



Reference & Readers' Advisory Policy
ADOPTED DATE 03/25/2021
REVISED DATE 01/26/2026
REVIEW DATE 08/25/2022
REVISION # 1.0

LIBRARY POLICY

Reference & Readers' Advisory Policy

PURPOSE

Governing the professional reference and readers' advisory services provided by Library staff. This policy was previously titled "Reference Service Policy."

POLICY

It is the goal of the Frankfort Public Library District to seek to meet the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the Library user.

Reference service transactions are information consultations in which Library staff recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others meet their particular information needs.

Readers' advisory transactions are provided by Library staff who assist in the reading, viewing, listening, or other collection needs of the patrons of the Library. A readers' advisor recommends specific materials, authors, or resources, based on knowledge of the person's past reading/viewing/listening preferences, and may also compile lists of recommended materials.

The Frankfort Public Library District provides accurate, timely, and thorough information to the community. Reference and readers' advisory is provided by trained staff all the hours the library is open. Patrons may receive service in person, by telephone, or electronically.

The Library staff shall develop such rules and procedures as are necessary to ensure compliance with the Frankfort Public Library District Reference and Readers' Advisory Policy.

Scope of Reference and Readers' Advisory Reference and readers' advisory transactions are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context, except when required by applicable law. Patron questions are addressed with no distinction about the purpose of the inquiry or the use of the information. Equal priority is given to informational and recreational requests. All questions are handled with respect and impartiality. Staff does not discriminate based on age, gender, race, sexual preference, disability, socioeconomic level, education level, or any legally protected characteristics of the patron. Service is provided in a manner consistent with the Library Bill of Rights, the American Library Association Code of Ethics, and copyright law. Patrons do not need to be Frankfort Library cardholders to receive reference or readers' advisory assistance.

Priority of service is given to patrons on site. At busy times it may be necessary to provide basic help and get back to a patron for more assistance. Questions received via telephone, email, or other electronic means will be answered in a timely manner. Patrons may not expect to work exclusively with a particular staff member. Readers' advisory queries may be passed to staff members from other departments according to knowledge of individual staff reading interests.

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Library staff strives to provide complete and accurate answers to all queries. Simple questions are usually answered fully and quickly. Complex questions may require follow up at a later time. Complex questions may also require the patron's participation in the information search with staff providing guidance and advice on the search strategy and process. When questions cannot be answered fully with the available resources, staff provides referrals to experts, organizations, and other authorities. Staff set reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patron requests for information in order to ensure equal and fair access to library services for all patrons.

Limitations

As information professionals, library staff provide guidance and instruction. Library staff are not able to provide services in other areas of professional practice. Staff will use their professional judgement to select the most authoritative source available; however, the source of information, not the Library, is responsible for the accuracy of the content. Staff do not:

- handle confidential information such as social security numbers, credit card numbers, account passwords and PINs, or medical information. If such information is viewed inadvertently, staff makes every effort to protect patrons' privacy.
- provide opinions or advice on medical, legal, copyright, financial, tax, or product information.
- recommend individual practitioners such as physicians, attorneys, daycare providers, or tutors.
- offer more than limited assistance with patrons' personal technology.
- provide appraisals of books, artwork, antiques, or other collectibles.
- provide editorial or translation services.
- provide career counseling advice.
- conduct genealogical, patent, trademark, or other in-depth research.
- engage in conversation or debate of a personal nature, including but not limited to religious or political beliefs, or their personal lives.

Staff will provide assistance in basic research and connecting students with resources, but will not complete homework assignments on behalf of Library users.

Fees

Reference and readers' advisory transactions are part of regular Library services available for the public at no additional cost. Printing of information found online or photocopying of information may incur the usual printing and photocopying fees. Additionally, there is a fee set for borrowing materials from libraries outside of Illinois, but this fee will be communicated to a requestor prior to out-of-state borrowing requests being finalized.