

# Public Library Director / Staff Competencies

State Library of Iowa / Iowa Library Service Areas

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## Introduction

Competencies are, “the capabilities expected of a person hired to perform a specific job, or upon successful completion of a course of study or training.” (ODLIS: Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science, <http://www.wcsu.edu/library/odlis.html>) Public library directors and staff must have certain competencies to provide excellent library service to their customers. The following competencies have been developed to assist:

- public library boards in hiring the library director
- public library directors in hiring library staff
- individual library staff members in identifying their learning needs
- continuing education program planners in identifying learning needs
- instructors in developing courses

The competencies were developed by:

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Sources Consulted:

Continuing Education/Certification Advisory Committee, “Iowa Certification Manual for Public Librarians,” State Library of Iowa, 1985: 1-5

Johnson, Carol P., “Domain Competencies and Minnesota’s Voluntary Certification Program,” *Public Libraries* (July/August, 2001): 228-234

Madden, Karl, “A Library Education Plan for Western North America,” Western Council of State Libraries Education Task Force, (draft 4/11/02): 7-27

State Library Continuing Educator’s Forum - Competencies,  
<http://www.curtisrogers.info/conted/comps.html>

Tennessee Regional Library System Sequential Training Program for Directors of Small and Medium-Size Public Libraries, March, 1999 revision.

## Foundations

Library staff will be able to:

- Understand the overall role of the library in society and commit to the ethics and value of libraries
- Understand the necessity of equal customer service to all
- Recognize the customer's right to privacy
- Reaffirm the First Amendment
- Commit to the right of people to access of information.
- Recognize the importance of the specific library's mission, long-range plan and promote those programs that support the library's mission and plan
- Know the role of the library in the political process and work effectively with elected officials
- Understand the process of local library policy development in relationship to community needs
- Recognize the importance of library co-operation and collaboration
- Keep informed on current library trends and issues
- Recognize the importance of technology in the delivery and use of library resources
- Understand the role and governance of the Library Service Areas, the State Library and the Iowa Library Association in Iowa
- Be current on laws affecting libraries
- Have knowledge and understanding of State Library programs that include the standards, accreditation, certification, SILO, and others
- Understand how the library participates in county, LSA and statewide systems and networks
- Maintain regular communication with other agencies, institutions and organizations in the community

## Personal / Workplace

Library staff will be able to:

- Develop and practice time management skills
- Set priorities
- Participate as team members
- Teach others
- Exhibit leadership
- Communicate and work with diverse staff and customers
- Use effective problem solving and decision making techniques
- Deal with confrontational and emergency situations
- Demonstrate responsibility, integrity and honesty
- Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills
- Be innovative and enthusiastic

## **Board Relations**

Library staff will be able to:

- Recognize the authority of the library board in matters of: recruiting, hiring, and evaluating the library director; budget development and fiscal oversight; policy development; long range planning, advocacy
- Understand the distinction between governance (board's role) and management (director's role)
- Understand the roles of the library board, director, and support staff within the local political process
- Ensure that the board is well-informed on matters affecting their authority and responsibility
- Foster an effective and articulate board of trustees, motivating them to be citizen advocates for library service
- Maintain frequent and open communication with the board
- Maintain frequent and open communication with funding bodies
- Encourage citizen interest in public library board service

## **Management**

### **Planning**

Library staff will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of planning
- Gather, analyze and use library statistics
- Make use of existing demographic information to assist in identifying community information needs
- Conduct community analysis and user surveys and use results in planning
- Develop vision and mission statements that recognize challenges and future potential for the library in cooperation with the library board, customers, and appropriate administrative units
- Develop short range and long range planning documents based on community needs which include measurable goals and objectives
- Evaluate, report and recommend adjustments in activities and services in relation to short and long range goals and objectives

## **Facilities Management**

Library staff will be able to:

- Complete a space needs assessment
- Maximize use of facilities in compliance with goals and objectives developed in planning
- Modify library layout as necessitated by changes in programs, technology, or use
- Recommend and implement policies affecting use of facilities
- Supervise daily the site and building to insure safety of staff and library users
- Work with appropriate agencies responsible for maintenance, repairs, and capital improvements
- Understand the need to comply with all relevant national, state, or local building codes

## **Financial Management**

Library staff will be able to:

- Understand the budget process, including its development, approval, and implementation
- Create annual budget goals from the library long-range plan
- Create an annual budget calendar
- Obtain cost information to aid in preparing the library budget
- Balance budget goals with estimates of potential income
- Develop and make an effective budget presentation
- Administer budget once approved
- Maintain accepted accounting practices and procedures, complying with state and city audit requirements, and file necessary fiscal reports
- Identify and utilize traditional and alternative funding sources
- Understand the grant process, demonstrating an ability to organize, administer, and evaluate a grant program

## **Personnel Management**

Library staff will be able to:

- Recommend appropriate organizational patterns for the effective use of staff
- Encourage and develop positive staff relationships
- Develop, review, and revise written job descriptions for all staff
- Recruit, select, and train new staff
- Demonstrate a knowledge of relevant state and federal laws pertaining to employment and personnel practices
- Train, supervise, and evaluate performance of staff
- Provide opportunities for and encourage participation in staff development
- Develop, review, and maintain procedures manuals
- Recruit, select, train, and supervise volunteers

## **Public Relations / Marketing**

Library staff will be able to:

- Determine target markets
- Determine the library services that can effectively serve targeted markets
- Develop effective messages for reaching selected markets
- Develop a list of local media outlets, key contacts, deadlines and editorial policies
- Choose the most effective media for a target audience
- Locate and use already created marketing tools

Public Services
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## **General**

Library staff will be able to:

- Design appropriate programs of service based on community uses and needs studies
- Explain circulation, interlibrary loan and how they are different
- Train or provide staff training
- Explain library copyright implications and restrictions
- Identify special populations, such as handicapped, homebound, and daycare centers being served or to be served
- Design and implement services to meet the needs of special populations

## **Customer Service**

Library staff will be able to:

- Encourage and develop positive staff-patron relationships
- Demonstrate awareness of and willingness to serve diverse individuals
- Treat customers equally, fairly, with respect and without judgment
- Define quality customer service
- Present welcoming behaviors and practices
- Effectively use interview skills to best determine customer actual needs
- Plan, develop and deliver instructional programs for *customers*

## **Information Service**

Library staff will be able to:

- Effectively use common reference resources, print and electronic
- Evaluate and select reference materials
- Instruct customers in use of library resources and equipment including how to research and evaluate information sources
- Explain the reference process and the reference referral process
- Conduct appropriate and effective reference interviews
- Fill information needs by using resources beyond immediate collection
- Match the format to the request
- Understand information seeking behaviors
- Construct competent and complete search strategies
- Process appropriate follow-up and referral as necessary

## **Readers Advisory**

Library staff will be able to:

- Explain readers advisory and how it differs from reference
- Use basic readers advisory materials such as reading lists
- Have knowledge of popular authors and titles and continually develop this knowledge
- Maintain current awareness of popular trends
- Provide recommendations to reader at desired reading level
- Elicit information from the reader and base recommendations on readers interests and desires
- Identify reading levels or reading ability
- Support readers in their talking about books
- Recommend appropriate formats based on knowledge of collection
- Make recommendations without making assumptions about the readers age, race, sex, ethnicity, marital status or economic status
- Develop an understanding of the factors that make a book attractive and interesting to readers
- Willingly read books and reviews in all genres
- Be aware of the content of the local collection
- Show enthusiasm for books and reading

## **Youth Services**

Library staff will be able to:

- Be aware of trends in popular culture
- Provide programs of interest to youth
- Promote reading for self help, enjoyment and for developing critical thinking skills
- Be aware of and promote services and programs available to and designed for youth and their families
- Design youth programs based on an understanding of developmental stages
- Advocate for youth services within the library
- Support the rights of youth to courteous service and to equal access to materials and services
- Have a sense of humor
- Be flexible
- Demonstrate a rapport with children and teens
- Demonstrate a knowledge and appreciation of children's literature, periodicals, web sites and electronic resources
- Respect children's right to browse and answer questions regardless of their nature or purpose
- Serve homeschoolers in a nonjudgmental manner
- Develop cooperative programs between public library and school library

<b>Collection Management</b>
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Library staff will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of collection development and management based on the needs of the community served.
- Develop/adapt and recommend policies and procedures for selection, acquisition, circulation, maintenance and weeding of library materials.
- Support community activities with organized and accessible resources in various formats.
- Evaluate electronic products and services and make appropriate recommendations for selection
- Effectively use selection tools.
- Evaluate the collection

## Technical Services

### Acquisition

Library staff will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the publishing industry and vendors from which libraries acquire materials, equipment and services
- Apply effective procedures for ordering, receiving orders, resolving problems and accounting for expenditures
- Apply effective procedures for handling special materials (For example, serials, electronic resources, and other formats)

### Cataloging

Library staff will be able to:

- Understand the purpose and importance of the catalog and the relationship between the catalog and library customers' access to the collection
- Accurately describe an item to ensure access
- Select appropriate subject headings and call numbers for proper identification and placement
- Adhere to current and appropriate cataloging standards and classification schemes
- Be familiar with services to share cataloging information

### Processing

Library staff will be able to:

- Apply appropriate methods and techniques for accurate physical preparation and repair
- Apply appropriate methods and techniques for storage and preservation of materials.
- Apply filing rules (if the library is not yet automated)

## Technology

### General

Library staff will be able to:

- Plan for and implement appropriate technology in the library. Keep all systems up-to-date.
- Evaluate electronic products and services and make customer focused, cost effective choices in their selection and use
- Make arrangements for support of all systems beyond the ability of in-house staff (and know when to request help)



## **Hardware**

Library staff will be able to:

- Use and maintain a PC:
  - Properly turn on/off
  - Log into computer/network
  - Use keyboard & mouse
  - Understand the basics of all operating systems/networks used in your library
  - Perform maintenance functions such as regular backups and restore from backups as well as minor repairs to keep equipment operating properly
- Use and maintain a fax machine: send messages, add paper, change ink cartridges, clear jams
- Use and maintain a photocopier: make copies, add paper, add/remove toner, clear jams, call service, know special functions of your copier

## **Software**

Library staff will be able to:

- Use a word processor: create, format, save, print and open a document. Change fonts and sizes, cut and paste, align text.
- Use a spreadsheet: create, format, save, print and open a document. Change fonts and sizes, cut and paste, align text and use basic formulas.

## **Automation**

Library staff will be able to:

- operate the various modules of the library's automated system (OPAC, circulation, acquisition, cataloging, etc.)
- design and use reports from the automated system to effectively manage the materials collection
- maintain current automated system and upgrade software and hardware as necessary

## **Troubleshooting**

Library staff will be able to:

- Isolate and identify problems with hardware, software, and local area network
- Understand the meaning of common error messages
- Locate and use manuals, FAQs, and online help services to identify and solve problems
- Communicate problems effectively to support/ repair person

## **Internet**

Library staff will be able to:

- Know internet terminology, such as URL, search engine, home page, link, web site, tool bar, status bar, scroll bar
- Know the web page address for your library
- Understand what resources can be found on your library web page
- Know the web page address for your LSA and the State Library of Iowa
- Know the web page address for your web based OPAC and how to use it
- Know what online resources your library subscribes to and how to use them
- Understand what a web browser is and use it effectively
- Search the Internet using two or three different search engines
- Find information on the Internet using two or three different subject directories
- Evaluate information found on the Internet including currency, relevancy and accuracy
- Send, retrieve, reply to and organize email
- Understand how to subscribe to, resign from, and participate in electronic mail lists
- *Participate in local library's web site development, including developing content, organizing information, and updating information*
- Understand and use other Internet based applications, such as FTP, telnet, news groups
- Understand privacy and intellectual property issues as they relate to the Internet, including filtering software and censorship issues

## **Internet Instruction**

Library staff will be able to:

- Demonstrate basic Internet use to customers, including web navigation, email, basic searching, printing, saving, etc.
- Teach customers how to evaluate information found on the Internet including currency, relevancy and accuracy
- Conduct structured Internet and other computer classes for both the public and library staff