

Policy on Reference and Information Services

The following policy has been adopted by the San Marcos Public Library Board as authorized by Section 2.298 of the City of San Marcos Code of Ordinances. This policy is to be considered the official position of the library.

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 and including referral to resources in other libraries or agencies, if necessary. Questions that may need to be referred could be of a genealogical, technical, medical, legal, or academic nature.

Reference service also includes providing instruction in library use.

The San Marcos 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.

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 and Internet tools repeatedly, to learn the use of these tools.

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

- Personal service to library users who come to the library. Patrons are served on a first come, first served basis.
- Telephone inquiries.
- Email reference.
- Mail reference.

III. Standards

1. All information requests are to be handled. If information is available, it is provided to patrons without making judgement 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 information material will be checked out or interlibrary loan requested.
3. The needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and treated with respect and confidentiality.
4. While on desk duty, service to the public takes precedence over any other duties.
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.
7. Neither the patron's nor the staff member's personal opinions or 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 a librarian for guidance in determining if a reference request is too extensive or beyond the library's resources.

*Approved by the San Marcos Public Library Board
January 23, 2017*