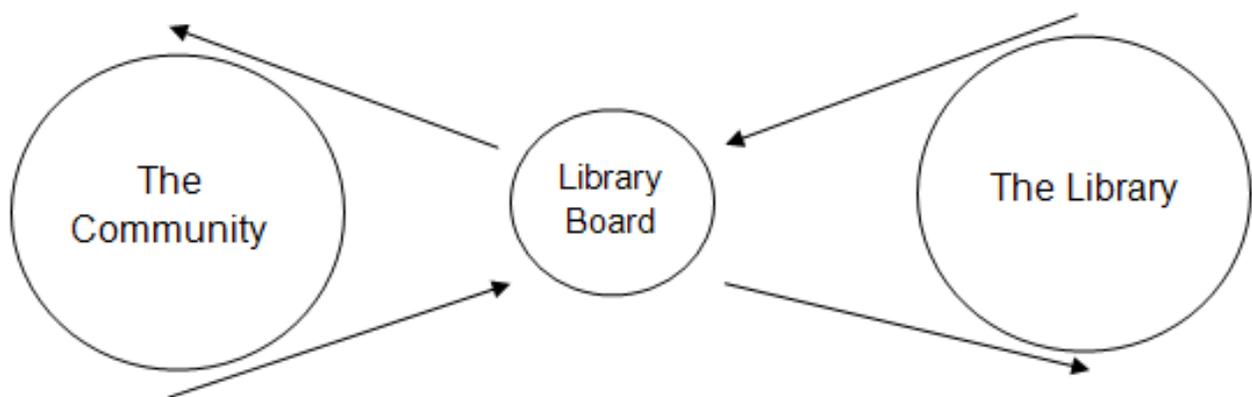


Strategic Issue:

Community Engagement

As the community face of libraries, trustees are key. Trustees are already community leaders with public responsibilities. They have connections to other organizations that are very important. Some keys to community engagement include listening to people in your community. Find out what their needs are rather than waiting for them to come to you. It's also important to pay attention to changing demographics—know who your users are, or who they aren't, and why they may or may not use the library.

The board is a major conduit of information between the library and its community. Thus the library board has two separate, but related, functions in relationship to its community. It represents the needs and desires of the community to the library staff and it represents the needs of the library to the community.



One side of the library board's responsibility in community relations is to represent the library to the community. This means that board members should be thoroughly familiar with the library. In fact, outside of the library staff, no one in the community should know the library better than its board members. Gathering community information is not enough, however. It is also important to put this information to use. This requires that board members look beyond their own interests and opinions to consider the interests and opinions of others. Ensuring that the library's programs, services, and offerings are defined around community priorities may lead to choices, trade-offs, and change.

Action Steps for Trustees

1. Be a well-informed champion of your library and what it offers, and be persistent in stating the case for its importance to the community.
2. What does your library's website look like? Is it easy to use and attractive? Does your library have a strong social media presence? Help ensure policies are in place to support library promotional efforts and community engagement tools.
3. Assemble a list of desired outcomes and goals for the library, then make sure the library has the means to measure them. Communicate those outcomes to key policymakers, partners, and other community leaders.