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# Standards for the academic veterinary medical library

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The Standards Committee of the Veterinary Medical Libraries Section was appointed in May 2000 and charged to create standards for the ideal academic veterinary medical library, written from the perspective of veterinary medical librarians. The resulting *Standards for the Academic Veterinary Medical Library* were approved by members of the Veterinary Medical Libraries Section during MLA '03 in San Diego, California. The standards were approved by Section Council in April 2005 and received final approval from the Board of Directors of the Medical Library Association during MLA '04 in Washington, DC.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1974, the Veterinary Medical Libraries Section (VMLS) of the Medical Library Association has supported librarians serving veterinary medical institutions and other organizations related to animal health. The VMLS appointed a Standards Committee in May 2000 to create standards for the ideal academic veterinary medical library, written from the perspective of veterinary medical librarians. The VMLS Standards Committee determined qualitative standards were appropriate and would complement tools that VMLS had already developed, including the *Annual Survey of Veterinary Medical Libraries* and the *Basic List of Veterinary Serials*.

Academic veterinary medical libraries exist to support the educational, clinical, and research needs of the faculty, students, and staff of the veterinary medical institution. Their collections include materials on many topics including the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases in animals; the relationship between zoonoses and public health; the medical and psychological effects of interactions between animals and hu-

mans; the legal and ethical aspects of the human-animal bond; the practice of veterinary medicine; and the education of veterinary professionals.

The primary audience for these standards is academic veterinary medical librarians. Following the lead of the Hospital Libraries Section, the committee has adopted the format used by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), where a statement of need is provided, followed by an explanation of the intent for that statement.

## STANDARD #1

**The library's collection supports the educational, clinical, and research programs of the veterinary medical institution. The collection may be the library's principal collection or may be integrated with other complementary collections such as agriculture or human health.**

**Explanation of intent.** The library should collect, at the research level, all types and formats of recorded information on veterinary medicine. Materials from related disciplines such as biomedical research, clinical scienc-

es, and animal sciences should be collected less comprehensively, depending on availability of such materials from other library collections located in easily accessible facilities nearby. Collections should be organized according to a recognized library classification scheme and accessible through a print or electronic catalog.

Professional library staff are responsible for selecting, acquiring, and withdrawing materials using a written collection development policy. They will periodically evaluate the collection to develop collection priorities and determine long-term and short-term goals. Library users are encouraged to suggest materials for acquisition or withdrawal.

The size and quality of the collection is supplemented by materials available in the library system, through consortia borrowing agreements, or through interlibrary loan or a commercial document delivery service.

#### STANDARD #2

**The library's services support the educational, clinical, and research programs of the veterinary medical institution and encourage optimal use of the library's resources.**

**Explanation of intent.** The library anticipates user needs by establishing and maintaining a close relationship with users and developing services to meet their information needs. All services are periodically reviewed. Basic services may include:

- user orientation
- bibliographic instruction and/or information literacy
- reference
- database and index searching
- interlibrary loan and/or document delivery
- circulation of materials
- outreach programs offering resources, services, or referral in support of continuing education for the graduates of the parent institution and veterinary practitioners in the region

Circulation policies are written to address user needs, preservation needs, copyright, and other legal requirements and to protect patron privacy. Library hours facilitate access to collections and services and are consistent with reasonable demand.

The library should promote its services to users through instructional and advertising programs.

#### STANDARD #3

**The library's services are directed by a qualified professional librarian. Additional qualified professional and paraprofessional staff are provided to support library services and address user needs.**

**Explanation of intent.** A qualified librarian is a person who has earned a master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association or its successor accrediting organization or from a master's

level program in library and information studies accredited or recognized by the appropriate national body of another country. Professional responsibilities include, but are not limited to, educating users to search for and evaluate information resources; selecting, acquiring, and organizing veterinary medical collections; negotiating license agreements for electronic resources; evaluating library services; strategic planning; selecting, training, and supervising personnel; and assessing and implementing new information technologies to support and enhance library services. Academic veterinary medical librarians and paraprofessional staff should actively participate in continuing education, research, and professional activities required to maintain the unique knowledge and skills required to successfully operate a veterinary medical library. Membership in the Medical Library Association's Academy of Health Information Professionals (AHIP) is preferred.

#### STANDARD #4

**The library's reporting relationship allows active participation in the institution's planning and resource allocation process. Adequate financial resources are provided to meet the information needs of the individuals the library serves. The library assesses the needs of its users and the quality of its services on an ongoing basis and provides evidence of effectiveness.**

**Explanation of intent.** The library should report to a high-level decision maker in the institution. Library representatives should be included at administrative meetings and on committees, including curriculum development committees. The library requires discretion to allocate financial resources independently to satisfy user needs and provide balanced collections and services.

#### STANDARD #5

**Appropriate space is provided for the library's collections, personnel, and services and supports the research and study needs of students, faculty, and staff.**

**Explanation of intent.** To facilitate an active learning environment where students, faculty, and staff can engage in quiet study or scholarly debate, continuous assessment of library facilities related to library users is required. An active learning environment includes adequate space for group and individual study, information technology, library collections, and library staff. Strategic planning and investment in library facilities is necessary to reflect changes in technology and academic programs.

#### STANDARD #6

**The library participates in cooperative programs with other libraries, consortia, networks, vendors, and agencies to assist it in meeting its goals and addressing user needs.**

**Explanation of intent.** The above programs should supplement library collections and resources and comply with national standards for interlibrary cooperation.

## APPENDIX

### Bibliography

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