

Reference Services Policy

Purpose

The Library provides Reference and Reader's Advisory service to connect people with information, select library materials and use library and other information resources. Staff responds to varied information needs using the library collections to the fullest extent possible, the Internet, online databases, and resources beyond the library, whenever necessary. The staff uses professional judgment to assess needs and provides information, assistance or instruction appropriate to individual requests.

Policy

1. Reference service will be provided whenever the library is open.
2. The Reference Desk will be staffed at all times by professionally trained librarians who will provide quality service to all users. The best service possible will be provided through the resources available and through collaboration among staff. Regional reference service or other agencies will also be consulted when it is necessary to access collections with more extensive resources.
3. Library patrons shall be provided with accurate and timely information, and all information requests shall be answered promptly, accurately, efficiently and courteously.
4. Reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patrons may need to be set. Simple requests for information can usually be answered fully. More complex questions may require that patrons participate in finding needed information, with staff providing guidance and assistance. Patrons doing in-depth research or needing extensive individual reading guidance should expect to receive professional assistance, direction and library instruction, but will be expected to conduct the actual research themselves.
5. All requests for information will be accepted in person and by phone, postal mail, fax, email and electronic media.
6. Although all requests for assistance will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis, priority will be given to in-person inquiries.
7. There will be no discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, political affiliation, point of view, religion, or disability in the provision of reference services.
8. The reference interview is a vital part of Reference or Reader's Advisory transactions. If the transaction is not a face-to-face interaction, misinterpretation is always a possibility. Therefore, only brief definitions or descriptions can be read

over the telephone or sent via mail, e-mail, fax or electronic media. Sources are always quoted verbatim without interpretation.

9. In order to ensure equitable access, reasonable limits may be imposed on the use of resources and facilities such as study rooms, the Internet and other computer workstations.

10. Reference transactions are confidential under Section 7 of Chapter 78 of Massachusetts General Rules.

11. Personal advice will not be given by staff in response to reference questions, especially in the subject areas of law, medicine and human biology, consumer information, and personal finance/tax information.

12. Reference materials are circulated only under special circumstances and are subject to the approval of the Adult Services staff. Patrons who check out reference books must be cardholders in good standing with The Minuteman Network. Reference materials are loaned for the shortest time possible.

13. Reference and Reader's Advisory service complies with copyright and other applicable restrictions in the use of library materials.

14. Reference and Reader's Advisory service is provided in a manner consistent with the Library Bill of Rights and American Library Association Code of Ethics. (1995).

Voted Board of Library Trustees
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