

2.8 REFERENCE SERVICE

Mission

Reference staff includes professional librarians and library associates trained specifically to locate a wide variety of information through a variety of channels including but not limited to books, internet sites, subscription-based databases and human contacts. The Library maintains a reference collection and a team of reference staff to answer our patrons' needs for accurate, timely, relevant information. The print reference collection comprises books considered so essential for reference service that they must always be available to consult. Therefore, reference materials do not circulate.

Response time for reference service

Reference staff respond to queries from people in the library and from people who telephone or email them. As a rule, people who are physically present get first priority. Patrons who phone or email queries should understand that their needs will be attended as quickly as possible, consistent with the demand for reference service and other onsite customer service. Those seeking reference services via phone and email can generally expect an answer within 24 hours if not sooner. Naturally, the nature of the information sought will also bear on the time it takes to provide the appropriate response.

Scope of reference service

The highest priority of reference service is the provision of timely, authoritative information from clearly identified sources. If high quality published information is not available, reference librarians will often refer information-seekers to other institutions (such as special libraries), organizations (such as professional associations), and people (such as law librarians, lawyers, doctors, or accountants). While librarians strive to be knowledgeable on a wide variety of subjects, it is both unprofessional and unethical for reference librarians to give advice that should properly come from a different professional with distinct education and credentials.

Some patrons simply want the answer to their question, while some want to learn how to use various research tools such as catalogs, directories, and databases as well as get some particular information. Furthermore, the reference staff provides on demand assistance to patrons using the public computers. The Library is committed to providing our patrons with access to the prevailing information technologies, as well as instructional material to help them utilize these technologies. While the staff strives to assist patrons for whom these technologies are new, the ability to spend time with individual patrons varies with the volume of demand for reference services. Reference staff will provide assistance using electronic resources as time permits, and/or may need to schedule additional training at a mutually convenient time. If a patron is in need of basic computer or Internet training, or training in office applications software, the reference staff will provide quick guidance, but may then direct the patron to appropriate computer training classes or assist them to begin using selected online training websites.

Inevitably there will be times when reference staff cannot provide the degree of reference service or computer assistance that the patron desires. If the patron feels he or she has not

received appropriate assistance he or she should take the name of the staff person and discuss the matter with the library director.

Beyond our walls

When our library's collection of print, media, and electronic resources are insufficient to meet a patron's needs, the reference librarian will steer the patron to likely alternative sources. Reference staff can show patrons how to place holds on materials held by other libraries in our consortium, call other consortium libraries and request that materials be pulled and held pending pickup by the patron, or may initiate an interlibrary loan (ILL) request for the materials from libraries outside our consortium. ILLs from libraries outside the LMXAC consortium entail special restrictions and conditions, and prospective ILL borrowers must sign a statement indicating their understanding and acceptance of these special terms before the ILL is processed.

Confidentiality

Reference librarians are committed to doing their utmost to protect the confidentiality of patrons. When reference questions result in contact with possible sources, the requestor remains anonymous. Follow up questions and the information response will only be shared with the person requesting the information.

Attitude and Manner

Assisting patrons to connect with the materials and information they need is the top priority of reference staff. While reference staff have other tasks, patrons should be made to feel welcome and comfortable approaching a librarian (unless he or she is on the telephone or assisting another patron). Patrons have the right to *always* expect a respectful, courteous response to their request for assistance. Reference staff should be accorded respectful, courteous behavior by patrons. Verbal or other abuse of staff is not tolerated in the library.

Tours and Special Presentations

Tours of the library for community and student groups are scheduled upon request. Special presentations can also be scheduled, including using our catalog, how to place holds, and searching subscription databases. Groups are invited to contact the library should they wish to schedule such a tour or presentation.