

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.
5. Provide limited computer instruction as time allows.

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. Requests containing multiple short questions may need to be performed through the library's Reference Research Policy.

2. Assistance in locating information for more extensive reference.

The reference staff will help patrons search for materials, instruct patrons in the use of library equipment and resources, and 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, software, and computer 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 all Internet websites or computer programs and may not be able to assist in the operations of particular sites or programs. 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. Computer assistance will be provided as time allows. Staff may assist with patron devices to the extent they are trained or refer patrons to print or online material.

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 or on a later day, especially if the patron's request is delaying service to others.

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. 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.

3. Medical, Tax, Copyright, 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 is unable to give advice on the use of copyrighted materials. Staff may direct patrons to legal material and may instruct in their use, but staff shall not suggest which statutes, regulations, or cases the patron may need

Reference Material Lending

Reference materials may be checked out upon the approval of the Library Director or Adult Services Supervisor. 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. Length of checkout is at the discretion of the librarian. A fine of \$.50 will be assessed for each hour the item is overdue.

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. The Library is not liable for damages to devices or loss of electronic data.

Disagreements concerning any aspect of this policy may be appealed to the Stillwater Public Library Board.

Approved by Library Board 6/24/03

Revised 10/28/08; 2/25/14

Re-affirmed 12/27/05; 2/23/10