

Creating Library Policies That Work

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Why & How
to Write a Library Policy

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WHY have policies?

- »Consistency
- »Transparency
- »Accountability
- »Quality Management

Unwritten / Written Policies

- Written Policies
- Unwritten Policies
 - Just happen
 - They exist anyway
 - No planning or coordination
 - No accountability
 - No reliability

NH Revised Statutes Annotated TITLE XVI LIBRARIES CHAPTER 202-A PUBLIC LIBRARIES Section 202-A:11

202-A:11 Powers and Duties. – Except in those cities where other provision has been made by general or special act of the legislature, the library trustees of every public library in the state shall:

I. Adopt bylaws, rules and regulations for its own transaction of business and for the government of the library;

II. Prepare an annual budget indicating what support and maintenance of the free public library will be required out of public funds for submission to the appropriate agency of the municipality. A separate budget request shall be submitted for new construction, capital improvements of existing library property;

III. Expend all moneys raised and appropriated by the town or city for library purposes and shall direct that such moneys be paid over by the town or city treasurer pursuant to a payment schedule as agreed to by the library trustees ...

What a library should have

- Mission Statement
- Goals & Objectives
- Bylaws of the Board
- Emergency/Disaster plan
- Technology plan
- Building maintenance & renovation plan
- Furniture & Equipment plan
- Staff addition / salary plan
- Annual reports to town & to State Lib.
- Procedure manuals
- Posting of state/Fed labor laws
- Customer Service plan
- Circ & use statistics

Policies a library should have

- Personnel Policies
 - Job description, classifications, salary sched.
 - Performance review process
 - Grievance process
 - Disciplinary process
 - Conditions of work
 - Benefits, including leaves & vacations
 - Jury, armed services, public service duties
 - Sexual Harassment

Policies a library should have

- Internet use (acceptable use)
- Use of materials, borrowing limits, loan periods, fines, fees. overdues
- Unattended children
- Hours of operation
- Materials reconsideration request
- Collection development & maintenance
- Reference service

Policies a library should have

- Investments (RSA 35:9 re Trust Funds)
- Meeting room use
- Bulletin board and display space use
- Behavior in the library
- Gifts/grants acceptance & disposition
- Interlibrary loan
- Automation

Policies a library should have

- Cooperation with other public & non-public libraries & other agencies
- Relations with "Friends of the Library"
- Public relation and publicity
- Marketing & Merchandising
- Safety & Security
- Utilizing legal services

Policies a library should have

- Services to schools & specialized groups
- Payment of dues, continuing education & mileage for staff & trustees
- more...

Policies a library should have

- **Policy Policy** (review & revision)

Distribution of responsibilities for library policies

- The library director recommends policies & provides the board with the information needed to evaluate the proposed policy and any alternatives (staff, public)
- The library board approves policies and regularly reviews policies (see next slide)
- The library director makes sure all library staff understand the policies and follow them

Board consideration of policy

- Give adequate time and attention to all policy deliberations
- Be satisfied that policy is legal, clear, reasonable, and that all ramifications are understood
- Make sure policies are documented and available to staff & public
- Actively support officially established library policies

Four tests of a legally 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

Anatomy of a Policy

- Purpose statement
- Scope – who and what the policy affects
- Responsibilities – who is responsible for what and to whom
- Compliance – who enforces it and what penalties are

Writing Policies: The Nuts & Bolts First ask:

- Who is doing this?
- Is there a specific format you must use?
- What do you wish to accomplish?
- Why?
- Is this new policy or an addition/revision?
- What policies do you already have?
- Are you reinventing the wheel?

Writing Policies: The Nuts & Bolts Review the Draft

- the writer
- A friend
- the committee
- the legal department
- the director
- the staff
- the public
- the trustees

Writing Policies: The Nuts & Bolts The Trustee Board votes to adopt



Policy Samples

- Use them
- Don't swallow them whole
- Don't adopt by reference
- Watch the age
- Watch the source

Policy Samples - sources

- NHSL
- NHLTA
- NHLA (CHILIS, READS, Academics, Urbans, Small Libraries...)
- Local Government Center (former NHMA)
- Library literature
- Your peers
- Interested groups and individuals
- The Internet (including WebJunction)

Disclaimer


All sample policies included here are provided as examples, with no assurances that their individual contents are still current, or have passed any legal review, or would apply in any other individual situation. Some policies also incorporate procedures and/or forms.

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Policies do not exist in a Vacuum



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