

LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY

Title of Policy: Service Review
Policy Type: Means
Policy No: M-103

Effective Date: February 15, 1989

Review:

PURPOSE:

This policy establishes the criteria and processes used for the review of services of current locations and future needs of the library system.

SCOPE:

LPL System.

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. It is the purpose of the London Public Library "to enrich the quality of life in the City by providing equal access to library resources and services that are responsive to the diverse informational, educational, leisure and cultural needs of citizens of all ages and walks of life."
2. To be responsive to the needs of citizens, services and resources must change, adapt, and develop, just as neighbourhoods, communities, and cities are changing and dynamic.
3. Within this environment, and with the objective of providing high quality, cost effective library services, it is:
 - a. the responsibility of the Library Board to determine the priorities for services and to assure the participation of the public and staff in this decision-making process;
 - b. the responsibility of library staff to interpret the needs of users through the ongoing assessment of current services and service levels;
 - c. the responsibility of the Library Board and the library staff to assure that the general overall service needs and interests of the community are met.
4. Therefore, the reason for any change in library locations or services is to improve overall library service in London, in keeping with the service priorities established by the London Public Library Board.

Guidelines for Service

In order to assure equal access to appropriate levels of library resources and services the following guidelines are used as a basis against which services and facilities are evaluated to determine the closure or withdrawal of services and/or the reassignment of resources. These guidelines cannot be considered individually but must be looked at in relation to each other in order to assess fully if the service needs of a community are being met.

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1. Population Density

- 1.1 The Library Board has established a minimum population of 20,000 residents within a library service area for a full service Branch. Although this guideline is used as a standard to evaluate the need for development of a Branch, library service areas with a population of less than 20,000 residents are also subject to service review, in order to assure that the quality and quantity of service is appropriate to the size of the user group.
- 1.2 Potential for service development must be considered as well. Changes taking place in the community can indicate that there will be residential growth, residential shifts, or other population changes that will result in either growth or decline in user needs.

2. Quality of Service

- 2.1 The Statement of Purpose identifies quality criteria for the London Public Libraries and it is in relation to this Statement that quality of service is evaluated. For example, libraries are to provide "a range of services", "resources and services responsive to diverse needs", "services to citizens of all ages and walks of life", with services and resources in Branch Libraries "geared specifically to local needs and interests". The evaluation of a Branch should consider if the Branch provides services to all representative groups, meets the informational, educational, and leisure needs of the community, and provides a range of services such as programs, collections, and collection-based services such as reference and referral services.

3. Use

- 3.1 Since libraries are mandated to provide a range of services, use must be assessed in terms of the full range of services provided. Therefore, circulation of library materials, program sessions and attendance, library visits, and other appropriate output measures must be considered in the evaluation of use.

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3.2 While a simple assessment of use on the basis of one statistic such as circulation cannot determine the usefulness of a library to its community, a guideline of 75,000 circulations per year or 25 circulations per hour can be considered a minimum, but not absolute standard for collection use at one service point.

4. Cost

4.1 As with all the above guidelines the cost of service delivery is not a factor which can be evaluated in isolation, but must be seen in relation to costs for similar services elsewhere within the Library system. Information on cost per circulation, or per hour of service, or on building maintenance and repair costs, as well as other statistical data can provide valuable comparable costs. However, the decision to retain a service or service point should not be determined strictly on the basis of how little or how much the service costs, if a service or service point can be shown to provide high quality and popular resources and services to a broad spectrum of users who can not be served in another way.

4.2 Despite this, the Library has a responsibility to assure the cost effectiveness of the service it delivers, and in evaluating a service or facility the cost must not be out of proportion to the actual benefit or value of the service to the community, in the judgement of the Board.

5. Condition of Facilities

5.1 Several factors must be evaluated in determining the condition of the library facility.

5.2 These include an assessment of the location of the library and the site in relation to users, the potential for expansion of the facility should service needs increase, increases in rental rates for leased premises and the history of the Library's relationship with the landlord, the need for physical repair and the cost of refurbishing, the need and associated costs to meet changes in building codes, the ease of access to the facility for all members of the community including the disabled, and the building's

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overall capacity to house and make accessible the resources and services it should provide to the community.

6. Availability of Alternate Services

- 6.1 The Library is one of a number of service providers in the community. Therefore, there is a responsibility to be aware of and familiar with the services that other agencies provide in local neighbourhoods or City-wide. To operate cost effectively the Library must assure that its services do not duplicate those available from other agencies.
- 6.2 In evaluating the availability of other services the Library must also determine, if services are withdrawn, what options are available to regular patrons. Therefore, the Library is committed to referring displaced clients to other service options either within the Library system or available from other agencies in the City.

7. Reassignment of Resources

- 7.1 In evaluating the service and determining its value to the community, the Board must be able to see the service in relation to all other services provided throughout the system, and to establish where a particular Branch or service fits into the overall priorities of the Library.
- 7.2 Therefore, the service evaluation must consider how the Branch or service relates to service priorities and, should the Board decide to discontinue the service, how the resources could be assigned in order to support higher level priorities, if appropriate.

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Procedures for Formal Service Review

Assessment of services ought to be ongoing, so that changes in service needs and especially in the demand for or use of a service are detected and monitored at an early stage. However, any major changes in the distribution or composition of a user group, or in the number of users, or in the quality, use or cost of service indicate the need for a formal service review, at which time this process is followed:

1. At the request of the Board or on Administrative initiative, a staff report to the Board is prepared assessing the service on the basis of the policy guidelines, and including any other factors relevant for the Board for decision making, including the observations and concerns of staff regarding the service.
2. The Board, in consideration of the report, may:
 - 2.1 continue the present level of service, or
 - 2.2 determine that, at first impression, a sufficient case exists to review the service.
3. In the event of 2(b) above, a staff discussion paper for public discussion is prepared, outlining the state of the service, concerns regarding the service and the reasons for the Board's review of the service.
4. The staff discussion paper is widely and appropriately distributed to individuals and community groups. Written responses are invited from the public. A meeting, in either a formal or informal format, may be held at the discretion of the Board and staff to invite, receive and clarify responses.
5. The community must be notified and given the opportunity for public input through one of the following forums before the issue is decided:
 - 5.1 a special Board meeting or a regular meeting when the issue is to be decided;
 - 5.2 a public meeting to receive further representation from the user community, or;
 - 5.3 the striking of an ad hoc committee.
6. The Board renders a decision in consideration of all documentation and evidence received; this decision is communicated widely to all interested parties.

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INQUIRIES:

CEO & Chief Librarian

KEYWORDS:

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

DOCUMENT CONTROL:

Approved: June 28, 1988 (L88/95)
Reviewed: February 15, 1989 (L98/19)
Reviewed: