



Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines

Operational Services Standard

August 2009

1. Operational Services Standard

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1.1 Objective

To provide standards and guidelines for a minimum set of operational services that enable the community effective access to library facilities and the services and collections they offer.

1.2 Operational Services Standard

1.2.1 Standard for access

The library should provide free access and membership for residents to its many services and resources, through a combination of the physical facility and online means. It should also offer inclusive access for the whole community, including clients with special needs and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The library facility should have clear and prominently displayed exterior signage, local directional signage and internal signage indicating collections and services. The library facility should be well maintained and offer a pleasant and welcoming environment. Collections should be well organised and regularly maintained.

Complete details of library services should be available online through the Council web site and the *Directory of Queensland Public Libraries*. A general phone contact number should be easily locatable via a telephone directory (printed or online).

The full range of services should be available all hours the library is open, and an after hours return facility should be provided. Suitable furniture and appropriate equipment should be made available to satisfy the needs of users, including chairs, desks and tables, copying services (photocopying and scanning), public access computers, and baskets or trolleys for resource selection.

For further information regarding specific standards and guidelines, including collections, technology and building requirements refer to <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>

1.2.2 Standard for opening hours

Population Catchment of an individual library facility*	Minimum Hours per week	Minimum Hours per annum (based on 50 weeks per year)
Under 1,000	6	300
1,000 - 3,000	12	600
3,001 - 5,000	16	800
5,001 – 7,000	21	1,050
7,001 – 10,000	31	1,550
10,001 – 15,000	34	1,700
15,001 – 20,000	38	1,900
20,001 – 30,000	40	2,000
30,001 – 40,000	45	2,250
Over 40,001	50	2,500

* For the purposes of this standard a library / library facility is defined as a place at which library services are offered to the public and which is staffed by employees of the council or library service. No distinction is made for branch, central or mobile facilities.

The library should be open to the public at fixed times and with a uniform advertised schedule, as per the above table. With the exception of special circumstances or community events, opening hours should not be subject to arbitrary change. Alterations to existing scheduled opening hours or extended closure periods of more than two consecutive opening days should be advertised at least four weeks in advance.

For councils under 5,000 population operating a single library facility that also provides broader council or community services, consideration should be given to setting opening hours in excess of the minimum requirement.

The schedule of opening hours should be based on an assessment of the most convenient days and times for clients and potential clients to visit the library, and should be regularly reviewed. Seasonal population fluctuations should also be considered where relevant, with additional hours to meet increased client needs during these times.

When setting opening hours for mobile libraries, time spent travelling or setting up should not be included. While it is recommended that mobile library services comply with this standard it is recognised that specific opening hours should be determined by a number of additional factors, including distance travelled, the number of clients served at individual stops and the total number of stops on the route. Refer to the Mobile Libraries Standard (<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>) for additional information.

Opening hours should be prominently displayed and advertised on exterior signage, brochures and marketing materials. Where multiple library facilities exist within the same council it is recommended that all opening hours schedules are advertised and available at each facility. Location maps should also be made available where it is feasible for clients to access an adjacent facility with different opening hours.

1.2.3 Standard for policies, procedures and local laws

The library should have policies and procedures (or relevant Local Laws) to cover specific operational services to support the needs and expectations of the community when using library facilities. These should be approved by Council and made widely available to clients either in print or online format. They should provide clear, accurate and consistent information about services and procedures of the library service.

The following list should be viewed as the basic requirement for all libraries, with additional policies, procedures and guidelines developed for specific local circumstances as necessary:

- Mission Statement / Client Service Charter / Service Commitment, outlining goals and philosophies and the core services on offer. Ideally it will incorporate performance evaluation mechanisms (feedback, suggestions, compliments, and complaints), privacy provisions, and obligations of library staff and clients.
- Circulation services, including fines and fees, loan periods, loan limits, loss and damage, etc.
- Registration and membership categories that are appropriate to local circumstances, including resident and non resident, adult and junior, isolated and institutional types.
- Collection Development Policy including statement on intellectual freedom and censorship, donations and gifts, interlibrary loans and purchase requests.
- Service use and availability guidelines, including library orientation and on-going client assistance programs.
- Use of facilities and equipment, including Internet use and copyright guidelines, venue / room hire, acceptable use policies, unattended children and library program policies.
- Exhibitions and displays, public notice board use, and promotion or distribution of non-library materials.
- Facility management and operational procedures including opening and closing guidelines, security and climate control (air-conditioning) system operation, supervisory and delegation guidelines, and supervision of volunteers.
- Emergency procedures and disaster management, Workplace Health and Safety plans and incident reporting mechanisms.

1.2.4 Standard for statistical collection and analysis

The collection and analysis of statistical information or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be an integral part of library operations, as they can assist with management decisions, resource allocations, compliance reporting and on-going service planning.

Statistical information should be collected and retained in accordance with council record keeping practices and the data should align with the requirements of the annual *Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin*. Statistics should enable measurement against the performance indicators included in the *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines*.

Standard operational performance measures that all Queensland public libraries should collect include:

- circulation activities, including loans, returns, reservations, membership, and interlibrary loans;
- physical visits, measured either by sample or electronically;
- in-house and service usage, including pc and internet use, public programs and events, and reference enquiries;
- virtual service usage, including web site usage statistics and electronic resource usage.

Developing a community profile through the regular analysis of these operational performance statistics, demographic data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other relevant data, including surveys, should be undertaken to guide the planning and budgeting of operational services.

1.3 Guidelines

1.3.1 Guidelines for programs and services

A wide range of programs and services should be offered by all libraries, regardless of size, to encourage and enhance library usage. Planning of these programs and services should include meaningful engagement with the local community. Examples of programs may include:

- Readers advisory services;
- Library orientation, including introduction to available resources;
- Storytelling, author talks, book launches, childrens activities and rhyme time sessions;
- Information literacy skills, including computer and Internet training sessions;
- Displays and activities to support special events;

Workshops, debates and discussions on topics of popular and current interest, including Family History and Writers groups.

1.3.2 Guidelines for marketing and promotion

Libraries should be proactive in promoting their resources and services to the whole community. The use of effective marketing strategies presents opportunities for libraries to attract new and retain existing members. Libraries should consider either developing a formal marketing plan or incorporating library services into the council wide marketing plan to ensure library services are recognised as an integral and valued part of the council.

Promotional materials should be of a high standard and, where appropriate, should be consistent with the branding of council services. All library promotional material should also include opening hours schedules, resources and regular programs / events held in the library (story time, etc.). Examples of promotional and marketing techniques include:

- displays and distribution of library brochures in a wide range of community locations;

- press releases and regular features in local media outlets highlighting library programs and services;
- library cards, bags, bookmarks, notices and signage;
- library welcome packs for new members.

1.3.3 Guidelines for community engagement and consultation

Effective community engagement and consultation can provide valuable input into the planning of library services and programs. Working relationships should be established with a wide range of community, education and government agencies.

Mechanisms for regular consultation with the community should be established so that changes to services are the result of a consultative review process. Surveys, focus groups and client input are some effective ways to ensure an inclusive process.

Methods of consultation should suit local circumstances, and may include:

- attending agency and community group meetings;
- inviting community representatives to address library and council staff;
- involving community representatives in focus groups, forums and planning sessions;
- forming advisory groups for regular feedback and input.

1.3.4 Guidelines for on-going service review

Libraries should review their services regularly to ensure optimal efficiency of operational services and to keep abreast of ever changing developments and client needs. The community's views on what services they currently receive and what they expect in the future should guide the on-going development of services. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including community profiles and performance indicators, should also be used to improve efficiency of existing services and guide the introduction of new services.

Consideration should be given to implementing additional services as a means of extending client access beyond the traditional staffed services of the library. Libraries should be proactive and innovative in finding solutions when implementing new services to meet changing client demands. Examples may include:

- Automated material handling systems and innovative stock return facilities, including automated book drops and mechanical sorting systems to improve the efficiency of back-room operations;
- Alternative return options, including community meeting places, neighbourhood or other council facilities, and shopping centres;
- Automated dispensing machines, kiosks or other secure pickup facilities to enable out-of-hours availability of library resources;
- Enhanced online and virtual services, continuous online reference (24/7 service), personalised web-based services, and Web 2.0 or Library 2.0 interactive technologies;
- Self-serve or self-directed services, including self-checkout and check-in, RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) systems and self-serve pc booking and printing systems (copy card and change dispensers);
- Web-enabled mobile phone applications, including mobile messaging services, including SMS alerts and notifications.

1.4 Performance Indicators

- Library access and membership is free for residents, orientation is offered for new members and continuing client assistance programs are available.
- External signage is in place and library opening hours are available through multiple channels.
- The library meets the minimum standard for opening hours.
- The schedule of opening hours is regularly reviewed to meet client needs.

- The library has operational services policies and procedures, reviewed and updated regularly and easily accessible by clients.
- Changes to services, including opening hours, are advertised in advance.
- Statistics are collected and analysed as part of on-going service review.

1.5 Definitions

Collection Development Policy – a policy that guides the development and maintenance of library collections and access to resources. The Policy should include statements on clients served, purpose and parameters of the collections, budgets, selection and procurement, collection evaluation, discards, donations, resource sharing and asset management.

Community Profile – is an analysis or study that describes the various components of a community. It may include geographic boundaries, demographic features and socio-economic information, and social and community needs. Ideally it is a summary of the history, present conditions, and anticipated future of an area.

Local Law/s – local laws are one of the regulatory frameworks that a local government might wish to consider when dealing with issues and implementing its policies and strategies to ensure the good rule and government of its area.

Opening Hours – these are the minimum (i.e. fewest) number of hours the library is open to the public every week during the year. To align with nationally reported statistical data the measurement is based on a 50 week annual basis to accommodate public holidays and Christmas / New Year service closures.

RFID (Radio Frequency Identification): the technology that uses devices attached to library items that transmit circulation transactions for member self-service.