

REFERENCES AND INFORMATION SERVICES POLICY

WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOARD APPROVED: SEPTEMBER 7, 2006

1. PREFACE

Information services are those services which link people with resources to fulfill informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This policy is intended to provide library staff with a clear description of and guidance in providing reference and information service. The policy is in no way meant to limit initiative on the part of staff in serving the public. Staff is encouraged to use good judgment to satisfy the informational needs of library patrons.

3. OBJECTIVES

It is the policy of the Information Services Department to answer all reference and information questions efficiently, accurately and as completely as possible, and to assist patrons in the use of the library and its bibliographic tools. If it is not possible to find an answer using the resources of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library patrons will be referred to other libraries, agencies and community resources.

4. COURTESY AND INTEREST

All patrons seeking help at the Library will be greeted in a friendly manner and will be treated equally and with courtesy and respect regardless of sex, age, or ability. All questions will be considered important and legitimate, unless it becomes clearly apparent that they are otherwise.

5. TYPES OF SERVICE

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library provides a variety of information services that are described below:

- Quick Reference

These questions can usually be answered immediately using resources kept for that purpose at the Information Desk.

- General Reference

General reference questions usually require a lengthier search and the use of a number of sources to arrive at a complete answer. The Information Services staff will guide and assist patrons in pursuing the answers while simultaneously providing, as required, informal instruction in how to search and use library resources to their best advantage.

- Readers' Advisory

Readers' advisory is the activity of recommending books to readers and helping readers identify their reading preferences. Staff will assist patrons by making judgments about the material, utilizing the criteria each patron and staff have established.

- Consultation/Interpretation

Staff will attempt, to the best of their abilities, to provide consultative assistance in defining more difficult questions and will show alternative methods of approach. The level of assistance will be based upon the patron's needs and capacities, and staff time constraints.

The interpretation of information which requires expertise beyond the scope of the competence of Information Services staff is not attempted; e.g. in the fields of law, medicine, and/or the evaluation or authentication of rare items. A patron will be referred to the information in the library but this information will not be interpreted by Information Services staff.

- Location of Material

The Information Services staff will check for a patron to see whether a specific item is in the library's collection. If it is, but is not immediately available, instruction will be given to the patron in placing a reserve or the reserve will be placed by staff if requested. If the Library does not own the item, assistance will be given to the patron in borrowing it from another library or in locating the information that will allow the patron to purchase the item.

- Library Orientation, Instruction and Student Assistance

An important component of the duties of the Information Services staff working at the information desk is that of familiarizing patrons with all library services and giving instruction in the use of the public access catalogue, indexes, cd-rom products, Internet, Genealogy collection, microfilm reader/printer, and other library materials and equipment. The level of assistance provided will depend on the resources and staff available at the time.

Students and researchers are given all information services available to other groups; however, neither time, resources, nor the best interests of the students allows Information Services staff to amass an exhaustive collection of materials for use in research papers. Students and researchers will be given instruction in the use of the available searching tools and assisted in their searches.

Information Services staff will provide formal library orientation and instruction to groups as requested and scheduled.

- Referral

It is the policy of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library to maintain active liaison with other service agencies in the community. This policy is reflected in mutual referral of patrons and sharing of information whenever appropriate. If it has been established by the Information Services staff that a request for

information cannot be answered or has been answered only in part with the resources of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library, the patron will be referred, when appropriate, to another source and assisted, where circumstances warrant, in contacting that source. Every attempt is made to satisfy requests with materials available in the library before referring patrons or inquiries to outside sources.

- Bibliographic Service

Information Services staff will instruct patrons in how to create bibliographies for themselves on the PACs. Bibliographies and/or Pathfinders will also be compiled at the request of agencies and community groups within the limits of available staff time. Priority will be given to material that is of general interest.

- Special Information Collections

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library maintains and gives service from the following special collections: (a) government documents, (b) local history, (c) genealogy, (d) reference, (e) Community Information database, and (f) Magic Collection. Staff will assist patrons in performing genealogical searches to the extent of their resources and expertise.

- Telephone Service

Patrons initiating inquiries by telephone will receive full staff attention. If the Information Services staff member is unable to deal with the telephone request immediately, arrangements will be made to return the call within an agreed upon time period. Staff will endeavour to respond to voice mail messages as quickly as possible on the day they are received.

Patrons needing extensive research service (extended reference) will be requested to visit the library in person to participate in the research process.

- Correspondence

In addition to answering requests presented in person and by telephone, the library will also respond to requests received by mail, e-mail and fax in a timely manner.

- Interlibrary Loan Service

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is part of an information network within the community, within the Southern Ontario Library System and in cooperation with other library systems across Ontario and Canada.

This service is automatically offered by the Information Services staff whenever the information requested cannot be filled by the resources of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and is within the scope of the regional and national interlibrary loan code.

In return, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shares its resources in accordance with the code, while always giving priority in the use of resources to its own patrons.

6. PRIORITIES OF SERVICE

The extent of personal service provided to each individual is dependent on the number of patrons to be served at any given time. The following priorities are applied:

1st priority - requests presented in person

2nd priority - requests presented by telephone/voice mail

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

4th priority - requests received via the interlibrary loan network

During times when personnel who lack expertise in a particular subject are assigned to the Information Desk, a patron's question may be referred to another member or deferred as appropriate until another staff member is on duty.

7. PERSONNEL POLICIES

The Information Services desk will be staffed whenever possible by trained staff from the time the library opens until it closes.

8. PATRON CONFIDENTIALITY

Patrons' confidentiality is respected at all times in compliance with government legislation. Patrons are not asked to identify themselves in any way before reference service is provided.

9. PATRON CONDUCT

The Library is a public building and a service paid for by the taxpayers of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. Abuse of patrons, staff or Library property is not tolerated. Disruptive or abusive patrons will be asked to desist from such behavior or leave the premises as per the rules of conduct policy.

10. PATRON FEEDBACK

Patrons who have comments or suggestions regarding services and collections covered by this policy will be promptly assisted at the time of the incident and informed as to how to communicate these to the Chief Executive Officer.