



New Public Library Board Members What should you focus on in the first few months?

Get to know your director and fellow board members

- What are they interested in?
- What are they working on?
- Build relationships. It usually leads to better library services, a better functioning board, and more enjoyable and productive meetings.

Get to know the library

- Explore the library building.
- Explore the library website.
- Ask the director to give you a tour and tell you about what programs and services the library is currently offering.

Find out about board meetings

- When are they? Where are they?
- How do they work? How do you add items to an agenda?
- How are decisions usually made?

Find out what the library board/director are working on

- Is it the budget? Is it a policy? A new service? Relations with the Friends or a Foundation?
- Whatever it is read what the *Trustee Manual* has to say about that area.
- Review any materials the library director or board chair might give you about this topic.

Review the legal section of the *Trustee Manual*

- Focus on the Open Meeting Law, Powers and Duties of Library Boards, and the Library Records Confidentiality Act. These laws are important. You don't want to violate them.

Learn about money and the budget

- For most of us it takes a while before governmental accounting makes sense. Review this section of the **Trustee Manual** and study the library budget reports.
- Ask the director and/or other board members to explain what types of revenue the library receives.
- How are bills handled? Who does the accounting for the library?
- What's the process for creating the library budget?

Find out about the Montana State Library (MSL) and its services.

- MSL provides consulting services to Montana libraries. It is also responsible for providing leadership to public libraries and handling state aid for libraries.
- Because of certain state aid requirements MSL has a basic set of standards that libraries need to meet. Review the MSL section of the **Trustee Manual** as well as the State Library's website to learn more about what MSL offers public libraries.

Attend trainings and/or library meetings.

- Attending a library training or meeting gives you a chance to meet other trustees and directors. You can ask questions as well as learn more about what other libraries are doing. Trainings can also help you better understand the library and the challenges and opportunities it faces. Possibilities include:
 - Federation meetings
 - **Montana Library Association** Annual Conference
 - Montana State Library events

Find out about the larger library world.

- Explore the **United for Libraries** website, a nationwide organization dedicated to supporting libraries, public library trustees, friends, and volunteers:

RESOURCES

Trustee Manual: http://msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/For_Trustees/Trustee_Manual/default.asp

Montana Library Association: <http://www.mtlib.org/>

Montana State Library: <http://msl.mt.gov>

United for Libraries: <http://www.ala.org/united/>