

## Introduction

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*Serving Our Public 2.0: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries* is an evolving document designed to help people who govern, administer, and staff Illinois public libraries. Illinois libraries have a long tradition of providing high quality library service to not only their communities but also a strong, dedicated commitment to statewide collaboration and cooperation. Although there are more than six hundred public libraries in Illinois that vary in size, all of these public libraries share one basic ideal...that all Illinois residents deserve high quality library service that is consistently gracious, friendly, timely, and effectively meets their needs. Users of *Serving Our Public 2.0* are reminded that this is an essential document under Illinois state law. State law requires Illinois public libraries to “provide, as determined by the State Librarian, library services which either meet or show progress toward meeting the Illinois library standards, as most recently adopted by the Illinois Library Association.” [75 ILCS 10/8.1(1)]

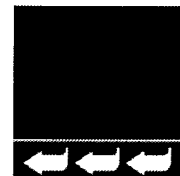
*Serving Our Public 2.0* is not meant to be a one-size-fits-all document. Instead the members of the *Serving Our Public 2.0* Task Force have struggled to find a balance between those libraries serving hundreds of people to those who are serving thousands and all of those library communities in-between. Furthermore, the task force recognizes that a public library is reflective of the local community that it serves. Therefore, the input from the Illinois library community (directors, trustees, staff members, and patrons of public libraries) served as the driving force that has shaped this document. Six public hearings were held to allow feedback and input from people beginning in the summer of 2008 and ended in the fall of that same year. Additionally, people were encouraged to review drafts of the document and complete surveys located on the Illinois Library Association’s Web site. The task force spent countless hours reviewing feedback, researching the standards of other states, recognizing relevant topics, reviewing the *Illinois Public Library Annual Report* (IPLAR) statistical analyses, and meeting to discuss and revise this document. The result is an enhanced version of the 1997 edition of *Serving Our Public*. This enhanced version includes revised core standards, a chapter dedicated to technology, practical worksheets that will allow users to evaluate their progress in a variety of areas, and an expanded glossary and appendix.

While much emphasis was placed on updating Illinois public library standards and garnering input, the task force discovered that two key factors in advancing the standards are the implementation of an ILA standing committee and continuing education. This standing committee would be charged with developing an edit schedule for each chapter of the document so there is continuous review and revision rather than a massive undertaking every few years, implementing and updating a Web version of this document, and helping to resolve issues that were not resolved with this edition. It is the task force’s opinion that it should not take another ten years to edit a tool that is vital to the operation of our profession. Furthermore, in order to keep the standards at the forefront, the task force as well as the Illinois Library Association’s Executive Board believes training availability for directors, trustees, and library staff on how to customize the standards to reflect the local community is paramount.

“Rome was not built in a day,” and neither were the Illinois Public Library Standards, but it is the task force’s hope that this document will help excite, challenge, and stimulate growth of Illinois libraries to meet the community demands.

# How to Use *Serving Our Public 2.0*

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## Overview

Statewide public library standards are designed to serve as a catalyst from which local planning can take place. The *Serving Our Public 2.0* standards are seen as a guide for librarians, library staff, and board trustees' discussions during budget preparation and strategic planning. The regular review of the standards helps the library evaluate its progress over several years toward becoming an ideal library for its community. As the library staff and trustees discuss the Core Standards and individual chapters, the library's strengths and weaknesses are revealed, allowing celebration of the strengths and plans to eliminate or improve the weaknesses.

There are multiple ways to use *Serving Our Public 2.0*

1. During board meetings, in-depth discussions of individual chapters provide a review, reflection, and refinement of the library's service philosophy and strategically guide library planning.
2. Each month, as part of the librarian's report, the director reviews a chapter checklist, sharing the library's progress, as well as recommendations for changes, with discussion and input from the board.
3. A board committee is appointed to compare the library's advancement toward achieving the standards, and a report is shared with the full board on a regular basis. As needed, the committee, with input and insight from the library director, proposes changes to the library's goals.
4. Library staff meetings focus on the chapter standards, allowing incorporation of *Serving Our Public* into the staff's understanding of the library's service philosophy.

## Core Standards

The Core Standards are considered essential to the foundation of quality library service to Illinois residents. The Core Standards are grouped together in Chapter 1 and applicable Core Standards are repeated with each chapter. The Core Standards can be discussed as a unit or in conjunction with the chapter standards.

## Chapter Standards

Chapter specific standards provide a detailed blueprint for developing, improving, or enhancing areas of library activity. While the Core Standards provide the foundation, the chapter standards provide a superstructure for the library's advancement.

## Checklists

A new feature is the chapter checklists. Many librarians and trustees asked for a way to formally compare progress from year to year. A board committee, the library director, and/or the staff can complete the checklist. When a checklist is completed, it should be dated and signed. Adding related comments and notes to personalize the checklist is encouraged.

## Appendices

The appendices contain a variety of documents, American Library Association (ALA) statements, references to *Illinois Compiled Statutes* [ILCS], recommended basic reference tools, and a collection of tables with recommended service levels.

The included American Library Association documents are the current editions as of December 2008. To ensure the documents are still current, please check with the ALA Web site for revisions, [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org).

Illinois public libraries operate under the *Illinois Compiled Statutes* [ILCS], generally chapter 75 [75 ILCS], but other statutes impact libraries. As librarians and their library boards must be familiar with Illinois statutes, this appendix provides a quick reference.

The recommended service level tables, when compared with results from the *Illinois Public Library Annual Report* (IPLAR), needed little change. The tables retained the minimum, growing, established, and advanced levels to allow library boards to self-select the appropriate goals for their library. Minimum is the foundation level where all Illinois public libraries begin, but should not remain. As each chapter is read, the accompanying appendices should also be reviewed to determine the library's current service level and to decide the target level of service.