

## MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARIES A RATIONALE (1986)

The following standards outline elements essential to the provision of community-oriented public library service in Vermont. Librarians, trustees, government officials and the public may use these standards as aids in evaluating and improving library service.

Vermont and its libraries and library systems are unique, and its residents deserve responsive library service that is tailored to their needs. In many Vermont public libraries of all sizes, careful, continuous planning and self-evaluation have combined with the creativity, concern and commitment of librarians, trustees and citizens to provide excellent service.

Vermont's standards in their present form were developed in 1971. Subsequent revisions have continued to emphasize four essentials: public service, public access, interlibrary cooperation, and community involvement. In order to be flexible and useful to the diverse libraries in the state, the standards have stressed philosophical approaches to service.

Minimum standards offer criteria and direction for assessing and upgrading local library service. The standards provide a basis from which libraries in even the smallest Vermont communities can proceed to improve service. Over the years, many Vermont libraries of varied sizes have developed innovative methods of meeting standards.

Meeting standards does not in itself guarantee adequacy of service. Some Vermont libraries, regardless of size or location, will consistently meet standards, and yet will find that they need to do much more self-assessment and planning to remain responsive to their communities.

Meeting standards is purely voluntary. The Department of Libraries provides services to all public libraries, whether they meet standards or not. It may, however, offer *additional* services to those public libraries which meet standards. The Department is eager to assist libraries in meeting standards and, once they are met, in continuing self-evaluation.

This document was developed by a committee of State Library Board members, Department of Libraries' staff, and representatives of the Vermont Library

Association and the Vermont Library Trustees Association. The committee considered written recommendations from the Vermont library community and held public hearings during its year-long revision process. State and federal regulations were included where applicable. These standards were approved by the Vermont Legislative Administrative Rules Committee on September 25, 1986.

## MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

### The public should have access to library services.

The library ...

1. 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
2. has a sign with the library's name clearly visible from the street and has hours of service posted in a location accessible to the public at all times
3. has a telephone listed under the library's name \* or agrees to install one permanently no more than 30 days after notification that it meets standards for the first time\*
4. is willing to serve all Vermonters. Basic Library services are provided *free* of charge to all residents of the town of designated service area. *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). Non-resident support not to exceed local per capita tax support may be charged. 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. (Fines or deposits may be levied. Privileges may be denied irresponsible borrowers.)*
5. serves the handicapped
6. has cataloged its collection to allow public access\* or is in the process of cataloging its collection\*

### A public library draws support from its community and should spend its money responsibly.

The library ...

7. receives and expends total local support of at least \$3.00 per capita, of which at least some is local tax support. Documented in-kind contributions may be included. *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.*
8. has separately designated budget items for adult and children's library materials (books, periodicals, tapes, sound recordings, films, etc., not including supplies)
9. expends for library materials either (a) at least 15% of the total library operating expenditures or (b) at least \$1.00 per capita. *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.*
10. budgets funds to reimburse staff for attendance at workshops or professional meetings, as well as travel to the regional library to select supplementary collections

**Public libraries should cooperate with other libraries to broaden their services.**

The library ...

11. contributes catalog cards at least annually to the Vermont Union Catalog
12. supplies all statistical data required by the Department of Libraries
13. communicates and cooperates with its local school library and other area libraries
14. communicates and cooperates with its regional library, including sending a representative to the regional library, as needed, to select supplementary books
15. is willing to loan and borrow materials through the statewide interlibrary loan network according to the Vermont Interlibrary Loan Code. *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.*

**A public library must have a librarian responsible for its overall operation.**

The librarian ...

16. is responsible for carrying out the policies of the board of trustees and takes an active role in policy development, planning and budgeting
17. is not a trustee of the library, but attends board meetings
18. and staff (except volunteers) receive at least the federal or state minimum hourly wage (whichever is higher) and are covered by Social Security, according to federal law. The library may be staffed entirely by volunteers.
19. possesses either a library science degree or a Vermont certificate of library training; or has actively worked toward one of these in the past twelve months
20. is responsible for collection development, including materials selection and weeding

**The board of trustees represents the community and is responsible for policymaking.**

The board ...

21. is responsible for assessing community needs, developing responsive plans of service, and evaluating library performance
22. has adopted and annually reviews a written policy including:
  - a . a statement of purpose
  - b . affirmation of principles of intellectual freedom
  - c. confidentiality of library records
  - d. collection development guidelines

A copy of the current policy must be filed with the Department of Libraries. \*or is working on such a policy\*

23. has a written job description for the librarian and evaluates the librarian's performance at least annually \*or is working on a job description and evaluation\*

24. includes the librarian in all meetings with the exception of executive sessions
25. meets at least *every* three months in meetings warned and open to the public, according to the Vermont Open Meeting Law (1 VSA § 312-317)
26. makes an annual financial and statistical report to municipal authorities and the public, which is included in the town, city or village report
27. has at least one member appointed by municipal authorities or one member publicly elected at a fully warned town, city, or village election

**A “community” library (a combined school-public library) or a public library located in a school or other multi-purpose building (town clerk’s office, senior center, etc.) must make special effort to meet the needs of the general public.**

Such a library ...

28. provides ready public access by being in a location convenient to all users, by having an entrance directly accessible by the public, and by having its own telephone listed under the library’s name
29. provides materials and reading space for all ages
30. conducts public relations and/or 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.)
31. is administered year-round by a librarian who is responsible for serving the total community
32. has a board which represents the community served (in a school setting, no more than half of the board members may come from the school sector) and addresses the unique division of responsibility resulting from the shared situation

*The starred (\*) portions of standards 3, 6, 22, and 23 apply only to the first year for a library meeting standards for the first time. To be eligible in subsequent years, the standards must all be met.*



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