



**Diputació
Barcelona**
xarxa de municipis

The Municipal Public Library

Guidelines for urban networks

The Municipal Public Library: guidelines for urban networks



**Diputació
Barcelona**

**Culture Section
Library Services Management**

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Foreword

The growth of the province's network of municipal libraries, in terms of size and, above all, in terms of quality, with new facilities being created constantly and many others being enlarged, as well as the considerable growth of the collections, the capacity to provide new services and, indeed, the great public demand for these resources, provide a resounding endorsement of the model of networked library services which the Diputació de Barcelona has implemented. A model which, with its ability to combine a firm commitment to bringing the provision of services closer to users, and the existence of networked planning, management and support tools that ensure common standards of quality, has become an example both at home and abroad.

But quite apart from the specific milestones that have been achieved, there is an underlying objective that must never be forgotten: to maintain and improve the balance the Municipal Libraries Network has been able to maintain between, on the one hand, flexibility (that is to say, the ability to meet the needs of the local environment of each particular library) and, on the other, the integrated provision of services that must ensure territorial cohesion and the right of all the province's citizens to have access to high-quality facilities, regardless of their place of residence.

This difficult but necessary balance has been maintained thanks to the involvement and commitment of the local authorities, who have taken up the public library project as their own. It is on this basis that the document you are reading has been prepared: a series of guidelines that seek to take yet another step forward to improve the library service in the cities, and which represent a firm commitment to a networked operations and management model based on proximity to the public, support for local cultural policies and the optimisation of resources in order to offer a wide range of services, adapted to the needs of each setting and, at the same time, sufficiently comprehensive to meet the expectations of 21st-century citizens.

José Manuel González Labrador
Delegate President of the Culture Section

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Introduction

The mission of the Diputació de Barcelona Libraries Services Management has been and continues to be focused on providing the territory with the library facilities needed to promote a system of public reading and make culture available to everyone. It is with this in mind that we are now moving forward to introduce new elements into the library policies for the big cities.

Under the provisions of Law 4/1993, concerning the library system in Catalonia, municipalities with a population exceeding 30,000 may provide a library service on a decentralised basis, according to their territorial structure. In Catalonia there are currently 39 municipalities with over 30,000 inhabitants, of which 29 are in the province of Barcelona.

We have good central libraries and good local libraries. Now, however, we need to take another step forward: the various libraries in a municipality must be forged into a single service, thus creating an integrated local system, which can meet the particular needs of the area it serves and advance towards the concept of “municipal public library”.

It was with this aim in mind, therefore, that we embarked on the project of setting forth some Guidelines for urban networks, and with the support of a contrast group we have analysed each of the elements needed to configure the local public library system of the future for the big cities.

Hence, the aim of this document is to put forward some new factors for consideration regarding municipal public library networks and lend impetus to a new service and management model for these networks. It should be noted that it is not the purpose of these considerations to provide a single homogeneous model for all municipalities. We have to deal with a variety of different situations and what we are seeking to do here is to provide some basic principles.

We in Library Services Management are committed to innovation in services and in management, with the will to continue giving support to the development of public libraries and the library service in each of the municipalities within the province of Barcelona.

Jordi Permanyer i Bastardas
Director of Library Services

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1. The starting point

1.1. Legal and regulatory framework for the public library and municipal library networks

In 2001 the latest version of *The Public Library Service: the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development*¹ was published. According to these guidelines, public libraries should focus on the following major areas:

- Access to information
- Support for training
- Promotion of reading/cultural development
- Providing a social space
- Support for personal development
- Services for children and young people

It is considered that public libraries must incorporate added value in the services they provide and focus on specific groups of members of the public, bearing in mind the circumstances of their local area. In order to specify and plan the municipal library facilities needed for Catalonia we have the Public Reading Map and the library standards. The Diputació de Barcelona is a leader in this regard and since the late 1980s it has had its own parameters which are suited to the province's needs and particular circumstances and which define, according to the number of inhabitants and the characteristics of each municipality, the dimensioning of the facility or set of facilities required, the collections and the level of staffing, amongst other factors. These parameters have gradually evolved since then and have been revised several times, notable being the 1999 version, which was included, together with other reference documents, in the IFLA/UNESCO guidelines. The latest version of the *Catalonian Public Library Standards* dates from 2007 and was drawn up jointly by the Libraries Department of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) and the Library Services Management unit of the Diputació de Barcelona (Barcelona Provincial Council).

As for municipal networks, the law concerning the Catalan library system establishes that cities with over 30,000 inhabitants must have a central urban library which coordinates, supports and advises the other libraries and mobile library services within

¹*The Public Library Service: the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development*. München: Saur, 2001. 116 p. (IFLA Publications ; 97). ISBN 3-598-21827-3.

the municipality. Furthermore, the law regulates the establishment and operation of a public reading committee.²

It should be noted that in Spain as a whole the specific library legislation of the various Autonomous Communities are not unanimous regarding the dimensioning of municipal and urban networks (from 20,000 inhabitants in Andalusia, Castilla-la Mancha, Castilla y León, Extremadura, Madrid and Navarre; from 25,000 inhabitants in the Valencian Community; from 30,000 inhabitants in Catalonia and the Basque Country, and from 50,000 inhabitants in Galicia and Murcia).

In accordance with the Catalan legislation, urban library networks consist of a central urban library and the local and branch libraries. Furthermore, the Public Reading Map includes a reference to mobile library services, which can complement the services of central urban libraries and which are particularly suited to rural and suburban areas where there are no permanent public reading services.

² Specifically, article 38 of the law states: "In each district and each municipality where there is an urban central library there will be a Public Reading Committee"

1.2. The library situation in municipalities with over 30,000 inhabitants

All the Catalan municipalities that must by law provide a municipal library system have a public library service, but only six of the 39 Catalan municipalities with a population exceeding 30,000 at present meet the provisions of the approved library plan.³

In the majority of situations the central library and the local libraries⁴ do not form a true municipal network. Their relationship is generally limited to the coordination of activities by the central library, and also in some cases consensus regarding certain technical aspects. The differences between the services, collections and buildings of the libraries in the same municipality are basically quantitative. Hence we find that the local libraries are a small-scale replica of the central library as regards their collections, the organisation of their space and the services they offer: there is no clear differentiation between the services and resources of the different components of the network nor is full advantage taken of the benefits of really operating in a network.

As regards mobile library services, Catalonia's eleven mobile libraries serve only rural municipalities. At present there is no urban mobile library service, although some local authorities are considering one for the future development of their library services, and from the late 1950s to the 1970s the provincial People's Library Service had two mobile libraries that served certain districts of Barcelona, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Esplugues de Llobregat and Sant Joan Despí.

If we analyse the evolution and tendencies of the public library networks in various other European cities, we find the following differentiating characteristics with regard to the current situation in Catalonia:

- Greater Web presence and development of virtual services. Bolstering of user autonomy and à la carte services.
- The existence of urban mobile libraries, which bring the library service closer to the public living in outlying districts where the population density does not justify the existence of a fixed facility.

³ In chronological order of approval: L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (1997), Terrassa (1998), Barcelona (1998), Sant Cugat del Vallès (2003), Sabadell (2006) and Sant Boi de Llobregat (2007). In addition to these, other municipalities have also carried out library planning processes, but the resulting plans have not been brought before the full council.

⁴ Also known as "branch libraries" or "neighbourhood libraries". They provide service for part of the municipality with a smaller, more specific area of influence than the central library, enabling more personal attention and greater adaptability of their services to local circumstances.

- A tendency to combine large libraries and libraries with specialised offerings for young people, a mediateque, music libraries, etc.
- The provision within the municipal network of library access points which bring the library service to the general public in busy public places (bus and rail stations, markets, beaches, swimming pools, etc.) or to those particular groups who, for various reasons, have difficulty accessing the service (hospitals, prisons, etc.).

2. The municipal network. Definition and components

2.1. The concept of “municipal public library”

A perspective based on networking and a greater differentiation of the functions of the various components leads us to the concept of “municipal public library” understood as a library service, independently of the number of facilities and components needed to provide it. These facilities and components are the means to provide the service but are not an end in themselves: a single library working alone can hardly be expected to meet the needs of all its users unless by way of cooperation, optimisation and distribution of resources and services within the framework of an overall city-wide system that at the same time allows for adaptability and specialisation to suit the immediate local needs of each of its components.

The municipal public library⁵ is made up of:

- A single, shared mission.
- A single catalogue of city library services, provided both on-line through the library Web-site and personally through the physical facilities.
- A network of libraries and possibly other components with some basic functions in common and some functions differentiated, but all under common administration.
- The organisation of the various buildings according to type and suited to the needs of their immediate local area.
- A single, city-wide documentary collection policy.
- Integrated management of resources, both human and financial.
- Shared annual planning.
- Joint planning and management of promotion and dissemination activities.
- A shared image and communication policy.

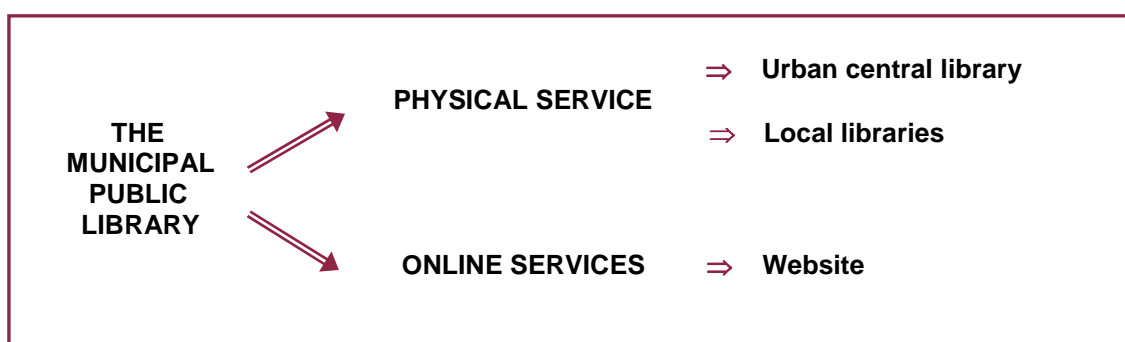
⁵ In some documents on the subject, reference is made to an “urban library system” or “network”.

The principles underlying the municipal public library model we are seeking to establish are:

- Cooperation
- Complementarity
- Efficiency
- Territorial balance
- Proximity and accessibility
- Suitability and adaptability

2.2. Components of the municipal public library and the functions of the different types of library

The municipal public library is available to the public in two ways: physically and virtually. The physical services are provided through the area's network of facilities and the online services are provided through the municipal public library's Web site.



The municipal public library—which we shall henceforth refer to as the MPL—in an area network is made up of a central library and at least one local library. The remainder of the MPL is constituted by its Web site.

PHYSICAL SERVICE: THE TERRITORIAL NETWORK OF FACILITIES

The territorial network is made up of the following components:

- central library
- local libraries⁶

In addition, in the case of the city of Barcelona the concept of a district central library is also introduced: its functions are half-way between those of the central library and those of the local libraries, it being responsible for coordinating the local libraries within

⁶ These are now usually called neighbourhood libraries or district libraries (according to the municipality and its administrative distribution). In English-speaking countries the term branch library is usually used.

its area. Furthermore, it should serve as an intermediary between these and the central library—when the latter becomes a reality.⁷

In order to determine the number, type and characteristics of the components of the local network, as well as their location, the distance users need to travel to access the library service must above all be borne in mind. In view of the conditions prevailing in our cities and considerations of mobility, members of the public must be able to reach a library at a maximum of fifteen minutes on foot from their place of residence; this indirectly implies that the distance between any two MPL facilities should not be less than 25 minutes on foot.

The structure of the local network must not be conceived of as something closed and unchangeable once the facilities provided for in the initial planning have been brought into existence. The ongoing change of cities means that the structure needs to be constantly reviewed in order to cope with the sociodemographic and urbanistic changes that might occur. Such changes might call for the adoption of corrective actions that might imply the creation of new service points or the enlargement or transfer, or indeed closure, of existing ones.

Networking and the fact of pertaining to a single system implies a functional distinction between the various components of the library system. The functions in question affect the services and consequently their specific needs for facilities and resources. The functions of the various library components are described below.

The urban central library

The urban central library is the core of the area's public reading service and the guardian of its documentary and bibliographic heritage. The urban central library is the lynchpin of the local network of public libraries and must provide leadership, coordination and support for the rest of the libraries in the MPL. It must therefore function on two levels:

- a service for the general public
- an internal service for the other components of the network

By definition, its zone of influence covers the entire municipality, including its floating population, but at the same time it must play the role of local library for those who live close by.

⁷ For more detail on the definition and functions of district libraries, see the Pla de Biblioteques de Barcelona (Barcelona Libraries Plan).

The main functions of the central library are:

- to lead and coordinate local network services at the city level.
- to ensure the provision of city services.
- to centralise those technical and administrative tasks that permit the optimisation of resources and an increased efficiency of processes (these would vary from network to network).
- to manage the network's staff and the mobility of human resources as required by circumstances.
- to centralise and coordinate financial and material resources.
- to direct the MPL's image and communication policy.
- to coordinate the production, maintenance and updating of the content of the MPL's Web site and its intranet and technically responsible for their publication.
- to act as an access node to other regional and national libraries.
- and to perform the functions of a local library in its immediate area of influence.

The local libraries

The local libraries serve a smaller, more localised part of the municipality. This fact enables them to be more involved in their immediate social environment and to play an active role in the development of their area of influence through more personalised attention, suiting their services to the interests and needs of the community they serve. The number and characteristics of the local libraries will vary according to the municipality's geographical, demographic, social and cultural circumstances.

Their basic functions are:

- to be the citizen's first port of call for municipal public reading services.
- to meet the most immediate demand for information and reading in their surrounding environment.
- to bring the public administration and its services closer to their area of coverage.
- to be one of the primary places in their local area for people to meet and interact.

In order to perform these functions it is essential for them to be able to adapt and evolve according to the needs of the surrounding area and to forge links with local organisations and cultural entities.

ONLINE SERVICES: THE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY'S WEBSITE

The municipal public library's website is the portal for online access to its services, beyond the physical space of its facilities and with unlimited opening hours. The MPL's website provides a single point of access for shared services and content.

Its basic functions are:

- to promote and raise awareness of the MPL, its resources and services, amongst both users and non-users of the physical library.
- to offer virtual services 24 hours a day.
- to provide immediate access to the MPL's digital collection.
- to provide information for all types of user, regardless of their age, needs and preferences.
- to provide materials and resources that facilitate the acquisition of computer literacy and for continuing education.
- to organise and disseminate information of a local and/or specialised nature, facilitating access to it by means of the digitalisation of documents.
- to reflect the activities of the area's network of facilities.
- to be a platform to promote dialogue and the exchange of views.

The MPL's website is not something that stands in isolation: it must bring together municipal online services and the online services offered by supramunicipal library networks (access to the collective catalogue, online administrative procedures, electronic subscriptions, etc.).

Responsibility for its infrastructure and the architecture of the information (content framework) is centralised at the central library. On the other hand, it must be possible to manage and maintain the content directly from all the libraries in the network with

different degrees of responsibility. Cooperative work in this regard makes it possible to save effort and share resources.

The MPL's website must comply with all information-exchange standards (XML, Dublin Core, OAI-PMH, amongst others) and must provide RSS⁸ feeds for the benefit of other websites. Its content must be accessible from any browser running on any platform, complying with basic accessibility standards (AA⁹). The treatment of personal data must comply with the currently applicable law¹⁰.

⁸ RSS (*Really Simple Syndication*) is a data format enabling the reuse of external websites, integrating them into one's own website in real time.

⁹ *Ley 56/2007 de Medidas de Impulso de la Sociedad de la Información*, according to which from 28 December 2008 all websites of public administrative authorities must comply with at least level 2 accessibility.

¹⁰ *Ley Orgánica 15/1999 de Protección de datos de carácter personal* of December 1999 is designed to protect personal information.

2.3. The Public Reading Committee

The Public Reading Committee is a participative body provided for under the law governing the Catalan library system that assists and advises the local authority on policy to be adopted regarding public reading. It could be described as a sort of “senate” with representatives of all the agents involved in the provision of the service and of the members of the public who use the service.

This representation of the public brings the service closer to the user, increases awareness of the needs of citizens and facilitates cooperation with local organisations.

The functions of the committee are:

- to collaborate with the MPL in the fulfilment of its functions.
- to analyse requirements for facilities and services in the municipality.
- to programme promotional activities to stimulate library use.
- to foster the habit of reading in the city.
- to foster cooperation at a local level between the libraries and other neighbourhood agents.
- to promote coordinated action by public and school libraries.
- any other task with which it is entrusted by the local authority.

The local authority determines the Committee’s makeup and manner of operation. However, it will always be chaired by a representative of the local authority (the mayor or the councillor for culture) and the director of the central library will always be a member.

2.4. The municipal public library and local cooperation

Library cooperation is not limited just to the MPL. Above and beyond this, collaborative links must be forged within the municipal area with the various other services which exist (public, school, specialised and university libraries, information services, etc.). The Public Reading Committee will foster coordination and joint actions by the MPL and other library services and agents in the territory.

The totality of the city's library and information services must act together in a coordinated way, focussing on the attainment of common objectives through cooperation. Joint action by the agents involved will be oriented towards:

- providing access to the various catalogues via the municipal website.
- jointly designing certain services such as the city's interlibrary loan system.
- coordinating the stock policy of the various library services.
- participating in the local information service (tourism, juvenile, seniors, etc.) and establishing Web portals giving access to the information resources available in the municipality.
- jointly participating in local information policy (including social; self-access courses in ICT; continuing education for the public, etc.).
- sharing certain resources and spaces (multimedia classrooms, study rooms, self-study centres, etc.).
- fostering the creation of documentation and studies of local history.
- jointly programming activities to stimulate reading and foster the local cultural heritage.

Each library service must retain its specific characteristics, in view of the fact that they do not have a mission in common, and that neither are the users of their services held in common. It must also be borne in mind that their areas of responsibility are different and that different levels of the public administration are involved, as well as private organisations and associations. These issues manifest the need to set specific objectives and share out responsibilities in accordance with the specific local circumstances with a view to going a step beyond the current situation, which is one of ad hoc cooperation taking place in some municipalities.

A priority in the context of local cooperation is that of establishing relationships and cooperation projects between public and school libraries. In this regard, the Laboratori Biblioteca escolar-Biblioteca pública (School Library/Public Library Laboratory) has already analysed and laid down ground-rules for cooperation between public and school libraries¹¹.

Furthermore, in addition to the relations established with other library and information services, the MPL must also open up ways of cooperating with other local cultural, educational, social and economic agents in its area. The MPL must establish cooperation with these agents at various levels and to different degrees with the twin aim of becoming an information provider and offering special services to groups of specific users. The relations between the various agents and the programmes for cooperation and collaboration between these and the MPL will vary according to the specific circumstances of each municipality.

In the next sections of the document we focus on developing the concept that encompasses various aspects of municipal public library. To the extent that this network is well defined and can be set to ensure best results with regard to cooperation between different actors in the city.

¹¹ The Laboratori Biblioteca escolar-Biblioteca pública is the outcome of a joint project by the Diputació de Barcelona Public Libraries Service, the Spanish ministry of education and the Catalan ministries of education and of culture. The documents with the resulting recommendations can be found at: <<http://www.diba.cat/biblioteques/treballenxarxa/quefem/xarxabiblioteques/projectelaboratori.asp>> [last consulted: 27/08/09].

3. Services

3.1. Specifying services from a city-wide perspective

The development and greater implementation of online services relativises the importance of the physical collections and the library building as a place for the user to relate to the library: library service and access to information can be provided remotely from the documentary collection and outside the public facility. This fact leads to a conceptual logic that understands the library as a service, a space for relations—both physical and virtual—that is not restricted to the fixed library facilities, but also serves other public and virtual sites. The concept of the “accessibility of the library” no longer refers just to specific buildings and places, but also applies to the services and bringing them closer to the public, on the basis of the characteristics and specific needs of the various segments of the population.

At the present time and in general terms, central libraries and local libraries offer similar services. On the one hand, there are basic services at all the sites to fulfil the normal mission of a library, such as an information service, a consultation and reading service and a loan service; on the other, there needs to be a strengthening and/or differentiation of certain services, according to the characteristics of the public in their respective areas of influence. In its turn, however, the ideal of service would be for members of the public to be able to use the services under the same conditions regardless of their place of residence. In this regard, the strengthening of networking and the services offered via the MPL’s website acquire great importance.

In comparison with the current situation, the MPL needs to make progress with its services along the following lines:

- precisely define the role of the various facilities in the production and dissemination of services, on the basis of increased networking and a differentiation of services between the different types of physical facility.
- create a menu of services for the city understood as a commitment to the quality of service.
- reinforce online services via the Internet.
- coordinate a single catalogue of activities.
- plan and evaluate the library service as a whole and draw up annual action plans as the basis for the improvement of services.
- fix opening hours at the city level on a coordinated basis.
- provide access points to the service outside the fixed facilities.

3.2. The catalogue of services

The single catalogue of services has to proceed from a single, shared mission which is understood as the *raison d'être* of the service. This mission is the primordial objective toward which all the services, plans and programmes must be aimed.

The city's catalogue of services takes on a new dimension with information and communication technology: the production and dissemination of services is decentralised and the central library takes on a new dimension, that of leading and coordinating services, whether physical or online. It also reveals the need for greater coordination and cooperation in the production and dissemination of services that will reinforce the role of local libraries. Such coordination will lead to an improvement in the management of the network and the optimisation of resources, and in the last instance, to the improvement of the service the public receives.

The central library

As far as services are concerned, the central library must adopt the following position:

- lead and coordinate the basic policies of the MPL's services.
- provide specific, specialised services for the city (amongst others, we might consider the local information service and support for training and self-access learning).
- coordinate the library services offered through the MPL's website. The central library must create and maintain electronic information resources for local content and content directed at specific groups (by topic and/or age-group), always according to the municipality's priority policies. Acting as a production centre for local information, it must contribute digital local content to the overall network.
- act as a lending library and coordinate the interlibrary lending service (that is, both internally, between the MPL's own facilities and service points, and externally, with other libraries and organisations, whether located in the same municipality or not).
- coordinate library extension services and special services (hospital patients, those with physical or mental disabilities, etc.) on the basis of an overall view of the city, whether these are offered directly or through the local libraries.

- coordinate the programming of activities to promote reading at city level and manage joint or shared activities.
- devise support materials for the management of the services.

On the other hand, the central library must also be able to decentralise all those services that are provided to meet the specific needs of a group of users who are found in a particular geographical area of the municipality covered by a local library. It must be borne in mind that certain services are “born” in the local libraries, and the viability of such initiatives being continued there is dependent on the continuing existence of specific needs. In this case, the central library must coordinate resources rather than centralise them.

The creation of a shared intranet improves the effectiveness of such coordination. The central library will maintain the municipal network of libraries’ intranet, with useful information for the management of the network and the design of services (municipal data, procedures, support , etc.).

Local libraries

Working as a network, the local libraries bring the library service as a whole close to the citizen in their area of influence. They therefore provide a decentralised service, close to the citizen. Although fewer services are directly available from them, they in turn benefit from the services provided and coordinated by the central library.

The MPL’s service policy necessitates a greater differentiation of services between the different local libraries based on a more accurate analysis of the public’s needs in the area of influence of each of them. This implies the creation of specific services according to the particular circumstances of the area.

Other service points

When planning services, it is necessary to bear in mind factors such as the mobility of the population and to contemplate the provision of services wherever people may be. It is to this end that, in addition to the central library and the local libraries, the possibility of providing other service points to enhance the accessibility of services must be considered. These should be planned for in the annual action plan and will always act subordinately to the urban central library—or in the absence of such, the district central library—from which they will receive support and assessment.

The access points are intended to provide service in busy, central places in the city in order to integrate the library service into the daily life of the citizens. They may be permanent or temporary, or may be set up on an ad hoc basis according to the location and the time of year:

- Permanent service points: bus and rail stations, markets and shopping malls, busy leisure areas, etc.
- Temporary service points: public places such as parks, squares, gardens, beaches or swimming-pools during the summer, to take advantage of the good weather.
- Ad hoc service points: specific cultural, leisure or commercial events such as festivals, fairs and exhibitions.

Access points are never intended to replace a library and they are to be set up after prior planning and with a subsequent assessment on the basis of each municipality's specific characteristics and the aims it is intended to achieve.

Services according to the type of facility

As a guide, the following table shows a proposed distribution according to the type of library, which must be adapted to the local circumstances in each case. As well as the services provided in physical premises, provision must be made to make these services available through the MPL's website.

SERVICES	Territorial network	
	Central library	Local library
Information and reference service		
Basic service	✓	✓
Design of information services for local groups of users	✓	*
Selective information service and specialised documentary collection	✓	*
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	
Local information service		
Basic service	✓	✓
Creation of databases with local content	✓	*
Assessment on the creation of networked local documentation centres	✓	
Advice to local organisations on the design of documentary content for their websites	✓	
Cooperation with other municipal information services	✓	*
Publication of material with local content and/or of interest to a specific sector	✓	*
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	

* Within its area of influence and in collaboration with the urban central library

SERVICES	Territorial network	
	Central library	Local library
Consultation and reading-room service		
Basic service	✓	✓
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	
Lending service		
Basic service	✓	✓
Interlibrary loan service	✓	✓
Home loan service	✓	✓
Loan service for public and private institutions	✓	*
Policy definition for and coordination of the loan service	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	
Document search service		
Basic service	✓	✓
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	
Training services and support for self-access learning		
Basic service	✓	✓
User training service	✓	✓
Support centre for continuing education and distance learning	✓	
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	

SERVICES	Territorial network	
	Central library	Local library
Reading-promotion and cultural extension services		
Basic service	✓	✓
Organisation of activities	✓	✓
Library services “beyond the gates”	✓	*
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	✓
Services in schools		
Basic service	✓	✓
Advice on organising the school library	✓	
Organisation of joint activities	✓	✓
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	
Special services		
Basic service	✓	*
Service coordination	✓	
Creation of support materials	✓	
Dissemination of services		
Basic dissemination	✓	✓
Creation and maintenance of the website	✓	*
Creation of materials for dissemination	✓	*
Definition of the dissemination and coordination policy	✓	

3.3. Services menu

The services menu is a document expressing a commitment to quality in which the MPL expounds its framework of action and describes the services it offers. This document must inform users of the services which are available to them and what they can expect of them, as well as the conditions and the responsibility they incur when using them.

The MPL's services menu will state:

- the MPL's mission and objectives.
- a description and location of services.
- specific commitments to quality through quality indicators that make it possible to measure the degree to which the specified quality has been attained.
- the users' rights and duties.
- the channels of communication between the user and the library (suggestions, requests, complaints, etc.).
- quotations from or brief references to the regulatory provisions that govern the library's mission, functions and services.
- the opening hours, addresses, available public transport and contact data of the various library buildings and service points (may be accompanied by a plan of the municipality).

The services menu must transmit and reflect values such as a swift and professional provision of services, their variety and quality, their accessibility and reliability, professional credibility, capacity to respond and personalised attention. Furthermore, it will help the MPL to evaluate and improve the quality of its service, through monitoring of the degree to which commitments are fulfilled, and it will make it possible to improve communication with members of the community and the exercise of their rights as users.

The services menu must be updated periodically and contain information regarding the extent to which the commitments made in previous versions have been attained.

3.4. Opening hours

The length of time and the times of day when the library service is available are fundamental factors if the community is to make effective use of the resources, services and other facilities provided by the library. In this regard the MPL must strike a balance between the needs of the public and its own objectives, services and resources.

In order to facilitate access to the library service, the hours of service of the network as a whole must first be defined, and then the timetables of each of the MPL's components must be set. The local libraries will define their opening hours in accordance with the dynamics and needs of the potential users in their area of influence, seeking at the same time to make them complementary with the opening times of the central library and the other local libraries in order to provide the maximum possible number of hours of opening in the city as a whole.

The current library standards define minimum hours of service according to type of library. The opening hours of central libraries must be long, up to 60 hours a week in the largest municipalities, and those of the local libraries must not be less than 35-40 hours a week, depending on the number of inhabitants in their area of influence. The minimum hours of service according to type of library and number of inhabitants as laid down by the *Catalonian Public Library Standards* are as follows.

Central library

municipalities 30,000 inhab.	municipalities 50,000 inhab.	municipalities 100,000 inhab.	municipalities 200,000 inhab.
40 hrs	45 hrs	55 hrs	60 hrs

Catalonian Public Library Standards

Local libraries

area of influence 10,000 inhab.	area of influence 20,000 inhab.	area of influence 40,000 inhab.
35 hrs	35 hrs	40 hrs

Catalonian Public Library Standards

As well as the opening hours of its individual facilities, the public library must provide the maximum possible number of hours of self-service access, particularly in large population centres. Apart from the services provided via the website, it is necessary to go beyond document drop-off boxes and automatic lending machines inside libraries, in order to be able to offer services such as loan (albeit of only part of the collection), through exterior dispensing machines similar to those installed by videoclubs.

4. Resources

4.1. The building and spaces

Changes to the means of production and consumption of public library services, in combination with the extension and diversification of the products they offer, are making it necessary to adapt and change the buildings they are housed in. Furthermore, the growth in use of CITs is strengthening the role of the library as a social meeting place and centre for open learning, an aspect of their role that has a direct impact on the conception, distribution and dimension of the various spaces.

Challenges for the library buildings comprising the urban network include:

- differentiating the library spaces in line with their assigned functions.
- providing specific solutions to enable the same space to be used for different purposes and increasing the multi-purpose potential for such spaces.
- planning the different spaces in the facilities from the city-wide basis. Not all libraries need to have everything. To the extent that the structure of the network becomes consolidated there is increased planning for spaces to answer the global needs of the municipality, above and beyond the specific needs of each library's immediate surroundings.
- the specialisation of spaces according to a provision of services based on a specific theme, a certain kind of support or particular kind of user.
- contributing to the definition process for each new facility on the basis of established standards and a more profound analysis of the territory. The functional programme will be the result of this process.
- increasing the area of access zones and enhancing their significance. There is a need to define the contents of the entrance hall in greater detail to include more than the centralised loan service and first contact point for information. The entrance area needs to become the library's meeting place and showcase and advantage should be taken of the fact that everyone must pass through it, and that it is where users first come into contact with the facilities available.
- participating in wider-reaching cultural projects with the aim of sharing the building with other municipal facilities such as archives, information services, exhibition halls and so forth, as well as combining services, so as to overcome the library's relationship only with its immediate neighbours. The possibilities for sharing and optimising spaces on the basis of common services design needs to be studied, founded on joint, prior planning.

Organisation of the spaces

The library building should be an attractive, welcoming and flexible space that answers the changing needs of a heterogeneous public. It should reflect the idea of the library as a cultural reference point for the territory and, while it must respond to common standards for public reading, it should adapt to the peculiarities and needs of the municipality and of the library's area of influence.

The functional organisation of the spaces within the public library is determined by four important zones:

- **Reception and promotion zone**

Conceived as a communal meeting place. Its various spaces are the focal point for most of the group training and reading promotion activities. The reception and promotion area consists of the entrance area, a multi-purpose area, a training area and support area¹².

- **General zone**

This area provides for the training, information and leisure needs of users over the age of twelve. The space must be adapted to the various services, uses and end users. Depending on the kind of documents and uses this zone is used for, three sub-zones can be distinguished: the information and general collection zone, the music and image zone, and a newspaper and magazine zone.

- **Children's zone**

For children up to the age of twelve, corresponding to the period of primary education. This area must meet children's educational support needs (both formal and non-formal), and their leisure and social development needs as well as providing a focus for promoting the habit of reading and acquiring the skills necessary for accessing and using information and library resources.

- **In-house work zone**

These are the spaces devoted to library administration and management, the carrying out of technical tasks which would be difficult to perform in public spaces, documentary collections, logistical store-rooms and staff rest areas. While use of

¹² The support area consists of a room or rooms to be used for activities such as meetings and working groups, promotional activities and/or training for small groups of adults such as writing workshops, reading clubs, etc. In the central library, and in the local libraries where considered desirable, a specific support space for children will be included in the children's zone of the library.

this zone is restricted to library staff, it should nevertheless be well connected to the public service areas.

The functional organisation should also bear in mind criteria of spatial organisation resulting from considerations such as the increase in use of libraries over recent years and the strengthening and growth of areas of more social use. With regard to this such aspects as the following become more important:

- frequency of use
- user's length of stay
- the atmosphere it is intended to create and transmit
- the level of noise in the various areas

Bearing these four points of view in mind there are, with regard to access, three library zones:

Frequency, length of stay and atmosphere



- **“Social” short stay**

An area of interaction between users and the library and between library users themselves. The library's most social spaces are located here along with those that must remain open when the rest of the library is closed. It is the noisiest part of the library where users stay for the shortest period of time.

- **“Quiet” medium stay**

The main features of this zone are access to information and the exhibition and storage of the collection.

- **“Calm” long stay**

Areas where silence is maintained for users who need to concentrate. This zone is furthest from the access area and, in principle, users' stays are longest here.

Central library spaces

In order to serve the whole municipality the central library should be situated in a central location that is well-served by public transport and accessible to most people. It should also have adequate car-parking facilities.

The characteristics defining central libraries, and which differ from those of local libraries, are:

- greater specialisation of the spaces so as to be able to provide service within differentiated opening times.
- circulation, communication and document access spaces need to be larger due to higher levels of use.
- there is an increased need for the reception and promotion areas to accommodate external services that complement those provided by the library: print centres, cafeterias, restaurants, shops, etc.
- spaces devoted to training are of fundamental importance in offering a city-wide service in all its aspects: continuing training, self-access learning, literacy in information technology.
- the general zone must have a specific area for local and community information.
- the children's zone must have a specific area devoted to activities aimed at promoting reading amongst children.
- the in-house work areas need to be larger and more specialised in order to cope with the library's internal tasks as well as those required by working in a network. Network staff based in the central library, the centralisation of processes and the growth of on-line services mean that these spaces are becoming more important.
- the document store must have its own specific space, differentiated from the work space. It must be sufficiently large to house the collection resulting from the MPL document conservation policy.

The central library building must be sufficiently large to live up to its name and fulfil its functions and this implies the rigorous interpretation of the *Catalonian Public Library Standards*. These standards propose the following distribution:

Central library space distribution (m²)

	municipalities 30,000 inhab.	municipalities 50,000 inhab.	municipalities 100,000 inhab.	municipalities 200,000 inhab.
Reception and promotion zone	410	480	645	765
Access area	170	200	270	330
Multi-purpose space	110	150	200	230
Multi-purpose space store room	20	20	25	25
Support space	60	60	90	120
Training space	50	50	60	60
General zone	1.000	1.365	2.230	2.510
Information area and general collection	790	1.085	1.835	2.060
Music and image area	80	115	175	210
Newspaper and magazine area	130	165	220	240
Children's zone	365	445	640	710
Information area and children's collection	275	340	500	550
Support area	30	30	50	60
Activities space	60	75	90	100
In-house work zone	195	260	385	515
Management office	20	20	20	20
Meeting room	---	25	25	30
In-house work space	80	90	140	180
Collection store	50	75	150	230
Logistics store room	25	25	25	25
Staff rest area	20	25	25	30
Total programme area	1.970	2.550	3.900	4.500
Total built area (+30%)	2.560	3.315	5.070	5.850

Catalonian Public Library Standards

The proposed dimensions and distribution of areas should be adapted to the specific needs of each local situation.

Local library spaces

Local libraries are smaller than central libraries. Their characteristics and distribution are determined by the service needs within its area of influence. In this regard it should be said that there is no exportable single local library model and that these libraries will differ amongst themselves according to local requirements.

With this in mind the *Catalonian Public Library Standards* establish the minimum area for library facilities on the basis of population within their area of influence, without detailing their spatial distribution:

Local library programme area (m²)

area of influence 10,000 hab.	area of influence 20,000 hab.	area of influence 40,000 hab.
750	1.100	1.600

Catalonian Public Library Standards

Local libraries, like central libraries, are functionally structured into four main zones: reception and promotion zone, general zone, children's zone and in-house work zone. However, determining the way spaces are used becomes more important in order to adapt them to the most pressing local needs. Nevertheless, the following points should be borne in mind:

- local library spaces have a community aspect and are veritable meeting places for citizens. This must be reflected in their design as informal, comfortable spaces, where ease of consultation and interrelation between users acquire more importance.
- it is important for all local libraries to have a multi-purpose space, with a capacity for a minimum of 50 people, and spaces for training.

With regard to their location account must be taken of the distance to the library services within the town plan and their centralisation within their area of influence, bearing in mind the usual routes taken by citizens. The time taken by users to reach the library from their homes should not be more than 15-20 minutes on foot.

4.2. The collection

The MPL collection consists of the documentary collections of all the libraries on all kinds of media, including digital media, available to citizens to satisfy their needs for information, training, culture and leisure.

Challenges facing the MPL collection include:

- strengthening the idea of a single collection distributed throughout the various points of service and accessible from any one of them.
- the distribution of the collection in an appropriate, balanced and complete way amongst the various points of service within the network according to the kind of library and the role it plays within the MPL network.
- the differentiation of the various components of the MPL in such a way that they complement each other.
- adapting the local libraries' collection to their immediate surroundings. This implies establishing criteria for developing the collection in a way that responds to citizens' needs in their area of influence. It is within this context that thematic specialisations make sense.

The *Catalonian Public Library Standards* and the policy of developing the municipal collection are the basic tools to help give shape to the MPL collection.

The importance of quantitative aspects of the collection must be tempered by other considerations such as it being up to date and its accessibility, quality and relevance. Nevertheless, the traditionally low number of documents held per capita by our public libraries means that the proposal for the establishment of certain ratios as a point of reference for the municipalities is all the more relevant. The standards establish the basic quantitative guidelines that determine the size of the MPL free-access collection and its renovation, as well as its distribution between the central library and the other components of the MPL. According to these standards:

- the global MPL free-access collection should have a minimum ratio of two documents per inhabitant for urban networks in municipalities of up to 200,000 inhabitants and of one-and-a-half documents for those with a larger population than that.

- a period of ten years is established for the total renovation of the collection, implying an annual pace of renovation of 0.2 documents in municipalities of up to 200,000 inhabitants and of 0.15 documents for those with a larger population than that.
- the collection of the central library should be between 2/3 of the global MPL collection in smaller urban networks and 1/3 for the urban networks of larger municipalities. Whatever the case, the central library collection should at least be double that of the largest local library.

Upon achieving the ratios considered optimal for the provision of services the library should move towards zero growth by incorporating new materials and withdrawing obsolete or damaged material.

The city collection policy

The policy of developing the municipal collection defines the size, composition and thematic distribution and media for the collection between the various points of service on the basis of it being up to date, its accessibility, quality and relevance. Similarly, it defines the processes associated with its management.

The collection policy is shared by all the libraries in the MPL and should be brought together in a single common document which sets forth the specifics and needs of the various components of the municipal network.

The collection policy is determined bearing in mind the following factors:

- the MPL service catalogue
- relations between the various components of the MPL
- the degree of development of the MPL and the situation pertaining beforehand
- the needs and characteristics of the municipality itself

In order to formulate the policy it is advisable to create a committee consisting at least of the heads of the facilities forming the network. In order to deal with specific thematic areas it is also proposed to create working groups that include network librarians working within these areas. Once the collection policy has been defined, the committee and its working groups will be responsible for ensuring its implementation and taking the relevant steps to keep it up to date.

The establishment of an MPL collection policy should:

- define the basic criteria for choosing and developing the collection. A selection committee may be established made up from staff from the various libraries with the aim of combining the particular interests of the system.
- coordinate specialisation and centres of interest according to the interests and needs of citizens while also attracting new publics.
- define and standardise the technical and administrative tasks associated with the document process, centralising those that enable the optimisation of resources and increasing the efficiency of the processes.
- establish criteria for the treatment of the various document formats.
- establish the criteria for the distribution of the annual municipal budget for maintenance and renovation between the various components of the MPL. Specifications may also be made with regard to documentary subject matter and media.
- coordinate subscriptions to periodical publications by the various libraries in order to achieve, at a global level, the greatest possible diversity in the various subject areas and to avoid unnecessary duplication of subscriptions to publications that are not widely consulted.
- define criteria for the common contracting of licenses to access digital documents.
- define the measures for accepting and dealing with donations.
- establish a city-wide policy for weeding.
- define a local collection policy in coordination with the municipal archive. Special emphasis needs to be made on accessibility and the preservation of on-line digital documents that may form part of the local collection. It is also necessary to undertake the transformation to other formats of those documents that are on media that have deteriorated or become obsolete (cassette tapes, records, videos etc.).

The municipal government must ratify the collection policy and provide the necessary economic resources to carry it out.

The central library collection

The central library collection should be thematically balanced. This is implicit in the library service's mission throughout the entire municipality and its function as a central pillar of local information policy and as a loan centre with respect to the other components of the MPL.

The *Catalonian Public Library Standards* establish the minimum collection and propose a distribution based on the municipality's population so that the central library can carry out its functions correctly.

Distribution of the central library free-access collection (documents)

	municipalities 30,000 inhab.	municipalities 50,000 inhab.	municipalities 100,000 inhab.	municipalities 200,000 inhab.
Total general collection	36.000	49.200	84.000	100.800
General knowledge	19.800	27.050	48.750	58.500
Fiction	9.000	12.300	20.150	24.200
Music and image	7.200	9.850	15.100	18.100
Total children's collection	9.000	10.800	16.000	19.200
General knowledge	3.250	4.100	6.400	7.900
Fiction	4.500	5.400	8.000	9.600
Music and image	1.250	1.300	1.600	1.700
Total collection	45.000	60.000	100.000	120.000
Newspapers and magazines	180	200	240	260

Catalonian Public Library Standards

With respect to the standards mentioned the most significant change concerns modifications to the collection distribution in response to new criteria for use, and a more user-friendly and logical ordering. As a result of this the collection is divided into three large sections that maintain a functional balance between subjects and media: general knowledge, fiction and music and image.

The children's collection should represent between 20% of the total collection of central libraries in smaller municipalities and 16% of those in larger municipalities. This percentage decrease is conditioned by the availability and limitations of the children's publishing market.

The characteristics of the central libraries' collections, and what differentiates them from those of local libraries are:

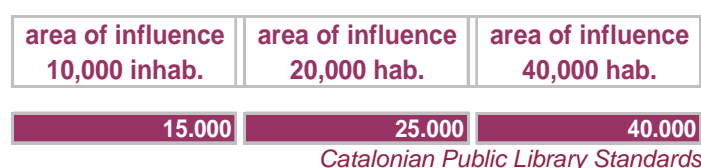
- an extensive section devoted to works of reference and information.
- a collection on more specialised knowledge.
- the local collection should be the most exhaustive within the local network and should enable the library to become the main centre for local research, together with the municipal archive.
- special collection on topics of interest to the city to cater to the more specific needs of the population.
- larger newspaper and magazine section with local and district publications, more specialised journals and publications in other languages. Duplication of subscriptions to the main newspapers.
- duplication of the most requested documents, especially novels.

Local libraries' collections

The local libraries' collections are smaller than those of the urban central libraries. Under no circumstances should this cause any disadvantage: access to the collection held by the other components of the MPL must be ensured by means of an agile and rapid inter-library loan system.

The *Catalonian Public Library Standards* establish the minimum collection to be held by each library according to the size of the population within its area of influence while leaving its distribution open in line with the local needs of each library.

Local libraries' total free-access collection (documents)



The collection should reflect the library's services, its action plan and particularly the specific needs in its surrounding area. The collection development policy should go hand in hand with a study of the socio-demographic evolution of its area of influence and should respond to the local population's main topics of interest while encouraging specialisation.

The mission of local libraries to bring the library service closer to users and to answer citizens' most pressing reading and informational needs also determines the kind of collection it holds. Broadly speaking emphasis should be placed on increasing the proportion of works of general interest and fiction with respect to works of reference, emphasis being placed on novels, biographies, travel guides and so forth.

The collection must be modern and up to date. The free-access collection should be renovated more frequently than that of the central library, an age of eight years for documents being considered a maximum. The selection and purchase of the latest published offerings should be conducted with diligence to ensure that these libraries continue to be considered a point of reference by their users.

With this in mind special attention should be paid to the organization of the collection. It should be attractive and based on the wide-scale display of documents, as is the case in good book shops. It is also interesting to work on the creation of centres of interest and to enhance areas of the library with an ambience befitting their thematic emphasis in order to facilitate users' access to the collection.

4.3. Human resources

The variety of functions and services offered by public libraries, together with technological innovations and the ever more varied expectations of citizens, necessarily implies a reconsideration of the administrative model and staff profiles. In the final analysis, the MPL human resources policy will be determined by each local situation. Whatever the case, and as a starting point, the staff employed throughout the various local network libraries, and their centralised services, should be considered as constituting a single body: each will have a specific workplace, but each should also consider themselves as part of the MPL as a whole.

The challenges facing the MPL human resources include:

- progressing towards a skills-based management model. In addition to their specific field of knowledge, account should be taken of staff's personal characteristics that make them particularly suited to the positions they hold. The application of this model enables a qualitative improvement to be made to the service provided while also matching that service more closely to local needs.
- differentiating staff profiles in line with the functions and characteristics of the MPL facilities. Networking makes it possible to put together a team made up by people who, while having varying areas of expertise, complement each other. With this in mind, specialised positions will be concentrated in the central libraries, while in the local libraries emphasis will be given to people with all-round skills.
- progressing towards a more interdisciplinary and flexible staffing so as to be able to have more resources available associated with certain services or sectors of the population. This implies the incorporation of specialists in different fields—in administration, computer technology, cultural awareness-raising, mediation, etc.—and cooperation with the staff of other local agencies to achieve commonly-held aims.
- developing flexible selection procedures appropriate to skills-based management that make it possible to evaluate candidates in accordance with the required skills, knowledge, abilities, techniques, aptitudes and attitudes for carrying out the assigned tasks in the work place, a selection procedure that goes beyond a mere consideration of academic qualifications and the time served in the public administration.

- promoting specific continuing training, as opposed to generic training. What is needed are tailor-made training schemes that are adapted to the needs of the various staff profiles and which enable every staff member to improve their work-related skills.
- establishing and recognising the post of MPL director.

The number of staff working within the MPL, as well as their personal professional profiles, will depend on a number of factors, amongst the most important of which we can mention:

- the number of inhabitants and the socio-cultural characteristics of the population for whom service is being provided.
- the number and physical characteristics of the facilities forming part of the MPL.
- characteristics of the services provided by the MPL and the volume of activity.
- the degree of the MPL's development.
- the facilities' public opening hours
- service use.

MPL director

The director of the MPL is also the director of the central library and is a key figure for the city's policy of library development.

The director's mission is to direct and supervise the working of the MPL in line with the aims established by the municipal authorities and the guidelines established by the technical management of the Municipal Libraries Network.

Amongst the director's functions are:

- providing the means for strategic and operational planning of the city's library service.
- establishing the catalogue of services provided by the libraries in the municipality and ensuring that they are adjusted to the needs of citizens.

- coordinating the local network and presenting proposals for adapting and improving the service.
- promoting action strategies that involve all the facilities and structures of the local network.
- establishing the city's collection policy.
- promoting, compiling and implementing the MPL website and those of the on-line library services.
- organising and coordinating the human resources of the libraries as a whole, especially the network's staff.
- planning and tracking activities to promote reading at the municipal level.
- administering the financial resources assigned to the local library network.
- participating in the process of creating new libraries from the planning stage, and tracking progress on the works.
- drawing up the MPL annual action plans.
- establishing the library service evaluation systems.
- representing the MPL before the municipal authorities and other institutions and bodies, and promoting the presence of the MPL in the municipality.
- promoting and coordinating the municipality's public reading committee.
- representing the MPL in the tasks of local information policy definition and in all those committees that promote the relationship between the library service and other municipal policies.
- promoting cooperation projects with other territorial agents.

Central library staff

The existence of a central library and the consolidation of the MPL by means of the centralisation of certain processes must enable the specialisation of posts and staff profiles with regard to certain services, processes, areas of knowledge and/or groups of users.

The degree of specialisation will be determined, in large measure, by the number of people on the staff. In this regard the *Catalonian Public Library Standards* establish the

minimum staff levels necessary in accordance with the population of the municipality so that the central library can carry out its functions correctly.

Central library staff

	municipalities 30,000 inhab.	municipalities 50,000 inhab.	municipalities 100,000 inhab.	municipalities 200,000 inhab.
Total staff	10-12	13-16	19-22	21-25
Library director	1	1	1	1
Library deputy director	0-1	0-1	1	1
Librarians	2	2-3	4-5	5-6
Auxiliary technical staff	6-8	8-9	10-12	11-13
Auxiliary administrative staff	---	0-1	1	1
Service assistants	1	2	2	2-3

Catalonian Public Library Standards

Noticeable with respect to previous versions of the standards are the incorporation of deputy directors and the auxiliary administrative staff who provide support to the director in administrative tasks so that more time can be devoted to MPL management. The position of deputy director will be obligatory for those central libraries whose management also acts as district or area head, or for central libraries in urban networks with three or more facilities.

Local library staff

The profiles for local library staff need to have more all-round skills. In general, staff who are able to generate synergies with their environment are needed, but certain specific skills may also be required in line with the functions of the service and the characteristics of the local situation in which the library is located.

The standards establish the minimum staff levels required for the central library to carry out its functions correctly according to the area covered:

Local library staff

	area of influence 10,000 inhab.	area of influence 20,000 inhab.	area of influence 40,000 inhab.
Total staff	4-5	5-7	7-9
Library director	1	1	1
Librarians	---	0-1	1
Auxiliary technical staff	3	4	4-6
Assistant service staff	0-1	0-1	1

Network staff

All MPLs need staff that give support to the globalisation of the network. This will be made up by library staff and peripatetic auxiliaries and by professionals in other fields. In this regard the *Catalonian Public Library Standards* recommend the following minimum staffing levels:

Network staff for urban networks

	municipalities 30,000 inhab.	municipalities 50,000 inhab.	municipalities 100,000 inhab.	municipalities 200,000 inhab.
Total network staff	0-1	1-2	2-4	4-6
Peripatetic librarians	---	---	---	0-1
Peripatetic auxiliary technical staff	---	0-1	1	1-2
Auxiliary computing staff	0-1	1	1-2	2
Sociocultural staff	---	---	0-1	1

Catalonian Public Library Standards

Skills-based management model

Skills-based management is a dynamic system that enables staff profiles and posts to adapt in line with the way society evolves and it places special emphasis on people, to ensure that each person carries out the most suitable task in accordance with their professional profile within the MPL.

The basis for its implementation is the definition of posts and of the professional profiles necessary to fill them. This administrative model enables:

- the linking of human resources management to MPL requirements and strategy.
- prioritising, strengthening and developing those skills, techniques, aptitudes and attitudes that are most appropriate to the organisation and its strategy for the future.
- interrelating all the processes brought together within human resources management: staff structure and organisation, selection process, training, evaluation and improvement, etc.

The skills fall within three groups:

- **Corporate skills**

Corporate skills are associated with the values and image of the MPL and with MPL organisational culture and strategy.

- **Qualitative skills**

Qualitative skills place special emphasis on people's attitude, aptitude and character. There are generic skills held in common according to the responsibilities of the entire MPL staff, and other, specific skills, determined by the post held.

- **Technical skills**

Technical skills are more focused on specific technical knowledge and ability. They are usually associated with specific posts held, but may be common to a spectrum of posts.

According to *The Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development* the fundamental qualities and skills required of public library staff can be defined as follows:

- the ability to communicate positively with people.
- the ability to understand the needs of users.
- the ability to co-operate with individuals and groups in the community.
- knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity.
- knowledge of the material that forms the library's collection and how to access it.
- an understanding of and sympathy with the principles of public service.
- the ability to work with others in providing an effective library service.
- organizational skills, with the flexibility to identify and implement changes.
- imagination, vision and openness to new ideas and practice.
- readiness to change methods of working to meet new situations.
- knowledge of information and communications technology.

4.4. Information technologies

The adoption of information technologies by public libraries must be the strategic aim of any institution since they facilitate access to information for all citizens and ensure their development while also providing equality of opportunity through the right to send and receive information.

In order to ensure the quality of service provided to citizens, the following should be borne in mind:

- the basic standards for computer equipment ensure the minimum resources necessary for public libraries to provide a good service. The January 2008 standards considerably increased the points of access to the Internet and office automation and extended the capacity of training rooms.
- computer technology should enable the management of a single city-wide common catalogue which users can consult and use to find information about the collections held by their library or city. The catalogue incorporates information on all kinds of media and not only includes the territorial network's physical collection, but also the city's digital collection.
- a single users' database enables the library ticket to be used throughout the entire territory. The library ticket can be associated with other of the city's services, such as the cultural ones, and its use could provide additional advantages.
- computer technology enables users to be ever more self-sufficient in obtaining information and in using library services. The availability of automatic loan machines and RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification) technology helps to achieve this.
- the library facilities' equipment and programs used should be adapted to the territory's needs and this means that some must be devoted to certain groups. In such cases, due to the high costs involved, they might only be installed in one or other of the libraries in the territorial network in line with identified needs.
- the public library office automation service should assist self-access learning and the use of technological tools. The MPL will adopt its own policies for use in the territory as long as they conform to the network's general policy.

- the MPL website should provide up-to-date information about its services and activities. The website is the portal to virtual services and also a major channel of dissemination.
- Internet access is one of the basic channels for accessing information. The MPL will adopt its own policies for use in the territory as long as they conform to the network's general policy.
- the aims of the Wi-Fi service are to facilitate users in their work by allowing them to use their own tools, enable mobility within the library itself, decongest the public Internet access points and facilitate access to the Internet.

5. Planning

5.1. The importance of planning

Library planning should be conceived as all those techniques used for deliberation and action based on an exhaustive knowledge of needs in the surrounding area, the local community and the specific library service production needs as adapted to this situation.

Library service planning is an aid for:

- the effective organisation of library services and resources (spaces, collection, staff, etc.) in the municipal setting.
- adapting the services to meet the information and reading needs of the community.
- increasing the understanding of politicians, directors, technical staff and users about the purpose of the public library and involving them in improving the service.
- the effective and responsible use of public funds.
- the continuity of the service despite political or staffing changes.

In order to ensure access to library services for all citizens, library planning must have three instruments available:

- **The municipal public library service plan**

This document is the result of a mid- to long-term planning process that defines the model for the kind of library it is sought to build up. The plan establishes and organises the services and facilities needed to achieve this.

- **The functional programme**

This document is the result of a planning process that specifies the main characteristics for new facilities foreseen in the municipal library plan.

- **MPL annual action plan**

This planning document establishes the lines of work to be followed during the year. It specifies and develops the strategic lines described in the municipal plan.

The contents and the processes for drafting the first two of these documents are considered in the following section. The annual action plan, being regarded more as an administrative document, is considered in section 6 (Administrative instruments) together with 'Service evaluation' and the 'Communication and marketing plan'.

5.2. The configuration and planning of the municipal network: the public library service municipal plan

City-wide library planning is necessary above all in municipalities with a population in excess of 50,000 due to the greater complexity of their structure with regard to information services as well as other services. Factors involved in the drafting of a plan include the city's existing processes for strategic deliberation, or more specific consideration of issues in the cultural field. For two decades the strategic plans have been useful instruments for the integrated planning of the economic and social transformation processes of a city or territory. Strategic planning in the field of culture is a much more recent phenomenon, given that today, culture does not consist simply of carrying out cultural activities.

The aims of the city library planning process are:

- to ensure access to library services for all citizens.
- to define the components of the local library network in accordance with professional performance standards.
- organising, or re-organising the libraries to make them modern balanced structures within the territory.
- to facilitate the sustainable management of resources and to define the financing system.
- to establish participation mechanisms.
- to determine the library service evaluation systems.

Firstly it is useful to define the urban central library since it is to be the core of what is a network of public libraries throughout the municipality and it is where specific services are generated for the rest of the facilities¹³. It is from here that efforts are directed towards creating services that are close to hand and also to determining the entire structure necessary while analysing the city's needs.

The process culminates with the drafting and approval of the municipal library plan which must have the consensus, political commitment and drive necessary to implement the project.

¹³ Currently, some of the planning processes which are under way are starting on the basis of an urban central library which is operating in a consolidated way, but we also find that there are many cities with over 30,000 inhabitants whose central library does not meet the standards required to perform this function, in which case the plans will include the construction of a new facility as part of the analysis of the overall needs of the municipality.

Elements of the municipal public library service plan

The contents of municipal library plans vary in accordance with the characteristics of the municipality and the position of its library services. Depending on the number and quality of the existing libraries more emphasis will be placed on building the network and building the necessary facilities or on the management plan. Whatever the case may be, the library plan must never restrict itself merely to the planned future construction of libraries without a consideration of the way in which they will be coordinated amongst themselves.

For the purposes of guidance, a plan should contain:

a) Data from the surrounding area (a “reading of the territory”)

The analysis of the existing situation and the prospective study of the surroundings enables citizen’s current and foreseeable information and reading needs to be known either individually or collectively (organisations, local political parties, local enterprises, etc.).

b) Situation prior to the plan: description of the types of libraries, their functions, the services offered, human resources and users

This analysis makes it possible to identify gaps and duplications in the library service and other services in the locality that have a bearing on the core work of the public library (information, training, reading). It should include a description of the existing library resources, the provision of services, the coverage of current public libraries, other kinds of libraries (school libraries, the libraries of other organisations, specialised libraries, etc.) and other municipal information points and services (youth, tourism, senior citizens, etc.).

c) Library model (concept, mission, functions, services, etc.)

The factors for defining the mission of the public library and its fundamental principles are to be found in the UNESCO Manifesto. The library model will be established for the local situation concerned following international guidelines.

d) Legal and regulatory framework as applied to the municipality

Various organisations, both local and international, have studied the characteristics an “optimum service” should have and have drawn up standards to guide library planning. Actions will also be affected by the lines of action taken by any cultural plans or other of the city’s strategic documents (plans for the information society, plans for intercultural harmony and so forth).

e) Definition of the group of facilities as a whole that will be necessary

According to the number of inhabitants and the characteristics of the municipality, the library standards define the dimensions the facilities, or group of facilities, should have as well as the dimensioning of their collection and staff, amongst other elements of the library service. The definition of the facilities needed to ensure an appropriate service is complemented later through the territorial organisation of the libraries.

f) Network administration model

It is necessary to define the organisational model and the human resources policy. It is equally necessary to consider the distribution of responsibilities between the various administrations implicated in the library service.

g) Action plan and calendar

This must commence with the actions necessary to achieve the desired results (extensions, new libraries, etc.). The establishment of a calendar for actions according to the order of priorities, and based on budget possibilities, enables the municipal library plan to become clear and operational.

h) Financial evaluation and financing

Various administrations have analysed the cost of initial investment in and functioning of a library in view of the kind of library in question and its dimensions.¹⁴ It is important to bear in mind the initial investment required for building and launching the new services and facilities as well as the annual outlay for running costs and for maintaining the municipal network.

i) Participative body

According to current legislation those municipalities with a municipal library network must have a public reading committee. The library plan must define its functions and the agents forming the committee¹⁵.

j) Library service evaluation mechanisms

The evaluation of the library service must be contemplated along with the establishment of administrative indicators and mechanisms for monitoring results since these are indispensable for decision making and implementing improvements.

¹⁴ The Diputació de Barcelona is one of these administrations and has a series of financial standards that determine this financial cost and the approximate cost to each of the public authorities involved in the creation and management of the service.

¹⁵ Section 2.3 of the document provides more information on the Public Reading Committee.

The public library service municipal plan is the starting point for future planning processes and the basis on which other strategic documents are founded such as the functional programmes for planned facilities, action plans, possible cooperation agreements with local agents (such as school libraries, for example), etc.

5.3 Configuring and specifying a facility: the functional programme as a result of the programming process

The programming process establishes the facility's characteristics and basic functions. It is set in motion in order to create a new facility or to transfer or enlarge an existing one.

The process provides a framework for deliberation and consensus between the agents involved in the provision of the library service that facilitates decision-making. The contributions of the parties concerned—local politicians and local-government officers, library staff, the architect, planning experts, etc.—are an essential part of the process.

A study analysing the circumstances of the locality and the needs of the community the library is to serve forms the basis for the specification of the new facility, along with other planning tools such as standards, library maps and library plans.

During the programming process basic aspects such as the following are decided and defined:

- The library's mission, its functions and its strategic objectives.
- The role of the facility within the MPL.
- The services the library will offer, both the basic ones—common to all libraries—and those specific ones that are required in order to meet the needs of its specific circumstances.
- The number and distribution of documentary resources and possible specialisations.
- The definition, dimensioning, distribution and functions of the rooms that make up the facility.
- The length of weekly opening hours.
- The human resources needed to manage the library and provide its services.
- Synergies with the various services in the area of influence, above and beyond simply relations with the nearby population.
- The characteristics of the initial investment and annual operation.

The “functional programme” is the document that emerges from the programming process. Its content will subsequently form the basis of the architectural project in the design and construction phase, and for the provision of resources in the phase of equipping the future library.

Stages in the creation of a new library

STAGE		AIM OF PROCESS		RESULT
Programming stage	→	Define the new facility (functions, services, resources, organisation of the different areas of the facility) on the basis of standards and the local circumstances	→	Drawing up and approval of the functional programme
↓				
Design and construction stage	→	Design of the CONTAINER: THE BUILDING	→	Project for the library in different phases: initial project, executive project, works
↓				
Equipment stage	→	Provide the CONTENT	→	Libraries equipped with: collection, computer equipment, antitheft system, etc.

6. Management tools

6.1. The annual action plan

Annual action plans are drawn up in the context of the strategic action plan. This strategic plan should coincide with the local authority's terms of office (four years) and describe the lines of action to be adopted and the scenario it is desired to attain by the end of the term of office for each strategic strand.

The annual planning process is essential in order to :

- set the direction taken by the service.
- promote the cohesion of the team around a shared project.
- reach consensus on the project with the various agents involved in the service (elected officials, local government officers in the culture department and in other municipal information services, etc.).
- relate the library project with other information and culture projects in the city.
- facilitate the design of services and activities jointly with other services.
- evaluate the management, use and impact of the MPL's services and resources.

The annual planning of the MPL is carried out on two levels:

- at the global level of the municipal network
- at the specific level of the network's different facilities/service points

The annual management plan should also be considered as a tool to attain constant improvement in the provision of services and for the development and refinement of other municipal planning instruments such as plans for culture, mobile libraries, etc. Annual planning allows greater adaptability than medium- or long-term planning, and makes it possible to keep step with changing needs.

The annual action plan is the document that emerges after the following steps have been taken:

a) Diagnosis of the current situation and of user needs

Analysis and assessment of the MPL and of the needs of the community which it serves in order to detect areas in which improvements can be made and prioritise the measures to be adopted.

b) Establishment of goals and objectives

A translation of needs into specific actions through the formulation of goals and objectives.

c) Determination of procedures to achieve the goals and objectives

Specification of tasks, responsibilities, timing and assignment of resources (financial, human, spatial, etc., for each of the goals and objectives.

d) Provision for evaluation mechanisms

The aims and objectives must be measurable and quantifiable, defining and clarifying the desired results and facilitating evaluation of them.

6.2. Evaluation of the service

Evaluation is not an end in itself; rather it must be fully integrated into the management cycle and linked to the annual action plan. In this regard, evaluation serves to:

- take stock of the past
- monitor the present and direct it or redirect it
- plan the future

In all cases, the efforts devoted to the evaluation process must be compensated by a subsequent projection of the results of the process, either by communicating them to the public or to the elected officials or senior managers responsible for the service, or by the availability of better information and capacity for decision-making in the short, medium or long term.

The evaluation of the MPL must be approached from a global perspective, on the understanding that the library service is a single entity, regardless of the different premises and channels through which it is provided. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that impact cannot be measured purely quantitatively and that qualitative systems of analysis must also be adopted. At all events, there are three levels of analysis:

- the management and use of each facility considered individually
- the management and overall use of the network of urban libraries
- the social impact of the public reading service in the development of the community and its impact on the public policies in which it has participated

The definition of the evaluation system can be considered from different perspectives, each of which requires a specific methodology. At all events, a system of management tracking and control must be adopted which takes account of the resources employed, the degree to which objectives have been attained and the results obtained in the form of services. Furthermore, all plans, no matter which area of the service or what time-frame they affect, must provide for their own evaluation and provide benchmarks for the extent to which their objectives have been met.

It is useful to have dashboards in which the indicators are structured in a logical and ordered way according to the proposed objectives. It is also very useful to have referents by which to set optimum values for the indicators. The referent may be drawn from:

- **Planning and management tools**

Standards, public reading maps, library plans, menus of services, action plans, etc., as well as local bylaws and national or international regulations.

- **Vertical comparison**

Comparative study of data from previous periods.

- **Horizontal comparison**

Comparison with the library services in other cities and/or others in the same city. In this regard, participation in quality circles may provide elements for evaluation and planning.¹⁶ Comparisons may also be made with other types of service.

Finally, it is worth considering establishing periodical evaluation actions, through tracking committees, as well as ad hoc evaluation processes linked to specific projects or in the framework of cooperation with other organisations or administrative organs. The timeframe and the methodology are necessarily conditioned by the objectives of the project and it may be necessary to employ research techniques such as opinion polls, discussion groups, log analysis, data-mining or audits.

In all cases, the evaluation of the MPL must be:

- **Dynamic**

Evaluation is not an unvarying, static procedure which is carried out from time to time, but an ongoing process.

- **Flexible**

Evaluation must adapt to changing needs.

- **Efficient**

Evaluation implies expenditure of time and resources. Consideration must be given to the costs involved in relation to the benefits which may accrue.

¹⁶ The Library Services Management and the Programming Service of the Diputació de Barcelona coordinate the Intermunicipal Library Comparison Circle. Since 2002, a total of 28 of the province's municipalities have taken part. More information : <<http://www.diba.cat/governlocal/CCI.asp>> [last consulted: 11/08/09].

- **Practical**

Evaluation is not merely a theoretical exercise, but must serve to correct and improve library management.

- **Participative**

Evaluation is a participative exercise in which all the parties involved in the management and use of the service should take part.

6.3. The annual activities report

The annual report is closely bound up with the action plan and service evaluation. In turn, it is also a communication and marketing tool, since it is intended to publicise the activities that have taken place and the results which have been obtained by the local network in the course of the previous year.

The main targets of the document are:

- the administrative authorities responsible for the library (basically, the local and provincial councils)
- the press
- other bodies that may be interested in the municipal library service (cultural organisations, savings banks and professional organisations, etc.).

The basic content of the report consists of:

- Contextualisation, stating the library's mission and functions, and a description of structural resources
- Report on the previous year's activities
- Outcome of activities and the use and impact of services during the previous year
- Growth or decline with respect to previous years
- Policy areas in the year's action plan

Like the annual action plan, the annual report is a single document whose content is structured in two levels:

- at the global level of the municipal public library
- at a specific level for each of the components that make up the territorial network

6.4. Communication and marketing plan

A single, common communication policy must be devised for the MPL. This objective is particularly relevant if we bear in mind that communication is one of the tools that can best help to consolidate the image of a true network, so that the public can interiorise the idea that the local libraries and the central library form part of an integrated service.

Amongst the various aspects of communication, certain points are worth stressing as they help to consolidate the concept of the MPL. At the same time, it should always be borne in mind that they are to be integrated into the municipal communication policy.

- **Corporate image**

This must be common to the entire local network. It is desirable that the image be present in the communication of all the libraries that make up the network in order to strengthen the message of a single service with different access points. In addition, each library, in order to identify itself individually, may include its own image in its communication alongside the network image; in order to avoid image dilution, it would be desirable for this to be a minor variation of the mother image, that is, the image of the network. The latter must be applicable to all the materials in the local network (letters, brochures, audiovisuals, posters, e-mail messages, etc.).

- **Relations with the press**

The central library must play a leading role in relations with the media. In order to make this relationship as smooth as possible, it is desirable for there to be a single, readily-identifiable interlocutor, a role which may be played by the central library. In the field of dissemination (rather than strictly press), as regards media campaigns (advertising, for example) and PR actions, it is also desirable to act together. The MPL will always have more impact on the receiver than will the libraries acting separately; hence, the concept of “network” must be promoted in news conferences, advertising campaigns, etc. Nonetheless, the attention the network can attract in these actions can also be taken advantage of to publicise and promote the particular features of each library.

- **Identifying the subject of the communication**

Strategic use of the available design resources is a useful option to differentiate communications that refer to the network and those that only concern a single library. Both these areas of communication must be promoted (in publicity

materials, press releases, etc.): those referring to the network as a whole and those which are specific to a particular library.

In spite of the leading role reserved for the central library as far as communication is concerned, it must be remembered that in order to achieve an image of unity and internal coherence, the latter have to exist; hence, the design of the communication policy should be carried out in liaison with all the libraries that make up the local network. Only thus, when the individual libraries feel they can take the network's discourse as their own and they participate in the configuration of the communication policy, can the desired corporate behaviour be achieved and an active role be played in providing information for communication actions.

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