

REFERENCE POLICY

PURPOSE

The following policy is designed to ensure that Elmhurst patrons (persons with EPL cards, people with access to an Elmhurst Business Library Card, Elmhurst residents, or persons with EPL Workperks) receive the highest possible level of accurate, efficient, and user-friendly service. Limited reference service will be provided to individuals from other communities.

SERVICE TO ELMHURST PATRONS

I. Availability of service

Reference service will be provided on an equitable basis by trained, Elmhurst Public Library staff to all Elmhurst patrons. Library staff will strive to provide service in a manner that preserves the privacy of the patron.

Reference service will be provided in response to all forms of inquiry. In general, if transactions cannot be completed within five minutes, a patron will be contacted later with the desired information. Typically, a response or status report will be provided within 24 hours.

Due to time constraints and the difficulty of accurately communicating large amounts of data, only a limited amount of information will be provided by Library staff over the phone. Individuals requesting large amounts of information or assistance with research projects may be asked to come to the Library or be instructed on how to locate the information themselves.

II. Service priorities

In-person requests will take precedence over other requests to the extent that they can be answered while the patron is waiting. There is no set limit to the amount of time that may be spent on a reference question; the librarian will decide when all reasonable sources have been exhausted. When other patrons are waiting, staff will generally defer complex questions to a less busy time. Questions requiring further research will not be accepted without the patron's name and contact information.

III. Sources and types of information provided

Reference staff can use available sources of information within reason to answer questions subject to policy limitations. Long-distance telephone calls and/or email may be used to answer questions. Citations to sources of information will be given when questions are answered.

The librarian's personal opinion will never be given as fact. While the librarian will provide sources of information, information will not be interpreted and the librarian will not offer legal, medical, or tax advice. When the requested information is not readily available through Library sources, patrons may be referred to another organization with subject-specific expertise.

Staff will guide people doing extensive research or compiling large amounts of information to appropriate sources. Post-secondary students will be directed to their college or university library when EPL resources are insufficient. When a patron requests an item which is not on the shelf or not in the Library's collection, staff will assist the patron in obtaining the material.

IV. Homework Assignments (Elementary and Secondary Students)

Library staff will cooperate with Elmhurst elementary and secondary schools in handling homework assignments. Assignment alerts will be solicited from the schools, and preparations will be made to deal with large assignments. Where appropriate, materials will be pulled and placed on in-house reserve to ensure that adequate resources are available for all students. Instruction in the use of library materials will be provided if desired, but in general, homework questions will be treated like all other reference questions.

V. Fees

Reference service will be provided free of charge except when charges are levied by a supplying agency. The patron will be responsible for these charges. For information about ILL and photocopy services, see Circulation Policy 5.4.

Patrons specifically asking staff to print material (articles, tax forms, recipes, etc.) will be charged the standard fee for printing per page. Staff may print some material for patrons free of charge while researching a reference question. Typically, if more than 10 pages are printed during the course of a question, staff will start charging for printing.

SERVICE TO NON-ELMHURST PATRONS

As time permits, limited reference service will be available to non-Elmhurst patrons. Non-residents who visit the Library will be guided in finding resources but will be referred to their local libraries when the information sought is not readily available at the Elmhurst Public Library. Patrons contacting the Library remotely will be referred to their local libraries if the information requested cannot be provided quickly. Elmhurst information, which is unavailable elsewhere, will be emailed or mailed only in the case of requests from outside the Chicago metropolitan area.