

Georgia Public Library Standards

Regents Public Library Advisory Committee

2024

Introduction

The mission of Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) is “Empowering libraries to improve the lives of Georgians.” The goals of Georgia Public Library Service include to: serve as trusted advisors to the library community; develop a supportive community for Georgia’s public libraries; ensure equal access to information and technology; and foster a culture of learning statewide.

Public library standards are specific criteria by which public libraries can be measured and evaluated. Such standards represent objective, observable measures that indicate the parameters of minimal, essential or optimal library service.

Some qualities of library service are difficult to measure because many intangible elements are involved. To be sure, not all the elements of library service are objective; and while their effects may be observable, the actual evaluation of such elements is subjective. The evaluation of such elements is left to the management of each library entity.

Georgia Public Library Standards are an essential tool for meaningful library evaluation and measurement. They will be beneficial to all Georgia public libraries and the people they serve.

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I. Definitions

1. Member or Branch Library
 - a. is open 30 or more regularly scheduled hours weekly
 - b. has paid library staff
 - c. has an organized collection of library materials accessible through an electronic catalog
 - d. is in separate quarters with defined space used solely for library purposes
 - e. has a minimum of 1,000 gross square feet
 - f. has a telephone on site that is not shared
 - g. has minimum essential bandwidth needed to conduct business and provide public access computing
 - h. has at least one computer dedicated to patron use

Member or branch libraries do not include administrative office buildings, service outlets, bookmobiles, separate meeting/classroom buildings, processing centers or warehouses. A member or branch library is eligible for state & federal grants.

2. Library Service Outlet
 - a. is open 15 – 29 hours weekly
 - b. has paid library staff
 - c. has an organized collection of library materials
 - d. is in separate quarters with defined space used solely for library purposes
 - e. has minimum essential bandwidth needed to conduct business and provide public access computing
 - f. has at least one computer dedicated to patron use
3. Book Deposit
 - a. has no set hours of operation
 - b. has no paid library staff
 - c. has a collection of materials and no on-site catalog
 - d. has no telecommunications access or access is limited
 - e. is located in a shared and/or borrowed space
4. Library Kiosk
 - a. is a library point of service maintained outside of an administrative entity or branch library
 - b. has Internet connectivity and electronic equipment or other material physically available to provide access to library resources
 - c. provides access to the library catalog and patron accounts
 - d. may be within another structure or standalone
 - e. may be temporary, semi-permanent or permanent
 - f. must be placed such that all members of the community may approach it without cost

If all criteria for a member or branch library or a library service outlet are not met, the facility is automatically classified as a book deposit.

II. Governance

1. The library board, director and staff comply with the *Official Code of Georgia* and all other state, federal or local laws and regulations that pertain to public libraries and their operations.
2. The library is established in accordance with the provisions in the *Official Code of Georgia*. Each library system must have a governing board of trustees. In a regional system, the governing board is composed of representatives from county library boards.
3. County library boards of trustees include at least one appointed representative from each local governmental agency financially supporting the library at a level defined by the governing board. In a regional library system, county boards of trustees serve as advisers to the regional library board of trustees. County trustees act as representatives of their appointing government agencies in cooperation with the regional library board of trustees.
4. The governing library board of trustees is legally responsible for policymaking in areas such as budgets, personnel and contracts as is specified by the *Official Code of Georgia*. The governing library board adopts policies that strive to comply with the ideals of the profession and the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. This director administers the library according to these policies.
5. The regional library board of trustees exercises final authority as the governing board in a multi-county system.
6. Both regional and county library boards of trustees must approve and review, at least every five years, a written local constitution and bylaws document that outlines its purpose and board operational procedures. The constitution and bylaws must be on file at the Georgia Public Library Service.
7. The governing library board of trustees will meet at least four times per year with the library director or the director's representative in attendance.
8. All meetings are conducted under the Open Meetings Act (O.C.G.A. § 5014-1).
9. The governing library board is responsible for hiring the library director via a legal and open search process and for conducting an annual performance evaluation.

III. The Library Director

The library director is responsible for personnel administration and all day-to-day operations of the library system. Specifically, the library director:

1. Ensures that the library operates under a strategic plan.
 - The plan contains a mission statement that describes the library's purposes in the community.
 - The plan shows goals to be achieved over a period not to exceed-five years and outlines specific actions to achieve the goals.
 - The library conducts or uses a community study as part of its planning efforts.
 - GPLS will serve as a resource for current best practices.
2. Provides financial and statistical reports for review at governing library board of trustees meetings and communicates to board members on matters that affect policy.
3. Conducts an orientation program for each new board member.
4. Studies, develops, and evaluates policies in conjunction with the staff and governing board. The policies are reviewed at least every five years.
5. Meets the state of Georgia certification requirements. An interim or acting director must also meet state of Georgia certification requirements.

IV. Budget

1. The library board reviews and adopts an annual budget, which has been developed by the Library Director with input from the library staff.
2. The public library is supported by funds from local governments on a permanent basis; special grants and donations supplement, but do not supplant, the responsibility of the local funding authority to support the library.
3. The library spends 10-16% of its total annual budget (as reported in the *Georgia Public Library Annual Report/Application for State Aid*) on materials.

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
10%	13%	16%

4. A minimum of **three** month's expenses should be kept in reserve.

V. Staffing

The library system employs public service staff in proportion to population as detailed in the table below. Population density per library system is considered in determining the appropriate standard. Staff numbers refer to full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. Forty hours per week constitutes one FTE.

Staffing Standards

Staff per population:	Minimal	Essential	Optimal
FTE per 1,000 population	.3	.4	.5

1. The library has adopted personnel policies outlining the conditions and requirements of employment of library staff. These policies are consistent with state and federal regulations, are reviewed regularly, and are made available to all staff members.

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
7 years	5 years	3 years

2. The library has a written personnel classification plan with a starting salary for each position and written job descriptions listing the duties of each position, including any educational and experience requirements. These are reviewed at least every five years.
3. Employee performance is reviewed at least annually based on the components in the job description.
4. Each library staff member is required to attend training annually that meets continuing education needs.

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
10 hours	20 hours	40 hours

VI. Collection Development/Evaluation

1. Every library system should have a comprehensive board-approved collection development policy that:
 - a. Ensures selection of materials reflects community needs and the library's mission.
 - b. Establishes a standard set of criteria for the consistent selection and acquisition of library materials regardless of format.
 - c. Details who is responsible for the selection of materials.
 - d. Ensures a diversity of viewpoints on all topics will be included in the collection
 - e. Establishes standards for collection maintenance and the removal of library materials based on set criteria.
 - f. Creates a process by which individuals may share their concerns about library materials with library management and, if their concerns are unresolved, invoke a formal reconsideration process.
 - g. Affirms the importance of intellectual freedom, referencing key documents such as the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the Library Bill of Rights, and the Freedom to Read Statement.
2. Libraries should take into consideration the following when creating the reconsideration portion of their policy and make their decisions based on their individual communities:
 - a. Establishing who will have standing to file a challenge. Restricting to just library card holders, county residents, or other criteria.
 - b. Creating restrictions on how many items a single individual can challenge at one time.
 - c. Determining how long the official decision for a title will stand before it may be challenged again.
 - d. Establishing who will be reviewing the challenge and making the final decisions whether it be by appointed committee, professional staff, upper management, or the library board.
 - e. Establishing criteria for how challenged materials are reviewed.
 - f. Determining if you will allow organizations, groups, or just individuals to file a formal challenge.
3. Libraries should ensure that the reconsideration process outlined in policy is completed in its entirety and not subverted or ended prematurely in order to prevent leaving the library open to legal challenge.

4. The library should review their collection development policy in its entirety:

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
Every 5 years	Every 3 years	Every 2 years

5. Understanding that electronic formats selection is not analogous to physical materials selection and includes a much greater degree of vendor intervention and cooperation, consideration will be given to a wide range of factors, including but not limited to those listed in these [Guiding Questions for eResource Acquisitions and Collections Development](#). The RPLAC eResources Advisory Subcommittee has drafted the following standards to reflect what it identifies as current electronic resources assessment criteria. Georgia public libraries should make every effort to consider the relevant criteria in the creation of their collection development policy.

	Minimal	Essential	Optimal
Accessibility	End-user and library staff interfaces work with adaptive technology and native OS/browser screen reader and screen enlarging tools.	End-user and library staff interfaces are available in system-provided audio format and with enlarged/high contrast text.	System accepts proprietary or mass market plug-ins that allow for user-defined personalization of preferences.
Assessment and Reporting	Basic statistical reports can be pulled covering use, data retrievals, or checkouts at the global, system-wide, or consortial level.	Detailed statistical reports can be pulled covering use, data retrievals, checkouts, and/or titles at the global, system-wide, or consortial level.	Custom statistical reports can be pulled covering use, data retrievals, checkouts, and/or titles at most granular level of governance.
Authentication	Based on library card prefix	Systems can talk to one another using mutually agreeable protocols	Multiple streams of authentication
Collection Content	Specific scope, ex. Popular titles only Adequate quality, common/essential titles, lacking depth, core collection only	Larger scope, ex. Popular titles and core collection	Unlimited scope, ex. Opting in to largest available catalog diverse catalog of high quality titles available

Discoverability	Content is discoverable on platform only via resource link on library website	Content can be integrated into catalog or discovered on platform via resource link on library website	Content can be manipulated into specific collections to promote in addition to being discovered on platform and in catalog
Licensing Terms & Lending Models	Single model for acquisitions, ex. Only CPC or only OC/OU Least flexible/customizable	Multiple models for acquisitions available but must choose, ex. Metered and OC/OU available	Multiple models for acquisition available at the same time, ex. OC/OU or metered available but can also add CPC on top if needed; also includes OA where available. Greatest degree of flexibility/customization.
Reconsideration	Vendor is open to potentially suppressing, reclassifying, or making special notes upon request	Vendor can suppress or reclassify titles upon request	Capacity to suppress or reclassify titles at will without vendor inclusion
Technology Specifications & Access	One-size fits most (for example, onsite access only; particular device requirements)	Covers many types of devices and has minimal system requirements; can be accessed onsite and remotely.	Covers most if not all devices from any location

VII. Public Services and Circulation Services

1. The library strives to meet or exceed visits per capita as reported by the Public Library Data Service, published by the Public Library Association.
2. The library provides without charge an initial library card to any resident of the service area.
3. Library hours are fixed, posted, and include morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours based on users' and potential users' disposable time. One library in each county must be open at least one evening a week (after 6:00 p.m.) and one weekend day to satisfy this measure. Minimum days and hours of service for a library system are as follows, with consideration always given to weekend and evening hours. At least one library per library system must be open:

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
40 hours	55 hours	72 hours

4. Every library system has a written circulation policy that will be reviewed at least every five years.
5. The library participates in regional and state-coordinated interlibrary loan and resource sharing for circulation and reference services.
6. The library has a process for handling holds.
7. The library provides information and readers' advisory service to all patrons.
8. The library provides appropriate help for people requiring assistance with computer tasks.
9. Outreach services are offered, including remote access to the library collection. These services may also include but are not limited to online programs, bookmobile services, phone/email reference, homebound delivery, deposit collections and off-site wi-fi.
10. The library provides programming for children, teens and adults appropriate to the mission of the library.
11. Services for those with print impairments are offered. The library will expand accessibility to library programs for those with disabilities as needed. The library will designate an ADA compliance officer and inform library users of how to request special accommodations.

VIII. Technology Services

1. Each library has a board-approved Technology Plan that is reviewed at least every 5 years.
2. Each library facility will provide free public access to the Internet with essential bandwidth needed to conduct business and provide public access according to current industry standards.
3. Every library provides wireless access, with the ability to gather appropriate metrics and filter for content.
4. Library-provided hardware should include:
 - Devices with productivity software suites
 - Devices for Internet access
 - Devices for children's resources only
5. The library will implement a computer replacement plan as follows:

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
5 years	4 years	3 years

6. All library-provided equipment and Internet access will have centralized URL filtering that enables the library to comply with the provisions of the Children's Internet Protection Act.
7. The library provides virtual services that are available 24/7.

IX. Facility

Library facility standards are based on the library's mission statement and service goals. Major service factors to consider in developing a facility plan are: collection size, use of technology, adult and children's programming, seating, and meeting room space. One size or configuration does not fit all libraries. However, the architectural formula of 0.6 square feet per capita for space should be used to determine actual facility size and design. The library will:

1. Comply with federal, state and local building codes, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) and the *Georgia Accessibility Code*
<http://ada.georgia.gov/georgia-accessibility-code>
2. Be located and designed with input from all stakeholders, including users, staff, and governing officials, and provide accessibility to the greatest number of users
3. Ensure that all buildings have the required emergency facilities provided in accordance with the appropriate codes: fire alarms and extinguishers, emergency evacuation routes and exits
4. Review the value and replacement cost of its buildings and their contents on a regular basis and purchases property and casualty insurance in an amount adequate to protect the library in the event of loss or damage to such property
5. Incorporate sustainable design in the library building program so that the building can function efficiently without wasting energy.
6. Incorporate changes to existing and future libraries to move toward sustainable buildings by addressing environmental issues like water and electricity conservation and using recyclable materials.
7. All library facilities will have:
 - A plan and annual budget for the maintenance of building and grounds
 - Adequate space to meet its service, operation and storage needs
 - Convenient and adequate parking based on applicable building codes and anticipated usage
 - Exterior signage identifying the facility as a library that is clearly visible from the street
 - Well-designed signs and graphics including the display of the International Symbol of Accessibility, where appropriate
 - Adequate provision for current electrical, data and telephone connections
 - Controlled temperatures and humidity for the benefit of users and staff as well as the protection of library property
 - Adequate interior and exterior lighting in all areas

- An after-hours book return that is fireproof in a safe, well-lit area
- Furnishings and equipment adequate to the needs of users and staff
- Adequate noise control
- Meeting space available for library programming and for use by community groups, if such is a part of the library's plan. If public meeting space is provided, there is a board-approved Meeting Room Policy governing its use.

8. All library facilities will have a disaster preparedness and emergency response plan for each physical library location ([template](#)).

Minimal	Essential	Optimal
Disaster plan elements per the linked template.	Minimal + continuity of operations plan	Essential + all relevant optional attachments.

9. Existing and future facilities and space needs will be reviewed every five years to continue to provide a safe, secure environment.