

Chapter 6:

The Library Director

This chapter covers:

- ✓ The role of the library director
- ✓ Procedure for hiring a library director
- ✓ Evaluation of the library director

Role of the Library Director

The Library Director is responsible for the overall operation of the library including personnel, collection development and fiscal, physical plant and programming functions. The director also acts as a technical advisor to the board. A detailed chart of the roles of the director versus the board is included in Chapter 2.

PLANNING

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

ORGANIZING

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

STAFFING

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

DIRECTING AND LEADING

The library director motivates and leads the staff. He or she should inspire, give direction and communicate with them. Board members direct and lead *only through the director*.

MONITORING AND CONTROLLING OPERATIONS

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

Hiring the Library Director

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

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

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

A two-page check list on hiring a library director

https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/ld.php?content_id=6835832

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

https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/ld.php?content_id=6835838

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

Following is a list of steps that the board should undertake when hiring a director.

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

The board should determine if they are still valid and make adjustments as needed. Consideration should be given to any changes in the community that will necessitate changes in the library's mission and direction.

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

Guidelines for exit interviews are included in the resource at

<http://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/trusteezone/practical-guides/finding-library-director.pdf>

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

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

The outgoing director's job description should not be used by itself. The board may wish to redefine the job and/or elevate the position.

5. Review skills and abilities that the new director should possess for maximum achievement of the board's goals for the library.

Input should be solicited from staff, Friends and other stakeholders. Topics should include:

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

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

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

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

Chapter 6: The Library Director

The board may wish to consult the State Library's Statistical Profile of Connecticut Public Libraries as a useful tool in evaluation of an appropriate salary range:

<http://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/stats/annreport>. The board may also wish to consult with municipal human resources personnel.

8. Draft the job description.

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

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

For examples of job descriptions in Connecticut Public Libraries see

http://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/ld.php?content_id=6834413

9. Form the search committee.

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

10. Advertise.

The job opening should be advertised to as many candidates as possible. Qualified staff members should be encouraged to apply.

The board should stress that the goal is to select the best person for the job. All applicants should receive consideration and due process in accordance with equal opportunity laws. After reading ads published by other libraries, a carefully worded ad should be composed based on the job description. A deadline should be set for submitting applications and one person should be designated to receive them. Resumes and references should be submitted as well. A list of places where a Connecticut library board may wish to advertise is available at https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/ld.php?content_id=6835838

Word of mouth advertising among friends and colleagues is another means of spreading the news of an available position.

11. Observe Affirmative Action laws.

Libraries must abide by federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination in relation to hiring, promotion and all other working conditions of employment. It is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, age, country of origin, individual life style or physical handicap. Policies should demonstrate that the library board makes every effort not to discriminate. Library boards have the responsibility for determining deficiencies in their policies and adopting corrections. It is important to tie the skills and qualifications closely to the job requirements to be sure that no candidate is disqualified unfairly.

Information on federal affirmative action laws is available at <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/hiring/affirmativeact>

Information on Connecticut affirmative action laws is available at <https://www.ct.gov/chro/cwp/view.asp?A=2523&Q=315818>

12. Evaluate the Applications.

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

13. Supply candidates to be interviewed with additional information about the library.

This should include a current description of the community demographics and a copy of the library's long-range plan, policy manual and the latest annual report.

14. Interview the candidates and make a selection.

An evaluation sheet should be developed for use by each member of the interview committee to note the candidates' responses and members' impressions. Time should be allowed between interviews to complete the evaluation sheets.

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

Freedom of Information Act, FOIA

Under the FOIA C.G.S sec 1-225, *"The meetings of all public agencies, except executive sessions, as defined in subdivision (6) of section 1-200, shall be open to the public."*

However, sec 1-220(2) states, *"'Meeting' does not include: Any meeting of a personnel search committee for executive level employment candidates."* Thus, meetings of the personnel search committee do not have to be open to the public. For other implications of FOIA see also the Evaluation section beginning on page 6-7 of this handbook.

Illegal questions

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

- Marital Status, sexual preference, maiden name, spouse's name or occupation
- Nationality, citizenship, religion, age, height, weight

Chapter 6: The Library Director

- Age of children, arrangement for the care of minor children
- Plans to have children, health status, pregnancy, smoking, physical defects, illnesses (unless related to the ability to perform job-related tasks), psychiatric hospitalization
- Military experience, type of discharge
- Arrests, felony or misdemeanor convictions
- Candidacy for public office
- Membership in a labor organization
- Previous salary

15. Check candidates' references and present the top candidates to the board for final approval.

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

16. Offer the job to the top candidate and inform the others that a decision has been made.

The top candidate should be telephoned to offer him/her the position. The candidate should be given a reasonable deadline to respond with a decision.

The offer should be followed up with an information letter and/or contract specifying the details of the appointment, duties, salary, benefits, evaluation, starting date, probation period if relevant, etc. A second copy should be included for the candidate's signature. A return date should be specified.

All other candidates interviewed should be sent letters thanking them and informing them of the decision *only after* written acceptance has been received and the new director is in place. If the candidate declines, the board should move on quickly to the second choice.

17. Welcome the new director.

News releases and photographic coverage should be arranged. An open house or reception hosted by the board of trustees is a courtesy. The board and staff should conduct an orientation.

Evaluating the Director

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

- Provides the director with formal feedback on his/her job performance
- Can be a tool for motivation, encouragement and direction
- Can provide the board with valuable information about the operations and performance of the library
- Can help establish a record of unsatisfactory performance if there is ever cause to discipline the director or terminate employment
- Can give the board and the director a formal opportunity to evaluate the job description and adjust it as necessary

- Can provide assurance that the director and the board are working toward the same goals for the library

A formal written evaluation of the director should be done annually.

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

Who Carries Out the Review?

Though the board as a whole is responsible for oversight of library operations and the activities of the library director, often boards decide to delegate the task of developing a preliminary evaluation of the director to a personnel committee or specially appointed committee of the board. Whether the whole board takes part or a committee does the work depends on the makeup of the board and the time available to board members. Experienced managers or human resource professionals among its members might be good choices.

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

How to Conduct the Review

At the beginning of each fiscal year the board and the director should mutually develop goals, objectives with timelines and criteria upon which the evaluation will be based. For example, consideration should be given to the job description, mission statement, long and short-range goals and expected personal characteristics. Establishing objectives can be an exercise in creativity in searching for new ways to improve the library. A form should be developed that evaluates the achievement or roadblocks to meeting these goals.

The board may wish to gather input from staff, Friends and other stakeholders but the director should agree in advance to any discussion between board members and staff members. Evaluation questions in these instances should be in the same format as that used to gather feedback from board members.

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

Once the evaluation is written up, copies should be distributed to all board members and the library director, after which a conversation between a board representative and the director should take place, allowing a meeting of

Chapter 6: The Library Director

minds and perhaps adjustments to the evaluation document and/or job description. If issues arise, the director's input should be requested on how to proceed.

Praise and encouragement for successes and corrective actions for weak spots should be provided as needed. Suggestions for improvement are in order for each weakness.

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

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

Freedom of Information Requirements

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

More information on this requirement is available from the Freedom of Information Commission at <https://www.ct.gov/foi/site/default.asp> .

Follow-up

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

Further guidance is available on the tip sheet for evaluating the library director from the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations at:

<http://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/trustees/short-takes/Short%20Takes%208.pdf>