

Hamburg Public Library

Reference Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the goals of reference services provided by the Hamburg Public Library and to establish guidelines for delivering these services to patrons.

II. Goals of reference service

- A. Assist library patrons by providing information, materials or reader's advisory services.
- B. Guide patrons in using the library's resources and developing effective research strategies.
- C. Fulfill requests using available materials in the library whenever possible.
- D. Provide timely referrals and effective follow-ups for questions that cannot be answered with on-site resources.

III. Reference Services

- A. Basic reference assistance is available during all hours the library is open to the public.
- B. Generally, reference services are limited to inquiries that can be answered within five to ten minutes. More complex or time-intensive requests will be handled individually at the discretion of the Library Director.
- C. If the library lacks the necessary resources to answer an inquiry, staff will direct patrons to the District Library Center (Reading Public Library) or recommend alternative sources where the information may be obtained.
- D. When providing reference assistance, staff will always cite the source of the information and, when relevant, include the publication date. Staff will strive to use the most scholarly and authoritative sources available. The producers of these resources, not the library, are responsible for the accuracy of the information.
- E. Whenever feasible, staff will promote information literacy by teaching patrons how to search for information independently.
- F. Staff will assist patrons with computer applications and electronic devices as they are able and may refer them to books, online tutorials, or classes for further assistance. However, staff will not enter personal information for patrons.
- G. Staff will provide their professional judgment when recommending the best sources to answer a question or when offering reader's advisory services. However, staff will not offer personal opinions, advice, or interpretations beyond their training and expertise.

IV. Requests for Medical, Financial, Tax, and Legal Information

- A. Staff may provide information from published sources but will refrain from offering advice, recommendations, personal experiences, or opinions. Staff will not interpret the information provided.
- B. Library staff are not physicians, lawyers, financial advisors, or counselors. Patrons are encouraged to consult with qualified professionals in these fields rather than rely solely on the library's resources.

V. Reference Collection

- A. **Scope** - The Hamburg Public Library maintains a collection of reference materials to support patrons' information needs. The District Library Center (Reading Public Library) serves as an additional resource by supplying materials through
- B. **Priorities and Limitations** - In accordance with its Collection Development Policy, the Hamburg Public Library acquires reference materials that support the needs and interests of the general public. The library does not purchase highly technical, business-specific, or scholarly reference materials, though some may be obtained through interlibrary loan.
- C. **Collection Management** - The Hamburg Public Library is committed to developing and maintaining its reference collection based on the criteria outlined in the Collection Development Policy. The reference collection is non-circulating, except at the discretion of the Library Director.

Approved by the Board of Trustees September 13, 2011

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