SSCHPL
Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library

Reference Service Policy

The Steger-South Chicago Heights Library District serves a diverse public with unique individual needs and levels of ability to conduct research independently. The goal of reference service at Steger-South Chicago Heights Library is to assist patrons in using the resources of the library and to correctly answer questions submitted to the library. At times of peak activity within the library, it is mandatory that rules for providing reference assistance be established. The most recent standards document, Serving Our Public: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries, provides the model for this reference policy.

Reference service and materials are available to all persons who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the library regardless of the age, race, sex, social, or economic status of the patron. Reference service and materials are available during all hours the library is open and are provided in response to all forms of inquiry including but not limited to patrons in the library, the telephone, fax, and email. Reference service requested in-person is given first priority; telephone, fax, email and Internet requests will be handled in the subsequent order. Patrons with in-depth or research questions may be asked to come to the library instead of handling the question over the telephone, or the staff will return the call within 24 hours. All requests for information receive an answer or status report within one working day. The source of the information will always be given along with the answer. No personal opinions, advice, or recommendations will be offered except in the provision of readers' advisory service.

In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. The staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff define the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select income tax forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above. If all materials within the library are beyond the understanding of the patron, the patron will be advised to consult with their professional from the above listed fields for additional information or advice.

Other instances in which reference service is limited include answers to puzzles or contests. The staff will assist patrons in their search for information, but will not answer questions for them. The staff will not proctor exams nor will they conduct genealogical research on behalf of the patrons, but will direct them to resources found within the collection. The staff cannot give financial appraisals for collectibles and the staff cannot translate materials for patrons, but will help them locate materials for the translation.

The Board of Trustees and library director of SSCH Library District encourage staff of all levels to pursue continuing education opportunities which will enable them to better meet the needs of the library's patrons. All staff members receive in-house training regarding appropriate responses to patron questions, including reference questions. This training includes reference interviewing

techniques, reader's advisory service, and bibliographic instruction. Reference questions are treated equally; no value is established as to the reason for the question or the intended use of the information. The staff will answer reference questions regardless of their personal beliefs; all questions will be handled impartially and with no personal biases. Names of users and the transactions, which occur between users and the staff, are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context.

Reference materials regardless of format may not be removed from the library.

STAFF

The reference staff shall have the knowledge to meet the information needs of the patrons of the Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library. The staff will be familiar and competent with various sources and technologies used in the library.

Continuing education is fundamental to the professional growth and development of the reference staff and the library will encourage and support these efforts on behalf of its staff.

The reference staff has read and understands the policy as outlined in this document.

EVALUATION

The Reference Service Policy of the library will be evaluated every three years by the staff, administration and the Board of Trustees.

There will be a regular evaluation of the reference service and resources of the Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library at least every three years by the library's reference staff.

Adopted: June 2009
Reviewed: September 2015
Revised: October 2021
Reviewed: October 2023