

Why Library Policies Matter

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Outline

- **Definitions**
- **Why Are Policies Important?**
- **Why are Some Policies Required?**
- **How Do We Write Effective Policies?**

What Are Policies?

What Are Policies?

Policies are guidelines that express the principles of the library board and regulate its action

Policies vs. Procedures

Policies:

- **Broad guidelines**
- **Express principles**
- **Regulate action**

VS.

Procedures:

- **Tell HOW TO do something**
- **Specific**
- **Action oriented**

Why Are Policies Important?

A Governing Board

“The municipal board, subject to any enactment that limits its authority, has **full management and control** of the municipal library and shall, in accordance with the regulations, organize, promote and maintain comprehensive and efficient library services in the municipality and may cooperate with other boards and libraries in the provision of those services.”

(Libraries Act 7)

Provincially Required

- **Section 7 of the *Libraries Regulation* requires all boards to pass certain policies**
- **These include**
 - collection development
 - personnel
 - hours of service
 - and more

Putting Plans into Practice!

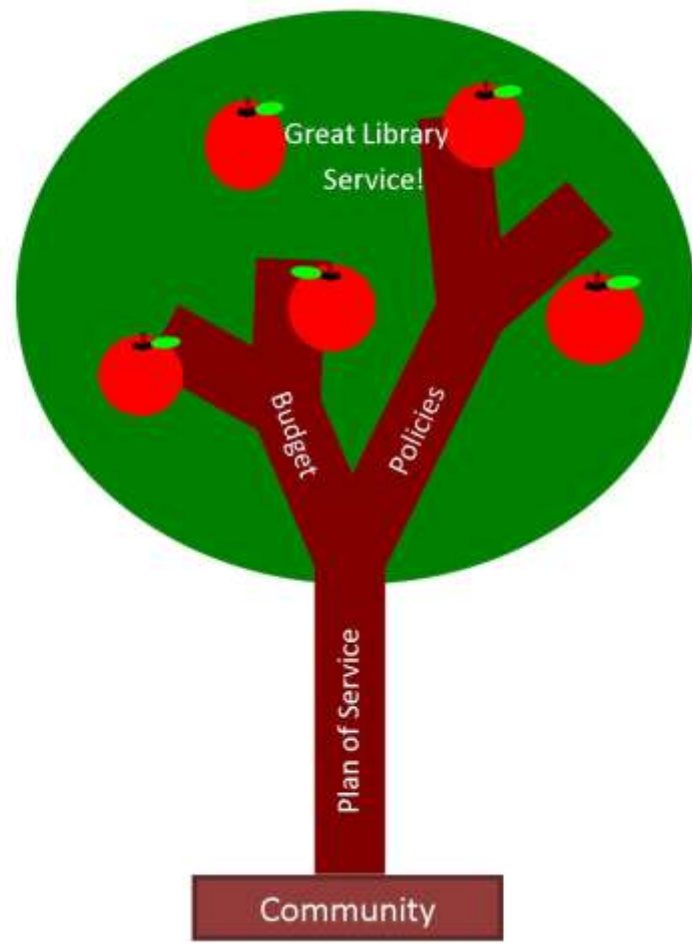


A Matter of Trust

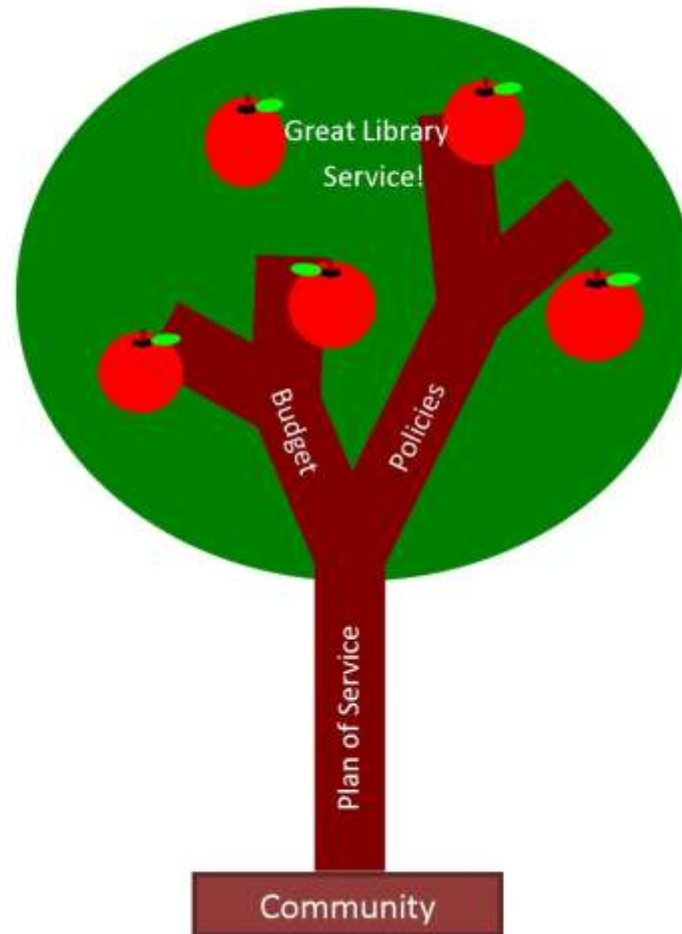


Three Governing Documents

- **Plan of Service**
- **Policies**
- **Budget**



WHAT – HOW – HOW MUCH



Consistency

- **Consistent service to all patrons**
- **Equality & fairness**
- **Be consistent with other policies (e.g. system policies, provincial policies)**

Direction

- **Helps staff make decisions**
- **Ensures compliance**
- **Protects staff**

Why Are Some Policies Required?

List of Required Policies

All library boards must pass policies on:

- Confidentiality of User Records
- Orientation and continuing education of board members and staff
- Finance

List of Required Policies

Boards with service points (i.e. that operate a library) must pass policies on:

- Personnel (job descriptions, performance evaluations, qualifications, working conditions, grievance)
- Collection development
- Resource sharing
- Service to print-disabled patrons
- Borrowing of materials
- Hours of service
- Meeting rooms



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An Employer



A Provider of Library Service

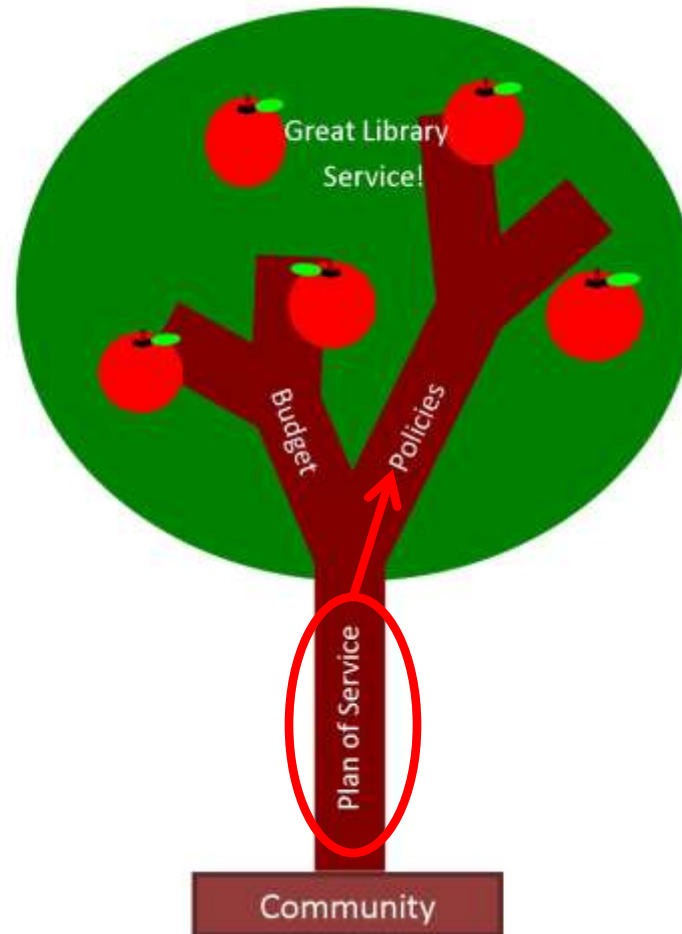
Libraries are...

- **Free to use for everyone**
- **Defenders of intellectual freedom**
- **Sharing resources and knowledge for their patrons**

Why Required Policies?

Required library policies ensure that all public libraries meet a basic level of governance and reflect library values.

Plan of Service



Collections Policy: A Closer Look

“Every board that operates a library service point shall...establish policies with respect to...**selection, acquisition, purchase, and disposition of library resources, including a policy respecting gifts and donations**” (*Libraries Regulation 7(2)(b)*)

Personnel Policy: A Closer Look

“Every board that operates a library service point shall...establish policies with respect to...**personnel, including job descriptions and performance evaluations for employees and volunteers, qualifications for staff positions, working hours, conditions of employment and a grievance procedure**” (*Libraries Regulation 7(2)(a)*)

Hours of Service Policy: A Closer Look

“Every board that operates a library service point shall...establish policies with respect to...**hours of service at each library service point**” (*Libraries Regulation 7(2)(f)*)

How Do We Write Effective Policies?



**“I had a really
good summer
vacation.”**

**“I had a long, relaxing
summer vacation in the
Rockies. I hiked and
saw an elk.”**

**“I had a really, really,
really, really, really,
really, really, really good
summer vacation.”**

Less is More

“I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.”

— Blaise Pascal

Make it Simple

“When returning books to the stacks, place each book on the shelf in the correct order as described in the most recent edition of the Dewey Decimal system.”

Make it Simple

“Shelve the books in Dewey order”

Be Precise

“The application form should be signed by the cardholder”

VS.

“The application form should be signed by the cardholder, or the cardholder’s parent if the cardholder is under 18”

Other Tools

- **Use active voice**
 - “Shelve the books” not “The books will be shelved”
- **Use present tense**
 - “The page checks in the book” not “The page will check in the book”
- **Start with an action verb**
 - “Greet the patrons” not “Employees should greet the patrons”
- **Only use jargon that ALL of your readers will understand**

Lots of Lists

Remove the damaged book from the shelf and take it to the back for repairs. Carefully repair the book using tape and glue. After repairs are completed, return the book to its original place on the shelf.

VS.

- 1. Remove the book**
- 2. Repair the book**
- 3. Reshelve the book**

What Might Happen?



Discussion Topics



Review

- **Policies put plans into practice.**
- **Required library policies ensure that all public libraries meet a basic level of governance and reflect library values.**
- **Effective policies express information clearly, concisely, and completely.**

Questions?

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