


Effective Library Policy

WV Public Library Directors Book Camp

Library Policies

- ▶ Policies are rules set by the Library Board of Trustees which govern day-to-day operations of the library, and keep the library in compliance with rules and laws.
 - ▶ Policy making is one of the most important functions of a library board of trustees.
 - ▶ Proposing policy and assisting the board with the development of policy is one of the most important functions of the director.
 - ▶ Policies are general statements governing library operations, rules, and use.
 - ▶ Policies should be flexible rather than overly rigid
 - ▶ Policies should be reviewed regularly.
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Library Policies (continued)

- ▶ Policies should be tailored to local conditions and should flow from the library's mission statement and service responses.
- ▶ It is the responsibility of the library director to implement board policies through the development of library procedure. When all elements of the process are in place, the library director and staff have direction of the day-to-day operation of the library, and both the public and the staff are assured of consistent treatment in all aspects of library service.
- ▶ Remember that no policy is carved in stone! Policies governing the library should be somewhat flexible, and be reviewed and amended from time to time as the community and its library changes and grows. Policies should always reflect current needs and services.

Why Libraries Have Policies

- ▶ Policies benefit the library by:
 - Supporting the library's mission, goals, and objectives,
 - Guiding the library director and staff in implementation of board judgments,
 - Providing direction and consistency in day-to-day service to community and library operation,
 - Reducing uninformed decision-making and crisis responses to problem situations,
 - Protecting the rights and assuring fair treatment of all patrons and staff members.
- ▶ Once adopted, the policies should have the unqualified support of the entire board, be fully implemented by the director, and be communicated to and understood by the staff.


Policy Development

- ▶ Under West Virginia law, library Boards of Trustees have the responsibility and the power to develop policies which govern library operations. While this duty and responsibility rests with the board, experience shows that the process works best when the library director and staff are involved in researching options, drafting policies, and presenting a report, including recommendations to the board.
 - ▶ The library's staff can gather manuals and samples from various communities, as well as the Library Development division of the West Virginia Library Commission, and can adapt them to the needs of the library.
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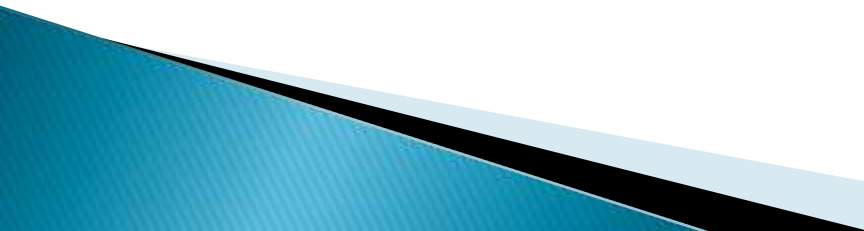
Policy Organization

- ▶ All policies should be recorded, compiled and organized for ready access in a policy manual. A loose-leaf binder and/or an electronic system provides a useful format because it allows easy revision. For easy reference, the contents of a policy manual should be categorized and numbered under some form of topical heading. As each new policy or revision is adopted, the policy can be numbered and the date of adoption noted. The West Virginia Library Commission keeps copies of each library's policies. Revisions should be sent to the Library Development division regularly.

What is the difference between policies and bylaws?

- ▶ Policies regulate the library; bylaws govern the library board.
 - ▶ Policies are general statements governing library operations, rules and use.
 - ▶ Bylaws are general statements governing board operations, rules, and denote actions the board must take to stay within the confines of the law.
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What Should You Do If Your Library Does Not Have A Policy Manual?

- ▶ 1. Review all of the board minutes and list all policies (with the date of adoption) and categorize them into topical headings.
 - ▶ 2. Review the policies for legality, clarity, completeness, and comprehensiveness.
 - ▶ Use the “Trustee Manual” Policies section to identify subjects that are missing.
 - ▶ Contact the WVLC Library Development division for sample policies.
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Trustees and Policy

- ▶ Every trustee should have a copy of the policy manual and be completely familiar with the rationale for each statement. A thorough understanding of all policies is essential in order to adopt new policies or revise existing ones in a knowledgeable manner. Trustees may also be called upon to defend or interpret policies to the public or governing officials.

The Library Director/Staff and Policy

- ▶ The director is responsible for instructing personnel in the rationale of policies so that staff members understand the basis for procedures. All staff members should understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to each of the policies. Copies of the policy manual should also be available in all libraries in the system.

How to develop policy

- ▶ A statement of the condition or problem, past or present, that requires policy consideration.
- ▶ A statement telling how any policy will contribute to the accomplishment of the library's mission, goals, and objectives.
- ▶ A statement of all existing policies related to or affected by the policy decision.
- ▶ A listing of policy options available, with an analysis of:
 - long- and short-range effects of enacting new policy,
 - potential side effects — good or bad — of passing each policy,
 - relevant legal ramifications, and
 - cost in terms of library resources: staff, budget, collections, and buildings.
- ▶ A recommendation from the library director, accompanied by a summary of the corresponding rationale for changes in related policies.
- ▶ Draft of concisely worded statement.

EVERY YEAR!!!

- ▶ All policies should be reviewed annually and revised periodically in order to meet the mission, goals, and objectives of the library.

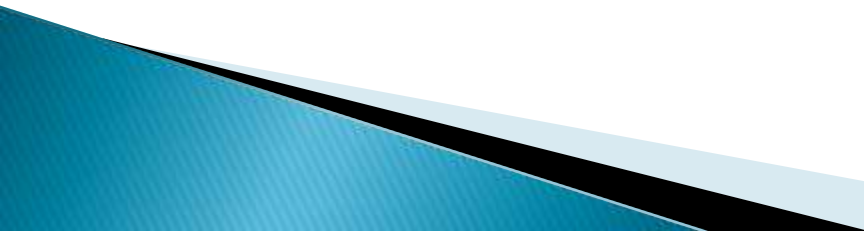
Are there any specific policies that are required for every library?

- ▶ Four are now **required** in the Administrative Rule—
 - Library operations
 - Collection development
 - Personnel
 - Technology.

Necessary Policies

- ▶ Access:
- ▶ Borrowing privileges
- ▶ Cash handling/audit
- ▶ Circulation of materials
- ▶ Collection development (Also includes "Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources")
- ▶ Confidentiality of user records
- ▶ Cooperation with other libraries and information providers
- ▶ Disaster plans
- ▶ Drug free workplace
- ▶ Electronic access
- ▶ Exhibits and displays
- ▶ Fines and fees

More Necessary Policies

- ▶ Gifts
 - ▶ Hours of service
 - ▶ Intellectual freedom
 - ▶ Interagency cooperation
 - ▶ Interlibrary loan
 - ▶ Internet acceptable use
 - ▶ Meeting room use
 - ▶ Personnel
 - ▶ Programming
 - ▶ Provision of library equipment and supplies for public use
 - ▶ Public participation and input
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And More Necessary Policies

- ▶ Public relations
- ▶ Reference service
- ▶ Relationship to Friends of the Library
- ▶ Responsibilities of board and director
- ▶ Rules of behavior
- ▶ Service to schools, nursing homes and other institutions, including prisons/jails
- ▶ Site establishment criteria for branches and bookmobile stops
- ▶ Unattended children
- ▶ User complaints
- ▶ Volunteers

Remember

- ▶ Sample policies are available from the Library Commission.
- ▶ Commission consultants will be glad to review policies before adoption.
- ▶ Call us when you need us!

Notes

- ▶ The West Virginia Code can be found online through the State Legislature's website.
- ▶ The Administrative Rule can be found online through the Secretary of State's website.
- ▶ Bid law information can be found on the West Virginia Division of Purchasing website.
- ▶ Access to state laws and rules affecting libraries are also available through the WVLC website:

www.librarycommission.wv.gov

THANK YOU



West Virginia
Library Commission