

Brookfield Free Public Library

Reference Service Policy

Effective Date: 03/02/1994

Revised: 7/26/2006

Reference Service Mission:

The Adult and Youth Services Departments of the Brookfield Public Library together strive to meet the personal, recreational, educational, and business information needs of all library users through the provision of prompt, accurate, and useful reference service. Reference service will be provided in response to all forms of inquiry, whether in person, via fax, telephone, or other remote, electronic means. It is the goal of the reference staff to facilitate patron access to needed resources and, further, to encourage patrons to seek staff assistance in the use of library materials. In the provision of reference service, staff will uphold standards of patron confidentiality, impartiality, and intellectual freedom, and will make no distinctions or judgments about the use or purpose of the information requested.

Purpose of Policy:

This Reference Service Policy provides guidelines for library staff to ensure that patrons consistently receive assistance of the highest quality.

Description of Collection:

The Brookfield Public Library's reference collection consists of print and electronic materials of a popular nature targeted to a general audience. The *MLS Core Reference List for Public Libraries* will be used as a guide to ensure the currency and completeness of the reference collection.

Service Priorities:

Service to the public has priority over all other tasks. Simultaneous requests will be managed at the reference staff's discretion with regard to urgency, complexity and availability of staff resources. In person, telephone, e-mail, and Internet reference requests will be handled in the order they are received. If a staff member cannot answer a request immediately, he or she will obtain contact information from the patron and see that the patron receives a response within twenty-four hours.

Sources:

Reference staff will rely upon reputable sources in order to provide accurate, authoritative assistance to patrons, and will use professional judgment to determine whether the most appropriate source is available in print, via subscription electronic databases, on the free Web, or other means. Regardless of the source of information—local, consortial, print or electronic—reference staff will provide patrons full, complete citations of the source(s) used.

Referrals to Other Libraries or Agencies:

If the reference staff deems it appropriate to refer the patron to another library or agency, the staff member must verify that the material sought is, in fact, available at the agency. If it is not possible to call the agency immediately, staff will encourage the patron to call ahead before traveling to the agency. Staff will provide the agency's contact information to the patron.

Legal, Medical, Financial and Tax Information:

Reference staff will provide legal, medical, and financial information that is as current and factual as possible. The staff member providing such information will make it clear that the information given is not intended as a professional opinion and should not be interpreted as such by the patron. Staff will provide income tax forms and information; however, because reference staff are not trained tax professionals, no tax advice or interpretation may be given.

Haines Criss+Cross Directory:

The *Haines Criss+Cross Directory – Chicago Near West* is part of the reference collection and is housed at the Reference Desk. Reference staff will look up one entry for patrons who request this service over the phone. Staff will not provide bulk listing information to individuals for marketing purposes.

School Assignments:

The role of reference staff is to guide students to appropriate material or potential sources needed to complete homework assignments. In this capacity, staff will assist students with, but will not complete, homework assignments.

Staff:

Trained reference staff will be available to patrons at all times the library is open.

Procedure for Policy Review:

A copy of this policy will be available for patron perusal at all public service desks. Together with the Library Director, the Heads of Youth and Adult Services will continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of reference service. Feedback, ideas, and suggestions from the public are always welcome.