[Assess service hours by the month instead of the week](#)

Submitted by Sarah Cole on Thu, 05/26/2016 - 11:21am.

Currently, the standards require a library to be open sixteen hours a week. I am a solo librarian in a small special library. If I'm on vacation, or at weeklong trainig, the library would have no service hours during that weeek (though we do accept walk-ins). Under normal conditions, however, the library is available forty hours a week. If the standard is adjusted to sixty-four hours a month (the equivalent of sixteen hours a week), solo librarians and their contribution to knowledge exchange in Illinois would be protected.

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[I may be wrong, but I](#)

Submitted by Cynthia Fuerst on Thu, 05/26/2016 - 12:09pm.

I may be wrong, but I interpret the number of hours listed in the Standards as what would be a 'typical' week. Regardless of a library's size and staffing levels, the number of hours a facility is open each week can fluctuate because of emergency closings (weather), building issues (construction), staff in-service training, Holidays, etc.

It is really important that all librarians have an opportunity for professional development, and even librarians deserve a vacation once in a while …. to catch up on our reading at the beach.. :-)

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[hours open](#)

Submitted by Dee Brennan on Thu, 05/26/2016 - 2:03pm.

Yes it is a typical week, or a scheduled week. Of course, there are always emergencies and special circumstances as you say Cindy!

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[Sarah, the 64 hours per week](#)

Submitted by Dee Brennan on Thu, 05/26/2016 - 11:35am.

Sarah, the 64 hours per week would apply only to public libraries in communities with population over 50,000.

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A Different Point of View

Submitted by Megan Millen on Mon, 04/11/2016 - 2:44pm.

Going to conferences always gives one time to reflect on things in a way you can't do at your desk. During PLA, I thought a lot about Membership Standards, probably because I spent most of my time with the chair of the committee. After watching the RAILS Update of March 24 and reading all the comments, I would like to take a different approach. There is still much work to be done on these standards, and I believe the committee is aware of that. Along with everyone else, I thank them for the somewhat thankless task of attempting this. My thoughts on the subject are as follows:

  We consider librarianship a profession and many of us obtain a professional degree. That got me thinking about another profession that most of us have had exposure to – the medical profession. I was wondering how these same comments about our professional standards would translate if instead it was doctors and hospitals that we were talking about rather than libraries and librarians. I'm fairly certain that if you were about to undergo a procedure at a hospital you would find cold comfort to learn that some doctors argued in favor of having the lowest standards possible rather than trying to strive to be the best possible hospital. Whether your doctor was a first year intern or a 40 year veteran, I'm sure you would want, even desperately hope that he or she had kept abreast of the latest innovations and technology with frequent certifications and not merely rested on laurels or what they learned in medical school. No, I'm not saying what we do is comparable to doctors. No one will die if we don't keep up with social media or learn about eBooks. However, if we are going to say we are a profession, let's agree that professions need standards. We can work on hammering out the details. We can find ways to fund the mandates therein. There is always a work-around.   However, just like doctors' patients, we owe it to our patrons for our libraries to strive for excellence. This means recognizing that we must go beyond the lowest common denomenator and set goals to grow and improve. Illinois is one of the only midwestern states that currently doesn't require certifications or rigorous standards for librarians. We need to examine why that is.   I know many will disagree and I'm not looking to start a fight. I just wanted to share what I was thinking about in Denver and open it up for discussion.

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Initial Reaction

Submitted by Michael Baumann on Wed, 04/06/2016 - 12:51pm.

Having reviewed these standards alongside *Serving our Public 3.0* and the Edge initiative I have several concerns. Many of these concerns will be assuaged, I hope, when more details of implementation and category counts are determined; specifically when/if issues #2, 4, 8, 10, and 11 are resolved. I have compiled a numbered list instead of summative comments.

Concerns:

1. Another assessment that ends up being an unfunded mandate in time of budget crisis.
2. No method of enforcement? Are you going to inspect every library? Are you going to interview library directors? Do you want the resume and transcript from every librarian in the state?
3. What is a related "associates degree?" What bachelor's degree is sufficient? These abstract requirements are meaningless as stated. I have almost ten years library experience, 5 as director, and have completed a new building project while holding 2 master's degrees in education and English. Am I qualified for these standards? I have no idea as they are currently written.
4. Some objectives are quantifiable while others are abstract and subjective. For example, "Do you have a generator" is a valid question, "is it eco-friendly" is much harder to quantify.
5. As worded these have the power to be used as a weapon against libraries and their funding by patrons and government.
6. Adds confusion and another layer of bureaucracy to the library world. Which standards are we supposed to meet? The edge? Serving our Public 3.0? Iowa's standards? How about the standards set by my library board in their wisdom and planning?
7. Staff training requirements are completely unrealistic for a small and rural library. In my case I would have to close the library which does a disservice to our taxpayers.
8. "Management staff" which is the director at many small libraries are often also working on the front lines making ten CE engagements difficult.
9. Reading through this made me think of phrases like "common core" and "no library left behind."
10. Reciprocal borrowing and delivery is one of the most used and best run services that we offer our patrons. These standards have the potential to leave many small, and rural libraries without this vital service if they were to be used against us.
11. We have a new building that is the only ADA compliant library facility in our county. To do this without a tax increase we have a mortgage which makes it impossible to spend as much on materials as we would like and is recommended. Therefore, we rely on donations of materials from patrons which are not calculated into our budget. How will special cases like this be handled and reported?
12. Again, we need to define "related field" in reference to education.

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basic time for new administrators to meet ed requirements

Submitted by Barb Coward on Wed, 03/30/2016 - 4:27pm.

Two years is not enough time to allow a new director of a truly small library to complete coursework.   Five years would better.

Small library directors spend most of their time at the circulation desk. They purchase, catalog, plan programs, present public programs, and in spare minutes, administer. There are insufficient funds to pay for "substitutes" while the director takes classes.

SPILMI is critical because of the concentrated doses of information presented to the floundering new director.

If a new hire needs to complete the LTA coursework, they can only spare a few hours away from the library to attend classes.

I took the LTA classes at Rockford, back in the days of PALS. The classes were a fun way to spend my day off. I enjoyed learning!

I never fulfilled the 99 volunteer hours at another library because I didn't have that kind of time to spend away from my library job.

As I am a visual learner, the classes complimented my learning style much more than donating my efforts to another library would have done.

Continuing toward the MLS was not a cost effective option for me.

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Unnecessary

Submitted by Brock Peoples on Wed, 03/30/2016 - 3:36pm.

Beth made a very good argument and I agree. Those who have worked on these draft standards obviously put a lot of effort and thought into them. However, I would go further than she to say that I find additional system membership standards on the whole to be unnecessary, somewhat unmeasurable in a quantitative sense, and burdensome to comply with and to report on. The standards, as submitted for our review and as Beth notes, are in many instances also a duplication of those found in Serving Our Public.

It is great to say that "these standards are not meant to be punitive or exclusionary; the goal is to assist libraries in serving their communities and to achieve greater levels of service according to their own needs and resources," but once the standards are passed, there is nothing to stop them from being used in such a manner by RAILS or by a State administration seeking excuses to further cut funding.

As vehemently as the library community in Illinois has rallied in the past to block bills that would mandate computer filtering standards on the grounds of local control concerns, I am disheartened that we as a community are considering placing these sorts of burdens on ourselves that would minimize local control and create unfunded mandates on a scale so much larger.

I agree wholeheartedly that system membership requirements should be based on absolute minimums so that the maximum number of libraries can participate in system membership for the benefit of those we serve. There are ALREADY standards in place that libraries must certify annually.

Why do we need to tie more requirements to system membership? I have always found the Serving Our Public book very helpful in analyzing my library's performance and for taking any deficiencies to the board. Additionally, the Per Capita grant has instituted a de facto annual review of where we stand with standards compliance, further incentivizing working towards goals of excellence of service.

Unaddressed is the question of funding. Holding libraries to additional standards is itself an unfunded mandate. How is RAILS to pay for the staff time to administer any sort of program to work with libraries to improve compliance?

If the goal is truly to provide a pathway to excellence for member libraries, I suggest divorcing the idea from system membership itself and setting up a recognition program for those libraries that able to meet standards as specified and a mentorship program comprised of system consultants (when there is money to pay them) and library administrators whose libraries already meet the established goals of the program to assist those that may need it.

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Draft Membership Standards

Submitted by Nancy Dolan on Mon, 03/28/2016 - 1:50pm.

I agree with Beth. The standards seem to be expressing wonderful ideals, but many of them are not measurable. If they are truly going to be used to determine membership eligibility, or even for recognition for outstanding service, there must be a method of measurement. Thank you for all the work that has been done on these, and all the work that you continue to do! Nancy Dolan, Quincy Public Library

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System Membership Requirements

Submitted by Beth Duttlinger on Thu, 03/24/2016 - 4:06pm.

First off, I want to say that I appreciate the time and dedication that the commitment members gave to the requirement revisions. I know that it took a lot of work and involvement of the many committee members to get to this draft released 16March2016. Thank you all for your efforts.

However, I have grave concerns about the way the requirements have been addressed. The vision, mission and values of RAILS seem to focus on being inclusive rather than exclusive. Therefore, I believe that the system needs to be very careful and ensure that the basic requirements for system membership should be the absolute minimum for a functioning library. There are 52 basic requirements listed in the draft and they encompass 6 areas. I believe many of these could be revised and condensed to number no more than 25 basic requirements.

I believe the other categories (proficient and exemplary) are an innovative way to address those libraries exceeding requirements, but it is difficult to define excellence standards across all library types. My concern here lies with differentiating the Serving Our Public Standards with the system requirements. Yes, it is important to establishing ideal standards but isn't that what SOP does? System requirements should be attainable by libraries and be the "basics" that would be expected at any place that calls itself a library. As rails_19341 wrote during the RAILS Update chat on 3/24/16: "The aspirational aspects of the standards, as opposed to the practical, quantifiable requirements, should be reconsidered."

It is essential that all requirements be measurable regardless of area. Without measureable objectives, it is difficult to assess if the requirement is being met. For example, Draft Standards-Customers #1 states "The library ensures the safety of customers and staff." How can that be measured? It would be more clearly worded by saying something like: "To ensure the safety of customers and staff, the library will have a Disaster Plan that has been updated in the last 5 years and provide annual staff training on emergency procedures." (very similar to Draft Standards-Facilities #3)

We still have a lot of work to be done on these draft standards. I believe that the committee members, RAILS staff, and members need to keep in mind that library system membership is perhaps the most important resource that enables some of our smaller and poorer libraries to be able to meet the needs of their residents. Not meeting membership standards could exclude libraries that need system membership the most. I propose that a smaller group of the committee reviews the suggestions and makes major revisions to this draft.