

LP 111 Reference Material Policy

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1. Principle:

All Library staff shall receive training in offering subject assistance to library patrons. All staff may attempt to answer questions and requests for information from any library patron, regardless of age.

2. Policy:

2.1 Type of Service Offered

Library staff will attempt to answer questions as fully as possible, but must keep in mind the needs of all patrons using the library. If a question proves to be very time-consuming or complex, the library patron may have to be called back later with the answer. A possible time frame for answering the question should be provided to the patron.

The Library welcomes all questions from all patrons and, except for the circumstances noted in ***Excluded Questions***, will attempt to answer any question, and will do so without passing judgment on the nature of the question.

2.2 Excluded Questions

School related questions will be answered in the same manner as all reference questions.

Only simple answers can be provided for prize contest questions.

In the course of reference duty, a staff member may be asked to provide information from medical, legal, census or tax sources. Library staff will do so readily, but must not offer any interpretation of the information provided.

2.3 Telephone, Email or Facsimile Requests

Requests shall be received by telephone, email, facsimile, or in writing and are treated as all other requests, but if the library is busy, priority will be given to the needs of patrons who have come into the library. Telephone questions will then be answered when time permits. The patron will need to be called back on the principle of first come-first served basis, giving a realistic time frame of how long it might take to answer the question.

2.3 Development of the Reference Collection

Each branch shall maintain the reference collection appropriate to the needs of the community. Questions from patrons that library staff are unable to answer will be documented and all staff will submit these questions to Collection Supervisor to assist in collection development.

2.4 Unanswered Questions

Questions for which no answer or material has been found in the Library collection, will be referred to the appropriate agency by the library staff (if such an agency is known), or will become an interlibrary loan material (ILLO) request.

2.5 Circulation of Reference Material

Reference questions may be answered using the entire collection of the library. However, some material will be designated for use in the library only. Such material normally does not circulate. In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the senior staff member on duty, a special one (1) or two (2) day loan may be granted.

3. Procedure:

- 3.1 All information requests are to be handled. If information is available, it is provided to patrons without making a judgment on its moral or aesthetic worth.
- 3.2 No effort will be made to determine whether library users are entitled to library cards before reference service is given except to decide whether or not information material will be checked out or interlibrary loan requested.

- 3.3 The needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and treated with utmost respect and confidentiality.
- 3.4 Discussion of any individual or group of individuals, whether adult or child, or their inquiries, outside the professional context, is strictly prohibited without the consent of the patron.
- 3.5 While on desk duty, service to the public takes precedence over any other duties, and service to the patron in the library takes precedence over telephone inquiries.
- 3.6 It is not sufficient for the staff to wait for a patron to request assistance. Since many patrons are reluctant to request aid, it is the responsibility of staff to anticipate public needs and offer service when it appears needed.
- 3.7 Information given is always based on accurate printed sources or learned from a reliable authority. The opinion, evaluation, or interpretation of staff, even when requested, is not given as fact. Answers to reference questions will only be given after the answer has been verified and a source cited, even for the most common knowledge.
- 3.8 Neither the patron's nor the staff member's personal opinions and beliefs should influence the quality of service given.
- 3.9 No time limit should be put on searching. However, lengthy searches of periodicals, bibliographic sources, or searches through extensive reference materials are beyond the library's resources to perform in most instances.
- 3.10 Telephone reference service should be used for short, factual information questions which do not require extensive reading or any interpretation on the staff member's part.