

Library Trustee Orientation - Part I
NH Library Laws
Trustee Responsibilities
Library Policies

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Agenda

1. NH Laws Relative to Public Libraries
2. Library Trustees – A Job Description
3. Establishing Library Policies
4. The Trustee as Library Advocate

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**NH Laws Relating to
Public Libraries**

RSA = NH Revised Statutes Annotated

- RSA 202-A = Public Libraries
- RSA 201-D:11 = Library User Confidentiality
- RSA 91-A = Right to Know Law governing public meetings
- RSA 32 = Municipal Budget Law
- Case Law (Taylor decision: Library staff are not town employees)
- The local library's bylaws and policies

**The NH General Court Likes
Libraries**

RSA 202-A:1. Declaration of Policy

NH Legislature "declares that the public library is a valuable supplement to the formal system of free public education" and "deserves adequate financial support from government at all levels."

**The Public Library Is for
EVERYBODY**

RSA 202-A:4. Maintenance

If a town has a public library, it MUST appropriate funds "sufficient to provide and maintain adequate public library service...or to supplement funds otherwise provided."

RSA 202-A:5. Status

Every public library shall remain forever free to the use of every resident of the town wherein it is located.

Election of Trustees

RSA 202-A:6

- Board of Trustees is elected at Town Meeting (RSA 202-A:6)
- Board must be an odd number (3, 5, 7 most commonly)
- Serve staggered 3-year terms.
- Up to 3 alternates appointed by the Selectmen (RSA 202-A:10)

Patron Confidentiality

RSA 201-D:11

- Library patron records are confidential and shall not be disclosed.
- Includes electronic records, circulation data (materials, services used)
- **EXCEPTIONS**
 - By request or consent of the patron
 - Pursuant to subpoena, court order
 - Otherwise required by statute

Library Trustees – A Job Description



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Library Trustees in NH Are Powerful Elected Officials



RSA 202-A:6

“*The library trustees* shall have the entire custody and management of the public library and of all the property of the town relating thereto ...”

Power But Not Pay

- Trustee is a volunteer post—no compensation
- Can be reimbursed for expenses (e.g., travel to a conference)

RSA 202-A:14 Compensation of Trustees

What Are the Responsibilities of a Trustee?

- Trustee Responsibilities are defined by laws of N.H.
- Essentially, Trustees have three principal responsibilities
 - ✓ To write the policies that govern the library
 - ✓ To ensure that the library is sufficiently funded
 - ✓ To appoint/hire and oversee a library director

Trustees Establish Policy for the Library



Why Libraries Need Written Policies

- Policies are required by law.
- If you don't adopt them, they "just happen."
- Policies provide guidance to board, staff, and patrons.
- Policies assure consistency, comfort and trust.

Four Tests of a Legal and Enforceable Policy

1. It must comply with current statutes and court cases.
2. It must be reasonable (and all penalties must be reasonable).
3. It must be clear (not ambiguous or vague).
4. It must be applied without discrimination.

Review them and update on a regular basis; provide time for board review and updates at board meetings.

Sample Library Policies

- Circulation and Materials
 - ✓ Challenged materials
 - ✓ Overdue Items and Fines
- Financial Policies
 - ✓ Investment Policy
 - ✓ Purchasing Policy
- Meeting Room Policy
- Personnel Policies (often mirror town policy)

Tip: Check out other libraries' webpages to see what they have adopted for policies.

Library Advocacy



What Is Library Advocacy?

- **Advocacy** is the act of supporting, educating, or recommending for a cause, idea or policy.
- Advocating for a library includes:
 - ✓ educating the public and policymakers about the current and evolving roles and values of libraries
 - ✓ promoting library programs, and
 - ✓ seeking adequate financial support.

Things You Should Know About Your Library

- Staff, Friends, Key Volunteers
- Strengths, Programs, Collections
- What makes your library *special*?
- What are your library's goals for the next year and into the future?
- Your key audiences: town officials, managers

Advocates Are the Voice of the Library

- Wear your library hat at all times.
- Create a 3-minute “elevator” speech and be prepared to deliver it anytime, anywhere.



***Speak Up,
Speak Out,
Speak For...
Libraries***

NHLTA Resources

- NHLTA Board Members
- NHLTA Conferences and Workshops
- 2016 Trustee Manual
mailed to each library, updated every 5 years
- NHLTA Newsletter – published quarterly
- NHLTA Web Site : www.NHLTA.org
(join listserv via link on Home Page)
- LISTSERV: to post a message, send email to
NHLTA-L@maillist2.nh.gov