

# LINCOLNWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT REFERENCE SERVICE POLICY

*“The library seeks to enhance the quality of life in Lincolnwood by: creating and sustaining a sense of place for residents; bringing the community together in order to celebrate its diversity; offering individuals a welcoming gateway to knowledge and discovery; and fulfilling residents’ desire for cultural and recreational activities”*

The Library’s Mission Statement

## **PURPOSE AND GENERAL PROVISIONS OF REFERENCE SERVICE**

Delivering effective reference service is an important component of the library’s mission. The library’s goal with respect to reference service is to improve the quality of life in Lincolnwood by providing its residents with current, accurate, and useful information in a responsive, timely, and friendly manner. To achieve this goal, the library will maintain a diverse collection of general reference resources that will be available for library patrons to use themselves as well as for reference service staff to use in assisting patrons who request assistance. Lincolnwood Public Library cardholders may also request additional materials through the interlibrary loan process.

Any library patron who requests information or materials will be assisted by staff to the extent that such assistance can be offered within the limits imposed by: (1) available resources, and (2) policies, practices, and guidelines established by the Lincolnwood Public Library District’s Board of Trustees.

## **SERVICE LIMITATIONS**

If the information requested by a patron proves to be beyond the scope of the resources available at the library, or if the information requested is deemed to be so complex as to necessitate time-consuming research that will require reference staff to neglect the needs of other patrons or other key job responsibilities, the patron will, if possible, be referred to other libraries or agencies that might be able to provide more help.

## **SERVICE TO NON-RESIDENTS**

Non-residents will be assisted with local library resources. If the request requires resources beyond the Lincolnwood Public Library, or extensive research by staff, non-resident patrons will be referred to their home libraries or other agencies for service. Remote access to many of the electronic information databases to which the library subscribes requires password authentication, and use is limited to Lincolnwood Public Library cardholders. Such databases may be accessed at the library on library computers without password authentication.

## **FORMS OF INQUIRY AND RESPONSE**

Reference service is provided in response to various forms of inquiry. If the answer to a question cannot be conveyed effectively, with relative ease, and at a reasonable cost by means of a phone call, letter, fax, or e-mail, the patron will be asked to come to the library to pick up or use the material. Inquiries are answered in the form the librarian feels is the most expedient. If a visit to the library would entail a hardship, and the patron is a Lincolnwood resident, the library will attempt to make other arrangements.

## **RESPONSES TO REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE: STANDARDS AND PRACTICES**

Reference service is provided by trained staff during all hours the library is open. When working at a service desk, response to patron service needs, including reference inquiries, takes precedence over other staff duties.

Requests will generally be handled in the order in which they are received. Requests submitted by patrons in the library are given priority over telephone requests that are received at the same time. Reference staff members will attempt to answer questions at the time the request is made and to work within the patron’s time requirements. When this proves to be impossible, staff will promptly inform the patron that a longer response time will be needed or that assistance should be sought from another library or agency.

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When answering a patron's reference question, reference staff will cite the resource(s) from which the information is obtained. The producers of that resource, not the library itself, are responsible for that resource's accuracy. The librarian will decide when all reasonable resource options have been exhausted at the library and when it is time to cease working on a question and refer the patron elsewhere.

Staff **will not** provide the following kinds of assistance, which are deemed to be beyond the scope of the library's service responsibilities:

- Interpretation, advice, or personal recommendations in any area other than the use of library resources.
- Critiquing or editing patron documents, including resumes for job seekers.
- Completing forms (including online forms) for patrons, or assisting patrons in completing such forms.
- Solving or troubleshooting problems with patron's personal computers or other electronic devices. (In such instances, staff is permitted to assist by attempting to locate relevant instructions and similar kinds of information for patrons.)

If it proves to be both possible and practical to do so, staff will also attempt to guide and instruct patrons in the use library resources when responding to reference inquiries.

The library adopts as its own, and strives to adhere to, the *Reference Service Standards* and *Reader's Advisory Standards* promulgated in ***Serving Our Public 2.0: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries*** (Illinois Library Association, 2009).

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STANDARDS**

The library's mission, and the reason for its very existence, is to serve the needs of Lincolnwood residents. Therefore, distinctions must be made between residents and non-residents regarding the scope and depth of service that can be offered. Except for such distinctions, reference service shall be provided to all users on an equal, nondiscriminatory, and nonjudgmental basis without regard to: (1) race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal view of the patron making the inquiry; (2) the subject matter being researched; or (3) the purpose of the inquiry. Transactions with patrons will be treated as equally important and shall be kept confidential. The library adopts and adheres to the American Library Association's ***Code of Ethics***, a copy of which is appended to this statement of policy.

### **FEES**

There is no charge for reference service. However, charges assessed by outside agencies and costs incurred for providing photocopies and printouts will be passed on to the patron. The patron will be notified in advance of any such charges.

### **REFERENCE SERVICE STAFF**

The effectiveness and quality of reference service is largely dependent on the skill, attitude, and behavior of staff. Reference staff in both the Adult Services and the Youth and Teen Services departments will: be well-trained in reference interviewing techniques; participate in continuing education opportunities in order to stay knowledgeable about reference and reader's advisory resources, and to keep abreast of new technologies; provide reader's advisory assistance; provide bibliographic instruction when necessary and appropriate; and keep the community informed about reference and reader's advisory service and resources.

### **RELATED LIBRARY POLICIES**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LINCOLNWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT REFERENCE SERVICE POLICY</b></p>
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Reference service and the use of reference resources are also subject to the policies, provisions, and requirements contained in other library policy statements, including, but not necessarily limited, to those listed below.

- *General Policies Governing Library Use*
- *Policies Governing the Use of Public Computers, the Internet, and Other Electronic Resources in the Library*
- *Policies Governing Behavior in the Library and on Library Property*
- *Policies and Guidelines Governing Collection Development and the Selection of Library Resources*

***POLICY REVIEW***

The *Reference Service Policy* will be reviewed every two years.