

Reference and Information Services Policy

Purpose

The Lake of Bays Township Public Library's (the Library's) information services link users of all ages with high quality, responsible and accessible resources to fulfil their informational, educational, cultural, technical and recreational needs. The Library will strive to ensure users are aware of the resources available. This policy describes information services at the Library and guides Library staff when answering reference questions.

All users seeking information assistance will be treated equally regardless of sex, age, ability and ethnicity. The staff will respect and protect the confidential and private nature of requests for information at all times. The staff will answer all reference questions efficiently, accurately and as completely as possible and will be guided by the Board's policy on *Intellectual Freedom*. All questions will be considered important and legitimate, unless it becomes clearly apparent that they are restricted by Federal and Provincial law. The staff will assist the user in finding information and will provide instruction on how to use Library resources based upon the user's needs. The staff provide the following services:

- *Quick Reference* - Immediate answers to questions using resources readily available in the Library. Staff will assist users in locating additional information, and may provide informal instruction on the use of Library resources and search tools.
- *In Depth* - Answers to questions that require a lengthier search process and involve the use of multiple resources to arrive at an appropriate outcome. Staff will assist users embarking on extensive research projects in defining their information needs and identify numerous resources. A variety of methods may be used to arrive at an appropriate outcome. The amount of time required will be determined by the user's specific needs, availability of staff and time constraints.
- *Readers' Advisory* - Answers to questions that strive to connect readers with the books they will enjoy and are interested in reading.
- *In Person, by Telephone, Email and Social Media* - Staff provide information service in person or by telephone or email. In person or telephone requests for information are completed in the order they are submitted. In order to ensure efficiency staff may take the name and telephone number of the user submitting the request by telephone and will respond to the users query in a timely manner. Email requests for information will be responded to in a timely manner.

- *Referral* - If an information request cannot be fulfilled using resources available at the Library, staff should refer users to another source, and if necessary, assist them in contacting that source. Staff will make every effort to fulfill information requests using resources available in the Library before referring users to other external sources
- *Library Instruction and Orientation* - Staff will familiarize users with all Library services and provide them with instruction in the use of Library materials and equipment. The public access catalogue, databases and other e-resources provided by the Library are an important part of the provision of information services. The level of assistance provided by staff will depend on the needs of the user as well as staff availability and resources. Staff will provide formal Library orientation and instruction for groups where arrangements have been made in advance.
- Staff will assist users in responding to their technical queries: use of Library equipment, devices and software; and use of personal devices, equipment and software. Staff will assist users in developing technical competencies.
- *Local History & Genealogy* - Staff will assist users in using the Local History collection, and the equipment required in accessing items in that collection.
- *Interlibrary Loan Service* – Lake of Bays Township Public Library is part of an information network within the community, within the Southern Ontario Library System (SOLS) and in cooperation with other Library systems throughout Ontario and Canada. This service will be offered to users when the information request cannot be fulfilled by the resources of the Library. Staff can access the interlibrary loan system via the INFO service provided by SOLS in order to place or track requests on behalf of users. In return, the Library will share its resources with other Library systems, while always giving priority in the use of its resources to its own users.

The extent of individual service to each person will depend on the number of users needing to be served. The following priorities will apply:

1st priority - requests presented in person

2nd priority - requests presented by telephone/voice mail

3rd priority - requests sent in by mail/ e-mail

4th priority - requests received via the interlibrary loan network

To assess and evaluate information services, and to comply with the requirements of the Annual Survey of Public Libraries, statistics on reference questions will be kept and analyzed.

Provision of Information Services follows the Canadian Library Association's *Statement on Intellectual Freedom* (Appendix A) subject to Canadian legal restrictions as noted above.

Appendix A

Canadian Library Association Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom

Approved by Executive Council ~ June 27, 1974; Amended November 17, 1983; and November 18, 1985

All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the law, is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available all the Library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.

Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Both employees and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles.

Approved: Sept 25th 2017

Reviewed: 2021

Signature of the Chairperson _____