

Moore Memorial Public Library Reference Policy

The purpose of this policy is to assist library staff in providing consistent, high quality reference and reader's advisory services. This policy covers reference services and readers advisory services provided to all ages of library patrons. The Library Director or his/her designated staff member has the authority to make exceptions to this policy as appropriate.

REFERENCE SERVICES

Providing reference services requires the identification of the patron's information needs and utilization of available resources to meet that need as completely, accurately and efficiently as possible. Those resources include, but are not limited to, Moore Memorial's own collection of library materials, online resources, electronic databases, and resources available through other libraries or agencies. Reference staff also provide instruction in the use of the tools, equipment, software and information sources of the Library. Library staff will encourage patrons who need to use these tools and sources frequently to learn to use the tools themselves, but will continue to assist that patron directly if requested.

ETHICS/CONFIDENTIALITY

In accordance with the mission statement of the Library, reference services will be made available on an equal basis to all patrons regardless of race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal views of the patron requesting assistance. Each request is given serious consideration and library staff will not make judgments about the value or worth of the request.

All reference and readers advisory requests are considered confidential and will not be divulged to other agencies or individuals without meeting all criteria required by Federal and State law.

PRIORITIES

While at the reference desk, requests of patrons in the library will normally take precedence over those received by telephone, email or mail. Requests will generally be handled on a first-come first-served basis, although the number, type and depth of the requests may require alternative handling at times. As resources allow, Library staff will also proactively offer service to patrons who appear to be confused or unsuccessful in locating information. Telephone requests which cannot be immediately handled will be handled through return phone calls made in a timely fashion.

AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

Responses to information queries will be given based on sources which are considered to be reliable, accurate and authoritative. Sources will be cited for all answers, and library staff will not provide personal opinions or interpretations.

REFERENCE/READERS ADVISORY INTERVIEW

Library staff will use the reference interview to help define patron needs. Information gained in this interview will also be considered confidential unless specifically released by the patron.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF REQUESTS

Library staff will generally attempt to assist with all inquiries. However, the following guidelines and limits have been established for services and queries beyond the resources, scope, expertise and mission of the library.

1. Directional requests – Any knowledgeable library staff member may provide directional assistance to patrons. If possible, library staff should physically accompany the patron to the appropriate part of the library.
2. Homework assignments – Library staff will help find resources or discover tools to complete assignments, but will not help in completing the actual assignment. Moore Memorial Public Library serves many students and recognizes that the search for appropriate and authoritative sources is part of many assignments. Therefore, library staff will attempt to work directly with the student when suggesting resources and may include, or focus on, instruction on the use of search techniques and finding aids in their assistance to that student. Students calling with reference questions that involve selection or analysis of sources for assignments will be asked to come to the library.
3. Telephone reference requests – Requests that involve short answers may be answered by phone. Patrons with requests that would require the reading of lengthy passages over the phone should be asked to come to the library to receive the answer.
4. Portions of materials will not normally be copied in advance for patrons.
5. Secretarial services, copying services, scanning services, editing, graphic design and layout, calculations, tutoring and similar services are not provided.
6. Library staff will assist in finding mathematical or scientific formulas or explanatory materials, but will not solve mathematical problems or work equations for patrons.
7. Income tax questions – Patrons will be assisted in finding and printing a specific tax form. Patrons with requests for tax assistance or determination of appropriate tax forms to file are referred to the IRS or tax guides.
8. Patrons with medical questions are referred to authoritative sources either online or in print. No interpretation, opinion, analysis of drugs or treatment prescribed, or analysis of symptoms is offered.
9. Basic help in using genealogical sources is provided. Library staff members do not provide genealogical research services.
10. Library staff members do not provide private tutoring in literacy, but will refer patrons to local literacy programs or other community resources as appropriate.
11. Patrons with legal inquiries are assisted in locating available legal information sources, but will not be provided with legal advice, interpretation or direction by library staff.

12. Appraisals or valuations of collectible materials or art are never provided by library staff. Instead, staff will direct patrons to appropriate guides, price lists, or specialized resources as available.
13. Library staff members do not generally provide translation services, other than that of words or simple phrases.
14. Patrons with questions involving patent and or copyright searches will be directed to books on copyright and patent procedures. Patrons seeking property searches will be directed to the appropriate governmental entity.
15. Personal financial, legal, or consumer information – Library staff will not directly access personal financial, legal or confidential consumer information to include bank statements, investment documents, legal case documents, credit checks, insurance statements, credit card statements or other personal information on line for patrons. Library staff will assist patrons in obtaining these documents themselves to the extent possible, but will not purchase, make investments, pay bills, authorize changes or charges to accounts, or perform similar tasks for patrons.
16. Library staff will not normally assist in posting personal information, including photos, to social networking sites.
17. Library staff will not assist in downloading music, video clips or other media to portable players, except through authorized download services to which the library subscribes.
18. Patron equipment – Library staff will not operate, troubleshoot or repair personal equipment of patrons such as MP3 players, cameras, computers, or cell phones.
19. “Reverse information” (where the patron has a phone number or address, but not the name) or “nearby” information (where the customer has an address and wants to know who lives nearby) is not provided over the telephone. Patrons seeking this type of information will be advised to visit the library to utilize the reverse directory themselves.
20. Library staff will not utilize the ILS database to provide personal information on library patrons in response to inquiries.
21. Library staff will not make personal recommendations for doctors, lawyers, or other local service providers in response to patron inquiries. Public information sources such as phone books, online directories, etc. can be consulted and that information provided to the requesting patron.
22. Requests for obituaries or information from newspapers will be checked for three days on each side of the requested date if the desired information is not found in the issue/date provided by the patron.

Limitations on service

Although Moore Memorial Public Library provides materials in support of many different educational and learning programs, it is neither an academic nor a research library. Library staff will generally attempt to provide assistance on every request received; however, some requests may require extensive or comprehensive searches of sources beyond the library’s available resources. In such cases, staff will attempt to suggest other sources for assistance for the patron. The Library Director may be consulted as needed.

Liability

Moore Memorial Public Library staff will make every effort to provide complete, current and accurate responses to inquiries. However, the Library does not guarantee the information or the sources it provides or makes available, and assumes no liability for any consequences or damages a patron may incur through use of the materials, reference or reader's advisory services, software, tools, or referral sources provided by the library.

*This policy was approved by the Texas City Commission on November 3, 2010.