

Purpose

- To explain the Reference Section's tasks and duties.
- To describe the core skills and competencies of the reference staff.
- To state the professional, ethical and behavioral standards of reference service.
- To outline parameters of reference service to insure consistency and clarity.

Reference Services

- Answering questions from the public which may range from simple and routine to difficult and complex.
- Assisting the public with the library's catalog, databases, computers, and printing system.
- Maintaining a collection of accurate and accessible books, audiovisual, and digital resources.
- Requesting books and articles from libraries outside Pinellas County according to the terms of the library's [Interlibrary Loan Policy](#).

Standards of Service

All patrons will receive respectful and courteous attention. Questions will be answered using the best available source. Every reasonable effort will be made to answer the patron's question to his or her satisfaction, keeping in mind that staffing limits may not always allow a single patron to monopolize a staff member's time when other patrons are waiting for help.

Service Limits

Reference staff does not provide the following services:

- Actually doing the patron's research.
- Typing or otherwise preparing the patron's documents.
- Proofreading or otherwise correcting the patron's work.
- Performing calculations or translations, unless the matter can be handled briefly and is within the staff member's own knowledge.
- Providing medical, legal or financial advice or services.
- Engaging in psychological or vocational counseling.
- Appraising or evaluating used books, manuscripts, paintings, artwork, antiques, or collectibles.
- Preparing tax forms or answering tax questions, apart from helping patrons locating requested forms.
- Giving in-depth computer instruction. By this is meant teaching patrons basic computer operations and skills or assisting them in technical problems with their personal computer equipment. Patrons desiring basic computer training will be referred to St. Petersburg College's Life Long Learning Program, other appropriate agencies, or qualified individuals. Reference staff will assist patrons with specific questions about computer applications, if they are within the scope of the staff member's knowledge.
- Accessing or providing information that requires staff to login to social media services or other online services requiring a member account.

Legal & Ethical Constraints

Although professional ethics require that all patrons are treated in a respectful non-judgmental manner, library staff are not obliged to assist patrons in what they may reasonably believe to be unlawful activities, or which may violate the policies of the Seminole Community Library, the City of Seminole, or St. Petersburg College.

Library Service Area and Distant Inquiries

As an institution supported mainly by local taxes, the library primarily serves residents of the City of Seminole, the Greater Seminole Area, Pinellas County, the students, faculty, and staff of St. Petersburg College and its partner institutions. Occasionally, reference staff receives questions from outside our normal service area. Staff will respond to these as time and resources allow.

Amendment approved by Library Advisory Board, January 24, 2011

Amendment approved by Library Advisory Board, 21 September 2015

Amendment approved by Library Advisory Board, 27 March 2017