



## Reference Services

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*Adopted: 2007*

### **Purpose of Reference Services Policy**

The New Castle County Library System (NCCLS) adopted this Reference Services Policy to provide guidelines that ensure a consistent standard of reference service, within each library and across the system as a whole. The policy applies to reference services provided in all NCCLS libraries to all ages of library patrons. The policy is available to library patrons who request it.

### **Types of Reference Service**

- Instruction in the use of the library and its resources, both print and electronic.
- Assistance in finding the answer to specific factual questions.
- Assistance in developing research strategies and identifying specific resources for finding information for reports, term papers, theses, and dissertations.
- Assistance in locating materials that will provide needed information.
- Readers' advisory service, suggesting titles that patrons might enjoy.
- Verification of library holdings and referral to institutions that have materials the library lacks or provision of those materials through Interlibrary Loan.
- Orientation to the library through tours, subject-specific workshops, etc.
- Production of instructional aids such as lists of books on various subjects, instructions for searching the catalog, signs explaining the Dewey Decimal System, etc.

### **Objectives of Reference Service**

- To meet the informational, educational, recreational, and cultural needs of the NCCLS community.





- To provide approachable, knowledgeable, trained reference staff to assist patrons.
- To provide materials and services to meet users' needs for timely, accurate, and useful information.
- To provide prompt, accurate, impartial, and confidential service to users of all ages and backgrounds.
- To facilitate access to the library's collection including print materials, the Internet, and electronic resources.
- To instruct patrons in the use of library materials, equipment, and facilities.
- To promote awareness in the community of library services, materials, and facilities.

## **General Guidelines for Reference Service**

Reference staff will provide equal service to all patrons regardless of age, sex, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, educational background, or socio-economic status.

Reference staff will treat questions impartially regardless of their content or purpose.

All reference questions are confidential and treated as such by staff. The nature of questions asked and the identity of the patron will not be discussed with other patrons or with other staff, except when necessary to transfer questions between staff members.

Reference staff will provide accurate, timely answers to questions whether asked in person or by telephone, letter, e-mail, chat, or fax. Usually, in-person inquiries take priority over telephone inquiries.

Reference staff will provide patrons with the source of information as well as the answer to the question.

Reference staff will not give personal opinions or recommendations in the course of answering reference questions (except in the case of readers' advisory).

Reference staff will not refer patrons to individual professionals such as physicians, lawyers, accountants, etc.

General reference questions – those that require more work than ready-reference but less work than research questions – will be answered in as timely and efficient a manner as staff resources allow.

Reference staff does not provide in-depth research, but rather assists patrons in locating sources to aid in their research. Telephone callers are instructed to come to the library.

Reference staff will not answer questions involving reading and evaluating an extensive amount of text; instead, the staff will help the patron locate suitable materials for use.

Reference staff will not answer specific homework questions, but will guide students to appropriate resources. Reference staff will provide instruction for students in using the library's catalog, databases, and print resources.

Questions that cannot be answered using library resources will be referred to other libraries, local resources or agencies, or Interlibrary Loan. If possible, the reference staff will verify that the needed information is available from the source before referral.