Appendix

What are Standards?

The research speaks to three kinds of standards: minimum, target, and benchmark.

Minimum standards should be met by every library. In Colorado, we have the [Definition of a Public Library](), which establishes minimum standards.

Target standards "often involve moving targets that are pegged to some percentile measures for a given library population… By the very definition of percentiles, a certain proportion of libraries will always be substandard…" (Hennen, Thomas. *American Libraries*. March 2000) Some Colorado libraries may not meet every standard, but that does not necessarily mean that libraries are substandard, but rather a product of their particular community needs.

Benchmarking standards are intended to indicate excellence and best practices that can be emulated by others." (Hennen, Thomas. *American Libraries*. March 2000) In the 2011 Standards document the Committee and the majority of those who participated in the focus groups wanted to configure the standards as benchmarks rather than minimum or target standards. The new standards point to best practices and striving towards excellence.

Background Information about the Colorado Public Library Standards (CPLS)

All Colorado residents should have legally-established, readily accessible, public library service capable of connecting each individual with the comprehensive information resources of the region, state, and nation.

The Colorado Public Library Standards are part of a number of efforts to support Colorado's public libraries. The Standards serve as models for services, resources, and information that should be available at libraries across the state; however, they are not meant to stand by themselves. Rather, they are meant to complement a local planning effort crafted to identify service goals that will allow the library to respond to the unique needs of its community.

After reviewing the introductions, checklists, tables, and resources, library decision-makers may generate a number of products. One of them might be a list of small administrative to-dos (key policies, nudges of existing practices, and so on.) A few major initiatives may rise to the top of the planning priority list (for instance, the creation of a comprehensive risk management strategy that identifies a host of business assets and procedures for assuring their survival.) Some items in the checklist may be seen by decision-makers as simply inapplicable or unimportant (although the standards committee believed all of them to be broadly applicable and significant). Decision-makers may also find gaps in the standards (which should be communicated to the Colorado State Library.)

The library, staff, and other interested community members should view this document as the beginning of a process and discussion. This document cannot replace the local knowledge or vision of local leaders. Moving toward the highest levels of library standards will certainly improve almost any library; but that might not constitute the most powerful or relevant library initiative in a particular community. Nor will working through this document's checklists necessarily ensure that libraries will be ready for the next big thing.

The standards point Colorado libraries toward excellence; they do not seek to limit anyone's ability to dream.

The Revision Process

The process to revise the CPLS started in August 2009 when focus groups were held in 5 locations in Colorado (Pueblo, Denver, Telluride, Grand Junction, and Fort Morgan.) All comments from these groups were recorded and referred to regularly throughout the formulation of the new standards. The questions that needed to be addressed were:

- Are the current standards facilitating the outcomes that libraries want?
- What determines the "quality of user experience"?
- How can we address maintenance, revision, and achievement all in the same document?

As we moved forward with the edits, it became clear that it was important to focus on the following when editing the document:

(1) Flexibility. How do we create standards that would be applicable to a variety of sizes and types of public libraries?
(2) Utility. How do we create a document that can also provide practical help for libraries in their quest for excellence?
(3) Accountability. What role can the Colorado State Library play in making sure that Colorado libraries are following the best practices?
(4) Impacts and outcomes in our community. How can we move beyond inputs and outputs and demonstrate the positive impacts our libraries have on our communities?
(5) Ease of use and comprehension. Is there a way to make the document more user-friendly and easy to understand?
(6) Budget Justification. How could the document provide a rationale or justification for budget requests for governing bodies or funding agencies?

After the focus groups, the 2011 Committee was formed with volunteers from around the state and from all sizes of libraries. The Committee met in person 3 times – January 2010, April 2010, and July 2010 and virtually in August 2010. After the January meeting, each of the existing standards was reviewed by a subcommittee of 3 or 4 members who met 3 times between the January and April meeting. During the April meeting we discussed the first round of changes.

Between the April and July meetings we continued with edits, finalized the format, updated the resources and worked on the introductory document. Each meeting involved animated discussion about the philosophy behind the standard, the practical application of it, as well as the clearest way of writing it. The committee-approved document was posted on the CSL website for comment in September 2010, and presentations to regional library groups as well at the annual Colorado Association of Libraries Conference were made to solicit feedback. Copies of the CPLS were made available in December 2010.

The Standards and Colorado Library Law

Public libraries are established and maintained according to the provisions of the Colorado Statutes (24-90-101 et seq.) The question as to whether the standards are enforceable is often asked. When the state of Colorado provided funding for libraries prior to 2001, the Definition of a Public Library established who would or would not receive funding. Since State funding is no longer available, the only requirements wherein libraries must meet the Definition of a Public Library is when applying for LSTA grants. Presently, this is the only means by which the Colorado State Library can enforce the standards.

Terminology Clarification

Library Governing Authorities (LGAs) are those bodies that adopt and provide oversight of budgets; supervise Library Directors; adopt policy, and set direction. In the case of a Library District, the LGA is the Board of Trustees or the Governing Board. In municipal libraries, the LGA is the Mayor and City Council. In county libraries, the LGA is the County Commissioners.

Advisory Boards are those bodies which do not govern, but provide input and advocacy.

Changes from 2005

No Tiers
Research was conducted and other State standards were reviewed during the revision process. Some states have embraced using a tiered format in their standards, but many have not. The 2005 Colorado Public Library Standards did use tiered methodology, but the 2011 Committee decided to remove the tiered format. The emphasis is on using the standards as a discussion and evaluation tool, not as a comparison tool.

Structure
The 2011 Committee wanted to present each standard as a cohesive unit. Therefore, each standard has been presented with an introduction, a checklist, and a list of resources. Library boards, directors, staff, and community members can discuss how their library is addressing each of the standards. Is this a standard we have already addressed? Is this important to our community? Is this an area where we need to focus on?

Tables

In the 2005 Standards, tables were intermingled with the standards. In the 2011 standards, many tables were omitted and those that were deemed important for statistical feedback are incorporated in the standard overview. National data tables were included (when available).

Resources vs. Appendix

The resource appendices from the 2005 Standards were replaced with a list of resources at the end of each individual standard. This was done to create more cohesiveness. The 2011 CPLS Appendix is to provide information on the revision process, the changes made, and other background information.

Community Engagement

A new standard entitled Community Engagement has been added. Essential to the growth and development of libraries are partnerships with Friends and/or Foundations and community organizations. This standard addresses this important trend.

Management

The management standard has been incorporated in the Governance Standard and Human Resource Standard.

Trends

This is a time of extraordinary ferment in nearly every sector of our society. We can observe a variety of trends; it's hard to know which of them will prove definitive of our shared future.

The brief list below doesn't begin to scratch the surface of a growing literature concerning the future of public libraries; however, it may spark further discussion and insight in the planning process. Any one of these trends might transform future operations. Please see www.coloradostatelibrary.org for updates.

- The Community Centered Library. For many people, the public library represents the "third place" (the place after work and home where people willingly congregate). Public library gate counts are rising across Colorado. So are virtual counts, as libraries make greater use of their own websites, subscription electronic resources, blogs, and social networking sites. The modern public library is not only a bustling community hub, both physically and virtually. Library resources – physical, electronic, and human - can be a vital community asset, convening and moderating discussion, helping to define shared questions and preliminary answers, moving from "ready reference" to the making of meaning. This trend is about moving from a standalone institution to one that is more aware of, contributing to, and tightly integrated with its larger social, intellectual, and political environment. It calls for more frequent and probing conversations with the community (through surveys, focus groups, and other processes), and perhaps a far more active professional visibility.
- Demographics. The release of the 2010 census and subsequent data will be available soon. These resources, combined with an understanding of the unique needs and preferences of each generation in our community, will provide rich resources for needs assessment and strategic planning. A third component is the continued demographic shifts in Colorado communities based on immigration to our state. Many entering our communities for the first time continue to have the highest need for basic information in order to effectively assimilate into the community and become successful contributors.
- Emergent literacy. Research in brain development has uncovered the importance of early childhood exposure to language. The traditional services of the children's story time, the Summer Reading Program (designed to keep kids reading for fun, and incidentally retaining academic skills), and a quality collection have been revealed as among our most powerful tools for growing smart human beings. Public libraries need to deeply understand and passionately articulate this role of advocacy for literacy.
- From input to impact. The trend in the assessment of library services goes like this: first, we track inputs (how much goes into libraries). Then we track outputs (the use per capita of a service). The frontier of library measurement is moving from such tidy tables to more meaningful outcomes and impacts. How was a life transformed? How did a community improve?

- From use to support. The measurement trend speaks to another pressing issue: while library use is rising in Colorado, library funding is declining. Use does not generate support. Libraries can, and indeed must, get better at communicating and demonstrating not just what we do, but why it deserves funding.
- Publishing. Most libraries have already begun the replacement of paper periodicals with rented digital archives. The same process is well underway for reference "books," now a series of electronic resources. Some pundits predict that by 2012, up to 20% of the commercial publishing output will be electronic only. How will this affect library checkouts and space use? As of 2009, self-publishing suddenly overtook commercial publishing. There are now over twice as many self-published titles published per year than commercial; few of these can be found in library collections. Moreover, there are a host of new digital objects, combinations of text, image, music, and movies. Data on what other libraries are spending on various kinds of materials can be found at www.lrs.org. How should the library manage these emerging forms of intellectual content?
- Content-creation. Many see libraries as warehouses of content created by others. But some librarians seem to be thinking about libraries as laboratories for the creation of unique local content. Is there a role for public libraries as digital workshops, music studios, and more?
- Mobile computing. Once, libraries focused on hardwired PCs. While we can anticipate the need for ever wider and faster telecommunication pipelines, we now support many wireless devices, from laptops to cell phones to tablets. Can we put the library in every pocket?
- Merchandising. Many of today's libraries utilize a host of retail tricks to move physical items (open face display of books, a more thoughtful exploitation of traffic patterns and space.) How will that translate into the digital world? Wall-sized iPads? How can libraries "go viral?"
- Self-service. Many library patrons now place reserves online, swing by the library and check out the materials themselves. "Ownership" of library titles blurs as we move more materials through multiple library locations, bridging jurisdictions and the Rockies themselves. How can we better empower our users to get what they want where, how, and when they want it?
- The Green Library. New energy-efficient technologies reduce operational costs, help staff and customers stay healthy, and perhaps provide for long term sustainability.