

Policy: Reference

Board motion number: 54:21, June 12, 2021 Chair's signature: _____

Responsibility for reference service

All public service staff of the Bonnechere Union Public Library should receive training in offering subject assistance to library patrons before taking sole responsibility for handling the circulation desk. All staff may attempt to answer questions and requests for information from any library patron, regardless of age. Patrons will be helped to find sources of information to find the answers to their questions. Library staff may have no particular expertise in subjects or topics that patrons may need to address, on the other hand staff are trained to use various types of resources to find answers to a large variety of questions.

Type of service offered

Library staff will attempt to help patrons find access to resources that will answer questions as fully as possible, but must keep in mind the needs of all patrons using the library. If a question proves to be very time-consuming (requiring more than 15 minutes to answer), the library patron may have to be contacted later with the answer. A possible time-frame for answering the question should be provided to the patron.

In the course of reference duty, a staff member may be asked to provide sources of information related to medical, legal, census, or tax topics. Library staff will do so readily but must not offer any interpretation of the information gleaned from these sources.

Telephone, fax, email and social media requests

Requests received by telephone, fax, email, social media or in writing are treated as all other requests, but if the library is busy, priority will be given to the needs of patrons who have come into the library. Telephone questions will be answered when time permits. The patron will need to be called back on the principle of first come, first served, giving a

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realistic expectation of how long it might take to address the question. Email and social media requests will be responded to within a three-day period (approximately).

Development of the reference collection

The CEO is responsible for developing and maintaining the reference collection appropriate to the needs of the community. The CEO may delegate tasks to other staff members, as appropriate. Please refer to the collection policy of the Bonnechere Union Public Library.

Unanswered questions

Questions for which no answer or material has been found in the Bonnechere Union Public Library collection, or on the internet, will be referred to the appropriate agency by the library staff (if such an agency is known), or will become an interlibrary loan request.

If time permits, staff may contact the agency for the patron. If time does not allow this, the name of the organization, as well as information allowing the patrons to directly contact the agency will be supplied, if possible.

Reference statistics

Accurate statistics regarding service to patrons should be recorded.

Circulation of reference material

Reference questions may be answered using the entire collection of the library. However, some material will be designated for use in the library only. Such material normally does not circulate. In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the senior staff member on duty, a special one- or two-day loan may be granted.