

23. Reference Policy

Statement of Intent

As part of its mission to offer “access to information and materials that enrich the lives of its patrons”, the Library will provide reference services, including responding to requests for information. In addition to providing information from sources available in the Library collection, the Library shall offer patrons alternative and extended means for answering questions that exceed the Library’s ability to complete satisfactorily. Reference services are available whenever the Library is open.

A. Services

1. Making available to patrons for in-library use all of the materials acquired by, or housed in, the Library, regardless of format, subject to reasonable rules of procedure. This includes the collection of the Blue Island Historical Society.
2. Making available for circulation to patrons with valid borrowing privileges, all materials not classified as Reference and all equipment specifically designated for circulation, subject to the circulation policies.
3. Offering guidance, either informally or formally, in-person or by printed or other materials, to patrons in the use and location of Library materials; including System Wide Automated Network (SWAN), computers with CD-ROM products and internet access, indexes, bibliographies, etc.
4. Responding to requests for information by providing the information itself or source(s) of information, if available in the Library; by offering means by which such information can be obtained from other libraries; or by suggesting alternative methods of obtaining such information if not available through libraries.
5. All Reference services shall be offered free of charge except for those services (e.g. out of state OCLC requests) with charges levied by outside agencies whose charges may be passed on to the requesting individual at the current rate. The Library also has some fees and charges for copies (see the Fines and Charges Policy).

B. Access

The library shall provide reference services and materials to all persons who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the library regardless of the age, race, gender, national origin, economic status. Patrons do not need to be registered Blue Island Public Library cardholders to use library facilities, reference materials or services.

The Library shall respond equally to requests regardless of whether the request is made in person, by telephone, letter, or email, subject to the limitations of the method used.

The Library shall respond to all questions in the order received and shall make every effort to provide a satisfactory answer or status statement within two hours of the time the question was received, with the exception of two days if by written correspondence.

C. Confidentiality

The needs of library patrons are treated with respect. Names of patrons and the transactions which occur between patrons and the staff are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context. Names of patrons and details pertaining to their reference transactions shall not be disclosed to anyone but staff.

D. Staffing

Some Reference Service may be provided by trained staff and subject to professional assistance when required. Such staff has been trained by a librarian, holding a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science.

Library staff providing Reference shall do so in the spirit of the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read and Freedom to View statements and under the guidelines of the Statement of Professional Ethics.

E. Responsibility

The Library Director shall have the responsibility to implement these policies subject to such procedures as deemed necessary and not conflict with the spirit and intent of these policies.

The Library Director may delegate such duties as necessary to appropriate staff in order to implement these policies.

The Library Director shall evaluate the Reference Service, including the Reference Policy, and present the results to the Board of Trustees with any recommendations for change every three years. Forms for this evaluation are available from the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Library Association, or the American Library Association.

Adopted: 1/89

Reviewed: 2/90

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