



Reference Service

The Mattoon Public Library serves a diverse public with unique individual needs and levels of ability to conduct research independently. At times of peak activity within the library, it is mandatory that rules for providing reference assistance be established. The most recent standards document, *Serving Our Public: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries*, provides the model for this reference policy.

All staff members receive in-house training regarding appropriate responses to patron questions, including reference questions. This training includes reference interviewing techniques, reader's advisory service, and bibliographic instruction. All staff members are taught to treat each question asked with respect insofar as the level of assistance required and the topic of the question. Names of users and the transactions which occur between users and the staff are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context.

Reference service and materials are available to all persons who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the library regardless of the age, race, sex, social, or economic status of the patron. Reference service and materials are available during all hours the library is open and are provided in response to all forms of inquiry including but not limited to patrons in the library, the telephone, fax, and email. The reference questions of patrons visiting the library are given the highest priority. All requests for information receive an answer or status report within one working day with the full understanding that some questions may require more in-depth research to answer.

In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. The staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff define the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select income tax forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above. If all materials within the library are beyond the understanding of the patron, the patron will be advised to consult with their professional from the above listed fields for additional information or advice.

Reference materials regardless of format may not be removed from the library.