



Officers of the Library Board

IC 36-12-2-23(a)

Any group that expects to accomplish anything must have leaders to keep the group organized, help the group discipline itself, prod the group to move ahead, and facilitate the work of the group to make good decisions. That's the function of all board officers.

Your board may have some or all of the officers described below. Boards grow from different traditions and have different ideas about the type and number of officers they need. The job responsibilities of your board's officers may vary from those described below.

Someone has to be the board's leader and that person is the board president. The job description for the president is relatively simple, but the job can be complex.

First of all, the board president must be understood to have no power beyond that of any other board member unless the full board has granted that power to the president. For example, the board may delegate specific powers to the board president, such as managing board meetings, speaking to the public on behalf of the board or signing contracts on behalf of the board.

The board president

Any power exercised by the board president must first be granted by the full board in policy or in commonly accepted and understood practice of the board. In other words, the board president does not speak for the board unless the full board has formally or informally delegated that privilege to the president.

Traditionally, the board president has several duties:

- **Planner**--The president works with the director to plan the meeting agenda and the manner in which the meeting will be conducted. The president keeps an overall view of the board year and ensures that the board is completing duties mandated by board policy or law.
- **Facilitator**--The president's job must be viewed as more of a facilitator of meetings than a controller of board meetings. The president begins the meetings on time, directs the board through the agenda and attempts to adjourn the meeting on time.

As facilitator, the president ensures that all board members have opportunity for

fair participation, attempts to get all sides of an issue fairly exposed and moves the board to action on the issues.

- **Delegator**--The president traditionally has the power to appoint board members and others to committees with board consent. To do that, the president must have a clear understanding of each board member's skills, strengths and interests so that appropriate assignment can be made.

It is also the president's responsibility as delegator to make sure that committee assignments are clear and to hold the committees accountable to do the job assigned. The president is often a member of every committee.

- **Liaison**--The president must be able to interpret board needs and concerns to the director and director needs and concerns to the board. In addition, the president offers personal support and counsel to the director and serves as a sounding board for the director.

- **Team builder**--The board must always function as a team, and it is the duty of the president to foster the team concept among board members. When there is danger of damage to the team structure, the president must mediate, counsel and discipline fellow board members to keep the team intact.

***The board
vice-president***

The vice-president of the board traditionally serves as the backup for the board president. However, the vice-president is usually assigned additional specific duties such as chairing a committee, taking charge of board development activities or preparing for special board events.

The vice-president must work with the president to stay current on issues and methods of board operation so that the vice-president can assume the president's duties if the president cannot perform the required function. The vice-president is often considered the logical successor to the president's position when the current president vacates the position.

***The Board
Secretary***

The size and the complexity of the business of today's library dictates that the traditional job of the secretary of the board be significantly changed.

For example, the minutes of the board meeting should be taken by a staff mem-

ber and not the board secretary. All board members need to be able to participate in deliberations, but the board secretary cannot do that well while taking the minutes. The board secretary's job becomes that of overseer to be sure the job is done correctly and that the minutes of all meetings are safeguarded for the future.

Correspondence on behalf of the board can also be done by clerical staff with the board secretary acting as overseer. Safe care and maintenance of historical documents of the library are also the responsibility of the board secretary.

The treasurer's job is also one of overseer. Although paid staff usually manage the finances of the library, the board treasurer is responsible to ensure that adequate financial records are kept, accurate and timely financial reports are delivered to the board and an audit of the system's finances is completed bi-annually.

*IC 36-12-2-22
The board
treasurer*

The treasurer may also be asked by the director to assist in preparation of the budget to be submitted to the board and to help interpret financial reports to the board. In the State of Indiana, the treasurer may be a paid staff member other than the director.

Actual processes for electing board officers vary widely, but whatever system your board uses, it must be a serious effort to place the best leaders of the board into the position of leading the board. It cannot be a popularity contest, a struggle between factions for a power position or just "whoever will say yes."

*Electing board
officers*



Not all board members are suited to be or have the skills to be an officer. **Poor selection of leadership can result in a poorly functioning board.**

Board officers, particularly the board president, must be well respected by the rest of the board, must be willing to give the extra time necessary to carry out the extra duties of the office and must have strong leadership skills. Officers should also be board members with some experience on this board.

If you are asked to be a candidate for a board office, consider carefully if you have the extra time it will take, as well as the leadership skills, to do the job well.

Notes: