

**MISSOURI  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY  
STANDARDS**



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# *Introduction*

In 2005 the Secretary of State and the State Librarian re-issued the 1996 Public Library Standards without making any changes to the document. The past seventeen years have seen a lot of changes in public library service, particularly in the areas of technology and marketing. In February 2012 a committee was formed to review and revise the 1996 Standards.

This new committee was driven by the same fundamental concerns as the previous committee. First, that the standards must be a means for the Missouri public library community to accomplish the following tasks:

1. To stimulate the growth and development of public libraries and to provide a tool to be used in the development of goals.
2. To motivate the improvement of quality and the effectiveness of service.
3. To develop a concern and appreciation for the necessity of evaluation and public accountability.
4. To provide a vehicle for eliminating barriers as well as a reminder that all Missouri citizens need and deserve quality library service.

Secondly, that the writing of public library standards raises complex issues and engages different opinions and perspectives. The 2012 committee sought input from a number of different sources. Suggestions from the Missouri Public library Directors and regional library groups have been incorporated into the document.

The standards document was adopted by the Missouri Library Association at its 2013 annual conference. The association transmitted the document to the Office of Missouri Secretary of State Jason Kander for consideration as official state standards. The Secretary's Council on Library Development and Secretary Kander approved the standards in December 2013.

“We are very pleased to accept these updated standards to help guide public libraries in improving services to their communities,” Kander said.

The standards document represents an attempt to codify a sense of ideal library practice in concrete terms. The standards themselves are written as statements of the conditions necessary for effective library service. The standards are supported by guidelines whose achievement contributes to the creation of those conditions.

## *Use of the Standards*

The use of the public library standards requires strong commitment on the part of the library director and the board of trustees. Some of the standards can be achieved through time, energy and leadership. Others also require an increase in funding. Securing additional funding requires significant efforts at the local and state level. To support those efforts, it is vital that public libraries provide a strong foundation for their service.

The first commitment necessary is one of time. Library directors and trustees should plan to devote a year to studying the standards and measuring their library against this document, which will assist in enhancing the service currently offered and lead the library to the next level of service needed by its community.

Boards should divide the standards into manageable sections and devote time at each board meeting to the area chosen for discussion at that meeting. Working through the standards this way will allow trustees and directors to take a close look at the library's practices. It will provide opportunity for discussing ways to change and improve the delivery of service.

This document will serve well as an evaluation tool. As the trustees and library director take a close look at current plans and services, it will assist them in determining the direction in which the library should move. With this information in hand and employing long-range planning techniques, the board and administration will be able to move the library forward and make it stronger.