



Library Board of Directors

Orientation Guide

Table of Contents

About the Library	2-4
Welcome to the Library Board	5
Library Board of Directors: Job Description	6-7
Responsibilities of the Library Board and Library Director	8-9
Library Board Ethics	10
Board Resources	11
Orientation Checklist	12
Acknowledgments	13
Attachments	
Library Board Contact List, Meeting Schedule, and Monthly Task List	
Organizational Chart	
Borrower's Guide	
Friends of the Bismarck Public Library Brochure	
Bismarck Library Foundation, Inc. Brochure	

Guiding Principles

Mission

Collecting, organizing, and providing open access to educational, informational, recreational and cultural resources.

Vision

Personal enrichment for all.

Values: Pillars of Excellence

Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library holds itself to the highest standards of excellence.

Inclusivity

We are dedicated to fostering a truly inclusive, welcoming, safe space for all. We provide library services to everyone in our community in an environment of equity, inclusion, civility, accessibility, kindness, and mutual respect. We institute policies and practices that promote equitable outcomes. We listen with intention by respecting the diverse perspectives of our patrons. We lead with kindness and extend compassion to all who enter our doors. You belong here and we look forward to seeing you on your next visit.

Access

We provide quality, essential, and valued services without charge. Citizens have access to essential technology and connectivity. We support your right to seek and receive information from all viewpoints on a broad range of ideas and we oppose censorship in all its forms.

Community

We collaborate with other community organizations to enhance the range and impact of library services. We create opportunities for community connection and enrichment. We offer materials and programs that reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds in our community and provide a platform for artists, authors, and performers.

Learning and Growing

We promote lifelong learning by offering a wide range of collections, services, and resources for citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Stewardship

We are responsible for the resources entrusted to us and ensure the proper use of public funds. We maximize the efficiency of staff time and talent to make the best use of our resources for quality library services. We adapt our services with changing community needs to remain relevant and responsive.

Accountability and Integrity

We hold ourselves and one another accountable for our actions. We value competence and adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards including safeguarding patron personal information and confidentiality.

Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library History

Bismarck pioneer women established a reading room soon after the city was established in 1873. By 1915, the Bismarck Civic League and the Commercial Club (forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce), with guidance from the State Library Commission, undertook a book drive resulting in a lending library of 1,500 books housed in the Commercial Club rooms. The secretary acted as Bismarck's first librarian.

Interest grew and the Andrew Carnegie Corporation was approached for a grant to build a "real library." Application was made and Bismarck was offered \$25,000 for its first building if the city would provide a minimum upkeep of \$2,500 annually. In February 1916, A.W. Lucas, president of the City Commission, brought the idea to the governing body and they decided to ask the citizenry. City citizens showed their support, 374 to 70. The city then donated the site at the southwest corner of Thayer Avenue and 6th Street and the Commercial Club began collecting books for the new Bismarck Public Library, which opened in 1917 with a collection of about 4,000 items.

The first library board directors were prominent Bismarck citizens: C.B. Little, C.L. Young, Otto Holta, George F. Will, and Agatha Patterson. George M. Register replaced Patterson in 1923. Ten years later, a trained children's librarian was added and, in 1938, a trained catalog librarian was hired. The operating budget in the 1940's was less than \$20,000.

In the early 1960's, citizens began planning a new 16,000 square-foot, three-level facility to be located farther north on 6th Street at the corner of Avenue A. Financed through a \$240,000 bond levy and named to honor the area's World War II and Korean War veterans, the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library (BVMPL) opened in 1963 with a collection of 100,000 volumes. The building served very well for a number of years. Services expanded and the library became perceived as a more active place with expanding weekly attendance and growing demand for more space.

In 1976, Burleigh County began levying support for library services as an expansion of the city services. In 1979, the Library Board appointed the first planning committee to conceptualize an expanded facility to meet present and future needs. This visioning process ultimately resulted in a sales tax to fund a major expansion of the 16,000 square foot building into a 70,000 square foot facility. A new parking lot was constructed on the west side; the new front of Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library now faced 5th Street. The library now encompasses the entire block.

Since the early 1970's, Burleigh County has contracted with the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library (BVMPL) to operate and maintain bookmobile services to rural schools and communities, and a handful of stops in Bismarck. The staff, collection, and bookmobile are housed in the BVMPL. The bookmobile currently visits 77 locations and makes 640 stops annually. Due to the reciprocal agreement between the city and county, all residents have access to both the bookmobile and BVMPL.

In 1975, the Bismarck Library Foundation, Inc. was established to raise private funding to supplement available tax support. Its endowment fund has surpassed \$1.25 million. During the early 1990's the Friends of the Bismarck Public Library was formed and now has semi-annual used book sales, supports the services of the library, and provides volunteers for events.

Since 1993, the library has been a member of the Central Dakota Library Network (CDLN), a resource-sharing and automated consortium of 20 member libraries throughout Burleigh, Morton, McLean, Mercer, and Oliver counties. The BVMPL serves as the hub of CDLN.

A 600 square foot coffee shop was built in 2007, with fundraising efforts through the Bismarck Library Foundation. It is currently leased and operated by The Gifted Bean Coffee Shop. In 2009, the Foundation raised \$643,000 to redesign the Children's Library. Also in 2013, a major remodeling of the main circulation desk was completed. In 2016, the Foundation raised over \$442,000 to construct an enclosed teen center. In 2018, we received funding from the City for a new roof. We received funding from the city to update the HVAC controls, dampers, and VAV boxes in 2019, and funding for an exterior siding/windows/doors renovation in 2022.

In late 2016, the Bismarck Mobile Library began outreach service to individuals within the city of Bismarck. The Bismarck Mobile Library delivers bins of books to a variety of organizations, which ensures personal enrichment and reading opportunities for community members who cannot physically visit the BVMPL. The Bismarck Mobile Library was made possible by a vehicle donation from Kupper Chevrolet. Ongoing insurance and fuel costs are covered by the Friends of the Bismarck Public Library.

Open seven days a week at 3,692 hours annually, which includes outreach services, BVMPL has a staff consisting of 32 FTE, which includes 18 full-time and 40 part-time employees. 55% of city residents are registered cardholders. In 2023, we had over 213,000 visitors at the library and at our outreach locations, making BVMPL one of the most used public facilities in Bismarck. In 2023, BVMPL circulated over 569,000 items. Public services include professional reference and information research - over 27,000 queries answered at the Information Desks; database searching with full-text online magazines and journals purchased through a statewide contract; interlibrary loan of materials from across the nation; free public computers - 23,000 connections; free Wi-Fi throughout the entire building and grounds - 65,565 sessions; and a shared online catalog with CDLN that includes 500,000 holdings. BVMPL also connects directly with the state university system catalog, Online Dakota Information Network, and Online Computer Library Center, Inc., the national database of major libraries in the United States, Europe and Asia.

BVMPL's website (www.bismarcklibrary.org) includes access to the online catalog as well as a wide array of purchased electronic databases, available 24/7. Downloadable eBooks and digital audio books are available with combined collections of over 1.5 million items. BVMPL's web site is a widely used resource for finding information about the library and its services. In 2023, over 133,000 sessions were logged.

BVMPL has 37 public computers that are readily available for adults, along with catalog search stations. We have six computers dedicated for patron instruction and offer classes on computer-related skills throughout the year. We offer year-round programs facilitated by BVMPL and partnering community organizations for all ages. The Children's Library has a total of 12 computers with filtered Internet for homework and educational games. A lower level includes three meeting rooms which are available to the public for meetings, classes, recitals, and public forums. Study rooms are also available in a variety of sizes accommodating one to ten people.

Welcome to the Library Board

Congratulations on your appointment to the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library's Board of Directors! Board members are appointed by the City Commission under authority of ND statute. Each Board member may hold office for a term of three years from the first day of July in the year of appointment. Board members may serve for no more than two consecutive 3-year terms.

BVMPL recognizes the importance of Library Board orientation for its ongoing efficient operation. After you've been appointed by the City Commission, you will go through an orientation process that encompasses the information and tools needed to understand the duties and responsibilities of serving as a Board member. This orientation process will be conducted by the Library Director.

Board member orientation includes a tour of BVMPL and reviewing the information in the orientation guide, financial documentation, and other documents you may find helpful as you familiarize yourself with BVMPL operations.

Library Board of Directors: Job Description

Qualifications & Experience

- Lives in Bismarck city limits
- Interest in BVMPL and community
- Excellent written and verbal communication
- Ability to negotiate with local government administration and commissions
- Good organizational skills and planning experience
- Holds a current BVMPL card
- Capable of raising funds for the BVMPL
- Willing to devote time to board activities
- Awareness and appreciation of the BVMPL's past, present, and future role in our community
- Ability to gracefully handle opposition and make decisions in the best interest of the BVMPL
- Knowledgeable of political issues that may affect the BVMPL
- Willingness to learn about the BVMPL and its services

Duties

- Attends regularly scheduled board meetings and special board meetings
- Attends BVMPL functions as appropriate
- Knows and abides by Board [bylaws](#)
- Reads Board meeting minutes and other materials sent out before the Board meetings
- Abides by North Dakota's [Open Records and Meetings](#) laws
- Works with Library Administration on long range plans
- Hires, supervises, and evaluates the Library Director
- Approves policies that govern the operation of BVMPL
- Adopts the annual budget and approves monthly invoices
- Represents BVMPL's point of view at City and County Commission meetings and other public forums
- Looks for ways to build a positive image for BVMPL
- Understands and supports basic library tenets such as Intellectual Freedom, Freedom the Read, Confidentiality of Patron Records, and the Library Bill of Rights
- Becomes knowledgeable about local, state, and federal laws affecting libraries when appropriate
- Abides by the majority decisions reached by the Board, and publicly supports these decisions

President Job Description - Duties

- Presides at all Board meetings
- Serves as the chief spokesperson and designated municipal representative for the Board
- Creates committees as necessary
- Communicates as necessary with the Library Director

- Coordinates with the Vice President to conduct the annual evaluation of the Library Director
- Recommends an annual salary increase for the Library Director at the October Board meeting when the personnel budget is presented by the Library Director

Vice-President Job Description - Duties

- Presides when the Board President is absent
- Accepts responsibilities as delegated by the Board President
- Coordinates with the Board President to conduct the annual evaluation of the Library Director

Responsibilities: Library Board and Library Director

If there is a mantra for governing library boards it is: “The Library Board sets policy, the Library Director operates the library with a team of employees.” What does this really mean, and what are the differences?

The Library Board and Library Director must work as a team, just as the Library Director must construct a team of employees. In order to work successfully, it must be a process of two-way communication, consultation, and trust building.

On the following page, you’ll find a chart that breaks down the major responsibilities of the Library Board and Library Administration. This will distinguish the roles and illustrate where the commonalities and differences are.

<p><u>Library Board</u></p> <p>Staff: Recruit, hire, supervise, and annually evaluate the Library Director. Approve the salary schedule and pay plan for library employees.</p> <p>Policy: Approve written policies to govern the operation of the library.</p> <p>Budget: Officially adopt the budgets upon review after presented by the Library Director and present it to City Budget Committee, City Commission, County Budget Committee, and County Commission. Review expenditures. Approve monthly invoices.</p> <p>Planning: Work with the Library Director to determine the mission, vision, and goals of the library. See that a plan is developed for meeting community needs and interests, and that it is carried out.</p> <p>Legal Issues: Be familiar with city, state, and federal laws relating to public libraries.</p> <p>Collection Development: Approve and adopt a collection development policy.</p> <p>Board Meetings: Regularly attend monthly Board meetings. Conduct affairs of the board at these meetings.</p> <p>Board Member Recruitment: Recommend and approve qualified incoming Board members.</p>	<p><u>Library Administration</u></p> <p>Staff: Recruit, hire, and annually evaluate all library employees. Adhere to approved personnel policies, salary schedules and pay plans, and monitor benefit costs for library employees.</p> <p>Policy: Create and carry out policies as approved by the library board. Recommend new policies and/or policy changes to the Library Board.</p> <p>Budget: Prepare and submit the budget to the Library Board. Maintain complete and accurate records of finances. Expend funds based on the approved budget. Amend line items within the budget as necessary.</p> <p>Planning/Management: Work with library employees on supporting the mission, vision, and values of the library and on achieving goals. Manage day-to-day operations of the library. Continually refine library services to meet community needs and interests. Report the library's current progress and future needs to the Library Board.</p> <p>Legal Issues: Be familiar with city, state, and federal laws relating to public libraries. Keep the Library Board informed of laws relating to public libraries.</p> <p>Collection Development: Responsible for overseeing the selection and ordering of all books and resources.</p> <p>Board Meetings: Attend monthly Board meetings. Provide a progress report and provide information as needed/requested by the Library Board.</p> <p>Board Director Recruitment: Recommend qualified candidates. Conduct new board member orientations. Send appropriate paperwork for new board members to City Administration for City Commission approval.</p>
---	--

Library Board of Ethics

Library Boards represent the community in which they serve by having a diverse set of individuals representing various cultures, ages, ethnicities, and genders. When members of the Board come together to make decisions, Board members must present a unified voice despite the difference of opinions that may exist. These Library Board ethics have been created so that Board members avoid some of the friction that can easily lead to disagreement and controversy.

As a director of the Library Board I will:

- Listen carefully to fellow Board members
- Respect the opinions of the other Board members
- Respect and support the majority decision of the Board
- Recognize that all authority is vested in the Board when it meets and not with individual Board members
- Keep well-informed of developments that are relevant to issues that may come before the Board
- Participate actively in Board meetings and actions
- Call to the attention of the Board any issues that I believe will have an adverse effect on the library
- Interpret the needs of the community to the library and interpret the action of the library to the community
- Refer complaints about the library to the proper level on the chain of command
- Recognize that the role of a Board member is to ensure that the library is well-managed, not to manage the library
- Vote to hire the best possible person to manage the library
- Represent the whole community to the library and not a particular area or group
- Do my best to ensure that the library is well maintained, financially secure, growing, and always operating in the best interests of the community
- Declare any conflict of interests between my personal/work life and my position on the Library Board, and avoid voting on issues that appear to be a conflict of interest
- As a Board member I will not:
 - Be critical in or outside of the Board meeting, or of fellow Board members or their opinions
 - Use any part of the library for my personal advantage or the personal advantage of my friends and relatives
 - Promise prior to a meeting how I will vote on any issue in the meeting
 - Interfere with the duties of the Library Director or undermine the Library Director's authority

BOARD RESOURCES

Below are links to resources you will find helpful in your position as a Board member They include information about the library as well as state laws applicable to public libraries and nationally accepted library policies.

Library Resources

[Annual Reports](#)

[Bylaws](#)

[Archived Meeting Minutes](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[Public Policies](#)

State Laws and Standards

[North Dakota Library Law](#)

[NDLCC's Standards for Public Libraries](#)

[Open Records and Meetings Laws](#)

National Library Policies

[Library Bill of Rights](#)

[Freedom to Read Statement](#)

ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

- Library Tour
 - Main Floor – Children’s Library
 - Main Floor – Teen HQ
 - Main Floor – Adult Area
 - Lower Level – Fiction/Magazines/800’s-900’s/MRR
 - Lower Level – Meeting Rooms
 - Staff Areas
 - Mechanical Rooms
- Orientation Guide
- Board Responsibilities
- Board Resources
- Budget Information
- Library Policies
- Oath of Office
- Questions or Concerns

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide was prepared with guidance from the following:

Board and Director Roles and Responsibilities - Washington Secretary of State

Duties and Responsibilities of the Library Board and of the Library Director - Iowa Library Services – State Library of Iowa

Handbook for North Dakota Public Library Board Members – ND State Library

In the Public Trust – Indiana State Library

Library Board Fundamentals (Librarian’s Toolkit) - New Mexico State Library
Trustee Orientation Policy – Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives

Wisconsin Library Trustee Handbook – Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction