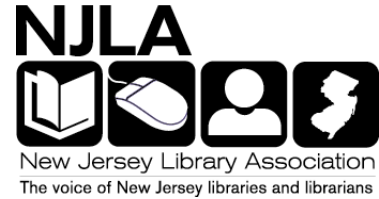


# Setting the Standard: The Development of Competencies for New Jersey Librarians



**Janie L. Hassard Hermann**  
**Princeton Public Library**  
**Princeton, NJ**

The New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) has been actively involved since 1998 in the process of developing a set of documents that will define the competencies required for professional librarians in New Jersey. As of October 2002, the NJLA Executive Board has officially adopted three sets of competencies: *NJLA Core Competencies for Librarians*, *NJLA Technical Competencies for Librarians*, and *NJLA Reference and Information Services Competencies*. This talk will focus specifically on the technical competencies, but will also briefly examine the core competencies. All NJLA competencies can be accessed at <http://www.njla.org>.

---

## **NJLA Core Competencies for Librarians**

*NJLA Professional Development Committee*

*Adopted by the NJLA Executive Board October 19, 1999*

Within NJLA, within New Jersey and within the profession of librarianship, there has been a great deal of discussion on how a librarian can be defined. The impact of new technology and new methods of service delivery only create more questions. An Ad Hoc Committee was formed under the auspices of the Professional Development Committee to examine and answer some of these questions.

Documents from other states and other associations that focused on core competencies were collected and studied. Much of the material appeared elsewhere in similar format and the committee is particularly indebted to the work done by the Special Library Association and the California Library Association.

There are a greater variety of competencies necessary to accomplish the role of the professional librarian, while the responsibilities of librarians in the collection, organization and dissemination of information does remain the same. The ability to use the most current technology and to identify and implement the latest methods of service delivery is essential.

The primary audience for this document is New Jersey librarians themselves. This document attempts to define the direction in which the profession is evolving; this direction demands greater self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-improvement and participation in the process. Individual librarians must take the responsibility for furthering the evolution of their profession, in their libraries, in their communities and beyond.

The document is intended for several purposes:

- To stimulate service excellence
- To renew enthusiasm for the profession among librarians
- To be used to develop job descriptions and evaluation tools for professional positions.
- To assist in planning a continuing staff development program
- To be used in the development of policies, particularly as these policies relate to the organization and staffing of libraries
- To guide students who are attending graduate library school and apprise faculty who are involved in the development of curricula of the continuously changing needs of the profession
- To educate communities, governing bodies and funding agencies about the importance of the skills and knowledge of professional librarians

Specific examples under competencies have been omitted to avoid limiting expectations or inspiration. Expertise with and willingness to use technology is underlying all areas in the field of librarianship now. Consequently, technological skills appear as a separate checklist.

These competencies underpin the delivery services to all ages, all constituencies and for all types of libraries. Companion documents may be created to focus on specific skills needed for specialized areas; NJLA strongly urges that librarians working in these areas, e.g., reference or children's services, work to develop these complementary documents.

## ***PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES***

### Customer service

- understands customer needs and preferences for information which build and drive the selection of resources and services
- improves customer service in response to changing needs
- presents welcoming behaviors and practices effective interviewing skills to best determine the customer's actual needs
- understands information-seeking behaviors and facilitates the customer's successful information retrieval
- instructs in information gathering, research and technical skills, including how to use and evaluate information sources
- plans, develops and delivers instructional programs for group presentation
- acts as a user advocate during the development of information products and systems
- tailors services and information products to support the user's needs
- acts as a consultant to the parent organization and community on information issues

### Assessment

- continually analyzes and investigates the information and service needs of the targeted customer base
- continually analyzes and investigates the use, quality and effectiveness of current services
- continually scans the local and global environments for societal changes and service opportunities
- evaluates and selects resources to assure their quality, accuracy and pertinence and delivers them in a form appropriate to the situation
- focuses on the outcomes of library use and conducts related research toward solving identified information management problems

### Knowledge of Information Sources

- can identify materials appropriate to customers' requirements and their abilities
- can identify, interpret, and access varied information resources
- designs and locally produces resources in a wide variety of formats to anticipate and meet customer needs

### Resource Management

- organizes materials and resources using appropriate systems of access that are compatible with customers' needs and styles of learning
- develops and manages convenient, accessible and cost-effective facilities and services that promote and support the organization's mission and strategic direction

### Technical Skills

- understands and uses the latest relevant technology to manage and deliver services
- scans the environment for emerging technologies that are relevant to library services

### Advocacy

- communicates the value of library and information services to decision makers
- promotes literacy
- promotes intellectual freedom and equal access to information
- participates actively in the New Jersey Library Association, the New Jersey Library Network, the American Library Association, and other professional organizations and library networks which promote libraries and librarianship
- can identify and enlist the support of strategic partners to complement strengths and weaknesses of the organization and to obtain key resources and assistance to support the achievement of mutual goals

### Collaboration

- understands and works to realize the mission, values and vision of the library organization
- uses effective team process skills to develop and achieve organizational objectives
- collaborates to achieve common goals in a spirit of collegiality and mutual respect

### Administration

- creates a culture which promotes change
- identifies, develops, administers, and evaluates both internal and external resources to support the library's mission
- develops and implements policies and procedures for the efficient and effective operation of library functions
- continually adjusts programs and services to respond to social changes and service opportunities
- assesses strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges to the organization and develops strategies for dealing with them effectively without compromising vision and values

## ***PERSONAL COMPETENCIES***

### Education

- only the MLS degree is the appropriate foundation degree for a professional librarian
- continuing education is essential to update skills, keep current, broaden knowledge and integrate new techniques and methodology into everyday practice

### Service Commitment

- is interested in the goals of customers, coworkers and suppliers and strives to provide effective support in helping them achieve these goals
- demonstrates an understanding of and a respect for diversity
- demonstrates a sincere commitment to customer service
- remains knowledgeable with current events, popular and local culture

### Flexibility

- anticipates and manages change effectively and participates in change
- consistently maintains a positive attitude in responding to unpredictable situations
- adapts personal styles and preferences to the demands of the situation
- takes risks, experiments and makes mistakes and supports this behavior in others

## Leadership

- sees the long view, articulates the direction clearly and enlists others to jointly work to achieve it
- from any position within the organization, sets a positive example for others to follow
- values the contributions of others
- helps others to achieve their full potential

## Ethics

- treats others with honesty, respect, and fairness
- protects and values patron confidentiality and organizational security

## Communication

- effectively shares what is learned with others
- communicates openly and directly
- practices effective listening skills
- demonstrates effective and informal presentations skills
- writes effectively

## Self-motivation

- takes responsibility for managing the development of one's own career within the organization and beyond, including a commitment to lifelong learning and periodic retooling of personal skills set
- keeps current with professional literature and discussion groups
- takes initiative and demonstrates innovation
- seeks opportunities to serve one's personal goals and those of the organization.

---

## **NJLA Technical Competencies for Librarians**

*NJLA Professional Development Committee  
Adopted by the NJLA Executive Board February 20, 2001*

## Online Catalog

- performs all author, title, subject and keyword searches
- helps patrons using instructional pamphlets for Web pac or remote access to pac
- uses advanced searching options including, but not limited to, limiting, call#, publisher, etc.
- searches using standardized numbers, such as ISBN, ISSN, SuDocs

- understands subject heading structure (natural language, formal subheadings, fiction headings, video genres, subjects vs. series for special formats, etc.)
- understands how search operators function

### Electronic Resources and Databases

- has familiarity with full text periodical index(es) and how to access from within (and outside) library
- demonstrates mastery of all subscription databases
- executes printing options (full article, selected text, citation only, email)
- uses limiters to narrow searches as appropriate to database, e.g., dates, journals, etc.
- uses Boolean operators and truncation appropriately in a search strategy
- helps patrons select appropriate databases for their search

### Internet

- knows Internet terminology, such as URL, search engine, home page, link, Web site, tool bar, status bar, scroll bar
- identifies and understands elements of a URL, e.g., common domain names, use of appropriate slashes (/,\) and tilde (~)
- is aware of information on and able to maneuver through library's home page efficiently, including links
- customizes and restores toolbars
- understands the differences between and elements of search engines and subject directories and can effectively select appropriate resource for specific searches
- uses Boolean and Search operators
- evaluates results of searches, including currency, relevancy and accuracy
- evaluates Web sites, including currency, relevancy and accuracy
- has an awareness of reliable subject Web sites, including medical, NJ, financial, etc.
- is able to participate in Web site development, including developing content, organizing information and updating information

### Instruction

- demonstrates Internet use to patrons, including Web navigation, email, basic searching, printing, saving
- assists patrons in evaluation of Web sites
- assists patrons in selecting appropriate software for their task on public pc's
- is able to conduct structured Internet and other computer classes for both the public and the staff
- uses presentation equipment and software for instruction

### E-mail

- accesses library email programs to compose, send and reply to email
- uses programs with some degree of facility, creating mail groups and maintaining files and address books, as appropriate
- utilizes email efficiently and professionally to increase work-related communication
- understands how to subscribe to, resign from and participate in listservs

### Applications Software

- uses operating systems effectively and efficiently
- uses application software, such as word processing, spreadsheets and database managers
- understands and efficiently manages desktop software
- uses appropriate electronic archival techniques and procedures

### Computer troubleshooting/preventive maintenance

- understands multisystem architecture
- can isolate and identify problems with hardware, checking components methodically and effectively and can communicate findings to repair person
- can isolate and identify software related problems and can communicate findings to repair person
- establishes and performs appropriate backup
- performs regular file maintenance

### Awareness of evolving technology

- actively pursues continuing education opportunities in evolving technology
- expands professional reading to include technology trends, both within and outside the field of librarianship
- tracks changes on optimum method to utilize online and Web based search tools
- keeps current in multimedia and electronic publishing, incorporating appropriate options into the library setting

~Notes~

**Pathfinder: Competencies on the Web**

---

For further information on the development of competencies for librarians, as well as relevant examples of core and technical competencies developed by a variety of organizations and institutions, the following Web sites will provide an excellent starting point:

Competencies for California Librarians in the 21st Century

<http://www.cla-net.org/pubs/Competencies.html>

Competencies for Special Librarians in 21st Century

<http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/professional/meaning/competency.cfm>

Competencies ~ Websites for Library Staff Information Professionals

<http://www.librarysupportstaff.com/4competency.html>

Connecticut Library Association LTA Competencies

<http://cla.uconn.edu/new/class.html>

Core Competencies for Libraries (*from the Local Government Institute*)

<http://www.lgi.org/Publications/Core-Competencies.htm>

Core Competencies: Suggested Readings (*compiled by the Canadian Council of Federal Libraries*)

<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/6/37/s37-4005-e.html>

Draft Core Competencies/ Depository library managers

<http://www.missouri.edu/~govdocs/fdlp/ewgmaster.rtf>

Library Instruction Competencies (*from the University of Hawaii -- intended for students, but still relevant*)

<http://www.hern.hawaii.edu/hern96/pt061/compten.htm>

Minnesota Voluntary Certification Program for Library Employees

<http://www.arrowhead.lib.mn.us/certification/>

NJLA Core Competencies for Librarians

<http://www.njla.org/statements/competencies.html>

NJLA Technical Competencies for Librarians

<http://www.njla.org/statements/techcompetencies.html>



Rochester Regional Library Council Technology Competency for Library Staff  
<http://www.rrlc.org/competencies/techcomp.html>

Technology Competencies for Library Staff - Oakland Public Library  
<http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/techcomp.htm>