

Reference and Readers' Advisory Policy

Adopted by the Hinckley Public Library District Board of Trustees

July 11, 2016. Revised January 14, 2019

Good reference and readers' advisory service involves identifying a person's information need and proceeding to fulfill it accurately, efficiently, and pleasantly, using the resources available in the library, and including referral to resources in other libraries or agencies, if necessary.

While on desk duty, service to the public takes precedence over any other duties and service to the patron in the library takes precedence over telephone inquiries.

As time allows, staff will assist as they are able in helping patrons with technology questions and may refer patrons to appropriate books, online tutorials, or classes for further assistance.

Staff will not provide the following kinds of assistance, which are deemed to be beyond the scope of the library's service responsibilities:

1. Interpretation, advice, or personal recommendations in any area other than the use of library resources. This includes but is not limited to: legal, medical, financial or tax advice. Staff will provide instruction in the use of resources, enabling users to pursue information independently and effectively if so desired.
2. Critiquing or editing patron documents, including resumes for job seekers. Referrals will be made as appropriate.
3. Completing forms (including online forms) for patrons, or assisting patrons in completing such forms. When assisting patrons with computer resources, staff will not enter personal information for patrons.
4. Solving or troubleshooting problems with patron's personal computers or other electronic resources. (In such instances, staff is permitted to assist by attempting to locate relevant instructions and similar kinds of information for patrons.)
5. Online shopping, price comparisons and other personal business.

Ethical Considerations – Reference service shall be provided to all users on an equal, nondiscriminatory, and nonjudgmental basis without regard to: (1) race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal view of the patron making the inquiry; (2) the subject matter being researched; or (3) the purpose of the inquiry. Transactions with patrons will be treated as equally important. All questions and requests for information shall be treated as confidential in the sense that, except as may be required by law, the nature of the question asked and the identity of the patron shall not be discussed with other patrons, and shall not be divulged beyond what is necessary for the orderly and effective administration of the library and the reference service. Staff may consult with each other when necessary to serve the patron or consult with staff at other libraries, agencies, and organizations.