

Free Library of New Hope and Solebury

Information Policy

Priorities for Reference Services

Policy Statement

The Free Library of New Hope and Solebury is dedicated to meeting the information needs of the community. The Priorities for Reference Service Policy provides library service guidelines for the staff so that patrons will receive consistently high levels of service.

Definitions

A reference question is defined as any request for information, in person, by mail, phone, e-mail, fax, from either a child or adult, that requires the use of library materials or the professional judgment of the librarian to answer the question. The questions may involve requests for: help with the catalog (not mechanical questions such as how to operate a reader/printer); literature searches; readers' advisory services; referral to sources of information; help in finding specific facts; use of electronic resources.

Regulations

In support of this aim, the philosophy of service is based on the following:

- All library users are provided with equal service. Staff will provide information impartially.
- Users need not be registered borrowers or local residents to receive reference service.
- All requests by users for information are legitimate and are treated as such.
- All transactions between the patron and library staff members are confidential. Patrons and information requests are discussed only for conferring with a colleague for assistance or for training purposes.

Service Priorities

Service to the public has priority over all other tasks.

All patrons requesting for reference service other than readers' advisory or basic local information and directions will be referred to the library staff.

Simultaneous requests will be managed at the Director's discretion with regard to urgency, complexity and availability of staff resources. In-person and telephone reference requests will be handled in the order they are received. Email requests will be handled in the order in which they are received, but in-person and telephone requests will take precedence.

If the Free Library of New Hope and Solebury cannot provide an immediate response to an in-person or telephone inquiry, or an answer within twenty-four hours to an email inquiry, library staff will contact the Reference Librarian on duty at the District Center Library in Doylestown to request assistance.

For reference service that requires extensive research and time, patrons may utilize the library's book-a-librarian service and arrange for a half-hour, uninterrupted session with a librarian.

Referrals Outside the Bucks County Public Library System

If the library staff deems it appropriate to refer the patron to another library or agency, the staff member will make every effort to verify that the material is at the agency. If it is not possible to call the agency immediately, staff will encourage the patron to call ahead before traveling to the agency. Staff will provide the name, address, and telephone number of the agency to the patron, and will verify this information if possible.

Library staff should never refer patrons to individual practitioners -- physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, or others.

Sources

Library staff will rely upon information obtained from reputable sources in order to give the most accurate and authoritative answers to questions. Library staff should avoid giving personal opinions, philosophy, or evaluations; rather, they should rely upon information obtained from reputable sources. Library staff will always cite the source of the answer.

Instruction and Orientation Services

Instruction and orientation in library use may range from basic individual and class instruction on how to use catalogs, reference tools, the e-library and the Internet to more formal assistance which can be scheduled by appointment if staff time allows.

Specific Reference Policies: School Assignments

Homework is intended to be a learning experience for the student. The role of the library staff is one of guidance in helping students find material or potential sources of information to complete homework assignments and to evaluate information sources. Library staff will make every effort to assist students in locating the material needed for a class project. The students should use the material to complete their assignments.

Specific Reference Policies: Contest Questions

Library staff will treat simple, factual questions in the same manner as all other reference questions. Some contest questions are tricky and might have more than one answer that seems to be correct. The library cannot guarantee that the answer provided is the correct answer for any particular contest. Library staff will not conduct lengthy searches or interpret contest rules.

Specific Reference Policies: Consumer Evaluations

Library staff will help patrons locate objective product information by showing them how to use Consumer Reports and other related magazines, buying guides, and/or general indexes that may lead to product evaluations in other periodicals.

Specific Reference Policies: Book, Antique, and Art Appraisals

The library is not staffed with experts for making appraisals of books, works of art, antiques, coins, stamps, currency or other collectibles. Library staff should refer patrons to appropriate reference resources.

Specific Reference Policies: Genealogical Questions

Library staff will provide general assistance in genealogical research including guidance in locating items in the collection, guidance in contacting other local agencies, and help in obtaining resources through Interlibrary Loan, but library staff will not engage in actual genealogical research for patrons.

Specific Reference Policies: Translations

The library will provide brief translations only if a staff member is available with the appropriate expertise.

Specific Reference Policies: Compilations and Literature Searches

Library staff cannot prepare extensive compilations (bibliographies, lists, statistics, etc.) for patrons, nor can they undertake exhaustive literature searches. If patrons ask library staff to search the library's holdings on a topic and to have materials ready for them to pick up, library staff will do a quick search in library databases and/or scan periodical citations and retrieve some relevant books. Library staff will hold retrieved materials for patrons at the Circulation Desk. Library staff will also offer to assist patrons in their research.

Specific Reference Policies: Mathematical Calculations

Library staff will not perform mathematical calculations for patrons.

Specific Reference Policies: Medical, Tax and Legal Questions

The library does not provide advice or interpretation in the areas of medicine, taxes or law. Library staff cannot undertake legal searches or interpret legal reference sources. This would be regarded as practicing law.

In response to requests for medical information, library staff can only read brief definitions from authoritative sources. They will quote the sources verbatim, and they will inform the patron of the name of the quoted source.

Library staff will not provide advice in the interpretation of tax law or assistance in the selection of appropriate forms.

Specific Reference Policies: Patent Searches

The library does not provide services related to patent searches. These requests will be forwarded to the District Library Center at Doylestown.

Electronic Information Retrieval: Fee-Based Searching

Library staff will use professional judgment to determine when a fee-based electronic database would be the best means of answering a question. In this case, the patron will be advised of the existence of the fee-based material and provided with basic information on how to access the resource. The library cannot subsidize requests for fee-based materials.

Electronic Information Retrieval: General Searching

Library staff will use professional judgment to determine whether Internet resources are appropriate authoritative answers for questions. Librarians will offer suggestions to

patrons who are using Internet workstations and will help within the limits of their expertise in determining whether a resource is authoritative. Library staff will not guarantee the validity of information retrieved but will attempt to provide the patron with tools and contextual information that will help to evaluate the resource.

Loan of Reference Materials

The purpose of a reference collection is to assure library patrons of access to reference tools at all times that the library is open. Reference materials do not circulate. An exception may be made at the Director's discretion if a second copy of the resource is available within the library, or easily available within the Bucks County Public Library system.

Statistics

Statistics on reference questions asked and answered will be compiled during two sample weeks selected by the District Consultant. These results will be extrapolated and used as the basis for all reporting on reference questions.

Approved by Board of Trustees June 17, 2009

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Information Policy

Priorities for Outreach

Policy Statement

The Free Library of New Hope and Solebury is dedicated to meeting the needs of the community. In order to meet these needs it may be necessary from time to time to offer services at locations other than the library. It may be desirable to form partnerships with outside groups. It may be necessary to undertake other actions outside the normal scope of library service to ensure that members of the community are aware of services offered by the library. The Priorities for Outreach Policy provides library service guidelines for determining when outreach activities such as these are appropriate.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy "outreach" is defined as activity provided outside the normal provision of library services with the intent of promoting library services, creating community partnerships, or meeting needs which cannot be met within the library proper.

Regulations

Outreach activities may be initiated by either the Library Director or the Board of Trustees. The Library Director has primary responsibility for any outreach which involves provision of library services or which has an immediate impact on day-to-day operations. The Board of Trustees has primary responsibility for any outreach activity primarily involved with fundraising, long range planning, or the setting of policy.

The Library Director will promptly notify the Board of Director-led outreach activities. The Board will promptly notify the Director of Board-led outreach activities. The Director and Board will coordinate their activities to ensure that the library is well-represented to outside parties.

Outreach priorities will be determined in accord with the library's long-range plan. Activities which support the goals of the long range plan will be given precedence.