

150 / General Policies

Reference Service

The Villa Park Public Library builds, connects, and partners with our community to encourage exploration and discovery. The library nurtures this growth through education, literacy, technology, and fun.

Good Reference Service

Good reference service involves identifying a patron's information need and proceeding to fulfill it accurately, efficiently, and pleasantly. Staff providing reference service will use the resources available in the library, and electronically, including referring to resources in other libraries and agencies, if necessary.

The Library's Commitment to Reference Service

Reference service will be provided at all times that the library is open. All Service Desks will be staffed by trained staff members in order to provide quality service.

The Villa Park Public Library regards as valid every reference question asked by any patron of any age. All questions will be given equal consideration and each will be answered as accurately and completely as possible.

Every effort will be made to complete each reference transaction successfully. To that end, staff members are encouraged to consult with colleagues when necessary. Public Services staff is expected to continue learning about resources and methods of providing reference service. Attendance at continuing education activities, workshops, and seminars is encouraged.

In serving patrons, staff members adhere to the principles in the American Library Association's Code of Ethics. (See Policy 105)

Service Standards at the Service Desks

- The needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and treated with respect and confidentiality.
- Service to the public takes precedence over all other duties. Service to the patron present takes precedence over telephone service.
- Service Desk staff members will rely upon information obtained from reputable sources in order to give the most accurate and authoritative answers to questions. The staff member will always cite the source of the answer.
- The personal opinions or beliefs of the patron or the staff member should not influence the quality of service provided.
- Staff shall not offer their personal opinions on social issues, politics, religion, etc., to patrons.
- Staff may offer to schedule an appointment for patrons with extensive research needs.

Service Priorities at the Service Desks

The following services will be provided to patrons, listed in order of priority:

1. Direct personal service to library users who come to the library. Patrons are served on a first come, first served basis.
2. Telephone inquiries
3. Library orientation and bibliographic instruction
4. Email, fax, and mail reference

Simultaneous requests will be managed at the staff member's discretion with regard to urgency, complexity, and availability of staff resources.

If the staff member cannot answer a request immediately, he or she will obtain contact information from the patron and will make every effort to respond within 24 hours.

Considerations for Specific Categories of Requests

Legal and medical information is provided without advice or interpretation. No attempt is made to abstract or condense legal and medical information for patrons. No referrals are made to private sources.

Information on taxes is provided from published material on hand, not from the personal experience of the staff member. Tax advice is not given but appropriate tax guides and tax forms are provided where possible. The focus of tax resources stocked by the library is on individual income tax.

The purpose of homework and other school assignments is to educate the student. When it is perceived that information requested is part of a school assignment, staff members will use this as an opportunity to empower the student by showing her/him how to use the library; doing the assignment for the patron is no service. Parent involvement in homework preparation is also an opportunity to provide training in the use of the library and is handled as such.

The library stocks sources of consumer information for the public. Lengthy articles or product lists are not read over the phone to patrons and interpretation of the results of consumer research is not made. Appraisals are not made but price guides are provided where possible.

Genealogical research, mathematical calculations, literature searches, and patent / trademark research are examples of searches considered too lengthy and complex to be undertaken by the staff member on behalf of patrons. Staff assists in these cases by providing materials and suggesting sources.

Approved 12/27/1989
Revised 02/22/2006
08/22/2018