

## Steps to Create a Public Library

The establishment, structure and governance of public libraries in Oklahoma are outlined in the Oklahoma Statutes. Title 65 deals specifically with library systems, and Title 11 delineates the powers of cities and towns.

**Municipal Libraries** are agencies of municipal government and were established either in City Charter or by ordinance in compliance with the Oklahoma Statutes (Title 11, Section 31). The Library is usually a department of City government similar to Police or Parks Department.

Governing authority for the municipal library rests with the City Council or Commission who have delegated some responsibility to an advisory Library Board. Be sure to check with your local government for chain of command. The Mayor or Council appoints persons with an interest in libraries to the Board. The board sets policy and advises the City on issues relating to the library. These issues may include such things as appointment of a Director, the budget, and the schedule of fines and fees. Personnel and fiscal issues remain the prerogative of the City Council. Library employees are City employees and follow the same personnel rules as all other employees regarding pay scales and benefits. The Library Director is a Department Head and works directly for the City Manager (or designee) or the City Council.

The Board consists of 5 – 9 members who each serve a three-year term in compliance with Title 11 of the Oklahoma Statutes. The number of terms that a Board member may serve is indefinite unless specified by City ordinance. It is necessary that Board members do not serve indefinitely. If so, the Board represents only a special-interest group and not the entire community. Board members should be chosen to represent all of the community – ethnicity, age, sex, social and economic status.

The Library's budget process is the same as other City departments. All expenditures are approved by the City Council and the Library follows the same purchasing rules as all other departments.

**Multicounty Systems** are organized under Oklahoma Statutes Title 65, Article 4, and exist as separate legal entities – they are neither city nor county. Multicounty systems are formed when the citizens of two or more counties vote to establish the system and to levy an annual recurring ad valorem tax to fund it. The process can be initiated by the City Councils of all towns over 2,000 population asking the County Commissioners to put the issue on the ballot. The request to the County Commissioners may also come as a petition signed by 10% of the registered voters. The maximum allowable mill levy is 6 mills for counties with a population of 100,000 or more, and 4 mills for all other counties.

Each system is governed by an appointed Board of at least 5 members. The County Commissioners of each county making up the system appoint one Board member. Additional members shall be appointed for each city within the system with a public library located in the city, with these appointments to be made by the governing body of the city. Persons are appointed who have an interest in libraries. They serve with no pay except reimbursement for travel and conference expenses. Their terms are three years with one re-appointment allowed. It is necessary that Board members do not serve indefinitely. If so, the Board would represent only a narrow interest group and not the entire community. Ideally, Board members should be chosen to represent the total population of the system area – ethnicity, age, sex, social and economic status.

The number of Board members is determined by the geography of the system – the number of counties and towns. Governing authority for the System rests with the board. All fiscal and personnel authority rests with the Board. Employees are System employees regardless of the City in which they live and work. The System Director is hired by and works directly for the System Board.

**City-County Library Systems** are organized under Oklahoma Statutes, Title 65, Chapter 6, which allows a county and a city to combine their funds to provide a joint city-county library system. The City-County Library System follows basically the same organizational structure as the multicounty systems. At this time, Tulsa City-County Library is the only city-county system.

**Metropolitan Library Systems** are organized under Oklahoma Statutes, Title 65, and Chapter 9. The Statutes allow single counties with population of at least 100,000 to form a single-county system similar to the multicounty systems. The Metropolitan Library System follows basically the same organizational structure as the multicounty systems. At this time, Oklahoma County has the only metropolitan library system.

**Rural Single-County Systems** are allowed under Title 65, Article 4-201, of the Oklahoma Statutes. Voters in a rural county may vote to establish a single-county system. It follows the same organizational structures as the multicounty systems. At this time there are no single-county systems.