REFERENCE AND READER'S ADVISORY POLICY

PURPOSE

The library provides free reference and reader's advisory services to help people find information and use library and other information resources. Library staff uses library collections and online resources as well as sources beyond the library to fulfill informational needs.

POLICY

1. Reference and reader's advisory is provided in both the adult and children's sections with services available for people of all ages.

2. Staff replies to all requests for information in a prompt and timely way. Requests are accepted in person, via phone, mail or digitally. Priority is given to in-person inquiries. When not completed immediately, questions will be answered or referred within 24 hours.

3. Reference and reader's advisory questions are considered confidential. Staff will handle inquiries with a focus on privacy, professionalism and courtesy.

4. Patrons using reference and reader's advisory services will be served equally in accordance with existing City of Appleton policies.

5. Reference service is provided by trained staff during all hours the library is open. Reference staff will attempt to answer questions at the time the request is made and to work within the patron's time constraints. More complex questions may require that patrons participate in finding needed information with staff providing guidance and assistance. Reading and interpreting the information is the patron's responsibility.

6. When answering patron questions, reference staff will cite the resource(s) being used. The producers of that resource, not the library itself, are responsible for the resource's accuracy.

7. Staff may assist as they are able in helping patrons with computer applications or electronic reading/listening devices and may refer patrons to appropriate books, online tutorials and guides, classes or IT staff for further assistance. When assisting patrons with computer resources, staff will not enter personal information for patrons.

8. Staff will not provide the following kinds of assistance, which are deemed to be beyond the scope of the library's service responsibilities:

    a. Interpretation, advice or personal recommendations in any area other than the use of library resources. This includes, but is not limited to, legal, medical, financial or tax advice.
    b. Critiquing or editing patron documents, including resumes for job seekers.

c. Completing forms, including online forms, for patrons.
d. Price quotes, online purchasing and contacting commercial outlets or public agencies for a patron is not permitted. Reference staff may provide contact information and inquire if an agency offers a service.
e. Solving or troubleshooting problems with a patron's personal computer or device beyond finding relevant instructions for patrons.
f. Proctoring exams for students.

9. One-on-one assistance may be available to work with staff on individual information needs. Staff instructional sessions include, but are not limited to, using databases, basic Internet, and specific electronic devices. Staff reserve the right to schedule appointments as time permits.

10. Reference materials are circulated only under special circumstances and are subject to the approval of staff. Reference materials are loaned for the shortest possible time.

11. Reference and reader's advisory services comply with copyright and other applicable restrictions in the use of library materials.

12. Staff will make efforts to respond within the format that the patron prefers; however the library reserves the right to respond in a different format.

13. The library reserves the right to limit the number of questions or amount of time a staff member can spend helping individual patrons. Monopolizing the time of staff or otherwise interfering with staff members' performance of duties is not allowed and may be subject to restrictions up to and including permanent restriction from the library and criminal charges in accord with the library's Security and Safety Policy.

14. The library adopts and adheres to the American Library Association Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights.

Adopted: 1/ 1998. Amended: 11/17.