

RUTH CULVER COMMUNITY LIBRARY LIBRARY POLICY

REFERENCE SERVICES

I. Goal Statement and Philosophy of Service

- (A) The primary goal of reference service is to ensure the optimum access to information resources through interaction with library users as follows:
 - 1. Provision of personal assistance by library staff
 - 2. Provision of formal and informal instruction in the use of library resources
 - 3. Provision of access to a wide range of information through print, electronic, and online resources, and the use of interlibrary loan and document delivery networks.
- (B) The library patron is the most important person in the library. Service provided to patrons is not an interruption of work but is rather the purpose of it.

II. Guidelines and Responsibilities

- (A) A reference service user is a library patron of any age or circumstance who chooses to make contact with a library staff member for the purpose of obtaining information.
- (B) Library staff will treat all requests, and the patrons who make them, with respect. Appropriate assistance is provided courteously and impartially to all, regardless of age background, origin or views.
- (C) Questions will be referred to the appropriate sources if the information is unavailable at the Ruth Culver Community Library.
- (D) Reference questions will be responded to in the order received. In the cases of conflicts or time restraints, priority service will be given to in-person requests. Extensive telephone requests will be answered as promptly as possible with a return phone call.
- (E) All answers given by staff shall be verified by legitimate documentation and the source used will be noted to patrons.
- (F) Staff is expected to do as much as possible with the available resources and within a reasonable time frame to answer patron requests.
- (G) If it is not possible to answer a request to the patron's satisfaction with the library's resources, the following actions may be taken:
 - 1. Request materials from other South Central Library System libraries
 - 2. Contact other local sources of information
 - 3. Refer patrons to other resources outside the library
- (H) The library offers free access to the Internet and electronic resources from public workstations and Wireless Internet for patrons' personal devices. Library staff assumes responsibility only for the information provided on its website. Library staff does not monitor, has no control over, and does not accept responsibility for material from other sources on the Internet.
- (I) Personal opinions should not be given as part of reference service. Consumer, medical, legal, statistical and technical information should be given without interpretation or opinions by staff.
- (J) Library staff is not qualified to offer assistance in tax form preparation or to interpret tax laws.
- (K) Confidentiality is to be maintained. Patrons and their questions will not be discussed beyond a professional context.

III. In-Person Reference Service

- (A) Staff will maintain an alert and visibly approachable attitude at all times.
 - 1. Any work done at the desk should not become a barrier to public service.
 - 2. Staff should not appear too busy to be interrupted.
- (B) Privacy should be provided as best it can.
- (C) Staff should follow-through with service to the patron.

- (D) Patrons should be accompanied to the source of information rather than directed to it. In the case of computer searches, patrons should be shown how the information was retrieved.
- (E) Basic instruction in the use of resources should be provided as needed.

IV. Special Approach Reference Questions

- (A) Telephone Reference Service
 1. Service is usually limited to supplying information that is readily available and does not require extensive searching.
 2. Immediate service will be provided for questions that can be answered over the phone within a reasonable amount of time while the patron waits.
 3. Callback service will be provided as promptly as possible for questions that require more time to answer.
- (B) Electronic (Email) Reference Service
 1. Reference questions may be emailed to the library. Responses will be emailed as promptly as possible.
 2. For requests that require more time to answer, staff will email the patron to notify that research is being done.
- (C) Mail (Postal) Reference Service
 1. Staff will attempt to answer inquiries received by mail.
 2. Preference will be given to requests for information specific to Prairie du Sac.
 3. Generic requests that can be answered with the resources available at most public libraries may not be honored.
- (D) School Assignments: School assignments will be handled in the same manner as other reference requests and will be given the proper response as set forth in this policy.
- (E) Contest Questions: Such questions may be deemed low priority. Staff will evaluate each request and determine if staff has the time and resources to assist. Patrons may be referred to materials which may contain the answers.
- (F) Library Policy: Questions about library policy should be directed to the policy manual or Library Director.
- (G) Unusual Requests: Any unusual requests should be referred to the Library Director or Assistant Director.

Approved by Library Board

Date: 07/18/98

Amended/Modified by Library Board

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