



Reference Policy

Reference service is the assistance given to customers in pursuit of information. It may include providing help with the Library catalog or databases, readers' advisory, referrals to other organizations or sources or assistance with technology. The Library also provides individual and group instruction and may refer customers to those or other resources.

Customers present in the building have priority for service over telephone calls or other methods of communication. Service is provided on a first come first served basis.

Questions received via telephone, email or other electronic means will be answered in a timely manner. Phone questions generally should be kept to a maximum of fifteen minutes, if more time is needed a call back may be necessary or the caller can be encouraged to visit the library.

Customers contacting the Library from outside the area may be redirected to their home libraries if the query is beyond our scope or requires an excessive amount of time.

Levels of Reference Assistance

Referral

Staff may direct customers to the Library's catalog, databases, events, online classes, or print resources, or to outside agencies or websites. If the resource is in-house, staff may provide basic instruction to help a new user begin to understand the resource. The Library does not have the resources to provide more than basic instruction. When a query is beyond the scope or expertise of the Library staff referrals to other libraries, organizations, or authoritative sources may be necessary and it is incumbent upon the librarian to give the patron another option to find their information.

Research

Research assistance involves the in-depth coverage of a topic. The level of assistance provided varies according to the availability of staff, the staff and customer's knowledge of the subject, the volume of other customer requests, the depth of the Library's relevant resources, the complexity of the question, and the timeframe in which the information is needed.

Lengthy research for individual customers which requires extensive staff time to collect data from multiple sources, including bibliographic searches, electronic searches, copying of materials and collating items, is not provided as part of the Library's reference assistance.

Instruction

The Library offers basic instruction in the use of bibliographic and reference tools. This instruction may be provided to individuals or groups. The Library does not have the resources to offer more than basic instruction. Staff may assist individuals; however, they may not complete the work for the individual.

Staff members may assist students in locating information needed for school assignments but cannot assist the student in completing school assignments or homework.

Staff may conduct Library tours appropriate to the age and interests of a group. The size and number of group tours conducted are dependent on the availability of staff. Groups with scheduled appointments receive priority of service.

Not in Scope

Some inquiries are outside the scope and expertise of the Library. These include but are not limited to:

- Research for commercial purposes
- Computer software assistance beyond the basics
- Genealogical family histories or in-depth family research
- Medical, legal, financial, and tax advice. This includes explanation, interpretation, or personal opinions of the sources.
- Writing, typing, or editing documents. This includes explanation, interpretation, or personal opinions of the sources.
- Translations of full text documents. Staff can provide translations for specific words or phrases.
- Tutoring
- Appraisals. Staff may direct patrons to published and online price guides or refer them to the appropriate professional service.