

HILLSIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY

REFERENCE SERVICE POLICY

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy defines the goals of reference service provided by the Hillside Public Library and sets out guidelines for the delivery of the service. The policy is intended to serve as a foundation for developing procedures and providing clarification to patrons who may have questions concerning the reference service of the library.

GOALS OF REFERENCE SERVICE

The goals of reference service at the Hillside Public Library are:

- a. to acquire materials that meet the informational, educational and recreational needs and interests of the community
- b. to provide accurate information and facilitate access to the library's collections
- c. to provide a qualified staff to assist patrons in an efficient and courteous manner.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Hillside Public Library provides reference assistance to any patron requesting it, regardless of residency. The library assures that the entire collection is available for reference purposes to patrons of all ages. Off-site access to Hillside Public Library purchased subscriptions to online databases is limited to Hillside Library cardholders. Reference service is provided by qualified staff during all hours that the library is open.

Effort is made to answer all types of questions with no distinction made about the purpose of the inquiry or the use of the information. All questions are handled in confidence and with impartiality. Patrons are given the source of the information as well as the answer. With the exception of readers' advisory services, personal opinions or recommendations are not given.

Inquiries are accepted in any manner: in person, by telephone, through the mail, by email or by fax, etc. Priority is given to in-person requests when both in-person and telephone requests are received at the same time; however, staff will complete a telephone conversation in process before attending to an in-person request.

Staff will complete a thorough search of in-house sources to locate information to answer a reference question. Patrons may be asked to assist in checking materials for the information sought. Generally, staff will provide the answer to a question if the information is available in the library's resources. The patron is responsible for reading and evaluating an extensive amount of text that staff may provide in response to a reference question. The patron will be responsible for completing the necessary

synthesis. Librarian's may provide up to 3 pages of material copied from reference sources for the patron's use at no charge.

If information appropriate to the patron's need is not available in this library, referral will be made to local or metropolitan agencies, the Metropolitan Library System's Interlibrary Loan and/or other libraries.

Whenever possible, answers to questions will be provided during the patron's visit or telephone call or within one hour of the initial inquiry. During busy periods staff may have to limit the amount of time spent serving an individual patron; however, follow-up attention to the inquiry will be provided if more information is needed by the patron. Complex questions will be answered or referred within 24 hours. A longer response time will be negotiated with the patron if staff foresees unusual difficulty in locating the needed information.

Telephone reference service is usually limited to supplying the kind of information that is readily available, does not require extensive searching, and which may be accurately imparted over the telephone.

The usual time limit for telephone reference service is up to five minutes while the patron waits. If the question cannot be answered within this time limit, arrangements should be made for a callback from the library as soon as the information is available. A callback should be completed within the same day unless specific arrangements are made otherwise.

SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF REFERENCE INQUIRIES

School Assignments: Student assignments are meant to be part of an educational process. It is the responsibility of the library to introduce reference tools to students and to teach them how to serve themselves. When a patron telephones with an identifiable school assignment question, the following procedure will be followed:

1. If the inquiry is a simple one and can be answered briefly, the answer may be given by telephone.
2. If a more complicated search is required, the patron is encouraged to come to the library where assistance will be offered or referred to the pertinent databases linked on the library's website..

Telephone Numbers: Information from general telephone directories and on the Internet, which is published information available to the public, may be given by phone. Staff will verify five names/addresses/phone numbers in response to a telephone reference request.

Legal and Medical Questions: Staff will assist patrons who visit the Library to locate information in the legal and medical collections. The Library will provide information by telephone if it is brief and can be read in its entirety; sources will be cited. Staff is not legally qualified to offer legal, medical or tax opinions or interpretations, nor attempt to abstract or condense information read over the telephone or in person.

Contests and Quizzes: Patrons who come to the Library are assisted in finding probable sources for answers. In the case of an identifiable contest or quiz question received by the telephone, the patron should be encouraged to come to the Library. However, the staff will answer the question if the inquiry is a factual question and can be answered quickly. The Library does not assume the responsibility for finding correct answers nor for guaranteeing their correctness.

Recommendations, Ratings, and Evaluations: Patrons requesting recommendations for encyclopedia sets, dictionaries, and other reference tools will be referred to reviews and to lists such as Best Encyclopedias, and will be encouraged to examine the reference tools for themselves. The Library staff does not make recommendations for purchase. Consumer product ratings and evaluations from Consumer Reports or other similar publications may be given over the telephone, with the suggestion that the patron should come to the Library to read the entire article to understand the basis for the recommendations.

Genealogy: The Hillside Library has few resources in the field of genealogy. Patrons with inquiries about genealogy are referred to the Newberry Library and other appropriate agencies. Records located at the National Archives are available through interlibrary loan. Library staff will not do genealogical searches. Patrons may be referred to genealogical databases the library offers on its website.

Internet: Library staff will attempt to assist patrons as time permits, but the Library staff cannot provide in depth training or searches. Internet trained staff may not always be available, but the Library will be able to provide books and periodicals about the Internet. Library staff will not guarantee the validity of information retrieved from the Internet, but will attempt to provide the patron with tools and contextual information that will help evaluate the source.

FEES

Most reference questions can be answered without charge. Reference service is provided free of charge except when charges are levied by a supplying agency. The patron will be responsible for these charges. These fees include, but are not limited to, photocopying services and on-line searching.

ETHICS AND STANDARDS

The Hillside Public Library subscribes to the American Library Association's Librarian's Code of Ethics. The Library will also meet the reference standards established by the Suburban Library System. A copy of this reference service policy is available for patrons to consult in the Library. Further clarification can be sought from the Librarians or the Library Administrator.

EVALUATION OF REFERENCE SERVICE AND POLICIES:

An annual evaluation will be made by management to determine how effectively the Library is fulfilling its reference service goals. The Library Board of Trustees will review long range plans, budget requests, and community input to assess needs and authorize changes in the service program.

The reference service policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the Librarians and the Library Administrator. Public comment will be sought by the Library Board. Final approval of any revisions in the policy rests with the Board.

Approved by the Hillside Public Library

Board of Trustees

May 9, 1988

Revised December 11, 1991

Reviewed April, 1999

Revised March 19, 2008

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Since 1929, the American Library Association has recognized the importance of codifying and making known to the public and the profession the principles that guide librarians in action. This latest revision of the Code of Ethics reflects changes in the nature of the profession and in its social and institutional environment. It should be revised and augmented as necessary.

Librarians significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, librarians are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

Librarians are dependent upon one another for the bibliographical resources that enable us to provide information services, and have obligations for maintaining the highest level of personal integrity and competence.

Code of ethics

1. Librarians must provide the highest level of service through appropriate and usefully organized collections, fair and equitable circulation and service policies, and skillful, accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests for assistance.
2. Librarians must resist all efforts by groups or individuals to censor library materials.
3. Librarians must protect each user's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received, and materials consulted, borrowed, or acquired.
4. Librarians must adhere to the principles of due process and equality of opportunity in peer relationships and personnel actions.
5. Librarians must distinguish clearly in their actions and statements between their personal philosophies and attitudes and those of an institution or professional body.
6. Librarians must avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or financial benefits gained at the expense of library users, colleagues, or the employing institution.