

REFERENCE SERVICES POLICY

The Pinckney Community Public Library assures users that staff will “provide the highest level of service through appropriate and useful organized collections, fair and equitable circulation and service policies and skillful, accurate, unbiased and courteous responses to all requests for assistance.” Moreover, the staff “must protect each user’s right of privacy with respect to information sought or received, and materials consulted, borrowed, or acquired.”

REFERENCE SERVICE GOALS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Provide courteous and knowledgeable assistance to library users by making the best practical use of library resources. Assisting library users is the highest priority for all Library personnel. Staff members serve as the link between library resources and the patron, and, as such, it is important that the staff member be open and approachable, friendly but professional and able to communicate effectively with people.
2. Educate library users on the various access methods of information sources, within the Library and beyond it.
3. Avoid giving personal opinions or philosophy, or providing tax, medical and/or legal advice and use discretion in handling questions which might be confidential or sensitive. The source of information should always be cited.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE DESK SERVICE:

1. Reference questions are answered in the following order:
 - a. In-Library
 - b. Telephone
 - c. E-mail
 - d. Faxed
 - e. Letter
2. Staff members assigned to desk duty should report a few minutes early to the desk and “cover” that desk as closely as possible until relieved by the next person.
3. Questions that remain unanswered at the end of a staff member’s desk shift may be passed on to incoming staff. Staff members are encouraged to consult with colleagues if they need help with puzzling or difficult question. If the requested information cannot be provided within 24 hours, the patron should be notified of the status of the request.
4. Referrals to other agencies may be made when appropriate. Patrons should be advised that they may contact the Library for further assistance if they are not successful in obtaining help from the agency. At no time may staff refer the patron to individual practitioners – physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, etc.
5. Never assume that a patron knows how to locate library materials. Assistance should be offered whenever a patron appears to need it. Ask, “How may I help you?” or “Are you finding everything you need?” This may require accompanying the patron to the card catalog or computer to explain how to use it or to the indicated area. Whenever patrons are sent to the stacks on their own, it is

important to remind them to report back to the reference desk if they are unsuccessful in finding what they need.

REPORTING PROBLEMS

The reference staff member assigned to desk duty has the responsibility of enforcing Library rules of proper behavior and reporting any problems to the Director. In the event a patron becomes disruptive verbally or physically to staff or a patron and/or poses a threat, the Director should immediately be called. If the Director is out of the building and cannot be reached and the problem is serious enough, local police should be called.

CIRCULATION OF REFERENCE MATERIALS

Reference materials, because of timeliness, content and high demand, generally do not circulate. Under special circumstances the Director may authorize the loan of a reference material for a limited period.

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS

Every effort will be made to answer the student's or parent's question by providing sources of information and the instruction needed to use those sources. However it is the student's responsibility to use the material in order to meet the requirements of the assignment. Staff will not organize the material or "write" the paper. Requests involving extensive research for homework will not be answered by telephone.

TELEPHONE REFERENCE SERVICE

Telephone callers may be asked to leave their names and phone numbers for return calls by staff when the answer is not immediately available and/or the Library is busy and the answer cannot be quickly provided or there are in-Library users waiting for assistance.

Circulating materials that are located through a telephone call will be held at the request of the caller for a period of not longer than five (5) days.

No puzzle or contest questions will be answered over the telephone when they can be identified as such, unless they can be answered quickly.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Library has numerous electronic resources available for public use or as part of the Library's reference services. The purpose of this collection is to facilitate information access in a variety of formats to provide the Library's users flexibility and speed in accessing information. Access is provided, as well, to information that is not available in printed sources. Printing is .05 cents a page for students and senior citizens and .10 cents a page for everyone else. Some of the Library's electronic resources allow downloading of information to disk. Patrons must bring in their own preformatted disks. Copyright and other rules pertaining to authorship apply whenever any material is copied and/or downloaded.

MEDICAL/LEGAL REFERENCE QUESTIONS

Staff members treat requests for medical information as all other requests. They do not, however, offer medical advice or an interpretation of medical information.

TAXATION QUESTIONS

Staff will not provide advice in the interpretation of tax law or assistance in selecting appropriate tax forms. Published Tax Guides are included in the Library's collection so the patron may determine which forms are needed. Copies of the most commonly used forms as provided by the IRS and state governments will be available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis during tax season. Other forms will be available through the "Reproducible Federal Tax Forms for Use in Libraries" provided by the IRS.

CONSUMER EVALUATIONS

The staff should help patrons locate objective consumer product information by showing them how to consult the indexes to Consumer Reports and related magazines, buying guides, and/or general indexes which may lead to product evaluations in other periodicals. The staff should not offer personal opinions recommending one product or another.