

Reference Services

This policy defines the goals and philosophy of reference services at the Sherrard Public Library District. This policy also identifies for patrons the levels of service which the library provides, based on the resources available.

Goals of the Reference Services

- To provide high quality, consistent assistance to patrons seeking information, materials, reader's advisory service, or guidance in the use of the library.
- To acquire resources appropriate to the community's needs in order to satisfy the majority of requests, using materials available in the library or available electronically.
- To refer the question or patron to appropriate outside sources if the request cannot be answered using the library's resources.
- To provide current information by continuously updating the library's collections within budgetary limits.

Confidentiality and Impartiality

The library serves patrons of all ages and circumstances, with sensitivity to their particular needs. The library staff understands that the basic function of reference services is to provide information, not opinion. The library staff provides information in an impartial and businesslike manner, even when contrary to personal beliefs. The library staff keeps all requests for information and resulting patron records confidential. When referring a question, the library will provide the patron's name to an outside source only if necessary, and if this source also offers a guarantee of confidentiality.

Types of Information Services

Ready Reference - Questions can be answered quickly by trained staff using identifiable sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, directories,

Internet search engines, etc. Some examples are word spellings, zip codes, definitions of words, a company address, and holdings information. Staff answers ready reference questions by telephone, email and in-person.

Research Questions - Requires the gathering and synthesis of extensive information from various sources. Term papers and other reports are examples of this type of question. Staff guides the patron in his/her search, suggesting search strategies and sources, and explaining the use of appropriate reference tools.

Limitations of Service

With consideration to the numerous services provided by the Library, variety of responsibilities among employees, and limited staffing levels, there are necessary restrictions on the reference services provided. Extensive one-on-one assistance may not always be available, particularly when it is to the detriment of other customer service responsibilities. Requests for a Library employee to type, proofread, or navigate websites / technology outside of general instruction on behalf of a patron will be denied.

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