

Hinsdale Public Library

Reference Service Policy

Reference Service Policy Purpose

The Hinsdale Public Library Board of Trustees has established the following policy to guide the provision of reference service to the community. The Board's intent is to provide for the systematic provision of inclusive, balanced and useful reference service which fairly and effectively serves the diverse needs of the citizens of the Village of Hinsdale.

Definition of Reference Service

Reference service is defined as the provision of answers, information, instruction, direction, and recommendations to patrons either upon request or in anticipation of need, using all available resources.

Goals of Reference Service

- To offer well-trained, approachable, knowledgeable staff to assist library patrons
- To select, acquire, and organize information and resources to meet the needs of the community
- To provide thorough, efficient, timely, accurate reference service and materials
- To utilize all of the library's technological resources and all means of communication in the provision of library service
- To inform patrons about services and resources available from the library
- To provide instruction in the use of library resources as appropriate
- To provide patrons with thoughtful referrals to other agencies and libraries as necessary
- To treat all requests for reference service with respect, impartiality, and confidentiality

Availability of Service

Reference service is available at all times the library is open. When possible, reference resources will be available online for 24 hour access, and requests for reference service may be made via email or telephone message at any time of the day or night.

Timeliness

- Library staff will acknowledge all questions, requests or recommendations upon receipt
- Library staff will endeavor to answer all questions, requests and recommendations, regardless of their method of communication within 24 hours

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- Library staff will notify patrons if questions, requests and recommendations cannot be completed within 24 hours and will follow through with updates
- Patrons whose questions exceed the library's scope and resources will be referred to an appropriate resource or institution

Standards and Ethics

In order to maintain the trust of the patron and respect of the profession, library staff will act in accordance with federal and state laws, the guidelines and standards of conduct as set forth by the American Library Association and the Metropolitan Library System and the library's confidentiality policy in their provision of reference service. Accordingly, all staff will:

- 1) Keep reference interactions confidential and respect each patron's right to privacy with regard to information requested or materials sought or received, borrowed or loaned, as well as any resources consulted
 - a) Provide answers to information requests only to the person with the original request, unless otherwise permitted by the patron
 - b) Avoid retaining unnecessary or duplicate records
- 2) Not allow personal beliefs to interfere with professional duties and make no judgments as to the legitimacy or value of any given request

Metropolitan Library System's Reference Guidelines

<http://www.mls.lib.il.us/consulting/referenceguidelines.pdf>

American Library Association's Code of Ethics

<http://ftrf.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.cfm>

Special Circumstances

In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. The staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff explain the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select income tax forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above. If all available resources do not adequately answer the patron's request, the patron will be advised to consult a professional in the field for additional information or advice.

Reference materials are circulated only under special circumstances and with the approval of authorized staff. Patrons who check out reference books must be Hinsdale cardholders in good standing. When circulated, reference materials are loaned for twenty-four hours or for a different loan period at the discretion of an authorized staff member.

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Policy Review and Revision

This document will be reviewed by the Board at least every three years.