

# Mississippi Public Library System Accreditation Program Manual



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Mississippi Library Commission  
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## INTRODUCTION

Mississippi's Public Library System Accreditation Program is designed to assist public library systems in insuring all Mississippians have access to quality library services. Using levels of service as benchmarks, administrative boards of trustees and library directors can use these measures to direct local long-range planning and service delivery efforts. Specific measures are recommended in the areas of governance, administration and funding; staffing; collections; services; patrons and community; and access. By meeting these measures, a public library system can establish a baseline from which to build and expand library services.

The Public Library System Accreditation Program serves as guide to expanding library services to all Mississippians now and in the future. These measures are a starting point that can grow and continue to have an impact on communities throughout our state for years to come.

The guiding principles of the Mississippi Public Library System Accreditation Program include:

- Accredit public library systems, not individual public libraries.
- Establish tiered service measures with Level I least difficult to achieve to Level III most difficult.
- Protect funding levels for Level I(i.e. Base-level funding [Level I] is not eroded in order to implement Levels II and III).
- Require the library system to submit a "self-report" each year on achievement of service measures.
- Review & revise service measures every three years.
- Seek increased funding for Level I to ensure continuity of program and incentive funding for public library systems attaining Level II or Level III.

Due to a continual reduction in state funding available for Accreditation, increased incentive funding for systems attaining Level II or Level III has not been possible. However, the levels still provide benchmark achievement levels to which library systems should aspire.

The Mississippi Public Library System Accreditation Program establishes public service incentives based on specific local service levels of public library systems in eight (8) categories:

- Governance
- Administration
- Funding
- Staffing
- Collections
- Services
- Patrons and Community
- Access

To develop the program, in 2006 the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) convened an Accreditation Advisory Committee of qualified public library professionals and trustees. Eight trustees, eight professional public libraries, and five at-large members attended a retreat and provided significant input in creating the measures for the Mississippi Public Library System Accreditation Program. The feedback

of the public library community at large was also invaluable. The measures were reviewed, edited, and modified in 2016.

The eighty-eight (88) service measures in the program are cumulative - meaning to be accredited at Level I, all of the measures in Level I must be accomplished by a public library system. To be accredited at Level II, all of the measures of Level I and Level II must be met. Level III accreditation requires all of the measures in Level I, Level II, and Level III be achieved.

Where appropriate, measures are progressive from Level I to Level II to Level III. An example in the Access category:

**X1. Service hours of each library location are fixed, posted, and based on patron needs.**

**XX1. One or more library locations in each county within the library system is open until at least 6:00 p.m. or later at least one day a week, or offers weekend hours.**

**XXX1. In each county, the library system provides a minimum of forty (40) unduplicated hours of public service per week, including morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend hours to meet community preferences.**

To be accredited and thereby remain eligible to participate in the Personnel Incentive Grants Program, a public library system must submit a report with supporting documentation to the Mississippi Library Commission by May 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. A sample of the required report is found in the Appendices of this manual. In addition to determining eligibility and funding level status for the Personnel Incentive Grant Program, the report can also assist a public library system in benchmarking local library services.

## **MANUAL**

This manual is intended to serve as a resource for public library system directors and administrative trustees in their efforts to achieve each accreditation level and progress to the next level. Since this is intended as a working document for both director and trustee, the manual:

- is divided according to the eight (8) service categories of the accreditation program, i.e. Governance, Administration, and Funding; Staffing; etc.
- references the legal code citation when applicable, i.e. *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, §39-3-17.
- includes links to helpful information when possible.

It is hoped that this manual will be helpful. Assistance is available from the Mississippi Library Commission Library Development staff (1-800-647-7542). In addition, the Library Commission offers LSTA Professional Assistance Consulting grants to public library systems to obtain the services of a professional consultant to address specialized needs in such area as programming, technology, public relations, or other related issues.

## GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION, AND FUNDING

The ultimate responsibility and liability for the governance of a public library system in Mississippi resides with the [administrative library board of trustees](#). Trustees must have a high degree of commitment measured both by their willingness to donate time and by their effort to work for the advancement of the library system. Trustees are the connection between the public library and its community. Trustees function as advocates and leaders for quality library services in their communities. They develop channels of communication and influence with community leaders and are willing to work with the public library system director for the fulfillment of the mission and goals of the library system.

The public library system is administered by a library director. The public library system director is hired by and is answerable to the administrative board of trustees. The director is responsible for all other personnel matters; establishing procedures to implement policies approved by the board; managing the daily affairs of the library system subject to oversight by the board; providing leadership and reporting to the board on important matters such as finances, budgets, personnel problems, grants, major expenditures; and preparing the annual report and other plans and documents.

### GOVERNANCE – Level I

- G1. The library system is established and maintained [according to the provisions of state law](#).**
- G2. One legally appointed and constituted [administrative board of trustees](#) governs the operation of the library system. The library system board has complete authority, within legal limits, over the library system's budget and over all gifts, bequests, and donations.**
- G3. The library system is operated according to all local, state, and federal statutory requirements.**
- G4. The library system serves at least one (1) county and provides service on a county-wide basis. (Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated §39-3-1)**

### GOVERNANCE – Level II

- GG1. The library system administrative board adopts a process for developing a strategic plan.**

A major responsibility of the administrative library board is to envision and develop a direction for the library system. Strategic planning determines the direction in which a library system is going over the next five years, and how it's going to get there. The focus of a strategic plan is on the entire system and is long-range and comprehensive in nature. The strategic planning document is an understanding between the library system administration and staff, the administrative board of trustees and the public. The four basic elements comprising a strategic plan are:

1. vision: an image of what the future will be or could be
2. mission statement: broad enough to cover most contingencies

3. goals: supported by specific objectives and tasks
4. order: completion dates with individual responsibilities

**GG2. The library system director is a member of the Mississippi Library Association.**

As part of professional growth and connectivity, membership in the [state library association](#) is critical for the director. Both should be actively involved in the association, participating in annual conferences and committees. Participation in the state library association offers the director networking and continuing education opportunities.

**GOVERNANCE – Level III**

**GGG1. The library system administrative board adopts a strategic plan to guide the library system, which is revised and updated at least every five (5) years, and which is aligned with the library system’s community analysis, needs assessment plan, technology plan, collection development and management plan, staff development plan, and marketing plan.**

**GGG2. The library system administrative board members are individual members of the Mississippi Library Association.**

**ADMINISTRATION – Level I**

**A1. The library system administrative board properly advertises, and meets at least once in each quarter, with the library system director in attendance, at a time and place convenient for the board and the community and in accordance with the state’s [open meetings law](#).**

**A2. Upon joining the library system administrative board, new board members are provided access to the [Mississippi Trustees Handbook](#) by the library system director.**

**A3. The library system board has written bylaws that outline purpose and operational procedures. These bylaws are reviewed at least every five (5) years.**

**A4. The library system board adopts written policies for operations, collection development and management, [personnel](#), and Internet use. Policies are consistent with principles of intellectual freedom and the right of privacy as found in such documents as the U.S. Constitution and the Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated. The board reviews all policies at least every three years. All policies are available to staff and to the public.**

**A5. The library system administrative board employs the library system director and delegates active management of the library system, including personnel administration, to [the library system director](#).**

## ADMINISTRATION – Level II

**AA1. The library system director provides an orientation for each new board member based on the [Mississippi Trustees Handbook](#).**

**AA2. The library system has written procedures that implement board-approved policies.**

While policies the instruments through which the administrative library board governs the public library system, procedures are the written documents through which the library system director administers and implements board policy. Procedures clarify the duties and responsibilities of the administrative library board, the library system director and the staff for the achievement of the mission, goals and objectives of the library system.

**AA3. The library system administrative board conducts an annual performance review of the director.**

A personnel performance appraisal is a formal annual interview between an employee and supervisor in which the work performance of the employee is examined and discussed. The personnel decisions of a public library system must be defensible. Without an effective appraisal system, it is difficult to ensure that personnel judgments are fair, nondiscriminatory, and legally defensible. There are a variety of appraisal systems. Some of the more common systems are discussed in the Resource Guide for Directors of Mississippi Public Library Systems.

## ADMINISTRATION – Level III

**AAA1. The library system administrative board members participate in board training every year.**

Board training could include trustee training provided by Library Commission consultants; participation in workshops; attendance at state and national conferences; or instruction from auditor, board attorney, bookkeeper, director, or others.

**AAA2. Library system administrative board evaluates its performance annually.**

Just as evaluating the performance of the library system director is important, each trustee and the board as a whole should take time for self-reflection to evaluate board performance. How well does the board function as a group? How well do individual trustees, fulfill their responsibilities?

**AAA3. The library system administrative board retains a board attorney.**

Having an attorney available to the board if a situation should arise can be done by general agreement between the board and an attorney and without payment unless the attorney's advice or services are required on a specific issue. While it is not essential for an attorney to regularly attend administrative board meetings, some library systems have found such to be very helpful, especially regarding personnel issues. With the attorney attending board meetings, the attorney is kept apprised of library law and local library issues.

## FUNDING – Level I

**F1. The library system is supported in whole or in part by [public funds](#).**

**F2. The director prepares a proposed annual budget reflecting the library system’s priorities.**

**F3. Library system administrative board reviews, modifies as necessary, and approves the proposed annual budget developed by library director and reflecting board-approved priorities and goals before submission to local funding entities.**

Board approval of the proposed annual budget is recorded in the board minutes.

**F4. The library system administrative board submits an annual proposed budget to local funding authorities. The director and administrative board are available to make budget presentations to local funding entities.**

**F5. The library system administrative board reviews and adopts a final annual budget reflecting library goals and priorities and funding commitments.**

A budget request is a planning document. The information requested and presented will not be the actual operational budget for the library system. The actual budget will depend on the appropriation allocated by the governing bodies. Actual practice is that the board approves and usually adopts the final form of a budget developed by the library system director. The Mississippi Code 1972, Annotated, [§39-3-17 \(4\)](#) says that the board, by spreading upon board minutes, authorizes the library system director to expend such funds for lawful purposes only and in accordance with the annual adopted budget.

**F6. The library system director provides written financial and statistical reports for review at library system administrative board meetings and regularly communicates on matters that affect policy.**

**F7. The library system follows statutory and Library Commission requirements as to fiscal year, audits, and budgeting, and makes annual and other reports to funding authorities and the Mississippi Library Commission.**

**F8. Local funding for the library system is maintained at a level equal to or greater than the second preceding year, or the Board requests and is granted a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) waiver.**

Maintenance of effort, an eligibility requirement for a public library system’s receipt of Personnel Incentive Grant Program funds, is determined by the Library Commission based on the annual financial audit submitted by the library system to the agency. If the total operating income for the library system from public funds (city and/or county) falls below more than 2% that received in the second preceding year, a MOE waiver should be sought.

## FUNDING – Level II

**FF1. The director and administrative board seek alternative sources of funding.**

Examples: Grants, endowments, library foundation, bequests, gifts, donations, etc.

### FUNDING – Level III

**FFF1. The library system administrative board actively pursues establishment or increase of millage and/or increased funding to support the library system’s strategic plan.**

**FFF2. The library system administrative board and director develop advocates and partnerships.**

Public library services are unique in municipal and county government and are not always understood by local governing officials. It is essential that local and state officials understand the value of public library services. [Library advocates](#) fulfill this role. Advocates include librarians, trustees, Friends of the Library, library customers, community and institutional leaders, and most importantly, people of all ages and all walks of life who know the public library to be an essential part of their community.

## STAFFING

A library system needs facilities, library materials, and funding, but how well the library system succeeds depends upon the staff of the library system. The success of the library system depends upon the effective management of the system's personnel. Balancing legal, humanistic, ethical, fiscal, organizational, and political personnel issues is the most complex activity in library management. Staffing begins with the library director. Other staff is added as needed and as funding allows to support the programs and services of the library system. All staff members must:

- possess a strong commitment to quality customer service
- understand the service goals and objectives of the library system
- be competent and well-trained

While an accredited Master's Degree in Library Science, is recognized and desired, each library employee is valued for his or her specific talents and education. To this end, the Mississippi Library Commission is committed to the continued development of high quality library staff through a broad-based, annual continuing education program.

### STAFFING – Level I

**S1a. A library system must have a permanent, paid, full-time director who has, or will have within three (3) years of hire, a master's degree in Library Science from a school accredited by the American Library Association.**

**S1b. A rural library system, whose service area population is 15,000 or less, may employ a permanent, paid, full-time director who has a bachelor's degree, and who agrees to complete three specific master's level classes (at least one per year for three years) from a school accredited by the American Library Association; attend specific continuing education workshops, annually, as offered by MLC; and submit Annual Reports, completed by the Chair of the Administrative Board of Trustees.**

Library systems may choose between option a or b for question S1. As of 2017, only ten library systems have a service area population of under 15,000 and are eligible for this option.

**S2. The library system employs additional staff to provide services and oversee programs.**

**S3. Every new staff member, with the exception of custodial, maintenance, and student workers, has a minimum education of a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED).**

**S4. Every staff member is provided with a written job description and responsibilities.**

A job description is a written narrative of the major duties and responsibilities of a job. Because a job description states the essential job functions of a position and serves as the basic document for job performance appraisals, it is documentation for compliance with employment laws.

**S5. Every staff member is provided with access to a copy of the library system's policies and procedures.**

**S6. Every staff member is provided with access to a personnel handbook.**

It is important that the library system have a personnel handbook that provides the system's employees with an accessible reference on issues concerning personnel. The handbook should be a clearly worded, easy to understand written explanation of personnel policies and procedures. For management, the handbook serves as a communication tool that reinforces the intent to provide guidance and consistency in the day-to-day administration of personnel. Access to the personnel handbook can be by way of:

- library system's webpage
- copies in the staff lounge
- copies with the personnel officer
- copy provided to each staff member upon hire

## **STAFFING – Level II**

**SS1. Every staff member receives formal orientation and training to implement the library system's policies and procedures.**

Each new employee is given a planned orientation in which the immediate supervisor introduces the new employee to the staff of the system and conducts the formal orientation. The orientation introduces the employee to the mission, philosophy, goals and services of the library in addition to the individual's specific job responsibilities and a tour of the physical workplace.

**SS2. The library system trains staff on and promotes the usage of [MAGNOLIA](#).**

**SS3. The library system provides staff with the opportunity for training related to job duties.**

**SS4. In addition to the director, one or more staff members hold membership in at least one professional association.**

**SS5. The library system reviews and updates job descriptions at least every three (3) years.**

### STAFFING – Level III

**SSS1. The library system employs paid staff at a minimum of .5 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) per 2,000 population served.**

*Formula: Population served ÷ 2000 × .5 = Required FTEs*

Example: The total service population of a public library system is 10,000. The library system is required to have 2.5 FTEs to meet this service measure.  $\{(10,000 \div 2000) \times .5 = 2.5 \text{ FTEs}\}$

**SSS2. Any new employee hired to manage a library location (branch) serving a municipal population (defined as the population of the actual incorporated municipality) of 10,000 or greater must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.**

After July 1, 2007, any new employee hired to manage a library location (branch) serving a municipal population of 10,000 or greater must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. (Municipal population is defined as the population of the actual incorporated municipality).

**SSS3. Every staff member receives a written annual job performance review.**

**SSS4. Every library system has a staff development plan aligned with its strategic plan.**

Staff development and training are essential to enable staff to accomplish the library system's mission and goals. Effective use of a library system's funds demands that a staff development plan that updates and improves the skills of individual staff be in place. A percentage of the library system's annual budget should be allocated to staff development and training.

**SSS5. The library system has an ongoing program of cross training.**

Cross training of staff to learn library procedures of multiple library functions ensures continuity of service, provides staff development opportunities, and promotes an understanding of coworkers' job responsibilities.

## COLLECTIONS

Collection management is a process of information gathering, communication, coordination, policy formation, evaluation, and planning. These processes influence decisions about acquisition, retention, and access to information sources in support of the needs of a given community. The public library system collects materials based on system's mission and goals and the communities it serves. Collection development includes the planning, selecting and building of collections in all formats to meet community needs. The library system collection development policy, based on community needs, includes materials selection, requests for reconsideration of materials, collection specialties and purchase priorities, evaluation, and weeding.

### COLLECTIONS – Level I

**C1. The library system has a written collection development and management policy.**

A collection development and management policy documents how collection was built, describes future expansion of the collection. It focuses on communities' interests and serves as a consistent guide for selection. The policy defines the scope and limitations of the collections. It should also incorporate the tenants of intellectual freedom and equal access.

**C2. The library system allocates funds for purchasing materials in all appropriate formats based on its collection development and management policy, community needs, and current usage. (Mississippi Code 1972, Annotated §39-3-17 (i))**

### COLLECTIONS – Level II

**CC1. The library system evaluates the collection at least every three (3) years to determine its usefulness according to the library's collection development and management policy.**

**CC2. The library system continually uses collection analysis and statistical data to identify strengths and weaknesses and allocates resources accordingly.**

Data for a collection analysis can be run with a library's integrated library system (ILS or circulation system) to see which items are being checked out and how often. Analyzing a collection's subject, age, and usage allows a library to adjust its purchasing decisions to better serve the community.

### COLLECTIONS – Level III

**CCC1. The library system updates its collection development and management policy at least every five (5) years based on its current strategic plan.**

**CCC2. The library system uses community and collection analysis data to make measurable improvements based on its strategic plan.**

Examples of measurable improvements are major changes in the library system's collection development and management policy, a three to five year budget increase, a cooperative collection development purchasing plan with other library systems, or a focused fund raising effort.

**CCC3. The library system completes a physical collections inventory at least every five (5) years.**

Comparing the library system's holdings records with the actual items on the shelf to determine if the item is still part of the collection and still meets selection criteria has several purposes: to ensure that the catalog accurately reflects the collection, to maintain an accurate accounting of the library system's physical assets, and to ensure that the quality and quantity of the collection reflects a community's diverse needs.

**CCC4. The library system provides electronic collections for patrons, individually or through consortia agreements, to supplement MAGNOLIA or other statewide databases.**

## SERVICES

Since all library systems do not serve the same populations or offer the same services, awareness and inclusion of local needs and conditions are essential. The most basic, fundamental policy for a library system is the service policy. Services must be immune to ideological, political, or religious censorship, or commercial pressures.

State law regarding “free use of public libraries” must guide the development of a service policy. Mississippi Code, 1972 Annotated [§39-3-21](#) states:

Every public library or public library system established or maintained under this article shall be free for the use of the residents of the territory included within the library service area, subject to such reasonable rules and regulations as the administrative board of trustees finds necessary. Reasonable reimbursements may be collected for special library services, provided these are determined in advance and in writing by the administrative board of trustees.

### SERVICES – Level I

**P1. The library system provides materials in accordance with the library system’s policies and procedures.**

**P2. Using all available resources, library locations provide reference and readers’ advisory services. Questions that cannot be answered locally are forwarded to the next appropriate level until resolved.**

While reference service is assisting individuals to locate specific needed information, readers’ advisory is the process of finding the kinds of reading material that a particular reader might enjoy reading.

**P3. Library locations offer public access Internet computers located in public areas and designated for public use.**

**P4. The library system provides year-round [programming](#) for the community, including a [summer library program](#) for children.**

### SERVICES – Level II

**PP1. The library system analyzes usage, including reference transactions, public internet sessions, and participation data as part of strategic planning.**

**PP2. The library system provides programming in response to community needs.**

The first step in planning effective programming for library customers is to conduct a needs assessment of the community served. Such assessments should identify the groups to be served. One method of assessing community needs is an annual survey asking the community what types of programs would be of interest. Because one of the goals of library programming is to attract new users, it is imperative that the entire community be surveyed not just current users. Census data on the community such as age, income, occupation, sex, religion, nationality, and race may also be used to create a community profile.

**PP3. The library system offers outreach and extension services based on community analysis.**

### **SERVICES – Level III**

**PPP1. The library system employs staff dedicated to outreach and extension services.**

Extension services, when applied to libraries, means providing library services in different venues. Extension services can be divided into community services and outreach services. The former seeks to identify the library as a contributing member of the community, while the latter promotes new and existing library services available outside the physical structure of the library.

**PPP2. Based on its strategic plan, the library system uses results of data analysis to improve services and programs.**

**PPP3. The library system provides enhanced programming for its patrons and includes programming for [special populations](#).**

Enhanced programming entails specialized programming to meet a niche within the community. While such a program is open to all, the program is designed for a specific audience, i.e. “Protecting Your Idea: A workshop for Inventors.” Special populations are those that are frequently underserved, such as non-readers, immigrants, senior citizens, people with disabilities, or non-native English speakers.

## PATRONS AND COMMUNITY

It is especially important for the library system board of trustees and director to understand the communities that the library system represents. A knowledge of the diversity of library users as well as those segments of the community who do not use the library is critical. An analysis can inform the library system how best to support and involve the communities and is essential for the development of marketing and outreach programs.

### PATRONS AND COMMUNITY – Level I

**M1. The library system maintains a registration file of patrons.**

**M2. The library system determines the number of people coming into library locations each year and then compares the number of patrons with the service area population.**

The number of people coming into the library system includes all persons entering the facilities regardless of usage. Counts can be based on total of daily door counts at all branches or on the extrapolated (× 52 weeks) total from a designated week where all branches count the number of people entering each facility. Service area population is the number of people residing within the geographical boundaries of the public library system.

### PATRONS AND COMMUNITY – Level II

**MM1. The library system keeps patron registrations current. Registration records are updated at least every three (3) years to ensure patron information is current and to provide an accurate count of active library users.**

**MM2. The library system conducts a community analysis at least every five (5) years as part of an ongoing planning process.**

Community analysis is an ongoing process to understand the population residing within the geographic boundaries of the library system, including socio-economic characteristics, library and information needs, and patterns of library use. The information acquired through the process is used to improve library services and programs. Methods that can be used in a community analysis, such as:

- analyzing census data for community demographics
- conducting surveys
- holding community meetings
- using focus groups

Possible information to be gathered about communities includes, but is not limited to, age, sex, ethnicity, educational characteristics, birth and death, employment rates, mix of business, agricultural, industrial, and service sectors, economic cycles, institutions, clubs, societies, religious groups, traditions, and history, and agencies, other libraries, schools, newspapers, magazines, bookstores, radio and

television stations.

Information about the library system should include, but not be limited to, the building (age, condition, traffic patterns, signage, appearance, location, accessibility, parking, space needs), the collection (depth of holdings, available formats, use patterns, condition, customer requests), staff (educational levels, salary and benefit comparisons, length of service, job satisfaction, workload, opportunities for training or continuing education), management (efficiency and effectiveness of departments, administrative procedures, communication, and networking), and budget allocation (adequacy, comparison with other library systems, analysis of allocating by service or budget category).

**MM3. The library system provides a variety of opportunities for feedback from the public.**

While all of the data libraries collect is useful information, measuring the effectiveness of library services and programs must also be obtained from the library system's users. The process of gathering information directly from individuals such as library users, staff, and residents is done through customer surveys.

**MM4. The library system promotes its collections and services by using three or more approaches to publicity, including use of social media.**

Library promotion is a coordinated effort to communicate a positive image of the library and advertise the availability of the library's materials, services, and programs. Positive public relations and promotional activities can be accomplished in a variety of ways including, but not limited to:

- annual reports attractively packaged and made available to the public
- attractive and frequently changed exhibits, displays, and bulletin boards
- newspaper articles, columns, or advertisements
- presentations to community groups and organizations
- posters, flyers, brochures, and bookmarks about library programs & services
- staff and board involvement in community organizations and activities
- TV and/or radio exposure
- visually appealing printed materials, graphics, and signage inside & outside the library
- website

**PATRONS AND COMMUNITY – Level III**

**MMM1. The library system uses community analysis data, data from library operations, and feedback from members of the public to improve services and programs.**

**MMM2. The library system has a marketing plan based on its strategic plan.**

**MMM3. The library system identifies community support groups and establishes partnerships.**

To enhance effectiveness, library programs and services must be leveraged through partnership with other organizations. A true partnership must be mutually beneficial between the partners for it to be successful. Potential community partners can be identified in the community analysis process.

## **ACCESS**

Equitable access to all is an integral part of the mission of the public library. This access includes meeting the diverse recreational and informational needs of the residents beyond the confines of a library's own facilities and collections. Equitable access requires the movement of barriers to library services, especially for those patrons with special needs.

Library buildings housing the library system's services have a direct effect on access. Public library buildings must be inviting, flexible, and accessible to all. Building designs should focus on user efficiencies to encourage extensive public use and on staff efficiencies to encourage and support productivity.

Access refers not only to the physical library and to the number of hours open, but also to the remote access outside the physical facility. Access encompasses bibliographic access to the library's collections, to collections, databases, and the resources of other library systems.

### **ACCESS – Level I**

- X1. Service hours of each library location are fixed, posted, and based on patron needs.**
- X2. The library system branches and headquarters have telephones with the numbers publicly available.**
- X3. A book return is provided and available at all hours in at least one library location in each county.**
- X4. The library system has a catalog of holdings that is easily accessible to patrons and staff.**
- X5. The library system provides a website that includes contact information, hours, and service location(s) information.**

### **ACCESS – Level II**

- XX1. One or more library locations in each county within the library system is open until at least 6:00 p.m. or later at least one day a week, or offers weekend hours.**
- XX2. Each library location is well-lighted and utilizes appropriate signage.**

**XX3. Patrons can access library services remotely—ask a question, place a hold, renew an item, and find the location and hours of library facilities and programs.**

**XX4. The library system’s website meets the standards of ADA compliance and is updated regularly.**

**XX5. The library system conducts an annual needs assessment of facilities, equipment, and access.**

The written assessment of all service outlets (branches) considers compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), current space requirements, community study findings, and changes in access points, services, space requirements for new and emerging services and programs, accessibility, and safety and security issues.

**XX6. The library system makes information available via [the state VUC/ILL system](#).**

### **ACCESS – Level III**

**XXX1. In each county, the library system provides a minimum of forty (40) unduplicated hours of public service per week, including morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend hours to meet community preferences.**

Unduplicated hours of public services mean that, within a county, an individual must have access to an open public library at least 40 hours per week. To meet this measure, these hours may be distributed across a number of branches. However, the hours cannot overlap unless the total number of hours of access exceeds 40 hours per week. The forty hour period must also include morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours.

**XXX2. Directional signs are placed at key locations in each community to guide people to the public library.**

**XXX3. The library system uses needs assessment data, as part of the strategic plan, to provide facilities, equipment, and access appropriate to support library services and programs.**

A needs assessment determines how well the library system is currently meeting the needs of the system’s communities and what other types of resources and services it can provide in the future. The same methods used for a community analysis can be used for a needs assessment whether conducted by the library system staff or by an outside consultant. While not easy, the results of a needs assessment can be used to determine such issues as:

- How the user community is changing (e.g., socioeconomic status, demographics, etc.)
- The success of current library services and how such services might be improved to reflect community needs
- Whether staffing patterns and library hours are adequate
- If the space and physical building facilities are adequate for providing library services

**XXX4. The library system maintains a responsive, mobile-friendly website, which is updated regularly.**