

# Introduction

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The 2010 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. Many of the standards in this document are unchanged from the earlier editions. However, since the public library environment has changed significantly, this edition updates quite a number of the technology-related standards.

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 is because of the critical importance of public libraries that these standards are established. All Wisconsin residents need and deserve at least a basic level of library service. These standards provide a way to measure a *basic* level of quality for public library service and also provide a pathway to *excellence* in library service.

Thanks to advances in technology and the cooperation of all types of libraries, and statewide access to resources such as BadgerLink, even the smallest library can offer access to an impressive array of digital and traditional information resources. But while this new environment presents great opportunities, it also presents significant 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. Our library customers have come to expect rapid access to a broad range of services, from high-speed Internet to electronic books to comfortable settings and displays of inviting materials. Challenges also face the trustees and other government officials responsible for securing the funding and other resources necessary to provide library service that meets current needs and expectations.

This edition of the *Standards* reflects these changes and challenges. Some have been adjusted to reflect new and increased demands. Others reflect changes in public expectations for services.

Of course, planning must be done in context, considering current use, local and regional situations and projections, as well the availability and deployment of technology. Quality service to the *entire* community is a public library's basic responsibility. Every community includes children, young adults, and adults; and each of these groups has needs that must be considered when developing local library service.

## **Service to Children**

Public libraries promote the development of pre-reading and reading skills. Children who develop reading skills at an early age gain an essential tool for succeeding in school as well as for learning throughout life. Libraries must have staff, services, resources, and facilities that promote reading and learning for children. Libraries also need resources and services that support parents and other adults who work with children.

## **Service to Young Adults**

Special efforts also are needed to serve young adults properly—those who are no longer children but not yet fully adult. Young adults have interests and abilities that require unique resources and services. Special resources, targeted services, and a welcoming atmosphere are required to serve this population adequately.

## **Service to Adults**

Adults have a wide range of interests and needs, and the library's resources and services must be varied to meet those needs adequately. Today's rapidly changing society and economy make lifelong learning a necessity for most adults. Libraries must provide resources and services that support the needs of adults covering a wide range of issues—from the practical to the philosophical.

This *Standards* document attempts to cover the services, resources, and other requirements for basic library service that should be available to *all* residents of the state, including those who face physical, developmental, or other barriers to their use of public libraries. Wisconsin's public library standards are entirely voluntary, but every library is encouraged to strive to offer all local residents the highest level of service possible. It is hoped that this document will assist in the continued development of high quality library service throughout Wisconsin.

As in previous editions of the *Wisconsin Public Library Standards*, the new edition establishes certain quantitative standards for public libraries based on both the municipal and the service population of the library. Service populations in this edition are more accurate because they have been calculated based on each library's actual usage by county residents who do not live in a library municipality.

As in the last edition, quantitative standards are established at four levels of effort: basic, moderate, enhanced, and excellent. Local libraries can establish service targets by selecting the appropriate level of effort to apply to each standard, or use the levels to plan for progressive improvements over a period of time.