



Rules of the Game

This material first appeared as a chapter in
The Ontario Library Trustee's Handbook,
by Randee Loucks. Revised edition.
Toronto : OLA Press, ©2001.
ISBN 0-88969-044-8.
The book may be purchased from the OLASore
at www.accessola.com.

Over the course of your tenure as a Library Board member, you will face many challenges. The 21st century brings formidable changes including more complex information technology. There will be stronger and more strident arguments against Intellectual Freedom. You may be asked to provide more service with fewer resources. There may be possibilities for exciting and challenging partnerships. You may find it necessary to seek alternative sources of funding to enable the library to achieve its aims. It is hoped that this handbook has alerted you to areas that require your attention, and gives you information and resources to meet the coming challenges.

To sum up, here are ten significant points to remember:

1. Act always in the best interests of the library.

The Library Board is a corporation whose purpose is to provide library service that meets the needs of the entire community. The Board represents all of the taxpayers and residents and must ensure the best possible stewardship.

2. Know your job.

Take the time to learn about your job and take care to do it well.

3. Keep learning!

There is always new information, an advance in technology or a proposed change in legislation that could affect the library. It is important to be open to new learning all the time.

4. Connect with other trustees and Boards.

Sharing information with other trustees and Boards helps to strengthen the trustee's understanding of issues and learn new approaches to problems.

5. Govern, don't manage.

Avoid the temptation to get involved in the nitty-gritty of running the library. Work at a Board level with a focus on the future.

6. Know your community.

Take the time to get to know your community and understand their needs for information. It is the only way that you can represent their interests.

7. Build community support.

If you represent your community well, the community will be more likely to support the efforts of the Board in return.

8. Develop a good relationship with Council.

Use every opportunity to reinforce your linkage with Municipal Council.

9. Use resources wisely.

Remember that the Board is accountable for the stewardship of the library – a public resource.

10. Defend Intellectual Freedom.

Public libraries are built upon the principle of universal access to information. This is a cornerstone of a free and democratic society. As a Library Board, your job is to defend this principle and still represent the interests and values of your community.

If you are creative and do your job well, your library will be the light at the beginning of the tunnel for your community.