

Reference Policy

Goals

1. Provide accurate information in a timely matter.
2. Show patrons methods that will assist them in fully utilizing library resources.
3. Provide community information and referrals to other agencies to best meet public needs.
4. Assist patrons in locating reading material in their areas of interest.

Ethics and Confidentiality

The Stillwater Public Library does not discriminate in offering reference assistance based on race, nationality, alien status, gender, age, ability, or religion, nor does it discriminate based on assistance requested. In accordance with the Library's Patron Confidentiality Policy, all references interviews and information given to patrons are confidential.

Services

1. Ready Reference.

The reference staff provides answers to short reference questions. The staff shall attempt to answer each question asked using the best source possible according to their professional judgment. Some questions may not be answerable by the library staff. In this case, the staff will refer the patron to the best possible source according to the staff's professional judgment. The reference staff shall cite the source of the answer at each reference transaction and shall avoid personal opinions or interpretation of material. The staff can answer questions by patrons in-person, over the telephone, by e-mail, or through the mail. Information given by telephone or e-mail will be short in length. Longer answers may require that a patron come into the Library personally. Information can be sent via mail for a \$3.00 mailing fee.

2. Assistance in locating information for more extensive reference.

The reference staff will help patrons search for materials on the subject, will instruct patrons in the use of library equipment and resources, and will assist patrons in search strategies, so that patrons can locate information on their subject. Patrons may request the staff to perform non-ready reference research for a fee. (Please refer to the Reference Research Policy).

3. Reader's Advisory.

The reference staff will assist patrons in finding reading material using reader's advisory tools and personal recommendations.

4. Internet and software assistance.

The reference staff will instruct patrons in the use of search engines to find information on the Internet and will do the Internet searching for ready reference questions. The reference staff is not familiar with each/most Internet websites and may not be able to assist in the operations of particular sites. The staff may give a short instruction on how to set up an e-mail account. When staff has not been trained in the software offered on the computers, they will refer patrons to print material or instruct patrons in the "Help" component of the software.

5. Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and database instruction.

The reference staff will instruct patrons in OPAC and database usage upon request, and will perform the database searching to answer ready reference questions.

6. Photocopy and microform viewer assistance and material requests

The reference staff will instruct patrons in the use of the self-service copiers and microform viewers. The staff is unable to loan supplies or equipment.

Priorities

Patrons are assisted on a first come, first served basis, with the exception that if several patrons are waiting, patrons with more lengthy questions may need to wait or work with the staff as the staff is able. If necessary, a patron's question may need to be answered at a later time, especially if the patron's request is delaying service to others. Names and telephone numbers of patrons calling for reference assistance will be taken, and they will be called back as soon as possible, unless the answer takes less than two minutes or if no one is waiting. Short reference calls will be completed before the next patron is assisted.

Specific Reference Questions

1. School Assignments.

Homework is a learning experience that enhances the education process. Reference staff will assist students in finding sources to complete their homework.

2. Vehicle Price Information, Criss-cross and Address Lookups, and Contest Questions

Recitation of vehicle values, criss-cross lookups, address or telephone lookups, and contest questions are limited to three.

3. Appraisals, Car Repair Information, Mathematical Calculations, and Genealogy

Reference staff can direct patrons to print and Internet appraisal material, instruct patrons in the use of automotive repair manuals and databases, direct patrons to mathematical sources, and direct patrons to the genealogy room and instruct in its layout. Genealogical research may be performed under the Reference Research Policy.

4. Medical, Tax, And Legal Questions

Reference staff may direct patrons to medical resources and may read short entries from a cited source. Staff may direct patrons to tax forms and tax-related sources and can instruct in how to use the sources, but they shall neither offer tax advice, nor recommend a form to use. Staff may direct patrons to legal material and may instruct in their use, but staff shall not direct patrons to specific entries in the index, or to specific statutes.

Reference Material Lending

Reference materials may be checked out upon the approval of the Adult Services Librarian. The patron must have a Stillwater Public Library borrower's card, provide a second form of identification, and complete a reference material check out form. Items must be returned directly to the reference desk and may not be returned in the outside book drop. Items check out for two hours. A fine of .50 will be assessed for each hour the item is overdue thereafter.

Liability

The Stillwater Public Library is not liable for any damages stemming from the use of the information used in or provided by the Library. The Library is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in the sources it owns or of the information it provides through other sources.