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**MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARIES**  
**1998**

*Excellence in public library service is not an idle dream. In spite of the multifaceted character of the nation's public libraries and the diverse communities they serve, excellence is achieved daily. As you work toward excellence in your library, three principles are worth noting:*

- Excellence must be defined locally - it results when library services match community needs, interests, and priorities*
- Excellence is possible for both small and large libraries - it rests more on commitment than on unlimited resources*
- Excellence is a moving target - even when achieved, excellence must continually be maintained.<sup>1</sup>*

Each Vermont community must set its own standards for excellence in public library service. The process is complex, particularly for very small libraries and in areas where service has been poor. Meeting statewide minimum standards for public libraries can be a first step in a continuous process of self-evaluation and planning that leads toward excellence.

Vermont's minimum standards for public libraries have been organized under eight general statements of principle, and they represent the consensus of Vermont librarians and trustees about what is essential to providing basic service to all Vermonters. Every citizen ought to be able to expect at least this minimum level of service from his or her public library, regardless of the size or location. Complying with the standards makes a library eligible for selected services from the Department of Libraries. Most importantly, it represents attainment of a first level in a continuous process of self-evaluation and planning.

Libraries which meet all of the standards may wish to direct attention to the "Suggestions for Further Development." Although the "Suggestions" can be attained by most libraries, they are not required by libraries wishing to meet standards and, in some cases, may be inappropriate or impossible. Each library will need to set its own priorities based on its own community's needs,

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<sup>1</sup>McClure, Charles R. et al. Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries: A Manual of Options and Procedures (ALA, 1987)

character, and resources. There are many more elements of public library service beyond the "Essentials" and the "Suggestions" that must be chosen based on community makeup. A long range planning process with peer review, the Department's "Envisioning Excellence" program, will further help local librarians and trustees establish priorities for the future.

The standards development process involved work by a committee of librarians and trustees, statewide public hearings, revisions by the committee based on reaction of the Vermont library community, adoption by the Board of Libraries, and final approval by the joint Legislative Administrative Rules Committee. These standards will continue to be revised periodically so that they can accurately reflect the changing demands and needs of all Vermonters for public library service.



### **PRINCIPLES FOR VERMONT LIBRARY SERVICE 1998**

**Vermont public libraries...**

- 1. provide free, equal, and easy public access to services;**
- 2. draw support from their communities and spend public funds responsibly;**
- 3. cooperate with other libraries and community agencies to broaden their services;**
- 4. have trained librarians responsible for their overall operation;**
- 5. provide collections which are important community resources;**
- 6. are governed by Boards of Trustees which represent their communities and are responsible for ensuring that library services meet community needs;**
- 7. have long range plans that articulate their philosophies for serving their communities and outline specific means for achieving results.**
- 8. "Community" libraries (combined school-public libraries) and public libraries located in multi-purpose buildings acknowledge the unique challenges of shared facilities and respond to the diverse needs of all the groups they serve.**

## PRINCIPLES AND MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

### 1. Vermont public libraries provide free, equal, and easy access to services.

The library:

a. Is open for service to all ages throughout the year at least 14 hours a week, including at least 4 hours after 5 pm or on weekends (Saturdays and/or Sundays).

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

1. Suggested hours open weekly per population served:

<u>Population</u>	<u>Suggested hours open</u>
___ over 10,000 -	50-72 hours
___ 5,000-10,000 -	34-52 hours
___ 3,000-5,000 -	28-38 hours
___ 1,000-3,000 -	20-32 hours
___ under 1,000 -	14-22 hours

2. In setting the schedule of hours, the library identifies the times most convenient to users and when residents are most able to come to the library by any or all of these methods:

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| ___ survey   | ___ attendance count |
| ___ patrons' requests                                | ___ suggestion box   |
| ___ no. of books in book drop when library is closed |                      |
| ___ other:   |                      |

b. Opens all public areas to all ages whenever the library is open. Exceptions may be made for special collections.

c. Has its name, preferably via a sign, clearly visible from the street.

d. Posts its hours of service in a location accessible to the public at all times.

e. Has a telephone listed under the library's and/or Town's name, whichever is easiest for users.

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

1. The listing appears in both the yellow and white pages.
2. The library has an answering machine or voice mail to give the hours and take requests when it is closed.

f. Provides basic services to all residents of its community free of charge. Basic services include at least the circulating collection, reference service, interlibrary loan, and programming. *(Note: It is the practice of the Department of Libraries to define "basic services" to include all items a library circulates (e.g., print and nonprint materials), reference service, interlibrary loan, programming (except for recovery of the cost of materials), and public access computing including internet access)* If the library charges a non-resident fee, the fee does not exceed the per capita tax support of the town(s) that support it. *(Note: It is the practice of the Department of Libraries, in determining per capita tax support, to include the populations of all municipalities providing tax support)*

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

1. The library provides service to all Vermonters free of charge.

g. Serves everyone, without discrimination, in accordance with the Vermont Public Accommodations Law (21 VSA, Sec. 271). In addition, the library takes particular care to serve

everyone, regardless of reading ability, age, or economic status. The library's policy reflects this commitment.

h. Fulfills the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (as described in Planning for Accessibility (DOL, 1991), including conducting a self-evaluation of its facilities and programs and, if it is not barrier-free, having a written transition plan. *(Note: Among the issues the Act addresses are (1) having a barrier-free public restroom, (2) providing outreach service whenever physical access is limited, and (3) providing adequate parking near a building's entrance.)*

i. Has written procedures for patron and staff safety that are reviewed regularly.

j. Complies with state fire safety, health, and other codes, which are reviewed annually.

k. Catalogs and organizes its collection.

l. Engages in regular marketing and community relations activities.

m. Offers informal and/or formal training for the public in using library resources, equipment, and the Internet. *(Note: The Department of Libraries encourages libraries to offer such training free of charge)*

n. Encourages use of its resources as a community center. *(According to 22. V.S.A. Sec. 67: Public Libraries: Statement of Policy; Use of facilities and resources) (Note: The Department of Libraries encourages libraries to offer meeting spaces free of charge whenever possible)*

o. Plans and evaluates children's services following "Guidelines for Public Library Service to Children (Dept. of Libraries, 1989).

## **2. Vermont public libraries draw support from their communities and spend public funds responsibly.**

The library:

a. Receives and expends **total** support (including tax support, interest on endowments, local fundraising, carefully documented in-kind support, etc.) of at least \$5.00 per capita. *(The state average total income per capita in FY2001 was \$23.19; the national average was \$30.19) (Note: It is the practice of the Department of Libraries, in determining per capita tax support, to include the populations of all municipalities providing tax support)*

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

1. Local support for the library in the current year is higher than the previous year's.
2. Trustees encourage and support gifts, bequests, donations from community organizations, and activities to augment municipal funding.
3. Volunteers, Friends, or other support groups work with the library to broaden services and community involvement.
4. The library explores at least one grant source each year.

b. Receives at least \$1 per capita local tax support. *(Note: The state average per capita tax support in FY2001 was \$16.16; the national average was \$23.25. Vermont statute defines a public library as receiving tax support.) (Note: It is the practice of the Department of Libraries, in determining per capita tax support, to include the populations of all municipalities providing tax support)*

- c. Budgets funds to reimburse staff and trustees for attendance at workshops and/or professional meetings and for travel as needed to select supplementary resources.
- d. Budgets funds for electronic resources and technology, including general maintenance, scheduled replacements and upgrades, technical support, and staff development.

### **3. Vermont public libraries cooperate with other libraries and community organizations to broaden their services.**

The library:

- a. Contributes information on new holdings and changes in holdings to the Vermont Resource Sharing Network/Vermont Union Catalog at least once each year.
- b. Communicates and cooperates with its local school library and other area libraries.

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

- 1. The librarian visits the school library(ies) at least once each year.
- 2. The librarian and/or staff attend meetings of area librarians, if held.
- 3. The trustees meet with other trustees in the area during the year.

- c. Communicates and cooperates with the Department of Libraries, including supplying all statistical data requested.

- d. Lends and borrows materials through the statewide interlibrary loan network according to the Vermont Interlibrary Loan Code (which addresses procedures, including prompt responses to requests and timely return of borrowed items).

- e. Encourages and offers interlibrary loan service to its borrowers of all ages at **no charge, including postage**. The library budget includes an item for interlibrary loan postage. (*Note: It is the practice of the Department of Libraries to require that interlibrary loan service be provided free of charge and without restriction to all registered borrowers. Voluntary donations may be solicited.*) In cases when the loaning library charges a fee, the fee may be requested of the borrower if s/he has been warned in advance. Lost materials charges from loaning libraries may also be passed along to interlibrary loan borrowers.

- f. Has a computer for dial access to the Vermont Automated Libraries System (VALS).

- g. Works with other agencies (e.g., schools, early childhood programs, daycare providers, Adult Basic Education, etc.) toward the goal of statewide literacy. (*This could include co-sponsoring programs, offering space, making referrals, etc.*)

- h. Cooperates with other community organizations (e.g., scouts, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, churches, etc.) to broaden its services.

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

- 1. The library maintains a community resource file.
- 2. The library has a bulletin board to post local information and events.
- 3. The library works closely with other branches of municipal government (selectmen, planning commission, recreation department, etc.)

- i. Offers some free public access to VALS and the Internet. (*Note: the same computer and telephone line may be used for public and staff access*) (*Note: It is the practice of the Department of Libraries to require that internet and VALS access be provided free of charge to all registered borrowers*)

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

1. The library has a separate computer and telephone line for public access.
2. Free public access is encouraged and available whenever the library is open.

#### **4. Vermont public libraries have trained librarians responsible for their overall operation.**

The librarian/library director:

- a. Is responsible for carrying out the policies of the board of trustees.
- b. Takes an active role in policy development, planning, and budgeting.
- c. Is responsible for collection development, including materials selection and weeding.
- d. Hires, supervises and evaluates library staff.
- e. Is not a trustee of the library he or she works in.
- f. Attends and participates in all board meetings. Executive sessions may include the librarian when invited.
- g. Along with all paid staff (except volunteers), works in compliance with all federal and state employment laws covering issues such as Social Security, minimum wage, equal employment opportunity, Fair Labor Standards, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, Family and Medical Leave, and nondiscrimination.
- h. Receives, along with all paid staff, salaries and benefits at a scale or level comparable to those of other town employees and/or local positions with similar qualifications, educational requirements, and job responsibilities. (*Libraries may consult with town government, local schools, other Vermont libraries, the League of Cities and Towns, and library associations' recommended beginning salary guidelines.*)

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

1. The library offers staff
 

___ vacation and sick leave	___ parental leave
___ health insurance	___ retirement
___ investment plan	___ dental insurance

- i. Possesses a library science degree or a Vermont certificate of library training, and if not, has actively worked toward one of these by taking at least one of the four basic courses required for certification within the last two years. If the librarian has been on the staff more than 5 years, she or he must have completed certification requirements by Sept. 1, 2008. (*Note: Certification requirements are outlined in the "Certification Guidelines" of the Vermont Certification Board and currently involve earning at least 150 continuing education credits via workshops, courses, etc.*)

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

1. The librarian holds a Master of Library Science degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association.

- j. Attends at least two professional development opportunities (such as DOL workshop, VLA meeting/conference, VEMA and NELA workshops, class at vocational center, college course, etc.) each year, one of which is technology-related.

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

1. The librarian is a member of the Vermont Library Assn. (VLA) and/or the Vermont Educational Media Assn. (VEMA)
2. The library staff and board have used "Test Your Attitude" (Dept. of Libraries, 1992)

k. makes certain that the library offers staff and volunteers some training or continuing education each year, either in the library and/or by attending workshops, VLA meetings, etc.

## 5. Vermont public libraries provide collections which are important community resources.

The library:

a. Budgets funds specifically for library materials (books, periodicals, electronic resources, audio-visual items, etc., not including supplies or postage). The collection reflects community needs and interests, including those of babies, toddlers, preschoolers, adult learners, young adults, English as a Second Language students, people with disabilities, the elderly, etc.

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

1. If it fits with a library's role in the community, the library sets aside at least 30% of its materials budget

for children's materials.

2. There may be specific segments of a community that the library targets with specific funds for collection development, e.g.:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> children                 | <input type="checkbox"/> adult learners               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> business people          | <input type="checkbox"/> English as a Second Language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people with disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> young adults                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other:                   |   |

3. The library purchases at least some of the following:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basic reference materials       | <input type="checkbox"/> magazines for adults and children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> local newspaper(s)              | <input type="checkbox"/> CD-ROM products                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> materials for adult new readers | <input type="checkbox"/> computer software                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> videotapes                      | <input type="checkbox"/> on-line services                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> audio books                     |  |

b. Spends for library materials (books, periodicals, electronic resources, audio-visual items, etc., not including supplies or postage) either at least 15% of its total operating expenditures or at least \$1.25 per capita. *(The state average collection expenditure per capita in 1996 was \$2.61 per capita. The national average was \$2.96)*

c. Subscribes to at least one professional library journal to aid staff in selecting materials.

d. Allocates staff time regularly to developing the collection, including selecting additions and weeding.

e. Follows up on patron requests in a timely manner.

f. Is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of other area libraries' collections in order to avoid unwanted duplication, to insure the greatest breadth of available resources and the provision of essential resources, and to make prudent use of funds.

## **6. Vermont public libraries are governed by Boards of Trustees which represent their communities and are responsible for ensuring that library services meet community needs.**

The board of trustees:

- a. Is responsible, together with the librarian, for assessing community needs, developing responsive plans of service, and evaluating library performance.
- b. Promotes the library and its services in the community.
- c. Adopts and annually reviews a written policy(ies) including a statement of purpose or mission statement, affirmation of principles of intellectual freedom\*, confidentiality of library records, collection development guidelines, personnel, public access computer use, and building use. (*\*principles of intellectual freedom include the ALA Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read and Freedom to View statements, and accompanying interpretations relating to access to library materials by minors, computer use, etc.*)
- d. Files current policies with the Department of Libraries.
- e. Makes sure that there are written job descriptions for the librarian and staff.
- f. Evaluates or ensures the evaluation of the librarian's performance in writing at least once a year and ensures that procedures exist for annual performance evaluation of the rest of the staff.

g. Meets at least every three months in meetings warned and open to the public, according to the Vermont Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. 312-317).

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

- 1. The board meets approximately monthly, or more frequently as needed.

h. Includes the librarian in all board meetings. The librarian attends executive sessions when invited.

i.. Makes sure that there are adequate funds to operate the library.

j. Makes an annual financial and statistical report to municipal authorities and the public and includes its report in the town, city or village report.

k. Includes at least one member who is either appointed by municipal authorities or publicly elected at a duly warned town, city, or village election.

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

- 1. All trustees are elected at the municipality's annual meeting.

l. Includes, in by-laws, provision for members to serve staggered terms, to allow broad-based community participation.

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

- 1. The total length of uninterrupted service by a trustee is limited to 10 years.

m. Ensures that the majority of board members attend at least one continuing education session in or outside the library (such as orientation, meeting with area trustees or a consultant, visiting another library, DOL/VLTA workshop, etc.) every two years.

*Suggestions for further development (optional):*

- 1. Each board member attends some continuing education each year.
- 2. All board members belong to the Vermont Library Trustees Association (a section of VLA).

3. All new board members receive formal orientation.

n. Follows and expects the librarian to follow the American Library Assn. Codes of Ethics for trustees and librarians.

## **7. Vermont public libraries have long range plans that articulate their philosophies for serving their communities and outline specific means for achieving results.**

The librarian and board of trustees:

a. Adopts and annually reviews a written long range plan of service addressing services and resources to be provided and priorities for service, or plans to adopt such a plan by November 1, 1999. The planning process involved community members and included some of the following activities:

- meeting with representatives of segments of the community to discuss library role(s) and priorities
- discussing community needs and library priorities at meetings of the board of trustees
- reviewing community demographics, particularly the latest census figures
- reviewing the geography and travel patterns of potential library users
- developing a profile of community character
- reviewing current services, programs, and collection, and evaluating their quality and use
- looking at service statistics to identify trends and/or to compare them with other libraries
- becoming aware of the strengths and weaknesses of other area libraries' collections and services

b. Include a written technology plan to address the integration of technology in providing local library service as part of its overall long range plan.

c. File the current plan with the Department of Libraries.

d. Annually evaluate the library's success in meeting the stated mission and plan via statistical and other methods.

## **8. "Community" libraries (combined school-public libraries) and public libraries located in multi-purpose buildings acknowledge the unique challenges of shared facilities and respond to the diverse needs of all the groups they serve.**

If the library is a community library or if it is located in multi-purpose building, it:

a. Provides ready public access by being in a location convenient to users.

b. Provides ready public access by having an entrance which is directly accessible to the public and does not require entry into the other areas of the building.

c. Provides ready public access by having its own telephone listed under the library's name, or if the library shares a telephone with a school or other organization, also listing the number under the library's name. When the phone is answered, it is made clear that callers have reached both the school or other organization and the library.

d. Provides materials and space for all ages and segments of the community.

e. Conducts public relations and sponsors programs specifically aimed at those who might not readily come to the facility. In a school setting, this would include preschoolers and adults; in a senior center, this would include children; etc.

f. Is administered year-round by a librarian responsible for serving the total community.

*Suggestion for further development (optional):*

1. All staff are paid equitably, regardless of whether they are paid by the school or town.

g. Has a board of trustees that represents the community served. If the library is in a school, no more than half of the trustees come from the school sector.

h. Addresses the unique division of responsibility resulting from the shared situation in these activities:

_____ programming	_____ budget
_____ staffing	_____ board composition
_____ hours open	_____ policy development
_____ long range planning	_____ technology
_____ other:	

i. Offers all users equitable access to the collection and technology during open hours.