Standards for vision science libraries: 2014 revision

Kristin Motte, MS; C. Brooke Caldwell, MA, MSIS; Karen S. Lamson, MLS; Suzanne Ferimer, MSLS, MEd; J. Chris Nims, MSLIS; The Association of Vision Science Librarians

See end of article for authors' affiliations.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.102.4.010

Objective: This Association of Vision Science Librarians revision of the ''Standards for Vision Science Libraries'' aspires to provide benchmarks to address the needs for the services and resources of modern vision science libraries (academic, medical or hospital, pharmaceutical, and so on), which share a core mission, are varied by type, and are located throughout the world.

Methods: Through multiple meeting discussions, member surveys, and a collaborative revision process, the standards have been updated for the first time in over a decade.

Results: While the range of types of libraries supporting vision science services, education, and research is wide, all libraries, regardless of type, share core attributes, which the standards address.

Conclusions: The current standards can and should be used to help develop new vision science libraries or to expand the growth of existing libraries, as well as to support vision science librarians in their work to better provide services and resources to their respective users.

The Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL)—whose more than 150 members represent ophthalmology, optometry, and industry libraries throughout the world—has defined standards for its libraries since 1976 [1–3]. AVSL recommends that vision science libraries (VSLs) have at least one active member in AVSL. Standards for this very specialized area of library service have evolved owing to the work of librarians who, since 1937, have been developing and refining standards for their libraries [4]. The standards reported here reflect the changes that have taken place during the decade and a half since the last edition of these standards were published. Changes include recommended staffing and technology, and the addition of a section addressing online access to information.

AVSL convened a task force to first evaluate whether a standards revision was needed. Once it was agreed to do so, the task force guided the process of the revision, which included member surveys and discussions at meetings over the span of two years.

The standards are intended to provide qualitative information such as appropriate staffing levels and collection scope, which can be used to evaluate existing vision science libraries or to develop new vision science libraries. In addition, these libraries should reflect the purpose and mission of the institution to which each belongs, and each library should have policies in place that outline the various areas to support the education, research, and patient care information needs of their institutions.

STAFF

Staffing requirements for vision libraries will vary with the type of library: academic, clinical, or industry. No matter the type, in the United States, the principle staff member should be a full-time professional librarian who holds a master's degree from an American Library Association (ALA)–accredited program. For each professional librarian employed, it is recommended that there be two full-time staff employees (FTEs) in support positions [5]. The reporting channel will vary depending on the type of the library: the dean or chief administrative officer in charge of educational programs, the dean of libraries or the dean's designated administrator, the ophthalmology/optometry service chief, or the head of research and development to a company officer.

The responsibilities of the professional librarians should be the overall quality of the collection and services. For materials, this includes selection, acquisition, cataloging, maintenance, and de-selection. For services, this includes providing reference assistance using print and electronic materials, and instruction in the use of the library and any resources, regardless of origin or format, that are available to its users.

Administratively, the head librarian should plan, organize, and evaluate the work done in the library. Most importantly the head librarian should set goals for the future of the library that embrace the mission of the institution, involving relevant stakeholders. This librarian is responsible for communicating these goals to the organization's administration. In some cases, the head librarian should be responsible for developing and implementing the library budget; selecting, training, and supervising library staff; promoting good relations between the staff and patrons; and finally, marketing the library's services and resources within the organization [6].

All librarians need to engage in ongoing professional development to remain current with changes occurring in the library profession. Membership in professional organizations; attendance at local, regional, and national professional conferences; and participation in continuing education classes or workshops will help librarians' professional performance and benefit their institutions. Support from the institution for travel and registration fees is crucial to maintaining a high level of standards [7]. This includes adequate staffing that allows the library to

function while individuals are participating in relevant professional activities.

VSLs should be responsible for participating in local consortia and creating agreements, as needed, with local, regional, and national organizations. This benefits the library by sharing resources and services with other libraries. Accreditation bodies look for this in their assessments of libraries.

The institution should expect the library to provide control of circulation, interlibrary loans (ILLs), and periodicals, both print and electronic. The institution should also expect the library to maintain order for the collections, as well as ensure that all library equipment is in good working order. Librarians need to work closely with colleagues in their institutions' information technology (IT) departments to ensure that various technologies function optimally.

SERVICES

Libraries should be open and staffed at least forty hours a week (and often more, depending on the need and type of library) in order to support their users. Libraries should provide the following services: circulation, reference, reserve materials, and ILL. Other services, such as management of archives collections, educational media services, and scientific poster production may also be provided as needed.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF THE COLLECTION

Collections should reflect the purpose, mission, and administrative organization of the institution. Each library should have a collection development policy that outlines the scope and levels of collection that are necessary to support the education, research, and patient care information needs of an institution. This policy helps to ensure the collection meets the requirements of accreditation bodies and users.

Libraries should use the major medical or academic classification system of their countries as guides to define the scope of their collections.

More detailed recommendations for establishing a vision science library collection can be found in the *AVSL Opening Day Book: Journal and Media Collection*. This document is updated periodically with complete revisions approximately every three years and is available on the AVSL website [8].

Images that support teaching and residency programs should be acquired digitally, and it is the library's role to select, acquire, and organize these materials, and make them available.

TECHNOLOGY

The library should provide its users with access to the most appropriate, complete, and current resources such as PubMed/MEDLINE, Visionet or VisionCite, and other databases and resources that fit the institutions' curriculum and mission. In considering licensed content, the librarian should be aware of what is needed so that these resources are accessible from off campus or available for ILL. Standard for all libraries should be a library website that offers access to these resources, basic tutorials, and contact information.

Computers in the library are generally divided into either public access or staff workstations. Please see the latest Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry *Educational Technology Guidelines for Schools and Colleges of Optometry* for specifics [9].

VSLs should be adept users of the technology that their libraries provide. In particular, librarians should develop basic troubleshooting skills and learn the terminology of technologies to better communicate with various IT entities within and outside their institutions. While no one person can be an expert on everything, the VSL should be able to effectively handle access to resources issues, handle basic computer troubleshooting, contribute via social networking tools such as Internet discussion lists, and edit a basic web page.

ONLINE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Today's digital environment means VSLs must be well versed in established databases and current technologies, such as tablets. Social media usage and promotion is also a necessity.

Instruction can be done through one-on-one interaction or group presentations. Prepared instructional materials for these presentations are recommended. At times, a ''live demonstration'' is not possible and alternate presentation formats may be required. For such presentations, images of searches should be included to give patrons an accurate visual of the search interface. When possible, these handouts should be made available online. Librarians in academic libraries who work with users on searching and effective use of their libraries' collections should consult the Association of College & Research Libraries' *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* [10].

All librarians are encouraged to keep up with emerging technologies. This includes new electronic devices that have the potential to impact academic and medical communities, including apps for tablets and smartphones (AVSL maintains a current list of relevant apps on its website). VSLs need to be aware of these technology changes in order to fully satisfy their patrons' information needs. Librarians must also consider their libraries' online presence. This includes a library website, tools that make collections accessible, and profiles on popular social media sites. An online presence should maintain a high level of professional standards at all times and be in compliance with the institutions' guidelines. A social media policy should be established by the library for any active social media account.

A library's home page should accurately reflect the library's vision and services. Location, hours, and contact information need to be easily located or visibly linked to on the home page. All online resources should be as current as possible, including links and instruction material. Databases and full-text

access to subscription resources must be up-to-date, particularly when subscription coverage changes. As more resources become available only online, some libraries may hire an electronic resources librarian to manage these technical aspects.

PHYSICAL SPACE

It is recommended that all FTEs have their own computer workstations or laptops. Library users should have access to laptops with a wireless connection and/or networked computer stations. Some libraries may also choose to lend other mobile devices, like tablets. Arrangement of workstations can vary in each library as a result of space availability and configuration, number of users, and type of information being accessed by users.

For libraries in the United States, many things determine space requirements: the type of library, the hours of operation, circulation policies, the type of stacks, and the proximity of other libraries. The number of seats for the library is determined by the population being served. The recommended number of seats for a graduate population varies from 40%–65% of the number of full-time students [11]. A reading surface allocation of approximately 10 square feet per person is recommended, and the space between chairs should be 15 inches [11].

In the past, standard growth in stack space was a recommended minimum of 10 years, with a preference for 20 years of growth for US libraries. When looking at space, the need for a reserve collection, audiovisual materials, and oversized materials should be addressed. A standard stack is 3-foot-by-7-foot and should hold 100 bound volumes. Allow 6 volumes per linear foot when calculating the space needed to hold the collection [11]. As libraries turn to electronic journal subscriptions and resources, these numbers may change in the future.

Studies have shown that students who study in small groups are more successful [12]. Therefore, academic libraries should incorporate study areas such as study rooms and conference areas. Libraries should also allow for flexible configuration of study space.

Adequate electric lines, electrical outlets, data lines, data jacks, and wireless technology should be included in any library facility and plans. A security system to prevent theft of material and equipment is also recommended.

For libraries in the United States, there should be approximately 145 square feet per employee, including computer workstation [11]. These libraries must also comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding space between shelves and other regulations [13]. Staff work space should not infringe on user space.

In small libraries, the circulation desk provides a multitude of services such as checking books out, answering reference questions, providing access to reserve materials, and providing ILL services. The circulation desk should be located near the entrance to the library.

BUDGETS

Budgets for these libraries are affected and determined by the type of library, overall size of the program it serves, curriculum, amount and type of research carried out, number of patrons, size of library staff, and proximity of other resources.

Salaries and benefits must be consistent with and comparable to other salaries in the region and at the library's sponsoring institution to attract and retain competent staff [14]. It is important to realize that in some areas salaries for librarians in health or medical libraries are higher than those for librarians in other disciplines.

Material budgets for libraries must cover the purchase of books, duplicate copies of heavily used volumes, e-books, journal subscriptions, access to databases and other electronic materials, audiovisuals and equipment, and computers with the technology or programs needed to support them. Additionally, the budget should include costs for ILL, faxing, binding, staff travel, membership or education, telephone service, photocopiers with supplies and service, service fees for the catalog (integrated library system), security systems, LibGuides if wanted, other software and online services to make collections accessible, office and specialized library office supplies, postage, and any other expenses applicable at individual institutions.

In some libraries, it may be possible to defray costs by charging back for copies and other services. Small special purpose funds from donations (often honorific) and larger endowments may defray a portion of library expenses. A donor appeal is sometimes used for expenses, especially those outside the norm (unexpected opportunities/problems).

REFERENCES

1. Association of Vision Science Librarians. Guidelines and standards for visual science libraries serving optometric institutions. J Optom Ed. 1976 Fall;2(3):8–15.
2. Association of Vision Science Librarians. Standards for academic visual science libraries. Am J Optom Physiol Opt. 1986 Jul;63(7):559–66.
3. Association of Vision Science Librarians. Standards for visual science libraries. Bull Med Lib Assoc. 2000 Jul;88(3):234–8.
4. Yast H. Standards for library service in institutions: B. in the health care setting. Lib Trends. 1972 Oct;21(2):267–85.
5. Hitt S. Administration: personnel. In: Darling L, Bishop D, Colaianni LA, eds. Handbook of medical library practice. 4th ed. v.3. Chicago, IL: Medical Library Association; 1988. p. 291.
6. Doyle JD, Wellik KE. Topics in management. In: Bandy MM, Dudden RF, eds. The Medical Library Association guide to managing health care libraries. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers; 2011. p. 35–62.
7. Creth SD. The health information environment: a view of organizational and professional needs and priorities. Bull Med Lib Assoc. 1993 Oct;81(4):414–20.
8. Association of Vision Science Librarians. Home [Internet]. The Association [cited 6 Jun 2014]. <http://www.lhl.uab.edu/avsl/>.

9. Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry. Educational technology guidelines for schools and colleges of optometry [Internet]. The Association [cited 4 Dec 2013]. <http://dev.opted.org.php53-2.ord1-1.websitetestlink.com/files/EducationalTechnologyGuidelines.pdf>.
10. Association of College & Research Libraries. Information literacy competency standards for higher education [Internet]. The Association; 2000 [cited 4 Dec 2013]. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency>.
11. Leighton PD, Weber DC. Planning academic and research library buildings. 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: American Library Association; 1986. p. 557, 153.
12. Center for Teaching and Learning. Using groups in classes & encouraging study groups [Internet]. The Center [cited 5 Dec 2013]. <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/using-groups-classes-encouraging-study-groups/>.
13. Americans with Disabilities Act: accessibility guidelines, checklist for buildings and facilities. Vista, CA: BNI Building News; 1996.
14. American Library Association-Allied Professional Association. Minimum salaries by state [Internet]. The Associations [cited 5 Dec 2013]. <http://www.ala-apa.org/improving-salariesstatus/resources/minimum-salaries-by-state/>.

AUTHORS' AFFILIATIONS

Kristin Motte, MS, mottek@neco.edu, Director of Library Services, New England College of Optometry, 424 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02115; **C. Brooke Caldwell, MA, MSIS,** cbcaldwell@sco.edu, Electronic Resources Librarian, Southern College of Optometry, 1245 Madison Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104; **Karen S. Lamson, MLS,** karen.lamson@mcphs.edu, Reference and Instruction Librarian, Blais Family Library, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) University, 19 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608; **Suzanne Ferimer, MSLS, MEd,** SFerimer@optometry.uh.edu, Librarian/Director of Learning Resources, Weston A. Pettey Library, University of Houston, 114 University Libraries, Houston, TX 77204; **J. Chris Nims, MSLIS,** Judith_nims@meei.harvard.edu, Library Director, Libraries, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, 243 Charles Street, Boston, MA 02114; **The Association of Vision Science Librarians**

Received March 2014; accepted May 2014