

## Seaford District Library Reference Policy

The Seaford District Library in its efforts to enhance the quality of life in the community provides free access to a variety of materials, programs and services in a friendly and welcoming environment through traditional and emerging technologies. Special emphasis is placed on providing materials on current topics and titles of high interest in a variety of formats for patrons of all ages. The library encourages lifelong learning and a love of books in any form.

### Service Priorities

The Library provides reference service to all patrons on an equal, nondiscriminatory, non-judgmental basis without regard to race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal view.

Patrons present in the building take first priority for service over telephone calls or other communications. Generally patron requests will be met in the order they are received. However, staff reserves the right to assist a patron with a minor reference request first before assisting another with a more involved transaction. Staff should allow ringing phones to go to voice mail when busy helping patrons in the building. The voice mail questions will be answered in a timely manner.

**Confidentiality:** Staff is required to honor the confidentiality of reference transactions. Information will be disclosed upon the request or consent of the individual whose library privileges are affected or pursuant to a court order. (See also the Library's policy statement regarding Privacy, Subpoenas and Search Warrants)

### Types of Reference Assistance

#### Bibliographic Instruction

Patrons are not required to know how to use the library catalog. The staff will locate items on the shelves for patrons. Some brief informal library instruction may be appropriate if the patron expresses a wish to know how the catalog works so they can help themselves next time.

#### In-Depth Research

The staff does not have the time to conduct in-depth research for patrons. Patrons will be given search assistance to begin with, but they will be expected to continue their research independently. This might include instruction on how to use the catalog, help in locating relevant books, or assistance with search strategies in online resources.

#### Telephone Reference

Telephone Reference is for providing quick services and short factual answers. For example: Title checks in the library catalog; placing requests on items; finding addresses and telephone numbers and other such brief answers. Staff should always cite the reference resource used for the answer. Due to heavy

use of the reference services by the public, calls should be kept brief (3 minutes) and transactions should be limited to five per call. When additional time is needed, the reference requests will be handled as callbacks. Patrons with more involved questions are expected to come into the library where the staff will provide search assistance.

#### Referral

When staff is unable to locate an answer the patron will be referred to an appropriate agency or resource for assistance.

#### Computer Instruction

Staff is able to provide limited direct assistance with common software applications or Internet navigation. This is subject to the level of knowledge of the person on duty and how busy the library is. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the patron to know the program/application he/she is using. Referral may be made to online help screens, tutorials, and software manuals. Patrons requiring more detailed instruction will be referred to classes scheduled at the Library or other agencies.

#### FAX

The staff can FAX information directly to patrons, a maximum of 10 pages, at no charge. Patrons requesting more must either come into the library or contact their own library and proceed with an Interlibrary Loan request.

#### Written Requests, Email, Chat

Written reference requests received by mail and email are subject to the same limits as questions received in person and by telephone. Staff will mail information to patrons who identify themselves as disabled and unable to get to the library.

At present the Library does not participate in any 24/7 chat reference services.

#### Interlibrary Loan

Items not owned by this Library may be requested through the Interlibrary Loan service. Requests are subject to the Interlibrary Loan policy.

#### Patron's Equipment

Staff is not able to troubleshoot patrons' equipment, such as laptops, digital cameras, cell phones, and other devices.

#### Commercial Transactions

Buying, selling, banking, tax preparation and other financial transactions are possible on Library workstations, but patrons conduct such transactions at their own discretion. Staff assistance will be limited to website suggestions, but not endorsements, and basic web page navigation.

### Medical, Legal, Tax Questions

Staff may read directly from a cited source and help patrons locate relevant materials. However, staff cannot offer advice, interpretation, recommendation or opinion regarding medical, legal, or tax questions. Staff may provide referrals to individuals or agencies qualified to handle those topics.

### Consumer Product Evaluation

Staff cannot make recommendations but will direct patrons to resources that provide evaluations. Staff will read brief information from Consumer Reports over the phone, but patrons should be advised to come in and read the report for themselves or told how to access it through the library's database collection.

### Appraisals

Staff cannot appraise or identify antiques, collectibles, rare books etc. but will refer patrons to published guides. Staff is permitted to read car values over the phone from the NADA. Staff should indicate if mileage and options were taken into consideration. When possible use or recommend the web version.

### Formulas

Staff will provide formulas but not do the math. However, staff can use a website that does conversions. The source should be cited to the patron.

### Opinions

Personal opinions are not a part of reference assistance.

### Genealogy

Staff will provide general assistance with locating and using genealogy resources, but staff does not conduct in-depth genealogy research. Referrals will be made to Genealogy Room Volunteers and Genealogy Classes.

The purpose of the reference collection is to assure library users of access to reference tools at all times that the library is open. Reference materials, therefore, will not circulate.