

Revised Standards and Guidelines of Service
for the Library of Congress Network of Libraries
for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

DRAFT

(Released February 15, 2004)

Introduction

These draft revised standards and guidelines for Network Library Service for the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped are the result of the work of a dedicated working team and advisory committee, and insightful input from many people in the community – from librarians, to patrons of NLS libraries, to others who share our commitment to excellent service. We encourage you to disseminate these standards and guidelines as widely as possible, and to comment on any item, large or small, that you believe will help strengthen these guidelines.

The public comment period will extend until September 1, 2004, to allow as broad a review period as possible. The goal of the working team and advisory committee is to present the final standards to the American Library Association for approval in January 2005. Your input is critical to the success of this project.

Please forward your comments directly to the project director, Courtney Deines-Jones, at the address below:

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Revised Standards and Guidelines (Draft)

Provision of Services

- 1.1 Network Libraries shall register patrons in compliance with PL 85-522 (Pratt-Smoot Act as amended and extended).
- a. Network Libraries shall maintain information about patrons to meet LC/NLS requirements and to provide service
 - b. Network Libraries shall, within 3 business days of receiving an application for service, verify that the application is complete, initiate contact for additional information, or return the application for proper certification.
 - c. Once a completed application is verified, Network Libraries shall initiate service within 2 business days.

d. Network libraries that have in their service areas specialized schools serving eligible children shall develop a relationship with these schools to ensure that all eligible children are registered for NLS services.

e. Network Libraries shall ensure the confidentiality of patron records, and shall comply with the ALA policy on confidentiality on patron records.

1.4 Machine lending agencies (MLAs) and sublending agencies (SLAs) shall comply with the MLA agreements and the sublending agency agreement.

a. LC/NLS shall provide each MLA and SLA with a procedures manual.

b. Network Libraries shall provide analog/audiocassette playback equipment and accessories within two business days of a patron application or request.

c. As developed and made available, Network Libraries shall provide digital playback equipment and accessories using an equitable distribution policy.

1.5 Network Libraries shall maintain their circulation and machine lending functions electronically.

1.6 Network Libraries shall establish loan periods for reading materials.

a. Network libraries shall levy no fines on overdue or lost materials in the national collection.

b. Network libraries shall develop and communicate to their patrons appropriate loan policies for materials not in the national collection such as large print and descriptive videos.

1.7 Network libraries shall organize their services to ensure convenient access to materials and services.

a. Network Libraries shall provide materials and information about these services in appropriate formats.

b. Network Libraries shall provide hours of service that meet patrons' needs.

c. Network Libraries shall ensure that library service meets individual readers' preferences and patterns.

d. Network Libraries shall provide reader advisors to assist patrons in identifying specific materials in their areas of interest by title, author, subject, or genre.

1.8 Network Libraries shall promote independent access to materials and services through appropriate on-line, telephonic, and other means.

a. Network Libraries shall develop and communicate processes and procedures for using these tools.

1.9 Network Libraries shall process patron requests for materials and information by the next business day. Requests for materials generated through TBT / BBR and similar promotional activities shall be processed within 5 business days.

a. Network Libraries shall have the capability to accept patron requests via toll-free voice and TDD/TTY; voice mail; and messaging capabilities, with toll-free telephone service that is answered by staff members during all business hours. During

hours in which the library is closed the toll-free number shall provide voice mail or messaging capability.

b. Network Libraries shall have the capability to process requests and provide service via e-mail and on-line access, including an OPAC, that are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

c. Network Libraries shall have the capability to accept patron requests via facsimile and regular mail.

d. Network Libraries shall have the capability to serve walk-in patrons.

1.10 Network Libraries shall process all returned materials by the next business day.

a. Network libraries shall ensure that circulating materials are inspected, in good condition, and fully prepared for the next reader. (old 1.7.d)

1.11 Network Libraries shall respond to patron requests for contact the same business day.

1.12 Network Libraries shall respond to patron requests for information, including reference requests.

a. Network Libraries shall fulfill ready reference and information requests from their patrons the same business day.

b. Network Libraries shall fulfill in-depth reference requests from their patrons within five business days.

c. Network Libraries shall refer their patrons to public, university, and other libraries or resources if appropriate and shall collaborate with public libraries to facilitate fulfillment of reference requests

1.13 Network Libraries shall provide newsletters at least quarterly and other direct communications as appropriate in accessible formats.

a. Network Libraries shall provide newsletters and other direct communications in hard copy and electronic formats and shall have the capability to deliver electronic format materials via e-mail.

b. Network Libraries shall make electronic copies of newsletters and other direct communications available on a website accessible to people who have disabilities.

1.14 Each Network Library shall maintain a website that is accessible to people who have disabilities.

a. Network Library websites shall provide OPACs and other appropriate bibliographic finding aids.

b. Network Libraries shall accept patron requests for materials and information via their websites.

c. Network Libraries shall accept patron feedback via their websites.

d. Network Libraries shall post copies of all forms, patron policies and procedures; annual reports and other public documents; electronic copies of newsletters and other communications; hours of operation; links to LC/NLS; and other relevant information on their websites.

e. Network Libraries shall continually review all information and links on their websites to ensure information is current and correct.

f. Network Libraries should include supplemental information relevant to their patrons, such as links to consumer groups and other libraries and service agencies, on their websites.

1.15 Network Libraries shall provide patrons with information about and referrals to other service agencies.

1.16 Network Libraries shall maintain information about national, state, and local reading programs and book discussion groups and shall facilitate patron participation in these activities.

a. Network Libraries shall provide bibliographies to public libraries describing titles in the collection related to national, statewide, and regional reading program themes.

b. Regional Libraries shall participate in national, state, and regional reading programs and book discussion groups. Subregional libraries shall support such initiatives within their service areas.

c. Network Libraries shall develop individualized reading programs and book discussion groups as appropriate.

1.17 Network Libraries shall provide access to library materials through interlibrary loan or other resource sharing options.

a. LC/NLS shall coordinate alternative media book exchange and interlibrary loan with libraries and other agencies outside the United States.

1.18 Regional and subregional libraries shall establish deposit collections and demonstration collections to extend services.

1.19 LC/NLS shall provide services to United States citizens residing abroad in compliance with these standards.

1.20 LC/NLS shall provide music service to patrons in compliance with these standards.

1.21 LC/NLS shall provide direct service to patrons who need titles in obsolete, experimental or little-used formats in compliance with these standards.

1.22 LC/NLS shall provide a web site available to the public that is accessible to people who have disabilities.

a. LC/NLS shall include on the website an OPAC with links to relevant information, publications, sources of materials and electronically provided services.

b. LC/NLS shall provide links to network libraries.

1.23 Network Libraries shall provide services in languages other than English as appropriate to their communities.

a. Network Libraries shall maintain resources and collaborate with other institutions to serve patrons who speak or read languages other than English.

1.24 Network Libraries shall collaborate with public libraries, schools, and other agencies to promote literacy services for young (pre-reading) children.

a. Collections and services developed by Network Libraries to serve young (pre-reading) children shall be provided in accordance with these standards.

2. Resource Development and Management

- 2.1 LC/NLS shall make available audio playback equipment and accessories.
- a. LC/NLS shall develop and implement methods of quality control.
 - b. LC/NLS shall ensure equitable distribution of playback equipment and accessories.
 - c. Network Libraries shall maintain sufficient inventories to ensure provision of analog audiocassette playback equipment and accessories within two business days of a patron application or request.
- 2.2 LC/NLS shall develop and implement a systematic process of obtaining input from network librarians and patrons on the development of digital audio playback equipment and on equitable distribution methods for this equipment.
- 2.3 LC/NLS shall make available the national library collection.
- a. LC/NLS shall develop and implement methods of quality control.
 - b. LC/NLS shall ensure equitable distribution.
 - c. LC/NLS shall produce a minimum of 2,000 titles annually.
- 2.4 LC/NLS shall develop and implement a systematic process of obtaining input from network libraries, advisory committees, and patrons on collection development and quantity of materials selected in addition to using standard collection development materials.
- 2.5 LC/NLS shall make available in limited quantity other reading materials in accessible formats to supplement the national library collection in addition to materials produced for distribution to the network. Examples of these materials include BRAs, BRXs, and BRFs.
- 2.6 Regional and subregional libraries shall acquire or produce reading materials to supplement the national collection.
- a. Regional and subregional libraries shall produce reading materials in a specialized format in accordance with appropriate copyright laws in response to patron demand and emphasizing titles of regional and local importance.
 - b. Network libraries shall maintain non-circulating masters of all locally produced materials.
 - c. Regional and subregional libraries shall share locally produced materials with other network libraries.
- 2.7 LC/NLS shall establish, promulgate, and monitor quality control standards for materials in accessible formats produced by network libraries
- a. Regional and subregional libraries shall meet LC/NLS quality control standards in producing accessible format materials to be added to the local collection.
 - b. LC/NLS shall review locally produced materials submitted by Network Libraries to determine whether they meet LC/NLS quality assurance standards.

c. LC/NLS shall facilitate the distribution of locally produced materials that meet LC/NLS quality assurance standards.

2.8 Network libraries shall have the capacity to duplicate accessible format materials produced for the national collection according to LC/NLS quality control standards.

2.9 Network Libraries shall maintain or provide access to collections of sufficient quantity and condition to meet patron demand in a timely and responsive manner.

a. Network Libraries shall alter or discontinue circulation of any format of material only with input from and in collaboration with LC/NLS, network library advisory committees, and patrons

2.10 Regional and subregional libraries shall develop and implement procedures to determine the number of copies of new titles to request from the national collection.

a. Regional libraries shall maintain in each format they circulate a minimum of one copy of each title they distribute by LC/NLS

b. Subregional libraries shall maintain in each format they circulate at least one copy of each title distributed by LC/NLS in the last 24 months

c. LC/NLS, in collaboration with Network Libraries, shall develop and implement appropriate retention policies for digital materials.

2.11 Network Libraries shall use the bibliographic standard adopted by LC/NLS when cataloging materials.

2.12 LC/NLS shall provide network libraries with information on changes to the collection.

a. LC/NLS shall provide bibliographic information in full MARC format for titles produced for the national collection.

b. LC/NLS shall provide Network Libraries with online access to bibliographic data for all titles in the collection.

c. LC/NLS shall, on a continuous basis, advise network libraries of titles that LC/NLS has produced in quantity and titles that may be withdrawn from the collection.

2.13 Network Libraries shall, within their collection maintenance policies, systematically review and weed their collections and dispose of excess copies or withdraw titles in accordance with LC/NLS procedures.

2.14 LC/NLS shall maintain a circulating collection of titles in obsolete, experimental, or little-used formats. Examples include Grade 3 Braille and BRX.

2.15 LC/NLS shall maintain an archival collection of titles produced for the national collection.

2.16 Network Libraries shall maintain or have access to professional materials and resources that support the development and provision of library services.

a. Network Libraries shall maintain or have access to a collection of standard reference works and of reader advisory reference materials.

2.17 Network Libraries shall maintain information about national, state, and local organizations and programs concerned with services to eligible users.

2.18 LC/NLS shall inform network libraries of basic and current professional literature pertaining to the physical conditions described in the LC/NLS eligibility requirements.

2.19 LC/NLS shall provide Network Libraries with information pertaining to resources for or of interest to eligible users.

a. LC/NLS shall maintain and make available resource information in accessible formats, including electronic formats.

3. Public Education and Outreach

3.1 Network Libraries shall develop and implement a coordinated public awareness, education, and outreach plan for use in their service areas.

a. Network Libraries shall collaborate with public and other libraries, schools, veterans' organizations, senior organizations, and other agencies as appropriate to promote their services.

b. Network Libraries shall develop and implement awareness programs and materials for students in library science, education, early childhood education, social service, and similar college and university programs.

c. Network Libraries shall conduct awareness activities and events as appropriate to promote a climate of public opinion awareness favorable to the development, expansion, and improvement of library services. Examples include author/narrator events and open houses.

3.2 LC/NLS shall continually review network public awareness programs, and shall develop and implement national advertising, awareness, and education programs to effectively reach potential patrons.

a. LC/NLS shall develop and disseminate materials to promote awareness of network services in coordination with the anniversary of the passage of the 1931 enabling legislation.

3.3 LC/NLS shall develop and disseminate a model for community analysis that can be adapted for use by regional and subregional libraries.

a. Network Libraries shall conduct a community analysis based on the LC/NLS model.

4. Consulting Services

4.1 LC/NLS shall provide a minimum of two full time consultants to advise and assist network libraries.

a. LC/NLS network consultants shall conduct biennial consulting visits to each regional library.

4.2 Regional libraries shall advise and assist subregional libraries as well as other libraries and agencies in the development of services in their geographic areas.

a. Regional libraries shall conduct annual consulting visits to each subregional library.

4.3 The LC/NLS and the regional library consultant shall prepare and submit a final written report of observations and recommendations and shall send a copy to the network library visited and its administering agency within 3 months of the consultant visit.

a. LC/NLS and Network Libraries shall jointly develop and implement procedures to facilitate timely review and finalization of consulting reports.

4.4 Visited network libraries shall prepare a written response within three months of receiving the consultant report and shall send a copy to the visited network library's administering agency and the consultant.

4.5 Subregional libraries shall advise and assist local libraries and related agencies in their geographic service areas.

4.6 Network Libraries shall participate in peer consulting through NLS, ASCLA, and other professional associations as appropriate.

4.7 LC/NLS shall serve as a clearinghouse for information related to network services and operations.

5. Volunteers

5.1 Network Libraries shall use volunteers to assist in the performance of activities that supplement its basic program of services.

5.2 Volunteers shall not be used in place of paid employees.

5.3 Paid employees shall not be replaced by volunteers.

5.4 Network Libraries' volunteer programs shall be managed in accordance with administering agency policy and practice.

5.5 Network Libraries including MLAs shall develop and implement an organizational structure that formally incorporates administration of the volunteer program.

5.6 Network Libraries shall provide training and orientation programs and materials for volunteers that include information about blindness and disabling conditions as well as on the structure and philosophy of service.

5.7 Network Libraries including MLAs will develop and implement programs that recognize volunteer activities at minimum on an annual basis.

6. Administration/Organization

6.1 The regional library shall be responsible for MLA functions as described in the MLA Service Agreement.

a. The regional library/MLA may designate SLAs with LC/NLS concurrence.

b. Each MLA shall be responsible for ensuring that its SLAs comply with machine lending policy and procedure.

6.2 Each Network Library shall comply with laws and regulations pertaining to rights of and services to persons with disabilities.

6.3 The state library agency shall be responsible for the development and coordination of this library service either directly through its administration and budget or indirectly through cooperation with the administering and the funding agency.

6.4 Network Libraries shall provide a means of rapid communication with cooperating units.

6.5 Regional and subregional libraries shall continually administer, monitor, and evaluate deposit collection and demonstration collection operation and service.

6.6 These standards shall apply as appropriate to all network cooperating units, including contractors, institutional borrowers, and any others who perform services or functions covered in the standards.

6.7 The network shall be composed of no fewer than four regional conferences.

a. Regional conferences shall collaborate to sponsor joint meetings and events as appropriate.

6.8 Network Libraries shall encourage advice and input from a full spectrum of patrons and patron constituency groups through mechanisms including, but not limited to, advisory committees, focus groups, and patron forums.

a. Network Libraries shall make appropriate use of communications technologies to facilitate consumer participation in patron and patron constituency groups.

6.11 Network Libraries shall establish friends groups to support and promote library services.

7. Budget and Funding

7.1 Federal, state, and local units of government shall contribute funds, resources and services to network libraries for the provision of library services to eligible users.

a. Federal funds such as LSTA intended for seed funds and grants shall not be used to fund long-term ongoing operations.

7.2. Network Libraries shall provide all LC/NLS-mandated services at no charge to the patron.

7.3 Network Libraries should provide supplemental services at no charge to the patron.

7.4 Administering and funding agencies shall commit resources to enable network libraries to effectively operate, administer, and facilitate services as defined by these standards.

7.5 The head of each network library shall have primary responsibility for the planning and administration of the budget as well as the presentation or justification of the budget to appropriate groups or individuals.

7.6 The funding agency shall consult with the head of its network library before any action is taken affecting the finances of the library program.

7.7 Network libraries shall work with administering and funding agencies to obtain outside funding for non-operational functions. Examples include grants and in-kind donations.

8. Planning and Evaluation

8.1 Each network library shall develop a comprehensive long-range plan designed to develop, implement, maintain and improve services and programs and to make optimum use of resources.

a. Long-range plans shall be developed in cooperation with appropriate constituencies, especially patrons, administering and funding agencies, and associated Network Libraries.

b. The long-range plan shall include measurable objectives and a timetable for accomplishments.

8.2 Progress toward meeting objectives shall be reviewed regularly and the plan shall be revised at least annually.

8.3 The long-range plan shall be developed in accordance with PL 89-522 (Pratt-Smoot Act as amended and extended) as well as other appropriate statutes and codes.

8.4 The long-range plan shall be produced in accessible formats and shall be advertised and made available to patrons.

8.5 LC/NLS shall obtain consumer and Network Librarian input to its long-range planning activities.

8.6 LC/NLS shall develop and recommend methods for evaluating patron satisfaction with network libraries.

8.7 Network Libraries shall adapt and implement methods for evaluating patron satisfaction at minimum on an annual basis.

a. When patron satisfaction is evaluated, the results shall be used to improve services.

8.8 LC/NLS shall develop and implement methods for evaluating Network Library satisfaction with LC/NLS services on an annual basis.

9. Policies and Procedures

9.1 Each network library shall have written policies and procedures for library operations designed to meet service goals.

a. Each Network Library shall have a written statement of policy for collection development and maintenance; for materials selection; for the reproduction of materials in accessible formats; for interlibrary loan; for service provision to patrons including patron confidentiality; and for patron behavior and library usage.

b. Network libraries shall make available service policies and procedures in accessible formats.

c. Network Libraries shall communicate any changes in policies, procedures, or services offered to other libraries and units affected by the change in a timely manner.

9.2 LC/NLS shall develop model policies required or needed in the network and shall make them available online.

9.3 Each Network Library shall review its policies biennially.

9.4 LC/NLS shall include patrons and representatives of network libraries as advisors in the development and review of policies that affect the network.

9.5 Regional libraries shall include LC/NLS in the development and review of policies.

9.6 Subregional libraries shall include regional libraries in the development and review of service policies.

9.7 Regional libraries with subregional libraries shall include representatives of subregional libraries as advisors in the development and review of operational policies.

9.8 Each Network Library shall provide its staff and its cooperating units with an up-to-date manual that includes policies and procedures.

9.9 Network Libraries shall inform patrons of service policies and shall notify patrons of changes that will affect them.

a. Network Libraries will maintain up-to-date copies of service policies on their websites.

9.10 Each network library shall develop and make available instructional materials in accessible formats to guide patrons in the use of this library service.

9.11 Each regional library shall work with its subregional libraries to develop strategies that contribute to a consistent range and quality of service in the geographic area served.

9.12 LC/NLS shall work with each region to develop strategies that contribute to a consistent range and quality of service for all NLS patrons.

a. LC/NLS shall develop directories and other appropriate tools to facilitate collaborations and resource sharing and shall provide them online

10. Reports, Statistical and Narrative

10.1 Each network library shall maintain current and accurate statistical records to document use, services, and acquisitions; to meet the requirements of the administering agency, the funding agency, and LC/NLS; and to generate information for planning purposes.

10.2 LC/NLS shall define, collect, analyze, publish and distribute comparable data for the network on an annual basis and shall make this information available to Network Libraries online.

10.3 Each network library shall prepare an annual narrative and statistical report and shall make it available in appropriate and accessible formats to the administering agency, the funding agency, patrons, LC/NLS, and other interested parties.

11. Personnel

11.1 Network libraries shall operate under a written affirmative action plan.

a. Network libraries should make every effort to advertise to, solicit applications from, and employ qualified persons with disabilities.

11.2 Network libraries shall maintain a commitment to cultural diversity.

11.3 Each network library shall prepare an organizational chart describing clear lines of authority.

11.4 Each Network Library shall develop and maintain a position description for each title or each category of position.

11.5 The Network Library and its administrative agency shall, at minimum once every 5 years, jointly review and determine staffing patterns and requirements based on, but not limited to, the following: long-range plans; demographics of service population; geography; services provided; service patterns; physical facility; use of technologies; support provided by the administrative agency; and the guidelines included in these standards.

11.6 The administrative head of a network library shall possess a master's degree in library science from an ALA accredited program and shall be on the same administrative level as comparable unit heads within the administering agency.

11.7 Staff performing reader advisory service shall possess a bachelor's degree.

11.8 Network libraries shall plan and conduct formal orientation programs for employees that include information about blindness and disabling conditions as well as on the structure and philosophy of service.

11.9 Network Libraries shall send appropriate staff members who have completed at least 6 months on the job to the LC/NLS orientation program.

11.10 The regional library shall provide training and orientation for appropriate subregional library employees within the first three months of employment.

11.11 Network libraries shall encourage and support relevant continuing education activities for staff at all levels of the organization.

a. Network Libraries shall encourage and support staff participation in professional organizations

b. Network Libraries shall encourage and support site visits and staff exchanges to other libraries as appropriate.

11.12 An LC/NLS network consultant shall visit new directors of regional libraries within the first 6 months of employment.

11.13 Appropriate staff of each Network Library shall participate in meetings of patron organizations.

11.14 Appropriate staff of each Network Library shall participate in network conferences.

11.15 Appropriate staff of each Network Library shall participate in meetings of professional associations.

12 Research and Development

12.1 LC/NLS shall conduct and encourage research and development efforts relating to all aspects of this library service.

a. LC/NLS shall serve as a clearinghouse for research and development findings.

12.2 Network Libraries shall test, evaluate, and use new technologies, equipment, services, and materials to improve access to information and library services as well as to improve library services and operations.

a. Network libraries shall use compatibility with local or national systems as a criterion for evaluating and selecting technologies, equipment, services, and materials.

12.5 LC/NLS shall collect and analyze data relating to elements of the standards for the purpose of planning and to identify quantitative norms for network library performance.

a. LC/NLS shall disseminate the results of these analyses to Network Libraries and shall make these results available online.