

Introduction

So you're a trustee! How did that happen, and what is expected of you now?

Your new job has the potential to be exciting, challenging, and rewarding, but it will also require effort. You have obtained this position because the elected officials of your municipality believe you have the ability and dedication to contribute positively to the management of the public library—one of the most accessible and beneficial institutions in your community. Your three-year term gives you an opportunity to help your friends and neighbors take advantage of a wide array of services from the comfort and convenience of their local library.

The municipal governing body has established the public library using laws from Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin Statutes, and this same chapter specifies the appointment procedure and the legal authority of the public library board. (See [Trustee Essential #2: Who Runs the Library?](#) and [Trustee Essential #18: Library Board Appointments and Composition.](#)) Your job as a trustee, then, has significant statutory authority vested in it, making it a powerful and important position.

The tasks involved in being a library trustee are varied; they are explained in more detail in the *Trustee Essentials* that comprise this publication. One of the most important things to remember, though, is that a library trustee is part of a decision making team: the library board. By statute, it is the board that has the authority and responsibility for managing the library. For a board to function, however, it must include active, enthusiastic trustees who are prepared to do their part to make the board effective.

Congratulations! And thank you from across Wisconsin for the dedication you have exhibited by accepting this appointment. Your library needs and appreciates you. Your efforts are invaluable.

How this handbook can help

This publication comprises a number of *Trustee Essentials*, along with additional appendices. As the name implies, these *Trustee Essentials* cover the basic, essential information needed by you, the trustee, to serve your community effectively. Almost every *Trustee Essential* includes sources of additional information that can help in case you run into an issue or question not addressed.

It is recommended that these *Trustee Essentials* be used during orientation sessions for new trustees. And, because even experienced trustees benefit from a review of the issues essential to library board operations and trustee duties, it is recommended that these *Trustee Essentials* be used for short continuing education sessions held during regular or special board meetings. (For more information on use of this handbook see [Trustee Essential #27: Trustee Orientation and Continuing Education](#).)

To get a quick overview of the topics covered in these Trustee Essentials, start with [Trustee Essential #1: The Trustee Job Description](#).

Trustee Essentials: A Handbook for Wisconsin Public Library Trustees was prepared by the DLT with the assistance of the Trustee Handbook Revision Task Force.

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