

MRCPL Reference Parameters

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the scope, standards, and limitations of reference services provided by the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library, ensuring consistent, equitable, and professional support to all patrons.

Definition

Reference services involve helping users find information resources and recommending appropriate tools. While full or deep research falls outside of the scope of reference services, library staff aid customers with research by connecting users to credible and trustworthy research resources.

Equity of Service

Reference services are provided equitably to all individuals, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, immigration status, or any other protected characteristic. Every patron will receive respectful and professional assistance.

Availability of Service

Reference services are available during all open hours and are delivered in response to inquiries made in person, by telephone, or through digital means (e.g. email, online chat). Services are provided by highly trained clerical staff and credentialed librarians.

Service Prioritization

Priority is given to in-person reference questions. Phone queries requiring in depth searching into internal or external resources may require staff to return a patron's call once the search has been completed.

Scope of Service

The library provides reference services that include, but are not limited to:

- Instruction in the use of the library catalog, databases, and other informational resources across all formats
- Readers' advisory services
- Referrals to appropriate agencies or experts
- Library tours and introductions to collections and services
- Assistance with public computers, printing, scanning, and office equipment
- Support in locating information within the library's licensed databases and other resources
- Creation of guides, bibliographies, and instruction sheets to assist patrons in using library resources effectively
- Assisting patrons in conducting research by leading them to relevant sources available through the library, its partner institutions, or appropriate external referrals

Out of Scope

- Appraisals of books, art, antiques, or collectibles
- Legal, medical, financial, or tax advice or interpretation
- Writing, typing, proofreading, or editing of documents
- Document translations
- Assistance with solving mathematical equations
- Tutoring or educational instruction
- Consumer product recommendations

Patrons needing help in these areas will be referred to appropriate professionals, consumer information sources, or agencies.