

Chapter 3: Code of Ethics

As a board member of a public library, you are a public servant. The public expects that your conduct will always be above question and for the public good, not for your own interest or another special interest. United for Libraries: Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations (previously the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates), has adopted the following statement on ethics which you may want to adopt as a board.

It will also help your library function effectively if you:

Public Library Trustee Ethics Statement Official Statement from United for Libraries

Public library Trustees are accountable for the resources of the library as well as to see that the library provides the best possible service to its community.

Every Trustee makes a personal commitment to contribute the time and energy to faithfully carry out his/her duties and responsibilities effectively and with absolute truth, honor and integrity.

- Trustees shall respect the opinions of their colleagues and not be critical or disrespectful when they disagree or oppose a viewpoint different than their own.
- Trustees shall comply with all the laws, rules and regulations that apply to them and to their library.
- Trustees, in fulfilling their responsibilities, shall not be swayed by partisan interests, public pressure or fear of criticism.
- Trustees shall not engage in discrimination of any kind and shall uphold library patrons' rights to privacy in the use of library resources.
- Trustees must distinguish clearly in their actions and statements between their personal philosophies and attitudes and those of the library, acknowledging and supporting the formal position of the Board even if they disagree.
- Trustees must respect the confidential nature of library business and not disclose such information to anyone. Trustees must also be aware of and in compliance with Freedom of Information laws.
- Trustees must avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or financial benefits gained as a result of their position or access to privileged library information, for either themselves or others.
- A Trustee shall immediately disqualify him/herself whenever the appearance of or a conflict of interest exists.
- Trustees shall not use their position to gain unwarranted privileges or advantages for themselves or others from the library or from those who do business with the library.
- Trustees shall not interfere with the management responsibilities of the director or the supervision of library staff.
- Trustees shall support the efforts of librarians in resisting censorship of library materials by groups or individuals.

Approved by the United for Libraries Board in January 2012

- Recognize that all authority is vested in the board when it meets in legal session and not with individual board members
- Represent the whole community to the library and not just a particular area or group
- Are objective in hiring the library director
- Don't promise prior to a meeting how you will vote on a particular issue