

Purpose of Reference Service:

To define reference services provided by the library, to serve as a foundation for developing procedures for delivery of services and to provide clarification of reference services to library users.

Goal of Reference Service:

To assist every library user who requests information or materials from the library, to find what they seek, either in the library, or by referral to another source.

SCOPE OF SERVICE / GENERAL GUIDELINES

Eligibility:

1. Reference assistance is available to all who request it, regardless of residency
2. Reference service is available to library users of all ages.
3. Reference service is available in answer to requests in person, by phone, or by mail.
4. Harvey Public Library District cardholders have access to services of the Suburban Library System.
5. Residents of other library service areas are encouraged to seek the services from their home libraries.

Staffing:

Qualified staff is available to assist library users during all hours that the library is open.

Referral:

If required information / material is not available in the library, referral is made to an appropriate source – The Metropolitan Library System's Interlibrary Loan Department or Reference Service, area agencies or experts.

Sources:

Library users are given the source of information as well as the answer.

Priorities:

Priority is given to in-person request over telephone requests. However, calls in progress are completed before walk-in users are served.

Whenever possible, questions are answered during a patron's visit or phone call. If this is not possible, or if the answer to a telephone reference question cannot be provided within five minutes, the patron will receive answer or status report within forty-eight hours.

Complex questions requiring extensive research are not answered by phone. Staff will encourage callers to come to the library to be assisted with research. (See also telephone requests)

During busy periods, when staff may need to limit time spent with each person, response time for complex questions is negotiated with the patron.

Recommendations:

Staff does not give personal opinions, recommendations, or advice in areas outside their expertise – such as medicine, law, or appraisal of rare books, coins, etc. When staff does offer an opinion in an area of their expertise, that opinion is identified as such.

Confidentiality:

All requests for information are handled in confidence and with impartiality.

SPECIAL INQUIRES - GUIDELINES

Crisscross Directory:

Information from this directory is available in the library to anyone requesting it.

A maximum of three addresses will be checked per phone call. Information will be given only for address requested.

Telephone Requests:

A maximum of three books or newspaper or magazine articles per phone call will be checked for availability, when caller can provide adequate information so that the item may be checked quickly.

When a caller cannot provide such adequate information, staff will encourage caller to come to the library to be assisted to locate specific item desired.

Reference staff will not read lengthy lists or long passages of statistics, technical, medical, or legal information to callers. Staff will request that caller see or make a copy of information personally to insure that accurate information is obtained.

Contest & Quizzes:

Staff will answer if question is factual and an answer can be found quickly, or staff will assist patron to find probable sources for answers. The library assumes no responsibility for guaranteeing correct answers for contests or quizzes.

Genealogy:

The library has few resources in this field and cannot do genealogy research. Staff will request genealogical materials through interlibrary loan, and will refer patrons to agencies holding appropriate collections.

Homework/School Assignments:

Homework is intended to be a learning experience for the student. School assignment; the help provided is dependent on the nature and purpose of the assignment, the difficulty of the search, and the age and sophistication of the student. As appropriate, staff will assist student to find sources, instruct them in the use of the sources, and assist in the search.

FEE AND CHARGES:

Generally, reference services are available without charge to public. However, if charges are levied by a supplying agency, they are passed on to the patron. Other fees or charges passed on to patron can be, but not limited to Data Base Search, Dial-Up and Broadband Internet Services, Public Computer usage and printing.

NOTE: The Harvey Public Library District will not take personal checks as a form of payment for reference services other than Dial-Up or Broadband Internet Services.

ETHICS AND STANDARDS:

The library complies with the Suburban Library System's Minimum Reference Standard for Public Libraries (See Appendix III), and reference service requirements of the State of Illinois Standards For Illinois Public Library – Serving Our Public.

The Harvey Public Library District subscribes to the American Library Association's CODE OF ETHICS for librarians. (See policy #301).