

William B. Ogden Free Library
POLICY & PROCEDURE FOR LIBRARY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Purpose

Policymaking is the responsibility of the Library Trustees. Policies are the rules and the principles that guide the operation and the use of the library. They are required by Education Department Regulations ([8 NYCRR 90.2](#)) as part of the public library minimum standards and must be reviewed every 3 years and posted on the library's website. The library board is responsible for creating such policies, reviewing and revising them, and ultimately enforcing them with the assistance of the library staff.

Policies are the rules of the library and should not be confused with procedures, which are an administrative function and that describe how things are done.

Policies can be categorized into internal (such as personnel, business continuity, financial controls, etc.) and external (dealing with the public). These categories can be further broken down to suit the library's organizational structure.

All policies should be able to stand alone and be dated for the original adoption and review and/or revision dates. They should be recorded, compiled and organized for ready access in a policy manual. Every trustee should have a copy of the policy manual and must be familiar with its contents.

A thorough understanding of the library's policies is the foundation from which to adopt new policies, revise old ones, and interpret or defend the library's rules. Archival records of the superseded policies should be kept as part of the library's Records Retention Policy.

Personnel policies are critical to any successful operation and must be consistent, current and in conformance with applicable state and federal law. Each library staff member should receive a copy of the personnel policies at the time of employment. A written acknowledgement of receipt should be in each staff member's personnel folder. Posting and updating of personnel and other internal policies and procedures on a staff internet is a common best practice.

Policy Development

Policy development and policy revision often involve major decisions and consider philosophical reflection. Boards must allow adequate time to discuss and assess policy options and ramifications. While trustees alone have the legal authority to make policy, the process works best when the library director and other key staff are closely involved. The staff have an important role in researching options, drafting recommendations, and presenting them to the board for discussion and approval.

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When establishing new policy, the board should seek from the director sufficient information to discuss the issue with confidence. This should include:

- A description of the issue that requires policy consideration;
- A statement describing how a policy would contribute to the accomplishment of the library's goals and objectives;
- A list of existing policies related to or affected by the proposed policy;
- A list of the policy options available, with the appropriate analysis (including enforcing the policy, legal ramifications, and costs to resources, facilities and staff);
- A recommendation, accompanied by the justification for changes in any existing policies.

When any existing policy is under evaluation, the board should ask if it is:

- In compliance with all laws and regulations;
- Consistent with the library's charter, mission, goals, and plans;
- Consistent with the Library's Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement;
- Complete, clearly written, and easily understandable;
- In the best interest of the community at large, devoid of politics, prejudice, or favoritism;
- Easily enforceable without undue burden on the library staff;
- Designed to maximize library services and access for the greatest number of users.

All policies should have the date of the board's approval and the date of revisions noted in the footer of the document. Regular review and revision are essential and required under Education Department Regulations (8 NYCRR) 90.2. Copies of the policy manual must also be housed in the library and easily accessible by the staff and public. Posting public (external) policies on the library's website is required under Education Department Regulations (8 NYCRR) 90.2.

The director is responsible for instructing the staff about the policies that affect their work and assuring that they fully understand these policies. Staff members are asked questions by the public and it is essential that they are able to explain all policies to the public in a clear and effective manner and to apply them consistently.

Resource

Nichols, J., & Aldrich, R. S. (2018). *Handbook For Library Trustees of New York State*. Bellport, New York: Suffolk Cooperative Library System. Retrieved from <https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/trustees/handbook/handbook.pdf>

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