

LVDL POLICY MANUAL

Section II: Service Policies

TITLE: Reference Policy

ADOPTED: February 11, 2008

Reference Goal: to meet the information needs of Lake Villa District Library patrons in a professional and efficient manner.

Organization

Reference services are provided by both the Adult Services Department and the Youth Services Department. The former specializes in adults and youth in high school; the latter specializes in youth in 6th grade and below. There is considerable overlap due to both the needs of the information seeker and the information sources which are available.

Reference staff consists of the two department heads, department librarians, department library associates, and clerks. The director is available as needed.

General Guidelines

Reference staff members are available to assist all patrons. A number of services, however, are limited to Lake Villa District Library cardholders. Included among, but not limited to, these are:

1. Interlibrary loan
2. Selected online databases
3. Favorite Authors notification service
4. Reserves and Holds

If reference staff cannot fill a reference request in-house, the request will be referred to an appropriate source. Reference staff members are reminded to use teamwork, when necessary, when filling requests.

To ensure the most accurate and authoritative answers, reference staff should always cite from the source and should not offer personal recommendations, evaluations, or interpretations unless such are needed to convey the information found. It is important to note that the knowledge held by the information requestor largely determines how an answer is to be presented.

Reference service should be treated with complete confidentiality.

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Reference staff should be alert to the needs of patrons even when involved with other work. They should convey a friendly and helpful attitude at all times.

Reference staff shall instruct patrons in the proper use of resources if such is necessary.

Certain reference materials require supervision for security reasons. Patrons may be asked to provide some form of identification in order to use these materials in the library.

Reference materials are normally available for in-house use only. Reference staff may ask circulation department staff to check out items to patrons for overnight use if, in their judgment, circumstances warrant.

Definitions of Questions

Reference Transaction: a “request for information that requires use of library materials or the professional judgment of the librarian to answer the question”. This definition is based on the *Library Data Collection Handbook* (Chicago: ALA, 1981).

Title/Author: requests for a particular bibliographic or other entity specified by the patron.

Directional: questions concerning where materials are located, library hours, etc.

Readers Advisory: generally, questions concerning recommendations for reading material. Now includes recommendations for other types of material.

Library Equipment Instruction: requests for help in using library equipment such as computers, copiers, microfilm readers, etc.

Priority of Questions

Each patron request should be handled in order of occurrence. If a staff member is assisting a patron and another patron asks for assistance a second reference staff member should be contacted for help. If no one is available to provide help assisting patrons these patrons should be requested to wait.

Telephone patrons who are waiting should be put on hold or a message should be taken. Reference personnel can return calls as necessary.

E-mailed reference requests shall be done in a timely manner but can be interrupted in favor of live or telephoned requests.

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All reference questions should be answered or referred to an appropriate source within 24 hours. If a question will take more than 24 hours to answer, the patron shall be informed.

Referrals

When all the library's resources have been exhausted, referrals will be made to libraries and/or agencies.

Reserves

Reference staff may place reserves for patrons holding Lake Villa District Library cards. There is a 30 book limit on the number of items reserved for a given patron.

Legal/Medical/Tax Questions

Reference staff answers all requests for legal, medical, and tax information. Reference staff do not, however, offer advice or interpretation regarding these subjects.

Students

Students should receive the same services as other patrons. Reference staff should assist and instruct students in finding information, but should avoid doing assignments for students. Items may be placed on a reserve shelf (non-circulating status) for class assignments.