

4

CHAPTER FOUR

Library Standards

[Disclaimer: *The information in this handbook is not legal advice. We recommend that you consult an attorney if you have any questions about how the laws apply to your library.*]

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 basic level of library service. The Standards feature three tiers of service quality, providing a way to measure a core level of quality for public libraries as well as a pathway for libraries to pursue service excellence. 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 and e-resources.

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. Libraries are required to validate and reaffirm that they meet the standards to continue to receive LSTA-funded support. In the near future, libraries that do not meet at least the “Required” level of standards may lose support and funding from the Maine State Library.

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 the strategic planning process. Your planning committee can use the checklists to gather information about the library and the community during the community assessment phase of the planning process. The Standards can also help the planning committee establish service improvement objectives for the plan.

Sources of Additional Information

- Your Maine State Library Regional Liaison
<https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/districts/index.shtml>
- Maine Public Library Standards
www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards/
- Maine Library Commission's definition of a Maine Public Library
<https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards/definition.htm>
- Maine Library Annual Report data
<https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/data/annualreportstats.shtml>

