

# New York's Public Libraries Meet Minimum Standards

***A single set of basic standards that assures equivalent levels of access to public library services and resources is imperative in order to meet the informational and educational needs of all New York State residents.*** – Committee on Minimum Public Library Standards Report, 1988

All public and association libraries in New York State must meet 11 minimum standards of service. The standards support improved library services for the people of New York by helping libraries:

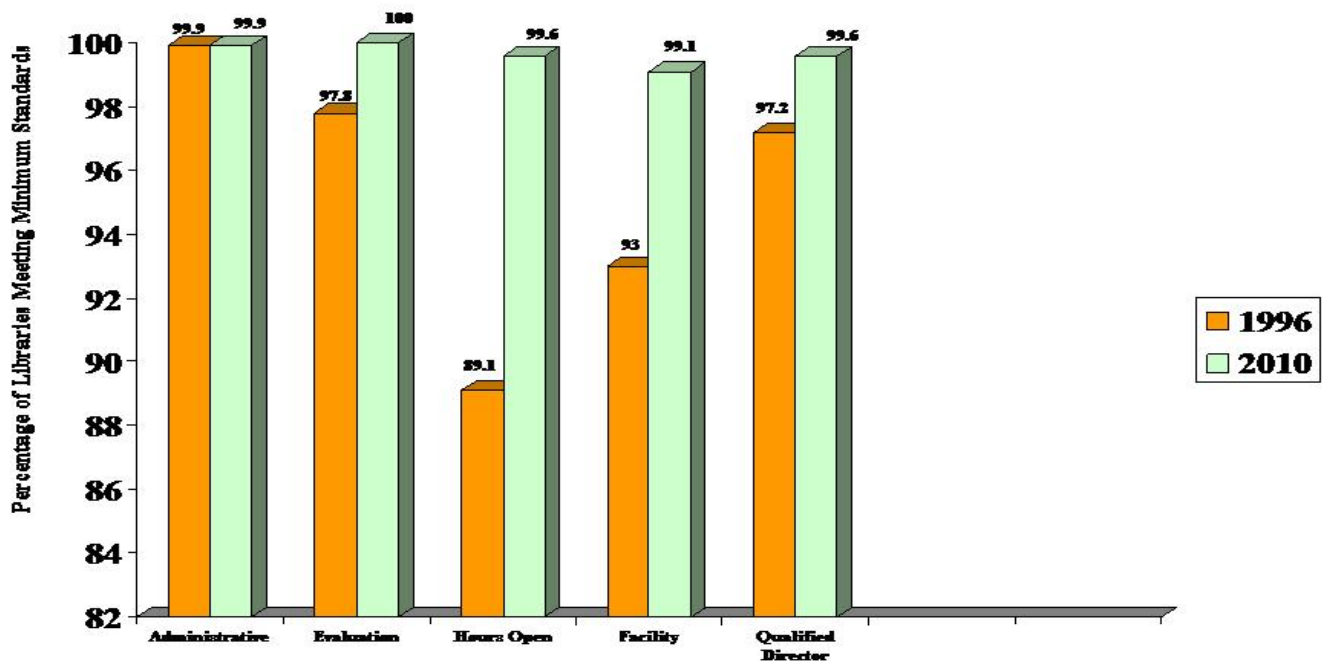
- provide better quality service to their community,
- advocate better for the funds needed to provide quality library service, and
- be more accountable to the community paying for library services.

Developed by a 1988 statewide Committee on Minimum Public Library Standards, the standards were adopted by the Board of Regents as Section 90.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

Communities applying for a library charter or registration must meet all of the minimum standards at the time of application. Education Law requires that a library be chartered and registered to receive local and State public funds.

The New York State Library is committed to improving public library services and works with libraries, library systems, library associations, trustees and other library advocates to help assure New York's public libraries meet the minimum standards.

## NYS Public Libraries Move Ahead As They Meet Minimum Standards (1)



Administrative Standards (Standard numbers: 1,2,3,4,5,10)	Hours Open (Standard 7)	Qualified Paid Director (Standard 11)
Evaluation (Standard 6)	Facility (Standard 8)	

(1) Standards as approved by the Board of Regents, Commissioner's Regulation 90.2 effective 1/29/99 and as reported on the 2010 Annual Report for Public and Association Libraries; updated December 2011

**2010 NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC AND ASSOCIATION LIBRARIES  
AND PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS  
Comparison Chart**

Minimum Public Library Standards Effective January 1999 (1)	2010 Libraries Responding (1)		Change from 2009 to 2010	Change from 1987 to 2010	2010 Percentage of Libraries Meeting Minimum Standard
	YES	NO	YES	YES	
1. Bylaws	756	0	0	756	100.0%
2. Plan	750	6	-5	750	99.2%
3. Community Report	756	0	1	756	100.0%
4. Policies	756	0	0	756	100.0%
5. Budget	756	0	1	756	100.0%
6. Measures Collection	755	1	-1	755	99.9%
7. Hours Open	751	5	-2	239	99.3%
8. Facilities					
a. space	749	7	0	749	99.1%
b. lighting	754	2	1	754	99.7%
c. shelving	749	7	0	749	99.1%
d. seating	748	8	0	748	98.9%
e. restroom	754	2	-1	100	99.7%
9. Equipment					
a. telephone	756	0	0	40	100.0%
b. photocopier	756	0	0	149	100.0%
c. microcomputer or terminal	756	0	0	324	100.0%
d. printer	756	0	0	367	100.0%
e. facsimile capability	755	1	-1	755	99.9%
10. Printed Information	756	0	0	756	100.0%
11. Paid Director meeting <i>CR 90.8</i>	749	7	-1	749	99.1%

(1) Total of 756 public and association libraries reported in 2009 and 2010. Standards as approved by the Board of Regents, *Commissioner's Regulations 90.2*, effective 1/29/99. Data for these elements are current as of December 2011 based on information provided by public library systems.

**Section 90.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education  
STANDARDS FOR REGISTRATION OF  
PUBLIC, FREE ASSOCIATION AND INDIAN LIBRARIES**

90.2 Standards for registration of public, free association and Indian libraries

(a) A public, free association or Indian library will be registered if it meets the following standards satisfactory to the commissioner:

- (1) is governed by written bylaws which outline the responsibilities and procedures of the library board of trustees;
- (2) has a board-approved, written long-range plan of service;
- (3) presents an annual report to the community on the library's progress in meeting its goals and objectives;
- (4) has board-approved written policies for the operation of the library;
- (5) presents annually to appropriate funding agencies a written budget that would enable the library to meet or exceed these standards and to carry out its long-range plan of service;
- (6) periodically evaluates the effectiveness of the library's collection and services in meeting community needs;
- (7) is open the following scheduled hours:

Population	Minimum Weekly Hours Open
Up to 500	12
500 - 2,499	20
2,500 - 4,999	25
5,000 - 14,999	35
15,000 - 24,999	40
25,000 - 99,999	55
100,000 and above	60

- (8) maintains a facility to meet community needs, including adequate space, lighting, shelving, seating, and restroom;
- (9) provides equipment and connections to meet community needs including, but not limited to telephone, photocopier, telefacsimile capability, and microcomputer or terminal with printer to provide access to other library catalogs and other electronic information;
- (10) distributes printed information listing the library's hours open, borrowing rules, services, location and phone number;
- (11) employs a paid director in accordance with the provisions of Section 90.8 of this Part.

(b) Any public, free association or Indian library registered by the department at the time this section takes effect shall be required to meet the standards for registration in subdivision (a) of this section on the following schedule:

- (1) meet the standards of paragraphs (1) through (5) and (10) of subdivision (a) of this section on or before January 1, 1995.
- (2) meet the standards of paragraph (6) of subdivision (a) of this section on or before January 1, 1997.
- (3) meet the standards of paragraphs (7), (8), (9) and (11) of subdivision (a) of this section on or before January 1, 1999.

(c) **Variances.** If circumstances over which any public, free association or Indian library has no control prevent it from meeting one or more of the standards of service set forward in subdivision (a) of this section, such library may apply for a variance for such standard(s). The application for such variance shall be submitted for such library by the public library system of which such library is a member, in a form prescribed by the commissioner. No variance granted pursuant to this subdivision shall be deemed to relieve a public, free association or Indian library of any obligation imposed by any other provision of federal or state law.

## What if a Library Cannot Meet Minimum Standards?

If a library cannot meet one or more of the Minimum Standards, the director or board president should contact its library system to discuss available options. Education Law and Commissioner's Regulations provide a process for libraries that cannot meet a particular standard because of circumstances beyond the library board's control.

## How are Public Library Systems and the State Library Helping Libraries Meet the Challenge?

The Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO) and the New York State Library continue to work together in a strong partnership to help public and association libraries meet the minimum standards. See *Helpful Information for Meeting Minimum Public Library Standards* <<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/helpful.htm>> for further information.

### Background on Minimum Public Library Standards in New York State

The New York State Library worked extensively with public library system leaders, librarians, trustees and other interested stakeholders for the better part of a decade to update New York's 1950 public library standards. The Regents endorsed five nonmonetary standards in 1989, but postponed adopting others until the Local Library Services Aid program was put in place during 1993. On December 17, 1993, the New York State Board of Regents adopted amendments to Section 90.2 of the *Regulations of the Commissioner of Education* related to standards for registration of public, free association and Indian libraries. The regulations became effective on February 4, 1994. On December 11, 1998, the Board of Regents again amended Section 90.2 to change wording to better accommodate new technologies. The amended regulations became effective on January 29, 1999. As of January 1, 1999, all public and association libraries in New York State must meet the eleven public library standards for registration.

**For more information on Minimum Standards for New York's public libraries, contact your public library system, visit our web site or contact:**

**Office of the State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries  
Room 10C34 Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230-0001**

**Phone: (518) 474-5930 • Fax: (518) 486-6880 • E-mail: [bmargolis@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:bmargolis@mail.nysed.gov)  
Web site: <<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov>>**



**The University of the State of New York • The State Education Department  
New York State Library • Cultural Education Center • Albany, NY 12230-0001.**

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