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## **The New York Library Association's Position Statement on Hiring a Fully Remote Public Library Director**

In response to the way in which libraries are adapting to the changing workforce, the New York Library Association (NYLA) after careful consideration, has developed a statement of position on hiring fully remote public Library Directors who are unable to be fully present in the building.

NYLA recognizes that the way our libraries serve their communities has drastically shifted in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Libraries heeded the call to offer more remote and virtual programming and services for their patrons. This also introduced the necessity of some remote work for library workers, and the updating of policies and procedures for virtual meetings of staff and Boards of Trustees. Remote work in a rapidly changing workplace environment is a necessity and is supported by the NYLA.

However, there are roles within the public library that are inherently public-facing and rely on being physically present to the community and the staff. Therefore, the hiring of a fully remote Library Director for a public library runs counter to NYLA's suggested best practices. The Library Director is the leader of the library and is expected to develop deep connections with their community, its needs, and their staff and Board. Without their active physical presence in the library, it is nearly impossible to develop the relationship necessary for a Library Director to perform the role effectively and wholistically.

For example, with this precedent, a public library could be potentially pressured by local government to hire a fully remote director as a cost-cutting measure. Moreover, this practice could risk trustees taking on routine administrative functions in the absence of the Director and cause dysfunction when staff on site have disagreements or emergencies that need immediate administrative attention. Finally, without the presence of community-facing and physically present leader in the library, there is no one to address public concerns on collection development and programming in an increasingly hostile environment for libraries due to ongoing challenges to Intellectual Freedom and the right to read.

When looking at best practices in the field for the position of Library Director or Manager, there are many references to activities that require the physical presence of the Director in the *Handbook for New Public Library Directors In New York State*, a publication which is endorsed by the Library Administration & Management Section (LAMS) and the Public Library Section (PLS) of NYLA. The Handbook outlines the job's responsibilities and highlights the need to meet the staff, Board, and community, and to

take physical inventory of the collection and the physical building itself regularly. The Handbook also stresses the “community first” approach throughout. When soliciting input from the community, it stresses to, “Attend meetings in the community to hear what the hot topics are or ask to be put on the agenda,” and to “Invite opinion leaders and non-users into the library for a tour.” While some groups may meet virtually, and staff *could* give tours to community leaders, best practice is that the Library Director would handle these events personally to ensure name and face recognition and demonstrate investment and interest in the community.

Therefore, a fully remote Library Director invites a myriad of potential negative consequences to the sanctity of the library and sets a precedent that does not align with the NYLA's view of the role of a public Library Director.