

REFERENCE SERVICES POLICY

Purpose

Kendall Young Library is committed to providing friendly, knowledgeable, and personalized reference assistance that connects patrons with information, resources, and services that support lifelong learning and informed decision-making. This policy serves as a guide for delivering consistent and high-quality reference service in an evolving information environment.

General Practices

- Providing responsive, courteous, and professional patron assistance is a primary responsibility of staff assigned to reference service area.
- Library staff will respect patron confidentiality and privacy in accordance with Iowa law and the Library's confidentiality policies.
- Reference service is provided equitably to all patrons regardless of age, background, identity, ability, or viewpoint.
- Staff will clarify requests and ask questions as needed to provide accurate and effective assistance.
- Because reference questions vary in complexity, the amount of time devoted to each request will be determined by staff based on the nature of the inquiry, overall service demands, and staffing levels.
- Staff will encourage independent learning by helping patrons develop skills to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.
- Reference assistance may be provided in person, by telephone, email, online forms, or other communication methods offered by the library.
- Staff providing reference service are encouraged to maintain familiarity with:
 - Readers' advisory resources
 - Community organizations, agencies, and local services
 - Library technologies, databases, and commonly used devices and digital resources
- When a request falls beyond the scope of available library resources or staff expertise, staff may:
 - Refer patrons to other libraries, agencies, organizations, or authoritative resources
 - Recommend or facilitate Interlibrary Loan services in accordance with library policy

Specific Practices

The following sections address categories of reference questions that may require additional clarification or limitations of service.

Technology Assistance

Library staff will assist patrons with the use of library technology, digital resources, and public equipment to the best of their ability while balancing overall service demands.

Staff may provide basic guidance and instruction but cannot:

- Type or enter personal information for patrons
- Troubleshoot or repair personal devices beyond basic assistance accessing library resources
- Perform tasks on behalf of patrons
- Assist with activities that are known or suspected to be illegal

Staff may limit technology assistance based on staffing levels, time constraints, and demand for service.

Medical, Legal, Tax, and Financial Information

Library staff may assist patrons in locating information and resources related to medical, legal, tax, consumer, or financial topics. However, staff may not:

- Interpret or evaluate information
- Recommend specific actions or decisions
- Provide legal, medical, tax, or financial advice
- Act in place of a licensed professional

Staff may advise patrons to consult an appropriate qualified professional for authoritative guidance.

Homework

Homework assignments are intended to help students develop skills in locating, evaluating, and using information effectively. Library staff will support this learning process by providing guidance in the use of library resources, research tools, and search strategies rather than simply supplying answers.

Students with lengthy or complex assignments may be encouraged to visit the library for additional assistance or use online homework and research resources available through the library's website.

Genealogy

The library provides limited assistance with genealogy and local history research as staff time permits. Obituary and newspaper article searches may be conducted for patrons seeking family

or local history information. Requests must include sufficient information, including a full name and the approximate month and year of death or publication.

Extensive or time-intensive requests may be referred to local historical organizations, genealogical societies, or other libraries as appropriate.

Financial Appraisals of Art and Collectibles

Library staff may assist patrons by directing them to published or online price guides and other informational resources related to art, antiques, and collectibles. Staff may also refer patrons to qualified appraisal professionals or appropriate community resources. Library staff do not provide financial appraisals or determine the monetary value of items.

Patron Conduct

Reference interactions are expected to comply with the Library's Patron Conduct Policy. The Library reserves the right to discontinue reference service if a patron's behavior is disruptive, abusive, threatening, or otherwise violates library policies.

Approved by the Kendall Young Library Board of Trustees: December 14, 1999

Amended: September 13, 2005; September 9, 2008; September 18, 2023; June 15, 2026