ASCLA Standards Handbook
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Model Outline for ASCLA Standards
ASCLA: Standards Process

ALA Bylaws permit type-of-library divisions, including ASCLA, to adopt technical standards (*ALA Bylaws*, Article VI. Section 3.d.: http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/bylaws).

Steps for Creating Standards

The ASCLA Board coordinates the development of all ASCLA standards. When the Board, interest group, or another unit of ASCLA desires to begin the process of creating or revising a standard, it shall follow the steps outlined below.

1. The Board, interest group or other unit submits a proposal to the Executive Director and ASCLA President for developing the standard. The proposal may come solely from an ASCLA unit, or may be a joint proposal, submitted in partnership with another unit of ALA or another organization.

2. The proposal must:
   - Describe the need for the standard, who will implement the standard, and which audiences will be served by the standard.
   - Outline the purpose for the standard, e.g., to set minimum expectations or describe best practices to which an organization should aspire.
   - Define a working group, with chair (paid or unpaid) and 3-5 additional ASCLA members, including individuals with wide knowledge about and experience working in the content area in which the standard is proposed. In many areas of ASCLA’s interest, other organizations working in the area may be valuable partners, including other ALA divisions or other units, or other professional groups, e.g., the American Correctional Association in standards for libraries within jails and prisons.
   - Outline steps to be taken including:
     - gathering information from previous documents, research, and best practices from those working in the field,
     - drafting standards language,
     - reviewing the draft standard, including a process through which those who are expected to promote use of and implement the standard may be involved in review of the standard.
   - Define a timeline for drafting and reviewing the standard
   - Outline steps for adopting the standard, including a public comment period, during which groups within ASCLA, within ALA, or outside ALA, shall review and comment on the standard, and which will be involved in formal adoption.
   - Propose a process for promoting awareness and use of the new standard.

3. The ASCLA President appoints the chair and members of an ad hoc standards committee to support development of and review a draft standards document. The ad hoc standards committee shall consist of a designated director or board designee from the ASCLA Board, a representative from the publications committee, the immediate past president or designee who is knowledgeable about ASCLA processes, and the ASCLA Executive Director (ex officio). In the case of joint standards, other ALA units or other organizations may also have advisory or other supporting groups; their leaders equivalent to the ASCLA Executive Director will also be involved.
4. The working group develops a final draft standard for submission to the ASCLA Board:

   a. Works together, in person or online, to create a first draft standard document, including purpose, intended audience, methodology followed in creation of the standard, content of the standard, and supporting documentation (see Model Standards Outline and Supporting Documentation Checklist).

   b. Distributes the first draft for comment to Interest Group members, ad hoc standards committee, cooperating units within ALA and other organizations, and other knowledgeable individuals, via email, Connect, and/or public hearing at an ALA conference, as appropriate. The ALA Standards Manual contains the following language:

   “All ALA divisions… engaged in the development of standards should ensure that other interested divisions or units are given an opportunity to participate in such development and to comment on successive drafts. In certain cases groups external to the ALA should be consulted, for example, professional associations, government agencies, or technical bodies in areas related to education or technology.”

   c. Revises the first draft, based on comments, and create second draft for review by ad hoc standards committee and others as necessary.

   d. Submits the second draft to the ad hoc standards committee for final suggestions about content, format, style, and other editorial matters, and to others as necessary

   e. Offers a period for public comment.

   f. Revises to create final draft for submission to the ASCLA Executive Director for addition to the Board agenda and distribution to Board members.

   g. Submits to the executive director at least three weeks before the Board meeting (usually Saturday morning at Midwinter and Annual).

5. The Board approves or disapproves the draft standard. If the standard is being developed in partnership with another ALA unit or outside organization, the parallel process for approval will occur as nearly as possible at the same time, as arranged by the working group.

6. If the draft standard is approved, it will be published by ASCLA and becomes an official ALA standard. If the standard is also approved by a partner ALA unit or outside organization, the standard will also become an official standard of that group. If the draft standard is not approved, the Board may decide to return it to the working group for further refinement or may end development.

7. A Word and pdf version of the standards document is sent to the ASCLA office to prepare for publication.

8. ASCLA office announces publication in Interface and distributes via ASCLA communication channels for sale.

9. After publication, the working group, Interest Group, Board, and ASCLA staff works together to create awareness and encourage use of the standard, through announcements, programming, and sharing success stories.

10. If a working group does not complete work on a new or revised standard within three years from initial proposal, the Ad-Hoc Standards committee will notify the Board, which
may encourage the working group to continue and extend the timeline, create a new working group and set a new timeline, or disband the working group and discontinue work on the standard.

**Ongoing Review of Existing Standards**

The ASCLA Publications Committee is responsible for initiating review of ASCLA standards no later than five years after Board approval. The review allows the opportunity for a standard to be renewed without changes, revised, or sunsetting.

When the Publications Committee desires to begin the process of revising a standard, it shall:

1. Notify the unit which created the standard that it is responsible for reviewing the standard and making a recommendation to renew the standard without changes, revise it, or sunset it, and set a deadline for the unit to make the recommendation.

2. Notify the ASCLA President and Executive Director that the standard is under review by which unit and what deadline.

When the unit is notified by the Publications Committee that a standard in its area of interest has reached the five year point, the unit will conduct an initial review the standard and make a decision to recommend to the ASCLA Board:

- renewal of the standard without change;
- sunsetting of the standard;
- appointment of a working group to revise the standard.

If the decision is made to renew or sunset, the unit will notify the Publications Committee, the ASCLA President, and ASCLA Executive Director, and begin the process outlined in “Steps for Creating Standards” above.

If the unit does not act by the deadline, the Publications Committee will recommend one of the three actions to the ASCLA Board: encourage the working group to continue and extend the timeline, create a new working group and set a new timeline, or disband the working group and discontinue work on the standard.

**Model Outline for ASCLA Standards**

Standards enumerate minimum expectations and often describe best practices for high-quality services. They typically compile broad input into simple, straightforward language that can be used by practitioners for assessing their organizations, benchmarking against expectations in the field, making improvements, and seeking support from policy makers, funders, and managers for needed improvements.

The *ALA Policy Manual* ([http://www.ala.org/tools/guidelines/standardsmanual/manual#1.1](http://www.ala.org/tools/guidelines/standardsmanual/manual#1.1)) defines standards as, “policies which describe shared values and principles of performance for a library.” Standards documents:

- Tend to be comprehensive, covering a broad scope of programs and services provided by a library.
- May define both qualitative and quantitative criteria.
- Present goals toward which the profession aspires.
• May include statements expressed in relative terms; that is, by relating library performance to norms derived from a reference population.
• Set criteria for the decisions and actions of those concerned with the planning and administering and accrediting of library services.

The *ALA Policy Manual* also suggests a standard format:

**Title Page.** The following information should appear on the title page:

• Date of approval by the division or ALA Council of the current edition.
• If the standard or guideline has been revised, the words “Revised Edition” and (on either on the title page or its verso) a list of all previous editions, with dates of their publication.
• The date of publication and the name of the publisher (American Library Association).

**Foreword.** The foreword should include if applicable:

• The history and status of the document, including the authority (i.e., the charge or statement) under which it was prepared and related guidelines and standards used to develop the guideline, if applicable.
• Acknowledgments and authorship of the document, including the names of the committee members involved in developing the standard or guideline, and recognition of the participation of any others who acted as consultants or advisers.

**Table of Contents.** The length and complexity of the document will dictate the need for a table of contents.

**Introduction.** This may include discussion of the following:

• The purpose or objective of the document.
• The need that justifies development and promulgation of the standards or guidelines.
• The scope of the standards or guidelines.
• The audience or group to which the standards or guidelines are directed.
• The methodology by which the standards or guidelines were developed.
• Definitions of special terminology incorporated in the standards or guidelines.

**Body or text of the standard.** This may be in narrative or codified format, but should be formatted for ease in identifying key sections and content. Many other standards, from ASCLA, other ALA units, and other professional organizations, are available to serve as examples and studying them before launching into writing is highly recommended.

**References on points of format, editorial style, and usage include:**

• *ALA Handbook of Organization*.

Revised November 20, 2014