



# **Library Board of Trustees**

## **Orientation Guide**



Bismarck Veterans Memorial  
Public Library

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# About

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## **Mission**

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

## **Vision**

Offering information, ideas and personal enrichment to all.

## **Values**

- Ensuring fast access to information
- Treating all patrons with respect and equity
- Responding to community needs
- Providing quality basic services without charge
- Protecting freedom of information, privacy and confidentiality
- Providing a safe and secure environment
- Stewarding community resources
- Focusing on cooperative development through partnerships
- Encouraging programming and display of the arts

## **Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library**

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

Interest grew and the Andrew Carnegie Corporation was approached for a grant to build a "real library." Application was made and Bismarck was offered \$25,000 for its first building if the city would provide a minimum upkeep of \$2,500 annually. In February 1916, A.W. Lucas, president of the City Commission, brought the idea to the governing body and they decided to ask the citizenry. City citizens showed their support, 374 to 70, in a February 28<sup>th</sup> election. The city then donated the site at the southwest corner of Thayer Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street and the Commercial Club began collecting books for the new Bismarck Public Library, which opened in 1917 with a collection of about 4,000 items.

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

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

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

Since the early 1970's, Burleigh County has contracted with the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library (BVMPL) to operate and maintain bookmobile services to rural schools and communities. The staff, collection, and bookmobile are housed in BVMPL. The bookmobile currently has 77 locations and makes 700 stops annually. Due to the reciprocal agreement between the city and county, all residents have access to both the bookmobile and BVMPL.

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

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

A 600 square foot coffee shop was built in 2007, with fundraising efforts through the Bismarck Library Foundation. It is currently leased and operated by The Gifted Bean Coffee Shop. In 2013, the Foundation raised \$643,000 to redesign the Children's Library. In 2013, a major remodeling of the main circulation desk was completed. In 2016, the Foundation raised over \$442,000 to construct an enclosed teen center.

In late 2016, the Bismarck Mobile Library began outreach service to individuals within the City of Bismarck. The Mobile Library delivers bins of books to assisted living centers and preschools, which insures personal enrichment and reading opportunities for older adults and young children who cannot physically visit the BVMPL. The Mobile Library was made possible by a vehicle donation from Kupper Chevrolet. Ongoing insurance and fuel costs are covered by the Friends of the Bismarck Public Library.

Open seven days a week at 5,772 hours annually, which includes outreach services, BVMPL has a staff consisting of 31.5 FTE, which includes 16 full-time and 43 part-time persons. 64% of city residents are registered cardholders. Close to 386,000 people walked through our doors in 2016, making BVMPL one of the most used public facilities in Bismarck. In 2016, BVMPL circulated over 532,000 items. Public services include: professional reference and information research - 36,924 queries answered at the Information Desks; database searching with full-text online magazines and journals purchased through a statewide contract; interlibrary loan of materials from across the nation; free public Internet - 137,311 sessions; free Wi-Fi throughout the entire building - 38,214 sessions; and a shared online catalog with CDLN that includes more than 531,000 holdings. BVMPL also connects directly with the state university system catalog, Online Dakota Information Network, and Online Computer Library Center, Inc., the national database of major libraries in the United States, Europe and Asia.

BVMPL's website ([www.bismarcklibrary.org](http://www.bismarcklibrary.org)) includes access to the online catalog as well as a wide array of purchased electronic databases, available 24/7. Downloadable eBooks and digital audio books are available through a shared purchasing agreement.

BVMPL has 36 Internet computers that are readily available for adults along with 11 catalog search stations. We have six computers dedicated for patron instruction and offer classes on computer-related skills throughout the year. We offer year-round programming that is facilitated by BVMPL and partnering community organizations for all ages, and we were the number one ranked public library in the state for program attendance in 2016. The Children's Library has a total of 12 computers with filtered Internet for homework and educational games. A lower level includes three meeting rooms which are available to the public for meetings, classes, recitals, and public forums.

# Welcome to the Library Board

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

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

The Library Director will contact you to welcome you to the library board and to set up an appointment for the orientation session.

Trustee orientation includes a tour of BVMPL, an introduction to the information included in this orientation guide, and other documents you may find helpful as you familiarize yourself with BVMPL operations.

# Library Board of Trustees: Job Description

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## Qualifications & Experience

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

## Duties

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

**President Job Description - Duties**

- Presides at all board meetings
- Serves as the chief spokesperson for the library board
- Creates committees as necessary
- Communicates as necessary with the Library Director

**Vice-President Job Description - Duties**

- Presides when the president is absent
- Accepts responsibilities as delegated by the board president



# Responsibilities: Library Board and Library Director

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

Sometimes the line between policy and operation is very thin and the differences are subtle. Basically, the board of trustees and the library director must work as a team, just as the library director must construct a team with employees. In order to work successfully, it must be a process of two-way communication, consultation, and trust building.

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

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

# Library Board of Ethics

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

As a member of the Library board I will:

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

# BOARD RESOURCES

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

## **Library Resources**

[Annual Reports](#)

[Bylaws](#)

[Minutes](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[Library Policies](#)

## **State Laws and Standards**

[North Dakota Library Law](#)

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

[Open Records and Meetings Laws](#)

## **National Library Policies**

[Library Bill of Rights](#)

[Freedom to Read Statement](#)

## **Library Bill of Rights**

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

A history of the Library Bill of Rights is found in the latest edition of the [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#).

## **Freedom to Read Statement**

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in

life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read



is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

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This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

*A Joint Statement by:*

[American Library Association](#)  
[Association of American Publishers](#)

*Subsequently endorsed by:*

[American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression](#)  
[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](#)  
[The Children's Book Council](#)  
[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)  
[National Association of College Stores](#)  
[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)  
[National Council of Teachers of English](#)  
[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](#)

# ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

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- Library Tour
  - Main Floor – adult area
  - Main Floor – children’s library
  - Main Floor – teen zone
  - Lower Level – fiction/magazines/800’s-900’s
  - Lower Level – meeting rooms
  - Staff areas
- Orientation Guide
- Board Responsibilities
- Board Resources
- Budget Information
- Organizational Chart
- Library Staff Policies

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This guide was prepared using information from the following:

*Board and Director Roles and Responsibilities* - Washington Secretary of State

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

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

*In the Public Trust* – Indiana State Library

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

*Wisconsin Library Trustee Handbook* – Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction