

Chapter V Reference, Reader's Advisory, and Bibliographic Instruction

Quality reference service is the provision of information or material within a time frame, at a level, and in a format that is satisfactory for the patron.

Reference service is the provision of information in response to a patron's question.

Reader's advisory service is guidance in selecting material appropriate to a specific patron's desires and needs.

Bibliographic instruction is service provided in response to a request by a patron either for the individual or for a group to learn how to use one or more of the library's resources.

All Illinois public libraries should provide or contract to provide professional reference service for their patrons. For purposes of this document *professional reference service* refers to reference service provided by a person holding an MLS degree from an ALA-accredited program.

Because so many Illinois public libraries serve sparsely populated communities and as a result, often lack the funding to hire a full-time qualified librarian, other approaches, such as the following, may be required.

mergers of several small libraries or library services

consortiums of several small libraries with one central reference library

system reference service with an 800 number

Illinois State Library reference service with an 800 number

contracts between small libraries and larger libraries for reference service

shared qualified librarians, with several small libraries pooling funds to employ and share a qualified librarian who would handle collection management, train staff, and provide back-up reference service and perhaps function as a circuit librarian by working suitable hours at each site

cooperative collection development in which the purchase of specific reference works is assigned to each library in the group

cooperative hours of service, with a group of libraries coordinating their hours of reference service to provide their combined patrons with access to reference service for a greater number of hours (A number of Illinois public libraries already provide late-night reference service using this approach.)

Applicable Core Standards

Core 1. The library provides uniformly gracious and friendly service to all library users.

Core 12. The library has a board-approved mission statement, a long-range plan, a disaster prevention and recovery plan, and policies. Such policies include but are not limited to the following topics: personnel; reference; use of the library's materials, services, and facilities, including use of the library for

exhibits and meetings; and collection management. Illinois statutory law specifically requires the board to establish and review at least biennially a written policy for the selection of library materials (as part of the library's collection management policy) and the use of library materials and facilities [75 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 5/4-7.2 or 75 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 16/30-60]. All library policies are in compliance with state and federal laws. (See appendix 2.2)

- Core 16.** The library adopts and adheres to the principles set forth in the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* and other ALA intellectual freedom statements and interpretations. (See appendices 2.4-2.6 for ALA *Library Bill of Rights* and other ALA intellectual freedom statements.)
- Core 18.** The library adopts and adheres to the ALA *Code of Ethics*. (See appendix 2.7 for *Code of Ethics*.)
- Core 19.** The library is a member of an Illinois multitype library system and participates in resource sharing through interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing.
- Core 20.** The library has a telephone, telefacsimile machine, photocopier, and computer with modem. The library provides telephone service to its patrons with hearing disabilities through a TTY (teletypewriter), TDD (Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf) or a voice relay provided by the telephone company.
- Core 21.** The library provides access to ILLINET Online.
- Core 26.** The library provides or develops a formal agreement with another agency to provide reference service to the community.

Supplemental Standards

1. All basic services are available when the library is open. For the purpose of this document, basic services are circulation and reference and reader's advisory. If reference and reader's advisory are provided to children and adults from two separate points, then the library provides adequate staffing at both locations at all hours the library is open.
2. The library has a board-approved reference service policy developed by reference staff and administration. (See appendix 5.1 for a model reference service policy.)
3. The reference service policy is reviewed every three years.
4. The library participates in system-provided backup reference, interlibrary loan, and resource sharing to help provide accurate and timely reference service.
5. The library is aware of the importance of accuracy in reference service and relies on information sources of demonstrated currency and authority.
6. The library provides easy access to an accurate and up-to-date community information/resource file.

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7. The library provides current issues of at least one community or local newspaper and retains backfiles for a minimum of six months.
 8. The library provides access to local ordinances or codes of all municipalities within its service boundaries.
 9. The library provides access to local and state maps.
 10. The library provides access to the minutes of local government meetings. These include but are not limited to municipal (village, township, or city) and school board meetings.
 11. The library provides voter information, including precinct boundaries and location of polling places.
 12. The library provides information about local history and events.
 13. The library has telephone books for the local calling area and any other frequently requested areas.
 14. The library has all materials included in the list of basic reference materials. (See appendix 5.2.)
 15. Staff have access to a telephone to receive and respond to requests for information and materials and to contact other agencies for information.

Evaluating Reference Service

Although reference service is one of the most difficult areas of library service to measure, the exercise of examining and attempting to evaluate reference service heightens the librarian's awareness of what comprises quality reference service, increases the librarian's sensitivity to patron needs, and stimulates efforts to improve. (See appendix 5.3 for evaluation methods.)

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