

Chapter 12: Hiring a Library Director

Your job as a library board member is to make sure the library operates well and in the best interest of those the library serves. To do that, the board hires a qualified director to manage the day-to-day operations of the library.

What Do Public Library Directors Do?

Before hiring a library director, the entire board should have a good grasp of what a public library director does. The library director is the department head of a city service whose responsibilities include:

- Acts as professional / technical advisor to the library board of trustees on policy, finances, planning, library performance, laws effecting libraries.
- Hires and supervises personnel.
- Implements board policy, interprets library policy for the public.
- Administers the library budget.
- Develops the library collection (“collection” is everything the library has on hand for its customers: books, DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers, subscriptions to electronic resources, puppets and more).
- Manages library services and programs.
- Directs and provides outreach services to the community.
- Manages and maintains the library facility/building, computer technology, the library’s automation system and other library equipment.
- Represents the library in the community and promotes the library and its services.
- Teaches the community how to access, evaluate and use information resources.

In small cities with few or no other library staff, the library director serves customers directly and may also:

- Provide pre-school story time to build early literacy skills in young children.
- Help kids find resources to complete school assignments.
- Help readers find a good book.
- Find answers to questions from customers.
- And yes, check out books!

As you can see by the list of responsibilities, hiring a library director is one of the most important duties of the library board.

To ensure that the most qualified candidate is hired, it is critical that the library board follow standard hiring procedures as outlined below.

Preliminary Assessment

The board must reach consensus on what they want a new director to accomplish and what qualifications are needed in a director for the library at this point in time. In order to do this, the board needs to discuss the following questions:

- What is the role of the library in the community?
- Have community needs changed? Has the library kept pace?
- What direction does the library need to go?

- What qualifications are needed in the next director?
- What is the reason for the job opening?
- Was the previous director dissatisfied? Why?
- Was the board dissatisfied with the previous director? Why?

Develop a Time Line

A time line should be established which would include:

- Appointment of the search committee
- Review of the job description and writing the job announcement
- Date that the job announcement will appear on websites and/or in newspapers, journals
- Deadline for applications
- Time to review applications and decide on persons to interview
- When to interview
- Time for the board to make a decision and offer the job to the candidate
- Time for the candidate to respond
- Anticipated starting date for the new director

Search Committee

The board as a whole can function as the search committee. An alternative is to form a committee of board members, staff and community members to review the applications and recommend candidates for the board to interview. If a search committee is appointed, be sure the duties of the committee and the deadlines are clear.

Job Description

The job description should indicate the minimum requirements for education and work experience. The job description should also include any desirable areas of expertise and work experience. All minimum requirements and desirable qualifications must be job related. The board should not hire a person with less than the minimum requirements.

Obtain a copy of the current job description from the current library director, the acting director or the city. (If no written job description exists, the board will need to write one before continuing with the hiring process.) Review it to ensure that it meets current requirements including:

- Areas of responsibility
- Specific duties
- Minimum requirements for education and work experience
- Desirable areas of expertise and work experience
- Salary and benefits
- Whether there is a period of probation
- Expectations for successful job performance
- Physical / environmental requirements of the job
- Certification requirements

Certification of the Library Director

Library director applicants should be certified, or be willing to become certified within two years of hire, under the Iowa Certification Program for Public Librarians administered by Iowa Library Services. To receive Direct State Aid, a public library must have a director who is certified or who becomes certified within two years of hire at the required level. The level of required certification is tied to the population of the community:

Population	Required Certification Levels
0 - 2,499	I, II, III, IV, V, VI
2,500 - 4,999	II, III, IV, V, VI
5,000 - 19,999	IV, V, VI
20,000 and above	VI

Level I

- High school diploma or General Educational Development (GED)
- Complete Public Library Management 1 and 2 (offered by Iowa Library Services)

Level II

- High school diploma or General Educational Development (GED)
- Complete Public Library Management 1 and 2 (offered by Iowa Library Services)
- Five years of library work experience or 30 semester hours of college credit from an accredited college or university

Level III

- High school diploma or General Educational Development (GED)
- Complete Public Library Management 1 and 2 (offered by Iowa Library Services)
- 10 years of library work experience or 60 semester hours of college credit from an accredited college or university

Level IV

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
- Complete Public Library Management 1 and 2 (offered by Iowa Library Services)

Level V

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
- A college credit course in each of these four areas: library administration; selection of all types of library materials; organization of library materials; reference and information services

Level VI

- Graduate degree in library and information science from an accredited college or university

Too often the work of library directors and staff is not understood, is undervalued and is not compensated fairly. In other words, **many library directors (and staff) receive lower pay than other employees who do comparable work.**

Salary

The first step in achieving pay commensurate with the work performed, referred to as “pay equity,” is to understand the job duties and responsibilities. It will help to re-read the previous section in this chapter, What Do Public Library Directors Do?

The questionnaire called “The Value of Librarians: Reaching Equitable Compensation,” can be used to compare to other positions in the local city or school district. Available on Iowa Library Services’ website, this tool helps to gather information about duties and responsibilities, education required, experience, computer skills, communication and contacts, customer satisfaction and service, working conditions, complexity and problem

solving, and decision making. The information can then be used to compare to similar positions. In some libraries, the director’s position might be comparable to the city clerk; in another city, it might compare to another city department head. In any case, pay for the library director should be comparable to city / school district positions with similar education requirements and responsibilities.

A caution...library boards and directors often ask about salaries of directors of nearby libraries of like size. While that can be useful information it should not be the sole basis for decisions on salary for the library director. Because low pay is a common concern among libraries, comparing to other libraries’ salary schedules is often comparing to equally low salaries that don’t adequately compensate for the work performed.

Advertising the Position

The job description should be used to write the job announcement. The job announcement should be as comprehensive as possible. Provide a description of the position, required education and experience, and desirable areas of expertise and work experience. Include the salary range and benefits, a brief description of the library and community, where to send applications, and application deadline. Request a resume and professional references.

Many cities have policies regarding what types of advertising must be done, and they may also have a budget for it. If your city has a Human Resources department, check the department before placing ads.

The job opening should be publicized widely. If the library board is considering hiring a director with a master’s degree in Library Science, notify library schools; purchase an online ad through the American Library Association. If you decide to place print ads in professional journals such as *American Libraries* and *Library Journal*, check publication deadlines and how they fit with your time line. In addition to advertising in a local newspaper, a notice may be placed on Iowa Library Services’ Job List at no cost, <http://www.statelibraryofiowa.org/ld/joblist>.

Reviewing Applicants

As applications arrive, each should be marked with the date of arrival to determine whether it falls within the deadline. Applications should also be acknowledged (such as via e-mail) by the search committee. Before applications are reviewed, criteria should be developed and used to rank them. It is helpful if a form is developed to screen and compare each applicant's qualifications to the requirements of the position. Some qualifications to consider are:

- education
- public library experience
- management or supervisory experience

A phone interview with preliminary candidates may be helpful to determine final interviewees.

Information for candidates who will be interviewed

Prior to the interviews, provide candidates with the library mission statement; planning document; budgets for the last several years; size and description of community; information about employers, shopping, schools, churches, recreation, higher education, and any other information that will inform candidates about the library and community.

Interview

Develop a list of questions to be asked of every candidate interviewed. Topics to cover in the interview include management and fiscal philosophy, intellectual freedom, technology, trends, the library's role in the community. It is illegal to ask certain questions of candidates, such as marital status, age, family plans, etc. For more about interviewing see Iowa Workforce Development's Successful Interviewing Guide, <http://www.iowaworkforce.org/sig.htm>

Another resource is A Library Board's Practical Guide to Finding the Right Library Director, by the Outagamie Waupaca Library System in Wisconsin. See <http://www.owlsweb.info/L4L/trustees/GuideToFindingTheRightLibraryDirector.pdf>

As part of the interview, arrange a tour of the library, a meeting with staff, and an opportunity for the candidate to learn about the community.

Evaluating candidates who were interviewed

Use an evaluation form to record candidate responses and board member impressions. Once all of the finalists have been interviewed, the search committee should discuss and rank the finalists. Some qualifications to consider in ranking candidates are:

- attitude of service to the community and enthusiasm for librarianship
- philosophy of library service attuned with that of the library's mission statement
- ability to explain how his or her experience and talent can be used as library director
- understanding of the role of trustees
- successful record of working with board and community leaders, and supervising staff
- willingness to become involved in the community and ability to be comfortable in relations with the public
- knowledge of basic principles such as intellectual freedom
- a reasonable grasp of the library's situation, budget and plans based on information supplied to the candidate in advance
- commitment to continuing education for the director and staff

Check references before offering the position to a candidate. When calling references, agreed-upon questions should be asked with space on the form for search committee members to write down responses. A search committee may want to seek out references other than those listed. Be aware, some employers will only verify such things as dates of employment and last salary earned.

Hiring Decision

Finally, decide if one or more of the candidates should be offered the job or if the search is to be reopened. The top candidate should be offered the position by telephone. When a candidate accepts the position, follow up with a letter of agreement indicating date employment begins, salary, benefits, etc. The board may want to consider a formal contract. Notify other candidates that they have not been selected immediately after the job offer has been accepted.