Libraries as Non-Profit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations, such as public libraries, should understand their role as entities that engage and inspire individuals and communities for the public benefit. They should conduct their activities with transparency and integrity and be accountable to their funders and those whom they serve.

Carter McNamara edited the “Checklist of Nonprofit Organizational Indicators” that was originally “developed by staff and volunteers of the United Way of Minneapolis Area for internal use by nonprofit organizations. Management can use the checklist to identify their organization's administrative strengths and weaknesses…. It is believed that widespread use of the checklist ultimately results in a more effective and efficient nonprofit community.”


- “Imagine and Inspire”
- Found and Frame
- Ground and Grow
- Produce and Sustain
- Review and Renew

Nonprofit Organizations Providing Information

National Council of Nonprofits is the umbrella organization for over 20,000 state and regional organizations. Their Nonprofit Economic Vitality Center assembles key information from across the country and packages it in four sections. The first section presents information about the economy and the nonprofit sector. The next section analyzes how the economic downturn is hurting nonprofits in different geographic regions, as well as different types of nonprofits, such as the arts and health care. The third section identifies various action steps that nonprofits can take and illustrates some of those options with examples of proven programs. The final section pays tribute to grantmakers making extra contributions to help nonprofits meet their missions.”

The Foundation Center provides “Links to Nonprofit Resources.”

Although the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University offers consulting and educational programs, their Executive Service Corps provides nonprofit organizations expertise on such topics as: human resources, facilities management, organizational development, strategic planning, finance and technology. Their volunteers serve as executive coaches, facilitators, and legal counsel.
Bucks County Center for Nonprofit Management provides management training, consulting and provides their excellent newsletter online.

The Nonprofit Leadership Institute at Duquesne University lists several management support organizations for nonprofits.

The Stanford Social Innovation Review and the Stanford Graduate School of Business Alumni Consulting Team provide answers to questions about managing nonprofits. Their Ask an Expert Service provides answers to a variety of questions dealing with issues that nonprofit organizations face regularly.

Focused Periodicals

Selected articles are available from current and past issues of The NonProfit Times, The Chronicle of Philanthropy and many other periodicals. For descriptions and an extensive list of these periodicals see Energize Inc., an international training, consulting and publishing firm specializing in volunteerism.

Organizational/Corporate Culture

Kaarst-Brown, Michelle L., Scott Nicholson and Gisela M. Von Dran. "Organizational Cultures of Libraries as a Strategic Resource," Library Trends, 53, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 33-53. OmniFile Full Text Mega, WilsonWeb (accessed April 2, 2010). This review article explore the characteristics of organizational culture and examines whether it "can be leveraged as a strategic asset to attract staff, create favorable assessments by administrators and funders, and cast library institutions in a positive light...."


This classic text on organizational culture includes a section on weak organization cultures that are characterized by a lack of clear values and beliefs. Deal, Terrance E. and Allan A. Kennedy. Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life. Reissue. New York: Basic, 2000. Available through Access Pennsylvania Database. Their five critical elements are still relevant today: business environment, values, heroes/role models, rites and rituals, and the cultural network.

Access Pennsylvania Database. How do you change the culture of your library? See the publisher’s website for an overview, table of contents and excerpts.


Return on Investment

The American Library Association’s Office for Research and Statistics has gathered much information on ROI.

The Taxpayer Return-on-Investment (ROI) in Pennsylvania Public Libraries was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Office of Commonwealth Libraries, in collaboration with the PA Library Association, to determine the economic benefit of public libraries in Pennsylvania. Published in 2006, it was prepared by José-Marie Griffiths, Donald W. King and Sarah E. Aerni from the University of North Carolina School of Information and Library Science. “However, if there were no public libraries, citizens and organizational users would be faced with a much higher cost in terms of both time and money to obtain the needed information from alternative sources. Not only is there an economic return-on investment to citizens and organization users, the surrounding communities receive an economic return in ripple effects from salaries and wages paid to staff, library purchases made, and a halo effect from spending in the nearby community by visitors during their trips to the public libraries.” A presentation on this report was presented at Commonwealth’s Libraries’ Trustees and Friends Institute in 2007. Taxpayer Return on Investment Public Service Announcements were developed to promote the information from the report. To accompany this, the Pennsylvania Library Association compiled and developed “Local Library Action Kit Materials.”

The Economic Value of the Free Library of Philadelphia, published October 2010 and also known as the Fels Report, concluded that the library created more than $30 million worth of economic value to the city in fy2010. Noteworthy is the library’s impact on business development and employment. The main categories of impact are literacy, workforce development, business development and value to homes and neighborhoods.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s ROI study, “Community Impacts and Benefits” was prepared by the Carnegie Mellon University Center for Economic Development. Another study of a large urban library, “The Seattle Public Library Central Library: Economic Benefits Assessment” has as its tagline “The Transformative Power of a Library to Redefine Learning, Community, and Economic Development.” Both of these reports would inform and give shape to one for a smaller library.
One of the early studies was the St. Louis Public Library report, “Public Library Valuation Study,” published in 1999 under the direction of their director, Glen Holt. He also prepared A Manual for Using Cost Benefit Analysis To Value America’s Medium Sized and Smaller Public Libraries.

The State Library and Archives of Florida published a Return on Investment Study in 2004 and updated it in 2010. Collateral pieces are also available.

Mid-Hudson Library System, NY established a website with many links to information about ROI. They included an Excel spreadsheet where your library can enter data for the “Return on Investment Calculator.”

Another site with several links is WebJunction’s.


The New York Library Association prepared a calculator to determine the worth of your library to individuals. The Maine State Library’s calculator is similar.

**Boards**

A “must read” for all library directors is the Training Resource Kit for Pennsylvania Public Library Trustees, published by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and supported in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The topics covered are: Pennsylvania Libraries, Board Basics, Managing Relationships, Board Development, Trends, Policy Making, Hiring, Planning, Money Matters, Advocacy, Meetings, Construction, Marketing and Public Relations. The PowerPoint presentations that follow correlate with the Trustee Toolkit Training Manual. These presentations can also be edited for local purposes.

Pennsylvania Libraries - PowerPoint  
Board Basics - PowerPoint  
Managing Relationships - PowerPoint  
Board Development and Training - PowerPoint  
Trends Driving Change - PowerPoint  
Policy-making Responsibilities - PowerPoint  
Hiring a Library Director - PowerPoint  
What Is Planning? - PowerPoint  
Money Matters - PowerPoint  
Advocacy and the Role of Trustees - PowerPoint  
Effective Meetings - PowerPoint  
To Build or Not to Build - PowerPoint  
Branding and Marketing - PowerPoint
Relating to the Public - PowerPoint

The Trustee Manual should also be near at hand; it’s a source for orientation and reference. Handbook for Public Library Trustees. 5th ed. Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth Libraries, 2003. Although this is available through the Access Pennsylvania Database, it should be on every public library director’s bookshelf.

The Foundation Center provides a list of sources, both print and electronic.

BoardSource is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building effective nonprofit boards of directors and inspiring board service. Their website contains a wealth of materials especially related to nonprofit governance.

The newsletter of the Bucks County Center for Nonprofit Management, Nonprofit News, contains an article, “Ten Simple Things You Can Implement Now to Strengthen Your Board.” Many of these would be implemented by the library director.

“Relationship Between the Board of Director and the Executive Director,” was prepared by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits with the objective of strengthening the relationship between the two parties.

The importance of good board/library director interactions is stressed in “Putting It All Together: Developing a Dynamic Board/Library Director Relationship, A Nonprofit Governance Training Session” designed expressly for Commonwealth’s Libraries’ 20th Annual Public Library Institute for Trustees and Friends, April 2006. Michael Kumer, Executive Director of the Nonprofit Leadership Institute, School of Leadership and Professional Advancement, Duquesne University frequently lectures on topics of interest to nonprofit organizations interested in continuous improvement.

Jan, Anthony T., “Every CEO Should Write an Annual Memo to the Board.” Harvard Business Publishing, November 12, 2009. This indispensible tool can focus leadership on the things that really matter.

Before it’s time for your appraisal, you may want to be thinking about how you relate to the topics addressed in CEO Evaluation 3.0 by Sharon Daniels writing for the National Association of Corporate Directors, NACD Directorship, September 21, 2010.

You may get ideas for your board orientation from the “Overview of Memphis Public Library & Information Center: Board of Trustees Orientation.”

Board Information on Pennsylvania Websites

Upper Dublin Public Library
Mt. Lebanon Public Library
Tredyffrin Township Public Libraries
Conflict of Interest

Learn more about conflict of interest, accepting gifts and other issues of due diligence from Nonprofit Law Podcast #40, *Due Diligence* with Tim Mooney.

Conflict of Interest Policies

- **Port Jefferson Free Library**, NY
- **Hudson Area Association Library**, NY
- **Westchester Library System**, NY
- **Abington Township Public Library**, PA
- **Bethel Park Public Library**, PA

WebJunction Courses

WebJunction Pennsylvania provides a large selection of free and discounted online workshops and training courses available to library employees, library board members, and trustees in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This service is supported by a grant from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. Log on to your account for access to courses such as:

- Directors ASK! (LibraryU)
- Organizational Culture and Leadership
- Creating a Business Execution Culture
- The Impact of Culture on Communication
- Advanced Project Leadership - Navigating Corporate Structures