

## **REFERENCE SERVICE**

### **I. MISSION OF REFERENCE SERVICES**

It is the mission of the Adult and Youth Services Departments to provide reference service at all times that the Library is open by professional and paraprofessional individuals who provide quality service to the best of their abilities.

Statement of Objectives: We aspire:

- To provide personal assistance without discrimination to library users seeking information.
- To select, acquire, and organize sources of information to meet the needs of library users.
- To identify and promote the information needs of potential users in the community.
- To cooperate with other community agencies and organizations in their efforts to serve the community.
- To ensure that library users receive a consistent level of service.
- To present programs and tours in the Library and in the community on reference services, library use and reference sources.

### **II. PURPOSE OF THE REFERENCE SERVICE GUIDELINES**

- A. To describe the services and resources offered with regard to reference service by the Adult and Youth Services Departments.
- B. To set standards and guidelines that ensure continuity and consistency in service.
- C. To provide guidance for those working at the Adult and Youth Services Reference Desks and for those being trained.

### **III. REFERENCE STAFF**

Reference staff members, whether professional or paraprofessional, serve as the link between resources and the patron. As such, it is important that the staff member be:

- A. Knowledgeable about library materials and services.
- B. Open and approachable; friendly but professional.

- C. Able to communicate effectively with people.
- D. Discreet in the handling of questions which might be confidential or sensitive.
- E. Able to exercise good judgment both in the interpretation of policy and in the handling of exceptional situations.

#### **IV. LIBRARY USERS**

Library users are defined as all people seeking information whether in person, by telephone, FAX, mail, or by electronic communication. Reference service is available to all persons served by the Library without discrimination. The needs of each library user are taken seriously and treated with respect.

#### **V. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DESK SERVICE**

##### **A. Priorities**

1. All reference questions are treated confidentially.
2. Service to the public receives priority over any other duties. Library users will be made aware that the primary purpose of a reference librarian is to assist them.
3. In-person requests for service receive priority over all other requests.
4. Although the Library's primary responsibility is to patrons within the Warrenville Public Library District and non-resident Warrenville cardholders, other patrons will also receive basic reference services.

##### **B. Reference Transactions**

No two reference questions are alike; therefore, no specific time limits can be placed on an actual question. The amount of time devoted to a question is at the discretion of the reference staff member. All reference questions receive an answer or status report within one working day unless patron is given a different time frame.

##### **C. Referrals to Local, County, State or Federal Agencies**

Referrals to other agencies may be made when appropriate. Patrons will be advised that they might contact the Library for further assistance if they are not successful in obtaining help from the agency. At no time may staff refer the patron to individual practitioners - physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, etc.

D. Referrals to Other Libraries

If the staff member feels that it is appropriate to refer the patron to another library, the staff member should verify that the material needed is available before sending the patron. If it is necessary to refer a patron to a corporate, university, or other special library, the staff member will provide contact information to the patron.

E. Sources

To give the most accurate and authoritative answers possible, staff members will avoid personal opinions, philosophy or evaluations; rather they will rely upon information based on accurate printed or online sources or learned from a reliable authority. The opinion of staff members, even when requested is not given as fact. The source of an answer is always cited.

F. Instruction and Orientation Services

Instruction and orientation services in use of the Library are an integral part of library service and may range from basic instruction on how to use the computer catalog or reference tools to more formal assistance such as tours designed to increase the patron's knowledge of the Library's materials and services.

G. Computer and Internet Assistance

Library staff will provide basic assistance with computer and software use and Internet searches, but cannot provide extensive individualized instruction. Basic assistance includes logging into the computer system and opening software programs, creating a computer reservation when all computers are in use, and paying for and using the Library's print management system. Library staff can also assist patrons with use of the Library's catalog and its subscription databases. They can demonstrate how to open and save documents. Basic assistance will also be provided for internet searches, especially when referring patrons to appropriate sites for research. Further assistance is dependent upon staff availability and expertise.

Users are expected to have mastered basic computer skills, including the ability to use a mouse and to access menu items. Library staff may refer patrons to instructional guides in the library's collection, help screens, tutorials within the computer programs, and computer instruction classes offered locally.

Library staff will not enter any data into a website or online form on behalf of any Library patron.

H. Handling of Cash Transactions

All fees for reference services (Interlibrary Loan charges, photocopies, etc.) are collected at the Circulation Desk. No cash is to be accepted by reference staff for services rendered.

I. Telephone, Fax, Mail, Electronic Request

It is the Library's practice to respond to all reasonable reference inquiries whether received by mail, telephone, FAX or electronic communication. These are defined as short, factual information questions that do not require extensive searching or interpretation on the part of staff members.

A limit of two items, title or subject specific, will be pulled by staff to satisfy a request. Anything more is considered extensive research and must be done by the patron. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the staff.

Patrons may submit material requests through the online catalog for items that the Library owns. If available, requested materials will be pulled from the shelves daily and the patron will be notified by phone or e-mail when they are available for pick-up.

J. Photocopying of Reference Materials

A photocopy machine is available for patron use within the Library. Patrons are responsible for making their own photocopies at a charge. There is no charge for photocopies sent by a staff member in reply to a reference request via fax, e-mail, or mail. All copies are made in accordance with copyright law at the librarian's discretion.

**VI. SPECIFIC QUESTION GUIDELINES**

A. School Assignments

Questions regarding school assignments are to be treated as any other request for reference assistance.

B. Contest Questions

Contest questions are guided by the same definitions and time limits as any other type of reference question.

C. Consumer Evaluations

The staff helps patrons locate objective product information by showing them how to consult the indexes to consumer publications, buying guides, and/or general indexes which may lead to product evaluations in other periodicals.

D. Book, Antique and Art Appraisals

Patrons may be referred to appropriate reference sources, consultants, or experts. Staff members do not give personal appraisals regarding the value of patrons' possessions.

E. Genealogical Questions

Staff members will provide general assistance in genealogical research, guidance in locating items in the collection, and help in obtaining resources through interlibrary loan. Referrals will be made to appropriate resources. Staff members will not engage in actual genealogical research for patrons.

F. Compilations and Extensive Research

Requests for and/or completion of lengthy research is not considered a traditional role of the public reference librarian. Research and reference differ in terms of time required, sources employed, and ease of determination of search strategies; research is the more involved of the two. Patrons needing extensive compilations (bibliographies, lists, statistics, etc.) or research are directed to the appropriate resources and offered as much assistance as staff time allows.

G. Medical, Legal and Tax Questions

The Library does not provide advice in the areas of medicine, law, and taxes. If legal information can be found in printed sources, it is provided. However, complicated legal searches are not undertaken nor will personal interpretations of legal matters be offered. Concerning medical information, brief definitions and descriptions from authoritative published sources may be provided. These sources are quoted verbatim with no personal interpretation. The patron will be informed of the source from which the information is taken. Under no circumstances does a staff member offer advice in medical, legal, or tax areas, regardless of how commonplace the knowledge seems to be. If more information is required, the patron is encouraged to examine the Library's collection or is referred to another source.

#### H. Mathematical Calculations

Mathematical calculations are not provided. Patrons are referred to sources containing the formulas or tables necessary for them to complete their calculations.

### **VII. LOAN OF REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Reference and ready reference books may not be checked out due to the nature of the information and the cost of the materials. However, in unusual circumstances the Person in Charge may make exceptions.

### **VIII. ORIENTATION AND TOURS**

The Adult and Youth Departments offer Library orientation tours and bibliographic instruction including minimal basic computer instruction.