



REFERENCE SERVICE POLICY

PURPOSE AND GENERAL PROVISIONS OF REFERENCE SERVICE

Delivering effective reference service is an important component of the Library's mission. The Library's goal with respect to reference service is to improve the quality of life in Highwood by providing its residents with current, accurate, and useful information in a responsive, timely, and friendly manner.

To achieve this goal, the Library will maintain a diverse collection of general reference resources that will be available for library patrons to use themselves as well as for reference service staff to use in assisting patrons who request assistance. Highwood Library & Community Center (HLCC) cardholders may also request additional materials through the interlibrary loan process.

Any library patron who requests information or materials will be assisted by staff to the extent that such assistance can be offered within the limits imposed by (1) available resources, and (2) policies, practices, and guidelines established by the HLCC's Board of Trustees.

SERVICE LIMITATIONS

If the information requested by a patron proves to be beyond the scope of the resources available at the Library or if the information requested is deemed to be so complex as to necessitate time-consuming research that will require reference staff to neglect the needs of other patrons or other key job responsibilities, the patron will, if possible, be referred to other libraries or agencies that might be able to provide more help.

SERVICE TO NON-RESIDENTS

Non-residents will be assisted with Library resources. If the request requires resources beyond the HLCC or extensive research by staff, non-resident patrons will be referred to their home libraries or other agencies for service. Remote access to many of the electronic information databases to which the Library subscribes requires password authentication, and use is limited to HLCC cardholders. Such databases may be accessed at the Library on library computers without password authentication.

FORMS OF INQUIRY AND RESPONSE

Reference service is provided in response to various forms of inquiry. If the answer to a question cannot be conveyed effectively, with relative ease, and at a reasonable cost by means of a phone call, letter, fax, or e-mail, the patron will be asked to come to the Library to pick up or use the material. Inquiries are answered in the form the librarian feels is the most expedient. If a visit to the Library would entail a hardship and if the patron is a Highwood resident, the Library will attempt to make other arrangements.



RESPONSES TO REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE: STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

Reference service is provided by trained staff during all hours the library is open. When working at a service desk, response to patron service needs, including reference inquiries, takes precedence over other staff duties.

Requests will generally be handled in the order in which they are received. Requests submitted by patrons in the Library are given priority over telephone requests that are received at the same time. Reference staff members will attempt to answer questions at the time the request is made and to work within the patron's time requirements. When this proves to be impossible, staff will inform the patron that a longer response time will be needed or that assistance should be sought from another library or agency.

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