



Rochester Public Library District Trustee Handbook

Welcome Note from Director

As the Director, it is my job to ensure that the staff are well-trained in the necessary skills to meet the needs of the community. Their work is to curate materials, programs and public services that meet their needs. Our goal is to help every person have their best experience every single library visit—in person, via the phone or online. We are proud of the work that we do, and we celebrate and stand for the public's freedom of access and freedom to read as laid out by the American Library Association. The staff of the Rochester Public Library District is passionate about their community and their workplace.

It is my pleasure to work alongside you as we fulfill the library's vision to connect, discover, and create. Welcome!

Janet McAllister

Director, Rochester Public Library District

Welcome Note from Current Board President

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Rochester Public Library District, I welcome you to your new role. Your dedication to your community and the Library through civic engagement is commendable and deeply appreciated.

This Trustee Handbook is not intended to be a comprehensive how-to manual for your term but was designed to provide an overview of the Library, the role of trustees, and the responsibilities of board officers. We hope it helps new trustees understand how public libraries function within their communities and the broader community of libraries and library workers. Just as libraries continually adapt to meet the needs of their communities, it is our intent for this handbook to be an evolving document.

Sarah Deen

President, Rochester Public Library District Board of Trustees

ILEAD PORTAL

Tips for Trustee Success

- Be There
 - Attend Board Meetings
 - Make Regular Visits to your library
 - Use your library card
 - Attend library events
- Come Prepared
 - Read the agenda and minutes
 - Know the topics to be discussed
- Obey the Laws
 - Federal, State and Local
- Leave Conflict behind
 - Avoid Personality Conflicts
 - Avoid bringing unrelated politics and social views into library operations
- Focus on the Task at Hand
- Stick to the Facts
- Keep Discussion Civil and Respectful
 - Do Not Bully
 - Allow everyone a turn to speak
 - Provide compassionate leadership
- Make Respectful and Inclusive Decisions
 - The library belongs to everyone
 - Libraries promote community engagement and development
 - Advocate for the library and all those it serves
- Avoid Micromanagement
 - Let the director handle the daily operations
 - The director hires and fires the staff
 - The staff is responsible for the selection, display and management of the collection

Public Library Board of Trustees Ethics Statement

Public library trustees are accountable for the resources of the library as well as to see that the library provides the best possible service to its community.

Every trustee makes a personal commitment to contribute the time and energy to faithfully carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively and with absolute truth, honor and integrity.

- Trustees shall respect the opinions of their colleagues and not be critical or disrespectful when they disagree or oppose a viewpoint different from their own.
- Trustees shall comply with all the laws, rules and regulations that apply to them and to their library.
- Trustees, in fulfilling their responsibilities, shall not be swayed by partisan interests, public pressure or fear of criticism.
- Trustees shall not engage in discrimination of any kind and shall uphold library patrons' rights to privacy in the use of library resources.
- Trustees must distinguish clearly in their actions and statements between their personal philosophies and attitudes and those of the library, acknowledging and supporting the formal position of the Board even if they disagree.
- Trustees must respect the confidential nature of library business and not disclose such information to anyone. Trustees must also be aware of and in compliance with Freedom of Information laws
- Trustees must avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or financial benefits gained because of their position or access to privileged library information, for either themselves or others.
- A Trustee shall immediately disqualify him/herself whenever the appearance of or a conflict of interest exists.
- Trustees shall not use their position to gain unwarranted privileges or advantages for themselves or others from the library or from those who do business with the library.
 - Trustees shall not interfere with the management responsibilities of the Director or the supervision of library staff.
- Trustees shall support the efforts of librarians in resisting censorship of library materials by groups or individuals.

<https://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/trustees/orgtools/Ethics%20Statement.pdf>

[Ethics Ordinance 2025](#)

Rochester Public Library District Mission & Vision

Mission: To strengthen community connections, inspire lifelong learning and discovery, and foster creativity

Vision: The library will be a welcoming, comfortable place where all people may engage in lifelong learning opportunities and diversity can be explored, celebrated, and experienced

Library Board Meetings

The Library Board of Trustees normally meet on the second Thursday of each month at the Library. The meetings begin at 6:00pm, and members of the public may attend. Note that the Board Committees meet at various times during the year as needed, not necessarily on a regular schedule. Committee meetings are announced 48 hours in advance.

Library Board Meetings Calendar Requirements

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1L3NZ1Pb9Ic6D4I48x74p0KNexqFShdB0cWtfdWwkE0k/edit?usp=sharing>

Effective Library Board Meetings

Managing an effective meeting is the duty of the board president. Effective board meetings can begin with a quick review of the agenda to make sure there is adequate time to cover all items and to modify the order of business if necessary. Effective board meetings move at an appropriate pace. Time for questions and full discussion is allowed, but the president makes sure discussion remains focused, and decisions are reached.

Board meetings generally should be completed within two hours. If meetings consistently last longer, issues can be referred to committees or the Director for further study or tabled for action at subsequent board meetings.

Open Meetings

To protect transparency in government, every state in the United States has some variety of law mandating that all government business be conducted in open meetings to which the public has access.

Training for the Open Meetings Act should be completed by all trustees every election cycle. *The Illinois*

Attorney General's Office provides training at:

<https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/open-and-honest-government/pac/pac-training/>

Closed Meetings

Closed meetings of the Board of Trustees are allowed in certain scenarios, such as, when discussing disciplinary proceedings against a staff member or personnel evaluations, considerations of the purchase or lease of property until an option is obtained, consultation with counsel regarding settlement strategy in connection with specific pending litigation, or consideration of specific contents of applications for employment or appointment.

You can find more information on Closed Meetings in the Illinois Compiled Statutes (5 ILCS 120):

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=84&ChapterID=2>

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gives the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. The records requested must be disclosed unless they are protected by one or more of the exempt categories of information found in the FOIA.

Emails shared via your library address are subject to FOIA requests and it would be our legal obligation to share them.

You can find more information on FOIA in the Illinois Compiled Statutes (5 ILCS 140):

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=85&ChapterID=2>

Statement of Economic Interest

In accordance with the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act, more than 900 units of government and over 22,000 public officials and employees must submit ethics filings to the Clerk's office. Government agencies provide a list of people who must file a Statement of Economic Interests.

Meetings & Agendas

For all trustees to be properly prepared for the meeting, a packet of information related to the meeting will be emailed in advance. The packet typically includes the meeting agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, Treasurer's Report, and the Director's report.

All trustees are expected to come prepared to participate fully in meeting discussions and actions, and to be familiar with the activities of the committees to which they are assigned. Using the talents and skills of every board member creates a more cooperative, congenial, and productive board.

Regular attendance at board meetings is essential. The Board President and the Executive Director should be notified in advance if attendance is not possible. A trustee who misses meetings frequently may not completely understand the issues at hand and valuable meeting time can be lost bringing that trustee back up to speed. An uninformed trustee cannot make the best possible decision when it comes time to vote.

Board of Trustees Operating Structure

Information about the current Board of Trustees, positions held, and email addresses can be found at <https://www.rochesterlibrary.org/library-board/>.

The Board ByLaws can be found at <https://www.rochesterlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Board-Bylaws-2024.pdf>

[Board Vacancy Form](#)

Library Board Standing Committees & Liaisons

Friends of the Library (FOL) Liaison

One trustee is charged with serving as the Board Liaison to the Friends of the Library Board of Trustees. The liaison represents the Library Board of Trustees at Friends of the Library Board Meetings and works with the Friends' Library Staff Liaison to foster cooperation between the Library and the Friends.

- **Who are the Friends of the Library:** The Friends are an independent 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to support the Rochester Public Library District. Funds are earned through membership dues, donations, fundraisers, and the used book sales (donated materials). The Friends of the Library regularly grant requests for Library materials, equipment, programs and more.

Library Staff

<https://www.rochesterlibrary.org/library-staff/>

Divisions of Responsibility

<https://www.rochesterlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Policy-Division-of-Responsibility.pdf>

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

What is Intellectual Freedom?

The American Library Association (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom frames intellectual freedom as “the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession, and a basic right in a democratic society. A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community.”

What Is Censorship?

The ALA’s Office of Intellectual Freedom describes censorship as “the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons—individuals, groups or government officials—find objectionable or dangerous. Censors pressure public institutions, like libraries, to suppress and remove from public access information they judge inappropriate or dangerous, so that no one else has the chance to read or view the material and make up their own minds about it. The censor wants to prejudge materials for everyone.”

Challenges to Materials and Policies

Trustees must be committed to the principles of freedom of expression and inquiry that are fundamental to the role of public libraries in a democratic society. The community benefits collectively when democratic institutions uphold the right of access to information.

Public libraries are for everyone. There are those who want to limit what others may read, see, or listen to, but libraries provide the right of unrestricted access to the expressions and beliefs of others. If someone wants materials restricted or eliminated from a public library, it must be addressed thoughtfully and carefully by those ultimately responsible for all library operations, i.e., the Library Board of Trustees.

<https://www.rochesterlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Challenges-to-Materials-Policy-2024.pdf>

Privacy and Confidentiality

A citizen’s right to privacy and confidentiality are First Amendment rights and as such go hand in hand with intellectual freedom.

The American Library Association frames privacy and confidentiality as follows: “The right to privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one’s interest examined or scrutinized by others.

The confidentiality of library records is a fundamental value of librarianship. Employees and Trustees are ethically bound to uphold customer privacy. The Library Bill of Rights addresses privacy as does the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association. *Find out more about the Library Records Confidentiality Act in the Illinois Compiled Statutes 75 ILCS 70:*

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1004&ChapterID=16>

Trustee Facts on File

<https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/libraries/pdfs/trusteefacts.pdf>

IL State Library Ready Reference

<https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/ARR/home.html>

Per Capita Grant - IL State Library

Requirements

https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/grants/plpc_equalization.html#:~:text=The%20Public%20Library%20Per%20Capita,to%20qualified%20Illinois%20public%20libraries.

Serving our Public 4.0

<https://www.rochesterlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Serving-our-Public-4.pdf>

IPLAR - IL State Library

PLAR Purposes

The Illinois State Library is the agency legally required to: (1) compile, preserve and publish public library statistical information [**15 ILCS 320/7(m)**], and (2) compile the annual report of local public libraries and library systems submitted to the State Librarian pursuant to law [**15 ILCS 320/7(n)**]. In addition, all Illinois public libraries are required by statute [**75 ILCS 16/30-65**] to prepare an annual report to be submitted to the State Library as a condition of system membership.

<https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/libraries/IPLAR/home.html>

IHLS/SHARE

Illinois Heartland Library System is a state agency that helps 520 member libraries deliver exceptional service to their communities.

SHARE is a collection of libraries in central and southern Illinois that have joined together to form the largest automation consortium in the country, with 362 members at 480 locations. There are many benefits to SHARE membership, including the ability to share the cost of purchasing an integrated library system, staff, technical support, and training

Associations

American Library Association, Public Library Association, Illinois Library Association, Association for Rural and Small Libraries

Continuing Education

[Senate Resolution No. 104](#)

[ILEAD PORTAL](#)

Email and communication

Each board member should have an email address that is reserved for library and board business only. Bearing in mind that all email communication is subject to FOIA, board members should avoid written communication that is unnecessary or not related to library business. There is no expectation of privacy for any messages sent or received by e-mail.

Board members must be mindful of the requirements imposed by the Illinois Open Meetings Act and the Local Records Act. Trustees may correspond between themselves if such correspondence would not constitute a violation of the Open Meetings Act

I acknowledge that I have read and received the Rochester Public Library District Trustee Handbook

Please sign, date, and return by the meeting following receipt.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Date:
