

# **BARRINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## *Reference Policy*

### **Services Defined**

Reference service is the assistance given to customers in pursuit of information. Reference includes providing help with the catalog and library computers, reader's advisory service, database and online assistance, bibliographic verification, interlibrary loan assistance, referral services, research assistance, school assignments, consumer information, and individual and group instruction. The library responds to all requests for reference and information services whether made in person, by telephone, mail, fax, or electronic means. Individuals present in the building take first priority for service over telephone calls or other communications

While on desk duty, service to the public takes precedence over any other duties, and service to the patron in the library takes precedence over telephone inquiries. It is not sufficient for the staff to wait for a patron to request assistance. Since many patrons are reluctant to request aid, it is the responsibility of staff to anticipate public needs and offer service when it appears needed.

### **Equal Access**

The library will provide reference service to all its customers on an equal, nondiscriminatory, and nonjudgmental basis without regard to the race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal view of the customer making the inquiry or the subject matter being researched. The library will offer services to those with special needs and utilize adaptive technology to meet those needs when necessary. No card is required for such services unless materials need to be checked out, or, an inter-library loan is requested.

The Library shall provide instruction in the effective use of its resources. Such instruction can range from the individual explanation of information resources or creation of guides in appropriate media to formal assistance through interpretive tours and group presentations designed to provide guidance and direction in the pursuit of information.

### **Confidentiality**

The Library recognizes that its records identifying the names of library users with specific materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, reference queries, requests, or other specific uses of the library are confidential in nature.

This information will be disclosed only upon the request or consent of the individuals or groups whose library privileges are directly affected or pursuant to a court order that shows cause and is in proper form as required by local, state or federal law.

### **Reference Interview**

All staff will be trained in answering basic reference questions when they are hired. The reference interview is used to help define customer needs and to answer customer questions.

Staff will begin reference transactions with verification of customer needs. The structured discussion that follows should clarify questions to be answered and the best way to provide the customer with information requested. Staff will provide a full citation of the resources used or recommended to the customer. Staff will also make referrals to other library employees or outside agencies as needed. The reference transaction will conclude with verification that the information need has been met.

### **Limitations of Service**

Library staff attempts to answer all questions. However, some limits have been established for types of questions and services beyond the scope and expertise of the public library. Some fees may be applicable to certain reference services if library supplies such as paper and copiers are utilized.

1. Research assistance involves the in-depth coverage of a topic. The level of research assistance provided varies according to the availability of staff, the staff and customer's knowledge of the subject, the volume of other customer requests, the depth of the collection, the complexity of the question and the time frame in which the information is needed. Lengthy research for individual customers which requires extensive staff time to collect data from multiple sources, including bibliographic searches, electronic searches, copying of materials and collating items, is not normally provided as part of the library's research assistance.
2. Any copying of information for out of town requests will be charged \$.10 per page for copying and additional postage to send the items. Information may also be scanned and sent via e-mail for free.
3. If staff members are unable to adequately respond to a patron's question with current library resources, they will refer the patron to a source that may be of further help. It is up to the patron to take the search further.
4. The library will **NOT** provide personal information such as phone numbers, addresses, e-mail addresses, names of family members, or borrowing records as part of reference services. The privacy laws of our state protect this information. When a customer seeks "reverse information" (where the customer has a phone number or address, but not the name) or "nearby" information (where the customer has an address and wants to know who lives next door), staff does not provide the answer over the telephone.
5. General assistance with the resources of the genealogy collection is provided; however, the Library does not trace complete family histories or conduct in-depth research for customers. An indication of whether or not requested genealogy information appears in an index or in the Library collection may be given over the telephone, by mail, fax, and by other electronic means. The patron must do any genealogy research needed on Ancestry Plus or via the State Records Department themselves. Some birth and death records may be accessible only from Town Hall at a nominal fee.

6. Published price guides for art works, antiques, rare books, coins, stamps, currency and other collectibles are available for customers. Staff will not provide appraisals of such works. While library staff may offer listings of appraisers or vendors, personal recommendations will not be made.

7. Staff will provide customers with basic orientation to computer hardware and electronic products available on the Library's computers. Library staff is available to assist users with basic machinery problems and answer simple questions regarding the electronic products. Depending on schedules, Public Technology Assistants may be available to work one-on-one with the public and library-supplied technology. However, in general, library staff cannot provide individual in-depth computer training, technical assistance or solve compatibility problems. When further information is needed staff will refer customers to pertinent manuals, other library resources, and the computer classes offered through the library. Staff may provide assistance in locating reviews, instructions, or other information about computer software or hardware. Library staff is limited in their ability to assist customers in solving problems with their own personal computers. If the library does not have the information desired, staff may refer the customer to an alternate source.

8. Staff may respond to medical, legal or tax questions by reading directly from the cited source or inviting the customer to use the Library's resources in person. Staff must not offer advice, interpretation, recommendation, opinion or personal experience, which is the domain of trained legal, medical, or financial professionals.

Questions involving intellectual property (law that involves patents, trademarks, and copyrights) may be addressed by offering the customer assistance with the tools needed for a preliminary intellectual property search. Staff cannot perform the search for the customer or advise the customer regarding intellectual property matters.

Staff may suggest that the customer contact an attorney or medical practitioner, an appropriate government agency or nonprofit organization, or other libraries.

9. Staff helps customers in locating mathematics or scientific formulas, but they do not attempt to solve problems or equations.

10. Staff does not provide private tutoring. Referrals to appropriate literacy providers or community agencies will be offered. Tutors may arrange to meet with students in library space, as it is available.

11. Staff does not critique or edit customer manuscripts or resumes for job seekers. Referrals will be made as appropriate.

12. Staff responds to customers' requests for translations of words and phrases by using appropriate sources. Staff translations of text material that would require considerable time or that are beyond the level of staff expertise will be handled via appropriate referral.