



Information and Reference Service Policy

*Query Requests Policy approved by the Library Board of Trustees, June 12, 2018
Revised and expanded policy approved December 8, 2021*

Service Philosophy

The goal of Eckhart Public Library's information services is to provide consistent and high-quality assistance in helping patrons obtain materials and providing accurate information, readers' advisory, and patron instruction.

Information services are delivered in an efficient, timely, courteous and impartial manner. Information services staff subscribe to the American Library Association's *Code of Ethics*, 1995.

Patrons of all ages and circumstances, including individuals with special needs, are treated with equal attention and with sensitivity to their particular needs.

All information requests from patrons are legitimate and are handled as such. Patrons will receive information, not staff opinions, in response to their requests. It is the responsibility of employees to provide information in an impartial and business-like manner, even when it is contrary to their personal beliefs.

In order to provide accurate and authoritative information, every response should have a published source and the citation of the source should be given.

As part of their professional work, library employees assist patrons in choosing materials for reading, listening, and viewing. Readers' advisory is unbiased and based on a thorough, continuing and up-to-date knowledge of the collection.

In all cases, employees strive to give as much help as possible. If a question cannot be answered, employees will attempt to make a referral to another information source or organization.

All library patrons will receive basic library services at no cost. Some services may be subject to fees established by the Library.

Types of Reference

The Library offers the following services at its service points:

Directional Questions. An informational contact which facilitates the use of the Library and its environs and which may involve the use of sources describing the Library such as schedules and floor plans.

Ready Reference. A search which requires little, if any interaction with the patron in determining the nature of the inquiry and search strategy which would best provide the answer. Ready reference questions are those in which answers can be found and delivered in 10 minutes or less.

Intermediate Reference. A search that requires up to 20 minutes to provide an answer. Intermediate reference requires more interaction with the patron in determining the nature of the inquiry and search strategy.

Extended Reference. A search that requires considerable interaction with the patron in the development of strategies to find the best answer in the most cost-effective way. Extended reference involves questions which require more than 20 minutes of staff time.

Instructional Question. Instruction on the use of printed and electronic resources is limited to 20 minutes or less.

Limits of Reference Services

The limit of service provided will vary based on the number of patrons who need assistance, the number of employees available to help, the complexity of requests, and the amount of information needed.

Service Points

In-person Reference. The Library offers ready reference, intermediate reference, directional information and instruction on using resources to patrons in person. In-person reference questions are answered on a first-come, first-served basis. Priority is given to in-person reference over telephone and electronic reference.

Telephone Reference. The Library offers ready reference via telephone. Library employees will direct calls to the appropriate Library area as needed. Telephone inquiries are handled with second priority, following in-person requests. Telephone inquiries are answered in the order in which they are received. For requests that are not resolved within ten minutes, employees may ask the patron to come to the library to continue research or may take the patron's telephone number and call them back. Employees will leave voicemail for patrons unless instructed by the patron to do otherwise.

Electronic Reference. The Library offers ready reference and intermediate reference electronically. Employees provide third priority to patrons following in person and telephone inquiries. Employees attempt to search and answer all electronic reference questions within a 10-minute time limit. The Library responds to electronic reference questions within 24 business hours. Responses may be delayed on weekends and holidays. Responses should reflect the Library favorably in form, content and grammar. Reference logs may be monitored to ensure quality control.

Written Correspondence. Lowest priority is given to written inquiries. Employees will normally reply to written correspondence within seven business days. Letter writers who reside within the Library's service area may be answered via telephone, if appropriate. Letter writers outside the Library's service area will be sent a form letter referring them to their local library for general information. Letters containing questions concerning local information and/or answered from sources unique to the Library's collection may be answered in detail. Employees will limit searches to 30 minutes before referring the letter writer to another source. Responses should reflect the Library favorably in form, content and grammar. Letters and their responses are kept for 30 days to assure the patron's receipt of response and are then destroyed. The patron is charged current

photocopy fees for any printing. For requests received by the Willennar Genealogy Center, see Local and Family History below.

Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). Instructional assistance is limited to 20 minutes or less. Use of the public access catalogs is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Special Types of Reference Questions. Employees will use the full range of reference interview skills when working with patrons on these topics. Patrons will be encouraged to consult professionals in the appropriate field rather than to rely on printed sources alone. Brief definitions and descriptions can be read verbatim from published sources in answer to telephone inquiries. Additionally, callers should be encouraged to come to the Library to avail themselves of a variety of sources to make informed decisions. Employees do not interpret, give opinions, advise, or make proposals.

Legal and Medical Questions. Library employees are not health care professionals or attorneys. They cannot offer legal or medical advice or interpretations of legal or medical information (defined as the explanation of what is not immediately plain, explicit or unmistakable).

Medical prognoses will not be read over the telephone or given electronically. Employees will assist patrons in the Library in locating information about a disease or medical condition using print and non-print sources.

Over the telephone, employees may:

- Read a definition of a medical term or description of a disease or condition from an available source, which will be cited and quoted verbatim. When the definition is difficult to understand, employees will define terms used in the definition or description by using other sources but will not give an interpretation of the term. Employees may read brief information over the telephone about prescription drugs from a drug dictionary when the name of the drug is given. The source will be cited and quoted verbatim with no interpretation. Terms used in the text will be defined by using another source. Employees will not identify a drug from a physical description nor give recommended dosages.
- They will advise patrons to consult an attorney or a medical specialist when additional information is needed but will not recommend specific individuals.
- Employees will refer patrons to nearby law libraries or health agencies in the area when these resources seem most appropriate to answer the patron's needs.

Although employees will be as helpful as possible in locating and providing necessary legal materials, it is the responsibility of the patron to determine what the law "means." Employees may assist patrons in the use of legal materials, explaining their organization and format.

Employees may read over the telephone a definition found in a law dictionary. Employees will direct patrons to the U.S. Code, the Indiana Code, the Municipal Code and other legal resources.

During a reference telephone transaction involving legal or medical questions, the patron will be informed that the employee is reading from the best available Library sources; there may be other authorities or more current information.

Local and Family History Questions. Employees offer limited assistance as time permits with genealogy and local history research. Library volunteers will respond to letters requesting local history research.

Items from the clipping file are used inside the Library, one file at a time. The staff will hold identification while the patron uses the file. Browsing is not permitted in the local history clipping files.

The William H. Willennar Genealogy Center collects, preserves, and makes available to the public, information regarding the people, organizations, institutions, and events of Auburn and DeKalb County, Indiana. The primary aim of the Genealogy Center is to educate and empower patrons to do their own research. The staff of the Genealogy Center will assist patrons who cannot visit in person, but due to employee time and resources, the number of query requests answered per month may be limited.

Employees will do their best to locate the information requested in the Genealogy Center collection. If information cannot be located in the collection, an employee will contact the patron as soon as possible.

Employees will not research at the DeKalb County Courthouse or other institutions for patrons. However, they will guide patrons to other sources of information, including libraries and other institutions, which may have the information requested by the patron.

A patron can submit up to three query requests a month by phone, email, or U.S. Mail. The limit may be waived at the discretion of the Library Director or the Director's designee.

Translations. Foreign language translation is limited to words and phrases found in current reference sources. Staff do not translate documents for patrons due to foreign language proficiency problems, time constraints and far-ranging legal ramifications that could result. Staff will refer requests for translations beyond this scope to appropriate community resources.

Homework Questions. Staff will assist students in learning how to use the catalog as well as appropriate electronic and print materials. Staff will not complete homework assignments or provide answers. Students and parents are invited to come to the library and will be assisted in finding materials.