

# Standards for college libraries: A draft

Prepared by the ACRL College Libraries Section Standards Committee

## Foreword

Earlier standards for college libraries relied heavily upon resource and program “inputs” such as money, space, materials, and staff activities.<sup>1</sup> These new standards continue to consider “inputs,” but they also take into consideration “outputs” and “outcomes.” In order to create uniformity, the definitions as described in the ACRL “Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Report” will be used in these standards.

*Inputs* are generally regarded as the raw materials of a library program—the money, space, collection, equipment, and staff out of which a program can arise.

*Outputs* serve to quantify the work done, i.e., number of books circulated, number of reference questions answered.

*Outcomes* are the ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the libraries’ resources and programs.<sup>2</sup>

The standards suggest principles of good library management and provide a series of questions that are intended to assist librarians and academic administrators as they evaluate the effectiveness of their libraries. These standards address libraries only; not other components of a larger organization (e.g., computing). Libraries are encouraged to choose from a variety of techniques for gathering data that will facilitate the measurement of their performance.

## Points of comparison

Each college is encouraged to choose its own peer group for the purpose of comparisons. Once a peer group has been determined, “points

of comparison” should be made to evaluate the strength of the library with its peers. Suggested points of comparison for input and output measures are provided. This list is not to be considered exhaustive—other points of comparison could be determined by the college.

### *Points of comparison: Input measures*

- Ratio of volumes to combined student and faculty FTE.
- Ratio of material/information resource expenditure to combined student and faculty FTE.
- Percent of total library budget expended in the following three categories:
  1. materials/information resources,
  2. staff (including head librarian, full and part-time staff, student assistant expenditures—including federal contribution, if any, and outsourcing costs),
  3. all other operating expenses,
- Ratio of FTE library staff to combined student and faculty FTE.
- Ratio of library space (in square feet) to combined student and faculty FTE.
- Ratio of number of students attending library instructional sessions to total number of students in the focus group(s).<sup>3</sup>
- Ratio of library seating to combined student and faculty FTE.<sup>4</sup>

### *Points of comparison: Output measures*

- Ratio of circulation to combined student and faculty FTE.
- Ratio of interlibrary loan requests to combined student and faculty FTE.
- Ratio of reference questions (sample week) to combined student and faculty FTE.

- Ratio of interlibrary loan lending to borrowing.

- Interlibrary loan/document delivery borrowing turnaround time, fill rate, and unit cost.

- Interlibrary loan/document delivery lending turnaround time, fill rate, and unit cost.

## **Planning, assessment, and outcomes assessment**

### **Planning**

The quality and effectiveness of the library must be considered within the overall context of the college. Assessment of the library must be linked closely with the specific mission and goals of the college. In order to build its programs and services in the context of the college, the library must be involved in the overall planning process. Formal planning procedures and methods, such as strategic planning, are used frequently. These planning methods require input from a broad spectrum of the college community. They help the college prepare for the future by clearly defining a vision and mission, by setting goals and objectives, and by implementing specific strategies or courses of action designed to help meet those ends. Strategic planning is an iterative process that includes evaluation, updating, and refinement. This process helps the college community focus on its essential values and provides an overall direction that helps to guide day-to-day activities and decisions.

### **Assessment**

A comprehensive assessment requires the involvement of all categories of library users. The choice of clientele to be surveyed and questions to be asked should be made by the administration and the staff of the library with the assistance of an appropriate advisory committee. Questions should relate to how well the library supports its mission and how well it achieves its goals and objectives. Library users should be encouraged to offer signed or anonymous comments and suggestions.

Opportunities for making suggestions should be available both in the library and through remote electronic access. All categories of users should be given an opportunity to participate in the evaluation. The weight given to responses should be consistent with the focus and mission of the library. A program of assessment and evaluation should take into consideration the changing rhythm of the academic

year. Evaluation, whether it involves some or all of the techniques listed below, should be an ongoing process. Formal evaluation tools may include the following:

- General library knowledge surveys (or "pre-tests") offered to incoming first-year students, reoffered at a midpoint in the students' careers and again near graduation, to assess whether the library's program of curricular instruction is producing more information-literate students.

- Evaluation checklists for librarians and tutorial instruction for gathering feedback from students, other librarians, and teaching faculty.

- Student journal entries, or information literacy diaries, used to track their library use.

- Surveys of focus groups of students, faculty, staff, and alumni who are asked to comment on their experiences using information resources over a period of time.

- Assessment and evaluation by librarians from other colleges and/or other appropriate consultants.

- Reviews of specific library and information service areas and/or operations.

### **Outcomes assessment**

Outcomes assessment will increasingly measure and affect how library goals and objectives are achieved. It will address the accountability of institutions of higher education for student achievement and cost effectiveness. It should take into consideration libraries' greater dependence on technology, their increasing use of online services, their growing responsibility to provide information literacy skills, their increasing reliance on consortial services, and the possibility of dwindling financial resources for collection development.

Outcomes assessment can be an active mechanism for improving current library practices. It focuses on the achievement of outcomes that have been identified as desirable in the library's goals and objectives. It identifies performance measures, such as proficiencies, that indicate how well the library is doing what it has stated it wishes to do. Assessment instruments may include surveys, tests, interviews, and other valid measuring devices. These instruments may be specially designed for the function being measured or previously developed instruments may be used. It is critical, however, to choose the instrument, the size of the sample, and the method used for sampling carefully. The

instrument should be valid, and the way it is used should be appropriate for the task. Colleagues at peer institutions may render invaluable assistance by suggesting assessment questions and sample sizes, by sharing lessons learned, and by suggesting alternative methods for measuring outcomes.

#### *Evaluation:*

1. Is the library's mission statement clearly understood by the library staff and the college administration? Is it reviewed periodically?

2. How does the library incorporate the college's mission into its goals and objectives?

3. Does the library maintain a systematic and continuous program for evaluating its performance, for informing the college community of its accomplishments, and for identifying and implementing needed improvements?

4. Is the library's assessment plan an integral component of the institution's assessment and accreditation strategies? For example, does the library revise and update its assessment procedures in conjunction with campus-wide planning and the actions of academic departments?

5. How does the library assess itself? (e.g. what quantitative and qualitative data does the library collect about its performance? How does it take into account special needs, such as those of physically challenged users?)

6. What outcomes does the library measure and how does it measure these outcomes?

7. How does the library compare itself with its peers?

#### **Services**

The library should establish, promote, and maintain a range and quality of services that will support the college's mission and goals. The library should provide competent and prompt assistance for its users. Hours of access to the library should be reasonable and convenient for its users. Reference and other special assistance should be available at times when the college's primary users most need it. When academic programs are offered at off-campus sites, library services should be provided in accordance with ACRL's "Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services."

#### *Evaluation:*

1. How well does the library establish, promote, and maintain a range and quality of services that support the academic program of the college and encourage optimal library use?

2. How are reference services designed to teach users ways to take full advantage of the resources available to them?

3. How do the expectations of the students and faculty affect library services?

4. Are loan policies equitable and uniformly administered to all qualified users?

5. Does the library maintain hours of access consistent with reasonable demand?

6. What library services are provided for programs at off-campus sites? How are the needs of users and their satisfaction determined at those sites?

7. How are students and faculty informed of library services?

8. Does the library maintain and utilize quantitative and qualitative measurements of its ability to serve its clientele?

#### **Instruction**

The library should provide information and instruction to the user through a variety of reference and bibliographic services, such as course-related and course-integrated instruction, hands-on active learning, orientation, formal courses, tutorials, pathfinders, and point-of-use instruction, including the reference interview.

As an academic unit within the college, the library should facilitate academic success, as well as educate students for lifelong learning. By combining new techniques and technologies with the best of traditional sources, librarians should assist primary clientele and others in information retrieval methods, evaluation, and documentation.

In addition, librarians should collaborate frequently with teaching faculty; they should participate in curriculum planning, as well as educational outcomes assessment. Information literacy skills and bibliographic instruction should be integrated into appropriate courses with special attention given to intellectual property, copyright, and plagiarism.

Modes of instruction, often referred to as teaching methods, "may include, but are not limited to: advising individuals at reference desks, in-depth research consultations, individualized instruction, electronic or print instructional aids, or group instruction in traditional or electronic classroom settings."<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, the library should provide security, preservation, disaster and emergency training for its staff.

*Evaluation:*

1. Does the library provide formal and informal opportunities for instruction?
2. Does the library provide adequate space for instruction for both large and small groups? Is the available space designed to provide hands-on instruction, as well as presentation of all types of resources?
3. Does the library make appropriate use of technology in its instruction?
4. How do librarians work with teaching faculty in developing and evaluating library curricula in support of specific courses?
5. If applicable, how does the library facilitate faculty research?
6. Does the library provide a variety of educational programs?
7. How does the library promote its instructional programs?
8. How does the library provide security, preservation, and emergency training for its staff?

**Resources**

The library should provide varied, authoritative, and up-to-date information resources that are consonant with its mission and objectives and the needs of its users. Resources may be provided onsite or from remote storage locations, online or as hard copy, on the main campus or at off-campus locations, according to the needs of the users and the objectives of the library. The college library should provide resources in a variety of formats, including printed text, media, and electronic text or images. Within budgetary restraints, the library should provide quality resources in the most efficient manner possible. Collection currency and vitality should be maintained through judicious weeding.

*Evaluation:*

1. What criteria are used to make decisions about the acquisition, retention, and use of print, media, and electronic resources? How does the library select information for its users?
2. What is the role of the teaching faculty in the selection of library resources and in the ongoing development and evaluation of the collection?
3. Does the library have a continuing and effective program to evaluate its collections and resources, both quantitatively and qualitatively?

4. Do print, media, and electronic resources reflect campus curricular and research needs?
5. Does the library have sufficient user licenses for its electronic resources so that on-site and remote users can be accommodated?
6. How are consortial purchasing agreements utilized?
7. If the library has the responsibility for collecting and maintaining the college archives, how effective are its efforts?
8. How does the library's collection compare with collections of its peers?
9. Does the library maintain the collection through a judicious weeding program?

**Access**

Access to library resources should be provided in a timely and orderly fashion. Library collections should be organized by nationally approved conventions and arranged for efficient retrieval. A central catalog of library resources should provide access for multiple concurrent users and clearly indicate all resources, as well as the most efficient path to obtain access to them.

Access policies should address the need for proper maintenance and preservation, as well as the general needs of the users. Policies should be appropriately disseminated. Provision should be made for interlibrary loan and document delivery to provide access to materials not owned by the library.

*Evaluation:*

1. What methods are used to provide maximum intellectual and physical accessibility to the library and its resources?
2. How is accuracy and currency of the catalog assured?
3. Is the arrangement of the collection logical and understandable?
4. Does the library provide timely and effective interlibrary loan or document delivery service for materials not owned by the library?
5. Does the library participate in available cooperative programs?
6. Does the library provide sufficient numbers of appropriately capable workstations for access to electronic resources?
7. Is access to the catalog and to other library resources available across campus and off-campus?
8. If materials are located in a storage facility, are those materials readily accessible?

9. If the library has responsibility for maintaining the college archives, how are they organized and made accessible?

## Staff

The staff should be adequate in size and quality to meet the programmatic and service needs of its primary users. Librarians, including the director, should have a graduate degree from an ALA-accredited program. In addition, there may be other professional staff who will have appropriate training, experience, or degrees. All library professionals should be responsible for and participate in professional activities. The support staff and student assistants should be assigned responsibilities appropriate to their qualifications, training, experience, and capabilities. If librarians have faculty rank and status, it should be in accordance with the ACRL "Standards for Faculty Status for College and University Librarians." Salary and benefits should reflect compensation levels for comparable professionals in peer colleges.

### *Evaluation:*

1. Does the library employ staff capable of supporting and delivering information in all available formats, including electronic resources?

## Public hearing in New Orleans

The ACRL/CLS Draft Standards for College Libraries were prepared by members of the CLS Standards Committee. Members are Willis E. Bridegam, chair, Amherst College; Rebecca R. Bostian, Washburn University of Topeka; Robert W. Fernekes, University of South Carolina, Aiken; Richard L. Hart, Pennsylvania State University; Myrna Joy McCallister, University of Baltimore; Sharon McCaslin, Peru State University; James Mullins, Villanova University; David M. Pilachowski, Williams College.

The committee has scheduled a public hearing on the Draft Standards at the ALA Conference in New Orleans on Monday, June 28, from 9:30–11:00 a.m. Comments and suggestions are encouraged and should be sent to Willis Bridegam, chair, CLS Standards Committee, Amherst College Library, Amherst, MA 01002 or by e-mail: [webridegam@amherst.edu](mailto:webridegam@amherst.edu).

2. Is sufficient budgetary support provided to ensure the ongoing training of all staff?

3. Does the library have qualified librarians, other professional staff, skilled support staff, and student assistants in adequate numbers to meet its needs?

4. How does the college ensure that the library's professional staff has the appropriate accredited degrees, and how does it encourage them to engage in appropriate professional activities?

5. How does the size of the library staff relate to the goals and services of the library, the college's programs, degrees, enrollment, size of the faculty and staff, and auxiliary programs?

6. How do library staff policies and procedures compare with college guidelines and sound personnel management, especially in the areas of hiring, recruitment, appointment, contract renewal, promotion, tenure, dismissal, and appeal?

7. How do staff members who are responsible for instruction maintain sufficient knowledge and skills to be effective instructors?

## Facilities

The library facility should be well planned; it should provide secure and adequate space with suitable environmental conditions for its services, personnel, resources, and collections. The library's equipment should be adequate and functional.

### *Evaluation:*

1. Does the library provide well-planned, secure, and adequate space for users?

2. Are building mechanical systems properly designed and maintained to control temperature and humidity at recommended levels?

3. What is the perception of users and staff concerning the number of seats and the variety of study spaces?

4. Is there enough space for the library's collections?

5. Does the staff have sufficient workspace and is it configured to promote efficient operations?

6. If there are branch libraries, do they have sufficient space for the collections and staff?

7. Is the library's signage adequate?

8. Does the library provide ergonomic workstations for its users and staff?

9. Does the library meet ADA requirements?

## Communication and cooperation

Communication is essential to ensure the smooth operation of the library. Communication should flow from all levels of the library: from the director to the staff and from the staff to the director. The library should have a regular mechanism to communicate to the campus.

Library staff should work collaboratively and cooperatively with other departments on campus. A special relationship should be encouraged between the library and information technology staff in providing access to electronic information resources. In some cases, a vice-president, dean, or director of information services may administer both library and information technology operations and services. The library is usually responsible for selecting and providing information content. Computing usually provides the technical infrastructure and support to deliver information. There is no single organizational model that will work for all colleges. Computing and the library may remain independent but should work collaboratively.

### *Evaluation:*

1. Is there effective communication within the library that allows for a free flow of administrative and managerial information?

2. Are staff members encouraged to suggest new ideas or procedures to improve operations or working conditions within the library? Is there a process to facilitate this?

3. Does the library have a regular means to convey information to the campus?

4. Has the library established cooperative working relationships with other departments on campus?

5. If the library and information technology are administered separately, does the organizational structure provide opportunities for productive communication and collaboration?

6. If one administrator has responsibility for both the library and information technology, how well have the two functions been integrated?

7. Is the library able to obtain technical support for information technology in the form of in-house expertise to provide electronic resources to onsite and remote users?

8. Is the capacity of the campus network sufficient to provide reasonable response times for local and remote information resources?

## Administration

The library should be administered in a manner that permits and encourages the most effective use of available library resources. The library director should report to the president or to the appropriate chief academic officer of the college. There should be a standing library advisory committee. The responsibilities and authority of the library director should be defined in writing. If there are branch libraries, they should be administered by the library director in accordance with the ACRL "Guidelines for Branch Libraries." The library should be administered in accordance with the spirit of the ALA "Library Bill of Rights."

### *Evaluation:*

1. How does the library administration encourage effective use of available library resources?

2. What is the statutory or legal foundation (e.g., college bylaws) for the library's activities?

3. To whom does the library director report? Is that reporting relationship appropriate?

4. Is there a document that defines the responsibilities and authority of the library director?

5. Does the library have a standing advisory committee? Does the committee have adequate teaching faculty and student representation? How effective is the committee?

6. How effective are the policies and procedures that determine internal library governance and operations?

7. Does the library operate in accord with the spirit of the ALA "Library Bill of Rights"?

## Budget

The library director should prepare, justify, and administer a library budget that is appropriate to the library's objectives. The budget should meet the reasonable expectations of library users when balanced against other college needs. The library should utilize its financial resources efficiently and effectively. The library director should have authority to apportion funds and initiate expenditures within the library budget and in accordance with college policy. The budget should support appropriate levels of staffing and adequate staff compensation.

### *Evaluation:*

1. Does the library director prepare, justify, and administer the library budget in accordance with agreed upon objectives?

2. Are the library's annual authorized expenditures adequate to meet the ongoing, appropriate needs of the library?

3. How is the college's curriculum taken into account when formulating the library's budget?

4. How are the instructional methods of the college, especially as they relate to independent study, considered when formulating the library's budget?

5. What methods are used to determine the adequacy of existing collections? Is the budget adequate to maintain an appropriate rate of collection development in fields pertinent to the curriculum?

6. How does the size, or anticipated size, of the student body and the teaching faculty affect the library budget?

7. Does the budget support an appropriate level of staffing and compensation?

8. How is the adequacy and availability of funding for other library resources (e.g., archives and special collections) determined?

9. Does the library budget reflect the library's responsibility for acquiring, processing, servicing, and providing access to media and computer resources?

10. To what extent does the library director have authority to apportion funds and initiate expenditures within the library budget and in accordance with college policy?

11. Is the library able to retain, for support of its collections and services, revenues generated by fees and/or charges such as fines, payment for lost or damaged materials, and the sale of duplicate or unneeded items?

12. How does the library monitor its encumbrances and the payment of its invoices? How does it evaluate the flow of its expenditures? Is the library administration fiscally responsible?

13. Does the budget include adequate support for extended campus programs?

## Notes

1. The present document will replace the Standards for College Libraries, 1995 edition (*C&RL News*, April 1995, pp. 245-257.) The CLS Standards Committee was guided by the work of the ACRL Taskforce on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment, a group that was charged by ACRL to develop a philosophical framework for assessing libraries in terms of desired campus outcomes. (The Taskforce's

final report was accepted by the ALA Board July 1998.) These standards also address recent concerns of accrediting agencies (i.e., outcomes and assessment measures, as well as rapidly emerging and changing instructional and information technologies.)

2. *ACRL Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment*, June 27, 1998, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/outcome.html>.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

4. For a further discussion of space requirements refer to: Metcalf, Keyes D. *Planning Academic and Research Library Buildings*. 2nd ed. Philip D. Leighton and David C. Weber. Chicago: American Library Association, 1986. Appendix B.

5. *ACRL Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries*, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/guides/guuis.html>. ■

---

(*"New approaches . . ."* continued from page 364)

We will also be asking individual council members to review lists of potential donors and, where possible, advise us of an individual's particular interests or suggest the best approach for soliciting a contribution.

The University Libraries recently negotiated a contract for our health sciences library to manage the university hospital library. For many years we have had a contract to manage the General Electric Library. We will be looking to the advisory council for help in identifying additional opportunities as businesses outsource more of their operations.

We will also be looking for opportunities to capitalize on our information literacy expertise. Earlier this year, our business librarian gave a presentation on business resources on the Internet to members of the Family Business Center, a group working to preserve the viability of family businesses. We hope the council members can help us identify other organizations and companies that could benefit from our services.

We will continue meeting quarterly to brainstorm with council members and seek their advice on appropriate issues as we keep them informed of significant changes in the libraries and their services. ■

# BEST of/the WEB SERIES™

*A unique reference and educational series,  
placing the best of the Web at your fingertips . . .*

## **How To Search the Web (2nd Edition): A Quick-Reference Guide to Finding Things on the World Wide Web**

New edition now available! Intended for students, teachers, librarians, researchers—all those who use the Web to find things. Without search engines, the Web would be useless. This guide explains, in simple, non-technical terms, basic search techniques that will help turn the Web into a research and reference source that will challenge your imagination while it informs and entertains. Sample queries included throughout. March 1999. Spiral bound. 8 1/2 X 11 inch format. 65 pages. **\$12.95.** (ISBN: 0-942008-92-8)

## **Writer's Guide To Online Resources**

An invaluable reference for students and for those seeking opportunities and professional guidance. This guide covers the major websites dealing with: grammar, usage and style; guides to writing research papers; useful online reference sources; writing for the Web; organizations for writers, including those that offer advice on how to get published and freelance opportunities; creative writing programs and workshops; job hotlines; writers' newsgroups and online forums; grants and contests for writers; children's literature Web guide; legal issues relating to writing; and much more. March 1999. Spiral bound. 8 1/2 X 11 inch format. 90 pages. **\$15.95.** (ISBN: 0-942008-90-1)

## **Library of Congress Online: A Quick-Reference Guide to the Online Library Card Catalog and Legislative Reference Database**

The Library of Congress website—which includes among other resources the Library's vast card (bibliographic) catalog and federal legislative database—provides a wealth of information for the researcher, whether the project involves a school term paper, a college thesis, or scientific analysis. This unique reference offers a step-by-step guide to conducting searches of the card catalog and legislative database. Specific search examples are given throughout. March 1999. 8 1/2 X 11 inch format. 50 pages. **\$9.95.** (ISBN: 0-942008-91-X)

*Free catalog on request*



**WANT Publishing Co.**  
**420 Lexington Ave., Suite 300**  
**New York, NY 10170**

Voice: 212-687-3774 • Fax: (212) 687-3779  
E-mail: [rwant@msn.com](mailto:rwant@msn.com) • Website: [www.wantpublishing.com](http://www.wantpublishing.com)

*Serving the College and University Markets Since 1975*