

Reference Service Policy and Plan

I. Purpose

Providing reference service is one of the primary roles of the Schiller Park Public Library. Staff trained to provide reference service and materials are available all hours the library is open. The Schiller Park Public Library staff will respond to all reference and information questions efficiently, accurately, completely, and in a timely manner.

II. Goals

The mission of the Schiller Park Public Library is to provide services to meet the community's desire for information, literature and entertainment.

The goals of reference service at the Schiller Park Public Library are:

- A. To meet the community's need for information and answers to questions on a broad array of topics with appropriate services, programs, and collections in a variety of formats.
- B. To provide accurate information and facilitate access to the Library's collections and services.
- C. To call upon local resources to meet the needs which cannot be provided on site, or refer requests to the appropriate agencies or types of agencies.
- D. To provide qualified and trained staff to assist patrons in an efficient and courteous manner. To encourage library patrons to seek the assistance of the staff to meet their information needs.
- E. To provide assistance to patrons regarding their use of electronic sources.

III. Ethics, Confidentiality and Impartiality in the Reference Transaction

- A. The needs of library patrons are treated with respect. Names of patrons and the transactions which occur between patrons and the staff are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context.
- B. 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.
- C. The Schiller Park Library subscribes to the American Library Association's Code of Ethics.

IV. Availability of Reference Service

The Schiller Park Public Library provides assistance to any patron requesting it, regardless of residency, age, race, gender, national origin, or economic status. 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

Reference service and physical materials are available during all hours the library is open and are provided in response to all forms of inquiry including but not limited to patrons in the library, the telephone, and email. In the case of fax use, the faxed information may only be sent to the requesting patron's home Library, not to a personal or business fax. The entire collection – Juvenile and adult, circulating and non-circulating – is available to patrons of all ages to answer reference questions. Whenever possible, the library licenses online resources that can be accessed through the library website 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Many resources require a Schiller Park Library card for access outside the library.

V. Staffing

1. When answering reference questions, staff members, whether professional or para-professional, serve as the link between resources and the patron. As such, it is important that the staff member be:

- a. Knowledgeable about library materials and services
- b. Open and approachable; friendly but professional
- c. Able to communicate effectively with people
- d. Discreet in the handling of questions which might be confidential or sensitive
- e. Able to exercise good judgment both in the interpretation of policy and in the handling of exceptional situations

2. Staff will complete a thorough review of in-house and electronic sources to answer a reference question. Patrons are given the source of the information, as well as the answer to their question.

Assisting patrons has priority over other staff assignments. The staff may set reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patron requests for information. Simple requests for information can usually be answered fully. More complex questions may require that patrons participate in finding needed information, with staff providing guidance and assistance. Patrons doing in-depth research or needing extensive individual reading guidance should expect to receive professional assistance, direction and library instruction, but will be expected to conduct the actual research themselves.

Staff will offer their best professional opinion when providing reader's advisory or recommending the best source to answer a question. In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. The staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff define the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select income tax forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above. If all materials within the library are beyond the understanding of the patron, the patron will be advised to consult with their professional from the above listed fields for additional information or advice.

If information appropriate to the patron's need is not available in the library, referral may be made to another organization. Staff will verify that the needed information is available from source before referral.

VI. Fees

Most reference questions can be answered without charge. However, patrons will be charged the usual fees for the printing from the library computers when staff prints from online resources for them. Materials can be borrowed from other libraries through interlibrary loan. The Interlibrary Loan Policy covers the fees that may be charged for this service.

VII. Evaluation of Reference Service

An in-house evaluation is made every (3) three years by the Director and Reference Staff, to determine how effectively the Library is fulfilling its Reference Service goals. In addition, key staff continuously monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of Reference Service on an informal basis. The Schiller Park Public Library Board of Trustees reviews the Long Range Plans, budget requests and community input to assess needs and authorize changes in the service program.