

SPARWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (SPLA) STATEMENT of POLICIES		Page:	1 of 9
Chapter:	HUMAN RESOURCES AND VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT	SP No.	F.3
Subject:	Management of Chief Librarian	Approved:	May 15, 2024
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Replaces:	NEW	Dated:	

POLICY

Board Trustee Responsibilities

1. **SPLA's** board trustees retain overall responsibility for overseeing the Chief Librarian. This includes:
 - Attracting and retaining a qualified Chief Librarian,
 - Succession planning and,
 - Enhancing employee engagement.
2. The board trustees as a whole are responsible for directing and overseeing the Chief Librarian and for putting in place processes to minimize risk and liability.
3. The board has the discretion to form a committee to manage these obligations, established with a clear mandate and well-defined tasks. Human resources committees are tasked with making recommendations to the board on the recruitment, appointment, and compensation of the Chief Librarian. The **SPLA** may try to recruit board trustees with human resources expertise or contract a third-party human resources expert to provide the board with ongoing training and education in this area.

Creating the Chief Librarian job description

4. Selecting the right Chief Librarian is one of the board's key functions. To do so, the board needs to clearly define the overall mandate and specific duties of the Chief Librarian. These responsibilities shall be set out in a detailed job description, which is broad enough to cover the job's full scope while remaining flexible to allow the role to develop and expand.
5. Before the job description is created, the board should assess the **SPLA's** current and projected library goals, vision, and mission. The board may also complete an inventory of the skills and competencies needed to fulfil **SPLA's** goals.
6. These are the areas to consider when creating the **SPLA** Chief Librarian job description.
 - Providing leadership and assistance to the board in executing the **SPLA's** mission and achieving the strategic goals.
 - Managing and directing the **SPLA's** operations.
 - Implementing the board's policies and directives.
 - Reporting the **SPLA's** operational activities to the board.
 - Ensuring the **SPLA's** financial resources are properly managed.
 - Hiring, supervising, and evaluating staff, if applicable.
 - Recruiting and managing volunteers.

Recruiting the Chief Librarian

7. The Chief Librarian is the public face of the **SPLA** and is the library's key representative to funders, donors, members and patrons, volunteers, and other stakeholder groups. The **SPLA** shall retain a person who can effectively represent the library while handling the day-to-day responsibilities competently, diligently, and professionally.
8. To select a Chief Librarian, the **SPLA** shall create an ad hoc recruitment committee. Once the job

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profile is in place and potential candidates have been identified through an open application process, the recruitment committee would interview candidates. The interview gives the **SPLA** the opportunity to see how a candidate fits with the organization. The following questions may be used to assist the recruitment committee with finding the best available person who can help the Sparwood Library accomplish its strategic goals, vision, and mission.

The Sparwood Public Library Association Mission

9. What specifically resonates with you about the Sparwood Public Library and its mission?
 - The **SPLA's** mission is the backbone of the organization, and every potential employee should understand and be committed to advancing the mission.
10. How would your experience and skills help the library accomplish its mission?
 - This helps the **SPLA** see the candidate's familiarity with the **SPLA's** goals. The more the candidate talks about the library's mission, the more likely they have studied up on the **SPLA** and care about its future direction.

Library Experience

11. As a librarian, how do you determine which books to recommend for the collection?
 - Having the right collection is important for the library to stay relevant. A good candidate knows what materials and resources should be in a library and the most sought-after resources by library members.
12. Do you have experience providing reference services? Briefly describe how you would go about this task?
 - The library's role is providing members with access to the information they need. This is a vital duty and responsibility of a librarian. An ideal candidate shall have ample experience with this task.
13. What kind of organizations systems are you most familiar with?
 - The categorization and organization of a library's contents is complex. A librarian needs strong organizational skills to keep the library's system in order. This question shall reveal the candidate's understanding of different organizational systems and their personal perspective and preferences.
14. How have you adapted to the changes in technology in your role as a librarian?
 - Being able to identify the impact of technology on the role of a librarian shows the candidate is informed and aware of current trends. This will show their interest in professional development and realization of technological impact.
15. What would you do to promote the Sparwood Library in the community?
 - This will show the candidate's creativity in increasing visitation to the library.
16. How would you grow the library resources within a limited budget?
 - Growing the library resources within an allocated budget can be challenging. How the candidate answers this question helps you discern their budgeting and problem-solving skills and experience managing library financials.

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17. What would you change about the current utilization of our library space?

- Libraries are evolving from a space for solely accessing information and individual studying to a place of collaborative learning and productivity. This needs to reflect in the general set up of the library space. This question tests the candidate's foresight and preparedness to effect positive changes at the library.

18. What strategies would you put in place to help children and elderly visitors use the library better?

- Children and elderly members may face challenges in accessing the information they need from the library. A skilled librarian needs strategies for making the library accessible to everyone.

19. How do you choose the reading materials you recommend to members?

- This question highlights a candidate's interpersonal skills, ability to analyse a library member's needs and familiarity with popular genres.

20. Describe your perspective on customer service. How important is it to your role as a librarian?

- The Chief Librarian is the ambassador of the library and shall have a commitment to excellence in customer service.

21. What professional certifications do you have?

- The right candidate shall have relevant certifications and an interest in professional development.

Other

22. Tell me about a professional experience that did not go according to plan. How did you react and improvise?

- A candidate who has worked in libraries knows the need for flexibility and adaptation, especially in smaller organizations, like the Sparwood Library.

23. Can you tell us about an experience you had contributing to a team?

- Collaboration is key and inviting them to tell a story will give the recruitment committee an idea of how the candidate operates within a team.

The Employment Agreement

24. The Chief Librarian position is central to **SPLA** and as such, requires an employment agreement. There are basic elements that should be included in an employment agreement including:

- Broad duties of the job. This will outline the "scope of work". The employment agreement can reference the job description.
- Length of contract term. This may be 1-3 years to start. The agreement may automatically renew after every term unless the agreement stipulates the terms for renewal.
- Outlines compensation package. This includes benefits, salary, paid time off, sick time, etc. as well as the details about the annual performance evaluation.
- Details for expense reimbursement.
- Details of termination with cause and without cause. Termination without cause shall result in a penalty to **SPLA** in form of severance pay.

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Onboarding the Chief Librarian

25. A new Chief Librarian should learn the Sparwood Public Library’s priorities and the board’s expectations as well as how the board will evaluate them at the end of their first year. (Or at the end of a probation period if that is deemed necessary.)
26. It is important to note that an onboarding process is different than an orientation. An orientation is more of a welcoming process and onboarding is the process of integrating a new Chief Librarian into the organization. The onboarding of a new Chief Librarian should incorporate the following:
 - a. Review of the job description and role of the Chief Librarian.
 - b. Review of the annual calendar.
 - c. Dates of upcoming board meetings and committee meetings.
 - d. Introduction of the new Chief Librarian to board trustees and key volunteers.
 - e. Review of the history of the Sparwood Public Library and the vision, mission, values, and strategic goals.
 - f. Introduction to the key contacts at the District of Sparwood.
 - g. Review of policy manual.
 - h. Outline the expectations for the new Chief Librarian and their role in helping the Sparwood Public Library achieve their strategic goals.
 - i. Review the reporting structure.
 - j. Review the evaluation process. The board shall establish milestones to assess the performance of the Chief Librarian.

Overseeing the Chief Librarian

27. The Board-Chief Librarian relationship is the most important for the **SPLA**. The Chief Librarian translates the board’s direction into action and provides the board with most of its information about how the **SPLA’s** operations are performing. A healthy productive relationship between the board and the Chief Librarian – and especially between the Chair and the Chief Librarian – is essential to the board’s effectiveness and the **SPLA’s** success.
28. The Chief Librarian manages the operations of the **SPLA**, and the board is responsible for managing the Chief Librarian. The board’s oversight function requires it to ensure that the Chief Librarian is fully engaged in all aspects of the library and has set appropriate reporting mechanisms. The Chair shall act as the liaison between the board and the Chief Librarian. The board may, in their discretion, appoint a board trustee, other than the Chair, to act as the liaison between the board and the Chief Librarian. This shall only happen in rare occasions when the Chair is unable to fulfil this responsibility.
29. There are four things for the Chair and the Chief Librarian to consider in building an effective working relationship:
 - a. **Clarity on their respective roles.**
The Chair is the head of the board, and it is the board that oversees the Chief Librarian. The Chief Librarian is the **SPLA’s** operational leader but also the board’s partner in helping shape and realize the **SPLA’s** mission and strategic goals. The Chief Librarian shall have a job description outlining their duties and responsibilities. The role of the Chair is outlined in Policy B.4, and this includes acting as the liaison between the board and the Chief Librarian.

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b. The right amount of interaction.

It is important that the Chair and the Chief Librarian enable each other to do their job and support each other in it. At a minimum, the Chair and the Chief Librarian shall have at least one regularly scheduled meeting a month. Ideally, this could be set prior to a board meeting so that important items are included in the board meeting agenda. The Chief Librarian will also attend board meetings. This will allow the Chief Librarian to stay informed of board business. Although this is a common practice, it is at the discretion of the **SPLA's** board of directors. More interaction between the Chair and the Chief Librarian may be necessary when;

- i. The Chief Librarian is new.
- ii. The Chair is new.
- iii. There is an organizational crisis or issue.
- iv. There is an important governance initiative underway, like strategic planning.

c. The right kinds of interactions – an agenda to guide them.

Having an agreed upon Chair-Chief Librarian agenda is critical to becoming an effective leadership team. An agenda allows for more focused and planned meetings. Here is a list of potential Chair-Chief Librarian meeting items:

- i. Significant new developments and/or issues.
- ii. Human resource and/or volunteer issues.
- iii. Financial or funding issues.
- iv. Updates from board meetings; if the Chief Librarian does not attend.
- v. Board calendar – what is coming up.
- vi. Next board meeting agenda items.

d. Trust building and support

The role of the board and the Chair is to support the Chief Librarian. Through regular communication, the Chief Librarian will feel supported and heard within the organization.

Chief Librarian Performance Evaluation

30. One of the key responsibilities of the **SPLA** is to evaluate the performance of the Chief Librarian on an ongoing basis. The board shall utilize a process that provides meaningful information to the Chief Librarian for their development and performance.

31. The key steps are:

a. *Develop performance goals*

Using the **SPLA's** strategic goals, the board to establish the annual performance goals for the Chief Librarian. The performance goals shall be reviewed and finalized with the Chief Librarian prior to the start of the fiscal year.

b. *Determine who should conduct the evaluation*

The board shall assign the evaluation to an ad hoc committee (or the human resources committee if this is a standing committee). This committee shall include the Chair and Treasurer.

c. *Gathering information for the review*

The committee shall determine who among board trustees, staff, volunteers, and outside

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partners should be asked to complete individual assessments of the Chief Librarian. In general, all board trustees should complete assessments. The rest of the list shall be created by the committee and reviewed by the Chief Librarian. The Chief Librarian shall complete a self-assessment. Creating the evaluation form is an important committee task.

- d. *Tabulating and reviewing responses*
The committee has the responsibility of tabulating the individual assessments, together with the Chief Librarian's self-assessment, and summarizing them as a coherent evaluation of the Chief Librarian's performance.
- e. *Presenting the evaluation*
The evaluation is then presented to the Chief Librarian, usually in the form of a meeting with the Chair. The Chief Librarian may respond to certain points in the evaluation and should be given the opportunity to draft written comments for attachment to the final evaluation report. The meeting may also generate a plan for investment in the Chief Librarian's professional development. The Chair and the Chief Librarian shall discuss the development of performance goals for the upcoming fiscal year.
- f. *Approving the evaluation by the full board*
A well-developed and executed process should require no amendment at this stage. With the evaluation complete, the committee shall draft the performance goals for the Chief Librarian for the upcoming fiscal year.
- g. *Below is a sample timeline for the Chief Librarian performance evaluation.*

Timeline		
Activity	Date	Notes
Committee drafts evaluation form		
Committee, with the assistance of the Chief Librarian, creates list of stakeholders to complete evaluations		
Committee solicits input from stakeholders, via evaluation form.		
Committee tabulates responses and creates a summary of the evaluations		
Committee sends draft evaluation to the Chief Librarian		
Chair and/or committee meets with the Chief Librarian to discuss evaluation		
Committee makes changes (if needed) and submits evaluation to the board for approval		
Board moves to approve the evaluation.		
Any suggested compensation increases, or professional development funding discussed by board to include in the upcoming fiscal budget		

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Succession Planning

32. The board of the **SPLA** needs to be ready for a planned or unplanned departure of the Chief Librarian.
33. A ‘planned’ succession involves a succession plan that is triggered by an expected event, such as a planned retirement. To prepare for a planned succession, the board should have regular discussions with the Chief Librarian regarding their plans, including a timeline for any retirement or resignation and the status of ongoing projects and initiatives.
34. An ‘unplanned’ succession involves a sudden illness, unplanned resignation, or a dismissal.

Illness

35. If the Chief Librarian’s absence from work for an extended period is due to illness, this can create operational challenges, particularly if there are no other staff members to assume the duties. The board has a duty to ensure that the library continues to be managed properly in the absence of the Chief Librarian. The board may need to appoint a board trustee to help with the management activities during the Chief Librarian’s absence. Depending on the length of the absence, a formal interim Chief Librarian appointment may be necessary. Human rights legislation in Canada prohibits discrimination in employment based on “disability”, which generally includes physical and mental disabilities. Terminating, disciplining, or otherwise punishing an employee for being absent due to a disability is discriminatory. The **SPLA** has a duty to accommodate an employee who has a disability and requires accommodation, which could include a leave of absence from work. This includes:
 - a. Seeking medical information to substantiate the leave.
 - b. Determining the expected duration of the leave
 - c. Seeking medical information if the leave needs to be extended or when the Chief Librarian returns to work. (Before the Chief Librarian returns to work, the board should be satisfied that the Chief Librarian can resume their work safely and determine whether any permanent or temporary restrictions are needed.)
36. Where illness keeps the Chief Librarian from work for an extended period and the prospect of a return to work is slim, the board may consider whether the employment relationship has been “frustrated”. An employment agreement is generally “frustrated” by an employee’s illness where there is no reasonable likelihood of the employee returning to work in the reasonably foreseeable future. A frustrated employment relationship may be ended and is not by itself discriminatory. (Note: The law of frustration of the employment contract is complex. While the period of absence alone is not determinative, a lengthy absence is typically required as well as confirmation by a medical professional that there is no reasonable likelihood of the employee returning to work in the reasonably foreseeable future. The **SPLA’s** board of directors shall seek legal advice prior to the termination of an employment contract.)

Unplanned Resignation

37. If the Chief Librarian resigns suddenly, there are a few steps that can make the transition easier:
 - a. *Notify the board trustees and volunteers.*
Upon the resignation of the Chief Librarian, the Chair or designated liaison, shall immediately notify the board trustees, staff, and key volunteers. The board trustees may decide to craft a message to send to important stakeholders like the District of Sparwood and the Public Libraries Branch.

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- b. *Reach a consensus about the transition process.*
This process includes an examination of the Chief Librarian's responsibilities to ensure that important tasks are handed off in a logical way. The board may need to assign another employee to the Chief Librarian position if there is another **SPLA** employee. If there are no other employees, a board trustee or a combination of board trustees and volunteers may need to complete the Chief Librarian tasks on an interim basis to minimize disruption to the organization.
- c. The board may also consider an interim Chief Librarian. An interim Chief Librarian can focus on the immediate needs of the library so that the board can calmly focus on the recruitment process.
- d. Depending on the nature of the Board – Chief Librarian relationship, the board trustees, at their discretion, may decide to forgo any notice period that has been offered by the Chief Librarian.
- e. *Review of Chief Librarian job description*
The resignation of the Chief Librarian provides the opportunity to review the job description and responsibilities of the role. The board may decide to change the Chief Librarian job profile to reflect the changing needs of the library prior to the recruitment process.

Termination

- 38. The board may replace a Chief Librarian when doing so is in the **SPLA's** best interests. This decision shall be based on an objective assessment of the situation and, where appropriate, legal advice has been obtained. The reasons the **SPLA** may consider a replacement of the Chief Librarian include:
 - a. Ongoing performance shortfalls.
 - b. Leadership deficiencies.
 - c. A different skill set is required to take the library in a new direction.
 - d. Insubordination.
 - e. Conflict of interest.
 - f. Lack of professional judgement.
 - g. Criminal activity.
 - h. Other breaches of the **SPLA's** code of conduct.
- 39. In some cases, the Chief Librarian's departure must be immediate for safety and security reasons. In other cases, a period of working notice may be preferable. The board's options depend on the reasons for termination, legal requirements, and any provisions in the Chief Librarian's employment contract. In every case, the board shall verify that it has appropriately investigated, deliberated, and made a decision based on non-discriminatory factors.
- 40. The Chief Librarian should have an opportunity to address concerns and allegations of inadequate performance or misconduct before any decisions are made. In some cases, it may be appropriate to provide support through increased supervision, training, and mentorship before ending a Chief Librarian's employment.
- 41. When considering termination, the board shall take into account the potential legal liabilities (e.g., notice, pay in lieu of notice, severance pay), as well as the non-monetary impact on the **SPLA**.

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PURPOSE

42. The purpose of this Statement of Policy is to ensure the **SPLA** board trustees understand their role and responsibilities for overseeing the Chief Librarian and to provide guidance in recruiting, managing, and evaluating this position.

RESPONSIBILITY

43. The Statement of Policies will be applicable to the Chief Librarian.

PROCEDURES

44. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

ATTACHMENTS

Form F2 – Sample Employment Agreement

Form F3 – Sample Performance Evaluation