

Revisions made to Draft of May 1, 2001 at the Standards Committee Meeting on July 16, 2001 and later amended on 9/27/01 and again on 10/26/01.

County **Public** Law Library Standards

Preamble

Believing that the county **public** law library is an integral and vital part of the legal community it serves, the members of the [State, Court, and County Law Libraries Section of the American Association of Law Libraries](#) (AALL) urge county governments, **courts** and/or governing [bodies] **entities** to adhere to the following standards. The members realize that because of the great variance in size and governance **among** [between] county **public** law libraries, certain standards will be harder to achieve than others; but it is hoped that these standards will be guidelines for libraries to follow in order to assure the highest quality personnel, collection, and library services in [the] county **public** law libraries throughout the United States.

I. Governance

- A. The position of the law library within the structure of [county government] **the governing entity** should be defined by law. In addition, the law library should have a written mission and goal statement. The statement should reflect the statutory mandate.
- B. The relationship of the head law librarian to superiors should be defined by written [stated] policy. The head law librarian should meet on a regular basis with his or her superiors to report and to receive policy directions.
- C. The head law librarian should be recognized as part of the management team of the library's [governance body] **governing entity** and should participate in policy making which affects library operations.

<p><i>unbolded script</i> - original language from Standards as existed on March, 1996 <i>bracketed portions</i> - deletes from original and proposed amended language <i>unbracketed bold</i> - recommended new language <i>underlined</i> - proposed hot links to existing web sites</p>
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D. [The head law librarian should initiate or be involved in all planning and implementing decisions that affect the law library including but not limited to: 1) development and administration of the law library budget; 2) development of the collection, including bibliographic and physical control of facilitating access; 3) contracting for or participation in library or other information networks; 4) participation in local and/or statewide court

electronic networks; 5) personnel to assist users, service the collection, and perform all administrative functions required of the law library; 6) development and staffing of branch libraries; 7) physical facilities; and 8) management of library operations.] **The head law librarian should initiate or take part in all planning and implementing decisions that affect the law library. Illustrations of such activities include the decisions to:**

- 1.) **develop and administer the library budget;**
- 2.) **build a useful collection;**
- 3.) **participate in library or related information networks;**
- 4.) **coordinate implementation and upgrades of the library computer network;**
- 5.) **hire personnel to assist customers, service the collection, and perform all administrative functions required of the law library;**
- 6.) **plan and staff branch libraries, where appropriate;**
- 7.) **design and maintain the physical plant; and,**
- 8.) **manage all other library operations.**

Comment:

*The law library should be recognized as a separate unit within [county government] **its governing entity**. In some states the county **public** law library is part of the judicial system. In those states where the county **public** law library is not a part of the judicial branch, the law library should be recognized under the law as a distinct unit within its governing [body] **entity**.*

*The head law librarian should be part of the [county] management team that **may** include[s] the court administrator, the court clerk and/or other administrative or department heads. The head law librarian should be involved in all planning, and in the implementation of any decisions that affect the law library. [The head law librarian must be apprised and in turn must advise the governing body of the advantages and disadvantages, costs and benefits, of decisions affecting the law library]. **The head law librarian must be apprised of decisions affecting the law library, and, in turn must advise the governing entity of the resulting advantages and disadvantages, costs and benefits of such decisions.***

*To carry out the mission of the governing [body] **entity** as well as the law library, the head law librarian should report to and receive direction on policy issues from superiors.*

*As part of ongoing communication within the governing [body] **entity**, the law library should prepare and distribute an annual report of its activities. The report should include information about fulfillment of its mission and its participation in the mission of the governing **entity** [body].*

II. Budget

- A. The budget of the law library should be separate and distinct from the budgets of other operations of its governing [body] **entity**.
- B. The budget of the law library should be adequate to ensure a complete, up-to-date collection, including **print**, non-print **and electronic** resources, with provision for new acquisitions and a qualified staff to maintain an acceptable level of library services **as described in the standards that follow**.
- C. The budget should include but [should] not **necessarily** be limited to the following categories: 1) personnel costs, including salaries and benefits; 2) publication costs, including upkeep and subscription for both [hard copy] **print** and alternative formats **including access to online electronic services**; 3) supplies, [and] equipment **and appropriate technologies**; 4) binding costs; 5) resource sharing, including networking and online bibliographic utilities; 6) physical space and maintenance; 7) **membership in professional organizations**, training and travel **expenses** for law library staff; and 8) such other categories as may be defined by law or practice.
- D. The head law librarian should prepare, **justify** [present] and manage the law library budget. The law library budget should be given equal priority with other services in the budgetary process of the governing [body] **entity**. **The library's** [Its] budget request should be defended vigorously by the governing [body] **entity**.

Comment:

*The budget of the law library should be recognized as an **integral** [important] **part** [feature] of its governing [body] **entity's overall budget process**. The budget should accurately reflect all costs associated with the operation of the law library, including personnel and technological changes. The head law librarian should have the primary responsibility for preparing, **justifying** [presenting], and managing the law library budget. However, the governing [body] **entity** should be prepared to defend the law library budget as a vital part of its mission. The governing [body] **entity** also should be prepared to provide support throughout the fiscal year to ensure the administration of the budget complies with its overall mission and with **generally** accepted accounting procedures.*

III. Personnel

- A. The Law library should be staffed during all hours of court operation with professional personnel, qualified through education, training and experience. Staff should have expertise in administration, acquisitions, cataloging, reference, database and Internet searching, instruction, and any other necessary professional skills to meet the goals of the library's mission. [The law library should be staffed **during all hours of court operation** with professional personnel, qualified through education, training and experience in areas such as administration, acquisitions, cataloging, reference, including database **and Internet** searching, instruction and any other necessary professional functions, sufficient to meet the goals of its mission.] [*The Competencies of Law Librarianship*](#), as established by the AALL may be used as an **additional guideline [should act as a reference]**. Sufficient **information technology**, technical, clerical, and secretarial personnel also should be made available to the law library to support these functions and assist the head law librarian.
- B. The salaries of the head law librarian and all other library personnel should be commensurate with their education, training, experience and the extent of their responsibilities **in keeping with similar positions in that jurisdiction**.
- C. The head law librarian should [appoint] **select** and evaluate [the] other library staff [members]. **All library positions, including the head law librarian, should be specifically established within the governing entity's personnel classification system[.]** [The head law librarian and all law library staff should be], **and** covered by the governing [body 's] **entity's** personnel policy. [or a comparable plan for career employment].
- D. All law library staff should be given the opportunity to pursue a program of professional development that is relevant to [their own needs and interests, as well as] the interests of the law library. Such opportunity should include financial assistance.
- E. The [law] library staff should be encouraged to participate in local, regional, and national professional law library associations. The law library's budget should make provision for such membership dues **and other related staff development expenses**.
- F. The [law] library staff should participate in [online discussion groups and conferences] **conferences and online discussion groups** as part of an ongoing program of professional development and education.

Comment:

All law librarians should hold a graduate degree in library or information science. A law degree meets the requirements if the librarian possesses substantial law library experience. In addition, the head law librarian should have substantial experience in the management of libraries. Substantial experience means knowledge and practical application gained by the regular performance of duties that are usual to the position involved.

*The library and its [users] **customers** benefit when [the] library staff members improve their skills **by participating in** [through] institutes, post-graduate courses, online discussion groups **and** [online] conferences, **in-service training, and** professional associations [and meetings]. Such continuing education is accepted in [the legal] **all** professions, and, in fact, is required in many jurisdictions.*

IV. Physical Plant & Facilities

- A. The law library should be conveniently located in or adjacent to the county courts building. Where appropriate, branch libraries should be considered at [branch] satellite court houses.
- B. **The law library's physical plant must meet various basic structural requirements necessary to adequately house and provide access to informational resources in a variety of formats. Attention should be given to existing building standards and floor loading capacity.** Shelving should be arranged in a manner that allows for easy access to the collection. There also should be sufficient shelving or provision to permit adequate **space for and** growth of the collection.
- C. **Space and** facilities should be provided for the use and storage of non-print and fragile materials under **environmentally sound** [adequately protective] conditions. [Adequate provisions, **including**] **Public computers with printers** should be made available [for the use of] **to access commercial** online and electronic [data] **services, including the Internet.**
- D. There should be suitable and adequate equipment, work space, and comfortable seating for the library staff and [users] **customers** [of the collection]. Proper lighting and temperature control including heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and humidity control also should be provided.
- E. Conference areas, copiers, **fax machines**, [and] **sufficient** electrical outlets, **and networking capability** for computer use **and Internet access** should be provided in the law library.
- F. Directories, library guides, and other signage to assist [users] **customers** [in finding their way to and about the library] should be provided.
- G. The law library should meet the requirements of the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended](#). [**from time to time.**]

Comment:

*The county **public** law library and any branch library should be housed in the same building or in close proximity to the courts it serves to provide convenient library access by county officials, [the] judges, court personnel, [staffs of] prosecutor and public defender office **staff**, [bar members] **attorneys**, litigants, the general public and county jail inmates[.]. In counties*

with large geographical areas, law library service *may* [should] be extended by a branch library, or, in the alternative, by electronic *remote* [off-site] access.

At a minimum, the county public law library should be equipped with photocopiers, fax machines, microform reader-printers, an accessible public phone, any necessary audio-visual equipment, computers (with appropriate word processing and browser software), and any other equipment/hardware/software needed to enhance library services. A crucial component of providing access to electronic information is the baseline need for coordinated connectivity to reliable electronic networks. These network connections, in most circumstances, should be provided and supported by the library's governing entity. [(the county, court or other parent organization).] [Adequate provisions should be made for the installation and use of copiers, fax machines, computers [terminals], word processing[ors], microform reader-printers, audiovisual equipment, and any other equipment needed to enhance library services. This includes equipment needed for library operations such as cataloging, [and] acquisitions and other network functions.]

*The library should be customer-friendly by providing various [devices] **directional aids** to assist [users] **customers** in finding their way about the library [should be provided].*

V. Information Services

- A. The law library's mission and goals statement should identify the levels of information service provided to its [customer groups] **customers**.
- B. The law library should augment its resources through interlibrary loans, cooperative agreements, networks and **in-house and remote** online electronic [data] **services**.
- C. [Library policies concerning user access to print and non-print legal information should be formulated and conspicuously posted and advertised to advise users of the extent and availability of the library's resources.] **Library policies, approved by the governing entity, addressing customer reference assistance, including access to print, non-print and electronic legal information, should be formulated and conspicuously posted advising customers of information services available from the library.**
- D. **The library should provide access to the Internet for customers. An appropriate use policy may be developed for approval by the governing entity.**
- E. **The law librarian should have the authority to [initiate and oversee the planning, funding, and later, the] plan and implement[ation of] in-house library computer networks linking the library's online catalog, other library files, including technical processing operations, community based legal information resources, and other online information resources [available from remote locations] into a library web site. This web site should be designed**

either independently or in conjunction with the library's governing entity, to provide information about the library and its information services, and to maintain relevant links to law-related web sites within its own state/local jurisdiction.

Comment:

*The law library should provide access to legal information in a manner that is efficient, economical, reliable, and in accordance with accepted standards and measures of performance. Although some county **public** law libraries serve narrow constituencies, most libraries maintain collections that not only serve the court and its personnel, but also local government officials, [the staffs of] prosecutor and public defender office staff, [bar members] **attorneys**, litigants, the general public and county jail inmates.*

*Libraries must consider the concept of access to legal information versus ownership of materials. The information explosion has made it difficult for any one library to hold all legal information within its walls, **however**, technology has made it possible for the library to expand its capability to provide access to information not **previously** available within the library.*

*Interlibrary loans and strong cooperative agreements or networks among county **public** law libraries and other libraries provide one approach towards making legal information accessible to all [users] **customers** of the library.*

*The library should develop a written reference policy to ensure that the information and assistance provided to [their] [users] **customers** is appropriate to the situation. This should include service to **remote** [off-site] [users] **customers** as well as [users] **customers** in the library. The policies should be posted or otherwise advertised so that [users] **customers** are made aware of the availability of the resources or procedures necessary to access the materials.*

VI. Technical Services

A. Acquisitions and Collection Development

1. Written policies for collection development **and selection of print and/or non-print and electronic materials**, including criteria for the selection and discarding of materials and the acceptance and disposition of gifts, should be formulated by the head law librarian in consultation with staff and [users] **customers**, and approved by the library's governing [body] **entity** .

2. The head law librarian should have the authority to select materials to be added to the collection in accordance with the collection development policies; or to delegate such authority to a qualified staff member.

3. All materials should be current with respect to continuations, supplements, and replacements. Sets should be complete. Multiple copies, **in a combination of formats**, should be available where heavy usage requires them. All superseded material stored or maintained in the library should be clearly indicated as such and should be retained only if it continues to serve as a useful source of information for [users] **customers** of the library.

4. [The library should acquire and provide access to information in the best alternative non-print format, including microform, audiovisual, and electronic materials such as online databases, compact discs, and electronic data files available on computer networks, in addition to print materials.]

The library should acquire and provide access to information in the most appropriate format, print, non-print, and electronic, based on economic, technical, environmental and customer considerations.

5. The law librarian should have the authority to join library or other information networks that can aid in acquiring, sharing, and providing access to information services.

6. [The library should have available the selection resources appropriate to its needs.] **The library should have easy access to the appropriate selection tools necessary for informed decision-making when choosing materials for the collection.**

Comment:

*The law library should have a written collection development policy based upon its defined mission statement. The policy [It] should address access, material, and service for its diverse [user] **customer** groups; print and alternative formats; selection criteria and responsibility; and collection maintenance issues.*

*The law library should base its collection development strategies on combinations of traditional and [automated research] **electronic** resources. It should be remembered that [hard-copy] **print** is often necessary to allow multiple-[user] **customer** access or to permit access during online downtime. If core collections of legal materials in [hard copy] **print** are replaced by electronic [research] services, questions may arise as to whether database availability alone, without prompt and adequate assistance by trained librarians, provides sufficient access to legal information. Whether policies are adopted to provide basic legal information through print or through non-print **and electronic** sources, the planning and implementation of technology in [appellate court] **county public law** libraries should take the*

*needs of all [users] **customers** into account.*

The law library should strive to provide access to legal information that is comprehensive as well as authoritative. In addition to the standard primary and secondary sources, every effort should be made to acquire materials to assist and inform pro se litigants and the public of their legal rights and responsibilities.

*The head law librarian, as a member of the governing [body's] **entity's** planning team, should take an active role in the acquisition of materials, whether it is actually selecting the materials, or the delegation and oversight of the duty.*

*Technological developments are having a major impact on the development of law library collections. As a result of [technological] developments that already have taken place in information delivery such as microforms, audiovisual, optical media, compact discs, [telefacsimile] **fax machines**, online data bases and library automation, the concept of the law library as a depository of books has given way to the actuality of the law library as a total information resource and network.*

*Cooperative **networking** agreements [of networking] among county **public** law libraries and other libraries enable **cost effective purchasing and sharing of resources** [participating libraries to purchase materials jointly, share the use of materials and alert each other to the contents of their collections]. Participating libraries extend both their research resources and their budgets by not duplicating the purchase of materials.*

B. Cataloging

1. The entire collection, including non-print **and electronic resources**, should be cataloged and classified in a system that promotes quick, easy retrieval of material by both [users] **customers** and library staff. [National standards for bibliographical records](#) should serve as guidelines for cataloging and organizing materials.

2. The law library should join a computer-based library network for cataloging and other library services. Complete holdings information should be included on the records in the cataloging utility to facilitate the electronic exchange and sharing of information.

3. Library catalogs and other files should be generated in [machine readable] **electronic** formats based upon and compatible with national standards. Whenever possible, existing paper catalogs and files should be converted to electronic ones.

[4. The law librarian should have the authority to oversee the planning, funding, and implementation of in-house library computer networks linking the library's online catalog, other library files, technical processing operations, community based legal information sources, and

other online information sources available from remote locations into a single electronic information resource.]

*Note: #4 moved to V. **Information Services** Subsection E*

Comment:

*Technology has changed the library catalog into a virtual bibliographic resource allowing the library's staff and [users] **customers** to determine the availability of sources of information, not only within the library but worldwide.*

Manual card catalogs and paper files can no longer be considered adequate systems for accessing [to access] legal information[,] given the sophisticated access potential of electronic systems.

*It is essential that the library use a cataloging utility and include complete and accurate holdings information so that its [users] **customers**, staff, and other libraries can gain access to its resources.*

The use of cooperative cataloging products and services should be utilized as a means of simplifying and speeding up the cataloging process while keeping its cost down.

C. Collection Management

1. The library's collections **including electronic and non-print materials shall** [should] be maintained in good physical condition. The library should establish a preservation and disaster [control] **preparedness** program **which addresses such environmental aspects as lighting, air pollution, proper storage, and temperature and humidity control.**

2. Serial publications received in unbound form, except those of temporary value, should be either bound or stored in a durable and accessible non-print format.

Comment:

*Maintenance of the library collection includes book cleaning, repair and binding. Cleaning is a matter of periodically dusting and cleaning the books, [and] shelves **and appropriate non-print and audiovisual materials and equipment.** [A systematic] **Periodic** screening of the collection will permit minor repairs to prevent major problems. [Prevention] **Preventive** maintenance includes attention to environmental aspects such as lighting, **adequate** air **circulation**, air pollution, temperature and humidity. Preservation has two aspects. The first is*

stopping damage before it starts. The second is the repair of damage already done to prevent further harm and to make the material available for future [users,] **customers.**

VII. **County Public Law Library** Collection

A. Publications of the county **public** law library's home state:

1. **A complete collection** of the published decisions of state courts.
2. [13.] [Court rules and significant state court publications, including annual reports, judicial statistics, policy statements, and bench books.] **Current annotated set of state/local court rules. If space permits, a collection of superseded state/local court rules.**
3. [2.] Current statutory compilation, annotated if available. If space permits, a complete set of older statutory compilations and superseded volumes of current compilations.
4. [3.] A complete set of session laws, including a current session law service, if available.
5. **The current state constitution as well as various historical versions of the constitution, and any published debates/proceedings of state constitutional conventions.**
- 6.[14.] **Local**, [C]county and municipal codes, charters, by-laws or ordinances **within** area served.
7. Current state administrative code, **if available.**
8. Published decisions of state administrative agencies.
9. **A complete set** of Attorney General opinions.
- 10.[5.] The state legal encyclopedia, if available.
11. Significant state-oriented legal treatises and practice materials.
12. Selected legal periodicals and newspapers.
- 13.[10.] State and local bar publications and ethics opinions.
- 14.[4.] The state digest.
- 15.[6.] [Shepards Citations] **A citation service, either Shepard's or Keycite.**
- 16.[15.] State-oriented reference tools including state government manual, legal/social services directories, city and/or county directory.
17. **Significant state court publications including, but not limited to, annual reports, judicial statistics, legal forms, policy statements, and bench books.**

B. Publications **covering** [concerned with] federal law:

1. Official or another reporter of the decisions of the **Supreme Court of the United States** [United States Supreme Court].
2. A **U.S.** Supreme Court digest.
3. [*United States Code* and [at least] one annotated version of **this Code.**] **At least one annotated version of the United States Code.**
4. *U.S. Statutes at Large* or other **commercial** federal session law service.
5. All published decisions of the U.S. District Courts, U.S. Courts of Appeal, and U.S. Bankruptcy Courts.
- 6. Federal court rules and local rules for courts within jurisdiction.**
- [6.]7. Federal case digest.
- [7.]8. [*Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations.*](#)
- [8.]9. [Shepards Citations] **Citation service** for reports and codes held by the library.
- [10.]9. [*U.S. Government Manual.*](#)

C. General United States publications:

1. Units of the National Reporter System, as needed.
2. American Digest System units, as needed.
3. Current statutory compilations for contiguous states, as needed.
4. *American Jurisprudence 2d and/or Corpus Juris Secundum.*
- 5. American Law Reports and American Law Reports Federal.**
6. [5.] General legal forms set.
7. [6.] *ABA/BNA Lawyers Manual of Professional Conduct.*
8. [7.] American Law Institute Restatements.
9. [8.] [Set of uniform and model laws.] ***Uniform Laws Annotated.***
- 10.[9.] A basic collection of legal texts, treatises, practice materials and looseleaf services of contemporary value on subjects of interest to the legal community **and the public.**
11. [10.] A broad selection of legal periodical titles.

12. [11.] A legal periodical index.
13. [12.] [Shepards Citations] **Citation service** for **case reporter and code** units held by library.
14. [13.] Legal reference tools including dictionaries, a thesaurus, judicial biographical **and** legal abbreviations **directories**, legal quotations **compilations** and [Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory](#).
15. [14.] General reference tools, including **an** unabridged dictionary, atlas, and statistical abstracts.
16. [15.] A collection of general legal and self-help titles on subjects of interest to the public and pro se litigant.

Comment:

*The materials **recommended** [listed] above **provide** [are recommended as] the basis for a strong **core** county **public** law library collection. The list may be used as a checklist for collection evaluation purposes, but should not be used to limit the scope or **development** [growth] of a collection that meets or exceeds the standards.*

*Alternative forms of publication or cooperative agreements with libraries within a **reasonable** geographic area will satisfy the collection requirements if staff is available to assist [users] **customers** in effectively accessing resources, including **remote** [off-site] resources.*

It should be noted that it is critically important that a proper mix of print and electronic resources be maintained in county public law libraries. While online technology will provide a fundamental baseline for research platforms of future law libraries, certain print collections will always be needed and should be retained as part of the libraries holdings as a balance against countless deficiencies inherent in today's electronic media.