

# PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS RESOURCES FOR FLORIDA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

## 8. THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR

*“The Board of a Foundation may head that individual group into different directions from what the public library needs. Also, Foundation fundraising and grant writing may inhibit the library from seeking local grants and local funds.”*

*A Florida Library Director*

In all aspects of the development and continued success of library foundations, the most important role is that of the library director. The library director should be the nexus of information, sharing with the library foundation's board of directors and potential donors ideas, concerns, financial and budgetary information, political sensitivities and, most critically, a vision for the future. After all, it is the library director who knows the most about the library, its challenges and its hopes for the future; and, who will ultimately be responsible for partnering in fundraising and ensuring that funds raised by the library foundation are spent in accordance with donors' wishes.

The library director should be a full voting member of the library foundation's board of directors and attend all meetings of that board and its committees in order to help shape the agenda for the foundation and actively participate in the solicitation and oversight of gifts to the foundation. In some cases in Florida, the library director is an ex-officio or non-voting member of the foundation's board. In only one case did the survey of Florida libraries with library foundations indicate that the library director was not a member of the board at all.

The library director is ultimately responsible for seeing that the library foundation's board of directors clearly understands the library's needs for private support, the library's mission and goals and objectives, its priorities for funding, and its capacity to accomplish the projects for which money is solicited and donated.

Half of Florida's library foundations have their own dedicated staff. For the other half, the library staff, primarily the library director or a staff development director, organizes the fundraising efforts. If the library foundation does have its own staff, it is essential that the foundation's chief executive and the library director work together in a close, open and collegial relationship. The library director and the foundation's chief staff person must share information on the goals and progress of fundraising. They must have a mutually respectful relationship and a clear understanding about their respective roles and responsibilities. Without this, the fundraising efforts by the library foundation on behalf of the library may be doomed to failure. The foundation does not run the library and should not create programs and services that the library is not willing or not able to provide. Significant problems can arise when a library foundation goes off on its own, with its own agenda, and the library no longer is the focus of its efforts.

The library director should be involved, from the very beginning, in setting up a library foundation and in its ongoing operations by:

- Working closely with the leaders in the community who are charged with creating the foundation.
- Helping to identify key prospects for the foundation's board of directors.
- Meeting with the key prospects to inform them about the library and its goals and needs.
- Assisting in crafting the library foundation's mission statement, and contributing ideas to and reviewing the drafts of the articles of incorporation and foundation bylaws.
- Assisting in the drafting of a memorandum of understanding between the foundation and the library.
- Identifying the library's needs and priorities for funding.

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- Attending meetings of the foundation's board of directors and providing information on the library, its programs, finances and challenges.
- Providing an orientation to the library for foundation board members.
- Meeting with prospective donors.
- Working with the foundation leaders to develop a donor recognition program.
- Updating the library's advisory board on foundation projects, progress and issues.
- Keeping local elected officials informed about foundation activities and successes.
- Regularly communicating with foundation staff on all aspects of the foundation's programs and the library's ongoing activities.
- Acting as a spokesperson for the library and the foundation's efforts on its behalf.
- Attending foundation events, press opportunities, etc.

### **The Executive Director of the Library Foundation**

If the library foundation chooses to hire an executive director to oversee its operations and fundraising efforts, it will be critical to detail the roles and responsibilities of that position and the ways that it relates to the library and its director so that misunderstandings do not occur.

It is also important to note that the executive director of a library foundation does not manage the library or plan its programs. In fact, the executive director of a foundation cannot and should not speak for the library. Rather, the executive director and the library foundation are there to be supportive in raising funds and awareness to help the library succeed in its mission and goals.

In general, a library foundation executive director will report to the foundation's board of directors and have responsibility for:

- Overall management of the library foundation.
- Supervision of all library foundation staff.
- Financial accountability for the foundation.
- Fundraising, including donor research, donor cultivation, and donor recognition.
- Understanding the library and its needs.
- Working closely with the library director to develop plans and strategies for fundraising programs and projects.
- Communicating to the library director about foundation issues, challenges, and plans for the future.
- Working with the foundation board of directors and library director to identify prospective board members and donor prospects.