

STATEMENT ON OUTSOURCING PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

There are three basic philosophical premises for this statement: 1) residents of New Jersey deserve quality library services; 2) under state law, the trustees of a public library have specific duties and responsibilities and 3) duties of professional librarians must be performed by professional librarians.

The public library is a unique institution. The cornerstones of providing effective public library service are governance by lay trustees, the anticipation of and responsiveness to community needs and adherence to professional standards and practices. Furthermore, librarianship is first and foremost a service profession dependent on the commitment of competent and courteous staff.

These statements must serve as the backdrop against which any effort to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of libraries must be viewed. It is the position of the New Jersey Library Association that any decisions on the selection of outsourcing of public library service as a management tool must be governed by the following criteria:

1. The primary goal of a public library must be to meet the wide-ranging educational and cultural needs of its community.
2. The prerogatives of the Library Board of Trustees shall not be abridged or preempted. The Trustees must retain final authority and responsibility for all policy development, advocacy, goal-setting, fiscal accountability and personnel action.
3. All professional services including administration, children's services, materials and resources selection, reference service and technical services must remain the function of professional librarians.
4. All applicable laws and regulations must be obeyed and upheld, including- but not restricted to- all library laws, civil service regulations and state aid requirements.
5. The rights of library workers to negotiate their conditions of employment must be preserved. This emphasis carries with it a responsibility to treat library employees fairly and equitably.
6. The public library provides services to all residents without regard to economic status. The institution of user fees that would limit access to library services must be avoided.

It is the position of the New Jersey Library Association that outsourcing the management of a public library is a most serious step and should only be undertaken after careful study and as a last resort. Prior to Board consideration of outsourcing the management of any public library, the New Jersey State Library should perform an evaluation and review of library operations. The findings and recommendations of the New Jersey State Library shall be formally communicated to the Board of Trustees which shall develop and implement a plan of action.

-- Adopted by the N.J.L.A. Executive Board September 1998, revised March 2001.