

Library Practitioner Core Competencies
Western Council of State Libraries/Continuum of Library Education
Adopted October 20, 2004

The Library Practitioner Core Competencies have been developed by the Western Council of State Libraries as part of the "Continuum of Library Education" project funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership and a lifetime of learning. (<http://www.westernco.org/index.html>) The Core Competencies were validated by a summer 2004 survey of librarians and library practitioners throughout the western states and adopted by Western Council on October 20, 2004.

In interpreting these core competencies, it is important to recognize that they relate to the role of library practitioner. A library practitioner, regardless of the job title held by any individual, is defined for the purposes of the Continuum project as "*An individual who is a library director or manager and has no library science degree and requires additional formal library training to improve job performance and/or to achieve certification.*"

The following points are also key to understanding the core competencies and their application:

- The core competencies describe those knowledge and skill sets that are required for competent performance as a library director/manager of a small, usually rural, public library in particular, a library that is independent and not part of a larger library system.
- Certification of an individual with these competencies means that an individual is prepared to effectively administer such a library. Certification as a library practitioner does not indicate a professional-level mastery of these competencies.
- Teaching of these competencies will emphasize practical applications rather than the conceptual and theoretical material typically found in a post-secondary, graduate-level educational program.
- Application of these competencies by a library practitioner in the workplace will be at the practitioner, not the professional, level and will vary depending on the size, complexity and unique context of the library and its community.

Resources Used to Build Library Practitioner Core Competencies include the following:

1. Oklahoma, Appendix Z, Institute in Public Librarianship. Oklahoma Certification Manual for Public Libraries
2. Emporia State University. Information Management. Library Certificate Overview
3. Public Library Director/Staff Competencies. State Library of Iowa/Iowa Library Service Areas. February, 2003.
4. Montana Certification Program Manual. Rev/ July 1999.
5. A Library Education Plan for Western North America. Western Council of State Libraries Education Task Force. Suggested Competencies for Library Practitioner Education. Bob Grover, Jan Elliott, Karl Madden. Draft, 2/15/02.
6. "Competencies Developed by Christine Peterson," Texas State Library and Archives Commission, April 27, 2000
7. Continuum of Library Education Action Team and Implementation Committee, May-June, 2004

**Library Practitioner Core Competencies
Major Categories**

(I) Foundations of Public Library Service

Philosophy/Ethics
Laws/Standards/Governance
Current and Emerging Trends

(II) Public Library Administration

Management
Personnel
Policies/Procedures
Finance/Funding
Buildings
Planning
Cooperation/Collaboration/Partnering
Advocacy/Communication/Public-Relations/Marketing

(III) Services to the Public

Service Basics
Circulation
Reader Advisory Service
Reference/Information Services
Adult/Special Audiences
Youth Services

(IV) Collections

Collection Management Basics
Selection
Acquisition
De-Acquisition/Weeding

(V) Technical Services

Cataloging/Classification
Processing/Mending

(VI) Technology

Computers and Library Equipment
Systems/Networking
Troubleshooting/Maintenance
Security/Privacy
Automated Library Systems
Internet
Instruction
Technology and Communication Discount Programs

Library Practitioner Core Competencies

I. Foundations of Public Library Service

A Library Practitioner is able to

A. Philosophy and Ethics

1. Explain the role of the public library in a democratic society
2. Articulate the relationship between a library and its community
3. Articulate the relevance of the Library Bill of Rights to library service
 - a) Recognize the customer's right to privacy
 - b) Explain the necessity of equal customer service to all
 - c) Commit to the right of people to access of information
 - d) Commit to services for culturally diverse populations
 - e) Commit to intellectual freedom
 - f) Explain the role of intellectual freedom in libraries
4. Articulate the values and ethics of public librarianship expressed in the ALA Statement of Professional Ethics
5. Explain the principles of information literacy and the role of those principles in the public library

B. Laws, Standards, Governance

1. Articulate the role and typical forms of governance of local, regional, state agencies
2. Articulate the role of state, regional, and national professional organizations
3. Identify laws of the home state that pertain to public libraries
4. Identify state and federal laws that are not specific to libraries but which may have an impact on libraries (e.g. state aid Rules, LSTA, open meetings, confidentiality, copyright, Americans with Disabilities Act, workplace safety and universal service)
5. Explain the substance and impact on the local library of state and national standards
6. Relate the First Amendment to library services
7. Explain the characteristics of and distinguish between administrative and advisory boards
8. Inform the library board about matters related to its responsibility and motivate board members to be articulate advocates for the library.
 - a) Use open communication
 - b) Demonstrate knowledge and practice of basic trustee training
 - c) Define the roles and responsibilities of librarian and board
 - d) Implement legal requirements and standard procedures for conducting board meetings

C. Current and Emerging Trends

1. Use available professional resources to keep current about library trends and issues
2. Understand, anticipate, and respond to societal trends that affect local library service
3. Articulate the impact of current and emerging technology on library services and operations

II. Public Library Administration

A Library Practitioner is able to

A. Management

1. Manage resources, facilities, people (including constituents, paid and/or volunteer staff, community leaders), and the political landscape
2. Use time management skills and stress management skills
3. Apply creative thinking and problem solving skills
4. Build positive staff-patron relationships
5. Apply concepts of user-oriented customer service

- a) Articulate the value of positive attitude
 - b) Identify who is the customer
 - c) Respond to customer needs and demands
 - d) Evaluate services to the customer
 6. Conduct a meeting
 7. Exercise effective leadership incorporating vision, management, empowerment, diplomacy, feedback, entrepreneurialism, personal style, personal energy, and multicultural awareness
 8. Use various forms of decision making including *decide and announce*, *gathering input*, *consensus*, and *alignment*
- B. Personnel
1. Comply with relevant state and federal laws pertaining to employment and personnel practices
 2. Recruit, select, train, supervise, and evaluate paid and volunteer staff
 3. Plan, implement, and encourage participation in staff development activities
 4. Develop, review, and maintain procedures manuals
 5. Delegate responsibilities clearly and effectively
 6. Practice interpersonal and communication skills
 - a) Participate as a team member
 - b) Teach others
 - c) Negotiate agreements
 - d) Work with diversity
 - e) Exhibit leadership
 - f) Defuse volatile situations with problem customers
 - g) Understand and apply basic techniques of mediation
 - h) Use participatory management skills
- C. Policies and Procedures
1. Articulate the value of written and approved policies
 2. Articulate the difference between policies and procedures
 3. Lead the process of local library policy development to meet community needs
 4. Write, implement and evaluate library-user-centered policies and procedures
 5. Review policy documents regularly and revise as needed
 6. Know the components of standard library policies
 7. Identify problem areas relating to the local library where policies are needed
- D. Finance and Funding
1. Explain the principal means of funding for public libraries generally and locally
 2. Implement accepted accounting practices and procedures, complying with state and city audit requirements and complying with GASB 34 reporting requirements as needed, and file necessary fiscal reports
 3. Develop, prepare, justify, administer and evaluate a budget based on long and short range goals
 4. Balance budget goals with estimates of potential income
 5. Identify potential additional sources of income
 6. Apply sound purchasing decisions and appropriate processes to obtain supplies and equipment for library operation
 7. Demonstrate an understanding of grantsmanship
 - a. Explain a typical grant process
 - b. Organize, administer, and evaluate a grant program
- E. Buildings
1. Relate the physical layout of the library space to library goals, activities, and functions
 2. Develop facilities plans for long term use of the building within the community and within the context of the community's long range plans and economic development
 3. Supervise the site and building using standard techniques and review periods to insure safety of staff and library users

4. Work with appropriate agencies responsible for maintenance, repairs, and capital improvements to ensure that the library building meets required codes and is accessible to the entire community and is maintained in good repair
 5. Articulate the particular impact of ADA requirements on library buildings and services
- F. Planning
1. Implement planning processes relative to long range planning, short term plans, crisis planning, emergency and disaster preparedness planning, technology planning and strategic planning
 - a) Develop short range and long range planning documents which include measurable goals and objectives
 - b) Use long range planning techniques, such as the Public Library Association process, to evaluate and improve community oriented services
 2. Write a mission statement that will support the planning process
 3. Conduct a community analysis using formal and/or informal techniques that can lead to the implementation of community oriented library service
 4. Involve stakeholders in the planning process
 5. Implement standard assessment processes, including gathering and reporting relevant and required data, to assess library performance and progress toward achieving goals and objectives
- G. Cooperation, Collaboration, Partnering
1. Participate in state library programs, cooperative information systems and networks, and other cooperative, collaborative, and partnering relationships
 2. Initiate and maintain community contacts
 3. Develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with other organizations, agencies, institutions
 4. Develop and maintain library support groups such as Friends and Foundations
- H. Advocacy, Communication, Public Relations and Marketing
1. Communicate and promote the library's values, services, accomplishments and needs to library users, to the community at large, and to funding agencies
 - a) Use appropriate avenues for written communication
 - b) Speak before community groups
 2. Explain the role of the library in the political process and demonstrate how to work effectively with elected and other public officials and with community leaders
 3. Make strategic use of trustees and library friends groups to impact public officials and decision-makers
 4. Leverage community support to impact public officials and decision-makers
 5. Create a welcoming, useful, responsive library environment to encourage use of and strengthen support of the library by the community
 6. Develop effective communication, interpersonal, and customer service skills to negotiate with staff, volunteers, and constituents
 7. Develop, implement and evaluate a marketing plan for the library and library services
 - a) Determine the library services that can effectively serve identified targeted markets
 - b) Develop a roster of local media outlets, key contacts, deadlines and editorial policies
 - c) Develop contacts in community including Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, government officials as well as media

III. Services to the Public

A Library Practitioner is able to

- A. Foundation for All Services
1. Explain day-to-day library policies such as circulation, intra-library and inter-library loan processes, reference response and referral, Internet
 2. Explain the application of library laws and ethics to providing services to the public

3. Develop and implement services for special populations
 4. Understand the basics of information seeking behavior
 5. Establish an environment that encourages active use of library services by the public
 6. Deal with confrontational and emergency situations
 7. Implement user-centered policies and procedures to guide all services for the public
- B. Circulation
1. Apply basic concepts of organizing library materials and controlling library inventory
 2. Operate the processes of circulation, interlibrary loan, reserves, registration of borrowers, shelving, in-building-use-only materials, and related inventory control functions in manual and automated environments
 3. Articulate a basic understanding of automated circulation systems
- C. Reader Advisory
1. Explain reader advisory and how it differs from the reference process
 2. Use interview skills to clarify the customer's interests
 3. Use basic readers advisory materials in both print and digital formats
 4. Use reading lists, suggestions from the media, schools and community groups, and personal knowledge of current culture
 5. Assist and advise customers in the selection of useful reading materials in a variety of genres and subject areas and formats and at an appropriate reading level
 6. Assist and advise customers in the selection of useful reading materials without making assumptions about the readers age, reading ability, race, sex, ethnicity, marital status, or economic status
- D. Reference and Information Services
1. Produce a complete reference/information transaction that satisfies the customer's purpose
 - a) Facilitate the customer's ready and willing contact of staff to request information
 - b) Conduct appropriate and effective reference interviews
 - c) Construct competent, complete and appropriate search strategies
 - d) Provide intermediate and final follow up with the customer
 - e) Know when and how to refer to other sources whenever necessary to satisfy the customer's purpose
 2. Fulfill requests from the wide range of potential information resources
 - a) Select the appropriate resource to match the customer's needs
 - b) Select from among the many sources of information including the general library collection, reference materials, community resources and the resources of other libraries and cultural heritage institutions available locally and beyond
 - c) Use common reference resources in print, digital, and other formats
 - d) Build a network of human resources (e.g. medical, legal, etc.)
 - e) Locate relevant and accurate information on the Internet
 - f) Suggest useful internet sites to customers
 3. Instruct customers in use of library materials and equipment
 - a) Teach how to research and evaluate information sources
 - b) Teach technical skills, information gathering and research skills
- E. Adult and Special Audiences
1. Articulate the purpose of serving all ethnic, cultural, social, racial, age and other diverse groups in the community
 2. Assess the needs of and develop programs and services for diverse groups
 3. Advocate for special populations during the development of automated systems, selection of products, and development of services
 4. Accommodate different learning styles, reading levels, and reading abilities
 5. Encourage the use of library services and programs designed for special populations
- F. Youth Services
1. Articulate the stages of childhood and adolescent development
 2. Develop children's and young adult materials collections that include age appropriate materials, periodicals, web sites and digital resources

3. Present and evaluate library programs for children and young adults
4. Establish an environment that will encourage children and young adults to use the library and to participate in library programs
5. Inform users about services and programs available in the community for youth, their families and caregivers
6. Develop cooperative programs with other community agencies to enhance services to youth
7. Advocate for the rights of youth to courteous library service and to equal access to materials and services

IV. Materials Collections

A Library Practitioner is able to

A. Collection Management Basics

1. Develop and implement policies and procedures for selection, acquisition, circulation, maintenance and weeding of library materials
2. Apply professional ethics and laws including copyright and intellectual freedom issues that directly relate to collections management

B. Selection

1. Develop and maintain library collections based on the needs of the community served
2. Evaluate materials in all formats using appropriate review sources and make appropriate selections
3. Budget systematically for collection development
4. Select resources in various formats for appropriate ages and developmental stages and interests
5. Follow trends in traditional and digital publishing

C. Acquisition

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the publishing industry and vendors from which libraries acquire materials, equipment and services
2. Establish procedures for ordering, receiving orders, resolving problems and accounting for expenditures
3. Establish procedures for handling serials, digital resources, different formats and other special materials

D. Collection Maintenance

1. Use standard assessment and weeding techniques to maintain the vitality of the collection
2. Implement a procedure to evaluate materials already in the collection for retention, replacement, rebinding, weeding and duplication
3. Evaluate options for repairing and/or replacing worn or damaged materials
4. Perform basic, simple repair of materials in various formats

V. Technical Services

A Library Practitioner is able to

A. Cataloging and Classification

1. Explain the purpose and importance of the catalog, the relationship between the catalog and the collection, and the relationship between the catalog record and the library customer's access to the collection
2. Explain the standard manual and automated methods used in the organization of collections
3. Identify and use sources of cataloging information for copy cataloging
4. Use current, appropriate cataloging and classification schemes
 - a) Accurately describe an item

- b) Select appropriate subject headings and call numbers for accurate identification and placement within the collection
 - c) Describe parts of the cataloging record, types of entries, descriptive information and record format
 - d) Demonstrate understanding of subject headings, their purposes, terminology, their sources and forms
- B. Processing
- 1. Use the appropriate type of physical processing to facilitate the customer's access to materials
 - 2. Apply appropriate methods and techniques for physical preparation of materials in various formats
 - 3. Apply appropriate methods and techniques for storage and preservation of materials

VI. Technology

A Library Practitioner is able to

- A. Computers and Library Equipment
- 1. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of computer hardware and common software
 - 2. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of business machines used in libraries (e.g., fax, photocopier)
- B. Systems/Networking
- 1. Describe the parts of a computer network
 - 2. Explain the difference between a LAN and a WAN
 - 3. Use equipment such as cabling, routers, network cards, and wireless technology
- C. Troubleshooting/Maintenance
- 1. Isolate and identify problems with hardware, software, and networks
 - 2. Isolate and identify problems with basic library business equipment
 - 3. Communicate problems effectively to support/repair person
 - 4. Locate and use manuals, FAQs, and telephone and online help services to identify and solve problems
- D. Security/Privacy
- 1. Use security tools and backup strategies
 - 2. Articulate privacy and intellectual property issues that relate to library technology, including filtering software
- E. Library Systems Automation
- 1. Articulate an overview of the various automated library systems available
 - 2. Operate the various modules of the library's automated system (OPAC, circulation, acquisition, cataloging, etc.)
 - 3. Design and use reports from the automated system for management of library operations
 - 4. Work with vendors to maintain current automated system and prepare to upgrade or replace when necessary
- F. Internet
- 1. Articulate a basic understanding of the development and structure of the Internet
 - 2. Articulate a basic understanding of the World Wide Web and web page structure
 - 3. Use digital communication tools such as email, electronic discussion lists, and web conferencing
 - 4. Participate in digital distance learning opportunities
 - 5. Create, evaluate and implement a computer and internet usage policy for the library
- G. Instruction
- 1. Teach basic computer and Internet use to customers
 - 2. Teach the use of library equipment to customers
- H. Technology and Communication Discount Programs
- 1. Explain e-rate and other technology discount programs