

## REFERENCE POLICY

### PURPOSE

Reference is a major service of the Elmhurst Public Library, and Library staff will make every effort to ensure that patrons are aware of this service and receive assistance in meeting their informational needs. The following policy is designed to ensure that Elmhurst patrons (Elmhurst residents, persons with EPL cards or persons with reciprocal borrowing cards with an EPL Business Sticker) receive the highest possible level of accurate, efficient, and user-friendly service. Limited reference service will be provided to individuals from other communities as outlined at the end of this policy.

### SERVICE TO ELMHURST PATRONS

#### I. Availability of service

Reference service will be provided on an equitable basis by professionally trained, Library staff to all Elmhurst patrons regardless of age during all hours that the Library is open. The entire collection will be available for reference purposes to patrons of all ages. All requests for information will be handled impartially and with confidentiality. Library staff will strive to provide service in a manner that preserves the privacy of the patron.

During hours when the Library is closed, access to a cooperative ready-reference service will be provided through a link on the website.

Reference service will be provided in response to all forms of inquiry, including in-person, electronic, telephone, fax and mail. In general, if telephone or chat transactions cannot be completed within five minutes, a patron will be contacted later with the desired information. Under normal circumstances, a response or status report will be provided within 24 hours.

Due to time constraints and the difficulty of accurately communicating large amounts of data, only a limited amount of directory, stock price, or statistical information will be provided by telephone. However, a reasonable amount of reference information will be mailed, emailed, or faxed to patrons upon request. Individuals requesting large amounts of information or assistance with research projects will be asked to come to the Library.

#### II. Service priorities

In-person requests will take precedence over other requests to the extent that they can be answered while the patron is waiting. There is no set limit to the amount of time that may

## Reference Policy

### Page 2

be spent on a reference question; the librarian will decide when all reasonable sources have been exhausted. When other patrons are waiting, staff will generally defer complex questions to a less busy time. Patrons will then be notified of the outcome of the search. Questions requiring further research will not be accepted without the patron's name and contact information.

### **III. Sources and types of information provided**

Reference staff will use all available sources of information to answer questions subject to policy limitations. This includes, but is not limited to, books, magazines, electronic databases, the Internet, government agencies, associations, and personal acquaintances. Long-distance telephone calls and/or email may be used to answer questions. Citations to sources of information will be given when questions are answered.

The librarian's personal opinion will never be given as fact. While the librarian will provide sources of information, information will not be interpreted and the librarian will not offer legal, medical, or tax advice. When the requested information is not readily available through Library sources, patrons may be referred to another organization with subject-specific expertise.

Staff will guide people doing extensive research or compiling large amounts of information to appropriate sources. Post-secondary students will be directed to their college or university library when EPL resources are insufficient. When a patron requests a book which is not on the shelf or not in the Library's collection, staff will offer to obtain the material. (NOTE: Patrons will be encouraged to obtain materials directly from Elmhurst College if available at that location. Elmhurst College students will be referred to the Elmhurst College Library for interlibrary loans of academic material.) If the material is needed immediately, staff will try to locate it in another library and have it held for the patron to pick up. Every reasonable effort will be made to fill each request and answer each question fully and accurately.

### **IV. Homework Assignments (Elementary and Secondary Students)**

In recognition of the Library's vision of providing access to information for work and learning, Reference staff will cooperate with Elmhurst elementary and secondary schools in handling homework assignments. Assignment alerts will be solicited from the schools, and preparations will be made to deal with large assignments. Where appropriate, books will be pulled and placed on in-house reserve to ensure that adequate resources are available for all students. Instruction in the use of library materials will be provided if desired, but in general, homework questions will be treated like all other reference questions. Access to live homework help will be provided through the Library's website.

Reference Policy  
Page 3

## **V. Fees**

Reference service will be provided free of charge except when charges are levied by a supplying agency. The patron will be responsible for these charges. For ILL and photocopy charges, see Circulation Policies 5.4 and 5.4.1.

Up to ten pages of material printed by Librarians while researching a reference question will be provided free of charge; the standard fee for printing will be charged for larger amounts or print-outs of pages specifically requested by the patron.

## **SERVICE TO NON-ELMHURST PATRONS**

As time permits, limited reference service will be available to non-Elmhurst patrons. Remote access to electronic databases is not available to non-Elmhurst patrons due to licensing agreements. Non-residents who visit the Library will be guided in finding resources but will be referred to their local libraries when the information sought is not readily available at the Elmhurst Public Library. Telephone callers will be referred to their local libraries if the information requested cannot be provided quickly. Printed information will be mailed only in the case of requests from outside the Chicago metropolitan area for information pertaining to Elmhurst which is unavailable elsewhere.

## **PERIODIC REVIEW**

This reference service plan will be reviewed every two years by the adult and kids' reference staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees, although changes may be made as the need arises. The quality of reference service will be evaluated periodically by Library staff.

The Library's written reference policies will be made available to the public on the Library's web site and in print on request.