

REFERENCE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The staff at the Clive Public Library endeavors to provide accurate information and materials in response to requests from library users in an efficient, courteous, and timely manner. Questions are generally answered in the order received. Staff will respond to questions asked in the library, over the telephone, via e-mail, and the via 'bold chat' live website service.

Reference services available through the front desk include information services (answers to specific questions, call number and ownership of a specific book, recommendations on subject materials), instruction on the use of the library and library materials (indexes, online services, catalog, reference tools), bibliographic verification of items requested (title, author, publishers, ISBN, price), reader's advisory (suggestions on books to read, media to view, recordings to hear), referral to community services, assistance in locating materials, and homework questions.

Before responding to a reference request, staff must understand the question completely. When answering specific information questions, staff will always cite the source of the answer. Personal beliefs, opinions, and experience are generally not acceptable sources of answers to reference questions but, if given, will be appropriately identified. Staff will accompany the patron to the location of the desired material in the library and confirm that the information meets the patron's needs.

E-mail, 'bold chat' service, and telephone reference service is usually limited to supplying readily available information that does not require extensive research and that can be accurately and quickly imparted. Extensive research that requires selection of appropriate materials, interpretation of data and sources, or analysis of information is best performed by the patron. Detailed information, especially that which is subject to analysis or interpretation, will not be relayed over the telephone, website, or through e-mail. Samples of available materials can be gathered and held for patron pick-up. Every attempt will be made to answer questions using information available in the library. This includes print, non-print, and online resources.

Telephone reference questions that can be answered quickly (two or three minutes) without affecting service to patrons in the library, should be handled while the patron waits. Questions that require more time to answer, or that are received while other patrons are waiting in the library, will be handled as callbacks or e-mails. All callbacks and e-mails will be cleared by the end of the day or the patron will be notified of the delay. Privacy and concern for accuracy of information will be considered when leaving messages on answering machines or with another household member.

Additional care and caution must be exercised when providing legal, medical, or consumer information. To avoid misunderstandings, it is preferred that patrons visit the library to review this type of information rather than receiving the information over the telephone. Front-desk staff will provide definitions, quote material verbatim, and direct patrons to information sources. Staff will not offer advice or opinions, condense or abstract information, or suggest a course of action or diagnosis. Staff will provide the source and copyright date for legal and medical information.

All requests for reference information are confidential. Front-desk staff may consult with each other when necessary to serve the patron or consult with staff at other libraries, agencies, and organizations. Questions are tallied for statistical purposes and may be compiled to assist in staff training. In all cases, patron confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.

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