

# **Rutherford Public Library**

## **Reference Services Policy**

### **I. Introduction**

Service to the public is the primary responsibility of the staff member on duty at the reference desk. All requests for information are to be handled impartially and with confidentiality. Residents and non-residents will receive the same reference services. Our goal is to guide patrons to materials for educational, informational, recreational and cultural purposes as a basic part of reference service. The resources of the reference department are available to all patrons for in-library use during regular library hours. Reference materials may not be checked out.

#### Objectives

- To direct patrons to appropriate information sources for their reading and interest level.
- To provide courteous, prompt and accurate answers to patrons' questions. This may include direct personal assistance, information acquired from a reference source in a text or electronically based.
- To provide advisory assistance for readers.

It is recommended that ALA techniques for reference interviews be followed:

- Greet - in a friendly manner
- Assess - make sure question is understood
- Verify - repeat the question
- Locate - find the information
- Close - make sure patron found what was wanted

### **II. Overview of types of service**

Following is a list of typical reference services provided by the reference staff.

#### Item Requests

- When a patron seeks a known title, identify the holding libraries.
- When the item is not readily available, give the patron the option of reserving the item, making an inter-library loan request or going directly to a library that has the item available. If appropriate, the patron should be shown how to place an electronic loan request which will be forwarded to the home library to be processed.
- When a patron wishes to go directly to another library for an item, call that library to make sure the item is available, or strongly advise the patron to call. Phone numbers and directions should be offered. It is helpful to print out a copy of the citation with call number for the patron. Remind the patron to bring along a valid library card.

- If a book is not found in the BCCLS system, the library will attempt to request the item through JerseyCat. There is no guarantee that the requested item will be available. If the item is available, it may take as long as a month to get the item. Occasionally, there is a charge for the loan by the lending library. This does not happen often; however, the patron must agree to pay a charge of up to \$10 before the request is made.
- When a patron has a partial or erroneous citation, the librarian should make a reasonable effort to verify the citation with applicable tools such as the BCCLS database or other appropriate catalogs.

#### Ready Reference

- When a patron asks a question of a common “ready reference” nature (easily located within 5 to 10 minutes), identify the proper source in the library and report the information to the patron. As appropriate, common BCCLS databases and the Internet should be used to guide a patron to materials and information. Remind the patron to return for additional assistance if needed.

#### Telephone Reference

- This service is available during regular library hours for providing brief answers to questions. The reference staff gives priority to in-person requests over telephone requests. When staff is unable to respond to a reference call, the staff is requested to take messages and return calls after patrons who are actually in the library have been helped. If a user comes to the desk while a telephone inquiry is in progress, the person’s presence will be acknowledged and the phone conversation concluded as quickly as possible.

#### Requests for medical, legal and financial information

- Reference staff will provide information but not advice on these topics. Definitions and descriptions can be given from published sources but will not be interpreted by the librarian. Since timely information in these areas can be crucial, patrons should be advised to consult professionals in a given area rather than rely on print sources exclusively.

#### Instruction

- Patrons should be aided in the use of print materials and common BCCLS databases including the full text periodicals and newspaper citations.

### **III. Reference service does not include**

- checking a long list of citations
- compiling bibliographies
- checking indexes and bibliographies
- or completing assignments

Requests for extensive research

- If a patron's research needs require extensive investigation, a fee-based service is available at Newark Public Library where specialists will supply the information needed. This service for in-depth research is also obtainable at The New York Public Library for a fee.

---

This policy is determined by the Library Board of Trustees and is subject to periodic review and/or revision at the discretion of the Board. Appeals may be submitted to the Board in writing.

Adopted by the Rutherford Public Library Board of Trustees: June 14, 2005