

Jasper County Public Library Reference Policy

I. REFERENCE SERVICE DEFINED

Good reference service involves identifying a person's information need and proceeding to fulfill it accurately, efficiently and pleasantly, using the resources available in the Library system, and including referral to resources in other libraries or agencies, if necessary. It also includes providing instruction in library use.

The Jasper County Public Library regards every reference question asked by any patron as valid. All questions will be given equal consideration, and each will be answered as accurately and completely as possible within a reasonable time limit. Full library service will be available to all patrons and no questions asked by a patron will be considered unanswerable.

II. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Reference service involves directly providing information or providing instruction in the use of sources to each person to the degree that he or she individually requires.

Patrons will have opportunity to receive instruction in the use of resources and facilities but will not be denied information on the basis of whether or not they learn or accept instruction. However, the Library will encourage patrons who will need to use reference tools repeatedly, to learn the use of these tools.

The following services will be offered to patrons (listed in order of priority)

1. Directional personal service to library users who come to the library. Patrons are served on a first come, first served basis.
2. Telephone inquiries
3. Library orientation and bibliographic instruction
4. E-mail reference service/social media
5. Mail reference

III. STANDARDS

1. All information requests are to be handled. If information is available, it is provided to patrons without making a judgment on its moral or aesthetic worth.
2. No effort will be made to determine whether library users are entitled to library cards before reference service is given except to decide whether or not informational material will be checked out or interlibrary loan requested.
3. The needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and treated with utmost respect and confidentiality. Discussion of any individual or group of individuals, whether adult or child, or their inquiries, outside the professional context, is strictly prohibited without the consent of the patron.

4. While on desk duty, service to the public takes precedence over any other duties, and service to the patron in the library takes precedence over telephone inquiries.
5. It is not sufficient for the staff to wait for a patron to request assistance. Since many patrons are reluctant to request aid, it is the responsibility of staff to anticipate public needs and offer service when it appears needed.
6. Information given is always based on accurate print or nonprint sources or learned from a reliable authority. The opinion, evaluation or interpretation of staff, even when requested, is not given as fact. Answers to reference questions will only be given after the answer has been verified and a source cited, even for the most common knowledge.
7. Neither the patron's nor the staff member's personal opinions and beliefs should influence the quality of service given.
8. Staff shall not offer their personal opinions on social issues, politics, religion, etc., to patrons.
9. It is noted that lengthy searches of the internet, periodicals, bibliographic sources, or searches through extensive reference materials are beyond the Library's resources to perform. If needed, staff may consult with the Managing Librarian for guidance in determining if a reference request is too extensive or beyond the library's resources. The Managing Librarian may consult with Director as needed.
10. Telephone, social media, and e-mail reference service should be used for short, factual information questions which do not require extensive reading or (any) interpretation on the staff member's part.

Adopted 10/04; reviewed 10/22