REFERENCE POLICY

Purpose:

The Board of Trustees has established this policy to ensure that full and equal access to information resources is provided so all patrons are furnished with current, correct information in response to their queries.

Definition:

Reference service refers to requests that involve using, recommending, instructing, or assisting patrons in use of information resources.

Scope of Service:

General reference service and access to the library resources is provided to patrons of all ages who request information, regardless of residency, within the scope of our collection and staff expertise. Reference service is available during all the hours the library is open and 24/7 through online databases.

Confidentiality:

Requests for information and resulting patron records shall be kept confidential and shall not be made available to others unless specifically required by court order, or unless cleared by the patron.

Procedure:

A. A reference interview is conducted regardless of the age or request of the patron.
B. All questions are answered as quickly as possible on a first come, first serve basis. If answer is not available within 24 hours, patron will be given an update.
C. Reference service will be provided in response to all forms of inquiry, including telephone, mail, and e-mail. In-person requests take precedence over other types of requests.
D. The amount of time staff can spend assisting patrons is necessarily limited by the needs of other users. Time limits vary according to the complexity of the inquiry, library experience of the patron, the number of other patrons needing assistance, and the number of staff available. If determining the answer to a question requires reading and evaluating an extensive amount of text, the staff will gather the sources for the patron to use.
E. Reference materials are not circulated except at the Director's or Youth Services Librarian's discretion.
F. The library uses telephone, print, non-print, and electronic resources to answer questions.
G. If questions cannot be answered through library resources, the patron will be referred to other sources whether local or national.
H. All information requests are handled in a serious, courteous, and professional manner with utmost respect being shown to patron's request.
I. When answering reference queries, staff will cite the source of the information.

J. Telephone reference service should be used for short, factual, informational questions. Requests requiring extensive research or relaying large quantities of information are best handled in person. If there are physical or geographical reasons the patron cannot physically come to the library, arrangements will be made to have the information sent.
K. ILL (interlibrary loan) is used when requests for materials are not available in Mt. Pleasant. It is used for all age groups. ILL is available only to library card holders in good standing.

Special Approach Reference Questions:

Homework Questions:

The staff will cooperate with the schools in handling homework assignments. Assignment alerts will be solicited from the schools, and preparations will be made to deal with large assignments to the extent that the library is notified. Staff will assist students in their searches rather than provide specific answers for their projects.

Contest or Quiz Questions:

The library staff answers quiz, contest, or trivia questions.

Medical, Legal, Tax and Financial Questions:

The library provides information, but not advice. Brief definitions and descriptions are given from the library's collections. Sources will be quoted verbatim with no interpretation by the staff. Since current information in these areas is especially crucial, patrons will also be encouraged to consult professionals rather than relying on library resources alone.

City Directory:

The library provides answers from the City Directory, regardless if the question is called in or asked in person.

Genealogy:

The Mount Pleasant Public Library maintains a local history/genealogical area. This area houses materials of importance to the history of Mount Pleasant, Henry County and surrounding counties, and materials on Iowa. Genealogy and local history materials are not available for checkout.

The library staff attempts to answer genealogical questions. If the research requires more than four hours, the questions will be referred to local genealogical searchers. Charges for copying will follow the current library fee schedule ($.10 for black and white, $.25 for color).

Appraisals:

The library does not appraise items. Patrons will be directed to the appropriate resources for that information.

Bibliographies and Pathfinders:

Bibliographies are prepared for subject areas perceived as being of interest to the community and library users; none are compiled on demand. Patrons requesting bibliographies will be given brief instruction on assembling bibliographies and directed to appropriate resources.

Approved by the Board of Trustees
April 12, 2022