EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

School of LIBRARY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Step By Step to Effective Policy

for the State Library of Kansas and the Kansas Regional Library Systems

March 10, 2022

Andrew Smith, Ph.D.

Why does policy matter?

State Library requires policy

Policy foundational to all operations

Good policy:
ensures smooth library operation
provides protection for board, staff and patrons

Who am I?

Emporia Public Library Board - from 2016
Vice-Chair 2017 – 2020
Chair from 2020

Associate Professor
School of Library and Information Management
Emporia State University

Visiting Professor
Faculty of Philology
University of Belgrade
Serbia

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Disclaimer

I am not an attorney.

I am not offering any legal advice.

I am sharing information on how to understand and improve your current policy position.

If in any doubt, seek competent professional advice – starting with your Regional Library System.

Why am I here?

Policy is essential to libraries (and other organizations)

It can be daunting to create and revise policy

It can be time consuming

We all need help and support to make the process manageable

We're librarians – we share our expertise

What is Policy?

Definition of *policy*

1a :   *prudence or wisdom* in the management of affairs

  b :   management or procedure based primarily on material interest

2a :   a *definite course or method of action* selected from among
      alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and
      determine present and future decisions

  b :   *a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and
      acceptable procedures* especially of a governmental body

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We Don't Have Good/Any Policy Because…

I don't want to be restricted in my collection development

It's too time consuming

We don't need it – we've never had a problem

We did that 20 years ago. We have policy ….. somewhere

We have unwritten policy – and I know what it is

I don't know where to begin

Policy Components

Introduction
  Set the context for the policy – how does this fit within the library mission?

Legal Requirements (if any)
  Include appropriate legal requirement for policy – e.g. CIPA

Policy Statement
  Include detail of policy (not procedures for implementation!)

Consequences (if appropriate)
  Include consequences of failing to abide by policies (again, not procedures)

Policy Primer

The Board of Directors is responsible for adopting written policies to govern the operation of the library

> Statute says: To make and adopt rules and regulations for the administration of the library.

The Board hires the Library Director

The Library Director hires and manages staff

Staff develop procedures to implement policy

Policy Creation Process

Draft the policy
- Director can create initial draft
- Search for help – templates, examples, non-examples
- Use Regional Library Systems as resources
- Solicit staff input, policy sub-committee input, board input
- Collaborative process

Present for Board approval
- Don't be scared to rework it – do it right the first time

Implement

Publicize
- Communicate to staff
- Publicize on webpage or as required

Reasons for Policy

Legal requirements
    CIPA
    Weapons policy

Basic library operations
    Library card policy
    Circulation policy

Unreasonable behavior
    Code of conduct
    Internet and computer use policy

Diversity, equity, and inclusion
    Collection development policy
    Meeting room policy

Start from Where You Are!

Initiate a policy review

What policies do you already have?

Are they policies and/or do they include procedure?

How old are they?

What policies are missing?

What is essential to do now?

What is desirable?

Standards for Kansas Public Libraries

7. The library board has adopted and has available written bylaws and policies on all of the following topics. Check below for the topics for which the library board has approved policies:

Selection/Collection Management   Public Services
Building/ Meeting Room Use   Intellectual Freedom
Personnel   Budget and Finance
Confidentiality of Patron & Library Records   Equipment Use
Gifts   Patron Behavior
Appropriate Use of Online Services   Capital Improvements
Continuing Education   Surplus Property
Emergency Preparedness/Disaster Recovery   Trustee Bylaws

https://systems.mykansaslibrary.org/kansas-public-library-standards/

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Prepare for Policy Writing

Identify areas of necessity – prioritize!
   Legal requirements, essential policy, desirable policy

Create a manageable timeline for policy creation/revision
   One policy per board meeting/ select simple policies first

Educate the Board
   Convene a policy sub-committee if necessary

Educate the staff
   Process and input

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Establish Systematic Policy Review

Create a plan to review every policy periodically

Three years is a reasonable time frame
   Check legal requirements for some policies

Encourage Board and staff to suggest policy changes as needs arise
   It's your policy – you can change it
   Policy should *serve* your library population, not restrict it

Publicize Your Policies

Your policies should not be a secret

Post online through your web page

Post prominently in the library (if legal requirement)

Have paper copies available at the circulation desk

Educate board, staff and volunteers

Don't Publicize Your Policies

If you want to antagonize your patrons

If you want to fall foul of legal requirements

If you want people to think you're hiding something

If you want to encourage controversy and dissent

Things to Consider

Keep procedure out of your policy documents

Include approval statements on all policy (authority and date)

Make all your policy documents consistent in structure and design

Changes in one policy may necessitate changes in another

Group review of similar/related policies together

Review ≠ change

Questions?

The only silly question is the one you don't ask.

What do you need to know?

Some Useful Resources

Kansas Public Library Handbook

Kansas Public Library Standards

Kansas Library Trustee Manual

Wisconsin State Library Policy Resources

Emporia Public Library Policy Page
(for examples – with no claims to perfection)

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