

REFERENCE SERVICE POLICY

The Board of Trustees of the Warrenville Public Library District considers Reference Service a critical role of the Library. The Library is committed to responding accurately and in a timely manner to reference requests. The purpose of this policy is to assure the quality and consistency of Reference Service.

I. DEFINITIONS

- Reference Service entails the location of specific facts or the identification and provision of resources on a topic.
- Readers' Advisory involves suggesting fiction and nonfiction titles to a reader. Readers' Advisory extends beyond books to a variety of formats and collections. For the purposes of this policy, Readers' Advisory is considered a part of Reference Service.
- Research is the detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover information or reach a conclusion.

II. AVAILABILITY OF SERVICE

- Reference Service will be available during regular hours of operation to all persons served by the Library regardless of age, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, social or economic status, or residency.
- All Library users will be treated with equal concern and every request for information is handled impartially.
 - Service will be provided by qualified staff members who are:
 - Knowledgeable about Library materials and services.
 - Open and approachable; friendly but professional.
 - Able to communicate effectively with people.
 - Discreet in the handling of questions that might be confidential or sensitive.
 - Able to exercise good judgment both in the interpretation of policy and in the handling of exceptional situations.
 - In the event that a qualified staff member is not available, another staff member will be designated to handle inquiries or take information for referral to a qualified staff member.
 - Service will be provided for all requests whether received in-person or by telephone, mail, email or other means of communication.
 - Staff members use good judgment to prioritize questions when responding to more than one question at the same time.
 - Staff members are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the *ALA Statement on Professional Ethics*.

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE SERVICE

A. Priorities

- Service to the public receives priority over other duties except in emergency situations.
- Assistance will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.
- In-person requests for service receive priority over other requests.

- Phone and email messages will be checked at least once per desk shift (morning, afternoon, evening).
 - Time spent on individual questions will depend on whether others are waiting. To ensure no one has to wait too long for service, generally no more than 10 minutes will be spent with an individual requester when others are waiting. In such cases, staff will offer to continue the search and provide the answer later.
 - Although the Library's primary responsibility is to members (residents of the Warrenville Public Library District and non-resident Warrenville cardholders), guests will also receive basic reference services.
- B. Reference Transactions
- Requests will be answered or referred within 24 hours. If a question is complex and requires more time, the requester will be notified within 24 hours.
 - Requesters will be informed of sources used to answer questions.
 - Information will be provided without judgment of the use of the information, including homework, trivia or contest use.
- C. Referrals
- When questions cannot be answered fully with available resources, staff will provide referrals to experts, organizations and other authorities.
 - At no time may staff make referrals to individual practitioners - physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, etc.
 - When referring to another library, staff will verify the availability of needed material before sending the requester. Staff will provide the library's contact information to the requester.
- D. Sources
- Staff will not offer personal opinion, advice or interpretation as fact.
 - Staff will rely upon information based on accurate printed or online sources or learned from a reliable authority.
 - The source of an answer will always be cited.
- E. Instruction and Orientation Services
- Instruction and orientation services in use of the Library are an integral part of reference service.
 - Basic instruction on how to use the computer catalog, computers, digital and print resources is available.
 - Regularly scheduled instructional programs for the use of computers and digital resources will be offered.
 - Book-a-Librarian one-on-one sessions are available by appointment to members.
 - Tours designed to increase knowledge of the Library's materials and service are available by appointment for groups and organizations serving residents of the District.
 - Computer users may be referred to instructional guides, help screens, tutorials and computer instruction classes offered locally.

- Staff will not enter any data into an online form on behalf of any computer user.

F. Research

Staff will not perform in-depth research on behalf of a requester. Instead, staff will suggest materials and sources appropriate for research.

G. Fees

All service fees (printing, interlibrary loan, etc.) will be collected at the point of service (coin operated machines for printing and copying) or at the Member Services Desk. No fees will be collected at the Adult or Youth Services Desks.

H. Photocopying, Scanning and Faxing

- A photocopy machine is available near the Member Services Desk. Photocopy fees are posted at the machine and are the responsibility of the user.
- A scanner is available near the Member Services Desk. There is no fee to scan to a user-provided USB drive, email address or domestic fax number.
- A fax machine is available near the Member Services Desk. There is no fee to fax to a domestic number.
- The user is responsible for complying with copyright laws.

IV. SPECIFIC QUESTION GUIDELINES

As information professionals, staff members are not able to provide services in other areas of professional practice. Staff will not:

- Provide medical, legal, copyright, financial or tax advice.
- Recommend individual practitioners such as physicians or attorneys.
- Provide appraisals of books, artwork, antiques or other collectibles.
- Provide editorial or translation services.
- Provide career counseling advice.
- Conduct genealogical, patent, trademark or other in-depth research.
- Handle confidential information such as social security numbers, account information or medical information. If such information is viewed inadvertently, staff makes every effort to protect members' privacy.
- Prepare compilations or conduct exhaustive literature searches.

Staff will provide Library materials, online resources and referrals to address needs within these areas.