

Policy: 424
Subject: Reference Services
Reviewed
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1) General Policies

- a) Reference librarians will provide information, in the form of short answers to specific questions and/or guidance in locating materials, for patrons who appear in person, call on the telephone or request information through written correspondence, fax or the Library's electronic mail reference service.
- b) Reference service will be given in an unbiased, objective and confidential manner to patrons in accordance with the American Library Association's Statement of Professional Ethics. Reference service will be provided to all members of the community.
- c) Service to the public takes priority over other duties at the reference desk. Library staff at the reference desk must be knowledgeable about library materials, treat library patrons in a friendly manner and offer discreet service where appropriate. Library staff is trained to provide information from reputable sources. The source of an answer should be cited to patrons whenever possible.
- d) Reference librarians will assist patrons in the use of the Library and teach research methodology, when appropriate. This includes providing help in developing a research strategy and advice on whether a trip to the Library would be worthwhile to individuals who telephone or use the electronic mail reference service.
- e) Reference librarians will provide bibliographic verification of items both in the Library and not owned by the Library and will assist patrons in obtaining materials through interlibrary loan.
- f) Reference librarians may refer library users to other departments, agencies, and libraries in pursuit of needed information. Staff members should make an effort to verify that the information required is available before sending a patron to another library.

2) Interpretation

- a) Librarians may be asked to quote from medical, legal, census, financial or tax related sources. Librarians should refrain from making judgmental or evaluative comments and should not provide "their" interpretations.
- b) Librarians should not interpret dictionary definitions.
- c) Librarians should not give stock, bond, or mutual fund investment recommendations.
- d) Librarians can provide patrons with tax forms and publications where available, but cannot give tax advice or advice on what forms or publications a patron may require.
- e) Librarians should not make recommendations regarding purchases, for example, encyclopedias or products listed in Consumer Reports.

- 3) Telephone and Electronic Mail Reference
 - a) Quick reference will be given immediately to the best of our abilities. More involved reference questions will require a call back, bearing in mind that in-house patron requests take precedence. Electronic mail questions will be answered as quickly as possible.
 - b) Patrons requiring long research are expected to come to the Library and staff will help start the search.
- 4) School related
 - a) School related assignment materials may be placed on Ready Reference or in limited circulation.
 - b) If school related assignment questions cannot be answered by the reference staff, the student will be encouraged to return to the teacher for clarification or further instructions. In certain circumstances, a "Parent/Teacher Notification Form" may be given to the student. This form encourages teachers and instructors to contact the Library staff so that we can better serve the student. If an assignment sheet is available, Library staff may ask to obtain a copy to keep at the reference desk. Teachers are encouraged to inform the library of upcoming assignments.
- 5) Genealogy Research
 - a) The Milford Township Library has an extensive genealogical reference collection. Reference staff will provide general assistance with genealogical research, guidance in locating items in the collection and help in obtaining sources through interlibrary loan, but will not conduct actual genealogical research for patrons.