

Chapter 5: Board Officers

Board officers keep the board organized, help the group move ahead, and facilitate the work of the board to make good decisions. 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.

President

The board's leader is the board president. **However, the board president does not have 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

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 experienced board members. 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.

president, such as managing board meetings, speaking to the public on behalf of the board, or signing contracts on behalf of the board.

Traditionally, the board president has several roles:

Planner —The president works with the director to plan the meeting agenda and how the meeting will be conducted. The president keeps an overall view of the board year and ensures that the board is carrying out duties.

Presider / Facilitator—The president sees that the board follows the agenda, completes items on the agenda and that the meetings are well run. The president ensures that all board members have an opportunity to participate; attempts to get all sides of an issue fairly exposed and move the board to take action.

Delegator—Since the president usually has the power to make committee appointments, the president must have a clear understanding of each board member's skills, strengths and interests so that effective assignments are made. It is also the president's responsibility to make sure that committee assignments are clear and to hold the committees accountable for completing the assignment.

Liaison—The president must be able to communicate board needs and concerns to the director, and the director's 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 promote teamwork among board members. When the effectiveness of the board is at risk, the president mediates with and counsels fellow board members.

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 works with the president to stay current on library business and board operation so that the vice-president would be able to assume the president's duties if the president could not carry them out. The vice-president is often considered the logical successor to the president when the current president vacates the position.

Secretary

One board member has traditionally served as secretary. However, since library business is more complex and all board members are needed to participate in deliberations, perhaps the traditional role of the board secretary needs to be reexamined. For example, could the board meeting minutes be taken by a staff member so that the board secretary can fully participate in board meetings? Perhaps the board secretary's job could be that of reviewing the minutes for accuracy. The board secretary could still carry out the traditional role of handling board correspondence because this is typically done outside of board meetings.

Election of Officers

The purpose of electing officers is to place the best people into leadership positions. It shouldn't be a popularity contest, a struggle between factions for a power position, or just "whoever will say yes." Choose officers who are well suited for the position and have the necessary skills.