

**Policy: Operational - Information Services**

**Department: Library**

**Effective Date: March 2014**

**Revision Date:**

**Next Year of Review: 2017**

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The Bruce County Public Library's information services link people with resources to fulfil their informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs. This policy describes information services at the library and guides library staff when answering reference questions.

Library staff must support and implement the principles and practices embodied in the current Canadian and Ontario Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom. Any questions asked should be answered non-judgementally, regardless of personal view.

Library staff must be prepared, under the supervision of the CEO, to respond to reference requests from Library customers (see Attachment 1 for a list of the types of reference services which may be offered). Library staff must facilitate access to any or all sources of information which may be of assistance to Library users. Library staff have a responsibility to ensure that information is accurate and up-to-date.

Library staff should always be courteous and polite to their customers. Factors such as age, dress, or race should not influence the service provided. Every customer deserves to be assisted promptly with dignity and respect.

Library staff must protect the privacy of an individual Library user. If an individual or institution inquires information about an individual user, for whatever reason, including what that person has read in the past, the Library personnel has a duty to protect the user's right to privacy. Even a request from a police officer requires a search warrant issued by a court.

1. The staff will assist the customer in finding information and will provide instruction on how to use library resources based upon the customer's needs. Staff provide the following services:

- a) Quick Reference: Questions that require specific factual answers, such as the name of a local MP, are known as "quick reference" and often can be answered immediately using resources kept close to the circulation desk.
- b) In-depth Reference: In-depth reference requires a lengthier search and the use of a number of sources to arrive at a complete answer. The staff will guide and assist the customer pursuing this search while simultaneously providing, as required, instruction in how to search and use Library resources, including electronic resources, to the best advantage.
- c) Location of Material: The staff will help customers to find specific desired items in the Library. If the material is not immediately available, assistance will be given by reserving material. If the

Library does not own the item, assistance will be provided by means of borrowing from another library.

d) Library Orientation: Library staff will provide information on library orientation and instruction to each new individual joining the Library.

e) Instruction: Reference service has an instructional aspect when the Library customer wants to learn how to use Library resources or Library supported resources in order to be able to locate information independently. In these situations, the staff can instruct the customer on the use of reference tools such as an almanac or index; online resources including eBook resources; or how other information in a variety of formats.

f) Referral: Customers may be referred to outside resources, such as community-based organizations, government offices and other libraries, where the information can be found.

g) Electronic, Telephone and Fax Information Questions: Customers initiating enquiries by e-mail, telephone or fax will receive full staff attention. If the staff member is unable to deal with the request immediately, arrangements will be made to provide the information within an agreed-upon time period.

h) Interlibrary Loan Service: It is the policy of the Bruce County Public Library to function as part of an information network within the community, within the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and in cooperation with other library systems across Ontario and Canada. This service is automatically offered by the Library staff whenever the information requested cannot be filled by the resources of the Library and is within the scope of the regional and national international loan code. In return, the Bruce County Public Library shares its resources in accordance with the code, while always retaining top priority in the use of resources for its own customers.

2. The extent of individual service to each person will depend on the number of users needing to be served. The following priorities will apply.

1st priority - requests presented in person

2nd priority - requests presented by telephone/voice mail

3rd priority - requests sent in by mail/fax/e-mail

3. To assess and evaluate information services, and to comply with the requirements of the Annual Survey of Public Libraries, statistics on reference questions will be kept and analysed.

#### **Related Documents**

Bruce County Public Library -Confidentiality and the Protection of Privacy