

The essence of reference service is the provision of prompt and accurate information. Hedberg Public Library (HPL) provides reference service primarily to residents within the Arrowhead Library System (ALS). However, a question asked by any person will be honored. Each request is treated with respect and confidentiality. Questions are answered as accurately and completely as possible within a reasonable time limit. Complex questions may be restricted by the nature of resources, e.g. staff availability, materials, equipment and facilities, or as otherwise set forth in this policy.

### **General Guidelines for the Provision of Reference Services**

- A. Verification and Authority. Answers are always verified by citing a source.
- B. Service Limits
  - 1. The appropriate time spent on a question varies with the nature of the question and depth of information needed. A suggested maximum is 20 minutes. Since HPL is not a research library, lengthy searches are not done.
  - 2. The number of reference questions accepted at one time is at the discretion of the librarian handling the request. The suggested maximum is five per patron per day.
  - 3. Answers to questions received via telephone are kept brief. Lengthy information will not be given over the telephone. Brief descriptions may be read to the patron over the phone, but the length of the conversation will be at the librarian's discretion. If the question cannot be answered quickly, a message is taken and the patron called back, or the patron is encouraged to come to the library.
- C. Response Time. A reference transaction is normally completed on the day the inquiry is received. If the transaction is not completed, a status report is given to the patron before the close of business that day.
- D. Opinions. The staff does not give evaluations, interpretations, or personal opinions. Staff may help to locate published statements on such matters.
- E. Photocopying, Printing, Emailing Documents. Photocopying, printing, and emailing documents are done at the librarian's discretion.
- F. Instructing Patrons. Librarians will try to involve patrons in the reference transactions by describing search tools and explaining procedures. Patrons are expected to take an active part in reference searches after librarians have demonstrated the basic techniques. Patrons needing lengthy computer instruction will be referred to an appropriate resource.
- G. Holding Materials. In general, circulating materials will be held for a person at the checkout desk until closing time the next day. Reference sources will be held at the reference desk at the librarian's discretion.
- H. Reference Materials Use/Circulation. Reference materials remain in the library so that they will be accessible. Any special loans of reference materials, which are very infrequent, will take into consideration the demand for the title and will be at the discretion of the department librarians.
- I. Internet and Other Electronic Searches. Internet and other electronic searches are conducted at the librarians' discretion. Electronic reference sources may be used in the course of answering a patron's question.

- J. Requests for Resource Lists. Lists of materials (bibliographies and webliographies) on specific topics may be prepared in response to a request at the staff's discretion. As an alternative, the patron can be instructed in how to create a subject bibliography.
- K. Mail and Email Reference Requests. All written requests are answered in a timely fashion, but subject to the same 20-minute guideline as walk-in or telephone reference questions. Mail requests from Arrowhead Library System users are free of charge. In-state, non-ALS residents are encouraged to seek information from HPL via the interlibrary loan department of their own public libraries. HPL librarians will answer requests from out-of-state residents who send a \$10 check made out to HPL and a self-addressed stamped envelope with their requests. These requests are subject to the same time constraints listed above. As an alternative, HPL staff will refer out-of-state residents to their local library's interloan department.
- L. Requests from Persons with Disabilities. Reference requests from disabled patrons will be given special consideration in regard to the photocopying and mailing of information to them.
- M. Faxing Responses to Patrons. Library documents and information will be faxed directly to patrons under the following guidelines:
1. HPL reference department faxes library material to homes and offices in the U.S.
  2. HPL will charge \$2.00 for the first fax page, and \$1.00 for each additional page.
  3. ALS libraries (both member and affiliates), City of Janesville. Rock County offices, and other cooperating agencies designated by the library, are exempt from fax charges
- N. Telephone Service. Completion of reference transactions for patrons in the library is given priority over completion for telephone patrons.