



# Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries – Standards and Assessment

## Foreword

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The Government is committed to modernisation of all public services, and this includes public libraries about which I care passionately.

Public libraries are a vital element in the public services of this country. They are welcoming spaces held in great affection by their communities. They provide a focus for individual learning for people of all ages and access to vital information and community networks for the socially excluded; they are a gateway to local arts and cultural activities; and they are leading the drive to increase the use of Information and Communication Technology among all sectors of society.

The year 2000 was the 150th anniversary of the passing of the Public Libraries Act 1850. It was a key moment in the country's development. Since then, public libraries have been an ever present feature of our public services and have been centre stage in the great movements towards adult education and self improvement. The tradition continues to this day and the Government intends to see that it continues in the future.

My statutory duty is to ensure the provision of a "comprehensive and efficient" public library service by all 149 library authorities in England. However, executing this duty is hampered by the lack of a clear and widely accepted definition of what the requirement means in practice.

Since 1997, I have encouraged improved planning and accountability within library authorities and, in 1998, to this end, I introduced Annual Library Plans. At the same time, I have introduced through my Chief Library Adviser a much more rigorous monitoring of library service changes, that might, for example, include cuts in provision and branch closures.

Annual Library Plans have been very successful but, while they have instilled useful management discipline into library authorities, they have not provided as much of a direct link into performance monitoring as I had hoped. It is right that they derive from the needs of an authority's citizens and link to its overall objectives. But, the service should also meet certain basic expectations across the country. The library standards which I now propose accordingly complement Annual Library Plans and will provide a link between planning and performance.

They take account of the consultation which I launched in May 2000. The final standards have been fine-tuned, both in the light of what was said to us and so that they better reflect service outcomes and the requirements of Best Value. This framework is a positive demonstration of the practical implementation of the Best Value concept. Library standards together with Best Value provisions are a powerful combination which should help authorities drive up library performance.

As we have said all the way through, however, we shall allow a generous period of three years for compliance with the standards and we shall be prepared to sit down with any library authority that is facing particular problems in order to agree a strategy for development of their service.



**Chris Smith**

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

## Public Libraries Today

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1. The fundamental need to provide universal free access for all to information and literature which led to the creation of public libraries 150 years ago has created a national institution which retains its value and appeal to the present day. It is true to say that no comparable institution exists. Modern public libraries are widespread, popular and of enduring importance to social justice and the maintenance of a democratic society.
2. Their 'vital statistics' illustrate this very clearly:
  - there are 3,187 public libraries in cities, towns and villages serving a population of about 49 million people;
  - 55-60% of the population use public libraries, rising to 70% where children and elderly people are concerned;
  - adults and children borrow over 420 million books and other items, such as CDs and videos, a year from public libraries.
3. The public library has become a multi-purpose agency with multiple roles covering the areas of information and life long learning, recreation and leisure, culture and research. The new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) do not threaten the existence of public libraries but offer an opportunity to provide increasingly valuable and effective services for users.
4. Because of their importance, public libraries are at the heart of both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and broader Government policies:
  - they underpin education, providing essential support for school children, students and lifelong learners;
  - they enhance public access to the world's storehouse of knowledge and information;
  - they promote social inclusion, by helping to bridge the gap between those who can afford access to information and those who cannot, and by facilitating access to information for socially excluded people;
  - they are a vital conduit and access point for the main principles of modernisation and delivery of public services;
  - they provide information and learning opportunities which underpin creativity, economic regeneration, urban renewal and rural development.

In addition, their traditional roles in support of literacy, reading and personal and community growth are undiminished.

## The Legislative Framework

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5. There are two relevant pieces of legislation; the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, and the Best Value provisions of the Local Government Act 1999.
6. **The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964** makes it the duty of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport:

*“to superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England ...and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them as library authorities by or under this Act”.*
7. Under the same Act, library authorities (County Councils, Unitary Authorities, London Boroughs and Metropolitan Districts) are required to:

*“provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.*
8. Library authorities have a duty to allow access to their libraries to all comers, but their obligation to lend extends only to those who live or work or study full-time in their areas.
9. The terms “comprehensive and efficient” are not defined within the 1964 Act. However, under the 1964 Act, a library authority should pay particular regard to:
  - *securing that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter and other materials “sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children.” This may be done by keeping adequate stocks of such books and other materials, by arrangements with other library authorities and by other appropriate means.*
  - *encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the service, provide advice as to its use and make available bibliographical and other information.*
10. Where there appears to be a failure to meet the provisions in the Act, the Secretary of State can institute an inquiry, issue a direction and ultimately order the transfer of library functions of a library authority to himself. The Secretary of State is also given power to hold an inquiry into any matter relating to the functions of a library authority under the Act.
11. The duty of Best Value for local authorities, as enshrined in the **Local Government Act 1999**, requires each Best Value authority to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.” The Act also contains a wide range of powers for the appropriate Secretary of State to intervene where local authority services within their remit are considered, as a result of the Best Value audit and inspection process, to be failing. These powers are exercised by the appropriate Secretary of State, which, in the case of public library services, would be the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.
12. Best Value is implemented by means of an independent system of audit and inspection, which makes qualitative as well as quantitative judgments about local authority performance, based upon an assessment of corporate management processes and the ability of authorities to deliver levels of service which are consistent with those achieved by the top 25%.

## Objectives of the Standards

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13. In order to fulfil its statutory responsibilities for public libraries, the Government is setting out to make available for users and their service providers – ie library authorities – a framework, which will both encourage and ensure an effective development strategy for each library service. Annual Library Plans were an important step on the way. The next, and very important, step in the process is the introduction of standards to guide the continuous improvement of services.
14. The standards will assist everyone concerned with providing good and improving library services:
  - *library service managers* gain the appropriate guidelines within which to formulate realistic plans;
  - *individual library authorities* have the opportunity of establishing a target against which service levels can be properly reviewed;
  - the *Audit Commission* is assisted in their Best Value inspections of library services; and
  - *users* and *the Government* will have a means to make more informed judgments about the quality of services being received and provided, and what can be expected from library authorities in the future.
15. The standards relate to key areas of service delivery in libraries and are defined by reference to the top quartile (25%) of performance on distributions measured by reference to available data at the beginning of each three year planning cycle, starting in April 2001. As under Best Value, library authorities should adopt strategies which will result in continuous improvement against all the objectives and standards included in this framework for defining service.
16. Best Value requires local authorities to make arrangements to improve continuously the manner in which they exercise all their functions. Therefore, irrespective of their position at 1 April 2001, when the library standards come into force, all library authorities should continue to seek improvement of their rating against each standard and measure. The Government does not believe it acceptable for authorities to reduce their performance where this exceeds the top quartile of any standard at the outset of the planning cycle. For those authorities falling below the top quartile on any measure at the beginning of the planning cycle, they should seek improvement in the rating on that measure over the life of the planning cycle.

## Monitoring and Assessment

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17. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will monitor library authorities' performance against the standards through the Annual Library Planning process. Detailed arrangements will be set out in the guidance to authorities for preparing their next cycle of Annual Library Plans, commencing in April 2001.
18. The standards relate to the overall library service of an authority and not to that provided within one library. In monitoring and assessing authorities' performance against the standards, therefore, DCMS accepts that improvements in one area of the service may be difficult to make without regard to priorities in other areas. In consequence, an authority will not necessarily be judged on the basis of performance against one standard alone; a public library service is a complex and integrated operation, and any assessment by DCMS will take account of the whole range of standards. In reaching a balanced assessment of an authority's performance, DCMS will also take into account whether the authority has met its own local targets for services to children, the socially excluded, ethnic minority communities and people with disabilities, and whether proposed targets are adequate.
19. If assessment of an authority's performance against the standards raises concern, financial resources (especially those relating to expenditure on books and other materials) will be taken into account when making recommendations for improvement. Library authorities are reminded that, in its response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee report on public libraries, the Government said: "Ensuring that book stocks remain up-to-date and attractive is central to keeping public libraries alive and is the magnet that draws users to the multitude of other services that we have all come to expect"<sup>1</sup>.
20. Library authorities' performance against the standards will also be examined by Best Value Inspectors as appropriate in the context of Best Value Reviews of, or involving, library services. Using Best Value Reviews to tackle poorer areas of performance remain the main means by which library authorities are expected to secure step changes in performance. The Best Value inspection framework will highlight deficiencies in performance and those authorities which are unlikely to improve. It will also provide for regular assessments of those aspects of performance which are covered by Best Value Performance Indicators.
21. **Further guidance will be issued shortly setting out how the two sets of intervention powers in the 1964 and 1999 Acts may be used in the case of failure by a library authority over time to improve their services, or deal with serious deterioration.**

<sup>1</sup> Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Third Special Report. Public Libraries: Government Response to the Sixth Report from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Session 1999-2000. ISBN 0-10-256700-X

## Coverage of the Standards

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22. The specific objectives inherent in the standards are to:
- ensure that libraries are located so as to provide convenient and suitable access for users;
  - ensure that opening hours of libraries are adequate for users;
  - develop electronic access for users;
  - ensure satisfactory services for the issuing and reserving of books;
  - encourage the use made of the library service;
  - provide choice in books and materials made available to users;
  - provide appropriate levels of qualified staff.
23. The population served by any library authority is not homogenous but comprises numerous large and small minority interest groups. In order to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”, it is necessary to undertake a community profiling exercise; to identify the different market segments; and to adapt or develop existing services to better meet the needs of the different segments.
24. To help auditors and inspectors judge whether a library authority is planning to provide effective, relevant and improved services, Annual Library Plans will have to include in future:
- Local targets for services to the following groups:
    - a. children
    - b. socially excluded people
    - c. ethnic minority communities
    - d. people with disabilities
  - An explanation of how regional and cross-border patterns of library use affect services (especially in London), and how this is reflected in the way services are planned and co-ordinated in co-operation with other library authorities.

### Tackling Social Exclusion

25. Public libraries have an important role to play in helping to combat social exclusion within the communities they serve. The DCMS policy document, *Libraries for All*<sup>2</sup>, recommends that library authorities adopt a strategic approach based on the following six-point plan:
- Identify the people who are socially excluded and their distribution; engage them and establish their needs;
  - Assess and review current practice;
  - Develop strategic objectives and prioritise resources;

<sup>2</sup> Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries – Policy Guidance for Local Authorities in England. DCMS. October 1999.

- Develop the services, and train the staff to provide them;
- Implement the services and publicise them;
- Evaluate success, review and improve.

Library authorities are strongly encouraged to adopt and implement these principles through their Annual Library Plans.

26. Most of the specific objectives in the standards can also be linked to objectives aimed at tackling social inclusion and set out in *Libraries for All*. When they are considering service provision, particularly in relation to convenient and suitable access, opening hours, electronic access, encouraging library use, user satisfaction, and choice of books and materials, library authorities should take into account the needs of socially excluded people. The particular social or economic characteristics of socially excluded people will vary from authority to authority, and consequently their information needs will vary. Adopting the methodology set out above will help to establish their service requirements.

## Standards and Assessment

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### The standards

Throughout the following measures, a ‘library’ means a staffed service point in a dedicated building, room or vehicle. It excludes book-borrowing facilities in other premises – for example, shops or post offices. **A brief definition is given for each measure or target associated with the standard. These are grouped under the principal service level objectives set out above.**

### **OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must enable convenient and suitable access for users of libraries (PLS 1 and 2)**

**PLS 1.** Proportion of households living within a fixed distance of a static library<sup>3</sup>, for:

- i. all libraries;
- ii. libraries open during convenient hours – *see also [PLS 4, below].*

*The authority's own estimate of the proportion of households served by mobile libraries on scheduled routes will be accepted as a contextual indicator when assessing the proportion of households served by static service points.*

*‘Convenient hours’ means at least five hours per week outside 9am-5pm on weekdays.*

Measure (i), for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001, will be the top quartile for all authorities in the class:

- 100% of households in Inner London Boroughs within one mile;
- 99% in Outer London Boroughs within one mile;
- 95% in Metropolitan Districts within one mile (or, 100% within two miles);
- 88% in Unitary Authorities within one mile (or, 100% within two miles);
- 85% in County Councils within two miles.

Measure (ii) to be calculated using survey data yet to be collected. †

**PLS 2.** Proportion of the planned time that service points were not available to visitors, measured by:

- i Percentage emergency closures of central and branch libraries;
- ii Percentage of mobile library visits/stops missed or cancelled.

*(i) Emergency closures means closures where advance notification of at least five working days was not given to library users. Calculated as hours of closure as a percentage of total planned opening hours.*

*(ii) Expressed as a percentage of total planned stops or visits during the year.*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be the top quartile for all authorities – to be calculated using survey data yet to be collected. †

<sup>3</sup> These measures are based on the straight line distance between the centroids attributed to the postcodes of domestic addresses and the library.

† The Committee on Public Library Statistics is being requested to develop an appropriate means for calculating this statistic.

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must provide adequate opening hours of libraries for users (PLS 3 and 4)**

**PLS 3.** Aggregate opening hours per 1,000 population for all libraries.

*This is to be based on actual rather than scheduled opening hours. 'Population' is the resident population for the authority. London authorities may use a measure of 'enhanced' population<sup>4</sup>, taking into account daily flows of commuters and visitors to the area. The figure is calculated each year by DETR to inform Standard Spending Assessments. Calculate "aggregate hours per 1,000 population" by dividing the sum of individual service point opening hours for the year by the population.*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be the top quartile for all authorities – this equates to 128 annual hours per 1,000 population. Library authorities will be required to report in their Annual Library Plans on their policy for opening hours outside 9am-5pm on weekdays and on the proportion of their aggregate opening hours that fall outside that core.

**PLS 4.** Percentage of larger libraries open at least 45 hours per week.

*'Larger libraries' are those with a catchment area of more than 40,000 resident population, broadly equivalent to 200,000 expected visitors each year. Exclude mobile libraries.*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be the top quartile for all authorities – to be calculated using survey data yet to be collected. † In addition, authorities should review their provision of static service points available for 60 hours or longer per week. Seven authorities in England (of 149) provided static service points open for 60 hours or more per week at the beginning of the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001. Authorities with libraries known to provide the service point of first choice for resident populations in excess of 150,000 persons will be asked to report on the merits of extended opening hours (ie 60 hours or more per week) in their Annual Library Plan.

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must enable electronic access for library users (PLS 5,6 and 10)**

**PLS 5.** Percentage of libraries open more than 10 hours a week that have access to on-line catalogues.

*'On-line catalogue' means the catalogue for the whole authority. Exclude mobile libraries.*

It is expected that all static service points, which are open for 10 hours or more per week, will have on-line access to a catalogue by the end of the three year planning cycle to commence in April 2001.

<sup>4</sup> ENHANCED POPULATION is a measure of population served. It is a measure in calculating Standard Spending Assessments. The enhanced population equals the sum of:

- i. Resident population;
- ii. Average day time net inflow multiplied by 0.25;
- iii. Count of annual overnight visitors multiplied by 0.5, divided by 365; and
- iv. Count of annual day visitors multiplied by 0.5, divided by 3, divided by 365.

† The Committee on Public Library Statistics is being requested to develop an appropriate means for calculating this statistic.

**PLS 6.** Total number of electronic workstations available to users per thousand population.

*'Electronic work station' means a computer terminal with access to an on-line catalogue and/or the Internet.*

It is expected that the total number of work stations (including those for on-line access to catalogues) available for public use will equal or exceed 6 per 10,000 population by the end of the three year planning cycle to commence in April 2001. Every static service point is expected to provide public internet access by 31 December 2002.

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must ensure satisfactory services for the issuing and reserving of books (PLS 7 to 9)**

**PLS 7.** Library authority's normal book issue period (in weeks)

*'Normal book issue period' is the period for which borrowers are allowed to keep books before the first loan renewal is required.*

The standard is a minimum of three weeks.

**PLS 8.** Maximum number of books that library users are allowed to borrow at one time.

*Applies to books only – exclude arrangements for loans of other items.*

The standard is eight books. Library authorities will be asked also to specify, in their Annual Library Plan, what standards they operate for loans of other materials.

**PLS 9.** Percentage of requests for books met within:

- i 7 days
- ii 15 days
- iii 30 days

*Based on counting the period from when reservation was made to the time when the borrower was informed that the book was available.*

The provision of a reservation service is a key element in the provision of a "comprehensive and efficient" service required by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. Library authorities which do not provide a reservation service, place arbitrary restrictions on it, or seek to levy high charges which act as a barrier to access, are likely to place themselves in breach of their statutory duty. In addition, in order to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, an authority should allow requests for items in alternative formats which meet the needs of people with disabilities.

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be the top quartile for all authorities – these are:

- 50% within 7 days
- 70% within 15 days
- 85% within 30 days

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must encourage the use made of the public library service (PLS 10 and 11)**

**PLS 10.** Number of visits to the library website per thousand population.

*Based on a count of visits to the library pages only, if these are included within a website for the whole authority. Only count Internet websites, and Internet visits (ie exclude authority intranet use unless this is the only route available for the public to connect to the library's facilities).*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be the top quartile for all authorities – to be calculated using survey data yet to be collected.†

**PLS 11.** Number of library visits<sup>5</sup> per thousand population

*Separate measures are to be applied for the following groups:*

- Inner London Boroughs
- Outer London Boroughs
- Metropolitan Districts
- Unitary Authorities
- County Councils

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be the top quartile for all authorities in the class – these are the following number of visits per 1,000 resident population:

- 7,650 in Inner London Boroughs (or 6,800 enhanced population)
- 8,600 in Outer London Boroughs
- 6,000 in Metropolitan Districts
- 6,300 in Unitary Authorities
- 6,600 in County Councils

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must ensure user satisfaction with the services provided (PLS 12 to 15)**

**PLS 12.** Percentage of library users reporting success in obtaining a specific book:

- i adults
- ii children

*To be based on the National PLUS standards (Public Library User Surveys).*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be 65% for both adults and children. Authorities may also inform this measure with information about the number of searches for books leading to reservations, and satisfaction with the outcome.

† The Committee on Public Library Statistics is being requested to develop an appropriate means for calculating this statistic.

<sup>5</sup> In the absence of more sophisticated data, physical visit is being used, as a necessity, to provide a better approximate of use than issues; the CPLS is being asked to investigate practical measures for the recording of use more generally and remote access in particular. Meanwhile, library authorities will be asked in their Annual Library Plans to demonstrate that they look at extent and spread (eg by age, area, ethnic group and gender) of library use across their population.

- PLS 13.** Percentage of library users reporting success in gaining information as a result of a search or enquiry.

*To be based on the National PLUS standards (Public Library User Surveys).*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be 75% for both adults and children. In addition, the Library Association and the Audit Commission will be invited to advise on the development of a formal “unobtrusive testing” or “mystery shopping” process which will provide for a measured professional assessment of the quality of the enquiry service. This is expected to develop into an indicator in its own right.

- PLS 14.** Percentage of library users rating the knowledge of staff as “good” or “very good”.

*To be based on the National PLUS standards (Public Library User Surveys).*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be 95% for both adults and children.

- PLS 15.** Users rating the helpfulness of staff as “good” or “very good”.

- i adults
- ii children

*To be based on the National PLUS standards (Public Library User Surveys).*

The target for the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 will be 95% for both adults and children.

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must provide choice in books and materials made available to users (PLS 16 to 19)**

- PLS 16.** Quality index for:

- i adult fiction
- ii adult non-fiction
- iii children’s books
- iv reference materials
- v large print books and books on tape
- vi materials in languages other than English

*Based on inspection, ‘quality’ will be defined on both national and local criteria, taking into account areas of local interest and the requirements of ethnic minority communities.*

These indices will be developed in 2001-2, taking account of existing work by the Audit Commission in respect of fiction. Meanwhile, library authorities will be asked to report on inspections carried out within the immediate cycle of Best Value reviews.

- PLS 17.** Annual items added through purchase per thousand population

*These include ‘Books’ and ‘Other items’ which include audio-visual materials, electronic publications and other formats but excludes newspapers, periodicals and other materials.*

The target will be the top quartile at the beginning of the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 – this is 216 additions per 1,000 population. Individual authorities may wish to analyse their additions in more detail as set out below: –

- a adult fiction 88 additions per 1000 population
- b adult non-fiction 57 additions per 1000 population
- c children’s materials 69 additions per 1000 population
- d reference materials 11 additions per 1000 population
- e large print books and books on tape†

*‘Children’s materials’ includes books and other items aimed specifically at under 16 year-olds. ‘Reference materials’ includes books and other items available for general use at libraries, but not available for loan. Each multiple access to electronic journals counts as one addition.*

**PLS 18.** Time taken to replenish lending stock

*‘Lending stock’ means all books and other items available on open access or available for loan. Special collections, however, should be excluded. ‘Time taken to replenish’ is the number of years it would take to restock the entire lending stock (including the replacement of old with new titles) based on stock additions made during the current year.*

The target will be the top quartile at the beginning of the three year planning cycle commencing in April 2001 – this is 8.5 years.

*Further assessment of the choice in books and materials available*

Although up-to-date and attractive bookstocks are central to keeping public libraries alive, the above indicators provide a limited perspective on the choice of books and other materials available for consultation or loan. Therefore, where the Secretary of State (or an auditor or inspector) has cause to be concerned that an authority appears to be performing poorly on any of the above measures, a further analysis will be made to assess whether the level of investment in books and other materials is likely to lead to improvements:

*Fund for purchasing library items per thousand population:*

- i books
- ii other materials

*‘Other materials’ includes all other items available for loan or reference, including periodicals, newspapers and other print, audio-visual materials, electronic publications and other formats.*

There is no explicit standard for this further assessment, which is a test of the authority’s intention to sustain acceptable service levels. The indicative levels of investment made by authorities in 1998/99 were: –

£ per 1,000 resident population on: –

	lowest quartile	median	top quartile
books	£ 1,298	£ 1,620	£ 2,018
other materials	£ 253	£ 348	£ 503

*The CPLS will update this analysis annually.*

† The Committee on Public Library Statistics is being requested to develop an appropriate means for calculating this statistic.

**OBJECTIVE: Library authorities must provide appropriate levels of qualified staff****PLS 19.** Numbers of staff per 1,000 population

- i with appropriate information management qualifications
- ii with appropriate ICT qualifications

*The count of staff will relate to “full-time equivalents”.*

The target is for each authority to provide the appropriate numbers of staff with information management qualifications, and with ICT qualifications. Information management qualifications range through NVQs to degrees and professional qualifications in information management. Authorities will be asked to report this information in their Annual Library Plans. There is at present insufficient information on which to base target numbers of staff with the different levels of qualifications. The Library Association expects to commission, in partnership with the DCMS, SCL, LGA and ISNTO, independent research to review this matter and to propose targets. The research will also cover ICT qualifications, taking due note of any developments or guidelines published by Resource or the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). The targets will take account of the Government’s published targets for qualifications in the workforce.

In their Annual Library Plans, library authorities will also be asked to report on the resources allocated to training and development as a percentage of payroll costs.

## Review

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1. It is intended that these standards be kept under continuous review and annual developments will be reported to library authorities in the guidance for preparing Annual Library Plans. Library users, library authorities and other interested groups or persons are invited to submit their observations, comments and suggestions for improving the framework at any time to :

Peter Beauchamp  
Chief Library Adviser  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
2-4 Cockspur Street  
London SW1Y 5DH

(email: [Peter.Beauchamp@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.Beauchamp@culture.gsi.gov.uk))

2. In practice, the speed at which these standards can be reviewed and amended depends to some extent on the pace at which the statistical reporting systems can be amended or supplemented. In this context, the Committee on Public Library Statistics usually requires at least one year to prepare and advise authorities of new statistical requirements and definitions. The present priorities are directed towards developing those indicators signified by a † in the above text.

## Acknowledgments

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The development of these standards owes much to the efforts of the Library Association which also contributed towards the research costs. Thanks are also due to the Local Government Association, the Society of Chief Librarians, the Audit Commission and all 253 library authorities, user groups and individuals who responded to the consultation draft.

An analysis of the responses to the consultation, *Analysis of the Consultation on Draft Public Library Standards*, is being sent to everyone who responded, as well as to all library authorities. Additional copies of this, and of the final standards themselves, are freely available from the Department.

If you would like additional copies of either publication, please write to Andy Birleson at DCMS (2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5DH), or call on 020 7211 6146, or e-mail [Andrew.Birleson@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Birleson@culture.gsi.gov.uk). The documents can also be accessed via the Department's website – [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk).