

# **Tompkins County Public Library Reference Services Policy**

## **Introduction**

The Adult and Youth Services Departments will develop reference service consistent with the mission of the Tompkins County Public Library to promote independent learning and discovery, and facilitate lifelong learning.

This policy will be applied with necessary flexibility to adapt to individual user need in the delivery of reference and information service.

## **Collections and Information Resources**

The collections will include information resources to support the library's mission and will facilitate the provision of quality service that reflects the full spectrum of the population served.

## **Reference Service**

Reference service will provide users with factual information on a wide variety of topics, provide interlibrary loan and referral service, and facilitate independence in exploring research and information resources.

Reference assistance with more than brief, factual information will be provided according to the availability of staff and library resources, as long as such assistance does not deter or inhibit other users from seeking help.

## **Tompkins County Research Service**

The Tompkins County Public Library will provide limited research on topics of local history or interest where the information sought is unique to the collection of the library. This service will be provided to individuals or organizations when it is not possible or practical to visit the library in person.

Requests may be submitted via phone, fax, surface mail or e-mail. There is a \$40 per hour fee, with a \$10 minimum due before research begins for the first 15 minutes. No more than one hour of research will be done per request. Up to ten photographed pages may be sent per request with no additional fee. The library will make every attempt to respond to a request within ten business days from the receipt of the request.

If more detailed research on topics of local history is required, the patron will be referred to the History Center or other likely sources.

## **Confidentiality and Privacy**

User needs will be taken seriously and treated with utmost respect and confidentiality. Information is provided without moral or aesthetic judgment.

The Tompkins County Public Library's complete Notice of Privacy Practices is available at <http://www.tcpl.org/privacy.html>.

## **Access**

In-house and phone Reference service will be available to all users during the Library's public hours. E-mail reference queries may be sent at any time and a response will be sent within 3 business days.

Reference service transactions or time spent completing a transaction on behalf of any one person may necessarily be limited to ensure equal access for all library users.

Reference service will provide fair, just, and equitable access and guidance to reference and collection resources.

Reference personnel will provide knowledgeable, approachable, sensitive, courteous, and efficient service without regard to age, gender, ethnicity, religion, affiliation, disability, sexual preference, English language proficiency or status.

Reference service will ensure adequate instruction and guidance in the use of reference resources.

Reference service will provide the ability to obtain information resources not held in the Tompkins County Public Library if such resources are available on interlibrary loan through the Finger Lakes Library System in accordance with established interlibrary loan policy.

## **Quality of Service**

Reference service will be provided in a welcoming and approachable manner consistent with common courtesies and sensitive to individual needs.

Reference service will strive to provide prompt, accurate, authoritative, and complete information acceptable to the user.

Reference service will provide instruction in the effective use of its resources.

## **Priority of Service**

Public service is the first priority and will take precedence over any other duties performed at the Reference Desk.

Reference staff will serve users on a first-come, first-served basis with priority given to those who are actually in the Library.

## **Referral**

When Reference staff cannot provide the needed information, they may refer the user to or request assistance from local agencies, organizations, experts or other libraries.

## **Loan of Reference Materials**

Loans outside of the library building are not encouraged. The department head may authorize brief loans in exceptional circumstances.

Guidelines for loans of reference material to FLLS member libraries are described in the "Use of Collection" section of the Central Library Book Aid Policy.

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