

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Library Standards

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The development of the Maine Public Library Standards (available at www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards) was guided by the belief that Maine's public libraries play a critical role in providing free access to knowledge, information, and diversity of ideas to all residents of the state. All Maine residents need and deserve at least a core level of library service. The standards provide a way to measure a core level of quality for public library service and also provide a pathway to excellence in library service.

Due to tremendous advances in information technology and to the cooperation of all types of libraries in Maine, even the smallest library can offer access to an almost unimaginable quantity of both electronic and print information resources. But while this new environment presents great opportunities, it also presents great challenges. Today's library staff must master not only the skills and knowledge necessary to provide traditional library services, but also the new and constantly changing skills and knowledge required to utilize the latest in information technologies. Challenges also face the trustees and other government officials responsible for securing the funding and other resources necessary to provide library service that meets current needs and expectations.

Maine Public Library Standards attempts to cover the services, resources, and other requirements for core library service that should be available to all residents of the state, including those who face physical or other barriers to their use of public libraries. Maine's public library standards are entirely voluntary, but every library in Maine is encouraged to meet the standards covered by the checklists in the Standards publication.

How to Use the Standards

The simplest way to use the Standards is to provide a photocopy of the checklists in the Standards document to each library board member and review those checklists at your board meetings. If your library does not meet certain standards, you can work with your library director to develop a plan to work toward achieving those standards in the future.

Library Planning and the Standards

It is most effective to use the Standards as a tool to assist with a locally developed planning process. In the context of a local planning process, your planning committee can use the checklists to gather information about the library and the community during the information-gathering phase of the planning process. The Standards can also help the planning committee establish objectives for the plan.

Sources of Additional Information

- Your District Consultant
- Maine Public Library Standards (www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards/)
- Maine Library Annual Report data (www.maine.gov/msl/libs/statistics/)