

STANDARD #8: MAINTAINING A FACILITY TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

Each...library maintains a facility to meet community needs, including adequate space, lighting, shelving, seating and restroom.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE IF OUR FACILITY IS ADEQUATE?

Various publications provide helpful "rules of thumb" or "standards" for the number of seats, shelving, or meeting room facilities needed by communities of varying sizes. (Although it is old, the Anders Dahlgren pamphlet, "Planning the Small Public Library" listed at the end of this section, has both such "rules of thumb" and a good introduction to library building planning.) As important, there are books and articles that help librarians and trustees evaluate and plan for the improvement of their libraries. Some of these focus on such important matters as compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and environmental regulations (such as asbestos and lead abatement).

Building experts would first ask the library director and board, "what are the goals and service plans of the Library?" General services planning precedes facilities planning because it defines the users, services, and programs of the library. Once these plans are defined, the board, director and others can better decide on space needs, layout, and technical specifications such as wiring for technology.

- A long-range plan with clearly articulated mission statement, goals, objectives and an action plan provides a basis for evaluating whether or not a library has a facility which adequately meets community needs.
- The planning and evaluation process should involve input from staff, members of the community or communities served (including people with physical disabilities) and the board, and be conducted in an open, well-publicized manner. This ensures that those paying for and residing in the service area will have a say in, and take ownership of, their library facility. The library may find it useful to hire a consultant to assist with the facility plan.
- Care must be taken to provide for a facility which is accessible to the entire community.
- Where legal mandates -- whether local, State, or Federal -- exist, it is the responsibility of the library to be aware of and comply with those requirements.
- Associations such as the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans offer free help and expertise, as do local code enforcement officers.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE BOARD HAS A PLAN?

- If funds and community support are needed to implement a facility plan, the plan should be widely disseminated and used to gain public understanding.

- Responsibilities should be clearly laid out, timelines set, and tasks completed.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?

There are a number of useful materials to guide the library in meeting this standard. The following are highly recommended.

- *Accessible Building Design*, Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, Jackson Heights, New York, no publication date. Call 1-800-444-0120.
- *Designing Better Libraries: selecting and working with building professionals*, Richard C. McCarthy, A.I.A., Highsmith, 1995.
- *Planning the Small Public Library Building*, Small Libraries Publication No. 11, Anders Dahlgren, LAMA/ALA, 1985.
- *Public Library Space Needs; a planning outline*, Anders C. Dahlgren. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1988.
- *Serving the Disabled; a how-to-do-it manual for librarians*, Keith C. Wright and Judith F. Davie. Neal-Schuman, 1991.

Each public library system has a construction plan as part of its responsibility in administering part of the state construction aid. Your system, therefore, is likely to have additional information materials, advice, and suggestions for evaluating and planning facilities.