

## **REFERENCE POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

This policy is intended to define the goals of the Reference Department at the Itasca Community Library (ICL). This written policy sets guidelines for reference staff in delivering services to patrons as well as answering patron questions about the library's reference services. For the purpose of reaching the library's larger goals and to equitably serve all patrons, regardless of age, race, sex, social and economic status, limitations may be placed on specific services.

### **GOALS**

To assist all patrons in the use of reference resources and library materials.

To assist patrons who request information or seek guidance in the use of library resources.

To provide efficient referral to outside sources if the question cannot be answered at the ICL.

To provide accurate and current information.

To provide inter-library loan services to ICL cardholders.

To assist patrons in locating the sources of information required to answer the reference query.

### **ETHICS, CONFIDENTIALITY & IMPARTIALITY IN THE REFERENCE TRANSACTION**

The reference staff of the ICL endeavors to handle all reference queries with impartiality and confidentiality. Patron records will be kept confidential unless authorized by the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

### **SCOPE OF REFERENCE SERVICE**

#### **Availability of Service**

Reference service is provided to patrons regardless of residency. If the material requested is not available at the ICL, all efforts will be made to locate the material or to obtain the material by inter-library loan. However, non-Itasca library cardholders will be referred to their local library for inter-library loans.

## **Priorities of Service**

Reference service will be provided in response to all types of queries including in-house, telephone, fax, mail and other electronic communication. For reference staff, answering reference queries takes priority over other staff assignments. In-person requests take priority over telephone, fax, mail and other electronic communication. The librarian will determine when all reasonable sources have been exhausted. There is no set time limit for answering queries, however, when other patrons are waiting, complex questions will be deferred to a less busy time. Questions will be answered or referred within 24 hours.

Telephone, fax and electronic communication requests for directory, stock price quotations, or statistical information are limited to 3 items per user per day, due to time constraints and the difficulty of communicating large amounts of data. Larger requests must be handled in person.

The reference staff will search all in-house and on-line sources to locate the requested information. The reference staff will gather the appropriate sources for the patron. The patron is responsible for evaluating and synthesizing the material.

Requests for and/or completion of lengthy research is not considered a role of the public reference librarian. Research and reference differ in terms of time required; sources employed, and ease of determination of search strategies. Research is the more involved of the two. Patrons needing extensive compilations (bibliographies, lists, statistics, etc) or research will be directed to the appropriate resources and be provided assistance.

When a library patron cannot come to the library to pick up material due to a physical disability or unusual circumstance, the librarian may photocopy and email, fax or mail information to them based on professional discretion.

## **Special Categories**

### **Medical, Financial, and Legal Queries**

In the areas of medicine, law, and taxes, the library will provide information, not advice. Sources will be cited and quoted verbatim with no interpretations or opinions by the staff. Staff will not abstract or condense information read over the phone or in person. If legal

information can be found in printed sources, it is provided. However, complicated legal searches will not be undertaken nor will personal interpretations of legal matters be offered. In the case of medical information, brief definitions and descriptions from authoritative published sources can be provided. These sources will be quoted verbatim with no personal interpretation. The patron will be informed of the source from which the information is taken. Under no circumstances will a staff member offer advice in medical, legal or tax areas, regardless of how commonplace the knowledge seems to be. If more information is required, the patron will be encouraged to examine the library's collection or be referred to another source.

### **Appraisals**

The library will not do appraisals. The library will direct patrons to appraisal sources and price lists. However, the library will not endorse any one appraisal resource and is not responsible for the information provided.

### **Contest/Trivia Queries**

No puzzle or contest questions will be answered when they can be identified as such. Patrons visiting the library will be assisted in finding probable sources for answers. The library will not guarantee the correctness of contest question answers.

### **Homework Queries**

Questions regarding school assignments will be treated as any other request for reference assistance. However, the reference staff will not do the students' homework for them.

Reference staff will cooperate with the schools in handling homework assignments. "Homework alerts" will be solicited from local schools and preparations will be made by the Youth Services Librarian to deal with large assignments. Where appropriate, books will be pulled and placed on in-house reserve to ensure that adequate resources are available for all students. Instruction in the use of library materials will be provided.

### **Genealogical Queries**

Library staff will not do any original genealogical research. Sources of information will be provided to the patron as in any reference query.

### **Criss-Cross and Telephone Directory Information**

Criss-Cross and city directory inquiries will be answered either by telephone, mail, fax and other electronic communication or in person. No

more than three listings will be provided per patron at any one time. Staff members will not give "nearby" listings for Criss-Cross requests.

### **Tutorial Services**

Reference staff will not provide tutorial services. Reference staff will direct patrons in need of tutor services to appropriate resources.

Board Approved:

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