

## B. Trustee Responsibilities

Library boards function successfully when each trustee fulfills these responsibilities:

**Attend all board meetings.** Boards conduct their business at meetings and need attendance to function effectively. If you cannot attend all meetings, with exceptions for illness or emergencies, think about resigning your post to make room for someone who can fully participate. Chronic absence is a neglect of duty for a board member and a violation of their oath of office.

**Participate at meetings.** Each trustee needs to discuss issues and make intelligent votes. Inactive and passive board members weaken a library board. If you have an opinion, express it. Come prepared. This means reading the minutes, agenda, financial and other reports prior to the meeting. The purpose of meetings is decision making and discussion. If there are no discussions or decisions occurring at meetings, the board is not functioning properly.

**Become a team player.** Effective library boards work as a team, with each member sharing the common concern for the library's welfare. While board members need to express themselves on various issues, they need to avoid making personal remarks. Mutual respect and goodwill go a long way to making your board experience a positive one. Board members cannot legally act unilaterally.

**Support board decisions.** Boards need discussion and debate to arrive at good decisions. Once a decision is made, however, all board members should support the decision. Good board members refrain from criticizing or attacking decisions after they have been made, particularly in public. Of course, it is proper to seek reconsideration of the issue should situations change in the future.

**Advocate for the library.** Trustees promote the library in ways that no one else can. Seek opportunities to promote the library, such as speaking before local groups on new initiatives your library has undertaken. On a personal level, tell friends, co-workers, and relatives about the resources available at the library.

**Respect the role of the library director.** The board should be careful to respect the management function of the library director. While the board establishes policy and approves major decisions, it does not assume the role of the library manager. That job is delegated to the library director hired by the board. To ensure the best library service, the director must be allowed to manage the library without inappropriate board interference. Conscientiously stay out of day-to-day library management and operations.

**Support the library director.** At times, the library director may be attacked by a citizen or government official. The board should always assume the director is correct and then investigate the situation if necessary. Board members should never criticize or denigrate the library director or library staff publicly outside of formal evaluations done while in a public meeting. If the board is the employer of the library staff, then any issues or concerns about the staff or director should be handled in the employment context.