Public Library Standards

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Comments/guidance by Montana State Library staff in tan boxes. Contacts: Sarah McHugh, (406)444-9816; Pam Henley, (855)419-2616; Lauren McMullen, (866)730-1681; Suzanne Reymer (888)826-0837

Standard
General
(a) The library is established under Montana's laws according to 22-1-301 through 22-1-317, 22-1-701 through 22-1-1711, or Title 7, MCA.
Public libraries in Montana must be legally established in order to receive state aid. To learn more about the different ways that libraries are created please visit Montana Library Law and Rules.
(b) The board conforms to all applicable state, local, and federal laws, rules, and regulations.
(c) Monthly, or at least every other month six meetings a year with no gap between meetings greater than 90 days, library board meetings are held in an accessible location at times and a place convenient to the public and according to state laws on public meetings.
In order to ensure excellent library services the board must meet regularly. There are a number of items such as budget, policy adoption, evaluation of the director and evaluation of the library that need to be addressed. Boards and directors should also follow the open meeting law. The Trustee Handbook has an informative section about meeting open meeting law requirements.
(d) The library submits the Montana Public Library Annual Statistical Report to the Montana state library.
Policies and Bylaws
(a) Every three years, the board reviews and updates its bylaws as necessary.
Reviewing library board bylaws ensures that the bylaws reflect any changes that might have occurred over time. Refer to Suggestions for Bylaws for Montana Library Boards for guidance on developing bylaws.
(b) The board develops, studies, evaluates, reviews, updates and adopts as necessary all library policies at least once every three years. When the board reviews library policies, the policies' effect on the library's relations with the public are evaluated.
Policies set the direction for the library, as well as making sure that customers receive fair and equitable service. A well-developed policy gives library staff some guidance on how to act when presented with a problem. Policies attempt to balance patron needs with library resources. The following links may help you review and develop library policies. Please contact MSL staff, other Montana public library staff, or search for library policies on the internet in order to see sample policies.
(c) The public must have easy access to written policies, procedures, and bylaws.
This standard can be met by publishing library policies, procedures, and bylaws on a website or giving the information to interested patrons. One easy way to do this is to create a policy and/or procedure manual. When all library policies and procedures are in the same place it is easy to give a patron a copy of a particular policy or procedure.
Planning and Evaluation
(a) The board uses the Montana Public Library Annual Statistical Report to review the library's year-to-year progress and performance.
Libraries are required to file an annual statistical report. These reports can give the library a snapshot of its performance. It is particularly useful to do a trend analysis or compare the library to other libraries in Montana. Has the library's circulation gone up over the last few years? Is staff offering more programs than before? How does the library compare to libraries that are a similar size? The Online Statistics Center can help answer these types of questions."
(b) The library governing authority adopts emergency response plans that ensure the safety of the public and staff as the primary priority.
You never know when disaster might strike. If a fire destroys part of the library, what will you do? Check with the city or county to see if it has a plan that includes the library. If the city or county does not have a disaster plan that includes the

library then you will need to develop your own plan. Your Statewide Consulting Librarian can help you or you can take a look at dplan.org. The library can develop its own disaster plan, but it might be helpful to look at dplan.org in order to see what should be included in a disaster plan.

Finance

(a) The board and the director follow fiscal procedures consistent with state law and local government requirements in preparing, presenting, and administering its budget.

This standard simply means libraries need to obey the laws and follow local procedures when developing and administering library budgets. If you have any questions about procedures in your community, talk to your city and/or county clerk.

(b) Local tax revenues provide at least 50 percent of the support for the library. Grants, donations, and other revenue sources supplement but do not supplant local tax support.

Property taxes or other local tax revenues from the city or county must provide at least 50 percent of the library's budget. State and federal dollars cannot be included in this total.

(c) The director works with the board to develop an annual financial plan or budget.

Developing a budget is required to run the library. A budget can also help people understand how much it costs to run a library, as well as informing people about how money is spent at the library.

(d) Every three years the board and the director review the adequacy of insurance coverage for the collection and building, and update the coverage as necessary.

Hopefully the library's collection and equipment will never be destroyed If it is, adequate insurance can help you recover from a disaster. Talk with your city and/or county officials to find out if the library's collection and contents are covered by insurance. If they are not, ask them to add you to the policy. If the city and/or county cannot afford to add you to their insurance coverage or you need to acquire insurance coverage, please check with MACO. Check with a local insurance agent in your city or the next largest town. Local insurance agents may also be able to insure the library's collection.

Library Director

(a) The board hires the director according to local, state, and federal regulations and delegates the day-to-day management of the library to the director.

The library director influences every aspect of the library from how it runs to how customers feel after using the library. Clearly a library board wants to hire the right person for the job. The following links might help you with hiring a director.
Montana Trustee Handbook-Personnel
Library Director Job Descriptions

(b) The board evaluates the performance of the director annually.

Most people want to know how they are doing at their job. Evaluating the director annually gives the library board and the director a chance to focus on how s/he is doing. What is the director doing well? What could be improved? What should the director focus on in the coming year? Answers to these questions can help the director improve his/her performance. The following links might help you with evaluating the director.
Montana Trustee Handbook-Personnel
Mid Hudson Library System - Evaluating the Director

(c) Each public library has a paid director who is responsible for the administration of library services.

The library needs a paid director to run the library in order to ensure that the library is open regular hours and providing an excellent level of service for its community.

(d) Libraries that serve more than 25,000 people employ a library director with a graduate degree in library or information science or its equivalent.

As libraries increase in size the complexity of issues that directors manage also increases. A director with an MLS has often been trained in library management and hopefully can bring a big picture vision to the library staff and board.

(e) All public library directors will be certified by the state library.

Library directors are required to do a little bit of everything. Like most fields continuous training is important. Please refer to the Montana State Library Certification Program for more information.

Human Resources: General

(a) The library board provides continuing education for the director and staff members by allocating funds to support continuing education costs, including travel expense and salary.

Training is necessary as new technological tools and the sheer pace of change means new services and new ways of providing traditional services. The board's support of continuing education is critical if staff are to receive additional and on-going training in the library field.

(b) Paid staff persons are present during 90 percent of all open hours.

Paid staff are necessary in order to make sure that all open hours are covered. Volunteers are often loyal and dedicated, but they are volunteers. Volunteers are a wonderful addition to the library, but they should be placed in positions where they either free library staff to offer new services or assist with offering new services themselves.

(c) The board has adopted and reviewed a personnel policy within the past three years.

The library director is probably a city or county employee. As such s/he will be covered under that agency's personnel policy. The board may want to review this policy to make sure that it is fair and adequately meets the needs of the library and the library director. If the library director is paid directly by the library board, the library will need to develop a personnel policy if it has not already done so. Montana Association of Counties - Model Personnel Policy

(d) The library maintains written, up-to-date job descriptions.

Job descriptions clearly define what is expected of an employee. Organizations tend to update a job description when they need to hire, but forget to review these descriptions. As a result the nature of the person's job has changed, but the description fails to reflect the changes. By updating the job description, you are making sure everyone is on the same page and clearly defining what everyone does in the library. This can help give you and the library board a better idea of what is required to run a library.

Montana Trustee Handbook - Personnel
Sample Job Descriptions for various library positions

(e) The library has internet access for staff.

Information, entertainment, and the way we interact with others is moving to the internet. It's critical that staff have access to the internet. They need this access to provide adequate support to their patrons in a wide variety of services and to stay abreast of changes in the library field.

Access

(a) The board and the director determine the days of the week and the hours during the day to be open to provide maximum service.

The board and director need to consider their community when choosing library hours. Who lives in the community? Seniors? Working people who commute? People who work 8-5 or something similar? Parents with small children? After identifying the largest majorities within the community think about what hours work best for the individual groups. The library may need to be open a combination of morning and evening hours in order to accommodate everyone.

(b) The library is open during the week at least the following minimum hours. Many libraries exceed this minimum because the community, the board, and the director recognize that the number of hours of public service leads to greater use by the public. A library with more than one service outlet may use the total nonoverlapping hours of all outlets to meet the minimum requirement.

Population	Minimum	Desirable
<3,500	15	25-40
>3,500	30	40-50
>10,000	40	50-60
>25,000	50	60+

In order for the library to serve its community it is necessary for it to be open a certain number of hours.

(c) Library users who wish to copy materials available from non-circulating items or from computer files have access to a photocopy machine or printer.

It is understandable that the library would wish to ensure that certain items do not leave the library. However it is important that, where permitted under copyright laws, library users have a way to make copies of these materials in order to satisfy the user's information needs.

(d) The library has a telephone and answers telephone inquiries.

It is important for the library to maintain telephone service for those users who are not able to travel to the library and who

prefer this option for contacting library staff.

(e) The library provides access to resources and services to patrons with disabilities.

One of the most inspiring elements of libraries is that they are open to everyone. This includes community members who have disabilities. The library board, director and staff should make every effort to serve those with disabilities. This includes making the library as accessible as possible as well as identifying ways to serve patrons with disabilities.

Collection Development

(a) The board adopts a collection management policy that it reviews every three years. The policy addresses the use of electronic resources.

A collection management policy can help the library provide a balanced collection. The following link might be helpful if you are developing a new policy or updating your current one.
Montana State Library - Collection Management Policy

(b) The board and the director develop an annual materials budget as part of the library budget.

It is important that the board and director set aside money to purchase new materials for the library collection. Although library services have substantially expanded beyond print materials, most library users want specific materials when they visit the library, either electronically or in person.

(c) The library uses at least one professionally recognized review source.

The following list isn't exhaustive, but might help you understand what Professional Review Source the State Library considers acceptable.

Booklist
Library Journal
Montana: Magazine of Western History
New York Review of Books
New York Times Book Review
YALSA
School Library Journal
Horn Book
SBF - Science, Book, & Film
Book Links
InfoTrac - search for reviews
Reviews from Newspapers
Reviews from magazines the library subscribes to - Nation, Science, Reader's Digest

(d) The library provides access to federal, state, and local government documents that are appropriate to its community.

This standard will be met if staff assists patrons with finding government documents. These documents may be online or at the library. The library does not need to have every type of document available, but staff may want to have local government documents accessible. For example if the community is near an EPA Superfund site, staff may want to have relevant documents at the library. Otherwise staff can use the Internet and Interlibrary Loan to give patrons access to this type of information.

Access to the Collection

(a) Materials are purchased to ensure a steady flow of materials for the public.

Library users expect regular access to new materials through their library. Although the library's cash flow may vary it is important to find a way to regularly add new items to the library's collection.

(b) The library catalogs and organizes its collection according to standard cataloging and classification systems and procedures. Automated records comply with the machine-readable catalog (MARC) format.

Cataloging and classification standards are constantly changing. It is important to follow and keep informed regarding standard cataloging procedures. By doing so library staff will find it easier to transition to a new cataloging and circulation system and to new technologies in the field.

(c) The library offers interlibrary loan and follows the Montana state interlibrary loan protocols.

No library can offer everything its users might want. Interlibrary loan is a way of expanding the library's collection and meeting the needs of library users.

Collection Evaluation
(a) The library's collection is continually evaluated for additions and deletions based on the library's collection management policy.
To meet this standard a library should continue to add and weed materials from its collection. Numerous online courses can assist librarians in collection assessment, development and maintenance. Learning Portal lists online, self-paced courses that might assist you.
Facilities
(a) The board and the director evaluate the library building every three years to determine adequate space needs.
Is the library adequate for the population that is serves? Is the library building crowded and running out of space? Is there a need for more room for computers? A teen area? Answering these questions can give library directors an idea of what needs to be done with library facilities. By taking the time to answer these questions and think about how to implement any solutions, the board and director can help improve library services.
(b) The board and the director identify and attempt to address facility shortcomings.
This standard is in place to encourage board and directors to identify problems or shortfalls with their buildings. After identifying these shortcomings boards and directors are encouraged to address these issues, so that the building is a safe and welcoming place for both library users and staff.
(c) The library facility is safe for the public and staff.
The library won't be used very much if people feel unsafe. It is important to ensure that the facility is safe for both the public and staff in order to increase enjoyment and productivity.
(d) The library's facilities conform to local requirements for accessibility.
This standard closely relates to an earlier standard about providing services for those with disabilities. It comes back to a desire to make the library a welcoming place for everyone in the community. Local practice may vary so this standard is asking directors and board members to identify what the local practice is for providing accessibility and at a minimum to meet that standard or attempt to exceed it.
Public Relations
(a) The library cooperates in state, regional, and national efforts to promote library services.
Please see the Marketing campaign link for what is happening statewide. You will find some great ideas and tools for marketing your library.
(b) The library uses basic PR/marketing tools such as brochures, flyers, bookmarks, newspaper, radio, TV, public service outlets, web sites, story times, displays, and programs in the library.
The Marketing website has some great PR tools that you can customize for your library.
Services
(a) Every two years the library gathers feedback on library services from library users and nonusers. The library can use a variety of methods, including but not limited to, surveys, focus groups, and community meetings.
The intent of this standard is for library directors and boards to collect feedback from users and non-users alike in whatever method is appropriate for the library. MSL encourages directors and others to use the best methods possible for identifying ways to improve library services. Please contact your Statewide Consulting Librarian if you need assistance with this standard.
(b) The library uses comparative statistics, annual surveys, or other methods to evaluate the services offered.
(c) The library offers programming for children and adults.
Libraries are often community centers and as such need to offer programs that educate and entertain community members. Offering programming generally increases the library's relevance in the community.
(d) The library has policies and/or procedures for services provided.
Policies set the direction for the library, as well as making sure that customers receive fair and equitable service. A well-developed policy gives library staff some guidance on how to act when presented with a problem. Policies attempt to balance patron needs with library resources.

(e) The library programming is free and open to all.
It is necessary for the library to offer free programming so that no one is at a disadvantage due to financial constraints. This highlights the fact that the public library is the one place where everyone is welcome regardless of economic status, place within the community, or ability.
(f) The library must make every effort to maintain confidentiality of library records as addressed in 22-1-1103, MCA.
It is important that library users be assured of their privacy when using the library's services. This privacy ensures that users will be able to freely use library material.
(g) Core library services as defined by the local community and library are provided all hours the library is open. Examples include lending circulating materials, reference and interlibrary loan.
It is important that all core library services are available when the library is open so that library users can take advantage of its services at their convenience.
Certification Statement
(a) This statement will provide for a status report regarding each essential standard and will require the signature of the library director and the library board chair.
(b) The signed and dated certification statement will be returned to the state library by July 25th of each year.