

Highland Park Public Library Customer Service Guidelines

The Highland Park Public Library is committed to providing excellent service to its community. Each staff member is expected to demonstrate the highest service-oriented qualities when working with patrons, co-workers and other individuals and organizations.

Working with Patrons

- Helping a patron takes priority over any other task.
- Patron convenience should be given first priority.
- When appropriate, offer your assistance before a patron asks.
- If a number of patrons are waiting for service, focus on one while acknowledging to the others, “I will be with you shortly.” Also, thank patrons for waiting. Patrons waiting in person should be serviced before telephone inquiries.
- When asked for assistance, give as complete an answer as possible and make the patron aware of all library services which could answer the question; however, do not give more information than you are sure of.
- Avoid “robot-like” responses and pointing to an area. Give specific directions, adding, “If you can’t find it, please come back to the desk.” Or, take the patron to the requested area of material. Tailor your level of directional service to the needs of the patron.
- When responding to a request or problem, always get back to the patron within the time period promised even if it is to tell the patron you are still working on it. This guideline should be followed for long and short-term inquiries, when you are contacting a person by phone or when the patron is waiting in the library.
- Be approachable, smile, make eye contact, and listen to patrons.

Responding to Problems and Complaints

- Respond to problems and confrontational situations in a positive manner.
- Respond to a problem or complaint at the place and time it is received, instead of referring the patron immediately to another department. If you must refer the patron to another department or person, acknowledge that there is a problem, adding “Let me direct you to someone who can help.” Whenever possible, take the patron to the other staff person and explain the situation to the staff member to whom you are directing the patron.
- Be diplomatic. Although patrons may not always be right, avoid making them feel as if they are in the wrong. Try to find a solution to the problem without placing blame.
- Be courteous. If you must ask a patron to refrain from certain behavior (for instance, eating in the library or using a cell phone in the lobby), do so in the most polite terms.
- Defuse confrontational situations. Try to understand and respond to a patron’s complaint of problem, not react personally to his anger.

(continued on reverse)

Professional Guidelines

- Appear and conduct yourself as a professional. Refrain from making negative comments about other employees, patrons, the library or other organizations in public.
- Become thoroughly acquainted with the services and policies of the library and of your department in particular. Know the reasons for patron service policies so that you can explain when asked. Stay informed of all procedures and processes in your areas of responsibility and make sure you thoroughly understand any changes and the reasons for these. Avoid commenting to patrons, "I don't know why we do it that way." If a patron inquiry is beyond your scope of responsibility, offer to call your supervisor to find the patron additional information.
- Conversations in public areas should be held at a quiet level. Refrain from holding personal conversations with other staff members in the presence of patrons.
- Each staff member's appearance and demeanor contributes to making the library a welcoming, professional environment. Staff members are expected to maintain personal hygiene and dress in clean, neat attire that is appropriate for their duties. Clothing should not contain any slogans or images that may cause patrons to be uncomfortable.
- Staff who use perfume or cologne should do so with discretion as other staff or patrons may have sensitivity to certain scents.
- Staff are required to wear badges identifying them as employees of the library when they are working. Staff may choose to wear badges with their first names and departments, first and last names and departments, or departments only.
- Personal telephone calls, including the use of cell phones, should be made and received away from the public service desks, and whenever possible, during breaks. Staff's cell phones should be turned off or put on "silent" when on the public desk.
- While working in office areas, it is expected that any incoming personal phone calls be brief and that outgoing personal phone calls be made during breaks and from the staff room whenever possible. This also applies to the use of cell phones.
- Beverages are permitted in public spaces, provided they have lids and are in neutral containers that do not advertise businesses. Whenever possible, beverages should be kept away from public view. Staff should use caution when consuming beverages around electronic equipment. Eating is not allowed in public spaces.