

# SERVICES



## READING TIME CREATES FAMILY TIME

A four-year-old and his mom settle in to read a story. Both of them think, “This is my favorite time of the day.” Finding time to read together is not easy for a working single parent, and she used to think that her son would get everything he needed to read well in school. But a TV ad made her think again. Plus, it showed kids and adults having so much fun that they decided to check out the source. There at the library – free – were the best books and people who talked about reading in ways she could relate to. Thank goodness they found the library!



## ELECTRONIC EXCELLENCE BY THE HOUR

Lots of entrepreneurs talk about serving customers 24/7. This library does more than talk. At home or at work or via PDA, it delivers complete articles, the latest statistics, and online help anytime. People can truly get what they want when, where, and how they want it. The commitment to electronic excellence has caught the attention of businesses and saved them a bundle. The library has even helped to attract new firms with the high-paying jobs that college graduates used to go elsewhere to find.



## DISTANT, BUT STILL CLOSE AT HAND

After reading her e-mail, a high school junior starts gathering statistics about Mars for the hardest, most important project of the school year. When she gets stuck, a librarian helps her understand some confusing numbers. The student then prints some of that day’s photographs from the Mars X satellite along with commentary from one of the country’s most famous planetary researchers. What’s more, she “talked” to the scientist online. This town of 1000 is a long way from anywhere, but at the library it doesn’t seem that way.



## Filling Customers’ Requests

Residents ask libraries for specific titles, detailed information, and community referrals, to name only a few of the types of requests libraries receive. This area quantifies the proportion of requests libraries are able to fill through their systems, interlibrary loan, and other resources.

### Guideline 11: Meeting Requests

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
<b>Gateway</b>	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
<b>Pacesetter</b>	80%	80%	80%	80%	85%	85%
<b>Innovator</b>	85%	85%	85%	90%	90%	90%

## Materials for “Check Out”

The number of books, CDs, videos, and other materials checked out is a common measure of a public library’s quality and value to the community. The more “check outs” the more people that library is serving with the materials they want. However, the number of items residents take home is just one way of looking at a library’s use and value. The use of materials in the library is often as much as a third to a half again as much as the “check out” figures. In addition, residents increasingly take advantage of library resources in ways other than by coming to a building. Telephone reference, fax, web links, e-mail, services with community partners, and many more methods all bring library services to people, rather than the other way around. The following guidelines will help libraries to look at two important facets of their operations, but there are clearly not the only ways of looking at a library’s overall use and value.

### Guideline 12: Use of Materials Outside the Library

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
<b>Gateway</b>	4.4*	5.0	6.0	6.3	4.0	4.8
<b>Pacesetter</b>	2% increase	2% increase	2% increase	2% increase	2% increase	2% increase
<b>Innovator</b>	3% increase	3% increase	4% increase	4% increase	4% increase	4% increase

\*Check outs per resident

### Guideline 13: Check Outs of Children’s Materials

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
<b>Gateway</b>	6.0*	7.0	8.0	8.5	9.0	9.5
<b>Pacesetter</b>	3% increase	3% increase	5% increase	6% increase	7% increase	7% increase
<b>Innovator</b>	5% increase	5% increase	7% increase	8% increase	9% increase	9% increase

\*Check outs per child

## Proportion of Library Materials Less Than 5 Years Old

Having the latest and greatest materials is a notable public library strength, and it also presents a challenge. At times, libraries' older materials are more desirable than the newest ones. The levels presented here apply across systems and branches and take into account that some libraries may have substantial older collections for good reasons. This guideline does not apply to children's materials.

### Guideline 14: Up-to-Date\* Materials

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999**	25,000–99,999**	100,000–750,000**
<b>Gateway</b>	12%	15%	15%	15%	15%	20%
<b>Pacesetter</b>	15%	17%	18%	19%	20%	22%
<b>Innovator</b>	17%	18%	20%	22%	25%	26%

\*Up to date means less than 5 years old \*\*Across systems or communities with multiple locations

## Opportunities for Children to Learn and Do

Children have never been a more important public library audience than they are now. Activities for children foster an ongoing interest in books and reading and trust of the library as a source of assistance and support. Activities may take place in the library or in the community and may be provided by staff, volunteers, or community partners.

### Guideline 15: Program Opportunities for Children per Week\*

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
<b>Gateway</b>	2	2	4	6	8	12
<b>Pacesetter</b>	3	4	5	10	12	14
<b>Innovator</b>	4	5	6	12	14**	18**

\*Opportunities per week may be determined across a year.

\*\*For larger communities, the Innovator level assumes that some programs are of regional and national stature. These may include authors, storytellers, performers, or other programs.

## Growth for Summer Reading Programs

Summer reading programs are among libraries' most innovative programs. Numerous partnerships and new promotions have made summer reading a "must" for thousands of children across the state. This measure considers the percentage of local 5–11 year olds served, and the growth in participation desired.

### Guideline 16: Children's Participation in Summer Reading

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
<b>Gateway</b>	15% Base*	15% Base	18% Base	20% Base	20% Base	25% Base
<b>Pacesetter</b>	3% increase	5% increase	5% increase	7% increase	15% increase	20% increase
<b>Innovator</b>	8% increase	10% increase	12% increase	15% increase	20% increase	25% increase

\*Base means the percent of the population 5–11 years old in the community.

## Opportunities for Youth and Adults

Opportunities for youth and adults are important also. This measure refers to library-sponsored activities that serve a community need or request. Activities may take place in the library or in the community and may be provided by staff, volunteers, or community partners.

### Guideline 17: Opportunities for Youth and Adults Per Month\*

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
<b>Gateway</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Pacesetter</b>	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Innovator</b>	3	4	5	6	7**	8**

\* Opportunities per month may be determined across a year.

\*\* For larger communities, the Innovator level assumes that some programs are of regional and national stature. These may include authors, performers, or programs that would not be available in the community without library sponsorship.

## Community Input for Evaluation and Planning

Feedback from participants and advice from a broad range of interests are vital to developing and improving library services. Some libraries may already have advisory committees or may use a board in that capacity. It is not necessary for libraries to form new groups to meet the Gateway level.

### Guideline 18: Listening to the Community

	< 2,500	2,501–4,999	5,000–9,999	10,000–24,999	25,000–99,999	100,000–750,000
Gateway	Advisory Body Annual Plan/ Review	Advisory Body Annual Plan/ Review	Advisory Body Annual Plan/ Review In-library surveys on satisfaction and needs	Advisory Body Annual Plan/ Review Community interviews with leaders, users, and non-users on issues and needs In-library surveys on satisfaction and needs	Advisory Body Annual Plan/ Review Community interviews with leaders, users, and non-users on issues and needs In-library surveys on satisfaction and needs	Advisory Body Annual Plan/ Review Multiple focus groups with library and non-library users Annual revisions to long-range plan In-library surveys on satisfaction and needs
Pacesetter	In-library surveys on satisfaction and needs	Community interviews with non-library users on needs and preferences In-library surveys on satisfaction and needs	Community interviews with non-library users on needs and preferences Regular use of formal library planning process	Regular use of formal library planning process Annual revisions to long-range plan	Multiple focus groups with library and non-library users Annual revisions to long-range plan	Community survey
Innovator	Community interviews with non-library users on needs and preferences	Regular use of formal library planning process	Online feedback from customers	Community survey	Community survey	Participation in community-wide needs assessments

# ISSUES



## A LIBRARY VOLUNTEER WORKS WITH TOMORROW'S READERS

A toddler sits expectantly as a familiar visitor begins to read to a group of eager two- and three-year olds. After the story, the reader, who has been trained in how to enhance young children's literacy development, engages the little learners in an activity similar to one in the book. Before getting ready to leave, the visitor explains to the childcare staff how to introduce parents to the new "Family Reading" program and adult literacy classes throughout the community. She then adds several more age-appropriate books to the in-house collection. Saying goodbye until next week, this committed, yet unpaid, worker knows that she has provided something most kids get too little of: reading.



## Nurturing the Next Readers

Few topics have been as important to library professionals traditionally as children and reading. Fortunately, that sentiment is now widely shared in Oklahoma and across the country. The *Models of Library Service* include a special initiative on early literacy to bring libraries' unique expertise and resources to an issue of vital interest to Oklahoma and to illustrate how libraries complement the work of other organizations. In addition, in recent years, we have gained an even deeper understanding of how children learn about reading and writing in the years from birth to six and the critical role formal and informal activities play in reading and school success. As early childhood experts have pointed out, "the majority of reading problems faced by today's adolescents and adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years."<sup>2</sup>

Over the next five years at least, Oklahoma's public libraries will increase their commitment to children and literacy. The *Models of Public Library Service* reflect this special emphasis. In this case, the Gateway level is the same for all libraries because of the need for every community's institution to evaluate its status and plan for this important area. The Pacesetter and Innovator levels are presented as "menus" so that library professionals and community leaders may select the items that hold the greatest promise for their areas.

## Guideline 19: All Public Libraries Can Nurture the Next Readers

### Gateway includes:

- Pass a governing board resolution of support for the statewide initiative on Nurturing the Next Readers.
- Ensure that all staff members have an understanding of early literacy.
- Provide special training for any staff member who works with children and families.
- Evaluate and develop goals for the library's collection, staff, partnerships, programming, and the community's needs related to Nurturing the Next Readers. Determine how best to make an impact considering the community's cultures and experience with the library.
- Take the message of early literacy and appropriate services to where people are in the community. In particular, implement services for child care facilities and in-home providers outside of the library.
- Speak in the community about early literacy.

### Pacesetter Menu

- Increase program opportunities and services for young children and caregivers such as Dial-a-Story and Read Aloud options
- Obtain staff training from early childhood experts
- Utilize in-house consultations from state representatives of early childhood organizations or national organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children or Zero to Three
- Offer family reading programs
- Sponsor training for the community on early literacy development
- Participate in literacy advisory committees in the community
- Participate in coalitions, such as Success by Six, that are promoting early childhood development
- Increase learning opportunities for young children in the library

### Innovator Menu

- Focus on convenient access to library services and a variety of venues to reach young children, parents, and caregivers
- Increase the number of degreed children's librarians
- Identify a cadre of early literacy staff members for additional training
- Increase collections by one book for each child under age five over a five-year period
- Develop partnerships for programming for families and children with a school district or a community-based organization
- Implement one of the "best practice" programs identified by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries
- Create or implement pilot or model programs to meet local needs
- Form a staff and volunteer Speakers' Bureau on early literacy
- Develop school readiness partnerships
- Train child care providers in literacy issues
- Offer multigenerational programming to support early literacy and take advantage of retiree skills
- Track early literacy activities throughout the community and be the ongoing "champion" for this issue
- Sponsor events and enhance collections that celebrate the diversity of the community
- Sponsor a conference or community "summit" on early literacy and related topics

## Investments to Fuel Communities’ “Engines of Change”

Historian Barbara Tuchman called books “engines of change” in one of her many essays. At the community level, public libraries could be described in the same way. To keep this unique “motor” running at peak performance, library leaders and policy makers need a variety of funding tools and options. All of the items in the following list should be part of any public library’s funding “toolbox.”

- **Economies of scale and outsourcing**—Libraries may benefit from joining with other public libraries for certain functions or from contracting out certain tasks. The positive track record of library districts reflects the potential from economies of scale. Numerous libraries have looked to outsourcing, especially of technical functions, to save dollars and staff time for activities more focused on users and the public.
- **Funding flexibility** (meaning lifting “caps” and developing new financing tools or using existing tools in different ways)—Some libraries face limitations in their basic tax rates making flexibility a key need.
- **Bond funds**—Public facilities are often developed with a variety of types of bonds, but not all Oklahoma public libraries or systems have access to this tool now.
- **State aid**—This funding through the State of Oklahoma is critical to helping communities provide and improve public library services. State aid is determined by formula and guarantees a public library or system an amount that supplements its base and often helps to generate other funds. As shown in Table 4, any increase in state aid would be a small amount of dollars, but a significant step forward for local areas.
- **Library foundations and programs of individual gifts and bequests**—Having mechanisms available to encourage individuals, corporations, and foundations to support public library activities is an important step for any community.
- **Friends of the Library financial support**—Volunteer Friends give their time and talent to libraries in many ways. Some public libraries, though, also receive sizable annual cash contributions from their Friends in addition to other assistance.
- **Retail operations and other entrepreneurial activities**—Coffee shops and gift shops may come to mind first, but some communities have developed funding streams from classic film festivals or a concert series.
- **Grantwriting**—This common tool is often critical to obtaining funds for innovative programs and partnerships.
- **In-kind donations**—With the many resources available among community members and businesses, public libraries can benefit from the expertise of a local leader or equipment from a business.
- **Diversification of funding sources**—Libraries traditionally receive municipal funds or dollars through a special district. However, many other sources of public and private funds could, and are being used, by public libraries. In terms of public dollars, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are just two federal sources that have been used by libraries, often in conjunction with other organizations. New federal education dollars, historic preservation funds, arts grants, and many more might be tapped.
- **Matching**—Many libraries have made their public dollars stretch further by matching them with other funds and using them to meet “challenges” from donors to raise additional dollars to match “seed” funds.



## Public Library Economics

Public libraries are multi-faceted operations that include many types of people and systems. As a rule of thumb, public library budgets break out into four categories: 1) People (65–70% of total budget); 2) Technology (5–10% of total); 3) Operations (15–20%); and 4) Materials (15–20%). This formula provides an important guideline for planning and funding, especially as institutions work to achieve various parts of the models. Because each public library is different, giving an exact budget guideline would be counterproductive. However, library trustees, funders, and elected officials can get a good sense of the total funding needed to move towards achieving the Oklahoma vision from Tables 4–6.

Table 4: **Among Comparable States, Oklahoma’s Libraries Rank Fourth in Total Income**

State	State Aid to Public Libraries Per Resident, FY 1999	Total* Public Library Income Per Resident, FY, 1999
Arkansas	\$1.64	\$14.72
Colorado	\$0.65	\$35.17
Kansas	\$0.76	\$30.07
Missouri	\$0.61	\$30.08
New Mexico	\$0.33	\$18.66
Oklahoma	\$0.65	\$20.53

\*Includes federal, state, local, and private funds

Table 5: **Average Public Library Income in Communities of All Sizes Across the U.S. Tops that in Oklahoma**

Community Size	Average Total Income U.S.	Average Total Income Oklahoma
500,000–999,999	\$23,448,756	\$18,133,365
250,000–499,999	\$10,133,281	\$4,192,724
100,000–249,000	\$4,433,954	\$2,507,694
25,000–99,999	\$1,997,037	\$831,164
10,000–24,999	\$635,370	\$283,562
5,000–9,999	\$262,464	\$125,854
< 5,000	\$142,958	NA
2,501–4,999	NA	\$68,691
< 2,500	NA	\$34,513

Sources: Public Library Data Service, Statistical Report, 2002 and Oklahoma Department of Libraries Annual Report, FY 2001

Table 6: U.S. Public Libraries' Expenditures Reflect Their Greater Resources

Community Size	Public Library Expenditures Median U.S.	Public Library Expenditures Average U.S.
500,000–999,999	\$19,270,225	\$22,492,352
250,000–499,999	\$8,057,218	\$9,574,540
100,000–249,000	\$3,550,798	\$4,093,336
25,000–99,999	\$1,485,639	\$1,852,396
10,000–24,999	\$479,598	\$582,896
5,000–9,999	\$222,495	\$244,526
< 5,000	\$82,837	\$127,049

Source: Public Library Data Service, *Statistical Report*, 2002.

## Coming Together: A Proven Choice

For some libraries, the future may appear to be bleak instead of bright because of a declining tax base, isolated location, or shifting population. The solution to the dilemma of providing sufficient resources for public libraries may be combining with other towns in similar situations or joining a library system or district. These are certainly viable options in Oklahoma. But, many will ask: Does it really pay to merge? The answer, based on research done by the Colorado Library Research Service, is a resounding yes. Their study looked at the effects of membership in systems, federations, and cooperatives, especially for public libraries serving communities with less than 25,000 residents. The findings included:

- Small public libraries that are members of systems have more dollars to work with than those that choose to go it alone. System libraries realize, in particular, more funds for staff and collections.
- Use is higher among system libraries in comparison to others so communities are getting a better “deal” for their dollars.
- Technology resources and staff opportunities expand as well.<sup>3</sup>

This viable option deserves serious consideration by community and library leaders across the state.



### COMING TOGETHER TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE

People have always treasured their ranching lifestyle. Now, though, the area is losing residents faster than it is gaining them. Fewer people mean a smaller tax base and a struggle to provide the services the area wants and needs. The town wants to maintain, and even improve, its library especially now that it and the school are so important to adults working to learn new skills. But, it always boils down to money and that eroding tax base. A solution finally came through a suggestion from other towns in similar straits. By combining their efforts, each library got more than it would have had on its own. Local dollars were suddenly multiplied tenfold. Banding together has breathed new life into a town that thought it didn't have any choices.

## Steps Beyond for Oklahoma: Issues for the Future of Public Libraries

These models provide a starting point for the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century public libraries throughout Oklahoma. However, much more remains to be done for public libraries to be able to meet the challenges that are between them and the vision. Together, we will develop timely research and recommendations on topics vital to the continual improvement and funding of the state's public libraries.

These topics include:

- Technical assistance for achieving the models
- Telecommunications and technology initiatives to reduce costs and enhance services throughout the state
- Partnerships in the private, public and nonprofit sectors to enhance revenues and services
- Changes needed in statewide performance measures to enhance and promote the use of the models
- Additional funding sources for public libraries statewide
- Recruitment, retention, compensation, and status of library professionals
- Career development for library professionals, especially related to children's services, leadership, and collaboration

*Choosing a Dynamic Future* began with a description of what could be the reality for Oklahoma's public libraries in just a few short years. Today's decisions can definitely bring big dividends. If we work together to take advantage of our opportunities and address our challenges, the vision of Oklahoma children entering school ready to read and learn, more students graduating from high school and college, more prosperity, and a higher quality of life will happen. Then, with our public libraries on the leading edge of learning and service for Oklahomans, we can look to our next vision of quality.



Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are engines of change, windows on the world, "lighthouses" (as a poet said) "erected in the sea of time." They are companions, teachers, magicians, bankers of the treasures of the mind. Books are humanity in print.—Barbara W. Tuchman

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### Notes—

<sup>1</sup> "Library usage up in wake of recession," American Library Association, April 15, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Zero to Three

<sup>3</sup> "It Pays to Belong: Small Libraries Benefit From Membership in Systems, Federations, and Cooperatives," Fast Facts, Colorado Library Research Service, 1999.