

# **Elmwood Park Public Library**

## **Reference Service Policy**

The Elmwood Park Public Library is committed to providing excellence in Reference Service. We define excellence in Reference Service as adherence to the following policies:

### **Reference service**

Professional Reference Service consists of aiding Library patrons in locating and securing needed information. Such information may be found in the Library's resources or, if necessary, other resources.

Professional Reference Service is available for all residents of Elmwood Park as well as non-residents. All of the reference collection may be used by patrons of all ages.

For Reference Service, patrons are directed to the appropriate department according to the location of materials available for their specific needs. Staff not directly designated to provide reference service will refer inquiries to a reference librarian or designated reference service provider.

### **Reference staff**

Implementation of this policy is supervised by the Head of Patron Services, Reference service is provided by professional librarians, and other staff trained in accordance with the Standards for Illinois Public Libraries.

A Librarian or trained reference service provider is available to handle reference requests during all hours in which the Library is open.

All staff providing reference service shall receive continuing education on a regular basis. Such training consists of workshops and classes conducted in-house, at other libraries, via webinars, or via other library organizations such as LACONI, ALA, ILA, or RAILS (Reaching Across Illinois Library System).

This reference policy is read and understood by all staff providing reference service.

### **Scope of service**

Reference Service is provided for all in-library and telephone requests as well as for those received by mail, fax, instant messaging, or e-mail. Questions will be answered as quickly as circumstances allow. All requests/inquiries are treated with uniform diligence and thoroughness.

The patrons determine the level and quantity of information required. It is the librarian's role to determine how much the patron already knows and to work with him/her toward the patron's goal(s).

Reasonable attempts are made to answer all telephone, e-mail, instant messaging and Facebook reference requests. However, if the individual's question requires an in-depth search, then the patron may be encouraged to personally visit the library. The librarian then provides guidance in the research.

Attempts are made to answer ready-reference questions requested and needed the same day.

Every question deserves a thorough response. “No.,” without qualification, is never an appropriate reply. If a full explanation cannot be provided, the patrons have a right to know why this is the case.

Other duties must not interfere with service to the public.

Reference librarians are careful to see each information transaction through to the end.

At times, after a preliminary search, it may not be possible to provide sufficient information for certain reference requests due to limits in available on-site resources. In such situations, referral will be made by the reference librarian to any of the following: local or metropolitan sources, Interlibrary Loan, I-Share (Statewide Illinois Library Catalog), OCLC (WorldCat), the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (Voices for Vision), as well as other libraries.

Patrons with income tax, medical, legal, advanced technical, or appraisal requests may have to be referred to professional sources. The library’s liability insurance precludes answering in-depth questions.

The public librarian acts as neither parent nor teacher, although she/he may act as a guide to those patrons who want to learn how to use certain information resources.

The use of several public access computers, including the On-Line Public Access Catalog (OPAC), and some on-line reference resources is available free of charge to all patrons. Patron access to the Internet does require a per hour fee to patrons.

In most instances, there are no fees charged for any Reference Services at the Elmwood Park Public Library. One instance in which a fee will be charged is when the request is referred to an outside agency, and that source charges a fee for the service provided. Fees are assessed for printing.

Patrons who visit the library take priority over the patron who telephones, e-mails, uses instant-messaging, or chats, especially at times of heavy in-library use. In such cases, a return call or contact may be necessary.

All patrons have equal access to all reference services. All patron requests and the answers they receive are held in strict confidence.

The written Reference Service Policy of the Elmwood Park Public Library is available to the public for inspection.

This Reference Service Policy is subject to periodic review under the supervision of the Head of Adult Services.

For current information on Reference Services, patrons may refer to the Elmwood Park Library website: [www.elmwoodparklibrary.org](http://www.elmwoodparklibrary.org).

### **Policy Review and Revision**

Elmwood Park Public Library Board of Trustees  
will review this document at least biennially.

Approved and Adopted by Library Board, September 2011, February 2013