Chapter 4
General Library Management

ABSTRACT

Building on the discussion of mission statements, goals, and objectives in Chapter 3, this chapter begins with long and short range planning. It is not enough to complete the basic organizational documents only to shove them into a filing cabinet and forget they exist. Used properly, these documents can help keep library activities, staff, administration, and governing authorities on track and within the library's resources. Planning activities can also have an impact on the political climate in which the library exists. Political realities are addressed throughout this chapter as it discusses funding methods and issues, the budget process, and the purpose of written policies and procedures. Because much of this information is generic to all library types, the authors have tried to keep the discussion and examples specific to the public law library's peculiarities.

OVERVIEW

Planning, funding, fiscal management and politics make uncomfortable bedfellows, yet this combination is the bedrock of public law libraries throughout the United States. Mission statements, goals, objectives, and long and short range planning guide the library's administration, staff and advisors in determining how to best serve the library's patrons while making effective and efficient use of the library's limited resources. Policies and procedures enable the librarian to limit interference and political mayhem as well as place restrictions on what patrons and staff can and cannot do in and with the library's resources. Regardless of the quantity and quality of a library's organizational documents conflicts and politics will still rear their ugly heads.

While librarians in other types of libraries also have to cope with politics, they tend to be

shielded from some of the raw power directed at many public law librarians. The academic librarian may have to deal with budget cuts but does not have to worry about losing the library's entire budget as well as future revenues to another department's expenditures even when those revenues are supposed to be kept separate from the general fund. The public, academic or firm librarian is not concerned about the effect a recent local election might have on her job. The public law librarian, however, experiences local politics in the budget process, the hiring process, while providing services to the library's constituents and while safeguarding the library's assets. In fact, politics are involved in just about every aspect of public law librarianship. Clearly written planning documents are helpful tools when the librarian has to defend a service policy allowing the layperson to use the library's resources, enforce an unpopular policy with an aggressive government official, explain a ban imposed upon a politically connected and popular but out of control patron, or prevent the parent organization from dipping into the library's protected funds to cover some other department's bills.

PLANNING

According to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, the purpose of planning is to provide "…an infrastructure for allocating existing resources, seeking new funding, identifying service and resources priorities, demonstrating accountability, and accomplishing goals, objectives, and outcomes." (Todaro, 2012, p. 51). By reviewing the library's mission statement, goals and objectives, the library's administrators, staff, and board or committee members can tailor both long and short range plans to the library's demands, needs and wants. The planning process helps prioritize the library's activities, easing the budget process when trying to fit the governing authority's and

library users' expectations to the library's existing resources. Constant evaluation of the library's short and long range plans is also essential if the library's staff, governing authority and library board or committee are to make those adjustments necessary to meet library and user needs as they arise during each budget and contract cycle. Effective planning helps keep everyone focused on:

• The library's mission, goals and objectives.
• A specific need or wish.
• The purpose behind each specific need or wish.
• The financial and non-financial cost of an item or project.

Finally, planning enables the library to respond quickly to a change in direction caused by fiscal, political or community changes.

Effective use of the library's resources means knowing where the library's resources (financial and non-financial) are going and evaluating those expenses as justifiable, necessary, unnecessary, or in need of adjustment. The library's needs change as its patrons' demands change, revenues rise or fall, expenses rise or fall, and the parent organization's view of the library changes. Continually evaluating the library's services, collection and expenditures enables the librarian to make quick, regular adjustments to services and resources throughout the year. Is the public law library seeing more lay patrons than legal professionals? Does the library's personal injury collection need a major overhaul? Is that massive and very expensive real property print set used enough to justify spending one-tenth of the collection development budget on another year's update subscription?

Are the librarian's non-library tasks still necessary? Maybe the parent organization recently adopted a records management or knowledge management program and assigned supervisory responsibility to the public law librarian. Can or should non-library responsibilities be simplified

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