if they are too damaged for reuse or sale.

You should decide how to handle to memorial books from your collection before discarding. Consider contacting the donor to ask if they would like the book. If not, make sure that you remove the memorial book plate before disposal.

## CIRCULATION

The library’s circulation department has two major functions: inventory control and service to patrons. Inventory control is done through cataloging and circulation so that the location and status of every item in the collection are known. The staff at the circulation desk are the main public service point. Circulation staff are usually the first people a patron sees and are the greeters and information desk for the library.

### INTEGRATED LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ILS) OR LIBRARY AUTOMATION SOFTWARE

An Integrated Library System (ILS) is a comprehensive suite of software applications used by libraries to manage their collections, circulation, acquisitions, cataloging, and patron records. Choosing and maintaining an ILS is one of the most significant decisions for a library, as it directly affects the efficiency of daily operations and the quality of service offered to patrons.

An ILS serves as the backbone of a library’s operations. It integrates all the library's core functions, from cataloging and circulation to acquisitions and patron management, into one central system. This automation allows libraries to accomplish several things.

*Streamline Circulation*

Automate the check-in and check-out process, track overdue materials, and send notifications for overdue items or holds.

*Manage Cataloging and Inventory*

Keep track of every item in the collection, from its location to its current status (checked out, available, or lost).

*Handle Acquisitions and Budgeting*

Manage new purchases, receive and process orders, and keep records of expenditures.

*Maintain Patron Records*

Store and update information about patrons, their borrowing histories, and any fees or fines associated with overdue items.

Given the ILS's central role in library operations, careful consideration is required when selecting a system or migrating from one ILS to another.

**Selecting an ILS**

Choosing an ILS requires evaluating several factors to ensure that the system meets both the current and future needs of the library. Here's what libraries should consider:

***Cost and Budget***

The budget for an ILS includes not only the initial purchase but also ongoing maintenance fees, support, and potential costs for hardware or server upgrades. Some ILS vendors charge based on the size of the collection or number of patrons, while others may use subscription-based models, especially for cloud-based systems.

***Cloud-Based vs. Locally Hosted***

*Cloud-based ILS:* In recent years, cloud-based systems have gained popularity due to their flexibility and cost-effectiveness. A cloud-based ILS eliminates the need for local servers, provides automatic software updates, and allows remote access for both staff and patrons.

*Locally hosted ILS:* In-house systems, while more traditional, may offer more control over data and customization, but they require dedicated IT staff to manage updates, security, and backups.

***Scalability***

The ILS should be scalable, meaning it can grow alongside the library. This is important for libraries expecting expansion in their collection size, patron base, or number of branches.

It should also support additional modules if the library decides to add new services, such as electronic resources or self-checkout stations.

***User Interface and Ease of Use***

Both staff and patrons will interact with the ILS regularly, so an intuitive and user-friendly interface is crucial.

Some systems offer mobile-friendly interfaces and apps, which are increasingly important for patrons who access library services on their phones or tablets.

***Compatibility with Other Systems***

Libraries should ensure the ILS integrates well with other systems they may use, such as third-party databases, calendar applications, meeting room booking software, e-book platforms, or statewide library consortia. For example, many Louisiana public libraries participate in statewide interlibrary loan, so the ILS must support smooth resource-sharing with other libraries.

***Vendor Support and Training***

A library's ILS vendor should provide ongoing support, including troubleshooting, updates, and new features.

Consideration should also be given to the training required for library staff. Vendors may offer onboarding programs, but adequate in-house training plans should be prepared for new staff or ongoing skill development.

***Data Ownership and Security***

It is important to discuss with your vendor who owns the data stored in the ILS, preferably prior to signing the contract. You need to review and understand the vendor's policy for data migration, especially when considering switching to another system.

Security is paramount, especially with cloud-based systems. Libraries must ensure that patron data is protected and that vendors comply with national and state-level data protection laws. Specifically, La. R.S. 51:3074 mandates that any entity conducting business in the state or owning computerized data containing personal information must implement reasonable security measures to protect that information from unauthorized access or disclosure. This applies to the ILS vendor with whom your library has a service contract. If the ILS is hosted in the vendor's data center, in the event of a data breach, they must notify affected account holders/patrons without unreasonable delay, typically within sixty days, unless law enforcement requests a delay due to an ongoing investigation. Notification can be made through written or electronic means or through substitute methods if costs exceed certain thresholds. If it is determined that a breach poses no risk of harm, notification may not be

required, but the entity must maintain documentation of this determination for five years. Violations of these requirements are considered unfair acts under state law.

**MIGRATING FROM ONE ILS TO ANOTHER**

If you are considering switching ILS vendors, keep in mind that migrating from one ILS to another is a complex process that requires thorough planning and execution. Here are the key considerations:

**Data Migration**

One of the biggest challenges in switching ILS systems is transferring all patron, catalog, and circulation data from the old system to the new one.

Before migration, libraries should clean up their data (e.g., removing outdated patron records or correcting cataloging errors). This will make the migration smoother and ensure the new system doesn't start with inherited issues.

The new vendor should offer a robust migration plan that includes data mapping, testing, and validation.

**Downtime and Transition Period**

During migration, there will likely be a period of downtime where staff will not be able to access the ILS. Libraries should prepare for this by informing patrons and creating alternative procedures for borrowing and returns.

**Training and Adjustment**

Staff will need training on the new system's features, workflows, and user interface. It's also important to allow time for adjustment once the new ILS is in place.

Ideally, the vendor should provide on-site training and offer resources (manuals, tutorials) for ongoing support.

**Costs of Migration**

Migrating ILS systems comes with costs that include data migration fees, retraining staff, and possible interruptions in service. Budgeting for these expenses well in advance is crucial. Depending on the size of your library,

- migration fees may be in the tens of thousands of dollars,
- annual cost is usually in the tens of thousands, and

- the cost to acquire a new ILS may exceed one hundred thousand dollars, depending on the size of your library and its collection.

**LOUISIANA PROCUREMENT LAWS AND ILS ACQUISITION**

In Louisiana, public libraries are required to follow state procurement laws when purchasing systems like an ILS. These laws ensure that purchases are made fairly, transparently, and in the best financial interest of the public. Key considerations include:

**Request for Proposal (RFP)**

For large purchases, including ILS systems, Louisiana libraries must typically issue an RFP. This formal document details the library's requirements for the system and invites vendors to submit bids.

The library's selection committee will evaluate the bids based on predetermined criteria such as cost, functionality, vendor reputation, and technical specifications.

**Compliance with State and Federal Laws**

Libraries must ensure that any new system complies with Louisiana's data privacy laws (La. R.S. 51:3074) , especially as they pertain to patron records.

**Evaluating Bids**

Once proposals are submitted, the selection committee should consider not only the price but also the vendor's capacity to provide adequate support, the system's ability to meet future needs, and the total cost of ownership (including training, support, and upgrades).

## CIRCULATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Circulation policies guide how materials are loaned to patrons. These policies typically cover loan periods, the number of items a patron can borrow, renewal limits, and whether or not fines are charged for overdue materials. Additionally, they outline the procedure for issuing library cards, including restrictions for minors and temporary cardholders.

**IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF LIBRARY RECORDS**

In Louisiana, patron confidentiality is protected under La. R.S. 44:13. This law specifically exempts public library records that contain information identifying a library user or details of their use of library services from public disclosure. The statute ensures that the privacy of library patrons is maintained regarding their borrowing habits, research inquiries, and use of

library resources, except under certain legal circumstances, such as court orders or investigations.

## CIRCULATION CONTROL

Effective circulation control is vital for ensuring smooth operations and demonstrates that the library takes good care of public property. Tracking loaned items also helps reduce losses. It is recommended that you perform regular audits and inventory checks (a.k.a. shelf-reading) to ensure materials are accounted for and available for checkout

## LIBRARY CARDS

### Kinds of Library Cards

A typical public library offers a variety of library card types which allows it to serve different patron categories. Common types of library cards include:

- **Adult Cards**

  These cards allow full access to the library's resources, including borrowing physical and digital materials, using computers, and accessing databases.

- **Children's Cards**

  Issued to minors, typically with limited borrowing privileges and requiring a parent or guardian's signature. Age-based restrictions might apply for access to certain materials.

- **Teen Cards**

  Designed for young adults, offering access to broader resources than children's cards but still with limitations based on material ratings.

- **Guest cards or temporary Cards**

  Issued to individuals without permanent residency in the area, such as visitors or students, usually with restricted borrowing limits. Some libraries issue guest cards for computer access only.

- **Digital Access Cards**

  Primarily used for online services, providing access to eBooks, databases, and streaming services without the need for borrowing physical materials.

### Restrictions on Library Cards (Louisiana Law 2023)

Signed into law in 2023, La. R.S. 25:225 introduced specific rules regarding library cards, particularly concerning minors. The new law mandates that Louisiana libraries implement

policies for parents to choose minors' access to library materials. Parents must have the option to restrict their child's borrowing of materials, both in physical and digital formats, through the library card system. Libraries must also adopt a reconsideration process, allowing patrons to challenge the inclusion of specific materials. Failure to comply may result in withheld funding or state penalties, though no liability is imposed on individual library employees or board members.

Contact Library Development for samples of policies and application forms that have been approved by the Louisiana Attorney General's office.

**Registration for Library Cards**

When registering for a library card, patrons must meet basic registration requirements, which should be outlined in your library's policy:

1. A government-issued ID such as a driver's license is typically required.
2. A utility bill, lease agreement, or other documentation showing the patron's current address ensures that they are part of the service area.
3. Some libraries allow patrons to apply online and pick up their physical card later. Online registration also facilitates immediate access to electronic resources.
4. Patrons under 18 typically need a parent or guardian to co-sign for a library card, accepting responsibility for lost materials and fines.

**LOAN TIMES AND LIMITS, BOTH PHYSICAL AND ELECTRONIC**

Different loan rules may apply for books, DVDs, magazines, and eBooks, depending on demand and format. The length of the checkout period is determined by the size of your collection, demand, and budget. When materials are not available locally, your patrons may borrow items from other libraries using the statewide LoanSHARK program coordinated by the State Library. Clear procedures for ILL requests and returns are necessary to provide this service.

Loan periods may vary based on material type. Books, audiobooks, and DVDs may have different borrowing times, commonly 2 to 3 weeks. High-demand items such as new releases often have shorter loan periods.

Libraries typically set a cap on the number of items patrons can borrow at one time, with higher limits for physical materials (e.g., 15-20 books) and lower limits for digital resources due to licensing restrictions.

Return options should be convenient for patrons. Traditionally, patrons return items at the circulation desk or designated return bins. Located outside the library, book drops allow

patrons to return materials after hours, increasing convenience and compliance with due dates. Many libraries allow a day of grace when checking in materials from book drops or bins. By using the previous date, (allowable in many ILS systems), this will keep materials turned in after library hours to be considered returned on time.

Library policy should clearly state renewal and return policies, such as renewal limits on an item. If an item is on hold for another patron, policy should determine if it can be renewed, or does the patron have to put the item on hold.

Renewal policies allow patrons to extend the borrowing period for materials, provided there are no holds. Some ILS systems automatically renew items if no holds exist. Automatic renewal is popular because it offers convenience for patrons and reduces overdue fines. Typically, several methods of renewing borrowed items exist to offer maximum convenience to patrons. Patrons can request a renewal in person, online, or by phone. Your renewal policy should also mention limits on renewals (e.g., two or three times) to prevent patrons from monopolizing limited public resources.

**MANAGING OVERDUES**

The issue of overdue items can create friction between the library and patrons, so policies must be clear and fair. Some libraries charge fines for overdue materials, serving as an incentive for prompt returns. However, most libraries are moving away from this practice, offering fine-free borrowing. Libraries are legally required to charge fees for lost items. A grace period, typically 1-3 days, can be implemented to ease the burden on patrons who miss due dates by a small margin. Patrons with significant overdue items or lost items on their account may have their borrowing privileges suspended until materials are returned or replacement fees are paid.

If your library charges fines, it's important to have a consistent, transparent process for managing overdues. Most Integrated Library Systems (ILS) send out email or text reminders before and after the due date, helping patrons avoid overdue materials. Similarly, the ILS may automatically suspend one's borrowing privileges if overdue fines reach a certain limit. Some libraries offer fine forgiveness during special periods, helping to recover overdue materials and reintegrate patrons who may be avoiding the library due to high fines.

**FINES**

There is growing debate over the role of fines in public libraries. The advocates of fines posit that fines encourage prompt return of materials, which keeps collections circulating and available to other patrons. However, fines can disproportionately affect low-income patrons, and studies have shown that fines do not significantly impact return rates.

Many Louisiana libraries have moved to a “fine-free” model, improving access and fostering goodwill in the community. Libraries market these in different ways, such as Fine Free Period, Fine Forgiveness, Reading for Fines, and Food for Fines.

### MAINTAINING BORROWER’S FILES

Maintaining accurate borrower files is critical for effective service. Your files should be updated on a regular basis. Questions that your library policy must address include:

- When you issue a library card, how long is it good? (one year, two years, forever?)
- How often and when do you update cardholder’s files?
- If your cards expire, how often do you purge patron records? That is, if the card is expired, how long do you leave it in your database?

Periodic audits of borrower records ensure that outdated or inactive accounts are purged, keeping the system running smoothly.

## THE INTERNET AND INTERNET POLICIES

### THE INTERNET DILEMMA

The Internet is about open access to a worldwide network of information and ideas. Libraries have Internet stations for public use in order to provide the greatest range of resources for their patrons and to ensure equal access to online information for everyone in the community. This commitment to an individual’s right to seek information via computer terminals positioned in a public space has forced libraries to consider how to balance free, open access with risks like harmful content.

### POLICY REQUIREMENTS FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The **Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)** requires public libraries that receive federal funding through programs like E-Rate to install filters on their internet services to block access to obscene materials, pornography, and content harmful to minors. This federal law aims to protect minors from inappropriate online content while accessing online resources at the library. However, CIPA also acknowledges the importance of intellectual freedom for adults. Libraries must have a process in place that allows adult patrons to request the disabling of these filters for lawful internet use. Compliance with CIPA ensures continued federal funding while balancing the need for content regulation with adults' rights to unfettered access to information.

### PRINCIPLES AT RISK: INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND FREEDOM FROM CENSORSHIP

Intellectual Freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive any information. It has been said that a good library contains something in it to offend everyone. But the reverse also holds true—in a good library, you can find any information you need from all points of view. Some individuals or groups have always sought to censor library materials that they find objectionable. It is important for libraries to maintain equal access to all viewpoints. This can be difficult and uncomfortable, but it is important for public libraries to offer access to a wide range of materials for all citizens, including those that a few people wish to limit access.

Intellectual Freedom is a core value of the library profession. Censorship is any change in the access status of material, based on the content of the work and made by a governing authority or its representatives. The library profession opposes censorship, preferring instead to support an individual's right to freely choose reading and information sources.

From the library perspective, it is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. All aspects of library service, from the selection of materials for the library, public use of meeting rooms, Internet use, and patron library records are affected by the principles of Intellectual Freedom.

## CENSORSHIP ISSUES AND HOW TO HANDLE CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGES TO ITEMS IN COLLECTION

Challenges to materials often stem from a desire to censor content based on personal or *perceived* community values. Libraries must be proactive by creating well-defined procedures for handling these challenges. By doing so, you can respond objectively, defending its role in providing diverse resources while being transparent with the public.

### RECONSIDERATION PROCESS

Instead of removing or altering materials without proper review, a structured reconsideration process allows patrons to formally submit their concerns. This process should be fair, documented, and publicized so patrons know how to submit challenges. A review committee can then evaluate the challenged materials against the library's collection development policy, ensuring that decisions are based on criteria like literary merit, relevance, and community needs rather than personal beliefs.

**PROCEDURES FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS OR SERVICES**

A formal reconsideration procedure ensures transparency and fairness, and is required by La. R.S. 25:225. Here's what this procedure might include:

- **Written Request**: A standardized form should be completed by the challenger, clearly stating their concern with the material or service.
- **Review Committee**: This team, often made up of library staff, administrators, and sometimes board members or community members, should objectively review the material in question.
- **Final Decision**: After a thorough review, the committee provides a written decision, either retaining, moving, or removing the item. The process and decision should be well-documented for future reference.

These procedures uphold the library's mission while providing a structured avenue for patrons to express concerns, which also demonstrates that the library takes its role in the community seriously. For a sample reconsideration form, contact Library Development.

**IMPLICIT BIAS**

Implicit bias should be acknowledged, particularly when addressing challenges to materials or services. Ensure that staff involved in the reconsideration process undergo training in recognizing and mitigating bias. This ensures that decisions are not influenced by unconscious preferences or prejudices and that the library's values of equity and inclusion are upheld.

**COMMUNITY NEEDS AND VALUES**

While defending intellectual freedom, libraries must also stay attuned to the specific needs and values of their communities. Regular engagement with patrons through surveys, focus groups, and public meetings can inform collection development in a way that reflects local priorities while maintaining a broad spectrum of viewpoints. However, this does not mean removing materials simply because they challenge some patrons' values; rather, it's about finding a balance between serving the broader community and respecting diverse perspectives.

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN LIBRARIES

**American Library Association on Intellectual Freedom**

The American Library Association actively advocates and educates in defense of intellectual freedom—the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession, and a

basic right in our democratic society. A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community.

The ALA website includes a number of resources and publications on intellectual freedom.[2]

**Louisiana Library Association on Intellectual Freedom**

The Louisiana Library Association has a committee on Intellectual Freedom as well as a committee for Communications and Social Media. Both of these committees defend freedom to read and advocate for intellectual freedom. The Intellectual Freedom Manual is published in Louisiana Libraries (vol. 68, no. 3, Winter, 2006), which is the Association's journal. A link to LLA publications is found on the Forms and Publications page.[3]

## RESOURCES

American Library Association. (n.d.). *Collection maintenance and weeding*. https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit/weeding

Massachusetts Library System. *LibGuides: Weeding: Home*. (n.d.). https://guides.masslibsystem.org/weeding

North Dakota State Library. (n.d.). *Collection development and maintenance: Weeding*. LibGuides. https://library-nd.libguides.com/cd/weeding

Organization for Library Cooperation – Small Libraries. (n.d.). *MUSTIE*. OLC Small Libraries. https://olcsmalllibraries.wordpress.com/tag/mustie/

## ENDNOTES

[1] Check Out Louisiana Museums, Resources for Librarians. https://library.la.gov/check-out-louisiana-museums/check-out-louisiana-museums-resources/

[2] American Library Association. *Intellectual freedom resources*. https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/resources

[3] Louisiana Library Association. Link to LLA publications (*Louisiana Libraries*, vol. 68, no. 3, Winter, 2006) https://llaonline.org/forms

# Chapter 20

# TECHNOLOGY

"Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one." — Neil Gaiman

## TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Gaiman's observation above captures something libraries have always understood: access to information only matters if someone can help you navigate it. Today, that navigation happens as much through digital infrastructure as through human expertise. In this chapter we will provide library directors with a practical framework for managing technology in the public library context, including hardware and network planning, cybersecurity, digital inclusion, and the state resources available to support your work. Technology decisions you make as a director will shape who your library serves, how equitably it serves them, and how resilient it remains when disruptions occur.

### DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Investing in a resilient digital infrastructure is crucial for enhancing library services and security. Digital infrastructure in a public library encompasses several critical components that support seamless access to information and resources.

**Hardware** is foundational to any digital infrastructure, comprising servers, computers, and tablets. Servers handle data storage, hosting library management systems, and running applications, ensuring reliable access to information. Public access computers and tablets provide patrons with the tools needed for research, digital literacy, and online services. It's essential to ensure that this hardware is regularly updated to keep pace with technological advancements and user needs. Regular hardware upgrades are recommended, if your library's budget can allow for it. We recommend that you plan to replace public and staff computers every five years.

**Network components** are equally important, as they facilitate connectivity throughout the library. Routers and switches manage data traffic and enable communication between devices while cabling infrastructure—such as Ethernet cables—ensures stable and high-speed connections. A well-designed network architecture can accommodate a high number of simultaneous users, supporting both in-library services and remote access.

**Software** is another crucial element, including operating systems that power the hardware and library management systems (LMS, sometimes also called an integrated library system or ILS) that streamline cataloging, circulation, and patron management. Access platforms for digital resources, such as e-books, databases, and online catalogs, must also be integrated into the software ecosystem to provide patrons with seamless access to a wide range of materials. We recommend active participation in user experience groups that are facilitated by your ILS and database vendors.

A resilient digital infrastructure should include a comprehensive **data storage, backup, and recovery** strategy to protect against data loss. This involves implementing both on-site and off-site (cloud-based) backup solutions to ensure that critical data—such as patron records, financial information, or historical records—is securely stored and easily recoverable in the event of an incident. Regularly scheduled backups, alongside testing the integrity of these backups, are essential practices. Additionally, utilizing cloud storage options can offer scalable solutions for data retention, ensuring that your library has ample space for its growing digital collections while maintaining security and compliance with data protection regulations.

**PLANNING FOR UPGRADES**

As a library director, you need to stay informed about technology updates and upgrades that may impact your library. To achieve this, you need to have a good relationship with your IT department and have communication lines open with the team at all times. Your IT manager should provide regular updates about any upcoming technology changes, including system upgrades or new software implementations.

Systemwide upgrades, particularly those that affect public services, can lead to disruptions. To minimize any potential negative impact, advance planning and clear communication with your staff and patrons are key. Make sure your IT department alerts you and the managers to scheduled upgrades well ahead of time, allowing you to evaluate potential disruptions and plan accordingly. Advance planning may involve scheduling system maintenance during off-peak hours or simply giving patrons notice of upcoming downtimes.

Beyond managing disruptions, technology upgrades often require substantial financial commitments. Large-scale projects, such as system wide computer upgrades, implementation of new security applications, or service migrations, can strain your library's budget if not planned for properly. It’s important to work closely with your IT and finance departments (if you have them) to ensure that these expenses are anticipated in your budget. Ideally, your IT manager should develop a technology plan that outlines expected costs over several years. This kind of planning ensures that you can make informed decisions about when upgrades are needed and how they fit into your financial plan, avoiding sudden or unexpected financial burdens.

# WEBSITE

When someone walks through the doors of the library, you want them to feel welcome, sign up for the programs you offer, and help them find everything they need. Your website should be the same. The content on your website should align with the library's goals and needs, and the design should be intuitive and user friendly. Most libraries hire a website design company to create the site, and then it is maintained and content is changed by library staff.

The following outlines the minimum content and legal requirements that every public library in Louisiana should maintain on its official website. By following these suggestions, your library will promote transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness for public services in Louisiana.

## REQUIRED BY LAW

**Fight Fraud, Waste, and Abuse:** Per La. R.S. 24:523.1(B), all public entities must provide a prominent link on their homepage to report fraud, waste, and abuse.[1]

**Open Meetings Law Compliance:** Per Louisiana's Open Meetings Law, agendas must be posted on your library's website at least 24 hours before public board meetings.[2] Required content includes board meeting notices, agendas, and approved minutes.

**Public Records Access:** It is recommended that you include information or a contact for requesting public records in accordance with La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance**: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related regulations, public websites must be made accessible to people with disabilities. Specifically, Title II of the ADA, which applies to state and local governments, and Title III of the ADA, which applies to businesses open to the public, mandate web accessibility. While the ADA doesn't explicitly mention websites, court decisions have interpreted it to require accessibility for online content.

- Requirement: Federal law mandates web accessibility under the ADA.
- Standard: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 compliance (e.g., screen reader compatibility, text contrast, keyboard navigation)[3].
- Best Practice: Post an accessibility statement with contact information for accommodation requests.

## CRITICAL CONTENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Meeting these legal requirements establishes the baseline, but an effective library website goes further. The following content areas represent the minimum your site should include to serve patrons well and reflect the full range of what your library offers.

1. Library Hours and Contact Information
   - Operating hours for each branch
   - Addresses, phone numbers, and general inquiry email
   - Map or link to location
2. Patron Account Access
   - Direct login to the library's integrated library system (ILS) for renewals, holds, etc.
3. Library Card Information
   - Eligibility, required documentation, and how to apply (in person or online)
   - Include a link to an application or pre-registration form if available
4. Programs and Services
   - Descriptions of core services (e.g., printing, meeting rooms, tech help)
   - Calendar of events, with filters for age group or location
5. Catalog and Online Resources
   - Access to the online catalog
   - Links to digital collections and databases (e.g., Libby, Hoopla, genealogy tools)
   - Organize resources by audience (e.g., Kids, Teens, Adults)
6. Library Policies
   - Code of conduct
   - Borrowing, Internet/computer use, meeting room, and collection development policies
7. Board of Trustees Information
   - Member names, terms, and (optional) photos
   - Public meeting schedules and documentation
8. Annual Reports and Strategic Plans
   - Most recent annual report or highlights
   - Current strategic plan or service goals
9. Employment Opportunities
   - Current openings and instructions for applying
   - Link to parish HR site if applicable

**Best Practices for Engagement and Transparency**

1. Search Functionality
   - Enable site-wide search for ease of navigation
2. Newsletter and Social Media
   - Signup for email updates
   - Links to active social media accounts
3. Friends/Foundation Information
   - How to donate, volunteer, or get involved
4. Technology Help and Tutorials
   - FAQs or video guides for using e-resources
5. Local Partnerships and Community Resources
   - Link to local programs like Check *Out Louisiana Museums*, community aid services, etc.
6. Feedback or Suggestion Form
   - Provide a simple mechanism for patron input
7. Provide your staff with a way to submit content for inclusion on the website.

**Technical Considerations**

- Mobile-Friendly Design (Responsive Design)
- Secure Browsing (HTTPS/SSL Certificate)
- Plain Language Use (Minimize jargon)
- Consistent Branding and Layout

Your library's website is its digital front door. By meeting these minimum standards, your library will ensure compliance, transparency, accessibility, and a consistent quality of service that reflects the values of public librarianship.

# CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

A well-designed website and robust digital infrastructure are only as valuable as your library's ability to keep them running. Disruptions from natural disasters, cyberattacks, or system failures are not a matter of if but when. The following section addresses how to plan for continuity before an incident occurs.

## CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Ensuring continuity of operations is critical for public libraries to maintain service delivery during disruptions, such as natural disasters, cyber incidents, or system failures. A comprehensive continuity plan should outline procedures for restoring library operations swiftly and effectively. This includes identifying essential services and resources that must be prioritized for backup and recovery. As we mentioned earlier, your library should maintain backups of crucial operational data, including patron information, financial records, collection inventories, and other crucial data, to minimize service interruptions.

## DATA RETENTION AND RETENTION OF RECORDS

Libraries must retain specific information to comply with legal and regulatory requirements. This typically includes financial records, employee records, and correspondence related to governance and policy-making. Retention of records is governed by both state and federal laws, which dictate how long certain types of documents must be maintained. Your library should have a clear records retention policy that outlines the duration for which various records will be kept, specifying when and how records can be securely disposed of. The State Library’s Library Development Division can assist you in developing or reviewing the policy. Regular reviews of this policy will help ensure compliance and adapt to changing regulations. In addition, the Louisiana Secretary of State plays a significant role in this process by providing resources and guidance on records management. The Secretary of State's office offers sample retention schedules and maintains a repository of public records, helping libraries understand their obligations under the law.

Retention schedules address how long records are kept, but libraries must also understand the broader legal framework governing what data they collect, how it is protected, and what obligations they carry toward the individuals that data represents.

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Public libraries must comply with various legal requirements related to data protection and privacy. Familiarity with laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), and state-specific regulations is essential. We recommend that you implement policies that

protect patron privacy and data, ensuring that any data collection, storage, and sharing practices comply with legal standards. Regular training for staff on these legal obligations will help ensure adherence and mitigate potential legal liabilities. Libraries should also maintain clear communication with patrons regarding their data rights and privacy practices.

**TECHNOLOGY POLICIES**

Effective technology planning is essential for public libraries to meet evolving community needs and enhance service delivery. We recommend that you work with your IT department or the State Library's IT team to conduct a comprehensive assessment of your library's technology resources. This exercise may help you identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in your technology services and infrastructure. This assessment should include evaluating hardware, software, digital resources, and staff capabilities. Based on the findings, a strategic technology plan should be developed that outlines clear goals, timelines, and budgets, aligning technology initiatives with the library's overall mission and community objectives.

Policies governing technology use must be clearly defined and communicated to staff, governing body, as well as patrons. These policies should cover areas such as acceptable use of technology, internet access, digital content management, and cybersecurity practices. It's crucial to establish guidelines that promote digital equity, ensuring all community members have equal access to technology and digital resources. Additionally, policies should address patron privacy and data security, outlining how personal information is collected, used, and protected.

Regular reviews and updates of technology policies are necessary to keep pace with advancements in technology and changing legal requirements. In addition, training programs should be implemented to educate staff on policies and best practices, cultivating a culture of technology competency and awareness.

Collaborating with other libraries can facilitate resource sharing and innovative technology solutions, maximizing the impact of investments in technology. The State Library hosts an annual Technology Fest; we highly recommend that your library's IT staff attend, and directors and assistant directors are welcome as well. Policies and plans can only go so far. Their effectiveness depends entirely on the people implementing them, making staff and patron digital literacy an essential complement to any technology strategy

**DIGITAL LITERACY AND TRAINING**

In an era of escalating cyber threats and growing dependence on digital technology, your library needs to prioritize improving digital literacy among both staff and patrons. Strengthening cybersecurity begins with education. Implement training programs that teach safe internet practices, how to identify cyber threats and the importance of privacy settings. These efforts

empower users to safeguard themselves and the library's resources. Offering workshops on basic technology skills, online safety, and data privacy also creates a culture of responsibility and awareness.

Your library is a vital community resource for delivering technology education and support. By providing classes and personalized assistance, it will enable patrons to navigate digital tools and resources more effectively. This elevates the community's overall digital literacy and builds trust and confidence in the library's services, positioning the library as a reliable and essential resource in the digital age.

**DIGITAL INCLUSION**

Promoting digital inclusion in Louisiana involves leveraging various resources and initiatives that support equitable access to technology and broadband services. The Louisiana Broadband Initiative[4] aims to expand high-speed internet access across the state, particularly in underserved areas. Local efforts like ConnectLA[5] focus on increasing digital equity by providing resources and support for communities to improve broadband access.

Libraries can also support digital inclusion efforts by providing device lending programs and digital literacy resources available through national and state partners.

One of the most powerful tools available to libraries pursuing these digital inclusion goals is a federal funding program specifically designed to offset the cost of connectivity. E-Rate can directly support your library's broadband access objectives, and every eligible library should understand how to use it.

## E-RATE

**WHAT IS E-RATE?**

E-Rate[6] provides discounts for connectivity services such as Internet access, internal connections, and certain network equipment. Traditionally, in Louisiana, discounts can range from 80% to 90% of costs. Your library’s discount will be based on your area's poverty level (number of free school lunches). The School and Libraries Division (SLD) of the Universal Service Administrative Company administers E-Rate.

**WHY APPLY FOR E-RATE?**

Simply put, E-rate saves you money. The significant cost savings on telecommunications and internet services provided by E-Rate will allow you to stretch the library’s budget further, and shift funds to other vital programs and resources that enhance your community’s access to information. For instance, with improved broadband connectivity funded through E-Rate, your

library can offer patrons reliable internet-based services such as telehealth, which are crucial for bridging the digital divide in your community.

**HOW DO I APPLY FOR E-RATE?**

To apply for E-Rate, you must determine your library's eligibility for the program. The best way to accomplish this is to contact the State Library for guidance on the application process, ensuring that your library meets all necessary conditions before proceeding with the application. After assessing specific telecommunications and internet needs, you can register on the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) website, obtaining a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). If your library is already participating in the E-rate program, make sure that you follow the deadlines for submitting applications/forms.

Keeping up with E-Rate deadlines is crucial for libraries to secure funding for telecommunications and internet services, reducing costs and ensuring equitable access to digital resources. Missing key deadlines can result in delays, funding denials, or lost opportunities to improve broadband infrastructure. Regularly checking the USAC-E-Rate calendar[7] will help you stay on track and maximize available discounts.

When applying for E-rate services, your first step will be to submit Form 470 to notify service providers of the desired services and allowing a 28-day waiting period for bids. The State Library can guide you through this process. Once the bids are evaluated, the director selects the best option based on the library's needs and budget. Following this, Form 471 is submitted to request funding for the chosen services, and the library awaits a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) from USAC that indicates the approved funding amount. After securing funding, the library collaborates with the selected provider to implement the services. Finally, Form 486 is filed to confirm that the services have started and to ensure compliance with program rules.

Throughout this process, maintaining thorough records is essential for potential audits and future reference, enabling the library to enhance its technological capabilities effectively.

**E-RATE ASSISTANCE FROM THE STATE LIBRARY OF LOUISIANA**

The State Library provides guidance to library directors on navigating the E-Rate application process, helping them understand eligibility requirements, funding levels, and application deadlines. Through workshops and training sessions, libraries can gain insights into completing forms, gathering necessary documentation, and submitting applications effectively. Additionally, the State Library offers ongoing support to address questions and challenges that may arise during the application process.

Expanding and upgrading your network infrastructure through E-Rate also increases the importance of protecting it. As libraries take on more sophisticated digital capabilities, cybersecurity must keep pace.

For more information, contact Library Development at 225-342-4931 or email libdev@library.la.gov.

## CYBERSECURITY

Public libraries' increasing reliance on digital infrastructure makes them attractive targets for cyber threats. As director, you must prioritize cybersecurity by charging your IT department with implementing defense and response protocols, as well as train staff to recognize phishing attempts and other malicious activities. Establishing an incident response plan is crucial; this plan should outline steps for mitigating risks, reporting incidents, and communicating with stakeholders. Regularly updating software and systems is essential to protect against vulnerabilities. Your library's IT department should develop policies and guidelines on preventing and responding to cybersecurity threats. When budgets allow, directors should also consider employing cybersecurity experts for assessments and ongoing monitoring to ensure that your library's network defenses are up-to-date and adequate.

Cybersecurity measures are critically important for public libraries to protect staff and patron data from ever-evolving types of cyber threats. Libraries retain a wealth of information, including patron records, financial transactions, payroll information, and other sensitive data, making them attractive targets for cybercriminals. A robust cybersecurity strategy safeguards this data from unauthorized access, breaches, and potential misuse, ensuring that the privacy and trust of patrons are maintained.

Implementing strong security protocols, such as firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and data encryption, is essential for creating multiple layers of defense against attacks. Regular software updates and patches are necessary to mitigate vulnerabilities in systems and applications. Additionally, staff training on recognizing phishing attempts and practicing safe internet behaviors is vital, as human error often serves as the entry point for cyber threats.

Moreover, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements (La. R.S. 51:3074) regarding protection of personal information adds another layer of responsibility. Libraries must adhere to state and federal laws that govern the handling of personal data, ensuring they implement policies that protect patron privacy and secure their information. ALA's *Library Privacy Guidelines for Library Management Systems*[8] offer a practical roadmap to safeguard patron data within integrated library systems (LMS), balancing operational needs with ethical and legal privacy protections. These guidelines stress embedding privacy into vendor contracts, ensuring

libraries retain data ownership, vendors adhere to state/federal laws and your policies (including subcontractors), and robust encryption secures data in transit and at rest.

Network security is foundational to maintaining a secure library environment. Your library's IT department must ensure that the library's public and staff networks are segmented, minimizing the risk of unauthorized access to sensitive systems. Implementing firewalls and intrusion detection systems will further provide an additional layer of protection. Regular network audits and vulnerability assessments are essential to identify potential weaknesses. Strong password policies, multi-factor authentication, and encryption of sensitive data transmitted over the network should be enforced. Staff training on safe internet practices can further mitigate risks associated with network usage.

Implementing and maintaining strong cybersecurity and network practices is a significant undertaking, particularly for libraries with small or no dedicated IT staff. The good news are that Louisiana libraries are not without support. The state offers several collaborative resources designed to reduce the burden on individual systems and extend the reach of limited budgets.

## STATEWIDE TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

**LOUIS**[9] is a collaborative effort among libraries in the state to provide access to resources, enhance library services, and promote information sharing. The network supports member libraries with tools, resources, and initiatives to improve library services and foster community engagement.

While focusing on academic libraries, LOUIS also serves public libraries, school libraries, and special libraries, aiming to improve access to resources and services for all types of libraries in the state. The goal is to enhance collaboration and resource sharing among all member libraries.

**LaNet** Regional Ethernet contracts[10] provide Ethernet services statewide through commercial vendors. Ethernet services are available as point-to-point and point-to-multipoint connections. Various speeds (from 2Mbps to 10Gbps) and handoff facilities may be available, dependent upon locations and vendors. Certain features such as QoS are available as well. OTS will work closely with agencies to provide technical assistance as needed, before ordering the services.

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (**GOSHEP**) serves as an extension of the office of the Governor and provides sound leadership during crisis events while also providing information to help in day-to-day operations. Their website has a Cybersecurity plan[11] to minimize the impact if cyberattacked and to facilitate a quick return to normal operations.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (n.d.). *Report fraud*. https://www.lla.la.gov/report-fraud/

[2] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (2025, August; rev.). *Open Meetings Law FAQ* (R.S. 42:11–42:28). https://app.lla.state.la.us/llala.nsf/baadb2991272084786257ab8006ee827/$file/open%20meetings%20law%20faq.pdf

[3] Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/

[4] Louisiana Office of the Governor. (n.d.). *Broadband for Louisiana*. https://gov.louisiana.gov/page/Broadband-for-Louisiana

[5] Louisiana Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity. (n.d.). *Connect LA*. https://connect.la.gov/

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# Chapter 21

# PERSONNEL

*"The most important asset of any library goes home at night – the library staff."*
–Timothy S. Healy, SJ, Former President, New York Public Library

## OVERVIEW

One of the most difficult tasks of the library director is personnel management. The style of personnel management that a director chooses to adopt is a very individual and personal decision. Just as people are different, it is unlikely that any two directors will adopt the same management style. In this chapter various ways of handling difficult situations are presented so that, as you use this manual, you will find "bits and pieces" to use in the operation of your library.

The library staff you employ is either your best asset or worst liability. Your library may have plaster falling from the ceiling, holes in the wall, and may not have been able to purchase new books in many years. But, if the first thing a patron sees when coming through your front door is a smiling, friendly face behind the desk, eager to search for the necessary information and resources that person seeks, that patron perceives the library as "a great place".

A library can do a number of things to ensure that its staff is the best it can be. Having the library board of control adopt personnel policies is one of these. In fact, if a complete policy manual has not been maintained, this should be among your first major projects.

While libraries are governed by Federal and state employment laws, your library should have board adopted, written policies and procedures for payroll and personnel, including hiring processes, personnel files, time and attendance, overtime and leave, payroll processing, performance appraisals, and discrimination/harassment. You should also have board approved policies that include affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, selection, recruitment methods, job classification and pay scales, benefits, attendance, and an employee dismissal policy. These policies will be the rules by which you run the library. They provide both guidelines and protection.

Other than developing personnel policies, a director can ensure the staff is as good as it can be when you have a management style that is fair, impartial and consistent for all employees. This is done by keeping lines of communication open at all levels and by remembering to treat subordinates as you would want to be treated.

Occasionally, the director must place others in management positions. Consider the individuals carefully who will supervise on your behalf. Will these persons manage your staff in a manner which is ethical, fair and reasonable? Or will they become destructive to your library's culture if

placed in administrative positions? Will they make others do all the work while they relax? Remember that you will be the one to answer for their actions, so select wisely.

## PERSONNEL/EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

An employee handbook is your foundation for a well-run library, setting the expectations, support, and structure staff rely on daily. Think of a good employee handbook as a trusty map for you and your staff—one that makes navigating the workplace a lot smoother and sidesteps unnecessary and sometimes unpleasant surprises. When put together thoughtfully, the handbook helps everyone understand the rules of the road and the support they can expect, which can prevent so many little issues from becoming big ones. Without it, or if it is too vague, staff and managers alike can quickly find themselves in a fog of misunderstandings.

An effective handbook starts by setting down clear expectations for employees as well as administration. It is not just about spelling out what the library expects from employees but also about making sure staff understand what they can count on from us. This is not just "covering the bases"; it is about setting the tone for a healthy, respectful workplace where everyone knows where they stand. Since most library positions do not come with formal contracts, the handbook also fills in some blanks around pay, benefits, and rewards, giving staff a better understanding of what they are working for and how those benefits are accessed.

Next, a strong handbook covers conduct and behavior—not in a restrictive way but with enough guidance to keep things running smoothly. Every library is different in how it approaches things like dress codes or workplace demeanor, and the handbook is the right place to lay out any specifics (or to state there are not any, if that is the case). With computers and social media so central to work life, it is also wise to add a few guardrails here—policies that keep things safe and practical without unnecessarily limiting your staff's freedoms or comfort.

Including a clear non-discrimination policy is also essential. It is the handbook's way of making a promise that everyone is treated fairly, equitably, and ethically, in line with all the laws and standards on equality and access. Remember, the employee handbook is not about predicting every possible scenario but about providing a foundation of respect and trust upon which everyone in the organization can rely.

And remember, your employee handbook should be a living document, anticipating changes in laws, technology, and workplace culture. You and the directors that come after you will want to revisit it every so often. As with any other official document your library produces (such as a library policy manual), it is worth consulting with a labor law attorney to be sure everything is in good order—getting that legal peace of mind from the start is a benefit for both you and your team.

**POLICIES/PROCEDURES TO INCLUDE IN HANDBOOK**

In crafting an employee handbook (or personnel policies), you will want to cover a range of topics to guide staff on what to expect and how to confidently approach their roles within the library. Covering these key areas creates a well-rounded resource that sets clear standards, establishes expectations for a professional environment, and helps staff align with the library's values. Your library board will approve all policies for staff. For example, your library may or may not choose to follow federal or state holidays. Check with your local governing authority for observance of holidays in your parish. A list of federal and state holidays is included in an Appendix in this handbook.

The Louisiana Legislative Auditor has a document outlining best practices[1] to help local government entities create their own written policies and procedures.

Here's a structured list of sections you may want to include:

**Leave Policies**

- Holidays
- Sick leave, including family sickness
- Vacation/annual leave accrual
- Personal leave
- Leave without pay
- Jury duty/court appearances
- Bereavement leave
- Military leave
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Disability leave and benefits

**Scheduling and Work Hours**

- Scheduling and schedule changes
- Working from home/telecommuting
- Policies for extreme weather or transportation delays

**Breaks**

- Breaks and lunch periods

**Attendance and Conduct**

- Lateness/tardiness policies
- Absenteeism standards
- Attitudes and interactions with the public and other staff
- Personal appearance and dress code

**Professional Standards**

- Conflicts of interest
- Policies on other employment
- Guidelines for gratuities and gifts
- Louisiana ethics laws

**Conduct and Professional Behavior**

- General conduct expectations and professional demeanor
- Respectful interactions with patrons and staff
- Ethical guidelines and confidentiality
- Social media usage re: acting/ speaking as representative of your library

**Electioneering and Political Activity**

- Rules around political campaigning or endorsing candidates within the library
- Restrictions on displaying or distributing political materials at work
- Standards for participating in political activities off-duty versus on-duty

**Fireable Offenses**

- Grounds for immediate dismissal (e.g., theft, fraud, embezzlement, harassment, violent or abusive behavior, using illegal drugs at work)
- Performance issues (failure to meet job expectations after warnings, repeated attendance issues, including excessive lateness or absenteeism)
- Insubordination and policy violations (repeatedly refusing to follow supervisor instructions, violation of policies on substance abuse or workplace safety)
- Breach of library confidentiality or misuse of library resources
- Dishonesty (misrepresentation of qualifications or credentials, falsifying library documents including resumes, timecards, or expense reports)

**Use of Library Resources**

- Use of library telephone and equipment
- Use of personal cellphones while on duty
- Staff loan policies

**Personal Items and Security**

- Security of personal belongings
- Food and drink policies within the library

## EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

A library should establish and maintain a position classification schedule and job descriptions for all individual positions. A job description defines an individual position (such as reference librarian, catalog librarian, acquisitions librarian). A classification schedule groups similar positions into classes (such as Librarian I, Librarian II, and Librarian III). This schedule measures responsibilities, experience, qualifications, and educational requirements for each class. A pay scale may be developed in conjunction with the classification schedule, assigning appropriate salaries and increments to the various classes within the schedule.

The needs and responsibilities of positions change over time and the class to which they are assigned should reflect those changes. For example, if the position responsibilities as listed in the job description have increased, a position reclassification may be necessary. Changes in the classification schedule and pay scale normally need to be approved by the board.

In developing and maintaining a classification schedule, you may want to use flexibility in your requirements for experience and education. For example, you might allow two to three years of library work experience to substitute for one year of college. On the other hand, you might allow two to three years of college to substitute for one year of experience. This flexibility allows you to select an excellent applicant or current employee who may lack one or the other of those requirements but who would excel in the position.

Determine how you will evaluate such things as trade school, vo-tech and business college. Transcripts, specializations acquired, and courses taken are items you may wish to consider.

When a library director decides it is time to reevaluate staff salaries, a salary study is usually the best place to start. This study gives you a clear view of whether the current pay scales are competitive and fair, comparing your library's salaries with those in similar roles at other parish libraries in your region, or even in other public libraries of similar size in other states. The study typically involves gathering data on salaries, benefits, and even cost-of-living adjustments. Your main goal is to ensure your library can attract and keep great staff, knowing their compensation matches their skills and the demands of their roles.

If you are in a larger library system with an HR department, the process can be pretty straightforward. The HR team often leads the study, pulling in information from salary surveys or using regional and national data sources. They'll work with you to ensure any adjustments meet library board policies and budget constraints. Together, you can fine-tune the details, making sure everything is fair and within the board's approval scope.

In smaller libraries without dedicated HR, the director often takes the reins. You might work with neighboring libraries or tap into state and regional library associations for salary data. In these cases, it is all about combining your findings with solid, relatable data. When presenting

to the board, including both the numbers (like salary ranges for similar roles) and the real-life impact of each position helps make a stronger case for any needed adjustments.

If you need more help, samples of position classification schedules and sample library job descriptions are available from the State Library, Library Development, libdev@library.la.gov.

**SALARIES AND BENEFITS**

When it comes to setting up benefits, managing raises, and deciding on holidays, the key driver is usually the budget, and every choice needs to make sense within that framework. Benefits are often a balancing act between what the library can afford and what's competitive enough to keep staff engaged. If funds allow, offering benefits like retirement contributions, health coverage, and paid leave can go a long way in attracting and retaining talent. When budgets are tight, though, directors often get creative, possibly supplementing core benefits with flexible hours, professional development, or additional unpaid leave options.

Cost of living adjustments (COLAs) and merit raises each have their place, but the timing and rationale behind them differ. COLAs, which reflect inflation and rising living costs, are typically applied annually if the budget allows. These adjustments show that the library values its staff's stability, recognizing that everyone faces similar economic pressures. Merit raises, on the other hand, are based on individual performance and are often awarded selectively, depending on staff contributions and any measurable achievements. When budgets are tight, merit raises might be limited to key roles or projects that go above and beyond, ensuring the raises are tied to both impact and fiscal responsibility.

Determining holidays is also a budgetary and logistical consideration, with most libraries following their parish government or state guidelines for holidays to keep things consistent. Some directors will add a few floating holidays or personal days to give staff more flexibility, but this always depends on what staffing and scheduling allow. Finding the right balance between days off, daily coverage needs, and budget constraints is all part of creating a workplace where employees feel valued while keeping the library's doors open to serve the community.

## CIVIL SERVICE

In certain parishes—such as Orleans, East Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and Jefferson—library employees fall under a civil service system. In these areas, you'll want to become familiar with and follow the specific civil service procedures and regulations, which cover everything from recruitment and hiring to discipline, termination, job classifications, and employee pay.

## FEDERAL AND STATE LABOR LAWS

Public libraries are required to comply with a number of Federal and state laws that apply to labor practices for public library personnel. Some of the topics addressed in these laws include Americans with disabilities, civil rights and discrimination, fair labor standards, family medical leave, safe workplace, and so on.

For more information on these state and federal laws, please see Chapter 9, Law and Legal Questions. You can also contact Library Development at the State Library.

## PRE-EMPLOYMENT: SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

### RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Where do you look for a replacement or to fill a new position? This is another area in which libraries differ as recruiting practices vary from library to library. Regardless of the method you use, remember to be consistent. Having a board approved hiring policy will help with this.

You may wish to consider current staff for a promotion or transfer. To this end, post vacancy announcements so staff are aware of possible opportunities.

Before you advertise, check current applications on file. Although applications may be kept on file for an indefinite period of time and used to fill positions, no state law requires an employer to keep applications on file for any specific period of time. You may want to have the length of time applications are considered current written into board policy.

Opinions vary concerning the advertisement of every vacant position in the local paper. Some libraries selectively advertise. You should advertise for positions on your library's web site and on any other job websites for your area. This is another area in which each director, in conjunction with the board, must decide what is best for the library.

General advertising (e.g., classified) often casts a broad "net", which results in many callers but perhaps few "serious" candidates with library backgrounds. Rule of thumb: if you want "general" applicants, advertise generally; if you want "specialized" candidates, advertise specifically (i.e., library association job lists, public library lists and newsletters, and/or trade journals). For example, you would advertise much more broadly for the director position than you would for a circulation clerk.

In larger cities it may be helpful to use an employment agency, particularly for positions like "automation specialist" or other jobs, such as maintenance, which don't require specific library experience or training. Sometimes an agency search may even locate applicants with library backgrounds who hadn't already applied at the library. A possible downside to using agencies is deciding which agency to use if there are several in your area. Even though it is time consuming and repetitious to contact all of them, you may be thought "partial" if you deal mostly with one.

Adopt what seems like a fair policy; be consistent, and be certain the agencies know it. Be sure to establish that the library will not pay the fee which most agencies charge; the successful client should pay that.

For the director position, libraries sometimes use “head hunters” to advertise the position nationally.

Don’t forget the local or state employment service (i.e., Office of Employment Security), particularly for the less specialized positions. These governmental service agencies offer the additional advantages of screening applicants through interviews and, often, through testing. They also provide I-9 certification for candidates selected.

Professional positions which cannot be filled from current staff or available applications should be advertised for a predetermined period of time. The advertisement will either list the deadline by which applications must be received or include a statement to the effect that the position will be advertised until filled.

Advertisements can be placed in your local paper, major papers around the state, and library schools. Job notices can be submitted online to be posted on the State Library’s website. If national publication is desired, contact Library Journal[2] and the ALA Job List[3]. The ALA Placement Center is a good source for recruiting and interviewing professionals.[4]

If you are unsure how to word an advertisement for a position, check the current job description for that position, and read several similar ads in the professional journals. Library Development at the State Library has job description samples available.

Before you call a professional to come in for an interview, have the board provide guidelines for travel expenses, if any, that will be paid. The library board may pay the moving expenses of a newly hired professional. The board must specify the provision for payment of moving expenses in the formal letter offering the job, or that information should be included in the contract, if used. In other words, the decision to pay moving expenses must be made in advance; the legislative auditor would take a dim view of the board’s paying such expenses as an afterthought.

When it is time to hire new staff or fill a vacancy, the recruitment and selection process becomes a pivotal task, one that balances the library’s needs with finding the right individuals to fulfill them. A thoughtful recruitment approach can help attract candidates who bring both the skills and commitment that make our libraries exceptional.

Starting with internal candidates is often a good first step. Posting vacancy announcements internally lets current staff know about new opportunities and encourages their professional growth within the organization. If no suitable internal candidates emerge, external recruitment follows. Each library’s approach to recruiting is unique, but consistency in the selection process

is essential, regardless of method. Whether advertising broadly or targeting specific skills, it is important to remain transparent, fair, and consistent at each stage.

When expanding to external recruitment, consider utilizing local media, library websites, state employment services, and professional networks. Digital platforms, like LinkedIn and library association job boards, and the Library's social media accounts help reach a wide pool of potential candidates and are particularly useful for specialized roles. Professional conferences or job fairs, especially those sponsored by the ALA or local library associations, are also excellent recruitment opportunities for more advanced positions.

Once applications start arriving, it is crucial to review them with consistent criteria. This not only helps maintain fairness but also reduces unconscious bias in the selection process. Consistency in evaluating resumes, experience, and skills ensures that all candidates are given equal consideration. If skills tests or assessments are required, like typing or shelving accuracy tests, ensure they directly relate to the position and are used consistently across all applicants.

For interviews, prompt follow-up communication is key. Scheduling interviews at a convenient time, whether in person or virtually, shows respect for the candidate's time and interest. To help streamline this, confirm interview times promptly and notify any applicants not moving forward. Phone or video conference interviews can be a good initial step for long-distance candidates, while a second or final round of in-person interviews can help you and the team get a fuller sense of each finalist.

As you reach the final stages, reference and background checks are helpful tools to confirm candidates' suitability and ensure the library's safety and integrity. Reference checks should be done uniformly, with questions that relate directly to the job's requirements and the candidate's work history. If background checks are used, conduct them carefully, balancing thoroughness with confidentiality and in compliance with any legal requirements.

For professional candidates, you'll also want to consult the board on policies for any travel or moving expenses before inviting candidates for in-person interviews. If the board approves covering moving expenses for a newly hired professional, ensure this provision is clearly stated in the formal job offer or contract. Any decision on travel or relocation expenses should be made in advance; it is best to avoid any "after-the-fact" adjustments, as the legislative auditor may view those with scrutiny.

Finally, remember that communication is critical throughout the hiring process. Each applicant represents a potential member of the library community, and treating them with respect—whether they are selected or not—reflects the values of our organization. By keeping lines of communication open and making decisions with transparency, we set a positive tone for future working relationships and uphold our library's reputation as a fair and welcoming place to work.

**NEPOTISM**

When it comes to interviews, it is important to focus only on candidates who truly meet the qualifications for the role. While it can be tempting to consider someone with a personal connection—like a friend or relative of a board member—it is best to keep the process as fair and straightforward as possible. Louisiana's ethics laws are there to help guide us, ensuring that our hiring practices stay impartial and free of any potential conflicts of interest.

If a candidate has ties to current employees or officials, take a close look at your library's nepotism policy, and don't hesitate to consult the Louisiana Board of Ethics if you're unsure about any specifics. This careful approach not only keeps things above board but also reassures everyone involved that each hiring decision is made openly and fairly.

Your library may already have clear policies around hiring relatives, so be sure to check in with those guidelines. You can also find more details in Chapter 9, "Law and Legal Questions," which covers ethics laws and practices in depth. Adhering to these guidelines supports a transparent, professional hiring process that everyone can feel confident in.

**BACKGROUND CHECKS/CREDIT CHECKS**

For information on background checks, see Chapter 9, Law and Legal Questions.

**INTERVIEWING**

Study carefully the candidate's application. Most of the time it will be evident whether or not they meet the qualifications. Call one or more of the references if you're uncertain whether to interview an individual. Don't interview too many or too few. For most paraprofessional or civil service vacancies, three or four candidates are appropriate, even though you may have examined a dozen or more applications. Try to obtain a reasonable balance for your area's population in the race and sex of the candidates you select for interviews even though it will not always be possible to have a balanced "pool" for every vacancy.

Several types of interviews have different goals, purposes, procedures, or "atmosphere".

- Initial (or Preliminary) interview. This type of interview would include "walk-ins", referrals from another agency or individual, or queries ("Are you hiring?"). Some organizations post a policy, such as "Interviews on Wednesday mornings only – 9 a.m. to noon." Such a policy allows the library's interviewer (possibly you) to compress this activity to a specific period; otherwise, unscheduled interviews could significantly disrupt your work week. Setting aside time to hold preliminary interviews helps prevent applicants from getting discouraged or from thinking they were turned away for other reasons like discrimination.

- Phone interview. This is particularly useful for candidates out of the area or otherwise not immediately available. Usually this is prompted by an applicant's letter or resume and the interviewer calls the applicant as convenient, or at a prearranged time. Sometimes, you will get "cold calls" from librarians looking for other opportunities or moving to your region. They may not be available to receive a return call from you during your normal "interviewing" time, so you should have handy a list of questions to ask, as well as any vacancy announcements for which they would be qualified.
- You may conduct an "electronic" interview. If so, be especially careful to have the individual follow up with a paper resume and application letter; this could be an important distinction at some future point.
- Follow-up (Finalist) interview. After interviewing many preliminary applicants, you may have a "short-list" of good candidates. A second look is usually a good idea anyway, but particularly if it gives you a chance to expose the applicants to the supervisor or co-workers in that department or branch. In the follow-up, you may want to explore more specific aspects of the candidate's library experience, interests, specialties, goals, and so on, or learn more about his or her work ethic and communication skills.
- Group interview. These consume a lot of time on the part of several people, so use them selectively. Some libraries use these only for finalists for upper level vacancies, such as department head or branch supervisor. In such cases, it is useful to see how this candidate interacts with others on your management team (or those who would be colleagues). Another factor is that group interviews are, undoubtedly, the most stressful for the candidate. For example, a superb finalist who had sailed through a preliminary interview (with one supervisor) and a follow-up (with two interviewers), literally froze at the beginning of the group interview (with four "new" faces, plus the two others). She continued to stumble, and the interview deteriorated. Obviously, the other evaluators thought she was a "dud", even though the first two interviewers knew she was fantastic (and stated so). As a result, the library lost a wonderful candidate. If the finalist copes well in this group interview, you've probably found someone who can handle hectic and varied library situations and functions, and who can become a great member of the service team.

**General Guidelines for Interviewing**

1. Supply the applicant with a job description.
2. Set aside a period of time for the interview either in your office or at a neutral site. Make sure you will not be disturbed.
3. Put the applicant at ease. Remember how nervous you were when you last interviewed.
4. Ask questions that cannot be answered "yes" or "no". The applicant should do most of

the talking. If you want more comments after an applicant has apparently finished answering a given question, remain silent. The applicant will usually take this cue to mean "he wants more information", and, of course, you do.

5. Good interview questions do more than just confirm skills on a resume—they offer insight into how a candidate thinks, solves problems, and interacts with others. Situational experience questions (see questions 9 and 10), in particular, ask candidates to recall and describe specific examples from their past. These questions reveal not only what they've done but also how they approach common challenges and apply their expertise in various contexts.

6. Have a general "game plan" for the interview. Concentrate on the qualities of the applicant and his suitability for the position first. Then, provide details of the position, the conditions of employment and information about the library itself. If you do the opposite, the applicant can slant his answers to fit your needs. Others suggest that the applicant should be given a brief overview of the library and the position, and then asked what he could bring to this position.

7. Discuss any mandatory drug testing or pre-employment physicals which might be required. Inform the applicant that employment is contingent on passing these tests. In most cases, you must give the applicant a "conditional offer of hire" before requiring substance-abuse testing or physicals (i.e., you should not test all applicants). Remember, all results (even "negative" drug-test results) are confidential.

8. What is the applicant's perception of library work, ethics, and standards? For example, does the applicant support the library bill of rights and Freedom to Read. If it is not realistic, can this person handle what library workers really must do? Does the candidate want to work and learn, or is he merely looking for a paycheck? Will this person be positive, productive and part of the team, or negative, unproductive, and difficult to work with? Is the candidate willing to work the schedule at this location? If the first group of candidates doesn't produce anyone you are satisfied with, don't be afraid to start over.

**Sample Interview Questions**

Do ask:

1. Why do you want this job?
2. What qualities do you have that you feel would help you in this position?
3. What skills or talents do you possess that you feel qualify you for this position?
4. If I asked your former employers (or teachers) about you, what would they say? Why?

5. What part of your last job did you enjoy the most? (Or, for those with limited work experience, what was your favorite class or teacher?) Why?
6. What part of your last job did you enjoy the least? (Or, for those with limited work experience, what was your least favorite class or teacher?) Why?
7. What are your positive characteristics (strengths)?
8. What are your negative characteristics (weaknesses)?
9. Tell me about a time when you helped a patron with a challenging research request. How did you approach it, and what steps did you take to ensure they found the information they needed?
10. Describe an experience where you had to handle a conflict or misunderstanding with a patron or a team member. How did you resolve it, and what did you learn from the experience?"
11. Are there any reasons why you would not be able to perform the duties required by this position, or work the hours posted for this position?

**Never** ask questions which have nothing to do with the job and could become fodder for discriminatory (intentional or unintentional) decision-making, such as:

1. Are you married? (Or variations, such as what does your husband do?)
2. Do you have any children? (Or variations, such as who will stay with your children while you work?)
3. Will you be driving to work?
4. What church or social groups do you belong to? (Or variations designed to ascertain memberships in controversial or questionable organizations, political preferences, etc.)
5. Are you taking any medications? (Or variations designed to ascertain the physical and mental health of the individual.)
6. Do you need the family plan insurance? Do you live alone? (Or variations designed to ascertain the individual's relationship status, lifestyle, or sexual preference.)

**Ensuring Equitable Interviews for Individuals with Disabilities**

Special attention should be given to preserving a non-biased approach to an interview with the disabled person. Remember that some disabilities are invisible but may affect the individual's daily work life. Since this is the case, all interviews should be conducted with the same standards. Subjects to be completely explored are a precise job description and discussion of the functions to be performed, the expected production to be accomplished, and the physical

working environment. Only with this complete knowledge and discussion can the need for any reasonable accommodations be determined.

All interview questions must be job related. For example, the interviewer does not need to ask whether the individual has a driver's license unless driving is an essential function of the position. Nor should the interviewer inquire how the interviewee will get to work if employed.

The interviewer should not ask the cause of a noticeable disability, nor should the interviewer preemptively suggest reasonable accommodations. The only appropriate questions are those needed to determine whether the individual can perform the functions of the job and, thus, whether the individual is qualified. A specific discussion emphasizing how the job is performed should elicit from the applicant information as to what, if any, accommodations might be needed.

Individuals can be required to have a pre-employment medical examination after a conditional offer of employment but only if this is required of all individuals applying for the same type of position. It should be noted that the ADA specifically prohibits classifying or segregating any job applicant or employee with disabilities in a way that adversely affects the individual's opportunities.

**PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTS**

Many libraries pretest all applicants. Some libraries give pre-employment tests to those who pass the interview stage. A director may use any kind of test to screen applicants as long as it is directly related to the job. It is recommended that the employer not set unreasonably high standards for a job. For example, an employer would be asking for trouble if he required an unreasonably high test score or a college degree for individuals applying for a filing clerk's position. The three criteria determined to have the strongest impact on an individual's work performance are previous job experience, test scores, and formal education. If the employer peremptorily excludes applicants because they do not meet one of these criteria without even considering whether they meet the other two, he could become the target of a discrimination suit.

If testing is used in any way during the selection process, it must be applied consistently. For example, your library's circulation workers must be able to type 25 words per minute for ordinary typing and keyboard work. For example, you have 15 applicants for a circulation clerk vacancy; you examine the paperwork and select six who appear to meet the qualifications for initial interviews. Three of those impress you as probable finalists. Test all three. Testing may not be used selectively, solely to exclude any candidate who otherwise meets the established criteria. As another example, your shelvers must be able to correctly arrange 25 "typical" books by call number and/or author's name. You may not favor one candidate by using 25 rather easily-arranged books while the other applicants have to sort 25 difficult ones. It is not acceptable to vary the difficulty of the test content or samples.

**EVALUATING YOUR CHOICES**

After you have analyzed the paperwork of the qualified applicants and held an initial interview with several of the most promising candidates, you should find yourself with a "short list" of contenders. From a large applicant pool, that may be four to six finalists; from a small pool it may be two or three. In the earlier stages, you consider applicants who meet the minimum qualifications and you interview those with the best credentials. Within the posted qualifications, however, try to allow for the "trainability" factor; that is, if the individual doesn't already possess the knowledge or skills, can he or she be trained?

At this point, you shift to a combination of: (1) an objective analysis of the education and experience and (2) a subjective analysis of such attributes as communication skills, grooming, personality, friendliness, and positive attitude. Of the applicants who are both qualified and experienced, the best person for the job is usually the one who is willing to work and learn and who gets along well with others.

Whenever possible, schedule a second interview for the finalists. Some applicants who give a really polished initial interview may do poorly in follow-ups. If so, study the differences between the two performances. If the initial interviews suggest a clear "winner" instead of a small group of finalists, you should still conduct a second interview or have the candidate meet one of your colleagues. If the new employee will work in a particular department or branch, if possible, involve that area's supervisor in some of these selection stages but at the very least in the second interview. Consider conducting your second interviews in the location they will be working and include a tour of the department or branch. This not only gives the candidate a chance to see where they will work, but it also gives you the opportunity to gauge their interest in the environment.

Generally, it is better not to announce a decision during or at the closing of the interview, even if you think you've made up your mind. Reflect on all the finalists without the distraction of one of them in front of you. Also, you should first discuss the finalist(s) with your colleague or the area supervisor to be certain of his or her analysis. It is possible to misinterpret the expressions or body language of your co-worker and assume he or she is thinking as you are. Go over the best and worst points of each finalist. Ask yourself (or each other) whether your evaluation is clouded by:

1. pity- ("they really need a job");
2. guilt (it is your responsibility to keep the wolf from their door); or,
3. any other reasons which would violate ethical or legal considerations.

Always call their references before you offer the job.

### PRE-EMPLOYMENT

Once the selection is made, make an offer to the successful candidate and wait for an answer before you notify the unsuccessful candidates. Get a written acceptance of the job by the successful applicant; keep a copy of that and the vacancy announcement in the individual's personnel folder. Complete and check all appropriate paperwork, including:

1. Form with contact information. Include line for preferred name.
2. W-4 form
3. Retirement form
4. Proof of citizenship or Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9
5. Health insurance information
6. Form to set up direct deposit for payroll, if you offer this

## EMPLOYMENT

### ORIENTATION

Orientation can be handled as either a group session presented by the director and staff to one or more new employees, or it can be one-on-one. Make sure the new employee knows the following:

1. An introduction to the library with an overview of the library and its staff, as well as how the library fits into the governing authority structure.
2. The library's programs and services.
3. A map of the physical library building, including where the new employee's workstation is located, where are the bathrooms and breakrooms, and short list of good places to go for lunch.
4. Make sure the workstation has any necessary supplies and equipment.
5. Make sure the employee knows their e-mail and any necessary passwords, along with instructions on how to log in and who to ask if they have any technology questions.
6. Risk management strategies –for example, what to do and who to call in case of emergency, fire drill procedures, inclement weather, and power outages.
7. Any internal jargon or acronyms they need to know.
8. Dress, appearance, and behavior expectations when they are working.

Complete an orientation check list with each employee. Review the job description with the employee, show him his work station and introduce him to the rest of the staff. Introduce the employee to the personnel policy manual. You may choose to give him his own copy. Have him "sign off" saying he has received a job description, and understands policies which explain benefits, termination, and probationary procedures. You may wish to survey employees after a predetermined period of time to see what parts of the orientation were helpful and which could be improved upon.

Give the employee a tour of the library on their first day, introducing them to everyone, especially library administration and employees with whom they will be working. Explain to the employee how he fits into the work flow. Take the time to train, or have him trained by someone who knows the job thoroughly. It is a good idea to document the training. After the employee feels comfortable in his new position, and for your protection, you may wish to have that employee sign and date a statement saying he was trained.

**Orientation Checklist for New Employees**

An orientation checklist should include the following items.

1. Copy of job description
2. Acknowledgement of receipt of personnel manual
3. Library hours and when various staff are expected to work
4. Receipt of ID/gate card/entrance card; system log-in information
5. Employee and trainer's signatures (dated) on the orientation checklist to acknowledge that the employee received the information. File in employee personnel folder.

On the new employee's first day, send out a welcome announcement to the entire staff.

Contact Library Development (libdev@library.la.gov) for a sample orientation check list and an acknowledgement of receipt of orientation. These forms should be customized to the needs of the individual library.

**PROBATIONARY PERIOD FOR NEW EMPLOYEES**

All new employees undergo a probationary period. This preliminary trial period is to be used by both employer and employee to determine if the newly hired person is the right one for the position. When writing library policy on the probationary period, be sure to cover such factors as:

1. length of time on probation (can vary from a month to a year);
2. how the employee's success or failure will be defined and documented;

3. who determines whether the employee has succeeded or failed, and must the decision be concurred with at a higher level;
4. will the probationary period automatically be deemed successful unless the employee is otherwise informed.

You should also consider following any local governing authority rules and regulations.

**PERSONNEL RECORDS**

**What is Kept and Where**

Libraries must keep personnel files for each employee. The personnel file should consist of records relevant to his/her employment and service history. These records must be kept in a safe, secure place where they are unlikely to be lost or damaged. All personnel records must be handled with discretion. Record keeping is extremely important for legal compliance.

Each employee's personnel file is a folder that contains all human-resource related documents, including tax, payroll, and performance records, among others. It will also include at least one additional file designated as "confidential." Medical records of any type and I-9 forms must be maintained in locked files which are entirely separate from other documents. Any documents related to past or pending litigation should be kept in a file accessed only by your legal counsel.

Keeping complete records helps promote transparency between staff and the library administration. This is particularly important if you reprimand an employee, or give them a poor performance review. If any records are missing from an employee's file, even if it was an honest mistake, this causes distrust and may even lead to legal complications.

Your library may use paper files for personnel, or you may have switched to electronic files. Or, you may use a combination of both electronic and paper. For example, your payroll may be in an electronic format, but you still keep paper copies of any signed disciplinary files. Digital employee records require encryption and be restricted by permissions. All hard copy employee records must be kept in a safe place that can only be accessed by using a key. Because you need to keep confidential documents separate to maintain confidentiality, you will need multiple locations and multiple keys.

**Public Record vs. Confidential Record**

The Louisiana State Civil Service department has published Job Aids and Resources: Employee file – Confidential and public records. It is a guide that discusses personnel confidential information and public information, guiding agencies on maintaining personnel files per Civil Service Rule 15.9.[5]

Another document published by the State Civil Service is Job Aids and Resources: Public v. private information. It discusses how to handle records that are public information and subject to public records request, and which records are considered confidential.[6]

**PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

Provide timely performance appraisals. The new employee should be evaluated after his probationary period, and, thereafter, at least once a year. Documentation is a necessary part of evaluating an employee, and is essential in defending yourself against charges that you have treated someone unfairly.

Generally, employees should not be "surprised" during an evaluation; a supervisor's grievances should not be "stored up" until the evaluation. In other words, the supervisor should have already covered problem areas as they occurred or were noticed. Periodic evaluation is a formal opportunity to narrow the distance between the supervisor's expectations and the employee's understanding of the job. However, the supervisor should have already informally clarified such misunderstandings (or at least attempted to) as the supervisor became aware of any discrepancy or confusion. Be sure to document the good behavior, as well as the bad for all employees. Keep and file any letters of commendation from outside the library. Employees should be given a copy of each evaluation. The original is filed in the employee's personnel folder.

All of your employee records can be subpoenaed and examined for signs of discrimination. Be sure you do not write anything in an employee's folder or on any record which could be misconstrued as discriminatory.

**POSITIVE PERSONNEL EXPERIENCE**

During a director's tenure at any given library there are many rewarding personnel experiences which should be mentioned before getting into the detail and "gloom" of the necessities of discipline inherent in the position. Things that come to mind include employees who:

1. get compliments from the public;
2. seek advice for educational plans or career goals;
3. attain a library science degree;
4. finally "crack" a complex problem in service or technology; or
5. discover a better way to do something which saves time and money.

Staff, in many instances, can help to make your work more enjoyable and infinitely more rewarding.

**PROMOTION, TRANSFER, REASSIGNMENT**

When it comes to promotions, transfers, and reassignments, having a clear process can make all the difference in building a positive workplace culture. As library directors, we are not only looking for the right fit in each role; we are also helping our staff grow professionally and find

satisfaction in their work. Here is an approach you can take to make these processes fair, supportive, and flexible.

Promotions are an exciting part of the job—they're your chance to recognize and reward those who've put in the time, effort, and creativity to make a real impact. Promotions aren't just based on tenure; they are about skill, performance, and contributions to the library's goals. When you are considering someone for a promotion, look at performance evaluations, relevant skills, unique contributions, and any "above and beyond" efforts. Regular reviews help you see who is ready for more responsibility and who might shine in a new role. One of the most important things to remember here is transparency. By sharing promotion opportunities openly with your staff, you encourage people to grow into these roles, making it clear that their career growth is something you value.

Transfers can be equally beneficial, not just for the library but for the employees themselves. Transfers can bring fresh skills and energy to different areas of the library, and they often happen at just the right time for both the staff member and the library's needs. Sometimes, an employee will request a transfer because they want to explore new areas, or maybe they are looking for a role that better suits their life outside work. Other times, a transfer might be initiated by management to fill a gap or bring a particular skill set to a different department. Either way, having a fair and open process makes a big difference. Outline the steps for applying for a transfer, and make sure everyone understands the criteria. If you have multiple candidates for the same transfer opportunity, consistency and fairness are key. That way, everyone feels respected and valued, even if they aren't selected.

Reassignments are sometimes necessary to respond to the library's changing needs—especially with new projects or temporary staffing needs. You may find that a particular employee's strengths are just what's needed in a different area, either temporarily or long-term. When a reassignment comes up, keep communication open. Let the employee know why the change is happening and what they can expect. If the reassignment is a big shift in responsibilities, consider any additional support or training they might need to succeed in the new role. And remember, recognizing their flexibility and willingness to take on new challenges can go a long way in building team morale.

Promotion, transfer, and reassignment aren't just about filling roles—they are also part of nurturing a team and even planning for the library's future leadership. Encourage staff development by making training and mentorship accessible, especially for those moving into more complex roles. And for any new role, having support, encouragement, and a chance to learn can make a huge difference for employees stepping up to meet those responsibilities.

If your library has an HR department or requires board approval for these types of decisions, make sure to keep them in the loop to maintain consistency with library policies and practices.

Having everyone on the same page makes these processes smoother and ensures staff have a fair experience, no matter which department or branch where they work.

By being open, consistent, and supportive in how you handle promotions, transfers, and reassignments, you're helping create a workplace where staff feel valued and know that their growth matters. And as you'll see, the library benefits just as much—keeping talented people, building flexibility, and preparing for whatever challenges or changes come our way.

As we move on to the next section of this chapter that discusses discipline and dismissal, remember that transfers or reassignments should not be used as a way to distance underperforming employees or to "move a problem" out of sight. While sometimes tempting, this approach can create bigger issues and affect team morale. If an employee is struggling in their role, the best step is to address performance concerns directly, using clear feedback and support to help them improve. This sets up the entire team for success and makes sure that any serious issues are managed responsibly and fairly, leading us into the next section on discipline and dismissal.

## DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL

Considering the time and expense involved in training employees, you should make every attempt to work with an employee who is not fulfilling his potential. If an employee is not doing a part of his job correctly, that employee might improve by "refresher" training. Be sure to document the repeated training sessions. For your protection, you may wish to have the employee sign and date this and all documentation. If repeated training does not help, you may need to terminate the employee at, or before, the end of the probationary period. Remember that the library itself cannot improve an employee; the employee must be willing to improve himself.

### Oral Warning

If it is the behavior of the employee that is the problem (e.g., tardiness, excessive personal phone calls, etc.), an oral warning may be in order. Talk to the employee about the problem; express your concern. Listen to the employee for his version and take notes. Sometimes your information on the case may be incorrect or incomplete. After hearing all sides, indicate your determination and whether further discipline is merited (e.g., written warning, probation, suspension).

### Written Reprimand

If it becomes apparent that the behavior is a chronic problem and repeated "talking" does not improve the situation, give a written reprimand. This is a documented warning in which you tell the employee what to expect, up to and including termination if the behavior continues.

**Formal Discipline**

Once things progress to the stage where formal discipline is necessary, it is very likely that an adversarial relationship exists between the employee and the supervisor. At this stage documentation is mandatory. The documentation should include the employee's name, social security number, date of employment, rate of pay, and the current date. Indicate the nature of the problem or the policy which the employee has violated and the dates of occurrence. Or, use a standard Employee Disciplinary Report Form designed for this specific purpose. Contact Library Development at the State Library for a sample of this form.

It is preferable to discipline the employee as soon as possible after the offense, ideally within a day or two of the infraction. Wait until shortly before the end of his shift and call him into your office. (Keep in mind that your handling of such a confrontation could differ from the specific conduct suggested here. Your actions will depend on such variables as the physical layout of the site, the availability of privacy, and the proximity of potential witnesses or other workers.) You need to anticipate the employee's probable reaction and act accordingly. For example, if you feel that the behavior will improve or you do not want to embarrass the employee, it may be best to close the door. Conversely, you may need an open door – and a witness – if you believe the employee will not improve, will not sign documentation, or may become violent or abusive. A witness can be especially important to ward off accusations of harassment.

When you address the employee concerning the problem, try to be positive and talk mainly about specifics. Tell the employee what you perceive as the problem. If this behavior is a new development, remind the employee of the "good" things he has done previously. Explain where this trend of "poor" work performance and/or "bad" behavior could take him – probation, suspension, or termination. Remind him of the policy and ask whether he understands it properly. If he doesn't, ask why he signed the acknowledgement that he read and understood all personnel policies when he began employment.

Tell him you expect this problem to cease and that, if not, he could be terminated for it. Instruct him to sign and date the formal discipline document. His signature should also attest that he has received a copy of this paperwork. If he refuses to sign, ask him to write down why he refused. This may help later as your evidence that the employee was warned. If he refuses to comment, you should have a witness sign and date a statement saying the employee was warned and refused to sign the warning. Give the employee a copy of this also.

If the employee becomes violent or abusive at any time during the session, it is suggested that you immediately contact security personnel (or police, if you don't have guards) to escort the employee from the premises. Such a response should be documented and attested to by any witnesses. Disciplinary probation, suspension, or termination should be seriously considered if the employee's violent behavior persists, threatening co-workers and/or staff. In fact, criminal charges may be warranted in some instances.

**Disciplinary Probation and Suspension**

Just as it is not usually "cut and dried" about when to invoke formal discipline, you should consider many variables about disciplinary probation and suspension. Some employees will respond after the supervisor first expresses concern; others may not respond to subsequent reprimands or discipline. Probation and suspension may or may not work with an employee exhibiting serious problems.

Disciplinary probation is a period of time (e.g., six weeks, 90 days, six months) during which the supervisor monitors the employee very closely. It should be long enough to give the employee a fair opportunity to improve, but not so long that it creates an oppressive atmosphere. Probation is designed to determine whether the employee (1) has ceased the problem behavior or performance, (2) is showing measurable and sustained improvement, and (3) demonstrates a cooperative attitude and willingness to change. Most supervisors consider probation to be a disciplinary step less serious than suspension, although both indicate the existence of a significant problem which has not improved even after actions such as counseling, warnings, and reprimands.

If, after a suitable period during probation, the employee is not responding, consider the next disciplinary step (e.g., dismissal). A supervisor is not obligated to wait until the end of the probationary period if the result is clear at the half-way point.

Among the disadvantages of probation are:

1. the employee remains in the same environment where the behavior occurred;
2. the supervisor must spend significant time monitoring the improvement (or lack of it);
3. the employee may feel like he or she is in a fish bowl; and
4. other staff in the area are probably aware that the employee is on probation and relations may be uneasy.

While suspension is usually considered more serious than probation, it may nevertheless be invoked before, or instead of, probation. Often probation and suspension are used as the last two steps before dismissal in cases where the employee does not improve. Sometimes a supervisor must decide which of the two has a better chance of correcting the problem and then invoke that step. Sometimes both are used together, (e.g., employee is suspended without pay and placed on probation upon return).

Suspension is a disciplinary measure in which the problem employee is penalized an amount of time (e.g., three days, two weeks, one month) without pay. This is a dramatic step which gets the employee's "attention" and forces him to examine the performance or behavior in question. This has the advantage of removing the employee from the environment in which the behavior or performance occurs. It also allows the employee the time to seek work elsewhere.

Before invoking either of these disciplinary steps, be certain the employee has been directly told what the problems are and what is expected, and has been given suitable prior warnings and time to correct after those reprimands. No employee, except one who is being disciplined for criminal activity or dangerous (violent) behavior, should receive suspension or probation without knowing the violation(s) and possible consequences and without having a chance to explain and to file a written response.

**Final Written Reprimand**

Continue to work with the employee if at all possible. If the employee continues to violate the policy, write him up again. The director may choose to give up to two written reprimands before giving the final written reprimand, but must be consistent with all employees. The final written reprimand follows the same procedure described for the first written reprimand. Let the employee know that this is his last warning and that next time, he will be terminated. Follow the same procedure for signing, dating (with a witness again if necessary).

**Pre-Termination Hearings**

Library administrators, when convinced it is necessary to terminate an employee, should do so in accordance with a board adopted termination policy that has been consistently and indiscriminately applied.

State law does not require a library to grant an employee a pre-termination hearing. However, for libraries which operate under a civil service system, the necessity to "Loudermill" an employee (that is, to provide a pre-termination hearing) has been ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court to be "due process" for any tenured civil service employee leaving your employment "for cause", unless the employee has committed a crime on the job.

Once a director has determined that the employee should be fired, he or she should communicate this to the employee in writing, explaining the charges against him. The employee then has an opportunity to respond, even though his response may not affect the termination decision.

**Termination**

Firing an employee should be the last resort. Before you terminate an employee, make sure the discharge is warranted, answering the following questions.

1. Do I know all the facts, and are they accurate?
2. Can I prove the employee's guilt with objective evidence, or is my evidence circumstantial?
3. Is the employee personally guilty, or is it guilt by association?

4. Am I being fair, impartial, and level headed, or merely reacting to a challenge to my authority?
5. Does the employee have a reasonable excuse for the misconduct?
6. Is the rule the employee broke a reasonable one?
7. Has the rule been applied reasonably in this instance?
8. Did the employee know the rule? Should he have?
9. Has the employee been warned in writing about or disciplined for this offense before?
10. Has the employing unit strictly enforced its rules? Has it recently notified employees of a "crack-down" on this type of violation?
11. What is the employee's past disciplinary record?
12. Is the employee receiving the same treatment given to others for the same offense? Does the punishment fit the crime?

If the indications are for termination, fire the employee in a timely manner. That is, do not wait until Monday because you need the employee to work his Saturday shift. The termination papers should include statements, dates, and signatures of all infractions. The termination meeting with the employee should follow the same general guidelines given above for formal discipline.

Some instances in which warnings are not needed are when the employee is caught stealing, damaging library property, fighting with a patron or another employee, and so on. You obviously would not give them the opportunity to repeat this behavior. These and similar examples should be written out in board policy.

**RESIGNATIONS**

Employees may resign their positions for a variety of reasons, including moving out of the area, another offer of employment, returning to school, demands of home life, or general dissatisfaction with their job circumstances. Some employers offer about-to-be-terminated employees the opportunity to resign in lieu of being fired. Under certain conditions, employees who resign (in lieu of being terminated) can continue medical insurance under COBRA. An employee who "resigns" may find that preferable to being "terminated" when seeking other employment.

An employee who resigns must submit a signed and dated resignation statement to the director.

## UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Employees who resign or are terminated, regardless of the reason, often file a claim for unemployment compensation. Terminated employees, college students who resigned to take post-graduate jobs, employees who resigned to return to school, and employees who moved out of state with their spouses have all successfully claimed and collected unemployment against libraries. Collecting unemployment depends on individual circumstances. It is imperative that the library submit a Separation Notice Alleging Disqualification (Form 77) to the State Office of Employment Security within 72 hours after separation. Failure to submit this notice within the specified time limits may cause you to forfeit your right to appeal or dispute an employee's claim for unemployment. Questions and answers about unemployment insurance and Form 77 are found at the Louisiana Works website.[7]

## GRIEVANCES

Libraries strive to treat all employees fairly and equitably in matters affecting their employment. Each employee who feels aggrieved has a right to present a grievance to the library for prompt consideration and resolution. An employee may have a complaint about anything in their job, or work environment, or employer. Generally, grievances are about one of the following, though not limited to these.

1. performance evaluation
2. termination of employment
3. salary disputes, including benefits
4. quality of supervision, including, for example, unreasonable requests by supervisors
5. disciplinary action taken against an employee which is arbitrary or capricious
6. unsafe working conditions

The library should have a written procedure to follow for an employee with a grievance.

### Grievance Policy and Procedure

A grievance policy will include a written procedure for staff to follow when they have a grievance. These items should also be included in your policy.

- Written Records: Crucial for documenting the complaint and steps taken.
- Deadlines: Specific timeframes (e.g., 5-10 business days) exist for each step.
- No Retaliation: Employees are free from reprisal for filing grievances.
- Transparency: Decisions are often made public through board meetings and written records.

A grievance procedure is a formal, step-by-step process for employees to raise and resolve complaints about their job. The procedure generally starts with an informal discussion with a supervisor and may move on to HR and the library director, and finally to the Library Board of Trustees for a formal appeal. This ensures a transparent process for employees, with specific forms and deadlines for each step, and often requiring written documents detailing the issue and desired resolution, and allows for representation and appeal at each level. Throughout the process, you aim for fair resolution and to prevent disputes from becoming legal issues.

**Items to include in a Grievance Procedure**

1. **Verbal Discussion:** Grievant discusses the issue with their supervisor or the Director within a few days.
2. **Written Grievance:** If unresolved, the employee submits a written complaint using the Grievance Form to the Director, detailing the issue, policy violated, and desired outcome.
3. **Director's Review:** The Director reviews and provides a written response within a set timeframe (e.g., 10 days).
4. **Appeal to the Board:** If still unsatisfied, the employee appeals in writing to the Library Board of Trustees.
5. **Board Decision:** The Board reviews the appeal, allows the employee to present their case, and issues a final written decision, often within 21 days.
6. **Settlement of a Grievance**: A grievance shall be considered settled at the completion of any step in the procedure if the matter is not appealed to the next step of the procedure within five working days after the grievant is provided a response.
7. **Employee Representation:** An employee is entitled to a representative of their choice at each step of the grievance procedure at their own cost.

**Grievance Form**

A grievance form should include the following:

1. the name and position of the grievant;
2. the date the incident or alleged violation took place, if applicable;
3. the issue involved;
4. a clear and concise statement of the grievance;
5. the specific library policy, procedure or practice alleged to have been violated or infringed;

6. any steps taken to informally resolve the issue;
7. relief sought; and
8. the signature of the grievant and the date.

**Grievance Against the Director or Board President**

If the grievance involves the Director (including, but not limited to, epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, threatening, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age or disability), an employee may submit his or her grievance directly to the President of the Board of Trustees. If the grievance involves the President of the Board of Trustees, the employee shall consult the Director, who, in turn, will consult with the Board Vice President or another Trustee, or the District Attorney.

**Policy on Staff Talking to Board**

Public library policies regarding staff communication with board members vary by library, but they generally follow established governance models that prioritize the Library Director as the primary liaison.

**Communication Protocols**

*The Chain of Command:* In Louisiana, the board supervises only the Library Director. Staff are typically expected to refer complaints or suggestions to the Director rather than directly to the board.

*Staff Reports:* Official staff-to-board communication often happens through structured monthly reports or scheduled presentations by department heads.

*Public Representation:* Some policies prohibit staff from speaking on behalf of the library or the board unless specifically authorized by the Director or Board Chair.

*Interactions at Board Meetings:* Staff may sometimes speak during designated public comment periods, as specified in Louisiana law, though they may be required to identify themselves as residents or taxpayers rather than "staff".

*Prohibited Conduct for Board Members:* Library policies often strictly forbid individual board members from giving directions or instructions directly to library staff. Trustees are generally expected to stay out of day-to-day operational matters, which are the Director's responsibility.

*Exceptions:*

- Whistleblower Protections: Policies often allow staff to bypass the Director and contact the board directly in cases of illegal actions or severe harassment. This falls under Louisiana law, La. R.S. 42:1169.

- Open Channels: Some progressive boards encourage informal dialogue to gain different perspectives on library operations, though they usually advise that the Director be kept informed.

## POST-EMPLOYMENT

Keeping thorough employee records is a key part of good management—it not only keeps you organized but also protects both the library and your team members. Think of these records as a roadmap of each employee's journey: they include everything from performance reviews and attendance to any disciplinary actions and achievements. When you have solid documentation, you are in a better position to make fair and informed decisions if questions come up around promotions, performance, or even disciplinary issues. It is also worth double-checking state and parish rules on record-keeping since they have specific requirements for public institutions. By keeping accurate and updated records, you are building a foundation that supports transparency and consistency, and that also shows respect for each employee's contributions and growth.

### EXIT INTERVIEW

Exit interviews can be a valuable part of the departure process, giving you insight into the employee's experience, gathering suggestions for improvement, and ensuring a smooth transition. Many libraries schedule an exit interview whenever an employee retires or resigns. These meetings cover essential logistical details, such as confirming a forwarding address, reconciling leave balances, and arranging the return of keys or other library property. They're also an opportunity for departing employees to share their observations about the library, their role, and the team.

Beyond logistical matters, an exit interview provides a safe space for the employee to reflect on their time at the library, including any challenges they faced or positive experiences they had. These conversations can reveal trends you might not see in day-to-day operations, such as recurring obstacles, training needs, or areas where communication could be improved. In this way, exit interviews serve as a feedback tool, offering insights that can be used to strengthen the work environment and retain future staff.

Additionally, exit interviews can be helpful for your departing staff, as they often provide closure and a formal end to their relationship with the organization. When handled with openness and respect, these conversations help build a positive impression of the library, which is especially valuable if the employee may one day return or provide community support in other ways. Making exit interviews part of your routine process sends a message to the team that feedback matters and that the library values continuous improvement, even during transitions.

It is important to add that while exit interviews are typically beneficial, they may be less productive with an employee who has consistently struggled or shown resistance to feedback. In such cases, an exit interview may not yield constructive insights and could even lead to unproductive or negative interactions. For these situations, it is often more effective to focus on resolving any outstanding logistical details, like final pay and return of library property, rather than pursuing a full feedback discussion. However, if the employee is open to constructive dialogue, a brief, respectful conversation may still provide helpful context for any issues that impact their role.

**VERIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

It is important for the library to clearly communicate which individuals are authorized to provide employment references. Typically, only the library director or designated senior administrators, or HR, are permitted to share reference information about current or former employees. Any staff member authorized to handle these requests should receive training from the director or personnel manager on what information can and cannot be disclosed to ensure consistency and compliance with privacy standards.

**REFERENCE CHECKS AND GIVING OUT REFERENCES**

Employee reference checking is a double-edged sword. There are potential consequences for not checking references on those you've hired (i.e., negligent hiring lawsuits); there are also potential consequences if you do check references (i.e., defamation lawsuits).

Before providing references for employees or former employees, be sure that all personnel know the library's policy on giving out references. If possible, obtain an employee's written permission before providing a reference. Document the positive and negative performance evaluations of an employee, and refer to these documents when giving a reference. It is important to provide only accurate and truthful information, because truth is an "absolute defense" to a defamation charge. It is also a good practice never to "volunteer" information. Be sure that any information you do provide is job related.

Make sure you find out to whom you are providing the information. If called for a reference, an employer may want to write down the requester's name, title, address, and telephone number, and then return the call. Returning the call allows the employer to verify the identity of the person seeking the information.

La. R.S. 23:291 relates to the disclosure of employment information. The statute provides for rights when certain employment-related information is disclosed, provides for immunity from civil liability in certain instances, and provides for a limitation of liability.

## RETIREMENT

While retirement may seem to be a challenge for the distant future to some, it plays a critical part in career decision-making for many individuals. As new staff are on-boarded, a discussion of all benefits should include the options for retirement, health and life insurance and premium cost-sharing, FSA/HSA offerings, and any other benefits.

Public libraries can fall under different retirement systems, including Parochial Employees Retirement, a civil service system for your parish, or a city retirement plan. A new employee should be given information about retirement upon hire and reminders along with updates sent to all staff at least annually during open enrollment.

Since libraries are under different retirement plans, what is included in a library's retirement plan will vary. You would need to contact the retirement system for their policy on social security and Medicare. Cost of living raises are determined by the retirement system.

In addition, board policy will determine specifics that are not in the retirement system. For example, your board will decide if the library pays all or part of health and life insurance for retirees. Your leave policy will determine if the library pays for unused leave upon retirement.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (2018). *Best practices – Payroll/personnel* (October 2018). Louisiana Legislative Auditor. https://cms.lla.la.gov/assets/documents/Payroll.pdf

[2] Library Journal. https://www.libraryjournal.com/

[3] American Library Association. *ALA JobLIST: Jobs in library & information science & technology*. https://joblist.ala.org/

[4] American Library Association. *Placement center*. https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/employment/placement

[5] Louisiana Department of State Civil Service. *Job Aids and Resources: Employee file – Confidential and public records*. https://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/HRHandbook/JobAid/15-Confidential%20and%20Public%20Records.pdf

[6] Louisiana Department of State Civil Service. *Job Aids and Resources: Public v. private information*. https://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/HRHandbook/JobAid/15-Public%20v%20Private%20Info.pdf

[7] Louisiana Workforce Commission. Unemployment insurance FAQ. https://www.laworks.net/FAQs/FAQ_UI_Form77s.asp#answer_1

# Chapter 22

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"The only thing worse than training employees and losing them is not training them and keeping them." — Zig Ziglar

## INTRODUCTION

Professional Development for anyone who works in a library is not a luxury - it is imperative to seek additional training in a variety of areas, whether you are fresh out of library school or a veteran of library work. The pace of change is so great in technology, in legislation, in management techniques, in information collection, and in the expectations of patrons and staff. As librarians, none of us can or should be expected to rely only on skills from the past or "on-the-job" learning. Taking advantage of far-ranging continuing education (CE) opportunities is widely accepted as a prime tool for coping with change–it is an important way of keeping up and benefiting library users in these rapidly evolving times.

The *Standards for Louisiana Public Libraries* states its strong support for CE and staff development, with suggested essential, enhanced, and comprehensive levels of support.

A strong commitment to professional development begins with the library board. Board members must understand the value of continuing education for library staff and the long-term benefits it brings to the institution and community. Their approval of policies and financial support is essential for sustaining ongoing learning opportunities. Establishing a dedicated budget line for workshops, training, and attendance at professional conferences ensures that staff can continue to grow, adapt, and enhance library services. Without financial investment, professional development efforts become inconsistent and unsustainable.

The director should also provide board members with concrete examples of how staff development leads to improved library services, increased efficiency, and better patron engagement. Case studies from other library systems can be particularly effective in demonstrating the return on investment.

Once the library trustees understand the importance of professional development for bettering the effectiveness, morale, and service attitude of library employees, the director should take the message to the staff. This should include clearly outlining available opportunities, ensuring equitable access, and creating a structured process for requesting participation.

To cultivate a learning culture, administrators can offer incentives for participation, such as recognition programs with public acknowledgement to celebrate achievements. While the

Legislative Auditor warns against paying small stipends for completing training milestones, you can use other incentives and recognition. For example:

- Tie completion of training to performance reviews.
- Make training a part of the employee's working hours.
- Include online training and webinars as well as in person training.
- Offer training that includes wellness courses to show care for personal as well as professional growth.

The director must lead the way in library association membership and workshop attendance to create a positive atmosphere toward professional development for all staff. Administrators should stress the career-enhancing aspects and the benefits to the community once new skills are put to work in the library. All workshop or conference attendees should be encouraged to report on and keep files on their experiences.

Maintaining a foundation of support for professional development will be an ongoing task. The following are some specific habits you can foster to accomplish this:

- Encourage formal and informal discussion of training experiences and future opportunities. Stress willingness to try and apply what is learned.
- Get involved with local, state and national professional associations--whatever your current situation affords-- and work to expand your involvement in terms of funding and people. The networking contacts you and your staff make will surely help out in some crisis your library will face in the future.
- Subscribe to and read professional journals and newsletters--library and otherwise. This is a good form of ongoing education in itself, and a logical source for learning about relevant, upcoming events. Also, look for non-library publications related to running public organizations, for example, fiscal management, community relations, personnel, and so on. Ask fellow directors what periodicals they read for timely, pragmatic approaches to their problems--they will tell you!
- Many reputable companies offer one or two-day opportunities on general workplace issues, such as supervision, stress management, getting the most out of your computer, and so on. An experience outside the strictures of pure library topics can be invigorating and can often give you some new ways to address old problems.
- Attend workshops, conferences, and meetings--take a chance! Occasionally, you may feel a workshop or meeting is worthless. Don't despair, something may come of the

experience later. If not, the occasional flop is worth the risk to get you to the workshops you do benefit from.

- Encourage your board members to attend the occasional library conference, as well. This provides them insight into "library land" that they cannot obtain from the board room and often leads to new appreciation of how/where your own library shines.

## SOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ongoing opportunities and sources of professional development exist at both local and national levels. Most organizations offer programs to ensure continuing education for their members. Below are specific sources relevant to Louisiana libraries, along with brief explanations of their records and projects.

### STATE LIBRARY OF LOUISIANA

The State Library fosters the ongoing professional development of library staff throughout the state, enabling them to be well-informed and competent to provide superior services to their constituencies. The State Library is committed to CE in nearly all of its functions. You can find all the current CE offerings on the State Library website, under Services, Libraries & Librarians.[1] Library staff must register to participate in these classes. Please register for classes using a separate email for each registrant.

In particular, the annual Administrative Librarians Conference targets public library directors and assistant directors. The conferences present speakers and discussion sessions on current issues facing Louisiana librarians. These meetings are great networking opportunities – a good time to talk shop with people doing the same work as you do.

### New Directors' Boot Camp

The New Directors Boot Camp is an intense, two-day workshop valuable to new directors and those needing a refresher course. Topics include library laws and governance, policies and procedures, planning, media basics, human resources and staffing, and facilities/building maintenance.

### Support Staff Training Opportunities

Your library staff may want or need more training than a one or two-day workshop. The State Library fosters the ongoing professional development of all library staff throughout the state, enabling them to be well informed and competent to provide superior services to their constituencies. The State Library created the Library Support Staff Certification to meet this need. It is a course provider approved by the ALA-APA. For information on the national

certification program visit the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association, Library Support Staff Certification.[2]

You can get more information about the State Library's staff certification courses[3] by visiting its website and following the navigation menu: Services For Libraries & Librarians, Training, Staff Certification Courses.

**On Demand**

Libraries can request an on-demand class. For more information on the State Library courses or to request a class, please email us at libdev@library.la.gov or call (225) 342-4931.

**STATE, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL**

**Louisiana Library Association (LLA)**

The annual conference presented by LLA is a primary event for all Louisiana librarians. The Public Library Section sponsors pre-conferences and workshops of relevance to public librarians. LLA publishes the *LLA Bulletin.* In addition to articles and reviews, each issue contains a calendar of upcoming local and national conferences, and other events. LLA maintains an online directory of LLA officers, committee members, and a list of individual and institutional members with accompanying addresses and phone numbers. In addition, Sections within LLA promote continuing education and sponsor events across Louisiana.

**American Library Association (ALA)**

ALA, with its divisions such as the Public Library Association and other national organizations, sponsors a plethora of conferences, workshops, CE committees, journals, book publishing, videos, and other educational items and events. Information on these opportunities are readily available from the headquarters of the organizations through their associated journals.

**Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) (not part of ALA)**

ARSL is a national member-run organization that supports rural & small library staff through online resources, training, and networking. It holds an in-person and virtual conference annually.

**Southeastern Library Association (SELA)**

SELA holds joint conferences every two years with the library associations of its various member states. Its official journal is the *Southeastern Librarian.* SELA offers a variety of continuing education opportunities.

**School of Information Studies, LSU (SIS)**

LSU's library school courses are another obvious source for professional development. Formerly known as the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS), SIS also sponsors research forums and other activities. The SIS library is an excellent resource for researching library topics. The SIS faculty is also a source of speakers for workshops and staff development programs.

**Regional Library Cooperatives.**

The Bayouland Library System, Libraries Southwest, the Green Gold Library System, and the Trail Blazer Library System occasionally sponsor CE activities in their locales.

**Office of Government Programs, LSU**

This Office of the Division of Continuing Education at LSU is a good example of CE opportunities to be found outside the usual library realm. The Office of Government Programs is the new name of the LSU Governmental Services Institute. The Office of Government Programs continues to sponsor workshops in the public sector, some of which can benefit public librarians.

**Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Center for Local Government Excellence (CLGE)**

This division of the state's Legislative Auditor's office provides annual training, best practices, and white pages that are especially helpful for administrators of fiscally emancipated libraries. Details can be found online at https://lla.la.gov/resources/center-for-local-government-excellence.

**SELF-PACED TRAINING**

As a director, encouraging self-paced training is one of the most effective ways to support continuous learning within the library, meeting staff where they are and respecting their varied schedules and learning preferences. Self-paced training offers flexibility, allowing staff to build skills or gain knowledge when it's most convenient for them, without interrupting the library's workflow or requiring everyone to attend training at the same time. Platforms like WebJunction provide tailored, high-quality courses on everything from customer service to evolving tech skills, which are essential for keeping our services up-to-date and responsive to patron needs.

By integrating self-paced training into our development practices, you will be fostering an environment where staff can take ownership of their learning, moving through modules at their own speed and focusing on areas that match their roles and career goals. It's a way for you as a director to empower employees and show that their growth matters. Practicing this, you will build a knowledgeable team, contribute to higher job satisfaction, and retain talent.

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS, MEETINGS, AND WORKSHOPS

Participation in professional associations, attendance at workshops, and engagement in conferences are key components of ongoing professional development for library staff, the director, and board members. Your library's involvement in these activities strengthens skills, enhances networking opportunities, and helps everyone to stay up-to-date with evolving trends, technologies, and best practices in the ever-evolving library field. A list of professional library associations is included in Chapter 2, The new Library Director.

The director should develop a formal policy that addresses the following questions:

### Memberships

*Paying for Professional Memberships:* Your library's policy should specify whether the library will cover membership fees and, if so, for whom (e.g., the director, staff, or board members). Consider whether memberships should be funded for local, state, regional, or national organizations, based on their relevance and value to the library's mission.

*Institutional vs. Individual Memberships:* Some libraries may opt to hold institutional memberships in certain organizations, such as the Louisiana Library Association (LLA) or the American Library Association (ALA), which allow broader access to resources for multiple staff members. In other cases, individual memberships may be more appropriate, especially when tied to specific roles, such as the director's participation in the Public Library Association (PLA) or a staff member's membership in the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL).

*Recommended Organizations*: Consult with your colleagues and fellow public library directors when seeking guidance on recommended professional associations. For example, ARSL might offer valuable resources and meetings for rural library staff, while PLA membership may be more beneficial for directors managing larger systems. Clear recommendations and policies can help staff make informed choices about their professional development.

### Workshops and Conference Attendance

*Fee Coverage:* Clearly define whether the library will pay for workshop and conference registration fees and for whom. If staff wish to attend professional development events but are willing to cover the fees themselves, clarify whether this is allowed and what approval, if any, is needed.

*Use of Vacation Time:* It is common for professional meetings to be held in desirable travel locations. The policy should address whether staff may extend work-related trips by adding personal vacation days, with the understanding that the library covers costs related to the professional portion of the trip, and staff cover any additional expenses.

**Return on Investment**

Encourage staff who attend professional events to share key takeaways with colleagues. This could be done through brief reports, internal presentations, or informal discussions, thereby multiplying the impact of each event attended.

The director and the board must establish a thoughtful, clearly defined policy to maximize the value of professional memberships, meetings, and workshops, which will underscore the library's strong commitment to staff development.

**TRAVEL AND REIMBURSEMENT**

A clearly defined travel and reimbursement policy is essential for reinforcing consistency, transparency, and fairness when library staff, board members, or the director participate in professional development activities, attend meetings, or carry out day-to-day library duties that require travel.

Travel is a crucial part of continuing education, whether for attending conferences, workshops, or professional meetings. It is also necessary for library operations, such as meetings with other institutions, community outreach, or library-related errands. As a director, you are responsible for including adequate funding for travel and reimbursement in the budget, which helps avoid ad hoc decisions and reinforces the library's commitment to professional development and effective management.

When preparing the travel and reimbursement policy, it is essential to:

1. Include a travel authorization form which lists all details about the proposed travel. It should also state that no reservations or registrations should be made until all approvals are obtained. A travel expense form should include all details of the travel that are reimbursed.
2. Specify which travel-related costs are eligible for reimbursement, such as mileage, meals, lodging, transportation, and conference registration fees. You can choose the federal rates set by the Internal Revenue Service[4] or use the state approved rate in the Louisiana State Travel Guide.[5]
3. Define the process for submitting expense claims, including required forms, receipts, and deadlines. Some libraries require receipts for travel, food, and hotel expenses, while other libraries specify an allotment for each.
4. Clearly outline procedures for trips or costs that need prior approval from the director, board, or other authority.

5. Include information about whether the library offers travel advances, along with any associated forms and timelines.

Make certain that all staff and board members review and follow all state policies and library policies when traveling on official library business. The following resources provide additional guidance and required forms:

- Louisiana Division Of Administration Travel Policies, including a State Travel Guide and forms, are available on the Office of State Travel featured resources page.[6]
- Louisiana Legislative Auditor also created an extensive FAQ regarding travel.[7]
- Lastly, a sample Travel Advance Request Form and Travel Expense Form is available on the LLA Best Practices page.[8]

Overall, as a library director, you need to establish a culture of responsibility and accountability when it comes to travel. Require staff to submit travel and reimbursement forms promptly, maintain detailed records, and communicate with the board about upcoming professional travel needs.

**SUMMARY**

Professional development is the cornerstone of a thriving library system; it equips staff, the director and their administrative team, as well as board members with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt, innovate, and excel. By prioritizing ongoing learning through clear policies, adequate funding, and diverse training opportunities, you can build stronger teams, improve services, and stay responsive to evolving community needs.

## ENDNOTES

[1] State Library of Louisiana. *Training*. https://library.la.gov/services/for-libraries-librarians/training/

[2] American Library Association-Allied Professional Association. (n.d.). *Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC)*. https://ala-apa.org/lssc/

[3] State Library of Louisiana. *Staff certification courses*. https://library.la.gov/services/for-libraries-librarians/training/staff-certification-courses/

[4] IRS. (2025). *Publication 463: Travel, gift, and car expenses*. https://www.irs.gov/publications/p463

[5] Louisiana Division of Administration, Office of State Travel. *PPM 49 travel guide*. https://www.doa.la.gov/doa/ost/ppm-49-travel-guide/

[6] Louisiana Division of Administration, Office of State Travel. *Featured Resources*. https://www.doa.la.gov/doa/ost/

[7] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (n.d.) *Travel FAQ.* https://app.lla.state.la.us/llala.nsf/vwLegalAssistanceQuestions?ReadForm&key=Travel

[8] Louisiana Legislative Auditor. (n.d.). *Best practices*. https://lla.la.gov/resources/local-government-reporting/best-practices

# APPENDIX A

# INFORMATION

**DIRECTORIES AND INFORMATION**

State Library of Louisiana Departments and Staff directory[1]

State Library of Louisiana Hours, Location, Directions, and Parking[2].

Louisiana Public Library Directory[3].

**CALENDAR – FEDERAL AND STATE HOLIDAYS**

| Month | Holiday | Federal/State | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| January | New Year's Day (January 1) | Federal/state | |
| | Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Third Monday in January) | Federal/state | |
| February | Washington's Birthday (Third Monday) | Federal/state | Unofficial name, President's Day |
| | Mardi Gras | state | Mardi Gras can be any Tuesday from February 3 to March 9) |
| March | Good Friday | state | |
| | Easter | While Easter Sunday itself isn't a legal holiday in Louisiana, Sunday "is a day of public rest and legal holiday." | Easter can be any Sunday from March 23 to April 25 |
| April | | | |
| May | Memorial Day (Last Monday in May) | Federal/Louisiana, declared by Governor | |
| June | Juneteenth National Independence Day (June 19) | Federal/Louisiana, declared by Governor | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| July | Independence Day (July 4) | Federal/state | |
| August | | | |
| September | Labor Day (First Monday in September) | Federal/state | |
| October | Columbus Day (2nd Monday in October) | Federal | |
| November | Veterans Day (November 11) | Federal/state | |
| | Thanksgiving Day (4th Thursday in November) | Federal/state | |
| | Acadian Day (day after Thanksgiving) | Louisiana, declared by Governor | |
| December | Day before or after Christmas (Louisiana, December 24 or 26)) | Louisiana, declared by Governor | |
| | Christmas Day (December 25) | Federal/state | |
| | Day before or after New Years (December 31 or January 2) | Louisiana, declared by Governor | |

## ENDNOTES

[1] State Library of Louisiana Departments and Staff directory. https://library.la.gov/about-us/departments-and-staff/

[2] State Library of Louisiana Hours, Location, Directions, and Parking. https://library.la.gov/about-us/hours-and-location/

[3] Louisiana Public Library Directory. https://library.la.gov/services/for-libraries-librarians/library-directory/

# APPENDIX B

# Library Consortia in Louisiana

In 1966, the State Library asked John and James Humphry to conduct a comprehensive survey of the Louisiana libraries. One of the recommendations of the Humphry report, *Library Service in Louisiana: Keeping Pace with Progress in the State*, was the establishment by the State Library of pilot library systems.

The Humphry report recommended that seven systems be created around the state. Of the seven systems, four are still in existence. While the Humphry Report referred to these groups of libraries as systems, today, they are more accurately called consortia.

**Current Library Consortia**

*Bayouland—est. 1974*

- Acadia Parish Library
- Allen Parish Library
- Iberia Parish Library
- Lafayette Parish Public Library
- Opelousas City Library
- Eunice City Library
- St. Martin Parish Library
- St. Mary Parish Library
- Vermilion Parish Library

*Green Gold—est. 1971*

- Bienville Parish Library
- Bossier Parish Library
- Caddo Parish Library
- Claiborne Parish Library
- DeSoto Parish Library
- Grant Parish Library
- Lincoln Parish Library
- Natchitoches Parish Library
- Red River Parish Library
- Sabine Parish Library
- Webster Parish Library
- Winn Parish Library

*Trail Blazer—est. 1971*

- Caldwell Parish Library
- Concordia Parish Library
- East Carroll Parish Library
- Franklin Parish Library
- Jackson Parish Library
- Lincoln Parish Library
- Madison Parish Library
- Morehouse Parish Library
- Ouachita Parish Public Library
- Richland Parish Library
- Tensas Parish Library
- Union Parish Library
- West Carroll Parish Library

*Libraries Southwest—est. 1971*

- Allen Parish Library
- Armaud J. Brinkhaus Community Library/South St. Landry Community Library
- Beauregard Parish Library
- Calcasieu Parish Public Library
- Calcasieu Parish School library
- Cameron Parish Library
- Eunice Public Library
- Evangeline Parish Library
- Lether E. Frazar Memorial Library, McNeese State University
- Jefferson Davis Parish Library
- Rapides Parish Library
- SOWELA Technical/Community College
- Vernon Parish Library

**No Longer in Existence**

*Capital Region—est. 1969*

- Audubon Regional
- Assumption Parish Library
- East Baton Rouge Parish Library
- Iberville Parish Library
- Pointe Coupee Parish Library
- St. Tammany Parish Library
- Tangipahoa Parish Library
- Washinton Parish Library

- West Baton Rouge Parish Library
- Earl K. Long Hospital
- Louisiana State University Library
- Southeastern Louisiana University Library
- Southern University Library
- U.S. Public Health Hospital, Carville

*Central Region (CenLa)—est. 1970*

- Avoyelles Parish Library
- Catahoula Parish Library
- Grant Parish library
- Natchitoches Parish Library
- LaSalle Parish Library
- Rapides Parish Library
- Winn Parish Library
- Central Louisiana State Hospital, Pineville
- Louisiana State University, Alexandria
- Medical Library Hospital, Alexandria
- Russell Library, Northwestern, Natchitoches

*Seallinc—est. 1970*

- New Orleans Public Library
- St. Bernard Parish Library
- St. Charles Parish Library
- St. James Parish Library
- St. John the Baptist Parish Public Library
- Charity Hospital School of Nursing
- Delgado College
- Dillard University
- Holy Cross College
- Louisiana State University School of Nursing
- Loyola University
- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
- Southern University New Orleans
- Tulane University
- University of New Orleans
- Xavier University

# APPENDIX C

## Duties of a Director, Library Board, and Local Governing Authority

| | **Library Director** | **Board of Trustees or Advisory Board** | **Police Jury or Parish Council** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview—responsibilities** | Employ staff. | Employ library director. | |
| | Recommend policies needed. | Establish written policy. | |
| | Prepare preliminary budget. | Secure adequate funding and approve budget. | |
| | Advise board of need. | Provide and maintain facilities, resources, and services. | |
| | Advise board of needs. | Develop the library's plan of service. | |
| | Maintain an active program of public relations. | Tell the library story affirmatively and participate as appropriate in a planned program of public relations. | |
| | Respect and carry out the decisions and actions taken by the board as a single unit. Does not take sides with individual trustees. | Understands that the board functions as a single entity; no authority resides in an individual trustee. | |
| | Remain politically neutral in representing the library in the community. | Preserve the library's independence from undue political influence and any threats of censorship. | |
| | Take advantage of opportunities for continuing education for self and staff. | Take advantage of opportunities for continuing education. | |

| | Library Director | Board of Trustees or Advisory Board | Police Jury or Parish Council |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Work to ensure a good political climate. Provide background information to board members. Offer library services to governing authority members. | Work to ensure a good political climate. Appear before governing authority to report or comment. | Make agenda time available to board or director when requested. |
| | Follow local and state government regulations and policies scrupulously in library business matters. | Avoid any conflict of personal or business interests with those of the library, staff, or governing authority. | |
| **Policy making** | Provide assistance and direction to the board in setting goals and objectives and determining methods of evaluation | Determine the goals and objectives of the library and methods of evaluating progress toward meeting them. | |
| | Recommend policies needed. Advise board on merit of decisions it is considering. | Consider what policies are needed to carry forward the library's plan most effectively. | |
| | Administer library in accordance with adopted policies. Interpret policies to staff and public. | Officially adopt library policies. | |
| | Select and order all books and other library materials, print and non-print. | Establish policies dealing with material selection. | |
| **Administration of the library** | Has direct responsibility for administration of the library within the framework of the board's plan, policies, and budget. | Has indirect responsibility through the employment of a library director and the adoption of plans, policies, and budget. | |
| | Report at each board meeting and in other ways keep board informed of library's progress and problems. | Keep in touch with library's progress and problems through librarian's reports, personal use of the library, and feedback from the public. | |

| | Library Director | Board of Trustees or Advisory Board | Police Jury or Parish Council |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Personnel** | Employ and supervise staff. | Employ and/or dismiss the library director and approve appointment of staff. | |
| | Recommend needed improvement in working conditions, fringe benefits, and salary scale | Ensure personnel policies provide fringe benefits, such as vacation, sick leave, and compatible working conditions. Opportunities for professional growth should be considered. | |
| | Advise board on salary scale and recommend changes in staff salary.. | Provide adequate salary scale for staff and approves salaries. | |
| | Suggest basis for evaluation criteria and provide materials for board study. Evaluate staff and maintain records of personnel evaluations. | Develop criteria for evaluation of the library director's effectiveness. Conduct periodic performance evaluations of the director. | |
| **Collection development** | Add materials to collection in accordance with established policy. | Adopt collection development policy. | |
| | Preserve the library's independence from any threats of censorship and promote intellectual freedom for all community residents. | Preserve the library's independence from any threats of censorship and promote intellectual freedom for all community residents. | |
| **Finance and Budget** | Provide counsel and documentation. Help plan educational information for the tax election. | Request tax election, or direct appropriation from the governing authority. Request and justify millage. Work to ensure tax passage. | Call tax election. Set millage after consultation with board. Levy library tax millage annually. Set direct appropriation, as needed. |
| | Prepare preliminary budget recommendation based on present and anticipated revenues and needs | Scrutinize preliminary budget submitted by library director, make | Budget submitted to police jury or parish council for approval, along with other agency budgets in the |

| | Library Director | Board of Trustees or Advisory Board | Police Jury or Parish Council |
|---|---|---|---|
| | in relation to the board's plan for library growth. | necessary changes, officially adopt budget. | parish. In some parishes, the library board will hold budget hearings and adopt the budget. |
| | Call board's attention to ways of stretching budget through cooperation with other libraries or agencies. | Explore and consider all ways of increasing library's income through new sources and cooperating with other libraries or agencies. | |
| | Decide on use of money on the basis of the approved budget. Prepare a list of claims for approval. If library is fiscally emancipated, the director and board assume responsibility for the administration and account of the library funds. | Authorize expenditures in accordance with the budget. Board president or designee approves expenditures. If fiscally emancipated, decide who will handle bookkeeping and accounting. | Procedure for handling of funds and payment of expenses varies from parish to parish. The governing authority may charge for bookkeeping, administrative, and clerical services. Some libraries are fiscally independent. |
| **Library buildings and property** | Help locate property and negotiate with seller to purchase. | Decide on appropriate property for new construction and mode of financing (from budget, bond issue, new tax) | Approve selection, purchase property, and take titles. |
| | Locate property for lease, counsel board, and negotiate with landlord. | Decide on property to be leased. | Approve and sign lease. |
| | Advise board of need and provide specifications. | Approve purchase of major furniture or equipment needed. | Advertise for bids and awards contracts on purchases over $60,000 for materials and supplies, and $250,000 for public works. |
| **Library Board** | Inform the board when new appointment is necessary. Remind secretary of governing authority. | Send the name of the person recommended for appointment to the board to governing authority. | Appoint board members. Police jury or parish council president is a voting, ex-officio member, or president may designate a jury member as alternate. |

| | Library Director | Board of Trustees or Advisory Board | Police Jury or Parish Council |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Attend all regular and special board meetings except those at which library director's employment, salary, or performance are to be considered. | Attend and participate in all regular and special meetings. | |
| | Give appropriate public notice of meetings. | Maintain "open meetings" as required by law. | |
| | Act as secretary to the board, prepare agenda, provide minutes. | Approve minutes. | |
| **Public relations** | Maintain an active program of public relations. | Establish and participate in planned program of public relations. | |
| | Interpret board policies to staff and public and involve library in community activities. | Serve as "connecting link" between the library and the community, interpreting the one to the other. | |
| | Keep political fences mended. | Keep political fences mended. | |
| **Continuing Education** | Call significant materials to attention of library board. | Read trustee materials and library-related publications. | |
| | Organize orientation of new trustees. | See that new trustees have planned orientation. | |
| | Urge travel support in budget for trustees and library staff. | Attend regional, state, and national trustee or trustee-related meetings. | |
| | Belong to and attend conferences of Louisiana Library Association and other professional organizations. Urges payment of dues in budget. | Belong to the Louisiana Library Association and other professional organizations. | |
| | Design and develop a continuing education program for staff and | Support continuing education for director and staff. Take advantage of | |

| | Library Director | Board of Trustees or Advisory Board | Police Jury or Parish Council |
|---|---|---|---|
| | board. Inform trustees and staff of important meetings and workshops for them to attend. | opportunities for trustee continuing education. | |
| **Planning for the library's growth** | Suggest and provide materials for community analysis. Help analyze the library's strengths and weaknesses. | Analyze the community and consider the library's strengths and weaknesses in relation to it. | |
| | Recommend plans for library's growth and means for implementing plans. | Set goals and adopt short and long-range plans for library's growth. | |
| | Administer library in terms of plans adopted by the board. | Set priorities and decide on a course of actions to implement plans including disaster plans. | |
| | Supply materials allowing board to become knowledgeable about library systems. | Consider the advantages of membership in a library system. | |

# APPENDIX D

## LOUISIANA MAP





STATE LIBRARY
*of* LOUISIANA




LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
BILLY NUNGESSER

701 N. FOURTH ST.
BATON ROUGE, LA. 70802
(225) 342-4913
LIBRARY.LA.GOV



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