

REFERENCE SERVICE

The Illinois Prairie District Public Library serves a diverse public with unique individual needs and levels of ability to conduct research independently. At times of peak activity within the library, it is mandatory that rules for providing reference assistance be established. The most recent standards document, *Serving Our Public: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries* provides the model for this reference policy.

The board of trustees and library director of Illinois Prairie District Public Library encourage staff of all levels to pursue continuing education opportunities which will enable them to better meet the needs of the library's patrons. All staff members receive in-house training regarding appropriate responses to patron questions, including reference questions. This training includes reference interviewing techniques, reader's advisory service, and bibliographic instruction. All staff members are taught to treat each question asked with respect insofar as the level of assistance required and the topic of the question. Names of users and the transactions which occur between users and the staff are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context.

Reference service and materials are available to all persons who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the library regardless of the age, race, sex, social or economic status of the patron. Reference service and materials are available during all hours the library is open and is provided in response to all forms of inquiry including but not limited to patrons in the library, the telephone, telefacsimile, electronic mail (e-mail) and TTY. The reference questions of patrons visiting the library are given the highest priority. All requests for information receive an answer or status report within one working day. Questions which cannot be answered with on-site resources are referred to another agency. Such referrals are verified and/or mediated by library staff.

In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. The staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff define the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select income tax forms or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above. If all materials within the library are beyond the understanding of the patron, the patron will be advised to consult with their professional from the above listed fields for additional information or advice.

The Illinois Prairie District Public Library provides online databases for in-house use to anyone who comes into the library and provides remote access, when available, to all persons who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the library.

Reference materials, regardless of format, may not be removed from the library without prior consent from the library director.

The Illinois Prairie District Public library adheres to the American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics. Copies of this policy as well as the ALA Code of Ethics are available on the libraries website and can be printed upon request.

The Reference Service Policy will be under constant evaluation, to be formally reviewed at least every other year.

Revised: 1/8/2019

Reviewed: January 2023