



Wisconsin Public Library Standards

Introduction



This edition of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards revises and updates the work of the many people who developed earlier editions of the Standards. We reviewed the previous edition of the Standards, noted the increased levels of library compliance with the earlier standards, and compiled information on changes in library statistical information in Wisconsin libraries since the last edition was produced.

The Wisconsin Public Library Standards document has evolved gradually over the years. Some of the standards in this document have remained unchanged; however, since the public library environment has changed significantly, this edition updates quite a number of updates to reflect those changes. The development of this document was guided by the belief that Wisconsin's public libraries play a critical role in providing free access to knowledge, information, and diversity of ideas to all residents of the state. It was first published in 1987 and was updated in 1994, 2000, 2005, 2010, and now in 2018.

This sixth edition of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards has been in development for nearly two years. More than 32 library professionals, representing libraries and library systems across the state, came together to create this document. The process began with much discussion about the currently published standards—addressing both the document's strengths and its weaknesses. The steering group then tasked the subject focus teams with analyzing each standard for relevance and clarity. The focus teams presented their recommendations to the steering group at the Standards Revision Summit, held on April 5, 2017, in Windsor, WI. The steering group then determined the structure and format of the document, based on the recommendations set forth by the focus teams.

What Has Changed

This edition is more concise. Based on feedback received from the public library community, this edition of the Standards has been curtailed to contain only the information pertinent to public library standards. Important information included in past editions, such as planning, can be found in other resources offered by the Public Library Development team and other professional sources.

Technology standards have been integrated into the other categories. The Standards Task Force deliberated over whether or not to have a separate section of technology standards, as was found in the public library

standards documents from other states. However, the task force determined that when technology standards were introduced in earlier editions, it was to encourage implementation of various technologies in libraries. Today, technology tools are now integrated into even the most basic of library services. As such, any standards relating to technology have been incorporated into other categories.

Quantitative standards are more granular. For many public libraries, the past model for quantitative standards is not granular enough to prove useful. The new model introduced in this edition provides the granularity necessary for libraries to more accurately assess their levels of service.

Standards have a tier structure. Perhaps the most significant change in this edition of the Public Library Standards is the application of a tier structure for the qualitative as well as the quantitative standards. The names of the tiers of service have also changed.

How to Use These Standards

The **Wisconsin Public Library Standards** program is a self-evaluation tool. The purpose of this voluntary program for Wisconsin public libraries and librarians is to encourage the ongoing development of quality library service in the state by providing public libraries with a tool to identify strengths, recognize areas for improvement, and assist libraries in gaining community support.

This manual contains the following categories:

- Statutory Requirements
- System Membership Requirements
- Governance
- Administration of the Library
- Funding
- Staffing
- Collections and Resources
- Programs and Services
- Public Relations
- Access
- Facility

Each standard is presented as a statement, allowing the library to easily determine whether it meets or does not meet the criteria. There are three levels of service:

- Tier One—the minimum services that should be available to all residents of the state
- Tier Two—an expansion of services beyond the basic
- Tier Three—the highest level of service

To be considered a **Tier One** library, a library must meet all of the Tier One standards.

To be considered a **Tier Two** library, a library must meet all of the Tier One standards and all but two of the Tier Two standards. The two Tier Two standards that a library exempts from cannot be in the same category (i.e., governance, staffing, access).

To be considered a **Tier Three** library, a library must meet all of the Tier One standards, all of the Tier Two standards, and all but two of the Tier Three standards. The two Tier Three standards that a library exempts from cannot be in the same category (i.e., governance, staffing, access).

In order to determine the status of the quantitative standards in this document, a library must decide whether to use its municipal population or its service population. “**Municipal Population**” is the population of the city, town, village, or county establishing the library, or the total population of communities establishing a joint library. “**Service Population**” is the library’s municipal population plus an additional population determined from circulation statistics for county residents without a library. In most cases, Service Population is a more accurate reflection of a library’s service population, because it includes the municipal population as well as those who live in surrounding communities and travel to the nearest or most convenient municipal library for services. To calculate a library’s Service Population, see [Appendix C](#) of this document.

The newly added categories of Statutory Requirements and System Membership Requirements have been included to increase awareness of public library requirements in Wisconsin. Statutory Requirements apply to *all public libraries*, while System Membership Requirements apply to any library that is a *member of a public library system*. As of this publication, every legally established library in Wisconsin is a member of a public library system, so these requirements currently apply to all Wisconsin public libraries.

Note that much deliberation took place about the terminology used in this document. Every attempt was made to use the most appropriate and consistent expressions available at the date of release.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Public Library Development Team is prepared to assist public libraries in using this manual to its fullest potential and can answer any questions regarding the new standards.

Appendices and checklists are included.