



The Colony Public Library Reference Policy

Adopted by The Colony Public Library Board 10/02
Revised 10/04; 02/11; 10/15; 08/23

I. Reference Services

In keeping with The Colony Public Library's mission of providing free and equitable access to information, materials, and services, the Library provides reference services overseen by a professional librarian. The primary goal of reference service is to provide accurate, timely, impartial, and useful information, as well as to provide assistance and instruction in using the Library's collection, resources, and services.

II. Philosophy

The Colony Public Library recognizes as its customers all individuals who access the Library facility; Library staff will provide professional, equitable, and unbiased reference service to all customers regardless of age, origin, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, background, human condition, or social, political or religious views.

III. Guidelines and Responsibilities

- A. Service to the public receives the highest priority over all other duties while staffing the Reference Desk and other service points.
- B. A librarian, holding a professional library degree, will be available all hours the Library is open.
- C. Library staff will seek to provide the best service possible by conducting a reference interview and consulting accurate and current sources to fulfill information requests.
- D. Given the complexity of reference work, there are no definitive time limits per interaction; the amount of time spent per query will be left to the judgment of Library staff.
- E. Reference questions will be responded to in the order received. In the cases of conflicts or time restraints, priority service will be given to in-person requests. Telephone, email, and web form requests will receive a response as promptly as possible.
- F. Reference services include instructing customers in searching for and assessing information; when feasible, Library staff will provide instruction in using the Library's collection, resources, and services to promote information literacy. Reference staff will also accompany customers to the shelves to locate materials, if desired.

- G. Library staff working at the Reference Desk are also responsible for maintaining a working knowledge of:
 - 1. Reader's advisory resources.
 - 2. Community affairs, organizations, and agencies.
 - 3. Consumer technologies, including smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers.
- H. When a query is beyond the scope of Reference staff expertise or outside the limits of the Library's materials and/or resources, the following actions may take place to find the desired information or resource:
 - 1. Refer customer to other resources outside the Library, including nearby libraries.
 - 2. Make phone calls to local sources of information.
 - 3. Use interlibrary loan service.

IV. Specific Practices

- A. Library staff may only guide customers to available materials and resources relating to medical, legal, tax, and consumer and personal finance information. Staff will neither evaluate nor interpret the information provided, nor offer opinions on the best course of action; they will also not offer investment advice, answer tax questions or assist in tax form preparation, or act as a surrogate for a professional in the above-mentioned fields.
- B. In the case of telephone reference requests, Library staff may provide relevant information related to the query via a definition or a brief description over the phone, including the citation of the source; however, customers must interpret the information on their own and will be advised to read the material themselves.
- C. Library staff will assist customers requesting information to complete school assignments. Assistance will focus on instruction in using the Library's materials and resources rather than only supplying answers. Library staff are unable to anticipate the instructor's purpose in assigning homework and will not interpret the instructor's questions for students. Complicated or lengthy assignments may necessitate the use of online homework help resources provided through the Library's website.
- D. Library staff will, to the best of their ability and while taking staff time into account, assist customers in the use of Library technology and digital resources. Staff are not permitted to type or enter personal information for customers, troubleshoot

personal device issues, or offer extended on-demand technology assistance. Customers needing more in-depth instruction are encouraged to set up a Book-A-Librarian appointment, attend relevant training classes offered by the Library, and/or consult instructional materials owned by the Library. Library staff are unable to provide assistance with customers' personal devices beyond assisting access to the Library's resources.

- E. Library staff will not provide information and/or assistance with activities they know to be or may be illegal.