



Reference Policy

- I. **Objective:**

The purpose of the Reference Desk of the Wilmington Public Library District is to provide accurate information to patrons and to assist them in the use of the Library's collection. The purpose of this policy is to serve as a guideline for staff members who provide reference service to patrons and also as a statement to patrons defining the services provided to them. Further, this policy ensures that each staff member providing reference will provide all services equitably to all patrons.
- II. **Patrons Served:**

The Wilmington Public Library District recognizes as its patron all individuals who access its facility, regardless of legal residency. All reference services will be provided to patrons regardless of residence, age or employment status on an equal basis. Access to external services is available through the Wilmington Public Library District only to patrons holding a valid Prairie Area Library System (PALS) card. Those services include, but are not limited to: inter library loan (ILL), reciprocal borrowing of materials from PALS member libraries, and direct loan requests. Access to downloadable audiobooks as well as remote access to online resources is only available to Wilmington Public Library District cardholders. Access to online resources is only available to non-cardholders from the library computers.
- III. **Reference Materials:**

The library maintains a small collection of Ready Reference materials that do not circulate. Other reference materials may be checked out for three days. Reference books may not be renewed.
- IV. **General Functions:**
 - A. Reference questions will be handled in the order they are received. When patrons are unable to come to the library due to disability, distance or unusual circumstances, the librarian may copy and mail information back to the patron.
 - B. The library attempts to answer all questions immediately, but recognizes that complex questions needing to be thoroughly researched may not be answered during a patron visit. The library will however answer or refer questions within three working days.
 - C. Reference and other staff will provide reader's advisory to individuals or groups of patrons.
 - D. The reference staff will provide assistance in using the OPAC (Online Public Access Computer), bibliographies and the general collection. In addition, staff will provide assistance with external services listed above.

- E. The library will refer patrons to other libraries, local government agencies or other organizations when direct contact between the patron and the agency will better facilitate the transfer of information.

- V. Unique Reference Queries
 - A. Contest questions, quizzes, and trivia will be answered as any other reference question and will not be given priority.
 - B. The staff will read a definition or brief description over the phone and will cite the source of information. Staff will not interpret, condense, or abstract any medical or legal information nor offer any opinion. If the patron is unable to locate the correct answers in library sources, the staff may request materials from external sources.
 - C. The reference staff will assist patrons requesting information to complete school assignments. Assistance will include locating the source, using the index, and indicating the section of material that answers the question. The staff is unable to anticipate the instructor's purpose in assigning homework and does not interpret the instructor's questions for students.
 - D. The staff will assist all patrons with locating reviews, buying guides or other hard copy of materials, for items which the patron is considering for purchase. Staff will not make recommendations for purchases.

- VI. Fees
 - A. The library will pass on to patrons any fees incurred while obtaining information for a patron which is authorized by the patron and is available only for a fee.
 - B. The Wilmington Public Library District photocopy fees are \$.10 per page for black copies.
 - C. Reference staff will print up to ten pages free of charge when the information is not available in resource that the patron can check out.

- VII. Internet Database Searches
 - A. The Internet provides a world of resources and organizations beyond the walls of Wilmington Public Library District. The library makes no guarantees, implied or otherwise, regarding the reliability or accuracy of information obtained from the Internet using the library's connection.
 - B. The library provides Internet access for public use. The library does not have sufficient staff to provide individualized instruction or assist in formulating search strategies. Patrons may do their own Internet searching if they have signed a User Agreement. There is a charge for all printouts from the Internet.
 - C. Customers who do not choose to personally use the Internet may request Reference Staff assistance. Staff will provide the answer while the customer waits if the material can be located within ten minutes.

staff is not aware of a site that will answer the patron's question and more time is needed for searching, staff will complete a Reference Request Form and search for an answer at a later time.

- D. Patrons will be notified when their material is ready to be picked up. Material will be held at the circulation desk with the name and date clearly noted for three days.

VIII. Code of Ethics

The library subscribes to the American Library Association Code of Ethics (attachment A). The staff and administration of the library regard all information transactions, interviews, and records as confidential in nature. All patrons will be served without partiality.

IX. Evaluation of Reference Service and Policy

- A. Reference service will be evaluated semi-annually. Guidelines for evaluation can include output measures or suggested procedures from PALS or the Illinois State Library.
- B. The Reference Policy will be reviewed every two years. The Board of Trustees must approve changes in policy.

Adopted	3/19/01
Amended	3/15/04, 3/20/06
Reviewed	3/15/10