

NEW DIRECTOR'S GUIDE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES



**WHEN YOU'RE RUNNING AROUND,
AND YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR HAIR IS
ON FIRE...**

STOP, DROP, AND READ THIS!



Colorado Library Consortium

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WELCOME

Dear Library Director:

The Colorado Library Consortium (CLIC) Colleague on Call team created this guide to give you some context for your role as the Library Director in your community. This guide is simply the start of your journey.

Take a look at our website, clicweb.org, to see all the services we provide for Colorado libraries. Under the Colleague on Call tab you will find information about FREE CLIC Consultants, and links to contact a consultant in your part of the state. You'll also find a digital copy of this guide here.

Written with practical advice and information, know that this guide is just the start of the support you will receive from CLIC.

Thank you for your service to YOUR community,

The Colleague on Call Team

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I. YOUR ROLE AS THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Public libraries, for many decades, have been crucial hubs for society: central to lifelong education, civil discourse, innovation, and community-building, for starters.

As Library Director, you have an important duty to ensure the success of the library for your community. This includes sustaining and developing important services and assets. It is important to recognize the unique characteristics of your community, and to adjust your library's services to anticipate as well as meet evolving local needs. Value every aspect of the community you serve by being inclusive of all populations, and respecting their diverse and special needs.

Most library services are enhanced through partnerships and collaboration, which means that you also must uphold regional and state standards in librarianship. Finally, you have a responsibility to the profession, supporting and enhancing the foundational beliefs that public libraries have carved throughout their history -- while still blazing new paths into the future.

Yes, it sounds like a pretty heavy set of responsibilities... but it will be fun and rewarding when it all comes together.

As the director it is important to differentiate between your role as a leader and as a manager. A focus on the day-to-day aspects of the library's operations can be fulfilling, but equally important are your leadership obligations. Honor the past, see what is happening in front of you, and plan for down the road.

Peter Drucker, who coined the term "knowledge worker" in 1959, said "Management is doing things right; Leadership is doing the right things."

Three key qualities in your leadership toolkit: your enthusiasm for unleashing the greatest potential of your library to serve your community; thoughtfully building and supporting your team and stakeholders; and, advocating for your library and what it stands for through showing its impacts.

You CAN do it. Through your leadership you can:

- define the direction of the library's various services and programs,
- focus on the best course of action, even if it is hard,
- determine how success will be measured,
- and celebrate when your community reaches its goals!

A big part of serving your community is listening to what they need BEYOND library services. Then figure out how the library can help solve those problems, either in a small way or as a major player.

II. WHAT'S MY JOB? LET'S GET PERSONAL

Fear factor

Whether you are new to working in a library or simply new to the role of director, this job may seem a little scary! You have a big responsibility to the community that your library serves. Luckily for you, the Colorado library community is truly supportive and full of collaborative people. That's why it is important to get out there to conferences, meetings, etc. to get the support you need and then one day pass it on to other new directors!

You are not alone. There are many opportunities to network and there are supportive people to provide you with an ear or a shoulder, and peers willing to share their knowledge.

Just like you, staff and board members don't fully know what to expect on this journey. Take time to get to know them. Reassure them about their value to the library. Ask for their opinions. You are their guide to managing change.

Honor the past

Let's face it, when someone starts messing with our routine it is natural to push back. It may take some time for you, and staff and stakeholders to get in a new routine and get used to the change that is you. Put yourself in the shoes of staff and board members. It is important to be patient, to allow time to pass as you learn about the library and the staff and the "way they do things." Give yourself space to grow into your new role. You don't have to change everything right away or "leave your mark."

When the time comes to put new ideas into place, approach those as *opportunities to continue the growth of the library* rather than representing those changes as *fixing things that were wrong*. Always try and speak positively about past directors to show respect for what they accomplished. Be a model for civility and professionalism. Honoring past milestones and improvements will help ensure that your new ideas are incorporated into a view of the library as a dynamic, evolving organization, constantly growing in a positive direction, serving the community better than ever.

CLiC Colleagues on Call

You are not alone in this new position. You have at least one important ally in your court whose purpose it is to assist you with any need you have. That ally is your CLiC regional consultant! Your CLiC consultant really is your Colleague on Call – put that person on your speed dial list.

Choose your own adventure

Your job may include any or all of the following: collection management, human resources, finance and accounting, technology, programming, facility maintenance, directing daily operations of the library, marketing and promotion, providing direct patron service or more. In a small library you'll likely do it all; in a larger library you may have staff that share these responsibilities.

No matter what your “other duties” include, below are some key relationships you will want to cultivate.

Establish a relationship with board members.

Your relationship with the board (advisory or governing) is crucial to your success as director and to the future of the library. See the [“Working with Your Library Board of Trustees”](#) section of this guide for more details.

Establish a relationship with staff.

Staff is the most important resource the library has, and also the biggest piece of the budget. Staff are a rich resource of knowledge and history. Fostering the culture you want to see at the library begins day one. Staff members will always need support, feedback, recognition and training. The staff, regardless of longevity, know things you need to know!

Establish a relationship with patrons.

Be visible—work the public desk, attend library programs, talk to people, learn names. People who use the library are the reason for the library's existence, so be sure they know you are genuinely interested in them.

Establish a relationship with the community.

You are the face of the library. The relationships you establish beyond the building's walls create opportunities to serve more than the people who have library cards. There will be opportunities to connect with local businesses, educators, economic development folks, community development professionals, tourism advocates and other groups of people. Make a habit of attending regular meetings of organizations

such as the Chamber of Commerce, local government, school functions... Any place you can meet people and learn about stakeholder groups in the community is a worthwhile investment of your time and energy.

Getting started

Here are a few ideas to set you on a good path and keep you moving ahead as you learn everything you can about your challenging new role.

- ✓ Start creating the workplace culture you want on day one.
- ✓ DON'T CHANGE ANYTHING YET except your office space. Make it a place where you can be efficient and comfortable. If possible, make it warm and welcoming.
- ✓ Be sure your email is set up, and update all director contact listings, such as the library's website and social media. Consider writing an introductory piece about yourself for those who are curious.
- ✓ Find out how to record your time, what the previous director's work schedule was, etc.
- ✓ Learn how to use the phone system.
- ✓ Learn how and where electronic information is stored (Server? Individual machine? Cloud?).
- ✓ Have your email added to various listservs (email distribution groups).
- ✓ Have your business cards produced and start handing them out liberally.
- ✓ Have the library's financial accounts/signatures updated (adding yours and removing outdated people) for banking and other purposes.
- ✓ Hold a "meet and greet the new director" event if one hasn't been held, so you can meet patrons and community members.
- ✓ Learn about your Integrated Library System (ILS) and how to perform basic daily functions with it.
- ✓ Scan through the files on your computer and through your paper files. Become familiar with what records were or should have been kept.
- ✓ Meet with staff individually to learn what they do. Find out what they need, what type of communication they prefer and how they like to interact with management. Dig in to learn more

about them as people and what is important to them, including what motivates them. This is the beginning of a very important relationship. People who know they are valued for who they are, as well as for their work, are usually better employees.

- ✓ Meet with staff as a group to introduce yourself and talk about how you work best, how you like to receive communication, and what motivates you. You should not be a “mystery” to them.
- ✓ Locate and read the current policy manual and the library’s procedures.
- ✓ Research the library’s long and short-range plans, how they were developed, etc. If they don’t have any start creating them.
- ✓ Review the results of the last survey taken by the library.
- ✓ Find out what community partnerships exist and how each benefits the partner and the library.

Begin making YOUR list for the future!

III. 21ST CENTURY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Shhhh! The retired Mr. Wilson is over near the windows reading the *Daily Journal*. You know he likes it quiet. The librarian, Miss Jane, is sitting at her desk stamping books, too engrossed to be interrupted with a question about Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Incredibly busy with all of her important work...

Don't you just love that sleepy little place where old men read the daily newspapers and ladies check out Nora Roberts romance novels? The sagging shelves are packed with books, and the space is overseen by a someone who shushes at the slightest sound. There is a storytime program every Wednesday morning where the children sit quietly with their hands folded primly in their laps. An occasional awkward teen can be seen tiptoeing in after school, later curled up in a chair with her nose in a novel written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Someday, she'll be the librarian.

Let's update this picture to reflect what's truly happening in today's typical public library...

- Mr. Wilson is actually on his laptop, an amateur day trader checking the daily stock market news before he goes online to buy or sell a few shares through his E-Trade account.
- The tattooed librarian is placing requests for books about applied robotics for a high school girl researching technology-involved careers.
- While the library still does offer romance and westerns, there were more cake pans checked out the previous month than Louis L'Amour novels.
- The children's librarian hosts several programs each week involving messy and loud craft activities but one of the most popular is when the canine reading buddies come trotting in.
- The knitting club (a really chatty group!) meets at the same time as the teen coding club.
- The public spaces are bright, full of a variety of people doing lots of different things including checking out books, bicycle repair kits, DVDs, electronic devices, State Parks pass kits, power tools, and musical instruments.

The reality of today's public library is far distant from what it once was: a warehouse for books used only by a select few. 2.5 million Colorado residents have a library card that they use at one of the 162 public libraries' physical or virtual branches. In addition to checking out physical items, people are attending programs, using meeting spaces, taking classes, connecting with others, running businesses, and creating things. Those patrons who seldom show up in person are using the library: borrowing eBooks, conducting casual to extensive research with online databases and getting homework help through virtual reference.

Even preschool kids are using online resources to get a jump on literacy skills.

Modern libraries provide all kinds of resources and services for their customers / users / patrons / members (take your pick!), and libraries are a vital part of the health and vitality of their local communities. Libraries evolve as the community and world changes.

If there is one thing in life you can count on, it is that a modern library is far from being a dull, dusty, sleepy place only used by bookworms!

IV. WORKING WITH YOUR LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

IV, i. Reporting to the Board

Boards need your support and guidance, but you need the same from them. By providing your board with regular and thoughtful information you will celebrate successes and figure out mysteries together. Gathering your information regularly for reporting to the board also helps you to have current information on hand to share in other advocacy situations. Being prepared makes you a more confident director, which also boosts the confidence placed in you by your board, staff (if any), your Friends and/or Foundation, patrons, volunteers, and potential donors.

Know your laws

Make sure you read your Board Bylaws, and that you understand the Sunshine Laws and Open Meeting requirements. You don't have to become a lawyer, but perusing Colorado Library Law will also help with reporting to the board. There are many parts to a board meeting, but one of the most important and best parts is letting the board know all the great things you are doing.

Get started

To start, be aware of what the board is used to getting as a report from the previous director and do at least that much. In your first few meetings discuss with the board what information they would like to see. You can also decide to add or subtract data that serves no real purpose. Make sure there are always positive items in your report about what you've accomplished every month. You do a lot, but they won't know that unless you tell them. Eventually you'll begin to set the direction you'd like to see the board and the library move toward, and your reports will be a part of that. Don't forget your reports are public record.

Director's report

In general, the director's report will include informing the board on the recent past, the present, and the immediate future. This usually looks like what happened last month, what is happening now, and what will happen in the next few months. This includes financials as well as programs and human resources. However, don't forget to look at a snapshot of the past year or where you might want to be strategically a year from now. This takes effort and thought up front, and ultimately

will save you uncertainty and time. Ask other directors how they've done it.

Whatever you do, don't hide information from the board. If your circulation numbers are down, for example, try to think about why that might be and share your ideas with the board. It could be something as easy as needing better signage, a customer service refresh, or just weeding the collection. Don't forget that Colleague-on-Call is happy to look at your data as well and give ideas and share experience.

Something for everyone

Everyone, including your board, learns in different ways, so having some basic photos, simple infographics, pertinent data, and patron/staff/volunteer stories are a great way to illustrate the impact of your efforts. Too many numbers in a spreadsheet are mind numbing, but only sharing stories isn't effective either. The combination is the best way to get your information and ideas across. This investment in your monthly reports will also make your annual report (or any report) much easier to put together. It's worth the investment of time and effort.

The data and stories you gather are easiest to manage if you collect them monthly. Some things to consider sharing, and that are typical, are:

- Communications received
- Financial update, such as:
 - Monthly budget report
 - List of bills and payments
- Use statistics, such as:
 - Circulation
 - Visitation
 - Electronic resource use (e-material circulations, database sessions, etc.)
 - Programs and attendance
 - Computer use
 - Items added and removed from the collection
 - The number of questions answered
- Website statistics
- Staff and director travel and Continuing Education (CE)
- Partnership updates (Friends/Foundation for example)
- Any bigger library world issues or trends (new or changing laws, technology, censorship, etc.)
- HR updates – changes, awards, evaluation process, hires, resignations, etc.
- Volunteer hours, tasks, etc.

- Program updates (new programs, changes to ongoing programs – they may want to attend!)
- Facility Issues (leaking roof, plumbing issues, etc.)

Don't overwhelm with data.

Just go over the highlights and don't write a novel, but make sure all the important issues are summarized and more detail is available if the board is interested. You'll want to create a reputation for trust and transparency and eventually you'll find the rhythm you need. If an issue comes up that is unusual, don't wait until the monthly report to let them know. Your board will want to hear it from you rather than from someone else. It's always better to communicate promptly.

When you're ready for more details...

Public Libraries Online: Tips on how to write a readable monthly report (2018)

<https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/09/how-to-write-a-monthly-report-that-stakeholders-will-actually-read/>

Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition's Sunshine Laws Guide

<https://coloradofoic.org/open-government-guide/>

CLiC's FAQs: Colorado Open Meetings Law

<https://www.clicweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FAQ-to-Open-Meetings-Law.pdf>

CLiC's FAQs: Running a Meeting

<https://www.clicweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FAQ-to-Running-a-Meeting.pdf>

Library Law

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarylaw/index>

IV, ii. Advisory & Governing Boards: What's the Difference?

You will work closely with members of your Library Board from your community. You may also hear them referred to as the Board of Trustees. There isn't a big difference between using the name Trustee or Board. However, there is a big difference between a Governing Board and an Advisory Board, and it is important that you know which type your board is.

Public libraries that operate as part of a town, city or county are controlled by that governmental structure. These are **municipal libraries**. For example, the library building is generally owned by the city or county, the budget is part of the overall city or county budget, the director is hired by the city or county, and the procedures for many things are set out by this municipality. Boards for this type of library are generally advisory in nature.

Advisory boards

An **Advisory Board** from municipal/county libraries generally makes recommendations on policy and/or budget to the local governmental entity, and acts as a liaison between the library, local government, and the community. The Advisory Board has the legal responsibilities granted by the local governing entity. This may differ from place to place due to local agreements, so make sure you find these agreements and read them. In a statutory city or county, the Advisory Board may act a little more like a Governing Board. Check your Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) or Bylaws for specifics as it can vary.

Governing boards

Public libraries that are part of a **Library District** have a **Governing Board**, sometimes known as a Board of Trustees. A Governing Board has *total* responsibility and oversight for managing all aspects of the library, including fiscal and legal oversight, policy, property, and hiring of a qualified director. Governing Boards, however, should refrain from interfering in the day-to-day operations of the library. That is why they hired you.

Often, boards want to get sidetracked into the operational details of the library. Try and keep them focused on the bigger, higher-level picture—because that is their job. Legal details of what

governing boards can and can't do are written in the Colorado Revised Statutes. [§24-90-109, C.R.S](#)

Regardless of your type of board, make sure you are prepared for board meetings. Be informative. Stay on the agenda and try to keep the meetings short.

When you're ready for more details...

Colorado Trustee Handbook

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarydevelopment/publiclibraries/trusteehandbook>

Colorado Revised Statutes – The Quick Guide. §24-90-109, C.R.S

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/liblawquickguide>

Colorado Library Law

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarylaw/part1>

IV, iii. Board Development

Your library board is critical to the success of the library. They provide and approve strategic direction for the library, ensure adequate resources, may supervise the director, and are ears and eyes (and mouth) in the community. Yet most board members receive little training on their roles and responsibilities, or library governance and management. Developing the board is critical to your success, their success, and the library's overall health.

Develop your board

A new or updated board development process or plan can support the board and how they understand their role. It will help define positive next steps for them to become more proactive supporters and/or governors of the library. Board development may also be a positive first step leading into a more comprehensive strategic plan, fundraising/development plan, or capital campaign (for remodeling or building).

Everyone needs a guide

Just like with your staff and volunteers it is essential to provide board members with a guide to their job. This can be accomplished with a full board training, but a written packet can also be helpful, especially for new board members. Everyone learns differently and roles and responsibilities need to be repeated often in different ways. There are packets already available through different sources that include basic information such as:

- Local and state ordinance and law to outline legal duties
- Library and Governance Ethics
- Meeting basics, including legal posting requirements
- Financial duties, if applicable
- Type of Board
- Bylaws, policies & procedures
- Role of the Board/Director/Foundation/Friends
- Colorado Public Library Standards
- Strategic Library Plan
- Community advocacy
- Recruitment/onboarding/offboarding of board members
- Core Values of Librarianship

Board evaluation process

In addition to providing a good orientation and onboarding to new library board members, continual development might include seeking training (i.e., webinars or in-person trainings). It may also include

attendance at state or national conferences, reading material, and an annual board self-evaluation. Continuing education is typical for any board member, not only the elected officers. With a self-evaluation, the board can see areas of need, assess skills, or celebrate accomplishments. Individual board members may also wish to sharpen their knowledge in certain areas, for instance understanding finances. Combining a board evaluation with the director's annual evaluation can be helpful in moving the entire library structure forward.

Board training

For assistance with a board training session, contact [CLiC](#) or the Colorado State Library.

When you're ready for more details...

Colorado State Library Trustees Page

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarydevelopment/publiclibraries/index>

Library Research Service's Key Statistics for Trustees

<https://www.lrs.org/public/data/trustees/>

Open Meeting Act, "Sunshine Laws" Guide

<https://coloradofoic.org/open-government-guide/>

Trustee Corner Newsletter from Colorado State Library

<https://www.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/learning/library-leadership/library-trustees/>

Trustee Trouble: The misadventures of a new library board member (short funny videos from the Wyoming State Library)

<https://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/trustees/>

V. ANNUAL LIBRARY PLANNING CALENDAR

Each library is unique and your planning calendar will also be unique. This calendar isn't for patron programming, but is instead for you, your board, and your staff (if any). What you do and when depends on whether you are a municipal (city/county) library or a library district, and what associations and memberships you have. It denotes deadlines and events, and answers questions such as when your Friends group has its annual officer election.

All libraries share commonalities such as starting and finishing tasks like budgeting, the Public Library Annual Report (PLAR), summer programming, staff evaluations, and more. It's a great way to remind yourself and give others a snapshot of what goes on.

Ask your peers to see annual planning calendars of other similarly sized libraries. You don't have to create anything from scratch. Keep in mind that not everything in theirs will apply to your library, and municipal and library districts have different obligations and dates.

Here are some items you might want to put on a calendar, even if it is a guess:

File DOLA Annual Budget Packet (end of January)

File the Public Library Annual Report (March)

Audit scheduling and preparation (completed by July 31)

Annual Report preparation and presentation for DOLA/city/county as applicable (November/December; also create a simple version for public consumption)

File CERTIFICATION of TAX Levies if you are a Library District (December/January)

Election of Board of Trustees for whatever kind of boards you have such as city council, Library board of trustees, Friends, Foundation

Membership Renewal for whatever kind of memberships you have, such as Employer's Council, Special District Association (SDA), Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL)

Annual library events and celebrations, such as Summer Reading planning, kickoff and evaluation; Annual Strategic Planning Day for staff

and/or board; National Library Week and Library Workers Day;
Volunteer Appreciation Day

Annual tasks, such as staff/director/board evaluations; budget development, approval and reviews; board resolutions; issuing W2s and 1099s

Annual professional development opportunities, such as CLiC Virtual Winter Workshop, CLiC & Connect Rural Meetups, AspenCatCon User's Group conference for AspenCat ILS users, Colorado Association of Libraries (CAL) Conference, Colorado Public Library Director's Retreat

Recurring events and meetings, such as meetings of the Friends or Foundation, staff development trainings

When you're ready for more details...

Department of Local Affairs Filing Information
<https://dlg.colorado.gov/filing-and-reporting>

CLiC Continuing Education/Talent Development
<https://www.clicweb.org/talent-development/>

24-90-109. Powers and duties of the board of trustees
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarylaw/part1#24-90-109>

VI. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Imagine driving down a road where there are no lane markers, speed limits, or directional signs. Good chance for chaos and car wrecks, right? For the library, policies and procedures are those essential rules of the road -- important to guide library operations to assure they're headed in the right direction, and valuable for keeping staff focused on meeting the mission and goals of the library.

Some policies address internal operations, such as finance, and others address more external issues like Internet use. Keep in mind that policies should be designed to support access rather than to limit service. Policies should be written to ensure consistency but not to inhibit creativity and the potential for library services to grow and evolve.

You can think of policies like the lane bumpers that kids use when bowling. Lane bumpers don't guarantee a strike, but they keep the ball rumbling in the right direction and ensure all momentum is focused on the goal. Policies also keep the library from getting off track into the gutter or skipping into another lane. They help to avoid conflict and situations that don't align with your library's services, mission or values.

Procedures are the steps involved in the actual work people do. Procedures detail how tasks are accomplished, how problems are resolved (or prevented), and how decisions are made. Procedures consistency in how staff members accomplish the everyday work of the organization, no matter who is completing the task.

Examples of procedures:

- cataloging practices (how materials are described)
- the process for ordering, labeling and shelving new items in a timely manner
- what gets done before the doors open
- how money is handled
- how statistics are collected, etc.

While procedures are established at the discretion of the Library Director (with input from staff members), reviewing and approving policies is a task of the Board.

Policies should be reviewed regularly and updated every few years. A note in the footer of the document detailing the adoption date, last review, and revision dates is beneficial for keeping things on track.

The following are suggested policy areas. If yours is a municipal or county library, some of these may be the responsibility of the umbrella

organization. While it is useful to look at other libraries' policies, it is important to note that utilizing a "cut and paste" method must be carefully considered, as laws vary between states, and needs differ from library to library. Examples of policy subjects:

- Administration and Governance
- Finance
- Circulation
- Collection Development and Management
- Interlibrary Loan
- Personnel/HR
- Public access computers and Internet use
- Reference
- Services and Programs
- Marketing and public relations

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: Directors of library districts create policies and procedures, which the library governing board then approves. For municipal libraries, the director develops policies, and the library advisory board should have some responsibility for policy review and approval. Check with the city/county manager to see how policy approval is handled.

When you're ready for more details...

Search for examples of policies from small and rural libraries in the Public Library Policy Collection

<https://www.clicweb.org/extras/innovations-initiatives/publiclibrarypolicycollection/>

Policy checklist and sample policies from Colorado State Library

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarydevelopment/publiclibraries/Policies>

VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Overview

The library is one of the few places in a community open to all people and offering all kinds of resources and services for “free.” But behind the scenes it is you, the Library Director, making all of that happen through your wise financial management.

Planning, executing, and evaluating all things related to the library’s finances is a key responsibility for every director, whether it’s at a one-person library or a library with a staff of a hundred, or a city/county library or a library district. It all comes back to the money. Becoming familiar with your library’s finances is one of your top priorities as a new director. Dive into your financial details early and often. The more you learn about income and expenditures, budget cycles, recordkeeping and every other aspect, the more comfortable you will become with this entire area of library management. By getting used to financials you’ll find everything will get easier.

Here are a few things to tackle that will help you see the full financial picture of your library. Schedule a meeting that includes all your partners in financial management such as the library board president, bookkeeper, town administrator and/or town clerk (if applicable).

Topics to discuss include:

- Sources of library revenue/income
- Getting accounts/signatures changed for banking and bill paying as needed
- Review of current financial policies
- Review of current financial procedures, everything from how to pay the library’s invoices to how cash is handled at the circulation desk
- Purchasing procedures, including where your library buys things. Also, remember that discounts on select products are available to libraries through CLIC. Contact your CLIC Colleague on Call to learn more.
- Review of the most recent year-end financial reports
- Review of current year regular financial reports, which are usually produced monthly or quarterly. Standard reports include monthly expenditures, budget to date and balance sheet.
- Audit requirements. For a library district, find out who the auditor is and schedule a meeting right away.

Budget

No matter how large or small the library budget, you are the person who is responsible for the judicious use of taxpayer dollars. The ultimate financial goal is for your community to see and feel you are being a good steward of their tax money.

Make arrangements to discuss the current budget, the budget development process, and expectations going forward with the board president, town manager (if applicable), and anyone else who is your partner in developing and managing the library budget. Things to review in preparation for an initial budget meeting include:

- The current budget and any questions you have
- Does the budget format make sense to you? For instance, is it clear how much money you have available to spend on print books versus audio books versus e-books? Maybe you want to change this?
- Are revenues and expenses tracked and reported on a regular basis, or do you need to develop a system and document for this?
- Review the previous year's Public Library Annual Report (PLAR), then be sure you have access or reports containing any information on revenues and expenditures that you will be required to report annually. (see **By the Numbers** section for more information on PLAR)
- Find out the legal requirements for developing and reporting/submitting your budget.

Communication plays a key role in the budget process. As the Library Director, sharing information about the library budget is just as important as planning and administering it. Monthly library board meetings are the best time to keep library trustees informed about all the great things the library is doing with taxpayer dollars.

Directors of city/county libraries should also attend town board meetings as often as possible. Share the monthly report you prepare for the library board with the town manager or town board. This will help tell the library's story to the town trustees/council. When the time comes to develop the town's annual budget, those decision makers will already know exactly what you are doing with the money they allocate for the library and the value library service brings to the community.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: Municipal libraries are dependent on town or city government for funding. While a district has the benefit of stable funding generally provided by a mill levy, there are also many legal requirements surrounding financial management. Because a library district is a unit of local government, districts are required to prepare, adopt and file a budget annually with Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The library's attorney (or the city/county attorney) is an important partner in meeting ALL legal requirements, not just financial.

When you're ready for more details...

For library districts, the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) is the source for legal requirements and deadlines.

<https://dlg.colorado.gov/budget-information-and-resources#submissions>

Crash Course in Library Budgeting and Finance, by Glen E. Holt and Leslie Edmonds Holt

VIII. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

What's in your library? Based on the needs, wants, and aspirations of your community you have the responsibility and power of developing and managing all the materials in your library. You'll find that collections vary from library to library, so if you have cake pans and your neighboring library doesn't have them (or the other way around) that's just fine.

Collection development is the process of planning and building a useful and varied collection of library materials. *Collection management* is the variety of tasks that occur after the materials are in the possession of the library. Whatever is in your library and available to the public is what is in your collection. This includes books, DVDs, electronic resources, or even things like e-readers or radon detectors.

Everything in the library needs a plan, policies, and procedures and collection development and management are no exceptions. Your library probably already has a collection management plan or policy approved by the board. It may need updating. If you don't have a policy (for this or any other area) then call CLiC and we can get you examples.

Selection and acquisition

Selection criteria: This is the set of principles, philosophy, and factors that are used to determine if an item is a good choice for addition to the current library collection. Whatever criteria you put in place make sure you apply it consistently for all items, especially donations. Otherwise your library might get overrun with musty old *National Geographic* magazines donated by well-meaning donors.

Selection Tools: Reviews are a primary tool used to evaluate items for purchase. Keep in mind the credibility of the review source. Sources such as *Library Journal* and *Booklist* publish reviews before a book is published and are considered good sources for reviews.

Format: Should this item be purchased as a print item, electronic, online or in another format? Is this format current and does it offer the potential to remain in the collection long term? These are all good questions to ask and there are simple ways to answer these questions when you have them. There are a lot of factors to consider.

Electronic devices such as computers and printers are no different than print materials and require all the same considerations. Both hardware and software need evaluation and updating regularly, too.

Space: This has an impact on deciding what and how many items to add to the collection. An overstuffed library isn't beneficial to your patrons. Quality of the collection is always a priority over quantity.

Acquisitions: The process of purchasing or obtaining items is acquisitions. Some large libraries have entire acquisition departments, but you probably don't. Carefully choose stores and vendors that offer not only a good price, but good customer service. Always check with CLiC's Cooperative Purchasing Department to see if we have discounts available to you for library-related products.

Cataloging and processing

Weigh all cataloging and processing decisions for necessity and usefulness against the cost in paying for materials and staff time (and/or your time).

Cataloging: Cataloging is the process of creating a record of an item to enable it to be found by your patrons in your library's catalog system. You are basically describing the item so patrons know what it is and where you keep it in the library. There are several important factors to consider when cataloging. If you belong to a group or union catalog system (AspenCat is one example), there will be standards for the entire group to follow.

Most cataloging is done by using existing records or information available about the item, rather than creating it from scratch. Find out how records are loaded into your computer system, either from another library or the book vendor.

Consistency is important to cataloging. Using the same format and terminology is important for providing patrons with reliable ways to find and discover materials. Just have a plan and follow it and get the items out so patrons can use them. Cataloging can either be fun or frustrating, or both. Just make sure it doesn't eat up your time.

Covering: Materials may last longer if they have protective coverings. The benefit of covering books is that it keeps dust covers nicer for longer and it makes the outside cleanable. Picture books are often hard to keep clean, for example. However, some libraries cover most of their books and some only certain books.

Labeling: At a minimum, a spine label is necessary. Labels attached to the spine of the book show an item's call number and indicate where it belongs in the library. Placement of barcodes should be consistent and logical as well. "New" labels on the spine (labels that let people know

the book is new) can be beneficial but must be removed when the item has aged beyond its “new” status (two months for example).

To use or not use the Dewey Decimal system or to arrange books by genre is a subject that gets a lot of attention. We know libraries that have done it every which way and we are happy to you to them. You decide what is right for your community.

Stamping: It’s important that patrons know which items belong to the library so they can return them. An inked stamp with the library’s name is sometimes used during processing. If you stamp then consider only stamping on one or two places on a book (title page is common). Then later, when weeding that item from your library’s collection, you can simply strike through the ink stamp with a marker. Some people put labels on DVDs with their library’s name.

Circulating the collection

Policy: A circulation policy determines the who, what, when, where and how long questions of loaning materials. It is important to include policy and procedures that address what will be done when materials are returned damaged or not at all.

Patron types: Some libraries apply different rules to different patrons based on age, resident status, time in the community, etc. A patron type may identify how many items a person can check out, how long they can keep materials or whether they can access the internet. Keep in mind that the more patron types you use, the more work it is to maintain.

Loan periods: Different types of materials may have different rules for use. Some may only be used in the library. Some may check out for a few days versus a few weeks. Loan periods may also vary between patron types.

Fines and Fees: Fines and fees may be assessed for a variety of reasons and must be spelled out in the circulation policy so that patrons aren’t surprised. Many libraries have eliminated fines on children’s materials or all materials. Fees may be assessed for damage to items, loss of items, or the cost of processing items that had to be replaced or fixed.

Resource sharing and Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

Your patrons are not limited to using only what is in your library collection. Through union catalogs such as AspenCat and Marmot, service through state-wide Prospector materials can be obtained from other libraries. Participation in the statewide courier service provided through CLiC is a convenient way to send and receive between libraries.

Courier services are optional and do have associated costs, but the statewide courier is heavily subsidized to make it as affordable as possible.

Regular maintenance of the collection

Repairing: Often materials aren't worth the costs in staff time to repair. Unless it is a rare item, it may be cheaper to replace the item or withdraw the item instead of spending time and materials to put it back together. When something needs repairing it may be a sign it is time to let it go.

Shelf-reading: Go through the shelves and see if items are in the order they should be in. Some areas need more shelf-reading than others (such as Children's or Young Adult).

Inventory: Taking inventory means that you go through your collection to see if what you physically have matches what you tell patrons you have in your catalog. A regular inventory will save time and money for staff and for patrons. After a physical inventory, the catalog needs to be corrected to show the item's actual status or the record needs to be deleted.

Weeding: Regular evaluation of the collection is essential to it remaining relevant and useful. Weeding is the process of finding, pulling, processing out, and discarding items that are unused, contain incorrect information and/or are out of date. Dirty, ripped, written in, chewed, stained, fading, or yellowed items do not serve your community. Your collection always needs to be clean and current.

An example of outdated information is a medical book with obsolete practices, or an item that still says Pluto is a planet. Regularly weeding will also help you know what you need to add to the collection. When you weed the item, be sure to delete the catalog record and to mark out the library's name on the physical item if you have stamped it. It is important that you (or your staff) don't weed a book because a patron has complaints about it. See [*Intellectual Freedom*](#).

Special collections can include all kinds of things. These collections are termed special because of format, significance to the community, uniqueness or value. They usually have different rules of use than the regular collection and may be shelved differently. They may require special measures for preservation or conservation. Some special collections need digitization to be preserved, crumbling local newspapers for instance. If you think this may be the case either now or eventually, CLiC can connect you to the right people.

Overseeing the development and management of your collection is one of the most important jobs you have as a director. Being able to have what your community needs when they need it (and sometimes before) can be one of the most satisfying parts of this position.

IX. HUMAN RESOURCES: THE EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE

Overview

We all know the story: The vacancy at your library needs to be filled immediately. You speed through the process to hire someone and even though you know the finalist is not a great fit, you hire the person in spite of this, just to get the position filled. It doesn't take long for things to go south when your quick hire turns out to be a huge mistake. Now, you're faced with the stress and uncomfortable steps involved in firing the person, then starting the hiring process all over again.

Don't let this be your story! By using the following guidelines and putting the time, effort and energy into all stages of the employee life cycle, you can help ensure that your library has the *right* people in the *right* place at the *right* time.

Hire right

The single-most impactful decision you make as a leader of your organization is hiring. Looking for the most qualified people for your library can be a lot of work. It will be rewarding if you approach the process thoughtfully and with an attitude of engagement and excitement. Here are a few pieces to consider:

Planning

- Think critically about the position that needs to be filled. Write or update the job description, ensuring that it reflects the knowledge, skills and abilities that someone would need in order to be successful in the role. Also write a job advertisement. This will be similar to the job description, but written in a warmer and more approachable tone that reflects the culture of your library and the uniqueness of your community.
- Draft a hiring timeline. Consider the length of the application window, review of submissions, the number of interviews (we suggest one phone and one in-person interview), and the time needed between job offer and start date. It might help to identify your ideal start date and then work backwards to establish your timeline elements.

Advertising

- Post your creative job advertisement to Library Jobline (<https://www.libraryjobline.org/>). It's free!

- Make the most of free promotional channels. Post marketing messages to various email distribution lists and social media sites, and use resource networks in your community to get the word out about your job opening. All marketing messages should link back to your ad on Library Jobline.
- Keep posting. One marketing message isn't enough. Continue to draw attention to your job ad throughout the application window. The more people that know about the opportunity and share your messages, the more likely you are to draw a pool of diverse and qualified candidates.

Screening

- Before the interviews, carefully review the application materials (cover letter and résumé) submitted by each candidate. Is the candidate's experience relevant and/or transferrable? What follow up questions do you have? Do you see any red flags? Consider using a simple rubric when reviewing candidates to ensure a consistent and fair process.
- Candidates should sign an application form which not only states that all of the information they've included is accurate, but also gives you permission to contact references.
- After the interviews, consider what types of background checks may be appropriate for the position.

Interviewing

- Behavioral and situational questions are highly recommended. Why? Because someone's past behaviors are more likely to indicate how they will behave in the future. Questions should be strictly work-related to avoid any potential claims of discrimination.
- Interviewing is a two-way street. Your goal should be not only to obtain information FROM your candidate, but to provide significant information about the role and library TO your candidate. After all, your candidate is deciding if they want to work at your library.

IMPORTANT: It is illegal to discriminate against applicants belonging to any number of protected classes. This includes, but is not limited to color, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, transgender status, and age (over 40). If a candidate volunteers such information, consider letting them know that *"the library does not take that information into account when hiring."*

Onboarding

If you don't intentionally onboard your employees, they will onboard themselves. And it likely won't be in the way you want or won't be conducted by the appropriate staff members. Taking the time to properly onboard new staff members is guaranteed to be time well spent. This also provides a great opportunity to introduce your new hire into the library's culture.

Here are some ideas to get you started with onboarding:

- Give your new hire an in-depth tour in and around the library. Where should they park? Where can they keep their belongings or store their lunch?
- Depending on the number of staff members at your library, consider scheduling introductory meetings between the new hire and other individual staff members. These conversations provide everyone the opportunity to discuss work styles, general job duties, special projects and how their respective positions will work together.
- Discuss library policies and procedures and be sure to give your new staff member the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.
- Inform the new hire of the resources available to help them be successful in their role. Consider following up again periodically with this information.
- Think big picture. Share the library's structure, mission, vision, and core values. Explain the role that the library plays within your community.

Evaluations

Employees thrive off feedback. More often than not, an employee wants to know what they are doing well and where they could improve their job performance. Setting aside protected time in your calendar on a regular basis throughout the year, and also on an annual basis for a formal evaluation, will help ensure these conversations take place.

There is no single nor right way to conduct evaluations. Find a system that works best for your library. To make this process easier, it helps to have job descriptions for each position available for reference.

Another good practice is to conduct some sort of semi-formal evaluation or review 90 days after the start of employment (or following a job change). This conversation provides your new-in-role staff member an important opportunity to have questions answered and allows the supervisor to identify if additional training may be needed.

Performance management

Performance management / improvement conversations are just that – they are *conversations*. When there is aggressive confrontation, very little productive progress can be made.

One thing that can't be overemphasized enough here is the need for documentation. You can make this easier by preparing your pieces of the conversation ahead of time and making a written record of the employee's comments after the fact. Following any conversation, a written reminder of what was discussed and agreed upon steps toward improvement should be provided to the employee in writing.

Here are the five keys to any performance management/improvement conversation:

- **State the Facts:** Describe the specific behavior and seek to understand what may have led to it. Avoid judgments, assumptions and exaggerations.
- **Identify the Impact:** Let the employee know how his/her actions impact you, other staff, and the patrons your library serves.
- **Clarify Future Expectations:** Describe the behavior you expect to see, referencing the Employee Handbook and/or the Job Description. Explain that *significant and sustained improvement* needs to take place and provide specific suggestions. Seek some confirmation from the employee that they understand your expectations for performance.
- **Discuss Possible Consequences:** This is a conversation, so use this opportunity to agree upon a clearly-defined outcome. Some suggested language: *"Failure to show significant and sustained improvement will lead to other performance conversations and could possibly lead to termination."*
- **Provide Tools for Employee Success:** Identify action items for the employee to take. Help them to identify a potential partner to help hold them accountable. Most importantly, schedule check-ins to continue providing feedback.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: Municipal libraries may have access to the town or city government's resources for any of the stages in the employee life cycle. In some municipal libraries, the library director controls HR processes, while in others many activities are done by county/city/town staff.

In a library district the director or designated staff oversees HR activity. If your district is small, as director you may perform literally all HR functions. Be sure to find out how all these HR functions were performed prior to your arrival at the organization. A good first step as a new director is to review all job descriptions, including your own. You will also want to review the most recent evaluations conducted for all staff.

If your library operates under a due-process system, it would be in your best interest to consult legal counsel, either the district counsel or the city/town attorney.

When you're ready for more details...

Contact your Colleague on Call, who can work with you and bring CLIC's HR manager, resident expert, and certified HR professional in to collaborate as appropriate.

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment Labor Standards
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/labor>

Employers Council (professional, for-fee services in employment law, human resources, and training)
<https://www.employerscouncil.org/>

X. HUMAN RESOURCES – EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK & JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Overview

No law requires an employee handbook or job descriptions -- so why bother?

In a word: Communication. Each of these tools, in their own way, helps to establish guidelines and expectations for all staff members. In other words, these documents help to create the lines in which we get to color. As a supervisor it won't be long until you're feeling glad you have all of that in writing.

Here are some guidelines to help you create tools that will ultimately help everyone be more successful in their roles.

Are you running a one-person library? These are helpful for you, too. Having formal documents that outline employment practices and job responsibilities can help you more clearly communicate the value of your library and your role in it.

Employee handbook

There are many benefits to having an Employee Handbook. Not only does this valuable communication tool clearly lay out policies, practices, benefits, etc., it is an opportunity for both the employer and the employee to understand what is expected in that relationship. In a perfect world, employee handbooks should be reviewed and updated every one-to-two years.

An Employee Handbook can cover a wide range of topics. Below is a list of some of the most important and most common things to include (with sample language provided in italics).

- **Nature of Employment.** For most public employers in Colorado, employment is at-will. This means that the employee or the employer can terminate the working relationship at any time, with or without cause. The handbook should offer a disclaimer at the beginning of the document, emphasizing that employment is at-will and that *“the handbook is not to be considered a contract of employment.”* Please note that some public employers operate under a due-process system. In that case, it may be in your best interest to consult legal counsel when drafting language around the nature of employment.
- **Employer Rights.** As the employer, you have the right to update the content of the handbook at any time, with or without notice

to employees. Another good thing to mention in the handbook is that *“no employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question.”*

- **Welcome Letter.** This should be sincere and set the tone, and should come from the director in most cases. After all, the employee handbook may be one of the first impressions a new employee has of your library.
- **Library Information.** Provide the library’s mission, vision, and core values. (If you don’t have them now add them later.)
- **Anti-Discrimination Policies.** Equal Employment Opportunity laws prohibit discrimination and harassment toward individuals belonging to protected classes. This policy should emphasize zero-tolerance for such behavior and that *“complaints will be kept as confidential as is practical for the situation.”*
- **General Employment.** What is included in this section will vary significantly at each library. Use this opportunity to clearly lay out practices regarding compensation (pay), benefits, employee performance, resignation/termination procedures, work schedules, employee benefits, time off and leave policies.
- **Standards of Conduct.** Another section that includes a wide variety of potential topics, such as: dress code; safety practices; severe weather procedures; security measures; use of computers and technology; and more.
- **Acknowledgement of Receipt.** This is yet another opportunity to emphasize the at-will nature of employment and explain the rights of the employer. Have the staff read and then sign the employee handbook. You’ll want to keep a copy signed and dated by each employee in their personnel files. By signing, they *“...acknowledge, understand, accept and agree to comply with the information provided.”*

Job descriptions

A typical job description will clearly identify five things:

- **Overview of Position/Position Summary.** This is usually written out in as little as one sentence or as much as two paragraphs at the top of the document. This section highlights the major areas of responsibility. It may include who the position reports to and if the position is full-time or part-time.
- **Qualifications / Job Requirements.** Use bullet points to highlight the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities necessary to be successful in the position. Don’t forget to include soft skills. Use language like this: *“General knowledge of...”*; *“Experience in...”*; *“Demonstrated ability to...”*
- **Responsibilities.** Use bullet points to list the more specific tasks and duties that someone in this role is expected to perform. To help shape this section of the job description, try starting each

line with a verb associated with an assigned task. Here are some suggestions: *Assists; Creates; Leads; Organizes; Performs; Provides; Serves;* etc.

- **Education and Experience.** This can be presented as “Required” and/or “Preferred.”
- **Work Demands.** Include physical demands of the job and general working conditions. It could read something like this: *“Normal office/library demands are encountered daily, including lifting of boxes and movement throughout the building. Use of telephone and computer technologies is mandatory. The candidate must be able to pass applicable driving and criminal background checks.”*

Looking for more sample language to include? Here are some additional suggestions:

- ***“...including but not limited to...”***
Every staff member in a library wears many hats, and there’s no way to capture ALL of them on paper. This phrase is helpful to include before listing specific tasks or duties.
- ***“Perform other tasks and duties as assigned.”***
Important! Be sure to include this as the last bullet point under the “Responsibilities” category, as this can go a long way in protecting you as the employer.
- ***“The above declarations are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of the duties and responsibilities of the job described, nor are they intended to be such a listing of the skills and abilities required to do the job. Rather, they are intended only to describe the general nature of the job.”***
Include this disclaimer in smaller print at the very end of each job description. A statement like this in your document will provide you some backing in a performance/improvement management situation and would certainly give your library flexibility.

Job descriptions can be revised at any time. Consider keeping notes in the footer of each document stating the date when the document was last updated. If this is a new position, a good practice may be to pull out the Job Description and review it with the person in the position after about 9-12 months on the job. This will give you a chance to update the job description to reflect the reality of the job responsibilities, or perhaps give you an opportunity to provide direction to that employee, to help them get back on track.

Municipal versus District: Municipal libraries may be required to refer to the city/town for the tools listed above. A Library District, as opposed to a Municipal Library, has autonomy in creating their own documents.

When you're ready for more details...

Contact your Colleague on Call, who can work with you and bring CLIC's HR manager and certified HR professional in to collaborate as appropriate.

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment Labor Standards
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/labor>

Employers Council (professional, for-fee services in employment law, human resources, and training)
<https://www.employerscouncil.org/>

LibraryJobLine.org is one place where libraries post jobs. It is managed by Colorado's own Library Research Service (LRS). It is a good place to find job description language.
<https://www.libraryjobline.org/>

XI. FACILITIES

Providing a safe and inviting building environment (both outside and inside) is an important aspect of service to your community – not only for your patrons, but also for your staff. Prevention goes a long way – don't wait until you have a live squirrel nesting in the library to make a plan. What are some of the crazy disasters you can prevent? Talk to other directors about unexpected problems they've experienced. Some things to consider include:

- General building maintenance, inside and outside – who is responsible; is there a dedicated budget? Is the current budget big enough? When will you need to replace costly items such as your furnace? You may need a savings/budget plan for various items.
- Bed bugs are a reality in every public space, but maybe they don't have to be part of your reality. Take steps to prevent issues.
- Basic safety areas – examples include: fire extinguishers (where are they; do you and staff know how to use them); how to turn off water in the building; knowing details about the building's HVAC system (heating, ventilation, air conditioning).
- Does the library have a fire evacuation plan, and an active shooter response plan? Talk with your local fire and police departments.
- ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance. Some believe that only new construction and renovation projects need to include accessibility compliance, and that older facilities don't, but that's not true. Consider reviewing the 2016 ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities. Also, if a patron is having trouble using the stairs, or reaching a shelf you can use that as a spark to reassess the location of various collections.
- Space planning – review physical flow, furniture, and layout – not only for future needs but to confirm that current building space being utilized effectively for everyone.
- Policies and procedures for use of public spaces. For instance: use of meeting and/or study rooms by patrons and groups.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: If you are a municipal library, check with your city/county administrator to see how facility maintenance has been handled in the past. In some cases, those responsibilities are delegated to the library director who then coordinates maintenance. That can include arranging for contracted cleaning service, snow removal, lawn service and major repairs or renovations. In other situations, library maintenance may be taken care of by the city or county as part of its overall handling of facilities maintenance for other departments.

Don't think you can't improve on what has been done in the past. A fresh pair of eyes on an old building is a great time to take note of what you see as potential facility needs.

In a library district, however, the director has complete control over and responsibility for the facility. It's your building and your home away from home so you'll want to take good care of it.

When you're ready for more details...

Public Library Policy Collection has sample policies on facility use:

<https://www.clicweb.org/extras/innovations-initiatives/publiclibrarypolicycollection/>

The Colorado State Library has an excellent facilities checklist in the Public Library Standards:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/standards/facilities>

The American Library Association has some information on bed bugs:

http://www.ala.org/pla/sites/ala.org.pla/files/content/onlinelearning/webinars/archive/PLA_Kittrell_Dont-let-the-bed-bugs-bite_Final.pdf

American Disabilities Act Checklist for Existing Facilities based on the 2010 (the most recent) ADA Standards

<https://www.adachecklist.org/doc/fullchecklist/ada-checklist.pdf>

Project ENABLE, funded by grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Service, is designed specifically for librarians to help them gain the knowledge and skills needed to create inclusive and accessible libraries:

<https://projectenable.syr.edu/>

XII. TECHNOLOGY

Technology in libraries, like everywhere else, is growing and changing constantly and there is a lot to know. Technology can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to. Managing technology is not very different than managing other aspects of the library, it just needs to be broken down into manageable pieces. CLiC is happy to help you do this if you haven't done it before. Here are some categories:

1. Assessment
2. Planning
3. Public Access Computers
4. Online Catalog
5. Electronic Resources
6. Web Presence and Social Media
7. E-Rate

Assessment

One of the first things a new director should do is examine the Information Technology (IT) environment in your library. Here are some sample questions you should ask, to get a basic understanding of that environment:

1. Who is in charge of the technology? Is it you or someone else? That "someone else" could be your city's or county's IT Department. These might seem like easy questions, but might not be so easy when you dig into the details.
2. What is the budget for technology? Do you control those funds, or again, is it some other entity making purchasing decisions?
3. How about daily/weekly maintenance? Do you have a dedicated staff member for those tasks, or is it outsourced to someone else?
4. What is your Integrated Library System (ILS)? If your catalog is online what is the name of the software that runs it?
5. What about a website? Do you have one? Who runs it, where is it hosted, who maintains it? Do you or does a library staff member have access to update that website?
6. When was the last time a technology inventory was taken? How many public access computers (PACs) do you have? How many staff computers do you have? What software is loaded on these computers? How old are these computers?
7. Extra credit questions: What does your library's network look like? Is it speedy or does it feel like slogging through mud when you access the Internet? When was the last time someone assessed the state of your network? Does your library have WiFi, and does that system provide statistics for how many patrons are connecting?

Planning

This will all eventually make sense, and you don't need to know what everything does or how it works to make a plan. Now that you have some basic information gathered, it is time to start thinking about planning for the future. Or, take a deep breath and start with it next week—not everything has to be done right away.

But you're up to the challenge! A basic Technology Plan is a good start. It doesn't have to be complicated and go on and on and on for pages, like a bad novel. The idea for a plan is to provide you some framework around the library's IT needs and align your IT decisions with the library's overall strategic plan.

As a new director, it is not your job to be an expert in all technology... but you should know some basics and, if you can, build a team around you who will assist in running and maintaining your library's technology.

See "when you are ready for more details" sections below for links to sample technology plans.

Public Access Computers (PAC)

PACs are the computers used by your patrons (as opposed to staff computers). These are different in that they can serve unique or specialized purposes. They're all about access and providing your patrons with a high-quality service experience. For example, computers in the adult section might have different software than the computers in your children's department. Some things to consider regarding PACs:

1. Policy – What is your library's policy regarding the public's use of these computers? Topics can include internet usage restrictions, such as pornography, hate sites, downloading of software, apps, age requirements, and parental permission... to name a few.
2. Procedures – Guidelines for use can include things like timeframe (example: some libraries shut down computer access 15 minutes before closing time), time allotment (do patrons get 30 minutes or an hour, or more?).
3. Maintenance – Who is responsible for maintaining these computers? Because of their heavy-use (often all day long), PACs need lots of tender-loving care. Who cleans the keyboards, mice, and display screens on a regular basis? More involved maintenance can include updating software (like web browsers), scanning for viruses and malware, or managing so-called "system restoration software" that resets everything back to a clean state every time a new patron sits down in front of the computer.

Integrated Library System “ILS”

Your library’s ILS provides “inventory control.” The software keeps track of what material is owned by the library, where it’s located in the building, or even who has an item checked out (and when that item is due to be returned).

You might know what software/system runs your library’s ILS, but who provides your library with support for that software? Find out, because those folks are important to the successful operation of your library’s MOST central electronic resource/tool. There are many commercial vendors for library catalog software, and some non-profit organizations in Colorado that provide these services (including CLiC).

It is important for you to understand your library’s ILS and the environmental factors surrounding it. Some questions to ask:

- Are you part of a consortium with a shared ILS (which allows your patrons to request materials from other libraries)?
- How much is your library paying for its system?
- Are staff members happy with the ILS functions, like circulation (material check-in, check-out, renewals), acquisitions, and cataloging?
- Are your patrons able to easily find books, and other materials with the online catalog (sometimes called “The Discovery Layer”)?

Once you’ve dug into answers to these questions, you’ll get a better sense of what improvements may be needed or desired to enhance the patron experience and access to your library’s collection of books, CDs, DVDs and other materials.

Electronic resources

Also known as databases, digital resources, research resources, online products... too many terms to name! What are these? Simply put: Databases and digital products are collections of published material made available online. Your library may subscribe to such products... find out! These resources can contain content from mainstream magazines, newspapers, books, guides, car repair manuals, educational videos, narrated e-books for kiddos, photos and imagery, genealogy and more.

Electronic resources often provide sophisticated searching tools and other features, designed to help individuals and students find what they’re looking for. Your library makes its own decisions to purchase or license such products based on collection development guidelines, much the same way your library decides what books to buy.

Access to databases and other online products can be provided to your patrons even when they aren't inside the library! Through your library's website, links can be established so that when your customer clicks, all s/he needs to do is type in a library card number and then access is granted. Like magic.

Electronic resources can be a valuable addition to your library's physical collection, offering online materials to your community that enhance education and research, small business development, entertainment and beyond.

Web presence and social media

Beyond the library's website (assuming the library has one... and it really needs to)... does your library's online presence represent to the community what your library wants to look like in the 21st Century? Inventory the library's website, Facebook page, Twitter account or other online accounts. Review from a marketing and customer service perspective what you like and what is not effective. Consider three key questions:

- Do these sites/accounts "look" fresh & clean and up-to-date, or are they cluttered, junky and out-of-date?
- Who is responsible for maintaining your website, and how often is it updated?
- How are you promoting your website or any social media accounts you have?

E-Rate

E-Rate (an offering brought to you by the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries – boy that's a mouthful!) provides some funding for libraries so that they can afford high speed Internet access and telecommunications service. E-Rate can save money for your library. To apply for E-Rate, your library must be CIPA (Child Internet Protection Act) compliant.

Locally, the program is supported through the Colorado Department of Education, and all the relevant information can be found at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/edtech/erate> At this website you can learn more about the eligibility requirements, the appropriate forms and deadlines, and additional contact information. The state E-Rate Coordinator is a knowledgeable person who provides periodic training (even online) and is the person to contact for personalized assistance.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: For municipal libraries, your city/county will have someone who oversees IT for all departments. Use this information as a starting point for conversations to become familiar with how technology issues are handled for the library. Library Districts will have sole responsibility for technology and may want to find an outside company to contract with for many tech needs, such as routine maintenance.

When you're ready for more details...

Implementing Library Technology for Small and Home Libraries by ALA
<https://libguides.ala.org/librarytech/small-lib>

Colorado State Library's Public Library Technology Standards
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/standards/technology>

WebJunction's Technology Planning Resources
<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/tech-planning.html>

More Information on CIPA (Child Internet Protection Act)
<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>

2017-2023 Sample Technology Plan for Eagle Public Library, Iowa
http://eaglepubliclibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2017/09/Technology_Plan_Board_20170921.pdf

XIII. MARKETING: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media can be a low cost and effective tool to get the word out about various activities at your library. Most social media can be free except for time commitments. It also can be a fun way to interact with your patrons in a virtual environment.

Here are just some basic ideas on how you can get your library up and running with social media.

- Assess what “channels” your library already has: website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, just to mention the big ones—there are more.
- Before you begin, check for existing policies that might affect your use of social media tools. For example, if you are a municipal library, your city/county might have a policy that would affect your ability to maintain social media. If your library does not have a policy on social media, create one. There are lots of examples to help you.

Develop a plan. What are your goals? Who will be on your social media team? Even if the “team” is just you, having some goals to aspire to will incentivize your effort. Although most social media services are free to set up and maintain, time is always a factor and a cost. Your plan could include such things as the number of platforms you are going to reach, the number of times you plan on posting, who is going to create content, etc.

- Be honest about how much time you have. Can some of this work be delegated to other staff members? Often it is better not to do something if you can’t do it well. So, if you don’t have time for social media, think about what types of marketing you do have time to do.
- Look at other libraries’ social media channels and see what they are doing to help inspire your efforts. Take the ideas that you think would work for your library, rip, and remix!
- Remember, media channels offer visual components, so pictures, artwork, and videos are always better than simply text. A general rule of thumb: less text is better, and photos/videos of library staff or patrons garner more interaction than graphics alone.
- On Facebook, you can also create events where followers can mark themselves as going or interested in attending. This is a good way to get information out about library storytimes, summer reading, and special programs or events.

- Once you get an account set up (and populated with some visual content), make sure you advertise it everywhere. Examples might be in your email signature line, at the bottom of program flyers, on bookmarks, through your website, etc.
- Don't be intimidated when getting started. There are plenty of resources out there for you, some listed below, and people eager to help.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: Municipal libraries should check on policies from town administration and/or the city's IT department as a first step in creating a marketing plan using social media. Districts can create their own policy to govern use of social media.

When you're ready for more details...

Tech Soup's Social Media Kit for Non-Profits

<https://page.techsoup.org/social-media-for-nonprofits>

Web Junction Social Media – Free self-paced courses and webinar recordings

<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/social-web.html>

PLA webinar “Managing Traditional & Social Media for Libraries”

<http://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/webinars/archive/media>

Public Library Policy Collection

<https://www.clicweb.org/extras/innovations-initiatives/publiclibrarypolicycollection/>

XIV. PROGRAMMING

Sing! Make! Learn! Get together!

Public library programming brings rich opportunities for learning and entertainment to your community and beyond. It builds connections across all ages and stages. While there is really no such thing as typical library programming, storytimes for baby through preschool-aged kids are standard.

Delivering a variety of programs keeps the library at the center of its community. Traditionally, libraries offer book clubs, instruction sessions of all sorts, and crafts. Events at the library can also be hosted by other community organizations with rooms provided by the library but not sponsored by the library.

Get creative with your programming! Think outside the box for new ideas that will encourage and excite your community. Consider partnering with local businesses or joining events that already happen in your area in a different location. Not all library events need to happen in the library.

Plan programs well in advance and strategically. Some things to keep in mind when planning:

- Community needs, desires, and interest (Also consider if the program is offered by other organizations – no sense duplicating efforts)
- Age groups
- Passive and interactive programs
- Instruction, entertainment, skill-building
- Single programs or a series
- Availability of instructors/speakers and/or partnerships within the community
- Cost both in fees and staff time
- Timing of the year
- In-person or virtual

The following checklist can help ensure a smooth and successful program.

Program Content

- Choose the type of program/speaker/author talk/entertainment.
- Determine the best format to present program content: series, single program, etc.

Venue

- Choose time and place, date, etc.
- Check with other departments/branches in your library so your program does not conflict.
- Reserve space for the program.
- Put the program on the library's calendar of events.
- Identify the equipment needed for the program (video, computer, podium).
- If registration is required, determine the method.
- Determine if there are costs, then identify and secure funding.
- Determine if there are space restrictions; be prepared.
- Decide if this event is better in-person, virtual or a hybrid.

Speaker/Presenter

- Research speakers and presenters; ask for recommendations from colleagues.
- Discuss the program with presenters/determine expectations.
- Reconfirm time and date with the presenters.
- Prepare introductions for the speakers/presenters.
- Complete any contracts or agreements for expectations and/or funding.

Partners

- Connect with community partners.
- Involve community partners in program planning.
- Ask community partners to publicize the program.
- Collect partners' logos to use on publicity materials.

Publicity

- Design promotional materials.
- If photo permissions are required, consider including the request as part of registration.
- Involve staff; make sure they have information so they can promote the program and provide specific information when interacting with patrons.
- Select channels of communication for promotions/media advisory/news release/web posting/social media.
- Create program materials.
- Write media communications.
- Distribute an advertisement to media outlets and social media.
- Decide if you will document the event/photos, recording, etc. (if photo permissions are required, have forms available).
- If documenting the event, assign a specific person to do so.

Day of the Event

- Arrange the room/technology equipment (if virtual).
- Contact media sources to confirm the event.
- Coordinate refreshments (if necessary).
- Post the publicity flyer at the site.
- Have on hand evaluation forms for after the event.
- Have photo release forms, if necessary.
- Prepare name tags or table tent cards (for panels).
- Record statistics (attendees, number of kids vs. adults, etc.).

After the Event

- Send thank you notes to the presenters.
- Thank staff/volunteers. Celebrate your success!
- Thank community partners individually.
- Review evaluations -- then what? Ask involved staff to evaluate.
- Share successes (post photos; social media postings; public thank you for support/program re-cap via a letter to the editor).

When you're ready for more details...

Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL)

<https://www.clel.org>

Association for Library Service to Children, a division of ALA

<https://www.ala.org/alsc/>

Colorado State Library Learning & Creation Center: Programming

<https://www.librarieslearn.org/services-and-programming>

Show Me Librarian blog

<https://showmelibrarian.blogspot.com/2013/04/a-plethora-of-programs-innovative-and.html>

Public Libraries Online, a publication of the Public Library Association

<http://publiclibrariesonline.org/tag/adult-programming>

XV. YOUR LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

Data is a friend that you need to spend time with. Data will grow on you over time to become one of your best friends. Collecting and sharing data is an important way to plan, show impact, needs, success, and challenges. Data is used in strategic planning, management, and communicating with stakeholders to stay on course or to make changes. Most organizations make data-driven decisions and libraries are no exception. As director, looking at data and understanding the data you see will eventually become an everyday activity. Just make a habit of spending time with your friend data every day with patience and eventually you'll come to understand each other and have fun.

Spare the spreadsheets

Think about sharing your data beyond monthly reports to your stakeholders. Make the information as easy to understand as possible. While spreadsheets are useful, they rarely tell a compelling story by themselves. Consider using a one-page infographic highlighting the most important numbers. However, don't just report to the board! Share your data widely. Share with staff, volunteers, your Friends group, or your Foundation – think about sharing your data with your local paper or even on social media. Celebrate success (or share a need) by showing the data – this really resonates with some people. Consider putting together a clear and simple annual report, sometimes called a Year-in-Review, which can also be used in your required annual report to your municipality or county commissioners. ([24-90-109. Powers and duties of board of trustees](#))

Library Research Service (lrs.org)

Do you want to know how many staff are typical for a library the size of your library? Or what they get paid in comparison? Look no further than the Library Research Service (LRS). They collect data through the Colorado Public Library Annual Report (PLAR) and organize it. Data are organized by statistic and group in just about any way you want. This information is used for benchmarking, forecasting, staffing, salaries, facilities expenditures, materials budgeting, etc. You can find results tailored to trustees, or just some fast facts. Or, you can dig deep and sometimes even fall down the data rabbit hole – it's not hard to do. If you have a question about a library statistic (e.g., why does my neighboring library spend so little money on print materials?) just reach out to that director and tactfully ask. You could learn something new and build your peer network at the same time.

Public Library Annual Report (PLAR)

Every year the LRS sends out a report for public libraries to complete and return. It is to everyone's benefit to fill it out as accurately as possible. People like you depend on the accuracy of this report to make decisions. The responses are gathered by LRS staff and used to receive funding for libraries in Colorado at the national level. All state library agencies in the U.S. are required by law to collect this data and submit it to the federal government. Colorado is lucky because the LRS organizes this information and then makes it available. Not all states do this.

When looking at what data to collect for your library you should review the PLAR from the previous year and see what kind of data you will need to report. Collecting that information year-round will save you time and headaches when it is time to fill out the PLAR.

Local level

As you gather data every month, think about what the data is revealing about your library. Maybe your patrons love romance novels or use DVDs instead of streaming services. You could have a large homeschool population. Maybe your cakepan collection circulates more than your non-fiction section. Don't just collect data for data's sake. Make it meaningful. You don't have to do the same thing as the library down the road. Do what's best for your community based on the data.

Ask yourself

- What data does my library already collect and why?
- Is there data I don't need to collect?
- What additional data should I start collecting and why?
- What data do I find the most useful?

Lots of help

You can reach out to your Colleague on Call for any informational data needs or questions. The LRS is also on hand to help with the PLAR and collecting and using data. They offer regional (and sometimes national) workshops, webinars, tools, and staff to answer questions. If you don't understand something you are likely not alone—don't hesitate to ask.

Searching for examples of Annual Reports?

- Many libraries post annual reports on their websites.
- Contact your regional CLiC listserv or the Colorado Public Library Director's listserv.
- We would love to help you find examples! Contact your [Colleague on Call](#).

Infographics

Libraries Design Share: an open online repository of interesting library-related design

<https://librariandesignshare.org/category/infographics/>

Blog Post on how-to create infographics with links to tools by Jennifer Burke (2018)

<https://www.intellicraftresearch.com/attention-library-pals-dont-make-another-infographic-read/>

When you're ready for more details...

Library Research Service

lrs.org

Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) State Demography Office. This is the primary state agency for population and demographic information including: population; births, deaths, migration; economy & labor force; housing and households; Census and American Community Survey.

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/> or email dlg.helpdesk@state.co.us

XVI. STRATEGIC PLANNING

It can be a bit overwhelming to figure out how to do everything that needs to be done and where to put your energy. How should you prioritize use of staff time, space, and money? How do you plan the budget for the coming year? Do I need more staff? These and many other questions are answered or impacted by a strategic plan. Strategic planning shows the way to achieving your organization's goals, vision, and desired future. It's a road map to guide you on your journey.

Library leaders, in partnership with the library board, the community, and/or municipal leadership, use strategic planning to identify the necessary funding priorities, staffing needs, and other elements of success. These stakeholders, with your guidance, help plan out the destinations and resources for the journey. However, as director, you are the pilot.

A living document

A strategic plan should be a living document that is consulted regularly. It is not something to write, update, and put away. Most organizations have a strategic plan. If you don't already have one, then you need to get one. If you do have a strategic plan it may need updating to meet the changing needs of your community. This doesn't have to be done right away but should be on your radar as you think about the current and future needs of your community, and therefore the library. There are lots of resources to assist with these processes. Other directors will share their strategic plans with you so you have a starting place. You may find something that resonates or is articulated in a way you like from another library to add to your own.

Share it

Once you have a strategic plan, regularly consult it to see if you are on track. Make sure you share the strategic plan with your staff (if any) and your stakeholders. Many libraries both large and tiny post their strategic plans on their websites or in the library (or both) to transparently share. It is also a good idea to peruse strategic plans created by other libraries to see examples and generate ideas.

When you meet a goal or have been meeting a goal from the strategic plan, let your staff, board, and community know the library is successful and directing resources toward the things they identified as important. After all, you are on the journey together.

When you are ready to do some strategic planning, please feel free to contact your [Colleague on Call](#) .

When you're ready for more details...

The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries is a great tool for community assessment.

<http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/Dialogue-on-Public-Libraries/2014/report>

CLiC's Quick Guide to Strategic Planning

<https://www.clicweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Quick-Guide-to-Strategic-Planning.pdf>

Web Junction: Assessment, Evaluation & Planning

<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/planning-coordination.html>

XVII. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Intellectual Freedom is a foundational aspect of librarianship, and a core reason public libraries even exist. It is the right of every individual to seek and receive information – the freedom to read, to listen, and to view content that comes from all points of view.

Libraries defend intellectual freedom because our country was built on the idea that people should be free to access ideas, and to explore any and all sides of an issue, cause or movement. It is closely aligned with our nation's First Amendment, and individuals' freedom of expression.

Occasionally, intellectual freedom will be challenged at the public library. These are not situations to be feared -- instead, these are opportunities to engage with your community in positive and professional ways!

Directors and library boards have a responsibility to explore and facilitate open discussion when intellectual freedom challenges emerge. These can present themselves through a variety of topics, including the following:

- Censorship – examples include:
 - Demands to remove materials from the library
 - Complaints about content posted through the library's social media channels
 - Questions about why the library won't purchase certain items
 - Collection bias – the idea that only selected viewpoints are represented through materials at the library
- Internet filtering and the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Patron privacy

Public libraries have experienced all types of situations related to intellectual freedom. To get a flavor for some of those situations, check out the FAQ document available on the American Library Association's website (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq>).

A related foundational document worth reading is ALA's Library Bill of Rights, first established in 1939 and updated over the years (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>).

Don't think that your library won't ever have to deal with intellectual freedom questions? They pop up in every type and size of community throughout the U.S.

Having reasoned policies in place to respond to such questions or challenges is useful and recommended. Plus, you're not alone. Library leaders in Colorado support one another, and there are many people primed to help, including the staff at CLiC.

When you're ready for more details...

ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif>

CAL Intellectual Freedom Committee

[https://cal-webs.org/Policy - Intellectual Freedom Committee](https://cal-webs.org/Policy_-_Intellectual_Freedom_Committee)

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>

A Guide for Understanding Strident Claims About the Electronic Resources in Your Library or School

<https://www.clicweb.org/libraries-under-attack/>

What Does Free Speech Mean?

<https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does>

XVIII. *LIBRARY LAW? I OBJECT!*

There's a law for everything and libraries are no exception. Not far beyond the law are the lawyers! Yes, there are lawyers in Colorado who focus on library law. You can skip law school (whew!). We can't practice law or give legal advice at CLiC, but we can point you in the direction of legal stuff you should know.

First, what is a statute?

Most library law consists of statutes. Often, statutes are "revised" which is marked with a "Rev" in front of the statute. For example, the Colorado State Statute [Rev Stat § 24-90-117 \(2016\)](#) is the law regarding "Theft or mutilation of library property." It shows the Rev (for revised). The symbol § is for state statute. Following that is the number of the statute itself followed by the year the statute was made or revised.

Laws to know and understand

Colorado Open Records Act (CORA)

All public records shall be open for inspection by any person at reasonable times in general. Any work you do for your library (including meetings) is on record and therefore subject to public inspection. However, there are always exceptions (which is why we have lawyers). CORA also applies to email so keep your personal email and your work email separate and professional. Your board may want to do the same. See the full section in this guide, "[Meet CORA](#)" for more information.

Formation and Legal Service Area

Make sure you know if your library is a municipal library (run by city/town/county) or a Library District (its own governing body). If you are a Library District, then you should know where to find your library's formation documents. The Colorado State Library keeps a record of these online, so you aren't the only one with a copy. This document should also tell you what the Legal Service area of your library is as well as what your bylaws are.

Privacy of user records

This lets you know under what specific instances patron records may be disclosed. Basically, privacy is a cornerstone of intellectual freedom as well as Colorado Library Law. Before you give out any information it may be a good idea to consult with a lawyer or ask your board for guidance.

Sunshine Laws

All meetings are open meetings except in rare cases, which are outlined in the Sunshine Laws. This law gives you all the details including how long in advance you need to make a public notice for your meetings. We suggest you give the public as much notice as possible. This law also means that if three of your board members are talking about library business spontaneously at a party they are in violation of the Sunshine Law. Two board members can talk library business without a notice. It still may not be a good idea. You, as director, can talk with two board members spontaneously about library business, but not three of your board members. This also applies to emails and text messages, so consider blind copying recipients when you need to send one message to all trustees.

Ask Yourself

- Is this legal? Maybe I should check...
- Even if it is legal does it promote trust and transparency?
- Is my board aware of this law? Do they need a refresher?
- Who is my lawyer or where do I go for legal help?
- What are my library's policies?

Lots of Help

- Your library (or city/county if you are a municipal library) may already have a lawyer that they use for legal issues. Ask your board or city manager who this person is. If they don't have a lawyer then you should probably look for one. Don't wait until you need a lawyer to find a lawyer. If your district or municipality already works with a specific lawyer introduce yourself.
- Call your Colleague at CLiC! We can help you figure it out, and while we can't give legal advice, we can point you to resources. It's likely that whatever your legal situation is, it isn't the first time it's happened.

When you are ready for more information.....

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment Labor Standards
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/labor>

Colorado Library Law
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarylaw/index>

CORA (Colorado Open Records Act)
https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/info_center/cora.html

How were you formed? What's your Legal Service area? What are your bylaws?

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarydevelopment/publiclibraries/legaldocuments>

Intellectual Freedom: Issues and Resources

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom>

Internet Protection in Public Libraries (2015)

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/qginternet>

Privacy of User Records

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/qgprivacy>

XIX. MEET CORA: COLORADO OPEN RECORDS ACT

A person walks into your library and loudly says “I want to see all of your records, right now!” What do you do?

Don’t panic. Requests for library records can feel aggressive (depending on the person) or like the person is trying to dig up something controversial. This is actually a great opportunity for engagement, and to show the library in its best light -- as a responsible and transparent steward of the public’s trust.

First take a breath. Then, treat the request like ANY other question. Conduct a reference interview to find out what the person is REALLY asking. Don’t feel like you need to treat this as urgent. You need to respond not react.

CORA is your friend when it comes to knowing how to handle requests for public records. You’ll find more information on state and federal privacy law in the “[Library Law? I Object!](#)” section of this guide.

What is CORA?

CORA, the Colorado Open Records Act, defines what records are considered public and mandates that such records be available to the public upon request. Find out if your city/county administration or library district has a policy or procedure that governs how to handle CORA requests, and be sure you have easy access to the policy (and the form for the public to use when making a CORA request). This policy should include clear guidelines to help the person requesting records, and include such details as:

- Requests for records must be made in writing.
- Who (at the library) should be contacted with a request
- What information must be included in the written request
- Fees or costs for research, retrieval, and copying of records
- If a standard request form is available, reference to that form, so it’s clear the person must use the form for submitting his/her CORA request.

What records are public & what records are protected?

The Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition (coloradofaic.org) has an excellent guide to CORA, which defines public records as:

“All ‘writings’ made, maintained or kept by the state or any agency, institution or political subdivision for use in the exercise of functions

required or authorized by law or administrative rule or involving the receipt or expenditure of public funds.”

This is a broad definition so it is best to always consult an expert regarding specific CORA requests. In most cases the expert will be city/county administration or the library’s attorney.

As a general guideline, here are a few examples of public versus protected records:

- **Definitely NOT a public record:** patron information, circulation records, public computer sign-in sheets or reservation records, personnel files
- **Most likely a public record:** written or email correspondence, financial records, policies and procedures, board minutes, internal memos, contracts, and agreements

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: The city or county will generally be responsible for CORA policies and procedures for municipal libraries. For an independent library district, check the date your policy was last reviewed by your attorney and update if necessary. If you don’t have a policy – put this near the top of your list of policies to create. Ask your attorney for model policy/language or get started by looking at other Colorado libraries’ policies.

When you’re ready for more details...

Find the full statute and other FAQs from the Secretary of State
https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/info_center/cora.html

Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition has tips, templates and more on CORA as well as sunshine laws
<http://coloradofoic.org/>

Find policy examples in Public Library Policy Collection:
<https://www.clicweb.org/extras/innovations-initiatives/publiclibrarypolicycollection/>

XX. RECORD RETENTION IS A BALANCING ACT

Have you inherited stacks of boxes or row upon row of filing cabinets filled with endless reams of paper? Should you rent a storage space to keep everything and simply continue adding more paper to the hoard? Tempting as that may sound... absolutely not. Start weeding.

But don't just take a weed whacker to your files... A plan for managing library retention records is just as important as a collection development plan.

A records retention schedule, also called a records retention policy, provides a guide to help keep just the right amount, for just the right length of time. Types of records that are important to keep include:

- Invoices
- Contracts
- Correspondence
- Personnel records
- Board agendas and minutes

Some documents, such as board minutes, you will want to keep permanently. These are an important record of the business of your library. When it comes to other items, such as flyers and other promotional items, you'll want to be judicious and really think about the ongoing or historical value of the item. Is that raggedy-edged, 8x11 sheet advertising the summer reading program for 2002 really worth keeping? Probably not. But if you must have it then scanning it and saving it electronically is your best option.

Records retention truly is like collection management. You don't need to keep every slip of paper or electronic file ever created by the library. Criteria to determine how much and how long to keep records can include:

- Historical value
- Ongoing administrative value
- Legal requirements

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: Municipal libraries are dependent on town or county government for funding. While a District has the benefit of stable funding generally provided by a mill levy, there are also many legal requirements surrounding financial management. Because a library district is a unit of local government, districts are required to prepare, adopt and file a budget annually with DOLA (Department of Local Affairs). The library's attorney is an important partner in meeting ALL legal requirements, not just financial.

When you're ready for more details...

Comprehensive guidance for legal compliance regarding records retention from the Colorado State Archives

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/archives/RecordsManagement>

XXI. VOLUNTEERS

If you need a fan of the library, look no further than your volunteers. They love the library and that love needs to be reciprocated. Volunteers are a valuable resource for libraries not only in the direct services they provide, but because they connect libraries to their communities. Some large libraries even have a paid Volunteer Coordinator on staff. Whether you have a large pool of volunteers or just a couple of helpers, think about using volunteers to improve your library and community outreach.

Volunteers and privacy issues

Volunteer duties can range from helping with shelving to advocating for the library. Managing volunteers and their work may not save a lot of time but it is usually worthwhile. You'll eventually get to know the abilities and interests of your volunteers over time and find tasks they'll enjoy. Due to patron privacy rules, most libraries don't allow volunteers to handle patron records or check materials in and out. According to the American Library Association (ALA), confidentiality of library records is a core value of librarianship.

Court-ordered volunteer hours are another route for volunteerism. This is a wonderful opportunity to create yet another believer in the importance of your library to all its community members. However, not all libraries choose to be available for this.

Give guidance

Your volunteers want to do a great job, and they require guidelines, support, and training just like a paid staff member. A volunteer handbook or even one sheet of paper outlining what you expect from them is helpful to everyone. It's important to create a volunteer job description. You can also create guidelines for the specific positions/duties for each volunteer. Borrow job descriptions from another library to start if you don't have your own.

For teenage volunteers this may be their first experience working and having clear expectations in writing will reduce everyone's anxiety. Some volunteers may just want to shelve materials while others may want to do more detailed work such as processing new books or help with programming. Make sure you take advantage of the variety of skills that your volunteers possess and enjoy their enthusiasm!

When you're ready for more details...

American Library Associations' tools, publications & resources landing page for volunteers

<http://www.ala.org/tools/volunteers-libraries>

American Library Associations' Privacy Toolkit

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/toolkit/corevalues>

Webjunction: the learning place for libraries – Friends, Trustees & Volunteers landing page

<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/friends-trustees.html>

Literature Review on Volunteers in Libraries from the University of Kentucky

[Handle with Care: Benefits and Drawbacks of Volunteers in the Library \(2013\)](#)

XXII. FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Everyone needs Friends! A strong Friends group can be an invaluable asset to your library and community. Fundraising and volunteerism to support library programs and services are the major functions of a Friends group. It is important for a Friends group to understand that their primary reason for being is to support library services, policies, mission, and strategic plan. Often the Friends have monetary funds that the director can ask to use for programming or materials purchases. A typical activity for a Friends group is to raise money through an annual book sale or other event.

As director, you should attend your Friends' meetings to keep them up to date on what is happening at the library. As a major stakeholder in the well-being of the library make sure the Friends are well-informed. All relationships require effort and with nurturing you can be a successful friend to your Friends.

As a new director, some questions you should ask are:

- Do you have an existing Friends organization?
- If you do, how strong is it? Who is on the board? Ideally, the Friends Board is separate from the Library Board and Library Staff. Talk to staff to get the history and status of the group.
- Do the Friends have a mission statement, strategic plan and or annual goals that support the library?
- Most Friends groups are totally separate 501(c)(3) groups that act independently. Section 501(c)(3) is the portion of the US Internal Revenue Code that allows for federal tax exemption of nonprofit organizations.
- Is it a registered 501(c)(3)? If not, consider encouraging the group to apply for this special IRS tax status. It will allow the group to apply for grants that may not be open to public libraries.

There are great resources available for more in-depth information. Both WebJunction and ALA provide free webinars, as well as memberships that can help you build and grow a successful Friends of the Library group.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: In general, the Friends group will be the main group fundraising for a municipal library. In some cases, all revenue generated goes into the municipal general fund. Alternatively, a library district may have both a Friends group and a Foundation.

A Foundation usually has more of a focus on planned giving and bequests, corporate giving, and capital (building or remodeling) campaigns. These are also usually 501(c)(3) organizations. Some library districts may have a combined Friends and Foundation group.

When you're ready for more details...

WebJunction – Information and webinars on Friends, Trustees, and Volunteers

<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/friends-trustees.html>

American Library Association – United for Libraries

<http://www.ala.org/united/>

Read, Sally Gardner. *The Good, the Great, and the Unfriendly: A Librarian's Guide to Working with Friends Groups*. ALA, United for Libraries, 2017.

XXIII. LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS

Sometimes a library has a Foundation as well as a Friends group. Sometimes a group is even called the Friends and Foundation Group. But what is the difference? The difference is the strategy they use for fundraising. Foundations focus on major fundraising activities for the library that go well beyond an annual book sale. A Foundation is typically involved in activities such as:

- endowments
- planned giving campaigns
- bequests
- corporate giving
- capital campaigns
- high profile fundraising events

Members of the Foundation focus on fundraising and not volunteering directly in the library, and they are often potential major donors themselves. Foundations may not meet on a regular basis unless they are involved in active fundraising, such as for a capital campaign.

In a large library system, a Foundation may have a paid director position in contrast to a Friends group which is a volunteer organization. This is rare in smaller libraries as most people rely on volunteers for Foundations.

If you don't have a Foundation and think you'd like to get one going, ALA has a great resource page to help you get started. It includes a fact sheet, Bylaw examples, and more.

MUNICIPAL V. DISTRICT: The is highly unlikely that a municipal library would have a Foundation, but there may be an umbrella fundraising group like a Foundation that supports all city/county departments. Check with the City/County Administrator to see if there are funding opportunities outside of the general fund. Municipal libraries often have Friends groups but not often a Foundation. Like all relationships, Foundations take time to nurture and grow, so keep this in mind.

When you're ready for more details...

United for Libraries Resources for Library Foundations

<http://www.ala.org/united/foundations>