

Reference & Reader's Advisory Policy

Adopted by the Board of Trustees, June 8, 2011

In order to provide access to ideas and material that support the cultural, educational, and recreational enrichment of the community, The Pittsburg Public Library provides ready reference and readers' advisory service. This information service is provided by trained staff during all hours the library is open.

Library staff identifies a person's information need and fulfills it accurately, efficiently and pleasantly, using the resources available in the library, and including referral to resources in other libraries or agencies, if necessary. Staff also provides instruction in library use upon request.

Staff replies to all requests for information from patrons in person, by phone, fax, mail, and e-mail. All requests for assistance are provided on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to people within the library.

Staff does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, sexual preference, disability, or appearance in the provision of information services.

The informational needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and treated with utmost respect and confidentiality.

Information, particularly in the subject areas of law, medicine, consumer information, and personal finance/tax information, is presented without interpretation, advice, or personal recommendation.

Providing advice and suggestions for recreational reading is an essential service in a public library. Each patron's reading tastes will be taken seriously and without judgment. However, when performing Reader's Advisory services, personal interpretation and recommendation are unavoidable.

Staff sets reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patron requests for information. For complex questions they provide professional assistance, direction and library instruction, so that patrons can conduct the actual research themselves.

Service is provided in a manner consistent with the Library Bill of Rights, the American Library Association Code of Ethics, and copyright law.

Procedures:

- If you cannot answer a simple request for information fully, attempt to give the patron additional contacts for assistance.
- Consider urgency, complexity, and availability of staff resources when dealing with simultaneous requests. If the answer cannot be given immediately, obtain contact information and respond as soon as possible.
- Each patron may receive up to five free copies from reference or online sources.

Guidelines:

- While on desk duty, service to the public takes precedence over any other duties, and service to the patron in the library takes precedence over telephone inquiries.
- Wear your name tag when on duty.
- Greet each patron. If busy with another patron, acknowledge waiting patrons and explain that you will help them as soon as you are able.
- It is not sufficient for 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.
- Maintain friendly contact with library users without engaging in lengthy conversations. If it is hard to break away, explain that you enjoy talking but you need to get back to work.
- Keep your voice low so it doesn't disturb library users.
- Keep conversation with other staff members to a minimum. Always give your attention to patron needs.
- Avoid extended phone calls while you are working at the desk. Even though the call is library-related, it means you are not available to library users. If you receive a call, ask if you can call back or ask someone to cover for you and go to a non-public area.
- Limit personal phone calls when working at a service desk.
- Avoid pointing. Escort the patron to the appropriate area.

- Conduct transactions in a helpful, pleasant tone of voice. Keep any impatience, annoyance, or implication of ignorance from your voice. Do not reprimand or scold patrons.
- Use plain language when speaking to patrons. Avoid using library and computer jargon. (Even common terms, like “ILL”, mean nothing to many patrons.)
- Readers’ Advisory suggestions are available in the flyer stand south of the reference collection. Similar lists can also be printed from online sources.