

Introduction

One of the most important things to remember is that a trustee is part of a decision-making team that includes the rest of the trustees and the library director. For a board to function effectively, all members must bring enthusiasm, preparation and dedication to the task and a firm understanding of the different roles played by the board and by the director and staff.

This handbook consists of basic information needed by you, the trustee, to be an effective board member and library advocate. Each chapter includes sources of additional information that can help if you run into an issue or question not addressed.

Since the governance models of Maine libraries are quite varied, the information supplied in various chapters won't necessarily apply to your type of library. It is the responsibility of each Maine library to understand its legal status based on its establishment documents. We recommend that you consult your attorney if you have any questions about how the laws apply to your library. If you are unsure of the type of library you represent, you can:

- Contact the Secretary of State's office or search their database (<https://icrs.informe.org/nei-sos-icrs/ICRS?MainPage=x>)
- Search for your library's source documents at your town hall (charter, special law, etc.)
- Search the IRS database (www.irs.gov/Charities-&Non-Profits/Exempt-Organizations-Select-Check)
- Contact Maine Association of Nonprofits for guidance (www.NonprofitMaine.org)

How to use this handbook

- As an orientation tool for new board members (especially chapters 1, 3, 4 and 22)
- As a reference for specific questions:
 - Laws and establishment of libraries chapters 1, 2, 7, 16, 17, and 19
 - Roles chapters 3, 4, and 9
 - Library professional ethics chapters 1, 5 and appendix B
 - Advocacy chapter 15
 - Evaluations chapters 6, 8
 - Statewide library community chapters 18, 21, and 22
- Explore it chapter by chapter, or use the tip sheets in the appendix, as discussion starters for exploring topics that the board is interested in learning more about
- As a guide to further resources on specific topics

