

Oskaloosa Public Library		Reference & Information Services	
Policy:			
Adopted:	March 2002	Last Affirmation:	December 2005

The Oskaloosa Public Library Board of Trustees believes that the Library is a vital resource for meeting educational and information needs within the community. Therefore, the Library:

- Assists all individuals, regardless of age, need or background in obtaining the information they request for personal or professional use.
- Selects and maintains a reference collection suitable to the changing needs of the community in appropriate print, online, and Internet formats.
- Assists patrons in using the online catalog and instructs users in simple research strategies that can be employed independent of Library staff.
- Gathers, creates, and familiarizes patrons with resources in the Oskaloosa Local History and Genealogy collections.
- Increases awareness within the community of the reference resources and the services available through the Library.
- Facilitates information requests that cannot be answered within the scope of our resources through referrals to appropriate agencies or libraries.
- Requests items not found in our collection for patrons through the Interlibrary Loan process and handles similar requests from other libraries.

Service Goals

- To treat patrons of any age or circumstance and their questions with respect, courtesy, and sensitivity to their particular needs.
- To conduct a confidential and tactful reference interview.
- To provide accurate and authoritative information in a timely fashion.
- To cite the source of the information given.
- To promote physical and intellectual ease and comfort in utilizing Library resources through approachable, courteous, and sensitive staff.
- To offer reference service by trained staff all hours the Library is open.
- To offer instruction in using reference sources.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, a reference transaction is defined as "an information contact which involves the knowledge, use, recommendation, interpretation, or instruction in the use of one or more information sources by the member of the library staff."

The reference transaction consists of these three major facets:

1. Verification of the question
2. Location of appropriate information or answers
3. Citation of the source.

Statement of Confidentiality

It is the policy of the Oskaloosa Public Library to regard as confidential the information sought or received, and materials consulted by library patrons. All library employees are advised that such

information is not to be made available to any other private individual or group, or to any agency of federal, state, or local government except pursuant to an order issued by a court upon finding that the disclosure of such information is necessary to protect the public safety or to prosecute a crime. The only legal way that an agency can obtain such information is through a court order or subpoena. Any staff member from whom such information is requested should refer the persons making the request to the Director or senior staff person on duty.

Priorities

The library responds to all requests for reference and information services according to the following priorities:

1. Individuals present
2. Telephone calls
3. Requests in writing, by fax, or received electronically.
4. Requests received through Southeastern Library Services mail list.

Specifications

The Oskaloosa Public Library attempts to answer all questions that are received. Specific policies are needed to clarify and/or specify the level of service that will be provided in various situations.

- Consumer information is given but limited to general ratings in the consumer magazines or electronic sources.
- General assistance with the resources of the genealogy collection is provided; however, genealogical research is not conducted for patrons (e.g. searching microfilm for obituaries). These services are performed by a library volunteer or referred to the KeoMah Genealogical Society.
- Students will receive the same level of service provided to other patrons.
- Assistance in locating mathematical or scientific formulas is provided by staff, but staff does not attempt to solve problems or equations for patrons.
- The decision of what information sources to check and the length of time spent on a question rests on the professional expertise of the Reference staff. Homework, trivia questions, and contests are handled according to the same guidelines governing other requests.
- While all efforts are made to provide authoritative collections and information, the Library does not take responsibility for the accuracy of information as found in its resources or presented by its staff.

Limitations of Service

Requests for information on subjects which are outside the scope of materials collected by the library or outside the scope of the training and education of the library staff are referred to other libraries or agencies. The library does NOT provide:

- Estimates or appraisals of value (limited to short answers from the Automotive Blue Books, etc.)
- Opinions or consultations regarding taxes, medicine or law (will be limited to the short factual answers from sources, but no interpretation will be given and the source will be cited).
- Patent, trademark, or copyright searches.
- Genealogical research in the form of tracing the family history of an individual.
- Instructions in the use of computer programs.
- Extended research to individual patrons.