

# 101 THINGS TO KNOW OR DO AS A WYOMING COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD MEMBER



## **SERVING ON A WYOMING LIBRARY BOARD**

The Wyoming State Library knows that there are more than “101 things” that board members need to know to be effective but it is hoped that these “101 things” provide useful perspective on the issues and policies that are dealt with regularly.

“101 things to know and do as a Wyoming county library board member” is designed to help you better serve as leaders for an important county agency. Instead of presenting a lengthy manual on many aspects of library boardsmanship this publication identifies a number of key points that can assist members in performing their work for the library and understanding Wyoming’s county libraries. Because board members have numerous other commitments with family and community these “101 things” are constructed so the user can review a few at a time and, when necessary, use them as points of discussion at board meetings. There is no sequential priority in these statements.

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT WYOMING LIBRARIES**

1. Statutes defining Wyoming County Libraries are WS 18-7-101 through WS 18-7-106. The statutory duties of the library board can be summarized as:
  - “receive and be responsible for real estate, money or other property
  - “appoint a competent librarian who, with the approval of the board of directors, shall appoint a library staff”
  - “prescribe rules and regulations for the establishment, organization, operation, and use of the county library and library system”
  - “may establish and maintain branches, stations and other library services and facilities”
  - “two or more county libraries may contract to establish a federation of libraries under their jurisdiction for the purpose of providing cooperative library services”
2. By WS 1-23-107 the members of any governmental board, agency, council, commission or governing body are not individually liable for any actions, inactions or omissions by the governmental board, agency, council, commission or governing body. You and the library may still face liabilities as described in the “Wyoming Government Claims Act” starting at WS 1-39-101.
3. Three Wyoming county libraries do not have branches (Goshen, Hot Springs and Niobrara). Two counties have bookmobiles to serve rural residents (Laramie, Natrona).
4. Wyoming has used the county library configuration for over 120 years. Laramie County Library System in Cheyenne is the first documented county library in the United States.
5. Use the publication Wyoming Library Laws published by the state library as your guide to many of the state statutes affecting libraries. The latest version can be found on the Wyoming State Library’s website, <https://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/library-laws/>. You can download it as a PDF on your computer or devices.
6. Wyoming statutes do allow towns to create libraries but most county libraries try to bring services into all towns in the county either through branch libraries or bookmobiles.

7. There is no Wyoming law allowing for the creation of library districts either within a county or a district covering more than one county.
8. Eight Wyoming libraries participate in the Federal Documents Depository Program. The federal government is the world's largest printer and these libraries receive publications on selected topics that add value to their collections and serve Wyoming residents. The list of those libraries is on the web at:  
<https://library.wyo.gov/collections/pubs/wyfdlc/members/>
9. GoWYLD is a portal to many electronic resources that is managed by the state library. It provides access to a wealth of information that is available to all Wyoming residents. The URL is <http://gowyld.net>
10. Wyoming library statistics are necessary for a number of reasons and go well beyond seeing how Wyoming public libraries, as a group, rank with the other states. Wyoming library statistics are found here:  
<https://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/stats/> If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the Research & Statistics Librarian at the state library by email, [thomas.ivie@wyo.gov](mailto:thomas.ivie@wyo.gov) or by calling the state library main number, 307-777-6333, and ask for the Research & Statistics Librarian.
11. Carol McMurry, a Casper native and former Cheyenne librarian, established a \$1 million library endowment that provides grants to Wyoming libraries for projects and to Wyoming librarians for their continuing education. Information starts at <http://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/mcmurry>

## **INFORMATION ON LIBRARY BOARDS**

12. Encourage your director and staff to minimize the use of acronyms of the library profession. But in the interim here are a few that get used often:
  - WLA.....Wyoming Library Association
  - ALA.....American Library Association
  - MPLA....Mountain Plains Library Association (a regional twelve state association)
  - PLA..... Public Library Association (a division of ALA)
  - WYLD... The branding acronym for electronic library resources available for all libraries in the state through the Internet.

- OCLC... The Online Computer Library Center develops and manages an international bibliographic database and numerous products and services related to the database.
  - LSTA..... Library Services and Technology Act. The federal program providing funding to the Wyoming State Library for statewide library development projects.
13. United for Libraries: Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations has created helpful resources for Trustees. They cover the role of trustees, trustee competencies, evaluating the director, mission statements, and more. For these and information about membership in United for Libraries see <http://www.ala.org/united/trustees>
  14. The American Library Association offers an eight point "Code of Ethics" for adoption by library boards at <http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics>
  15. The library board chair and library director should provide an orientation program prior to the first meeting for new board members. The orientation will not be able to include everything about your library and libraries in general but offers time to introduce library laws, library finances, board roles, working relationships and library operations. The state library has a web page designed to assist trustees with these kind of basics and includes a handy dandy handbook too at <https://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/boards/>
  16. WS 16-4-401 through 16-4-408 require that you conduct board business in public. You can only call an Executive Session for the eleven reasons identified in WS 16-4-405. Minutes of those sessions must be recorded and maintained by one of the board members. And don't forget that the discussion in an Executive Session doesn't become public.
  17. Board members should know the basics of parliamentary procedures for effective board meetings. Robert's Rules of Order is the most common guide.
  18. The board chair facilitates discussion by members at the board meeting and should not control the meeting.
  19. The board chair, not the library director, serves as the spokesperson to the media when special, difficult, highly charged, or controversial issues arise. Board

members should not speak on behalf of the board or the library before a board position has been clearly defined by the board.

20. The board does not entertain employee complaints about work scheduling, compensation, assignments, leave, or performance. Those personnel issues are the purview of the director using the personnel policies approved by the board. The library board oversees the library director. The library director manages and supervises all employees.
21. Each board member is expected to attend regular and special meetings. Readings and assignments should be undertaken in earnest. Notify the chair of your absences and resign if regular absences affect your ability to be productive on the board.
22. Board study sessions and regularly scheduled meetings are open meetings by WS 16-4-403(a). Special meetings may be convened providing public notice is given and only the stated special business is conducted.
23. Be sure to forward the minutes of the board meetings to the county commissioners. Highlight any actions or discussions that you want to bring to their attention.
24. Board members should find time to read about public libraries, especially articles on policy decisions, working relationships with the director, advocacy for libraries, and planning.
25. A board member is appointed to a three year term. The county commissioners can reappoint a member to a second three year term but the individual cannot be reappointed after that second term until at least two years have passed. Statutes allow for up to five members on the library board.
26. A job description of a library board member is very useful when talking to potential candidates about a board appointment and reminding county commissioners of the skills and expectations of an appointee.
27. Maintain communications with any local Friends of the Library groups that are supporting your headquarters or branch libraries. These groups need to know about the board's vision for the library system and how contributions of the Friends help reach that vision.

28. You can stay aware of national library-related issues by making District Dispatch from the American Library Association Washington DC Office a favorite browser website. Take a weekly peek at <http://www.districtdispatch.org/>
29. Wyoming legislators are interested in library funding and cooperation. Always be prepared to provide information, a positive comment, or a success story.
30. If you don't have an answer to a question about the library asked of you by a resident, get that person's name and phone number or address so you can follow-up after you look at your board member materials or discuss the question with the director.
31. Treat your director as you would want to be treated if you were the director. Communicate clearly, work cooperatively, and allow the director to make the operational management decisions.
32. A board member should not expect the director to act upon his or her singular recommendation or opinion presented either in a meeting or at any other time.
33. Establish and regularly review goals with the director. Understand what the mission encompasses and what role you play in keeping the organization focused on the goals.
34. Take an active role in strategic planning, set realistic goals, and review the library's work in an ongoing basis.
35. Define the board's role in the library so new members will understand what functions and responsibilities lay with the board and how the separation of power with the director is identified.
36. If you don't know what WYLD means and how it benefits your library and residents then ask your director to give you an update at the next board meeting.
37. Evaluate the director based on the goals or projects that the board establishes for her or him. Discuss accomplishments or difficulties throughout the year so that an evaluation in month 12 produces no surprises. Other issues that might arise need to be addressed in subsequent goal setting sessions or board meetings.

38. The director should have the final decision on whether any employees attend board meetings. The board may request a presentation or report by branch managers or project managers but the director ultimately determines the presenter and content.
39. Use your library resources such as WYLD CAT and GoWYLD regularly to see the range of information available to residents of your county.
40. Join the Wyoming Library Association via <http://www.wyla.org> Trustees or former trustees, or members of friends groups or foundations can join as Active members. Active members receive WLA communications and are eligible to vote, hold office, and serve on any board or committee of the Association.
41. Support at least one member of the board in attending the Wyoming Library Association's legislative reception during each legislative session. This is a major event that provides library representatives a forum to thank legislators for their support and discuss any legislation affecting libraries.
42. Always be prepared for the question "What's new at the library?" with a positive answer related to usage, resources, staff successes or recognition given to the library by a business or organization.
43. Ask your director how statewide library initiatives affect your library and local residents.
44. Public library statistical reports help to determine trends in your library, the state and nation. Be careful about comparing your county library to another in the state because of differences in revenues, demographics, number of branches and other factors.
45. Your director and library staff have continuing education needs. Librarianship is constantly changing with new technologies, new resources, and new approaches to service that require training and education. Ensure that you budget for this adequately.
46. Each Wyoming county library has a not for profit 501(c)3 library foundation recognized by the Internal Revenue Service. Many library boards realize that they can't handle the responsibilities and work of both boards. They recruit community

members with skills in fundraising, donor giving, and event planning to support or lead foundation work.

47. Collectively identify one board member to attend the Wyoming Library Association annual conference to learn more about trusteeship, library issues and how other boards lead their libraries.
48. If you want to learn more about being a library trustee, take a look at *Trustee Trouble* : The misadventures of a new library board member. In this series of ten episodes, laugh and learn along with Dan, a new library trustee, as he muddles through his first year on the library board. The episodes are only 6 to 10 minutes long. You will find them at: <https://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/trustees/>
49. A librarian from a local school or community college should not be encouraged to seek a board appointment. The director needs to work with that individual in cooperative projects and that can be difficult if that librarian is also on the board. And don't support the appointment of a former employee of the library. Seek out other community and business leaders.
50. Support and encourage your director to attend the annual public and academic library directors retreat underwritten by the state library. This event provides a high level continuing education program for directors and the opportunity to discuss important state issues among directors and the state librarian.
51. When you use the library as a customer you should expect no more, or no less service, than what is provided to every other resident of the county.
52. Remember that you are eligible for a Carol McMurry Library Endowment grant for your continuing education as a library board member.
53. Wyoming public libraries have the opportunity to participate in a collaboratively designed summer library program. Representatives from the fifty states, U.S. territories, Bermuda and Cayman Islands meet to identify the summer reading theme, identify books related to the theme, develop activity materials, and promote the program. Guidebooks and professionally designed materials are available at low cost to libraries so staff does not have to create a theme, identify books and make activity materials.

54. Be sure your director designs programs and services that attract teens so that the library is a “cool” place to be.
55. The director determines starting salaries for new employees based upon the salary range adopted by the board, candidate work experience, comparative community wages and budget.
56. The board’s elected secretary does not have to be the recorder of meeting minutes. The board can request the director to have an employee do that work. The board secretary can modify the summary and then seek board approval at the next meeting.
57. The director’s report at board meetings should focus on how activities and work are addressing the library’s goals. The report should review the goals established by the board, the accomplishments, and impediments or deterrents impacting the goals.
58. Support your director’s attendance at workshops on Wyoming employment laws, organizational management, staff utilization, and performance evaluation to maximize staff in their work and assignments.
59. Remember that the director needs to spend time out of the office attending meetings with county and state agencies for partnership programs, making presentations to community groups, and attending government meetings of all the towns in the county.

## **INTRODUCTION TO LIBRARY FINANCES**

60. The assessed valuation of property in the county determines how much tax income the county commissioners are able to collect for governmental operations. By Wyoming Statutes the county commissioners can establish the level of taxation for general government operations within the twelve mill limit. Libraries have no cap within that limit.
61. Some libraries receive a specified number of mills so when revenues are good the library benefits, and when revenues are down the library budget is down.

62. County libraries may receive money for operations from the county treasurer as few as two times a year. Understanding cash flow, reserves and carryover are very important for budgetary planning
63. The Uniform Municipal Fiscal Procedures Act starting in WS 16-4-101 provide the fiscal processes and procedures for dealing with public funds. Be sure you develop familiarity with the language and invite the county clerk to a board meeting to discuss the meaning of the Act.
64. Be a good advocate for adequate funding so the director and staff can reach their identified goals.
65. Continually influence the county commissioners on the importance of staff salaries and benefits equitable with other county employees and appropriate local businesses.
66. Short term investments are important to maximize your revenues received in the spring and fall. Make sure you have an investment policy that complies with WS 9-4-831.
67. Be part of the presentation team when the chair and director present the budget to the county commissioners.
68. Ensure effective fiscal management through well-defined policies that provide the director appropriate executive limitations.
69. Board members should maintain knowledge about the county's financial picture, changing employment, business developments, and education. Use the information to be proactive in your advocacy efforts, policy development and planning.
70. Discuss with the director how the budget presentation will be made to the county commissioners. Will the board chair make introductory remarks? Will the director outline the details? Will the chair provide a summary statement? Will any charts or presentation materials be needed? Will the chair of the foundation or chair of the friends group be needed?

71. As a principal advocate for the library you need to help create a vision for what the library can and should be for residents. Do not let financial conditions deter you from thinking positively.
72. Use the annual audit of the library as a tool to ensure fiscal policies are being followed and good fiscal decisions are being made.

### **INFORMATION ON POLICIES**

73. Know the "Record Retention Schedules" for County Libraries so you know how long meeting minutes, employee records, financial transactions and other documents must be kept. You can find them at <http://wyoarchives.state.wy.us/> Click on the orange "Ask an Archivist" button for contact information or sent email.
74. Be sure you have a policy which identifies why paper and electronic records with patron information are kept and for how long. Signup sheets for public computers, computer cache or histories, receipt books for overdue or lost book payments, paper interlibrary loan requests, and registration forms for library cards can all be information used inappropriately or be part of materials subpoenaed by law enforcement officers. Follow the "Record Retention Schedules" for County Libraries written by the Wyoming State Archives. Access information for them is given in #73 above.
75. Be sure you have a policy on how staff should respond to law enforcement inquiries, search warrants, and subpoenas for library records and equipment. The county attorney should be able to assist in designing this policy.
76. Practice succession planning by establishing policies and opportunities that support career ladders for staff, graduate and undergraduate library science coursework, and recruitment of a professional librarian as director when the position becomes vacant.
77. Use or create committees of board members if there are special board projects that need to be undertaken e.g. reviewing the bylaws, creating the board's operating policy handbook, etc.

78. Be sure you understand the reconsideration of library materials policy and your role in the event a county resident challenges the content of an item in the library, a book display or the use of the meeting room.
79. The library, as a governmental agency, must make its public records available for inspection per WS 16-4-201 through 205. These include original vouchers, receipts and other paper or electronic documents necessary to validate transactions. Correspondence, forms and policy manuals are also public. A library policy needs to define the requesting process, identify any costs for reproduction, and state legal limitations. Patron circulation transactions are not public records.
80. As a board member for the entire system your first responsibility is to the library system as a whole. Do not approach your duties acting only on behalf of residents in your part of the county.
81. Be sure you understand what it means that the State Librarian is the custodian of public library records in the WYLD integrated library system and related products. In WS 16 4 203 (d) (ix) the right of inspection and the grounds for denial of public records are covered. The custodian "shall deny the right of inspection of the following records, unless otherwise provided by law", and this denial of inspection includes "Library patron transaction and registration records except as required for administration of the library or except as requested by a custodial parent or guardian to inspect the records of his minor child."
82. Check with your county attorney to determine if you have to announce policy changes in accordance with the Wyoming Administrative Procedures Act starting at WS 16-3-101. County attorneys may interpret this differently from time to time.
83. Be sure you have a policy that clearly states what staff are expected to do when they observe an illegal activity on library property e.g. theft or damage to personal or library property (WS 6-3-201), observing a user retrieving child pornography on a library terminal (WS 6-4-301), child abuse (WS 6-2-503) or any other crime as defined in Title 6 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Wyoming Statutes. Specific criminal activity supersedes privacy rights.
84. The Board needs to focus part of each meeting on reviewing policies to ensure they reflect current laws, changing library practices statewide, and county budget conditions.

85. Lending your library's resources to other libraries is important for long-term cooperation. This is not just nice but necessary since no one library can afford to purchase and house even a small percentage of the new books published each year. Support your library's policy for interlibrary cooperation.
86. Your Internet Use Policy defines public behavior in using the library's computers. No matter how liberal or restrictive your policy might be, ongoing cases show that it can be problematic especially after some undesired event occurs in your community. The board should regularly review the policy to make sure it speaks to current use of the computers as well as any advances in technology.
87. The Board is responsible for ensuring that the policies that it develops or adopts including those recommended by the director, reflect the library as a center of the community, an access point to many resources, a source of good management, and rich in fiduciary responsibility.
88. Constantly build and update your "Board Operations Policy" to complement and clarify the processes related to your bylaws, your defined working relationship with the director, executive limitations you establish for the director, and board practices. The six year term limits for board members means that oral agreements between the board and director, and among the board members, get lost over time. Your director needs operational policy consistency to manage the library effectively.
89. The board must maintain a united voice after voting on a policy or action. The board's decision is the library's position.
90. Learn about your responsibility for supporting intellectual freedom by reading The American Library Association's "The Library Bill of Rights" and "The Freedom to Read." As board members, your policy supporting intellectual freedom is paramount among policies.
91. Librarians consider the protection of patrons' privacy vital for the library's role as a provider of information to residents. Unless court documents require it, Wyoming state law denies other citizens and law enforcement official access to patron circulation records and other related transactions, e. g., what patrons have checked out. Wyoming's patron privacy law is found in WS 16-4-203(d)(ix). Be sure to read all of the statute's paragraph 203 to put this privacy law into context

and to remember that the State Librarian is the only person who can authorize access to certain library records (see #81 above).

92. Expect your director to recommend policies and policy changes to the board with justifications or documentation on the reasoning for them.
93. Allow the director to establish the internal steps and define staff responsibilities for implementing and maintaining the policies you establish. Do not “micro-manage” the director in her or his decisions or actions in running the library.

### **INFORMATION ON STATE LIBRARY SUPPORT**

94. The Wyoming State Library does not set policies for the management of local libraries. Each library board sets all policies. The availability of WYLD products and services may mean that libraries need to modify service policies for statewide cooperation.
95. The Wyoming State Library can provide training and information sessions on board roles, current issues, and statewide projects either during a regular board meeting or other convenient time.
96. The Wyoming State Library offers a special orientation for new library directors. This is an important opportunity for a new director to understand statewide initiatives as projects that enhance cooperation among libraries, the benefits arising from resource sharing efforts, and a chance to meet state library staff. The state library reimburses the director or library for lodging in Cheyenne and meals associated with the orientation. Encourage your new director to attend.
97. Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) federal funds are made available annually to the Wyoming State Library through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). A five year plan identifies the types of projects that will be offered for the benefit of library workers, libraries and residents. Employee continuing education, resource sharing, interlibrary cooperation, electronic resources and central services are ongoing priorities.
98. The Wyoming State Library has books, electronic media and other resources that you can use to learn more about being a board member, making policies, and understanding library issues. These are part of a “professional collection” of materials available to trustees, directors and all library staff.

99. The Wyoming State Library publishes a monthly newsletter called the *Outrider*. It contains news, notes, and stories about the Wyoming library community. To subscribe to it and/or to read current and past issues visit <https://library.wyo.gov/news/newsletter/> Also available in the same location are former publications *Wyoming Library Roundup* and *News to Use* publications. The latter title was written as an information source for board members. The state library regularly updates the *Library Board Members' Handbook* and maintains a list of resources including the popular *Trustee Trouble* videos, all found here: <https://library.wyo.gov/services/ldo/boards/> A helpful glossary prepared with board members in mind and defining WYLD and other library technologies' terminology is found at: <https://library.wyo.gov/downloads/WYLD/pdf/glossary.pdf> Lastly, national and Wyoming library news is daily provided via social media on Twitter, @WyoLibraries, the state library blog <https://library.wyo.gov/news/> and at Wyoming State Library on Facebook.
100. Contact the state library when your director retires or resigns. You will receive assistance in designing the job announcement and advertising options for the vacancy, and receive support defining a plan under an interim director.
101. Feel free to contact the state library for assistance or answers to your questions by calling 1-800-264-1281.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact the state library at 307-777-6333. or go to <http://library.wyo.gov/>



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