COMPETENCIES for LIBRARIANS SERVING CHILDREN in PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), recommends the following Core Competencies to all children’s librarians and other library staff whose primary duties include delivering library service to and advocating library service for children ages 0-14.

The policy of this organization is that a master’s degree in Library and Information Science from an ALA-accredited graduate school is the appropriate professional degree for the librarian serving children in the public library, but ALSC expects the same standards applied to paraprofessional staff. Through specialized coursework in undergraduate and graduate study, on-the-job training, and/or continuing education opportunities, librarians serving children should achieve and maintain the following skills, orientations, and understandings to ensure children receive the highest quality of library service as defined in the ALA Library Bill of Rights, and the ALA and Association of American Publishers (AAP) joint Freedom to Read Statement.

IX. TECHNOLOGY
1. Possesses up-to-date computer and technology skills necessary for effective communications and presentations.
2. Acquires familiarity with emerging technological trends and tools.
3. Applies technological skills to provide reference services and programs for children and families.
4. Supports access to Internet and electronic resources for children.
I. KNOWLEDGE OF CLIENT GROUP

1. Understands theories of infant, child, and adolescent learning and development and their implications for library service.
2. Recognizes the effects of societal developments on the needs of children.
3. Assesses the diverse needs, preferences, and resources of the community on a regular and systematic basis.
4. Identifies patrons with special needs as a basis for designing and implementing services, following the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and state and local regulations where appropriate.
5. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for diversity in cultural and ethnic values.
6. Understands and responds to the needs of parents, caregivers, and other adults who use the resources of the children’s department.
7. Cultivates an environment which provides for enjoyable and convenient access to and use of library resources.
8. Maintains regular communication with other agencies, institutions, and organizations serving children in the community.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

1. Participates in all aspects of the library’s planning process to represent and support service to children.
2. Sets long- and short-range goals, objectives, strategic plans, and priorities.
3. Analyzes the costs of library services to children in order to develop, justify, administer, manage, and evaluate a budget.
4. Conducts job interviews, trains, and evaluates staff who work with children, parents, caregivers, and other adults using children’s services.
5. Writes job descriptions and encourages continuing education for staff who work with children.
6. Demonstrates critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, and mediation skills and techniques.
7. Delegates responsibility appropriately and supervises staff constructively.
8. Documents and evaluates services and needs assessments through various research methods.
9. Identifies outside sources of funding and writes effective grant applications.
10. Follows federal, state, and local legislation in the development and enactment of library policies and procedures.

VII. ADVOCACY, PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND NETWORKING SKILLS

1. Utilizes effective public relations techniques and media to promote an awareness of and support for meeting children’s library and information needs through all media.
2. Considers the needs, opinions, and requests of children in the development and evaluation of library services.
3. Ensures that children have full access to library materials, resources, and services as prescribed by the Library Bill of Rights.
4. Collaborates with other agencies serving children, including other libraries, schools, and other community agencies.
5. Lobbies on behalf of children for the highest quality library service, through library governance and the political process.

VIII. PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Acknowledges the legacy of children’s librarianship, its place in the context of librarianship as a whole, and past contributions to the profession.
2. Stays informed of current trends and emerging technologies, issues and research in librarianship, child development, education, and allied fields.
5. Preserves patron confidentiality.
6. Mentors library school students, paraprofessionals, and new librarians.
7. Participates in local, state, and national professional organizations to strengthen skills, interact with fellow professionals, promote professional association scholarships, and contribute to the library profession.
8. Pursues professional development and continuing education opportunities throughout her/his career.
III. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1. Defines and communicates the role and scope of public library service to children for administrators, other library staff, and members of the larger community.

2. Listens and interacts actively when speaking individually with children, families, other patrons, and staff, paying genuine attention to what is being communicated, and confirming understanding.

3. Writes proficiently and adjusts content and style to accommodate diverse functions and audiences.

4. Communicates effectively when addressing or presenting to large or small groups of children and/or adults.

5. Conducts productive formal and informal reference and readers’ advisory interviews.

6. Successfully communicates library policies and procedures to patrons of all ages.

IV. KNOWLEDGE OF MATERIALS

1. Demonstrates a knowledge and appreciation of children’s literature, periodicals, audiovisual materials, Websites and other electronic media, and other materials that contribute to a diverse, current, and relevant children’s collection.

2. Provides a wide and diverse variety of electronic resources, audiovisual materials, print materials, and other resource materials to best serve the needs of children and their caregivers.

3. Keeps abreast of new materials and those for retrospective purchase by consulting a wide variety of reviewing sources and publishers’ catalogs, including those of small presses, by attending professional meetings, and by reading, viewing, and listening.

4. Keeps up-to-date on adult electronic and print reference sources which may serve the needs of children and their caregivers.

5. Develops a comprehensive collection development policy consistent with the mission and policies of the parent library and the ALA Library Bill of Rights.

6. Considers the selection and discarding of materials according to collection development, selection, and weeding policies.

7. Maintains a diverse collection, recognizing children’s need to see people like and unlike themselves in the materials they access.

8. Understands and applies criteria for evaluating the content and artistic merit of children’s materials in all genres and formats.

9. Addresses materials against community challenges.

10. Demonstrates a knowledge of cataloging, classification, indexing procedures, and practices to support access to children’s materials.

V. USER AND REFERENCE SERVICES

1. Instructs children in the use of library tools and resources, empowering them to choose materials and services on their own.

2. Conducts reference/readers’ advisory interviews to assist children and their parents/caregivers with the identification and selection of materials and services, according to their interests and abilities.

3. Respects the patron’s right to browse regardless of age, and provides nonjudgmental answers to their questions.

4. Assists and instructs children in information gathering and research skills.

5. Understands and applies search strategies to give children the widest possible range of sources.

6. Compiles and maintains information about community resources.

7. Works with library technical services on cataloging, classification, and indexing to ensure easy access to materials for children.

8. Encourages use of materials and services through bibliographies, booktalks, displays, electronic documents, and other special tools.

VI. PROGRAMMING SKILLS

1. Designs, promotes, presents, and evaluates a variety of programs for children of all ages, based on their developmental needs and interests and the goals of the library.

2. Identifies and utilizes skilled resource people to present programs and information.

3. Provides library outreach programs which meet community needs and library goals and objectives.

4. Establishes programs and services for parents, individuals and agencies providing childcare, and other professionals in the community who work with children.

5. Promotes library programs and services to underserved children and families.