

Maine Library Commission

Standards for Public Libraries

September 2013

Adopted by the Maine Library Commission on 9/16/13

INTRODUCTION

Under Maine law (Title 27, Chapter 4, Article 112-2), the Maine Library Commission (MLC), as the governing body of the Maine State Library (MSL), has the authority to establish policies and minimum standards for the state's library program. The Library Commission recognizes the need for the development and regular review of library standards.

Such standards provide assurance of a continuing effort to provide quality and meaningful library services to the citizens of Maine. This document represents an effort to establish a baseline of standards for libraries. The standards set forth in the following document shall be the primary qualification for any Maine library to be eligible to participate in any Maine State Library (MSL) program. The standards are designed to note the minimum level of service for a library. As presented, the standards represent a consensus of professional opinion on what is necessary to provide minimum quality library service.

Why are standards needed?

The Standards have been developed by the Maine Library Commission to:

- provide a quantitative measurement for each area of public library service;
- apply eligibility to any Maine State Library program equally to every library in Maine;
- incorporate long-range planning concepts, statistical measures, and other developments in library service;
- provide a philosophical context for quality library service;
- define minimal levels of service as well as levels of excellence along with goals for the future;
- serve as a partial basis for local and statewide library assessment and development.

What are the purposes of the standards?

The standards are a method by which to assess and to plan for better library service at the local level. With quantitative assessment, library needs can be documented and strong justification can be made for improved funding from both local and other sources. The standards provide a consistent process to be used over a period of time to develop improvements in public library service.

For both the Maine State Library and the Maine Library Commission the standards serve as a statewide indicator of current library services and as a guide indicating future planning actions. The standards are viable both as a consulting tool and as a basis for statewide public library planning and development.

It should be noted that the standards are not a measurement of effort

or dedication of any local library staff. Indeed, for some libraries, particularly smaller libraries, it can be difficult to achieve even core level standards because of the size of the supporting tax base. Where local funding is low, libraries are encouraged to explore the formation of alliances to increase the resources available to them through cooperative services.

How should the standards be used?

The standards are meant to be incorporated into the management of each library in Maine which participates in the programs of the Maine State Library overseen by the Library Commission. Library staff members are therefore encouraged to familiarize themselves with the standards and should adopt the standards as both assessment and planning tools.

If the standards are used to assess the current situation in each library and to assist in the development of the library's long-range plans, the participation of any individual library in the programs and vision of the Maine State Library shall be both satisfying and productive.

What are the levels of standards achievement?

The Maine Library Commission standards, as presented, include three concepts for use as an assessment and planning tool. These concepts are “**Basic Standards**”, “**Core Standards**” and “**Exemplary Standards**” levels of aspiration. The three standards are defined as:

BASIC STANDARDS: An organization that does not meet the minimum standards (Core) but offers basic services, such as books or videos and public computers. Libraries that provide this level of service are encouraged to work towards meeting the Core Standards to improve services to their community.

CORE STANDARDS: These priority standards are those which should be achieved because of their fundamental importance to the communities served by Maine libraries. Core standards are the minimum criteria for any library to be eligible to participate in the programs of the Maine State Library.

EXEMPLARY STANDARDS: These standards are designed to help libraries to plan and achieve service levels for their own communities beyond the core service standards. Depending upon community needs and the availability of resources, a library may choose to move beyond “Core” and attain an “Exemplary” level of achievement. While the “core” standards qualify a library's participation in the programs of the Maine State Library, there may, from time to time, be special programs of the Maine State Library reserved exclusively for the participation of libraries meeting the “exemplary” standards. A listing of all libraries recognized as meeting the “exemplary” standards shall be published annually within the state. Said libraries shall receive a “Certificate of Commendation” from the Maine Library Commission.

This document provides a checklist for determining whether or not a library has met the standard. Library staff and others, including governmental funding agencies, may use this checklist format to assess which standards have been met and which standards have not been met. Over a period of time, progress can be measured as more standards are marked as “Met.”

What is the “Certificate of Commendation” relationship to standards?

In all walks of life when quality really matters, we put systems into place with rules, practices, incentives and supports that help all to maintain high standards. We do so because we understand that individuals do their best, are most productive, and reach higher goals when they are working with a system that supports their best efforts. The “Maine Library Commission Standards” is created and maintained to be that system for public libraries within Maine. These standards outline a method by which libraries can plan for better service.

As an incentive for libraries to achieve advanced standards, and to recognize in a public way those libraries that meet such standards, the Maine Library Commission invites directors of libraries to apply for a “Certificate of Commendation” which shall be recognition of exemplary planning, labor and success.

This certificate gives libraries the opportunity to showcase their achievements in their own communities with an attractive certificate and provides the opportunity for a library to apply for special grants as administered by the Maine Library Commission.

Assumptions on which the Standards are based

The basic assumptions:

1. The “core” group of standards establishes a minimum level of accomplishment that most libraries can meet.
2. Librarians want an easy to use tool to assess the quality of their library.
3. The standards represent the current situation for libraries in Maine; a review and revision process should be ongoing as needed.
4. Reports as submitted by the Maine State Library to IMLS and other reports for libraries of a comparable national stature, per the determination of the Maine Library Commission committee, shall be the foundation for comparing individual library data. Accurate reporting is, and shall continue to be, a requirement for the development of standards.

A checklist, **Standards for Maine Libraries**, is provided. As presented, a library director, as well as the Maine Library Commission, can easily look at the checklist and quickly determine if the library meets “basic”, “core” or “exemplary” standards.

STANDARDS FOR MAINE LIBRARIES

Basic Standards

Standard	Criteria	Achieved	In Process
Governance	<p>Is a non-profit organization with a governing board with written by-laws which outline the board's purpose, set the frequency of meetings, define the number of board members, specify procedures for the appointment of committees, specify operational procedures and address conflict of interest issues</p> <p>OR is a town department that operates under the policies, procedures and oversight of the town's governing body.</p> <p>Has a mission statement defining the services available to the community</p> <p>The library board and director have considered purchasing Directors and Officer's Liability and General Liability Insurance</p>		
Staff and Facility	<p>Has a physical presence with the facilities necessary to support a collection, staff and schedule and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Complies with building, fire, safety, sanitation and other applicable federal, state and local codes and legal requirements with at least one well maintained public restroom onsite b. Has an established and published schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public year round of no less than 12 hours per week c. Has an exterior sign which clearly identifies the building as a library <p>The library director supports staff continuing education</p> <p>For safety and security reasons, the library</p>		

	has at least 2 persons (one may be a volunteer), scheduled at all times the library is open		
Collection and Programming	Has an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof		

Core Standards

Standard	Criteria	Achieved	In Process
<p>Governance</p>	<p>Is a non-profit organization with a governing board with written by-laws which outline the board's purpose, set the frequency of meetings, define the number of board members, specify procedures for the appointment of committees, specify operational procedures and address conflict of interest issues</p> <p>Hires/appoints the library director/librarian and delegates to the library director the full professional responsibility for administering and managing the library, its policies, personnel and finances, as well as the selection of materials.</p> <p>OR is a town department that operates under the policies, procedures and oversight of the town's governing body.</p> <p>Creates and adheres to basic library policies including but not limited to Collection Development, Internet Safety and an acceptable use policy that addresses access by minors. Has circulation practices and policies that protect patron confidentiality</p> <p>Has a mission statement defining the services available to the community</p> <p>Is supported in whole or in part with public funds</p> <p>Is a member of the Maine Regional Library System</p> <p>The by-laws are reviewed at least every 3-5 years</p> <p>The library board and director have considered purchasing Directors and Officer's Liability and General Liability Insurance</p>		

	<p>The library’s financial record keeping provides adequate internal controls using appropriate accounting measures up to and including Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)</p> <p>Financial reports are reviewed by the board and the director annually</p> <p>An audit or review of the library finances, including funds received and expended, is conducted at least biannually by a Certified Public Accountant</p>		
<p>Staff and Facility</p>	<p>Has a physical presence with the facilities necessary to support a collection, staff and schedule and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Complies with building, fire, safety, sanitation and other applicable federal, state and local codes and legal requirements with at least one well maintained public restroom onsite b. Has an established and published schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public year round of no less than 12 hours per week c. Has an exterior sign which clearly identifies the building as a library d. Has telephone service and the telephone number is published <p>The library, no matter how small, has a permanent, paid library director who is responsible for the administration of library services. To meet this requirement, the library director may receive a stipend from the sponsoring entity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The library director plans, organizes, manages and directs a program of library services that serves all people in the community. b. The library director is responsible for completing and submitting an Annual Report to the Maine State Library in a format acceptable to the Maine State 		

	<p style="text-align: center;">Library</p> <p>Has a staff member who subscribes, reads and responds, when necessary, to MEINFO or MELIBS listserv</p> <p>The library director supports staff continuing education</p> <p>The library director measures and evaluates the effectiveness of library services in relation to the changing needs of the community</p> <p>For safety and security reasons, the library has at least 2 persons (one may be a volunteer), scheduled at all times the library is open</p> <p>The library has at least one public access computer connected to the Internet and available for public use during all the hours the library is open. This computer is connected to a good quality printer</p> <p>The library's governing body endeavors to compensate library staff equitably, and in doing so will consider benchmarks such as pay scales for comparable positions within the local municipal structure or school system.</p>		
<p>Collection and Programming</p>	<p>Has an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof</p> <p>Offers regularly scheduled public programming such as story times, book clubs, etc.</p> <p>The library has an up to date collection and systematically withdraws materials no longer useful based on accepted national library professional standards and maintain a commitment to local collection development as evidenced by maintenance of the library's acquisitions budget at or above the most recent three-year acquisitions budget average. Should a special circumstance arise, a library will furnish a statement describing the nature of the special circumstance to the Maine Library Commission.</p>		

	<p>The library provides an up to date automated catalog utilizing the current version of the international standard AACR II/RDA, MARC format and recognized professional standards for classification and subject organization</p> <p>The library maintains communications with community leaders, interest groups, agencies, etc. and regularly informs them of library activities.</p>		
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Exemplary Standards

Standard	Criteria	Achieved	In Process
<p>Governance</p>	<p>Is a non-profit organization with a governing board with written by-laws which outline the board’s purpose, set the frequency of meetings, define the number of board members, specify procedures for the appointment of committees, specify operational procedures and address conflict of interest issues</p> <p>Hires/appoints the library director/librarian and delegates to the library director the full professional responsibility for administering and managing the library, its policies, personnel and finances, as well as the selection of materials.</p> <p>OR is a town department that operates under the policies, procedures and oversight of the town’s governing body.</p> <p>Ensures that library statistics and financial records are kept, and that both statistics and financial records are incorporated into a written annual report made to the community</p> <p>Creates and adheres to basic library policies including but not limited to Collection Development, Internet Safety and an acceptable use policy that addresses access by minors. Has circulation practices and policies that protect patron confidentiality</p> <p>Has a mission statement defining the services available to the community</p> <p>Is supported in whole or in part with public funds</p> <p>Is a member of the Maine Regional Library System</p> <p>At least one library board member attends a</p>		

	<p>minimum of one statewide or regional library activity each year.</p> <p>The by-laws are reviewed at least every 3-5 years</p> <p>The library board and director have considered purchasing Directors and Officer’s Liability and General Liability Insurance</p> <p>The library’s financial record keeping provides adequate internal controls using appropriate accounting measures up to and including Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)</p> <p>Financial reports are reviewed by the board and the director annually</p> <p>An audit or review of the library finances, including funds received and expended, is conducted at least biannually by a Certified Public Accountant</p> <p>Using a formal planning process, the board works with the director to develop a written strategic plan that includes time frames and is reviewed and updated annually.</p> <p>The library director and/or board members attend town municipal government entity meetings several times a year in addition to the annual budget presentation.</p>		
<p>Staff and Facility</p>	<p>Has a physical presence with the facilities necessary to support a collection, staff and schedule and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Complies with building, fire, safety, sanitation and other applicable federal, state and local codes and legal requirements with at least one well maintained public restroom onsite b. Has an established and published schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public year round of no less than 12 hours per week c. Has an exterior sign which clearly identifies the building as a library 		

	<p>d. Has telephone service and the telephone number is published</p> <p>The library, no matter how small, has a permanent, paid library director who is responsible for the administration of library services. To meet this requirement, the library director may receive a stipend from the sponsoring entity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The library director plans, organizes, manages and directs a program of library services that serves all people in the community. b. The library director is responsible for completing and submitting an Annual Report to the Maine State Library in a format acceptable to the Maine State Library <p>Has a staff member who subscribes, reads and responds, when necessary, to MEINFO or MELIBS listserv</p> <p>The library director supports staff continuing education</p> <p>Measures and evaluates the effectiveness of library services in relation to the changing needs of the community</p> <p>Establishes and maintains working relationships with other governmental agencies, civic organizations, community groups and the general public</p> <p>For safety and security reasons, the library has at least 2 persons (one may be a volunteer), scheduled at all times the library is open</p> <p>The library has at least one public access computer connected to the Internet and available for public use during all the hours the library is open. This computer is connected to a good quality printer</p> <p>The library's governing body endeavors to compensate library staff equitably, and in</p>		
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	<p>doing so will consider benchmarks such as pay scales for comparable positions within the local municipal structure or school system.</p>		
<p>Collection and Programming</p>	<p>Has an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof</p> <p>Offers regularly scheduled public programming such as story times, book clubs, etc.</p> <p>The library has a disaster plan outlining procedures to follow in case of fire, water or other damage to the collection or building.</p> <p>The library has an up to date collection and systematically withdraws materials no longer useful based on accepted national library professional standards and maintain a commitment to local collection development as evidenced by maintenance of the library's acquisitions budget at or above the most recent three-year acquisitions budget average. Should a special circumstance arise, a library will furnish a statement describing the nature of the special circumstance to the Maine Library Commission.</p> <p>The library provides an up to date automated catalog utilizing the current version of the international standard AACR II/RDA, MARC format and recognized professional standards for classification and subject organization</p> <p>The library cooperates with other libraries to coordinate collection development, programming, and loan policies where appropriate.</p> <p>The library maintains communications with community leaders, interest groups, agencies, etc. and regularly informs them of library activities.</p>		