

## Reference Services Policy

**APPROVED: Board of Supervisors**

**Date: May 19, 2008**

**Section: 4117**

### **Purpose:**

Mohave County Library District provides general reference service to patrons of all ages who request information, regardless of residency, within the scope of our resources and staff expertise.

Staff responds to varied information needs using library materials and referral to outside sources. Staff uses professional judgment to assess needs and provide information, assistance or instruction appropriate to individual requests. Personal opinions are not a part of reference assistance.

### **Definition: Reference Service:**

Reference service is the assistance given to patrons in pursuit of information. A reference question is defined as an informational exchange between a patron and staff member that involves the knowledge, recommendations, or instruction in the use of information sources.

**Specific Reference Search:** A specific reference search answer takes the form of giving the user information requiring the simple search skills of reference staff.

**Research:** A research query is identified as in-depth coverage of a topic. Lengthy research for patrons which requires extensive staff time to collect data from multiple sources is not provided. Patrons involved in lengthy research projects can receive guidance on resources and searching methods and will be expected to conduct the actual research themselves. Copying of materials is not provided.

### **Goals of Reference Service:**

- Satisfy patrons' information needs by using print or online sources, or by referral to outside resources
- Provide accurate and timely answers to information requests
- Facilitate access to library resources and assist in the development of research strategies
- Provide qualified staff to assist patrons in an effective and courteous manner

### **Access, Ethics, Confidentiality and Impartiality in the Reference Transaction:**

The Library will provide reference service to all its patrons on an equal, nondiscriminatory, and nonjudgmental basis without regard to the race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal viewpoint of the patron making the inquiry or the subject matter being researched.

Requests for information and patron records shall be kept confidential and shall not be made available to others unless specifically required by court order that shows cause and is in proper form as required by local, state or federal law, or unless disclosed upon

the request or consent of the individual or group whose library privileges are directly affected. All staff is expected to honor the confidentiality of reference questions. Any decision to release information to a third party shall be referred to library administration.

### **Priorities of Service:**

Reference service will be provided in response to all forms of inquiry, including in person, telephone, fax, mail, and e-mail. Individuals present in the building take first priority for service over telephone calls and other forms of communications.

### **Types of reference service that require special approaches:**

Library staff will attempt to answer all questions. However some limits are established for types of questions and services beyond the scope and expertise of the public library.

**Appraisals:** The library does not appraise rare books or collectibles, but will direct patrons to published price lists and lists of appraisers. Personal recommendations will not be made.

**Computer questions:** Staff will provide patrons with basic orientation to computer hardware and electronic databases available on the library's website. Library staff is available to assist users with basic machinery problems and answer simple questions regarding the electronic databases. Library staff cannot provide individual in-depth computer training, technical assistance, or solve Internet wireless access problems on patrons' personal computer equipment. Staff will refer patrons to pertinent manuals, and resources, and the computer classes offered through the Training Division.

**Genealogy research:** General assistance with the collection resources and referrals to websites are offered. The library does not trace family trees or conduct in-depth research for patrons.

**Medical, legal, tax and financial questions:** The library provides information, but not advice. Sources will be cited verbatim with no interpretation by the staff.

**Contest/trivia questions:** Contest and trivia questions will be treated as any other information request.

**Homework questions:** Reference staff will cooperate with the schools in supporting homework assignments. Assignment alerts will be solicited from the schools and preparations will be made to deal with large assignments to the extent that the library is notified. Staff will assist students in their searches rather than provide specific answers for their projects.

**Tutoring Assistance:** Staff does not provide private tutoring. Referrals to appropriate literacy providers or community agencies will be offered.

**Editing:** Staff will not critique or edit patron manuscripts or resumes for job seekers.

**Translations:** Staff will respond to patron requests for translation of words and phrases using appropriate print or online sources.