

LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEES HANDBOOK



Montgomery County Public Libraries
21 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

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PREFACE

Thank you for volunteering to help improve our libraries through your participation on a Library Advisory Committee (LAC).

The local LACs are the eyes and ears of the Montgomery County Public Library (MCPL) system. It is through your observations and suggestions that the Montgomery County Library Board (MCLB) can advise the Director and other senior managers of Montgomery County Public Libraries about what your library is doing well and what needs improvement.

In this LAC Handbook, you will learn about:

- The roles and responsibilities of each LAC.
- How LACs are organized and operated.
- The differences between the LACs and the Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, Maryland Inc. (FOL).

There are also resource material on how to provide advice and counsel about our libraries, how to recruit new members, the Library Board awards, and many other topics.

Enjoy your time on your LAC. Let the Library Board know if you have any questions and thanks again.

About the LAC Handbook

The Montgomery County Library Board (MCLB) is one of 80 plus Boards, Committees, and Commissions (BCC) under the purview of the County Executive, and therefore, adheres to the policies and procedures as established in Maryland State Law and Montgomery County Code.

The LAC Handbook is the product of the Montgomery County Library Board written exclusively for its Library Advisory Committees.

MCLB sincerely hopes its LACs find the LAC Handbook provides a user-friendly document filled with pertinent information to guide their activities in support of MCPL.

MISSION

The mission of a Library Advisory Committee (LAC) is to advise the Montgomery County Library Board (MCLB) and the Library Manager on issues of local interest and concern for the benefit of the community and Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL). These issues may include, but are not

limited to, policy matters, collections, services, and facilities. The LACs are the voices of the community operating on a grassroots level for each library branch or services section.

HISTORY

In 1951, the Montgomery County Government adopted a law creating a Department of Public Libraries and a Library Board, responsible to the County Executive. The Library Board was authorized to designate from among the residents of each area in which a branch library was located a local advisory committee (County Code 2-51) subsequently called Library Advisory Committee (LAC). Accordingly, the Library Board could establish an LAC for each branch or service area. The LACs would function as a subcommittee of the Library Board and not as an independent committee of the library branch or agency.

There are 20 community/local branch libraries, each of which has an LAC. There are also LACs for two libraries that do not have specific neighborhood or community constituencies: the Montgomery County Correctional Facility and the Noyes Library for Young Children. The final advisory group, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), also has a countywide constituency: individuals with disabilities. AAC's membership is different from the other advisory groups in that it is self-selecting from county disability organizations and constituencies across the county.

All 23 of these groups have liaisons from the Montgomery County Library Board.

LAC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role

The role of an LAC is to consult with and make recommendations to, the Library Board (and Library Manager) concerning local library needs. A single LAC is designated to represent the needs of each local library or special services section of MCPL.

Responsibilities of each LAC and its membership:

- Advise the Library Manager and MCLB on specific issues, concerns, and opportunities related to the local library, including collections, services, programming, staffing, and facilities.
- Advise MCLB of specific findings, issues, problems, and concerns related to the local library and make recommendations to the Board on public library related matters, following the appropriate channels of communication.
- Foster communication among the MCLB, LAC members and the local library community by obtaining advice and views on public library needs in their areas and reporting those views.

- Participate in providing government officials with advice and counsel about libraries via the Library Board, and in support of positions taken by the MCLB, may testify before County Council and/or appear at Council hearings.
- Recruit new LAC members.
- Represent the users of the local library at community functions such as meetings, fairs, celebrations, etc.
- Advocate for the library in the community.

The following actions are **not permitted** by LACs, due to their structure of the LAC within MCLB:

- Participate in local library department personnel matters. (An LAC may comment on staffing levels or the needs for certain positions, as distinct from commentary on any particular incumbent or candidate for a position.)
- Raise money or funding streams. To assist their branch library in securing supplemental funds, LAC members, as individuals, may participate in its Friends of the Library (FOL) chapter book sales.
- Conduct surveys that have not been approved by MCPL or MCLB.

The MCLB can disband an LAC if it is acting, speaking or operating outside the roles of an LAC and/or neglecting its usual responsibilities. The MCLB decides on a case-by-by-case basis if a member of a disbanded LAC who applies to serve on a different LAC can be appointed.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the LAC should reflect the diversity of the local community and broadly represent a cross-section of the community served. Members of an LAC may be recruited from a library community service area by its LAC members or by the Library Manager. There is no limitation on the number of members who can serve on an LAC at any one time. Interested individuals can be recruited for membership at any time during the year.

An individual may serve as a member of only one LAC at any given time. An exception is that an individual could serve on one local/community branch LAC and also one of the advisory groups for the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) or the Noyes Library for Young Children, or on the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The MCLB would approve any exception. Serving on an LAC is voluntary and unpaid.

For risk management and insurance purposes, newly appointed LAC members need to fill out Montgomery County's Volunteer General Registration form, at

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/resources/files/about/volunteer-application.pdf>

The volunteer registration form should be given to the Library Manager for transmission to the Library Director's Office and entry into the volunteer database.

A candidate for LAC membership may initiate the membership process by completing an "Application for Membership to a Montgomery County Library Advisory Committee" (Appendix A of this handbook or the separate online form on the MCLB/LAC website) and submitting it to the Library Manager. The application form that is part of the LAC flyer is acceptable too. Both do not need to be filled out. The Library Manager is responsible for submitting the application to the Director's Office of the MCPL for consideration by MCLB. The Director's Office of the MCPL will convey MCLB decisions about applications to the Library Managers with a copy to the LAC Chair and will include these decisions within MCLB Minutes.

Library Managers are not considered to be members of their LACs.

Eligibility

- Any individual who shares the Montgomery County Public Libraries' mission, vision, and core values.
- Any individual who lives, works, attends high school, or college in the area served by a local library is eligible for membership to its LAC.
- Individuals elected to public office are eligible to join LACs as non-voting members. They may not hold an office in an LAC.
- Merit MCPL employees are not eligible to serve on an LAC, but Montgomery County employees working in other departments of the County are eligible to serve.
- Organizations, coalitions, or other groups are not eligible to join

Appointment Terms and Procedures

A member of an LAC is appointed to serve a term of three years. Members can be reappointed by the MCLB at the end of a term. Terms of appointment begin as soon as the MCLB approves the application. Terms of service may be automatically adjusted during the renovation or refresh of a local library, if an LAC is inactive during this period. The Library Manager will work with the Library Director's Office to adjust the LAC members' terms.

MCLB maintains full authority over all LAC appointments and reappointments.

Any member may resign from an LAC at any time during the year by notifying the LAC Chair, who alerts the Library Manager and the Library Director's Office. An LAC chair's resignation should go to that LAC's board liaison, the Library Manager, and the MCPL Director's Office.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

Each LAC must elect a Chair and a Secretary. After serving a one-year term, a Chair may be re-elected to a second one-year term. However, a Chair should not serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. LACs may elect two Co-Chairs who share the responsibilities of leading the LAC during a

term of service. A Secretary, after serving a one-year term, may be re-elected for consecutive one-year terms for as long as he or she is a voting member. MCLB may grant exceptions when requested and applies to both Chair and Secretary. The board liaison to the LAC in question should bring to the full MCLB a requested exception, for action.

LACs may also establish a subcommittee structure to help in the pursuit of various activities. For example, LACs may wish to establish a committee to recruit new LAC members or recommend programs for the public.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Chair

- With input from the Library Manager, sets the meeting agenda. The agenda of each meeting must include, but is not limited to:
 - Approval of Minutes
 - Chair's Report
 - Branch Manager's Report
 - MCLB Liaison's Report
 - Old Business
 - New Business
 - Adjournment
- Encourage dialogue and participation among diverse groups of library users in the community.
- Maintain regular contact and communication with the MCLB liaison and with the Library Manager to exchange information. Keep the MCLB liaison informed as to the meetings, activities, and concerns of the LAC.
- Schedule meetings at times the committee can meet and preside at LAC meetings.
- Inform MCLB and MCPL Director's Office of changes in the LAC roster as they occur.
- Organize recruitment campaigns to solicit new LAC members. (Appendix B)
- With input from MCLB liaison and Library Manager, recommend programs to address the needs of library users.
- Schedule and hold elections for LAC Officers in a timely manner, and submit the names of elected officers to the Director's Office as soon as possible after June 1.
- Submit an annual Library Advisory Committee form to the MCLB liaison no later than September 30th. (Appendix C).
- In support of positions taken by the MCLB, testify and/or appear at County Council budget hearings if appropriate and/or other such forums scheduled in local communities with County officials.
- Monitor attendance and ensure people are meeting their obligations of being an LAC member.
- Represent the LAC at special meetings or events called or organized by the MCLB.
- For new chairs especially, if possible, attend at least one MCLB meeting.

Duties and Responsibilities of the LAC Secretary

- Take minutes at each meeting.
- Prepare and distribute LAC correspondence as needed.
- Maintain accurate and up-to-date membership records.
- Notify LAC members, the Library Manager, and MCLB liaison of all meetings and/or any change in the meeting date, time, or location.
- Ensure that written notice of each LAC meeting is posted in the library, on the MCLB website, and distributed to members at least seven (7) days in advance of the meeting, as provided by the Maryland State Open Meetings Act. Regarding the MCLB website, provide a copy of the LAC meeting schedule for each fiscal year to the MCPL Director's Office for posting on the board's/LAC website. The meeting schedule should include the date, time and location of each LAC meeting.
- Keep written minutes of all meetings for one year.
- Send a copy of the approved minutes of each meeting to the MCLB liaison and Director's Office within ten (10) business days of minutes approval.

Elections

Elections of officers should be conducted no later than June 1 of each year. It is the responsibility of the LAC Chair to call a meeting of the members prior to June 1, conduct the election of officers, and promptly report the results of the elections to the MCPL Director's Office. Extensions of the June 1 deadline can be requested to the MCLB liaison, who can either approve the request or take it to the full board.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

During the period of September to August, a minimum of five (5) meetings of an LAC must be scheduled, and a minimum of three (3) meetings must be held. LAC meetings cannot be held on the same day as the MCLB meetings (usually the second Wednesday of each month). All LAC meetings must be run by either the chair or co-chair. LAC meetings are separate and distinct from Friends of the Library meetings.

The Chair or Co-Chair normally conducts LAC meetings. If the Chair or Co-Chairs are absent, the Secretary can call the meeting to order, call for nominations, and immediately conduct an election for a temporary Chair for that meeting only. (*Robert's Rules of Order*) Business may be conducted according to the preferences of the membership in terms of the formality or informality of the meetings. However, any action or proposal for action should be made in the form of a motion on which the members can vote.

The individual conducting the LAC meeting must be there in person.

Observers do not ordinarily participate in LAC discussions. However, if time permits, they may be permitted to make a brief statement at the conclusion of the LAC meeting.

The Montgomery County Code, Section 2-51 requires a local advisory committee to consist of no fewer than three members. LACs are exempt from the requirement to meet at least three times a year if the library is undergoing a refresh project. However, an LAC whose membership is below the minimum number of required members (three) may continue to meet, but may not vote as an official LAC. The LAC may request exceptions from MCLB in writing with rationale.

The Director and senior staff of MCPL are available, upon sufficient notice, to give presentations to LACs who desire a briefing on topics of library interest. Requests should be made through the MCLB liaison.

Quorum

Recognizing circumstances vary by LAC, a quorum for transacting business shall be a simple majority of voting members. At a minimum, this number will be two (2) members participating and voting.

ATTENDANCE

The assigned MCLB Liaison and Library Manager or another department representative should attend each LAC meeting and other meetings relevant to library initiatives and public support for libraries.

Voting LAC members are expected to attend and participate in all LAC meetings and when possible to notify the LAC Chair prior to the meeting of any absence. A voting LAC member who misses more than 50% of the confirmed meetings will be removed from membership. The MCLB may waive the removal for illness, emergency, or other good cause.

COMMUNICATIONS AND NETWORKING

In the event that an issue, problem, or question emerges in the LAC that requires attention from MCLB, the matter should be given to the Board liaison for communication to the Board. If the MCLB liaison is unavailable, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Library Manager. If the issue is still not addressed, the matter should be brought to the attention of the MCLB Chair or Vice-Chair.

To reach the MCLB leadership, submit letters or other written communications to this physical address:

MCLB, c/o the Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries, 21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

Alternatively, to reach the MCLB leadership, any emails should be submitted to Library.board@montgomerycountymd.gov.

The latest full MCLB Board roster is posted on the Montgomery County Library website at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/>.

ETHICS

All LAC members are subject to the provisions of Montgomery County Public Ethics Laws. Generally, the laws prohibit members from participating in matters that involve an economic or fiduciary interest of the member. Committee members are also prohibited from participating in a matter that involves an economic interest of a relative. Relatives include siblings, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, a spouse, a spouse's relatives, and the spouses of these relatives.

The MCLB can dismiss an individual from an LAC if that person is acting or speaking outside of the LAC's roles or responsibilities or in ways that impair the LAC's mission or operation, or if that individual is abusing usual rights and behaviors expected of all library users. (See "Guidelines Governing the Use of Public Libraries" and "Guidelines for Behavior" on MCPL website.)

LIBRARY BOARD RELATIONSHIP TO LACs

The Library Board Chair and Vice-Chair:

- Will designate a liaison for each LAC from among the membership of the MCLB. It is the responsibility of the MCLB liaison to attend each LAC meeting and be responsive to the LAC. Specifically, the liaison will serve in a bi-directional function to communicate any issues, concerns, questions, or related matters originating in the LAC to the Board and vice-versa.
- Will furnish the LAC Chair with any relevant documents or guidelines generated by the Board dealing with administrative issues or public support for the library system.

The MCLB:

- Typically holds at least (2) joint meetings with the LACs and members of the FOL. Both meetings may include MCPL Library Managers.
- Will recognize achievements of LACs through an annual award program and ceremony held at joint meetings (See Appendix D).
- Will make recommendations to the County Executive on matters affecting the public library system, such as location of new library facilities, the adequacy of book collections, services to outlying districts, and personnel needs of Montgomery County Public Libraries.
- Will review and approve all changes in LAC membership as appropriate.

RELATIONSHIP OF LAC TO FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND INC. (FOL)

LAC members may join their local library's FOL chapter in addition to maintaining their membership on a LAC. However, each group serves a vital, but different, role in the support of public libraries. The major difference between an LAC and a FOL chapter is that an LAC represents the interests of the library user in relation to library policy. The FOL is primarily involved in fund-raising for educational programming and other library needs while assisting and working with MCLB to provide public officials with advice and counsel on how to improve library services.

The purpose of the Friends of the Library is to

- assist the library in its public information effort;
- raise funds for special purposes;
- encourage gifts, memorials, and endowments for the benefit of library services;
- create opportunities for residents to volunteer;
- support public library service in Montgomery County.

The activities of the Friends of the Library include raising funds and assisting MCLB and LACs in promoting public awareness of library needs. The funds generated by FOL chapters are used to enhance the program of service, the equipment, the facility, and the materials collection of the branch they are created to serve. Chapter funds are not used for the regular salaries of the staff assigned to the library by the Department.

APPENDIX A – APPLICATION FOR LAC MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP ON A LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Montgomery County Library Board (MCLB)

Applicant's name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Preferred phone _____ Email _____

Branch library in which you are interested _____

Library Advisory Committees (LACs)

1. Advise the branch library manager and MCLB on specific issues, concerns, and opportunities related to the local library, including collections, services, programming, staffing, facilities;
2. Foster communication among the MCLB, LAC members, and the local library community by obtaining advice and views on public library needs in their areas and reporting those views;
3. Participate in activities including appearing at County Council hearings and public forums to support Montgomery County Public Libraries;
4. Represent local library users at community functions such as meetings, fairs, celebrations; and
5. Members are expected to attend at least 50% of confirmed meetings.

Considering the LAC functions above, please tell us which interest you and how you would expect to be active in the LAC. (attach additional page/s if needed.)

APPENDIX B – LAC STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS

The following strategies are suggested to facilitate recruitment efforts. Local LACs should consider these and modify them according to their particular community library environment and needs.

Work through the MCLB liaison to secure flyers, which describe the LAC, solicit new members, notes when the LAC currently meets, and provide the name and telephone number of a contact person for further information. Make these flyers available at the public information area of your library or post them on the library bulletin board and at local high schools, community college or university, post offices, and other libraries as appropriate.

Tips to help in recruitment efforts include the following:

- Refer prospective member to the LAC's Webpage
- To the extent possible, use a brochure to identify issues the library and its LAC will face in the next few months. If the library is scheduled to be refreshed, it is reasonable to expect a rise, sometimes dramatic, in interest. Conversely, once a library has completed its refresh, the LAC Chair must identify and publicize new strategies to recruit and retain members, who may plan to leave the committee once the new library is operating.
- Identify local Listservs and post LAC information. Indicate that an open LAC meeting will be held on XXXX and that local library patrons, as well as non-patrons, are welcome to attend.
- Obtain agreement of the Library Manager or designated person-in-charge and make flyers available to attendees at all library-sponsored public programs or to groups who regularly use the meeting rooms.
- Consider additional solicitation of the volunteers at the local library, those who are regular volunteers, and those who help with special projects.
- Consult with Library Manager to identify interested, informed patrons who would be an asset to the library through membership on the LAC.
- Consult with School librarians, officers of service groups, and local officials who may be able to suggest names of potential members. Remember that all Montgomery County high school students have to meet a mandatory service requirement; service on an LAC is an ideal way to meet that requirement, as well as to obtain real-world experience in working with adults in a typical business setting.

APPENDIX C – LAC ANNUAL REPORT

Return this form to the LAC’s Montgomery County Library Board liaison.



Library Advisory Committee 2019-20 Report

Branch Name	
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Please fill out the form below for the September 2019-August 2020 year and return to your MCPL board liaison no later than **September 30, 2020**.

Item	Info/Status	Notes
Branch Manager		
Board liaison		
LAC has at least 3 voting members		<i>Each LAC shall have at least 3 voting members.</i>
Date LAC roster last confirmed		<i>Most recent update with Library Administration.</i>
LAC Chair 2019-20		<i>Each LAC shall have a Chair, elected for a one-year term and who may be re-elected to a second one-year term.</i>
LAC Secretary 2019-20		<i>Each LAC shall have a Secretary</i>
List meeting dates for 2019-20. Indicate scheduled/held.		<i>Schedule at least 5 and hold at least 3 meetings from September-August</i>

Notice of meeting posted in library at least 7 days prior to each meeting?		<i>Open Meetings Act requires public notice of all board/committee meetings</i>
Notice sent for posting on MCPL website at least 7 days prior to each meeting?		<i>Open Meetings Act requires public notice of all board/committee meetings</i>
LAC meeting template used at each meeting?		
Copies of approved meeting minutes to liaison and Director's Office within 10 business days?		
Date of 2020-21 elections		<i>Each LAC shall conduct elections of officers by June 1 each year (i.e., 2018-19 elections should have been held by June 1, 2018)</i>
LAC Chair 2020-21		<i>Please include name and email address</i>
LAC Secretary 2020-21		<i>Please include name and email address</i>
List meeting dates scheduled for 2020-21		

Supplemental Questions (asked to collect information that can be compiled and shared among LACs). Add pages for answers as needed.

1. What were your notable accomplishments for this year?
 (To complete this question, if need be, review LAC roles in handbook at <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/Library/Resources/Files/boardd/lac-handbook.pdf>)

2. What worked well for your group this year? What good practices have you developed that you would recommend to others? What is an area of growth with which you may need help?

APPENDIX D – MONTGOMERY COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The purpose of the Achievement Awards is to publicly recognize and honor projects, activities and/or special achievements by Library Advisory Committees (LAC). The Achievement Awards are intended to inspire LACs to become more active and creative in working on projects to benefit their libraries and communities, to acknowledge and encourage their colleagues, and to encourage LAC innovative initiatives throughout the County. The Achievement Awards are approved by the Library Board and are presented at a meeting of the Board and LACs.

- The David Chiles Member(s) of the Year Award – presented to the outstanding member(s) of LACs for their work during the year.
- The Eleanor Abelard Award – presented to the LAC with the most effective program linking the LAC, the library and its community of users.

Award nominators are MCLB Liaisons with input from Library Managers and LAC Chairs. The MCLB liaison is responsible for completing the nomination form.