

Skip the Jargon: What is really means to Serve as a Library Trustee



LORI SCHARICH · CLINTON MACOMB
PUBLIC LIBRARY · BOARD OF TRUSTEES



CMPL Board of Trustees

We have a great collaborative team!

4 Trustees from Clinton Township

4 Trustees from Macomb Township

Variety of background and /experience:

Lawyer

Engineer

Information Technology

Teachers

Library patron/ Friends of the Library leader

Local county service



**“I answered
the call to
become a
library trustee.
How hard can
it be?”**

- **How many years have you served as a trustee?**
 - **New trustee**
 - **1-3 years**
 - **4-10 years**
 - **10+ years**
- **Raise your hand and look around the room.**
- **This is your session, ASK QUESTIONS!**

Trustees Steer

Focus on mission, strategy, community impact, and accountability.

- Set **strategic vision** and approve the **annual budget**
- **Accountable to law**, not to politics
- **Monitor outcomes** — a policy maker, not an operator
- **A fiduciary of public funds and public trust**
- **Hire, evaluate** the library director
- **More than attending** a board meeting
- Consider this **your new part-time job**
- Requires **commitment** from 100% board membership
- Should be considered an **honor, privilege, and duty to serve**

Directors Captain

Focus on operations, staff, services and execution.

- **Implement board policy** in day-to-day operations
- Hire, supervise, and **evaluate all library staff**
- **Advise the board** with professional expertise — then follow its decisions
- And **So Much** More!

Don't Dread the Meeting

- Board Chair leads meetings
- Monthly, lasting no more than 90 minutes
- Stick to agenda , Begin/end on time
- Full board responsible for board documents
- Use Consent agenda
- Decide how/when to use Robert's Rules
- Delegate committee work to committee



The Work Gets Messy

- Budgets
- Intellectual freedom
- Technology
- Community expectations
- Human element
- Construction
- Time Commitment

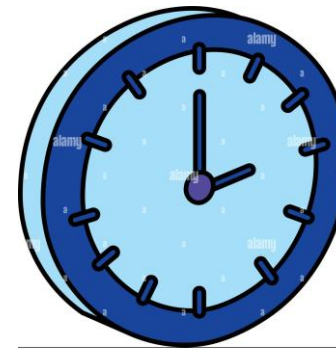


Intellectual freedom

Right to choice information from all points of view



Open a book, open your mind @ your library



CHALLENGES OF LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT



BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS

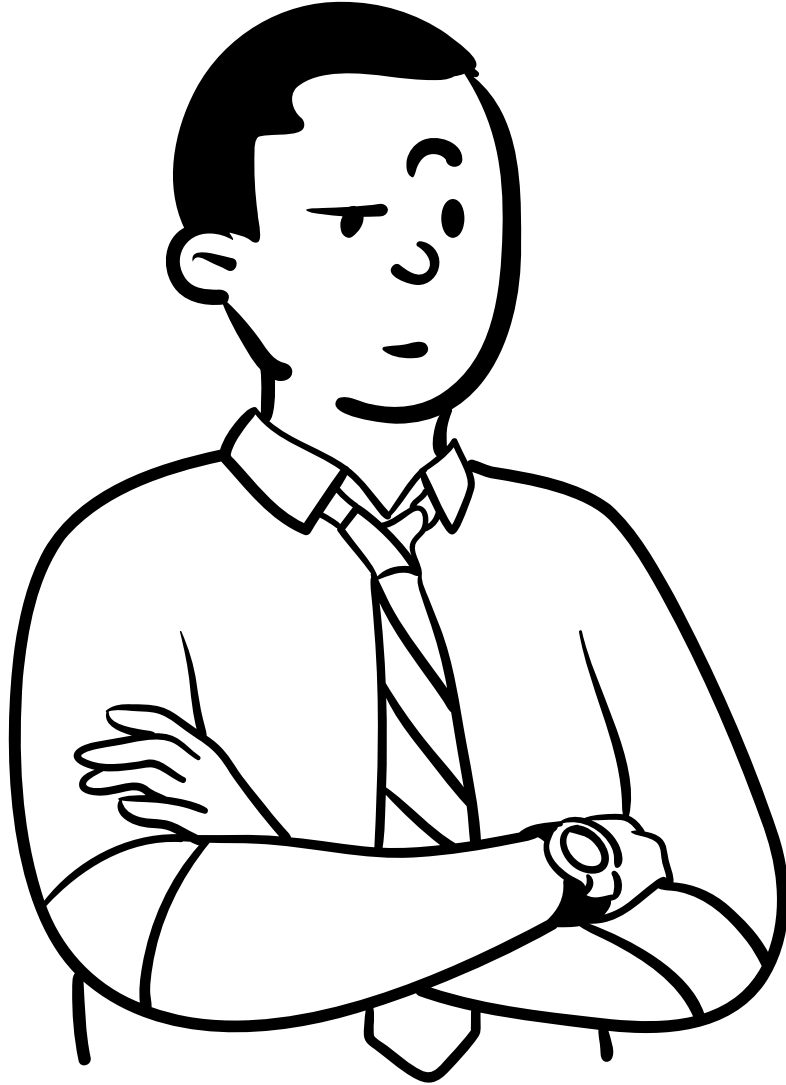
TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

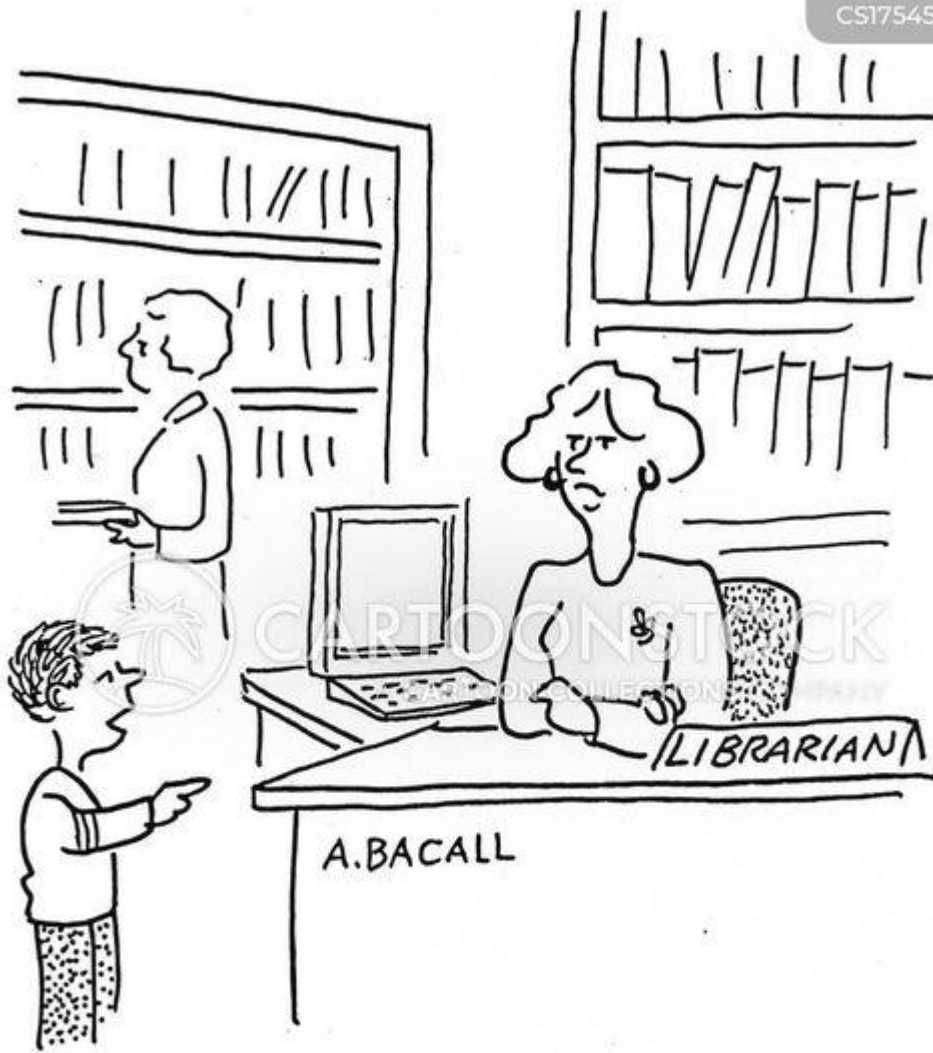
SPACE LIMITATIONS





Scenario #1: The Grocery Store Encounter

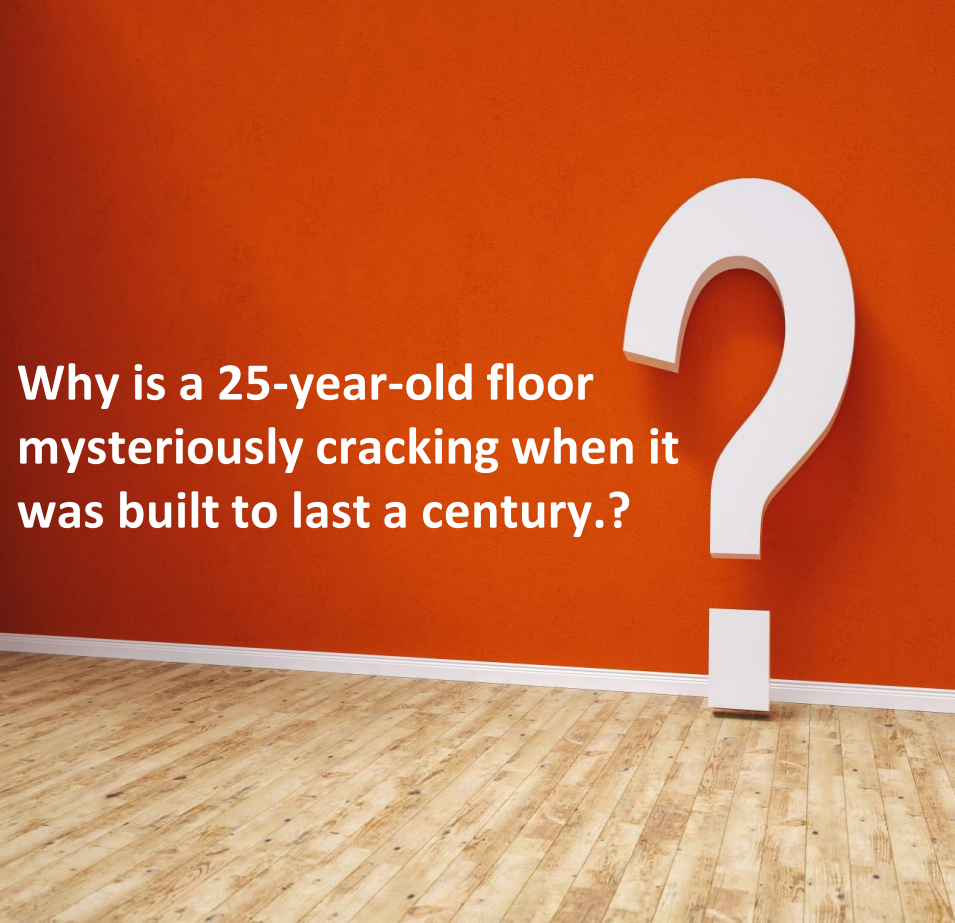
- A resident approaches with a complaint about a library program.
- Turn and discuss: What would you do?



“Do you have any books on managing disruptive students? I want to know what the opposition is up to.”

Scenario #2: Disruption and Chaos

- Staff is concerned about safety due to unruly patron behavior.
- Turn and discuss: What would you do?



Scenario #3: Do we have to close the building?

- What are the options?
- How Long do we have to close?
- Who was responsible?
- Who's going to pay for this?

- Turn and discuss: What would you do?

Your Superpower Is Perspective

- Libraries do not need trustees who know everything. They **need trustees** who listen, learn, ask questions, contribute and stay curious.
- **Respect** one another's experience, point of view, concerns. Be open to feedback, suggestions, options.
- Collaborate with your local community, government, districts to **identify** Board Candidates that contribute equally, bring diverse experience and skillsets
- **Rotate Board Roles**: Chair, Vice Chair Treasurer, Secretary, nominating committee, building construction reviews, etc.
- **Participate** in programs, community events, conferences



Guiding Principles

- **The #1 trustee failure: Micromanaging** staff, going around the director or getting involved in operations.
- **The "When in doubt, disclose.** Transparency is always the right answer" **Mess up, Fess up, Clean up!!** (Larry Neal, CMPL Director)
- **Policies protect the library, protect the staff, and protect the trustees—** Review every policy at least every three years.
- **Annual legal review** of your OMA and FOIA compliance — **not optional, not a formality.**
- **Evaluation is a full board function** — never delegate it to one trustee or a subcommittee alone. **And never skip it.**
- **MI Right to Read coalition is active statewide.**— Trustees should be ready **before a challenge arrives** — **not scrambling after.**
- **Never remove a book while it is under review** — that is a **de facto ban** before due process.
- **Financial Stewardship:** Have a **clear Purchasing Policy** for standard, out of budget or emergency purchases.
- **Complete orientation within 90 days.** **At least one** substantive training per year – and **read the audit!**



Reflection Activity

Write down:

1. One thing you will **START**
2. One thing you will **STOP**
3. One thing you will **CONTINUE**

The Rewards are Endless!!



A trustee helps ensure the library remains strong, responsive, and valuable to the community.

"The public library is one of the few remaining institutions created explicitly to serve every person equally — regardless of income, education, or status. Trustees are its legal guardians."— MICHIGAN PUBLIC LIBRARY TRUSTEE MANUAL





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