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## PERSONNEL

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Human relationships determine the inner climate of the library. Every effort should be given to make these relationships cordially cooperative and mutually understanding. Chief among these relationships, because of its effect on the overall library administration, is that between the library board and the library director.

### HIRING A NEW DIRECTOR

One of the most important functions of the governing board of trustees is the hiring of a competent library director. It may, in fact, be the most important single act undertaken by the board. Trustees should be aware of current practices in the profession, requirements imposed by the *Code of Virginia*, as well as The Library Board requirements and regulations, the current needs and direction of the library, and competitive professional salaries and benefits.

#### Preliminary Assessment

As soon as the vacancy is anticipated, the board should meet to formulate a plan of action.

The board should make a realistic appraisal of the situation. The members should decide what qualifications the library requires in a library director and what the library has to offer the director. Offer the best salary possible to secure the services of a qualified person. Consider any added incentives or challenges offered by the job opportunity.

#### Look at the Current Situation

- What are the current needs of the library?
- What qualifications are needed in the next director?
- What is the reason for the job opening? Is the departing director upward-bound, retiring, or dissatisfied? An exit interview can be very helpful.
- What changes, if any, are necessary to the job description and the qualification statement?

#### The job description might include:

- areas of responsibility
- specific duties
- initial period of evaluation
- desirable areas of expertise
- minimum qualifications and experience
- to whom the director is responsible

## **Method of Recruitment**

A search committee can be formed from the board. This committee selects a chair and establishes a procedure for the search process.

Items to be addressed might include:

- timetable
- calendar of activities for the candidates
- affirmative action and equal employment opportunity requirements
- financial and staff resources available
- confidentiality and discretion
- record keeping of committee actions
- unique circumstances associated with the position and community
- method for involving the full board and the staff in the selection process

## **Advertisement**

It is good practice to conduct a search even if there are staff members qualified for the position. The eligible staff members should be encouraged to apply. All should understand that the goal of the search is to select the best-suited person for the job. All applicants should receive consideration and due process in accordance with equal opportunity laws.

The job advertisement is the primary vehicle for publicizing the vacancy and attracting applicants. It should be carefully worded and might contain the following:

- job title
- duties/responsibilities
- qualifications (including education, experience, and personal characteristics)
- salary range and minimum salary
- fringe benefits (including vacation and retirement)
- request for résumé and references
- date of availability
- organization contact (preferably a specifically named person)
- closing date for applications
- an equal opportunity employer statement

### **The job advertisement can be distributed to:**

- major and local newspapers
- library schools in surrounding states
- the Virginia Library Association Jobline
- national professional journals such as *Library Journal*, *Library Hotline*, and *American Libraries*

### **Screening**

After the closing date for applications, the search committee screens all applicants, deciding between qualified and unqualified applicants. Those candidates who do not meet the requirements established for the position should be notified immediately.

Candidates who satisfy the requirements for the position become part of an official pool of applicants for further consideration. Narrowing this pool to a list of final candidates is perhaps the most difficult part of the search committee's task. Success of the evaluation process is contingent upon the formulation of an appropriate set of criteria against which all candidates can be rated objectively. After this process is completed, the search committee should be able to agree on three to five candidates to be called for interviews. It is appropriate to send each candidate background information about the library and the community, including the library's budget and the annual report. Prior to the interviews, a plan outlining the process should be developed:

- Designate one person to handle the planning of the interviews, making contact with the candidates to schedule the interviews.
- Designate one person to conduct interviews with others assisting. Keep the interview team to a reasonable size, usually three to five people.
- Identify what expenses will be paid or reimbursed and notify each candidate to be interviewed.
- Plan the location for the interview, accommodations for the candidate, a tour of the library and community, etc.
- Include an opportunity for the candidates to meet the library staff.
- Allow adequate time for discussion. The interview is a mutual evaluation process. The committee should provide the candidate with a fair, accurate picture of the library, working conditions, and expectations.
- Allow time between interviews to complete evaluation sheets while members' reactions are still fresh.

## **The Interview**

Agree to a standard list of questions to be asked of each candidate. This makes for a smooth interviewing process and helps to assure that only legal questions are asked and that each candidate responds to the same set of questions. The interview is an important step in selecting the best-suited person for the job; proper judgment here can help reduce turnover and organizational problems.

The Library of Virginia can assist trustees in developing the kind of interview questions that focus broadly on the profession as a whole, as well as enhancing the trustees' views of local needs. One topic that is important to cover with candidates is their vision of library services in the future.

The chair can wrap up the interview process with comments covering the time table for the final selection and the notification procedure.

## **Final Decision**

After all interviews have been completed, the search committee meets to discuss the results and to rank the candidates in order of preference.

References are checked on the first choice. Following this, a recommendation is made to the full board.

Once the library board agrees on a candidate to be the new director, the chair of the library board makes an official offer that includes a written notice of appointment. Such letters of appointment typically cover position title, starting date, salary, moving expenses, fringe benefits, and a deadline for the candidate to respond to the offer (normally two weeks). Upon receipt of written acceptance, publicity of the appointment is usually sent to the local newspapers, to library publications, and to appropriate local officials.

Write all other candidates interviewed, thanking them and informing them of your decision **only after** acceptance has been received. If the first choice declines or is unavailable, the board can consider the second choice.

## **After the New Director Arrives**

**Orient** the new director and assist him or her with relocation. Provide help with school and housing information and additional information on the library and the community. A subscription to the local newspaper is a valuable tool to acclimate the new library director.

**Welcome** the new director. News releases and photographic coverage should be arranged. Personal introductions to staff members, trustees, community representatives, and local government officials should be scheduled promptly. An open house or reception hosted by the board, and assisted by the Friends of the Library, is a standard courtesy.

It is evident that the best libraries have well-treated library directors to administer the libraries guided by trustees.

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND THE DIRECTOR**

It is critical to the progress of the library that the board and director work together toward common goals in a climate that fosters a free and open exchange of viewpoints. The expectations, roles, and responsibilities of each should be clearly delineated and understood.

In accordance with the library's written personnel policies, there is generally an initial evaluation period that allows the board and the director time to develop a working relationship. During this time either party may reconsider the arrangement.

A reciprocal relationship will flourish if the board follows these guidelines:

1. Hire with enthusiasm after an appropriate search.
2. Before hiring, be clear about your expectations of the director and your goals for the library.
3. Reveal any special problems the library has.
4. Support the director (new or continuing) in pursuit of goals and objectives decided on in discussions between board and director.
5. Handle problems as they arise. Be patient with the director while sticking to the goal of excellence in library management.
6. Define the roles of the board and the director and stick to the division, but provide mutual support in performance of the roles.
7. Treat the director as a team member and leader of the library, a participant in decision making and the professional advisor and resource.
8. Call for adequate reporting from the director.
9. Encourage the director to be involved in professional activities and give financial support to this participation.
10. Support the director in his or her position as administrator and stay out of the day-to-day operation of the library. Encourage the director to feel free to talk with the board members about problems.
11. Talk about the library in the community, including praise for the director. Introduce the director to the community. Aim for visibility for board, director, and library.
12. Encourage the director to be a futurist—knowing about trends and the projects of others and being allowed to dream about ideas and to try some of them.
13. Maintain a professional relationship with the director. Pass on the good that trustees hear about their libraries. Share the successes.

14. Pay the director an adequate progressive salary, a standard that applies to the staff as well. A contented adequately compensated staff responds well to the direction of the library director and to the desires of the board.

### **THE BOARD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STAFF**

A clear understanding of the relationship between the board and staff members is vital to the smooth operation of the library. Ideally, the relationship will be analogous to that of a corporate board of directors; i.e., it should be one of cordial and friendly interest, but at no time should the board, or an individual board member, intervene between a staff member and the director. The board hires the director to be the expert in management of the library, including the management of all other personnel. Policies governing job specifications, salaries, and other terms of employment are the responsibility of the board; selection and supervision of personnel are part of the director's administrative duties.

There may be occasions when staff members go around the director and take their concerns and complaints directly to the board or to an individual board member. When this occurs, the staff member should be reminded that the board does not act on complaints from the staff except through a grievance procedure that is board policy. The proper procedure is to discuss the matter with the director. Any other action by overzealous board members will undermine the director's authority and probably produce the unhappy result of opposing factions and general disorganization within the library.

**The board should not assume direct responsibility for day-to-day supervision of the staff other than overseeing the director.**

**Board members should not issue orders to the staff or make demands of the staff except through the director.**

**The board has no direct responsibility for assessing staff performance other than the director's.**

There are times when it is appropriate for board members to work with staff members. Some examples of when board members may work with staff members are: in committee settings; in the long-range planning process; if requested by the director to make reports at the board meeting; and when planning library social events.

A policy that reflects the relationship between the library board, the library director, and the staff should be adopted, and it should be communicated to the staff so that it is clearly understood.

## **EVALUATING THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

Performance appraisal of the library director is an integral part of the evaluation of the library as a whole. It is a continuous process that should be used as a means toward determining the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives and how well the library is being managed.

A formal evaluation of the director is good management practice and should be done regularly, at least on an annual basis. The evaluation should be based on the job description and/or negotiated objectives agreed on at the time of hiring or soon thereafter. The criteria should be defined specifically, thus providing the board with evidence of good management if the objectives are met.

### **Purposes of the Performance Evaluation**

- to provide the director with a clear understanding of the board's expectations
- to ensure that the director is aware of how well the board's expectations are being met
- to serve as a formal vehicle of communication between the board and director
- to identify the board's actual concerns so that appropriate action can be taken
- to document the justification for salary adjustments

### **Methods of Evaluation**

To be effective, the evaluation method and process must be designed to accommodate your specific local situation. Directors can be judged in many ways, but quality of performance is clearly the best measure.

- Has the director managed the operation of the library so as to provide the intended services?
- Has the director managed the staff so that operations are friendly, efficient, and cost-effective?
- Has the director been a leader in making the library an important service in the community?
- Has the director moved forward satisfactorily on achieving the goals and objectives outlined for the library and for the director?
- Has the director provided sufficient information to the board so that it can perform its duties?
- Has the director kept in touch with new trends in library service and relayed these to the staff and board?

These are among the questions boards might use in assessing the director's performance. Any evaluation of the director should be based on how the library is doing. Is there satisfaction in the community? Is there praise for the library? Is there movement towards goals?

The Library Development and Networking Division of the Library of Virginia has examples of director evaluations that may be borrowed.

### **Developing the Evaluation Process**

- Board and director jointly develop a list of factors that lend themselves to objective evaluation.
- Board develops general evaluation method, criteria, rating scale, and form.
- Board and director identify goals, long-range plans, and specific areas that need attention.
- Director prepares a set of objectives with time line.
- Board reviews objectives and suggests changes, if appropriate.
- Board and director negotiate changes in objectives.
- Director and board confirm objectives.
- Director handles implementation of actions to meet objectives, including delegation of tasks to staff.
- Director makes periodic reports to board on progress toward achieving objectives.
- Board and director makes revisions to objectives negotiated.
- Board conducts annual formal evaluation review.
- Board provides periodic feedback to director.
- Evaluation process repeated.

### **Expectations and Evaluation**

Directors are accountable to many varied and sometimes conflicting constituencies. The board and the director must recognize these groups and agree on the priority of the demands of each. These constituencies might include:

- elected officials and the appointed governing officer who supervised other local government department heads
- library staff members who have diverse personal expectations for their director
- special interest groups who exert pressure on the director to respond to their concerns
- individual members of the board of trustees who have personal priorities for the library and the director

Good communication, effective public relations, a written plan, and clear policies will all help the board and director to deal with any conflicting expectations.

**Remember:** If the librarian is having a problem, give timely help—don't wait for an annual evaluation. Single episodes, slips, or errors should be disposed of when they occur and not held in waiting for an annual criticism.

The board's performance must also be evaluated as part of this process. Did the board conduct itself well, abide by the board/director divisions of responsibility, set objectives and work toward them, listen to reports, and provide needed assistance throughout the year?

The evaluation should be a constructive process. Most library directors welcome the opportunity to review past performance objectively against established criteria. A good evaluation interview will include both strengths and weaknesses and will help the director be more effective in managing the library.

### **Dismissal of the Library Director**

One of the most difficult situations a board may have to face is the dismissal of the library director. It is an action that should not be taken lightly because it will reflect on the future of the library and on the career of the director.

There is less likelihood of having to take this action if care is taken in the hiring process and the board has a well-developed evaluation procedure in place.

If efforts taken to improve the difficulty are unsuccessful, and the working relationship between the board and the director reaches a point that it is not possible to continue, then dismissal becomes a last resort.

Generally the reasons for discharge are for poor performance or infraction of rules. Both the reasons for dismissal and the procedures to be followed should be stated explicitly in writing and adopted by the board as policy. It is important to avoid vague terms. An appeals procedure should be included to ensure fairness and to protect the director from false charges.

In considering dismissal of the director, the board should ask itself the following questions:

- Has the board acted responsibly?
- Has the board dealt with problems as they arose?
- Has the director received written notification of his or her dismissal and the reasons for dismissal?
- Has the director been given a full hearing?
- Have the charges been listed explicitly?

- Can the board defend its position?
- Does the board need legal advice?
- How will the dismissal be handled with the public?
- Do the policies need to be changed?

The board should understand that its responsibility is to provide the best possible library service. Every effort should be made to ensure that personalities and biases are not leading factors in a decision to replace the director.

**Are personnel policies reviewed periodically?**

**Do you refrain from intervening in matters  
between the staff and supervisors?**

**Do the board and director jointly determine  
the criteria to be used in evaluating the director?**

## SUMMARY OF PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

### Governing Board of Trustees<sup>2</sup>

### Library Director

Employs a library director who meets state certification requirements and develops guidelines for staff selection.

Hires and directs staff according to board policy.

Provides adequate salary scale and fringe benefits for all employees.

Suggests improvements needed in salary and working conditions. Utilizes skills and initiative of staff members to the library's advantage.

Adopts personnel policies and personnel manual.

Provides board with recommendations and materials to review. Maintains a personnel manual.

Recommends qualifications and candidates for board. Notifies appropriate authorities of board vacancies. Provides orientation for new trustees.

Recommends criteria and assists in the selection of new trustees. Participates in orientation by introducing library staff, explaining procedures, etc.

Develops standards for evaluating library director's performance. Reviews director's effectiveness.

Suggests basis for evaluation criteria. Provides materials for board to study. Maintains records of all personnel.

### Joint Responsibilities

Observes all local, state, and federal laws that relate to current employment practices.

Provides in-service training for professional development of staff members and effective implementation of policies. Provides opportunity for continuing education and advancement of staff and trustees.

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<sup>2</sup> These roles and responsibilities are primarily for governing boards. Advisory boards' roles and responsibilities may be different.



