Objective: This Association of Vision Science Libraries revision of the "Standards for Vision Science Libraries" hopes 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 review process, the standards have been updated for the first time in over a decade.

The Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL)—whose more than 150 members represent optometry, ophthalmology, and industry/libraries throughout the world—has defined standards for its libraries since 1976 [1–2]. 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 along with the core of libraries that since 1976, have been developing and refining standards for their libraries. The standards reported here reflect the changes that have taken place during the decade and a half since the last edition of these standards was published. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the development and improvement of vision science library services.

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The policy outlines the scope and levels of collection that are necessary to support vision science libraries (VSLs) in their work to better provide services and resources to their respective users.

The library should provide its users with access to the most appropriate, complete, and current resources such as PubMed/MEDLINE, VisionCite, and other databases and resources that fill 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 off-site. The library’s collection of all libraries should be a library that offers access to these resources, basic tutorials, and contact information. Each library is generally divided into either public or staff workstations. VSLs should be adapted users of the technology that their libraries provide.

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 [3].

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. Librarians 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.

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. Librarians 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.

All librarians are encouraged to keep up with emerging technologies. This includes new electronic resources 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 librarians' presence online. This includes a library website tools that make collections accessible, and profiles on popular social media sites.

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.

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, facing, 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.

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

References: