So You Want to be a Director
http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/so-you-want-to-be-a-director/

May I Ask You a Question? Lessons Learned from Interviewing Public Library Leaders
by Douglas Crane on January 4, 2016
http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2016/01/may-i-ask-you-a-question-lessons-learned-from-interviewing-public-library-leaders/

“In order to be really good as a librarian, everything counts towards your work, every play you go see, every concert you hear, every trip you take, everything you read, everything you know. I don’t know of another occupation like that. The more you know, the better you’re going to be.”

- Allen Smith

www.facebook.com/GoodwillLibrarian
Particularly for new directors in rural and small libraries

Pay attention to be careful not to move too fast until you’re better acclimated.

1. Contact your State Librarian and State Library Development Consultant to schedule an in-person visit so they can orient you about the library scene and state library supports in the state.

   If you are fortunate enough to live in a state with regional/system library services, contact their office for a visit.

2. Join the Association for Rural & Small Libraries  http://arsl.info/membership/

   This is the primary support network for those working in small and rural libraries. A terrific Listserv on which to ask questions comes with membership.

   Plan to attend their annual conferences.

3. Read through the Librarian as Community Leader  http://tinyurl.com/LibrarianasCommunityLeader pp.2-3; p.12;

   skip pages 14-15 and read the following instead:  So . . . what do I do now?  
   http://tinyurl.com/SowhatdoIdonow-2016

4. Browse through the Rural & Small Library Directors’ Tool Kit to familiarize yourself with the primary resources there, especially in the Being the Director section.  
   http://tinyurl.com/Rural-SmallDirectorsToolKit

5. Read through the following:


   Although out of print, Interlibrary Loan it and read thoroughly - a most thoughtful book about interpersonal relations.


   Sally Gardner Reed knows everything about everything - read everything she writes, then go and do it!


   ~  Introduction to Public Librarianship by Kathleen de la Pena McCook. 2nd ed. Neal-Schuman, 2011.

6. Take your first week to observe how the library functions and who is doing what. Read each staff person’s job description and meet with them to hear about what they do and show you where things are.
7. As early as possible in your second week, have a staff training day for all paid staff and volunteers to discuss their opinions about what the library does well and what they would suggest to improve the work place and services to customers. —> yes, close the library for an in-service day (your Friends group will be delighted to provide morning nibbles and lunch) to visit with the staff asking:
   ~ what is the library doing to serve the community?
   ~ what does the library do well?
   ~ ask what staff expects from you; what do you expect from them
   ~ what can we do to make the library better?
   ~ prioritize their list of suggested improvements -
     ask staff who would like to do (or be involved with) what
Have lots of chocolate available for last half of day.
Keep flip charts of lists for future reference.

Make sure you cover answers to What is our library doing? questions on p.5 of Librarian as Community Leader (from No.3 above).
Check how your library is doing compared to what public deserves list, also on p.5.
Distribute and discuss the Thumb Rules as part of staff discussion http://tinyurl.com/ThumbRules

8. Ask the same questions at a several hour open discussion meeting each with Board of Trustees, then Friends of the Library, if there is one.

9. Schedule a one hour meeting each with the mayor, town administrator, newspaper editor, Cooperative Extension head (including FCE supervisor), and paid head and/or president of Chamber of Commerce.
   Ask:
   - What’s happening in the community?
   - What are you and your organization doing?
   - What kind of information do you use and need?

DO NOT ask what the library could do for them (unless they volunteer, unasked) or attempt to tell them what the library can do - this is a fact-finding conversation about what they are doing.

Beverly Lynch has written that, “The most successful librarians are those who interact with their environment. The least successful are those who only talk to each other.”

10. Then, go back to your office and review your results with So…What do I do now? to begin a strategic plan for the library’s development. Schedule another visit with the staff about what you’ve found and begin to develop your next steps together:
   ~ what services to provide/change/develop;
   ~ how staff can be best deployed;
   ~ revisit folks from No.9 with specific information about how the library can help and support their activities.
Depending on your findings, begin to take steps to do what is needed - go gently, conversations with staff will give indication of best pace - it usually is not a good idea to go too fast unless severe conditions truly warrant.

And remember, you have stepped into being the library,

The library is a person - and you are now that person.
Do have a pleasant and energizing time - you have accepted the challenge of “active usefulness second to none”:

“The new library is active, an aggressive, educating force in the community, a living fountain of good influences, an army in the field with all guns limbered; and the librarian occupies a field of active usefulness second to none. (Melvil Dewey wrote that in 1886)

11. As you are beginning, review Jo Flick’s (CE Coordinator, Montana State Library) Briefing Book Outline at http://tinyurl.com/zwpp456. Although designed for succession planning, it provides a basic checklist of materials to have on hand.

Keeping these materials up-to-date during your tenure will not only help you find information quickly, but it will provide you information to pass along to your successor when you leave.

So, put on your best Auntie Mame persona and charge ahead:

“Ah, Patrick, I shall open doors for you, doors you never dreamed existed.”

Now, be of good cheer, good humor, and get crackin’ - Don

Oh, and

12. Have fun!

Some Additional Thoughts

Sue Ridnour <sue.ridnour@FLOWER-MOUND.COM> -
If I could give you just one piece of advice, it would be to buy the book Be a Great Boss: One Year to Success by Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, published by ALA, 2011. It has a different topic per chapter each week to help you navigate all the aspects of public library directorship. I found it to be very helpful (and I probably shouldn’t tell you that even though the chapters are fairly short, after almost three years I still haven't worked all the way through it.)

Good luck!

Diana Weaver <dweaver@BASEHORLIBRARY.ORG>
Another suggestion: The small library manager’s handbook, Alice Graves, ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014)

Chris Ely <whitewrightpl@GMAIL.COM>
The rule in small towns is never say anything about someone you don't want them to know, because who you're talking to is probably related to who you're talking about.
I say this from a small town where I'm related to about half the town in some way, and friends with about another quarter.

Nann Hilyard <nbhilyard@GMAIL.COM>
Right now I suggest you get to know people in the library service area.
Make appointments with the school superintendents, the mayor and village board, the township supervisor, head of the park district, the pastors of local churches,. Attend meetings of service clubs (Rotary, Lions, Woman's Club) and youth groups (4-H, scouts). Pretty soon people will call you “our librarian.”😊 Have fun!