

## **2.10 REFERENCE SERVICES**

### **Priorities**

Service to the public receives priority over any other duties. Reference service is available to all persons served by the library without discrimination. The request of each user is taken seriously and treated with confidentiality.

In-person requests for service receive priority over telephone requests, followed by requests received by fax, mail, email or other electronic communication.

If several people are waiting for assistance, requests that are brief may be given priority over lengthy or complex questions that require large amounts of time.

Reference services available via the RIOmobile mobile outreach library facility may be limited due to availability of staff and privacy concerns. Such reference services may be referred to other library facilities.

### **Time Limits**

The limit of reference service will vary according to:

- number of users needing assistance
- number of staff available to help
- complexity of materials
- amount of information needed
- level of staff technical expertise needed

The amount of time devoted to a complex request is at the discretion of the reference staff. It is not the responsibility of the staff to conduct lengthy research for users. Library users requiring lengthy or involved research assistance should be given guidance on available resources and basic instruction on research methods.

### **Telephone Reference**

Telephone reference service is available for questions that require quick, factual answers. Requests requiring lengthy research cannot be handled on the telephone. Patrons will be encouraged to come to the library to receive assistance with their research. During particularly busy times, it may be necessary to return the user's call or make arrangements for the user to call back.

### **Fax, Mail, Email and other electronic communications**

Fax, mail, email and chat or other electronic communications requests for service are defined as short, factual informational questions that do not require extensive reading or interpretation on the part of staff members.

Email reference questions must include an email address for a reply.

### **School Assignments**

Student requests for assistance with school assignments will be given the same consideration as any other request. Staff will work with the student to find appropriate resources and provide instruction in the use of those resources. Online tutoring resources, such as Brainfuse, will be used to assist students with school assignments as appropriate. Library staff will assist with orientation to the resource for students and tutors. Student requests that cannot be filled may be noted on the Student Request/Unfilled Form and addressed to the teacher.

### **Contest Questions**

Contest questions will be given the same consideration as any other type of reference question. Some contest questions might have more than one answer that seems to be correct; staff should not interpret contest rules. Staff will work with the patron to find appropriate resources and provide instruction in the use of those resources for contests initiated by the Library or by library-related organizations.

### **Consumer Evaluations**

The reference staff will help users locate consumer product information and sources for objective consumer evaluations. The staff does not offer personal opinions, recommend particular item brands, or interpret evaluation results.

### **Appraisals**

The reference staff will refer users to appropriate reference sources. Staff members will never give personal appraisals regarding the value of a patron's possession.

### **Genealogy Questions**

Staff will provide general assistance in genealogical research, guidance in locating items in the collection, and help in obtaining resources through interlibrary loan. Staff members should not conduct genealogical research for patrons.

### **Medical, Legal, and Tax Questions**

Factual information, definitions, or citations from codes will be provided, but staff will not interpret or offer an opinion of legal, medical, or tax matters.

### **Mathematical Calculations**

Staff will refer patrons to sources with the appropriate formula or tables for performing their own calculations, but will not perform the actual calculation.

### **Criss-cross and City Directories**

No more than three listings will be provided per patron at any one time. Staff members will not give “nearby” listings for criss-cross requests. Staff will also refer to online reference tools such as A to Z Database.

### **Voting and Elections**

Election issues will be answered as any other reference question. Reference staff should create a file of related information, such as printed brochures, newspaper clippings, position statements, etc. for important local, state, and national election issues. Staff will not summarize, interpret or offer opinions regarding political issues.

### **Stock Quotes**

Stock quote questions are treated as any other reference question. In order to avoid any misinformation over the telephone, patrons are encouraged to come to the library in person for stock quote information. Staff may provide patrons with appropriate Internet addresses for searching current or historical stock quotes.

### **Obituaries and Newspaper Reference**

Staff will search for an obituary in the New Braunfels Herald Zeitung for patrons not able to visit the library in person if a date of death is provided. Staff will utilize the online search tool in the digitized version of the Herald Zeitung, and may refer customers to this tool in lieu of staff performing the search. Staff will not conduct research if the date does not produce an obituary for the named person.

### **Online Searching**

The reference staff will utilize online searching as other reference sources. Patrons will pay for copies from the online search.

### **Technical Assistance with Devices and Electronic Library Resources**

Assistance with patron owned devices will be limited to quick, factual answers while on the service desks. The amount of time devoted to a more complex request is at the discretion of the reference staff. Library users requiring lengthy or involved research assistance should be given guidance on available resources and basic instruction on using their devices or library resources. Interactions requiring more complex assistance will be

referred to the regularly schedule technical help sessions or scheduled directly with library staff.

**Referrals**

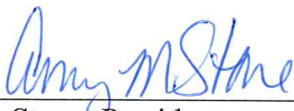
Patrons will be referred to more appropriate sources when it becomes clear that the request cannot be properly answered given the limitations of the library's resources. Reference staff should refer to other agencies only when they are reasonably certain the answer can be found there. A referral to interlibrary loan is part of the library's service.


***ENDORSED BY THE NEW BRAUNFELS PUBLIC LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD,  
JULY 21, 2003***

***REVISED MAY 15, 2006; MAY 19, 2008; OCTOBER 24, 2011***

***ENDORSED JUNE 16, 2014, JUNE 15, 2015***

***REVISED JULY 18, 2016; JULY 16, 2018; FEBRUARY 19, 2019***

By:   
Amy Stone, President

Attest:   
Gretchen Pruett, Library Director