

**Rosemary Garfoot Public Library
Reference Services Policy**

1. Goal Statement and Philosophy of Service
2. The Reference Collection
3. Guidelines and Responsibilities
4. In-Person Reference Service
5. Telephone Reference Service
6. Mail Reference Service
7. Special Approach Reference Questions
8. Other Public Service Responsibilities

1. Goal Statement and Philosophy of Service

(A) The main goal of reference service is to ensure the optimum access to information resources through interaction with library users as follows:

- (1) Provision of personal assistance by staff
- (2) Provision of informal instruction in the use of library resources
- (3) Provision of access to a broad range of materials through bibliographies, indexes and the like, and the use of an interlibrary loan network

(B) The Library patron is the most significant person in the Library and, therefore, service provided to patrons is not an interruption of work but is rather the purpose of it.

2. The Reference Collection

(A) Reference materials are purchased with the intent to provide assistance with general, rather than specialized information needs.

(B) Specific criteria for the selection of reference materials are set forth in the library's Collection Development Policy. Special consideration in this area will be placed on the timeliness of materials. Revisions of standard materials should be regularly purchased by the Library.

(C) Items catalogued for the reference collection do not circulate. The only exceptions are those materials designated Overnight reference. The Library will attempt to purchase circulating copies of certain popular and affordable reference titles.

(D) The Library provides various CD-ROM databases for patron use. These databases are available for public access when the Library is open. To provide maximum service to all patrons, searches are limited to thirty minute slots.

3. Guidelines and Responsibilities

(A) A reference service user is a library patron of any age or circumstance who chooses to make contact with a staff member for the purpose of procuring information.

(B) All inquiries will be handled courteously.

(C) Value judgments will not be made by any staff member as to the importance of any question. Questions considered inappropriate, will be referred to the relevant sources.

(D) Reference questions will be addressed in the order received. If conflicts or time constraints occur, priority service will be given to in-person requests. Telephone requests will be noted, and calls will be returned as promptly as possible.

(E) All answers provided by staff shall be verified by legitimate documentation and the sources used shall be noted to patrons.

(F) Staff are expected to utilize available resources as much as possible, and within a reasonable time frame to answer requests. Potential limitations are addressed in section 7.

(G) If the answer to a request cannot be answered to a patron's satisfaction with the Library's resources, the following actions may be taken:

- (1) Use interlibrary loan service
- (2) Make phone calls to local sources of information
- (3) Refer patrons to other resources outside the Library

(H) Confidentiality is to be maintained at all times. Patrons and their questions will not be discussed beyond a professional context.

- (1) Questions concerning library policy should be answered by referring to written policies. If the patron is not satisfied, he or she should be referred to the Library Director.

4. In-Person Reference Service

(A) Staff at the circulation desk will maintain an attentive and visibly approachable attitude.

- (1) Work done at the circulation desk should not become a barrier to public service.
- (2) Staff should not appear too busy to be interrupted.

(B) An atmosphere conducive to an efficient reference interview should be maintained.

- (1) Privacy should be provided in the best way possible to encourage the patron to state specific information needs.
- (2) Staff should utilize a low speaking voice. If necessary, move the

reference interview to a more private area.

- (C) Active assistance should be provided.
 - (1) Staff should follow-through with service to the patron.
 - (2) Instruction in the use of resources should be provided as needed.
 - (3) When possible, patrons should be accompanied to resources rather than directed to them.
- (D) Staff may help promote individual reading and independent learning interests by introducing materials that meet and develop topics suggested by patrons.

5. Telephone Reference Service

- (A) Service is generally limited to providing the type of information that is readily available, does not require extensive searching and may be accurately shared over the telephone.
- (B) Ready reference service will be provided for queries answerable over the telephone within two minutes while the patron waits.
- (C) Callback service will be provided the same day for questions requiring more than two minutes to answer.
- (D) Limitations on telephone reference service include:
 - (1) Directory, including criss-cross information: no more than five names, addresses and/or phone numbers per call.
 - (2) For other special approach questions, see appropriate category in section 7.

6. Mail Reference Service

- (A) Mail reference service is not usually within the range of the library's reference service program. Mail inquiries will not be accepted from anyone living within the South Central Library System service area with the exception of title requests received on the Library's standard interlibrary loan intake form.
- (B) Staff will attempt to respond to mail inquiries received from outside the South Central Library System with available local resources. Preference will be given to requests for information specific to Cross Plains. Generic questions such as those questions that can be answered with the resources available at most public libraries, or requests that involve extensive searching, will not be honored.
 - (1) Genealogical requests will be referred to the Library Director or Assistant Director.

- (2) Unusual requests will be referred to the Library Director or Assistant Director.

7. Special Approach Reference Questions

(A) Contest Questions

- (1) Deemed low priority questions, these queries will be evaluated by staff and determination will be made to assist with these questions providing the Library has the time and resources.
- (2) Reference for patrons participating in prize contests involving more than simple answers, will be limited to supplying the materials and explaining how to locate the information.

(B) School Assignments

- (1) Such questions involving in-person reference shall be handled in the same manner as any other question.
- (2) Generally it is not library policy to answer school-related questions over the phone. The following exceptions are noted:
 - (a) When the question falls under the guidelines of section 6 (telephone reference) of this policy.
 - (b) When the question is a small part of a much larger task.
 - (c) When the question involves checking a bibliographic citation.
 - (d) When the question involves whether or not the Library has enough material available to make a visit worthwhile.

(C) Evaluations and ratings

- (1) Assistance is provided to patrons in locating appropriate sources of information and, if necessary, directions on how to use them.
- (2) For telephone requests, staff may read a summary evaluation of a specific product, citing the sources of information. Staff may provide brand names and model numbers of products and may quote car prices.
- (3) Personal opinions are not appropriate in this area.

(D) Values of art works, coins, stamps and other collectibles

- (1) Undocumented appraisals of the values of these items are not given.

(2) Staff will refer patrons to standard antique and collectible price guides when appropriate.

(E) Critical analyses

(1) Personal critical analysis, judgments or interpretations of the merit of literary works are to be supplemented with published critiques when possible.

(2) All personal evaluations should be identified as such.

(F) Medical, legal, technical and statistical information

(1) Material of any type related to these fields (including tables, charts, equations, laws, regulatory or tax information, legal and medical definitions) are not to be interpreted by staff.

(2) In case of telephone requests, information may be read over the phone, including citation of the source, however, patrons must interpret the information. Patrons should be advised to read the material for themselves.

(3) Staff should state they do not have the specialized knowledge to interpret material for conclusive answers.

(4) Appropriate requests will be referred to the Madison Public Library or the state Reference and Loan Library.

(G) Compilations and literature searches: Staff members do not prepare extensive compilations, bibliographies, lists for patrons and extensive literature searches are not undertaken.

(H) Translations: Staff members do not supply translations for patrons.

8. Other Responsibilities of Reference Staff

(A) Public access microcomputers: Staff members are responsible for overseeing the use of the computers, referring to the Microcomputer and Internet Policies when necessary.

(B) Photocopier: Staff members will assist patrons in using the photocopier.

(C) Non-staff telephone use

(1) A courtesy phone is available for patron use in the hall near the meeting rooms. This telephone is only for out-going, local calls, however, staff may grant permission to patrons to use the library telephone if the situation warrants.

(2) Except in emergency situations, telephone requests for paging people will generally not be honored.

- (D) Quiet study areas
 - (1) Staff may request that fewer people work together in an area if the situation warrants or encourage the group to use one of two study rooms.
 - (2) Only one person may sit at a study carrel at any time. Exceptions for group study may be made by the staff member in charge.

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