

Maine Public Library Standards 8-28-2019

Overview:

Historically, the Maine Library Association (MLA) developed and provided Public Library Standards for Maine's public libraries. In 2013-14, the Maine State Library Commission reviewed the public library standards and made modifications. Recently, the Commission asked MLA to take the work that was done in 2013-14 and to further develop and refine the public library standards for Maine's public libraries. MLA agreed, and convened a committee to look at the current standards and revise them to reflect library services – and the state of Maine's public libraries – given the time that has passed since the work done in 2013-14.

This model reflects the statutory charge directed to the Maine Library Commission to, “[E]stablish the policies and operations of the Maine State Library and the State's library program including minimum standards of library service, the apportionment of state aid to libraries, the designation of library regions and their boundaries, the endorsement of the designation of area reference and resource centers and the designation of research centers after full consideration of the advice of the State Librarian.” (Maine Revised Statutes, Title 27, Chapter 112, Section 11.). In this instance, the Maine Library Association will create the standards, and the Maine Library Commission will endorse and adopt those standards, very similar to the School Library Program Standards created by Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL) and endorsed/adopted by the Maine Library Commission in 2018:

<http://www.maslibraries.org/School-Library-Program-Standards>

During the spring of 2019, the standards committee established by MLA resulted in new draft standards, and they were presented broadly to Maine's public library community for feedback over the course of several months.

The feedback that was received has been used to create a second draft, which was presented to the broader library community for further review and feedback in early September 2019. From there, a final draft was prepared and was discussed at the Fall MLA Conference September 30 – October 2, 2019. Following the conference, MLA members voted on the standards, and then the final standards were presented to the Maine Library Commission for their endorsement.

The standards have been created in hopes of giving libraries across the state a tool to measure themselves and inspire their boards to improve as needed – they are not punitive, nor will they be, or should they be.

The process of updating standards and reviewing significant feedback, underscored the need to ensure that Maine's smallest public/rural libraries are supported and are not negatively impacted by the thresholds established in the standards. The review of the standards also exposed the intersection between the official definition of a Maine Public Library (established by the Maine Library Commission 2012): <https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards/definition.htm> and new standards identified in the “Essential” tier. To this end, the revised standards (August 2019) addresses this.

Background Regarding the Definition of a Public Library:

The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) oversees the administration of federal Library School Technology Act (LSTA) funding as well as the collection of required public library annual report data, utilizes the following reference/requirements defining public libraries:

A public library is established under state laws or regulations to serve a community, district, or region. In this document [annual report], we report only on public libraries that meet all criteria in the definition of a public library developed by the Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS).

Under this definition, a public library provides, at a minimum, the following:

- *An organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof;*
- *Paid staff;*
- *An established schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public;*
- *Facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule; and*
- *Supported in whole or in part with public funds.*

Drawing from IMLS's and FSCS's definition of a public library, the Maine Library Commission further refined the requirements and thresholds to be designated as a public library in 2012. The definition is fundamental to maintaining status as a recognized public library that is eligible for support (direct or indirect) from federal Library School and Technology Act (LSTA) funds.

Below is the full definition of a Maine Public Library:

In order to effectively assist public libraries in Maine by offering state and federal resources, it is important that the most basic attributes that serve as the foundation of a fully-functional Public Library be defined. These attributes will help to ensure that 'public library services' are consistent throughout the state and for all communities in Maine who have and support their own Public Library, these attributes underscore the importance of sustainability of such an organization.

A Maine **public library** is defined by the Maine Library Commission as having the following attributes:

Governance:

1. Is a town department or an organization with a governing board that:
 - a. Has adopted written by-laws which outline the board's purpose, set the frequency of meetings, define the number of board members, specify the procedures for the appointment of committees, specify operational procedures and address conflict of interest issues;
 - b. Hires/appoints the library director/librarian and delegates to the library director full professional responsibility for administering and managing the library, its policies, personnel and finances, as well as the selection of materials; and
 - c. 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.
2. Creates and adheres to basic library policies including but not limited to Collection Development, Internet Safety/CIPA and an acceptable use policy that addresses access by minors. Have circulation practices and policies that protect patron confidentiality.
3. Has a mission statement defining the services available to the community.
4. Is supported in whole or in part with public funds.
5. Is a member of the Maine Regional Library System.

Staff and Facility:

1. 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.
 - a. The library director plans, organizes, manages and directs a program of library services that serve 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.
2. Has a staff member who subscribes, reads and responds when necessary to MEINFO or MELIBS listserv.

3. Supports staff attendance at continuing education.

Collection and Programming:

1. Has an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof.
2. Has a physical presence with the facilities necessary to support a collection, staff, and schedule that:
 - 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;
 - b. Has an established 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;
 - e. Provides public internet access and offers designated public access computer(s); and
 - f. Provides an up-to-date bibliographic card catalog or automated catalog arranged and indexed in the most useful form for patrons.
3. Offers regularly scheduled public programming such as story times, book clubs, etc.

Brief Synopsis of Edits to Standards Draft 2.0 – August 28, 2019:

Given the significant feedback, the focus on a public library definition, and the desire to establish standards that motivate and incentivize libraries, the following draft offers new recommendations.

- 1) A new, “Required” tier that serves as the most basic, entry-level, tier. The standards identified align with the current Public Library Definition requirements AND will recommend adding the entirety of the “Ethics” standards. Adoption of this category will require review by the Maine Library Commission to update the definition of a Public Library.
- 2) The “Essential” tier of standards will reflect core, essential elements that all libraries should strive for. Significant feedback indicated that many smaller libraries might not be able to obtain the essential category because of a “two-staff” requirement. By creating the new “Required” tier and moving the “two staff” requirement to the “Enhanced” tier, smaller libraries would meet the basic requirements of a Public Library, thus alleviating the angst of not achieving the entry level of standards. That said, the standards committee, MSL Library Development staff, and State Library leadership feel strongly that a safe, multi capacity library require two staff members present, as well as other standards that may be hard to meet, but nonetheless underscore a fully functioning, community supported organization. To us, it’s a primarily a personnel safety issue more than anything else.
- 3) Feedback provided also led to modifications in some of the standards at all levels to clarify ambiguity and to adjust standards that had quantifiable thresholds to reflect the true nature of the capacity of Maine’s libraries.
- 4) The standards relating to collections have been edited to reflect the desire to build a quality collection. It is important that a balance is struck to ensure that appropriate weeding takes place, the collection represents and reflects the community’s interests, and that the collection budget (no matter how small or large) be maintained, and ideally grow.
- 5) A self-imposed ranking system has been created that allows libraries to score themselves across all standards, thus allowing a more holistic picture of a library’s ability to meet certain standards. No points are allocated for the required standards. All areas shaded in blue receive 1-Point, and all areas shaded in red receive 2-Points. Libraries can then go through and see where they rank. A total of 15 points indicates, holistically, that a library is operating in the “Enhanced” level, and a total of 30 points indicates that a library is operating in the “Exemplary” level. To reiterate, this is a self-imposed review. The State Library is not auditing libraries against this – it simply serves as a benchmark for how an individual library is doing.

- 6) The standards are designed knowing that roughly 25% of all libraries will meet the required tier, and perhaps a few of the enhanced tiers; 50% of all libraries will meet the Enhanced category with some meeting standards in the Exemplary tier; and finally 25% of all libraries will find they are in the Exemplary tier but may not meet *all* the exemplary standards. While it would be fantastic if all libraries initially met the exemplary category, it would also represent that we're not setting standards that encourage us to do better.
- 7) Finally, there will be a two-year period where the Maine State Library works with libraries to understand what services and benefits should be aligned with certain standards. As statewide resources become limited or underfunded, some state services might be contingent on a library meeting a certain standard tier. This approach is modeled by other states and reflects the core notion that services or benefits be aligned with libraries that have the capacity and support to utilize such services or benefits to the best of their ability – and to the betterment of their communities. Once the standards are finalized the Maine State Library will begin the methodical process of understanding where libraries are meeting certain standards and where they are not, and MSL will gather feedback and hold focus groups to best understand how to align state services with the standards.

	Required	Enhanced	Exemplary
Governance*			
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 OR is a town department that operates under the policies, procedures and oversight of the town's governing body.	X	X	X
Has a written mission statement and service objectives.	X	X	X
The governing body hires/appoints/reviews 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.	X	X	X
Receives municipal support in whole or in part and does not charge members of their legal service area for membership	X	X	X
The library's financial record keeping is reviewed by the governing body and the director at least annually and complies with adequate internal controls using industry standard accounting measures.	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X
Provides a written annual report to the community that includes statistics and financial records.	X	X	X
The governing body and director have considered purchasing Directors and Officer's Liability and General Liability Insurance and have a vote on record.		X	X
The by-laws are reviewed at least every 3-5 years.		X	X
An audit or official review of the library finances, including funds received and expended, is conducted at least biannually by a Certified Public Accountant.		X	X
At least one library board member attends a minimum of one statewide or regional library activity each year			X
Using a formal planning process, the governing body works with the director to develop a written strategic plan that includes time frames and is reviewed and updated annually.			X
The library director and/or board members attend town municipal government entity meetings several times a year in addition to the annual budget presentation.			X
The governing body conducts a self evaluation every 3-5 years			X
*For town/municipal libraries, meeting certain standards will naturally be adapted to reflect the services provided under the umbrella of the town/municipal governing body (i.e. a "library board" might instead be a library advisory council, "library budget" and "financial audit" might be encompassed under the town's financial audit, all insurances are provided via the town/municipality, etc.).			

	Required	Enhanced	Exemplary
Staff & Facility			
Has a fixed location with the facilities necessary to support a collection, staff and schedule	X	X	X
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 on site	X	X	X
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	X	X	X
Legal Service Area < 5,000		20 hours/week	30 hours/week
Legal Service Area < 10,000		25 hours/week	35 hours/week
Legal Service Area < 25,000		35 hours/week	45 hours/week
Legal Service Area > 25,000		40 hours/week	50 hours/week
Has an exterior sign which clearly identifies the building as a library	X	X	X
Has telephone service and the telephone number is published.	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X
The library director plans, organizes, manages and directs a program of library services that serves all people in the community.	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X
Has a staff member who subscribes, reads and responds, when necessary, to MEINFO or MELIBS listserv.	X	X	X
The library director supports staff attendance at continuing education.	X	By having a written policy that outlines this support	By providing resources necessary to support staff development
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. Public 24/7 wifi is provided	X	X	X
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.		X	X
The library maintains the following staffing minimums (FTE, w/Advanced MSL Certification OR BS in Library Science OR MLS for full-time staff)		.000361/capita (67% of average)	.000717/capita (33% higher than average)

	Required	Enhanced	Exemplary
The library director measures and evaluates the effectiveness of library services in relation to the changing needs of the community.		X	X
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.		X	X
Has a dedicated space usable for a variety of purposes (programming, meetings, studying, exhibits, etc.)		X	X
The library has a disaster plan outlining procedures to follow in case of fire, water or other damage to the collection or building.		X	X
Establishes and maintains working relationships with other governmental agencies, civic organizations, community groups and the general public			X
Provides benefits to library staff (paid vacation, sick leave, health insurance, retirement)			X
Has facilities for video conferencing			X
Collection & Programming			
Has an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof	X	X	X
Weeds collection	X	Every 5 Years	Every 3 Years
Addresses community needs		X	X
Average collections budget		Has not decreased over the past 3 years	Has increased over the past 3 years
The library adheres to nationally accepted professional standards for collection maintenance and maintains a stable collection development budget	X	\$2.23/Capita (67% of average)	\$4.43/capita (33% higher than average)
The library provides an up to date catalog searchable by patrons that adheres to international and recognized professional standards for classification and subject organization	X	The catalog is automated and can be accessed online	The catalog is automated and can be accessed online
The library maintains communications with community leaders, interest groups, agencies, etc. and regularly informs them of library activities.	X	X	X
Offers regularly scheduled public programming such as story times, book clubs, etc.	X	X	Dedicated programming funds included in budget
The library has an up-to-date web presence.	X	Has a fully developed web site	Has a fully developed web site
The library cooperates with other libraries to coordinate collection development, programming, and loan policies where appropriate.		X	Optimizes statewide reciprocal borrowing and resource sharing practices

	Required	Enhanced	Exemplary
Advocacy			
The library maintains a marketing and advocacy plan that promotes services in the wider community		X	X
The library has a formal body that advocates on behalf of the library to the community		X	X
The library actively participates in local events, such as festivals and celebrations			X
Ethics			
The library adheres to state and federal labor laws	X	X	X
The library has circulation practices and policies that protect patron confidentiality that are guided by the ALA Bill of Rights and the Maine state statute relating to patron privacy	X	X	X
The library respects fair use and copyright laws	X	X	X
The library does not advance private interests at the expense of the library	X	X	X
Library staff distinguishes between personal convictions and professional duties and does not allow personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of their institutions.	X	X	X
The library has written policies to handle challenged materials, programs, and patron code of conduct	X	X	X
The library posts its policies publicly	X	X	X
		Worth 1 Point	Worth 2 Points
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE		20	36
"Required" = all elements are met			
"Enhanced" = 15 points			
"Exemplary" = 30 points			