

## REFERENCE AND READER'S ADVISORY SERVICE

### General Statement:

The reference and reader advisory function of the Phillipsburg Free Public Library may be described as personalized aid or guidance provided to library users in the pursuit of desired information. Its aim is optimum access to and use of existing resources within and beyond the Phillipsburg Library. The assistance provided may take a variety of forms depending upon the particular needs of the individual inquirer.

As an institution dedicated to public service, the Phillipsburg Free Public Library broadens and adapts its reference services to reflect areas of present social concern -- such as employment, education, health and consumer affairs - and attempts to anticipate significant future concerns.

### General Guidelines:

The Phillipsburg Free Public Library regards as valid every reference question asked by any patron. All questions will be given equal consideration and each will be answered as accurately and completely as possible within a reasonable time limit. Our primary objective is to give as much assistance as is practical, drawing on the expertise of others and using the resources of such cooperative library agencies as libraries participating in the New Jersey Library Network. Out-of-state libraries and agencies will be called upon as needed, including the Library of Congress.

In order to give the most accurate and authoritative answers, staff members should always quote from sources and should never make personal recommendations, evaluations, or interpretations. The title and date of the source used should always be cited.

Application of rules, such as the amount of time spent on a single question, depends upon the nature of the question, the needs of the reader, and above all, the judgment of the librarian. Simultaneous requests shall be managed at the staff member's discretion with regard to urgency, complexity and availability of staff resources. In general, in-person questions shall take precedence over questions received by telephone, mail, e-mail or other means.

Staff members will assist all Library clients regardless of age, gender, disability or ethnicity. Staff shall not offer their personal opinions on social issues, politics, religion, etc., to patrons.

## Guidelines for Handling Specific Categories of Inquiries:

### SCHOOL QUESTIONS

Questions regarding school assignments will be treated as any other request for reference assistance. Every effort should be made to satisfactorily answer a student's questions and provide the sources for information and the instruction needed to use those sources. If every effort has been made by the reference staff member and the student to locate information without results, the student will be encouraged to return to the teacher for further instructions or an altered assignment. A note to this effect may be given to the student if the reference staff member feels it is justified.

### MEDICAL, LEGAL AND BUSINESS INQUIRIES

When dealing with medical, legal and business requests, the librarian is responsible for providing access to sources of information in these specialized fields. The librarian must refrain from advising or interpreting legal, medical or business information for the library user. Because of the possibility of misunderstanding and the difficulty of providing definitive and comprehensive answers, librarians will not read substantial passages of medical, legal or business information over the telephone. Telephone inquiries will be limited to definitions and other brief factual information. These sources should be quoted verbatim with no personal interpretation. The patron should be informed of the source from which the information is taken. Under no circumstances should a staff member offer advice in medical, legal or tax areas, regardless of how commonplace the knowledge seems to be. Patrons seeking advice or interpretation of reference materials should be advised to consult a qualified professional in the appropriate field. The librarian shall not provide a specific name or suggest a particular practice.

The Phillipsburg Free Public Library will adhere to the Guidelines for Medical, Legal and Business Responses prepared by the Reference and Adult Services Division of the American Library Association. (See attached guidelines)

### PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPRAISALS

Patrons may be referred to appropriate reference sources or to consultants or experts. Staff members should never give a personal appraisal regarding the value of a patron's possession.

## GENEALOGICAL QUESTIONS

The Phillipsburg Library maintains a small collection of local history information and cemetery indexes, but does not collect family histories. Librarians can instruct library users in the use of sources in genealogy and local history, including genealogy databases, but cannot undertake genealogy research on the user's behalf. The Library staff will answer local history and genealogy questions from non-residents, but correspondence in this area will be limited to factual information queries located in basic sources. Users may be referred to other sources of information, such as the Phillipsburg Area Historical Association, the Easton Area Public Library Marx Room, and the Morristown-Morris Township Public Library Genealogy/Local History Collection.

## TRANSLATIONS AND MATHEMATICAL CALCULATIONS

Translations and calculations should be provided only if a person on the staff with appropriate expertise is available. Otherwise patrons should be referred to sources such as dictionaries and reference books containing formulas or tables.

### Telephone Reference Service:

Reference staff provides telephone reference service for short, factual inquiries which do not require extensive searches, interpretation, or the reading of long passages over the telephone. Sources consulted are cited. If research or interpretation is needed, the reference librarians cite sources of information and library users are invited to come to the Library to examine the materials and online resources. Staff will provide telephone reference service to non-residents as time and resources permit.

### Electronic Reference Service:

The Phillipsburg Free Public Library has implemented an E-mail reference service as another method for users to access the Library's staff and resources. The reference staff will monitor this mailbox during library hours. Response to requests for information through the E-mail service will adhere to the same guidelines as general reference and telephone reference.

### Delivery of Materials:

The Phillipsburg Library will participate in the New Jersey statewide delivery system to transfer interlibrary loan and other library materials within the State. The Library will also use the U.S. Postal Service or other delivery services to libraries outside New Jersey. Phillipsburg Library will fax or email materials to libraries, schools, government agencies and individuals as time and resources permit. The library reserves the right to impose limits on the number of pages faxed or copied, and reserves the right to refuse a request for delivery if it is beyond the scope of our service.

### Readers Advisory:

Readers advisory incorporates the same public service principles that guide library staff in all patron service. When a patron asks for a reading, movie or music recommendation, the staff member conducts a brief informal conversation aimed at determining the needs of the patron. During the course of the conversation, the staff member suggests materials that the user may enjoy based on input from the patron. When asked for reading suggestions in an unfamiliar genre, the librarian shall use print or electronic sources to determine appropriate titles. It is also appropriate to seek assistance from staff members who may have more familiarity with a genre or author; on no account should a patron's request for suggestions be turned down because the staff member is not familiar with the patron's genre of choice.