

HARLINGEN PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENCE SERVICE POLICY

DOCUMENTATION INFORMATION:

Proposed by Laura Salas - Tobia, Reference Librarian 04/11/94.

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REFERENCE DEPARTMENT SERVICE STATEMENT

The Harlingen Public Library recognizes three specific goals for reference service.

- (1) To determine the patron's information needs through the reference interview process.
- (2) To provide accurate and timely answers to information requests with reputable resources;
- (3) To provide quick referral and effective follow-through on questions that cannot be answered at this Library.
- (4) To keep the community well-informed about the reference services and resources available from the Library.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

The staff of the Harlingen Public Library handles all inquiries with in a courteous and efficient manner. Information requests are confidential and are not made available to others except as required by law. A reference services user is not required to hold a Harlingen Public Library card to use the reference collection and to access specific services (i.e., self-serve copiers) inside the library facility. A card is required to use online resources, computers, and to check out material.

Sec. 1 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE SERVICE

- (1) **SCOPE OF SERVICE**
The Harlingen Public Library provides reference services within the scope of the print and non-print library collection, staff expertise, and electronic information resources, including those available on the Internet.
- (2) **LIBRARY USERS**
Reference Services are available regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, or disability.
- (3) **AVAILABILITY**
Reference service is available during regular hours of operation to the public.

(4) **PRIORITIES OF SERVICE**

Information requests are accepted in person, by mail, voicemail, or by electronic communications. Requests are handled in order of their arrival. Simultaneous requests will be managed at the staff's discretion with regard to urgency and complexity of the question and the availability of staff resources. An interim response will be provided to the patron if a remote request cannot be responded to within a day's time.

(5) **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Staff members base responses on information obtained from reputable sources and avoid personal opinions, philosophy, or evaluation to ensure the most accurate and authoritative answers possible. Citations will be provided upon request.

(6) **INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORIENTATION SERVICES**

Instructional and orientation services in library use are an integral part of library service. Library staff may provide basic instruction on how to use the online catalog, electronic databases and, print and non-print reference tools. Patrons may request a Library Tour by contacting the Reference Department at least 30 days in advance.

(7) **REFERRALS**

Referrals will be made to other sources or other libraries if an information request cannot be answered from on-site materials.

Sec. 2 SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE SERVICE

(1) **TELEPHONE, VOICE-MAIL, AND E-MAIL REQUESTS**

Telephone reference service should be used for short, factual information questions which do not require extensive research on the part of staff members. Staff members will use their judgment in deciding how lengthy a response can be conveyed over the telephone. Patrons will be encouraged to come to the Library if the answer to a telephone request is too complex to be related over the phone. Reference service requests made by e-mail or voice-mail will be responded to within 24 hours.

(2) **LOAN OF REFERENCE MATERIALS**

Ready-reference material may be loaned out for one week intervals. Longer extensions can be authorized by the Reference Librarian or any Manager on Duty.

(3) **HOLDS**

(Any library item currently checked out to be held for the next patron)

Patrons may put their name on a hold list for library materials that are checked out. The patron will be notified by text, email, or phone call, depending on patron preferences when the requested library material arrives for the patron. Holds printed out with no preference will be called the same day as the processing date. The next requesting patron will be notified if holds are not picked up within 3 days.

(4) INTER-LIBRARY LOAN (ILL)

Interlibrary Loans, hereafter referred to as ILLs, are materials both requested and loaned via shipment between separate libraries.

AVAILABLE MATERIALS

Only items that are not available through the library catalog may be requested through ILL.

Books, audiobooks, CDs, DVDs and VHS tapes may be borrowed through ILL.

Magazines, journals, or other periodical articles, dissertations, or microfilm cannot be obtained. We do not request photocopies through ILL.

Many libraries do not participate in ILL, and even those that do may choose to withhold some items from ILL.

ELIGIBLE BORROWERS

Library card holders with fines of less than \$5.00 and no overdue materials may borrow materials using ILL.

Patrons may request up to 15 items.

LOAN PERIOD & OTHER RESTRICTIONS

Lending libraries set the loan period, which can vary from 1-6 weeks. Some libraries restrict certain materials to use inside the library only. Restrictions set by the lending library may not be overruled by either staff or circulation policies of the Harlingen Public Library.

RENEWALS

ILL materials may be renewed if the lending library approves the request. The library asks patrons to call ahead 3-4 business days to inquire about renewal options. A title may be requested again after it has been returned, but it may not come from the same library.

CHARGES

In most cases, ILL service is free because we try to obtain materials from libraries that lend free of charge. However, if materials can only be obtained from libraries that do charge, ILL staff will notify patrons before borrowing the material.

For overdue items, standard overdue charges apply.

For lost or damaged items, patrons will pay any charge required by the lending library in addition to the Harlingen Public Library's fines of \$5.00.

REQUESTS

Requests may be submitted in person, by printing out a request form (Appendix B) from the library website, by phone or by placing a request through the library catalog.

ILL materials generally arrive within 2-6 weeks, depending on the lending library.

Materials requested must be picked up and returned to the Periodicals department located on the second floor of the library.

When requested items arrive, patrons will be notified by email or telephone, depending on the preference set while filling out a request. Items will be held at the Periodicals desk until due back at the lending library. Items not picked up within the allotted time will be returned.

Materials must be returned to the Harlingen Public Library. No other library-even the library that lends the material-may be used.

Sec. 3 GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC REFERENCE QUESTIONS

(1) CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Reference staff provides information from published analysis. Staff does not provide personal critical analysis, interpretations, or judgment regarding the merit of literary or other works, including the patron's own writing efforts.

(2) STOCK, BOND, AND/OR MUTUAL FUND INFORMATION

Patrons interested in stock, bond and/or mutual fund information will be referred to reputable online resources. No market quotations will be given over the telephone. Similarly, reference staff will not give investment recommendations or opinions.

(3) GENEALOGICAL QUESTIONS

Staff will provide general assistance in genealogical research, such as guidance in locating items in the collection and help in obtaining resources through Inter-Library Loan. Staff does not engage in actual genealogical research for patrons. Patrons may be referred to the Tip-of-Texas Genealogical Society members, when available, for help with genealogical research. Genealogical inquiries involving ILL requests from another library may be researched via approval of the Reference Librarian if material is too fragile to transport for checkout purposes. Materials selected may be scanned for information to be sent to requesting ILL libraries at the discretion of the Reference Librarian.

(4) MATHEMATICAL CALCULATIONS

Patrons should do their own mathematical calculations. Reference staff may assist patrons by locating tables and formulas only.

- (5) **MEDICAL, LEGAL, TAX, AND STATISTICAL INFORMATION**
Reference staff does not interpret material of any kind related to these fields. Staff may provide brief definitions and locate reliable, authoritative sources of information. Patrons must interpret collected information on their own.
- (6) **CONSUMER INFORMATION**
Staff will help patrons locate objective consumer product information by means of online resources. Staff cannot offer personal opinions, recommend one product or another, or read consumer information over the telephone.
- (7) **APPRAISALS**
Patrons may be referred to appropriate reference sources. Staff members will not give a personal appraisal regarding the monetary value of any item.
- (8) **SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS**
Homework is intended to be a learning experience for the student. The primary role of the staff is one of guidance in helping the student find the materials or source of information rather than providing answers. The reference staff does not provide tutoring.
- (9) **LOCAL HISTORY SEARCHES**
Patrons wanting certain local history items from the Archive Collection may do so upon conferring with Periodicals staff. Staff will retrieve the items from the Archive Room for the patron. Local history searches that require extensive use of the local history files will be assisted by Staff members or by a local Harlingen historian. Staff will assist patrons when copying certain materials using the public copier machine. Some items may not be copied for reasons such as: copyright infringement, the materials may be damaged by the light emitted during the copying process, or the deterioration of the materials. Patrons may bring pencils, notepads, and lap-tops into the Archives Room. No food or drink is allowed at any time by anyone, including library staff. A staff member will determine if fragile materials may only be used under the supervision of staff, or if access must be denied to avoid damaging the material. Library staff will seek an alternative means of obtaining the needed information in cases when a patron is denied access to original fragile materials.
- (10) **COMPILATIONS AND EXTENSIVE RESEARCH**
Compilations and extensive research will be done for departments of the City of Harlingen. Library staff will assist patrons with instruction in the use of library tools, resources, and research. Library patrons are expected to perform compilations and extensive research themselves.
- (11) **TRANSLATIONS** Translation service will not be provided at this library.

Sec. 4 FAX SERVICE The Harlingen Public Library is pleased to provide for-pay outbound public fax services. The library will not receive incoming faxes for patrons. Operation of the fax machine is limited to library staff.

- The Harlingen Public Library will require a fax transmission cover sheet (Appendix A).
- No International fax transmissions (including Mexico & Canada).
- Fax transmissions may NOT be received.
- Payment must be made at the Circulation Desk via cash, check, or debit/credit before documents may be faxed.
- Due to processing times, fax services will only be available during library hours up until 2 hours prior to close.

FAX FEES

- Local fax:
 - \$1.50 1st page (*library cover sheet*)
 - \$1.00 for each additional sheet
- Long distance:
 - \$2.00 1st page (*library cover sheet*)
 - \$1.50 for each additional sheet

FAX REFUNDS

Refunds for fax services will only be issued after the following:

- Library staff have attempted to send the document three times without success.
- 30 Minutes has elapsed for documents less than 15 pages
or
60 Minutes has elapsed for documents more than 15 pages

Sec. 5 EXAM PROCTORING

The proctoring of examinations is a free service offered by the Harlingen Public Library. The Library will offer proctoring services based on the availability of personnel, facilities and technology.

- The Library requires prior communication between the testing institution and the Proctor to confirm the testing requirements and to verify the credentials of the Proctor. All exams are proctored by a Librarian.
- The Proctor cannot proctor exams that students bring in themselves. All exam information must be received directly from the testing institution.
- Exams must be scheduled with the Proctor a minimum of 7 days in advance. Tests will be scheduled during the Librarian's regular work hours.

- The Proctor is not responsible for calling or notifying the student of the arrival of the exam. The resolution of any problems with the receipt of exams, handling, or instructions are the student's responsibility.
- The student should arrive promptly at the agreed-upon time, prepared with the items required for taking the test. Only items listed in the instructions will be allowed in the test area. The student is responsible for securing personal items before the test begins.
- A valid picture I.D. must be presented immediately prior to the exam.
- Exams must be completed 15 minutes before the library closes.
- The Proctor will enforce any time limits that are placed on the exam, as well as other rules set forth in the examination materials.
- Any perceived violation of the posted rules for the exam will be reported to the educational institution
- Exams not taken by the date on which they were to be completed are either discarded or returned.
- The Library does not guarantee that a quiet study room will be provided. Depending on staffing and room availability, the exam may be given in a public area of the Library.
- The test taker must allow sufficient time to take the examination before the deadline that has been established by the institution.
- Tests offered in a computer format must be compatible with the hardware and software available on the Library workstations. The Library will not proctor online exams that require the installation of special software or the modification of existing computer settings.
- The Library reserves the right to cancel or postpone a proctoring session if any of the following scenarios arise: 1) test materials are not received in time; 2) test materials require clarification; 3) test materials incur any expenses other than postage; 4) test materials otherwise exceed our ability to comply with the testing institution's requirements; and 5) the testing institution prohibits substituting a Proctor in the event of the original Proctor's absence.
- The Library is not responsible for any delayed tests, as well as completed tests once they leave the Library's possession and have been mailed back to the testing institution.
- The Library is not responsible for tests that are interrupted by Library emergencies, power failures, or computer hardware or software failures.