

## REFERENCE POLICY

### □ REFERENCE SERVICE MISSION STATEMENT

Bloomington Public Library Reference staff is committed to assisting library users in successfully meeting their informational needs in a courteous and timely manner by consistently providing accurate, high quality service equally to all patrons. Service is provided to all persons on a non-discriminatory basis as required by state and federal law.

### □ PURPOSE OF THE REFERENCE POLICY

The purpose of this policy statement is to provide standards that will ensure consistency of service to all patrons.

### □ GENERAL REFERENCE SERVICE GUIDELINES

Trained staff work at the Reference Desk during all hours the library is open. Reference staff respond to all forms of inquiry to ensure quality service, other library staff members should refer all reference questions to the staff at the Reference Desk. Providing service to the public is a top priority and takes precedence over other tasks.

General reference service and access to the entire reference collection including electronic databases is provided to patrons of all ages. Non-residents are provided with in-house reference service, but are referred to their home library for materials which must be acquired from a library outside the SWAN consortium. Services are generally available free of charge, although fees charged by other agencies will sometimes be passed along to the patron. All patrons are treated impartially and their questions are handled in a confidential manner.

Staff are encouraged to ask patrons if their information needs have been met. If the information required is beyond the scope of the Bloomington Public Library collection, the patron will be referred to the appropriate information resources. In the event that a referral is made to another library, staff will contact the library on behalf of the user and verify that the material is available at the other library.

### □ NONCIRCULATING MATERIALS

Reference materials do not circulate. Non-reference materials in high demand may be placed on in-library use only during school assignments to ensure availability.

## ❑ **COMPUTER LAB GUIDELINES - ADULT SERVICES**

Bloomington Public Library provides access to the Internet, research databases, and other resources in the Adult Computer Lab. Users may use a valid Bloomington Public Library card, SWAN library card, or guest pass. Library laptops are also available for in-house checkout with a photo ID. Computer Services staff is primarily responsible for assisting patrons in the lab. If a Computer Services staff member is not in the lab, Adult Services staff will call Computer Services staff for assistance, if available. Adult Services staff assistance is available in the lab as time and expertise permit. Assistance is given on a best effort basis only. Research databases that offer a home access option by license agreement are available to Bloomington residents only.

## ❑ **SERVICE GUIDELINES**

### ▪ **IN-PERSON SERVICE**

Providing excellent reference services to the public is our top priority and takes precedence over other tasks. Staff receives ongoing in-house training regarding reference interview techniques, readers' advisory service, and bibliographic instruction.

### **BACKUP AT THE REFERENCE DESK**

First priority is given to in-person patrons, then telephone and online reference requests. Questions that can be answered quickly may be dealt with first, if this is agreeable to the person waiting the longest. When patrons are waiting, Adult Services staff will contact backup staff to provide assistance.

### **VERIFICATION OF SOURCES**

Staff will cite source titles and publication dates when answering questions.

### ▪ **TELEPHONE AND ONLINE REFERENCE**

These reference services are usually limited to supplying information that is readily available, does not require extensive searching, and which may be accurately communicated over the telephone or online. Reference staff will check a reasonable number of titles, addresses, indexes, etc., but the caller may be invited to come to the library if more extensive research is required. All telephone and online reference requests will be answered in a timely manner.

## □ **REQUESTS FOR SPECIALIZED INFORMATION**

### ▪ **MEDICAL, FINANCIAL, AND LEGAL QUESTIONS**

The Reference staff provides medical, financial, and legal information without advice or interpretation. Staff may not give personal referrals to patrons for particular medical, financial, or legal professionals.

### ▪ **TAXES**

Information on taxes is provided from published materials, not from the personal experience of the Reference staff. Tax advice is not given but appropriate tax guides and tax forms are provided where possible.

### ▪ **HOMEWORK**

If the information requested is part of a school assignment, Reference librarians will guide the student as to how to complete the work themselves. Requests involving extensive homework help cannot be answered by telephone or online. Students will be encouraged to visit the library or be instructed on the use of online resources for help in completing the assignment.

It is beyond the scope of library service to provide proofreading service or tutorial assistance. The Reference staff may not perform mathematical calculations, nor do they recommend tutors or tutoring services. High demand materials may be temporarily located at the Reference Desk if necessary.

### ▪ **VALUES AND APPRAISALS**

Values of art works, antiques, coins, stamps, etc. may be quoted from published or verified online sources, always pointing out to the user the date and source of the information. Library staff may offer listings of appraisers or vendors, but cannot make recommendations.

### ▪ **GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH**

Reference staff will assist patrons by suggesting materials and resources to assist them in their research. Extensive genealogical research services are not provided.

### ▪ **CONSUMER INFORMATION**

Reference staff will direct patrons to objective product information but may not interpret results of consumer research or offer personal recommendations.

## □ **INTERLIBRARY LOAN SERVICE**

The purpose of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is to provide materials that are not available from the Bloomingdale Public Library or member libraries of the SWAN consortium. The service is not designed to provide materials that the customer needs immediately, nor is it designed to fulfill requests for materials needed for an extended length of time (such as for an entire academic semester). The Bloomingdale Public Library endorses the principles of the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code. Materials may be requested from other libraries throughout the United States.

### ▪ **ELIGIBILITY**

Any Bloomingdale Public Library cardholder in good standing may request materials through ILL. Failure to return interlibrary loan materials on time may result in the suspension of a patron's interlibrary loan privileges.

Patrons are limited to five pending requests at one time. This limit allows ILL staff to provide timely service to all Interlibrary Loan patrons.

### ▪ **TYPE OF MATERIALS BORROWED**

Staff will request materials that are not owned by the Bloomingdale Public Library or not available from another library in SWAN. We will generally not be able to obtain the following types of materials:

- entire issues of magazines
- materials published within the last six months
- very old books (published before the mid-nineteenth century) and some genealogical materials
- video games
- eBooks and eAudiobooks
- materials in special collections.

### ▪ **COSTS**

Interlibrary loan is generally provided free of charge. On occasion, lending libraries charge a fee and in these cases the patron will have the option to borrow the item and pay the fee. Patrons must approve such charges before the item is borrowed. Lost items are billed according to the policy of the lending library. Patrons should specify if they are willing to pay any costs to obtain the items at the time of the interlibrary loan request.

### ▪ **DUE DATES**

Due dates are established by the library that sends the materials. Materials must be returned in accordance with the due date given by the lending library regardless of when the material is picked up by the patron.

- **RENEWALS**

Renewals are granted at the discretion of the lending library and they must be consulted before a renewal is granted. Renewals must be requested before the item is due. Patrons may not repeatedly request an item, or have another family member request it for them, in an effort to circumvent the standard interlibrary loan period plus renewal. Therefore, there will be a two week wait between the time a patron returns an interlibrary loan item and the time the patron or any member of his/her household requests the same item again.

- **TURNAROUND TIME**

Service will be provided as quickly as possible. Turnaround time varies depending upon the lending library and the material requested. Patrons will be notified when their requested materials are available.

- **SUBMITTING REQUESTS**

Patrons may submit requests through the Reference Desk services, or by using WorldCat. Patrons must supply name, address, phone number, and library card number.

- **PATRON COMPLAINTS AND CHALLENGES OF MATERIALS**

Patron complaints and challenges of materials are to be handled as outlined in the Material Selection Policy.

This reference policy is available to the public upon request. The Board of Library Trustees of the Bloomingdale Public Library will review the reference policy periodically, and reserves the right to amend it at any time.

Approved by the  
Board of Library Trustees  
June, 1986  
Revision approved  
1993; 1998; 2001; 2006; 2012; 2021; 2023