

Chapter 4 (Access)

The physical library remains central to successful service and while no one model can meet every need, some common requirements will help to create a functional and enjoyable environment for both staff and patrons. These include adequate and accessible space to house and circulate the collections, comfortable and light filled spaces for the public and staff, meeting and study spaces for both group and individual use, and youth spaces that inspire and teach children of all ages. Every five years the board should review the long term space needs of the library in conjunction with the library's strategic plan. While planning for the expanding mission of public libraries, flexible space with a high degree of connectivity should be a central idea for future programs to be accommodated with minimal physical change.

Access Standards

1. To the greatest extent possible, the library should aim to meet the requirements of the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* in order to provide a universal experience for all patrons. This shall include parking and building access along with internal circulation including elevators, toilet rooms, and seating for both staff and patrons. Available grants should also be explored as applicable.
2. The library should provide adequate, safe, well-lighted, and convenient parking during all hours of service. The minimum number of required parking spaces is usually governed by local ordinance. In the absence of local standards, libraries should provide one space per 500 square feet of library area.
3. The library's entrance should be clearly visible, easily identified, and well illuminated for both arriving vehicles and pedestrians. When possible, the entrance should face the direction used by the majority of the patrons.
4. The library should be adequately illuminated and provide a number of lighting environments that are suitable for different uses. Natural light will be employed whenever possible.
5. The library should have clear wayfinding and adequate internal signage. All signage is in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.
6. Service points within the library should be clearly marked and visible for intuitive wayfinding relative to function and collections.
7. The ability for the public library to provide either access to current technologies is key to both the staff and patron efficiency and experience. The library should allocate funds annually as part of the capital assessment report in order to remain relevant and provide adequate services in this ever-changing environment.
8. Visually and/or physically separate spaces should be allocated for both the youth and adult collections and seating, including separate computing areas, along with a separation between the public computers for each age group. When possible, additional spaces for either teen or tween patrons can also be created with age appropriate services such as furniture for hanging out, collaboration, gaming, and art projects, gaming consoles, and dedicated AV computers.
9. The library should provide enough appropriate shelving and other types of display and storage to provide patrons with easy access and clear understanding of a variety of different materials. Shelving in each area should be appropriately scaled relative to the specific use and function.

10. The library should have sturdy and comfortable furnishings in sufficient quantity and variety to meet the needs of multiple types and ages of users. Furniture in youth areas shall be sizes appropriate for small children along with typical sized furniture for adult caregivers. Where possible, furniture shall be equipped with integrated power and data connections to facilitate mobile computing. Furniture and fabrics should be commercial grade or certified for or other high-traffic public use.
11. Ideally, a library should be open at least 25 hours per week although the minimum listed in *Illinois Administrative Code* is 15. [23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030.110] The hours are scheduled for the convenience of the community the library is serving.

Access Checklist

- The library provides the right amount of space of the right kind to meet the provisions of its long-range/strategic plan.
- At least once every five years, the board directs a review of the library's long-term space needs.
- The staff are familiar with the requirements contained in the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) and work to address deficiencies in order to provide universal access to all patrons.
- The library, including branches or other service points, is located at a site that is determined to be most convenient for the community.
- The library provides adequate, safe, well-lighted, and convenient parking during all hours of service.
- The library has the minimum required number of parking spaces.
- The library's entrance is easily identified, clearly visible, and well lighted.
- The library has an identifying sign clearly visible from the street. Additional signs guide users from arterial streets to the library.
- The library has adequate internal signage.
- The library's lighting levels comply with lighting standards.
- All signage is in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.
- The library building supports the implementation of current and future telecommunications and electronic information technologies.
- The library has sturdy and comfortable furnishings in sufficient quantity to meet user needs.
- Space is allocated for child and family use with furniture and equipment designed for use by children.
- The library has enough shelving and other types of display and storage to provide patrons with easy access to all materials.
- Shelving in the areas serving young children is scaled to their needs.