

AVENUES TO EXCELLENCE

FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE IN ILLINOIS

VIII. SERVICES: REFERENCE

Reference

The public library should provide accurate information and professional guidance in the use of its reference sources, community resources, and through the proper channels, such as library systems and ILLINET, resources available outside the immediate community. It should provide information by utilizing the most effective, rapid means of communication, *relying on both on-site and off-site communication sources*. All persons served by the library, regardless of age, sex, social or economic status, have a right to information services provided by ILLINET through the local library and the regional library system.

- _____ 1. All requests for information should be answered or referral initiated within 24 hours of the request.
- _____ 2. Status of the information referral should be reported back to the library user within 48 hours and regular status reports should be provided if the request takes longer than 48 hours to answer.
- _____ 3. Reference service should be provided all hours the library is open.
- _____ 4. Telephone reference service should be provided during all library hours. (In some libraries, staffing patterns may prevent immediate response to telephone inquiries, but provisions should be made for returning telephone calls within one hour.)

Reference: Output Measures

The following output measures capture the perceptions of librarians and users and are therefore subjective assessments of the accuracy and thoroughness of the reference service given. The data are relatively easy to collect. When possible, librarians should participate in system or state supported evaluations of the quality of reference service through the use of sample reference questions. Whether administered obtrusively (with staff knowledge) or "unobtrusively" (without staff knowledge) the anonymity of the performance of specific staff members should be protected. These reference quality measures should not be used as a means of evaluating specific staff members.

- _____ 5. *The Librarian's Perception of Reference Fill Rate*
C, B, or A
Libraries should determine the number of reference transactions successfully completed in proportion to the total number of reference transactions. This should be calculated from data gathered during a sample week in October and April of each year. The procedures outlined in the *ALA/PLA Output Measures for Public Libraries* should be followed when calculating this measure. According to these procedures, information requests that are redirected to another library or agency are not counted as completed. The completion rate refers only to the percentage of time a library provides, from its own resources, the information patrons want.

	C	B	A
Any population size	50%	65%	80%
- _____ 6. *The User Perception of Reference Fill Rate*
Libraries should determine this during the same sampling periods as the "Librarian's Perception of Reference Fill Rate." (The completion of this data gathering activity is sufficient to achieve this standard.)
- _____ 7. *Reference Transactions Per Capita (OPTIONAL)*
Libraries should determine the average number of reference questions asked by each member of the community during the year. The definitions and procedures outlined in the *ALA/PLA Output Measures for Public Libraries* should be followed when calculating this measure. (The completion of this data gathering activity is sufficient to achieve this standard.)

Services/Reference: Bibliography

A Commitment to Information Services: Developmental Guidelines. Prepared by the Standards Committee, Reference and Adult Services Division, ALA, 1979.