

Bedford Public Library Reference Services Policy

Policy Statement 1-Purpose

Reference service is intended to provide timely, accurate and useful information. By utilizing materials from the collection, and through access or referral to sources outside the Library, information on all areas of recorded knowledge is made available.

- 1.1 It is the policy of this Library to provide adequate staffing, sufficiently educated and trained, in order to provide the highest level of library services.
- 1.2 The Bedford Public Library offers the same quality of service to all regardless of age, race, gender, nationality, educational background, disability, sexual orientation or any other criteria which may be the source of discrimination.
- 1.3 If the information requested by a patron proves to be beyond the scope of the resources available at the library, or if the information requested is deemed to be so complex as to necessitate time-consuming research that will require reference staff to neglect the needs of other patrons or other key job responsibilities, the patron will, if possible, be referred to other libraries or agencies that might be able to provide more help.
- 1.4 Library staff will provide instruction and orientation to users in order to promote greater self-sufficiency in library use and to promote more effective utilization of the Library's resources.

Policy Statement 2-Guidelines for Desk Service

Service to the public receives priority over any other duties.

- 2.1 Reference questions are treated confidentially.
- 2.2 In-person reference receives priority over telephone queries.
- 2.3 Library staff will conduct expert reference interviews to determine the reference/research needs of the library user.
- 2.4 Library staff will rely upon information obtained from reputable sources in order to give the most accurate and authoritative answers to questions.
- 2.5 Library staff will also use professional judgment in determining how best to serve each customer's reference needs.
- 2.6 Library staff will cite the source of the answer.
- 2.7 Library staff will refer the client to other appropriate sources or institutions when the query cannot be answered to the satisfaction of the client using BPL resources.

Policy Statement 3—Specific Question Guidelines

Library staff will make every attempt to provide information and reference assistance for all inquiries. When information cannot be provided, referrals to appropriate professional organizations or federal/state/municipal agencies will be made.

- 3.1 Reference staff does not give medical, legal, copyright, financial or tax advice.
- 3.2 Reference staff never refers library users to individual practitioners – physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, or others.
- 3.3 The Bedford Public Library does not provide genealogy reference due to limitations of collection and electronic resources. Patrons will be referred to other libraries.
- 3.4 Library staff does not provide an appraisal of books, works of art, antiques, coins, stamps, currency, or other collectibles but will provide contact information for appraisal services derived from professional association directories.
- 3.5 Library staff does provide brief translations only if a staff member is available with the appropriate expertise.
- 3.6 Library staff does not provide personal critical analyses, interpretations, or judgments regarding the merit of literary or other works.
- 3.7 Library staff does not provide editorial services or image searches to library users.
- 3.8 General assistance is provided for patent and trademark research. Reference staff does not conduct patent or trademark research for library users.
- 3.9 Questions of an inappropriate nature will not be answered.

In-Person Reference

- 3.10 Reference questions may require reference staff to accompany clients to the online catalog/databases to explain its use or to the library stacks to help locate material.
- 3.11 If there are a number of library users needing assistance, requests that are directional or brief in nature may be given priority over lengthy or complex questions.

Telephone Reference

- 3.12 Telephone reference generally falls into the Ready Reference category and should take no more than 5-10 minutes.
- 3.13 Telephone reference questions should be limited to a reasonable number; librarians will use their best professional judgment.
- 3.14 Reference questions of a more complex nature will be handled in-person at the library.

Electronic Reference

- 3.15 E-mail reference questions will be answered in the order in which they are received.
- 3.16 Questions of a complex or subject specific nature received electronically will be handled in-person at the library.
- 3.18 Internet reference questions will be answered at those times that the library is monitoring the service. The Library will not answer questions an hour before close due to securing the facility.

Electronic Databases/Internet

- 3.19 Reference staff will instruct and/or orient users to the online resources subscribed to by the library and made accessible through the BPL webpage.
- 3.20 Reference staff will use professional judgment to determine when a fee-based electronic database would be the best means of answering a question.
- 3.21 Reference staff will provide authoritative answers to questions.
- 3.22 Reference staff cannot guarantee the validity or accuracy of information retrieved from the Internet.

Loan of Reference Materials

- 3.23 The purpose of the reference collection is to assure library users of access to reference tools at all times that the library is open. Reference materials, therefore, will not circulate.

Policy Statement 4-Book a Librarian Service

The Library recognizes that not all patron information needs can be satisfied through 5-10 minute reference transaction at the Information Desk and so provides the Book a Librarian service to offer assistance to those who seek one-on-one guidance for questions that require more time or preparation.

- 4.1 The Book a Librarian (BAL) service is available to adult Library cardholders with accounts in good standing.
- 4.2 Appointments may be made using the online BAL form or the paper BAL form.
 - 4.2.1 Patrons are limited to 2 appointments per month for up to 30 minutes per appointment. When an appointment extends beyond 30 minutes, the patron will either be connected to resources to continue with self-directed learning or s/he will be asked to make another appointment if s/he has not already had two (2) that month.
 - 4.2.2 Appointments are available during Library operating hours at the Library. No appointments will be scheduled on City holidays, Saturdays, or Sundays.
 - 4.2.3 Patrons requesting BAL appointments must allow at least seven (7) days advance notice. A Library staff member will contact the patron about her/his appointment within that time.
 - 4.2.4 To cancel an appointment, the patron must call the Library during operating hours and provide her/his name and the time of the scheduled appointment.
 - 4.2.5 Based on the subject of the appointment and staff availability, BPL staff will determine who will assist the patron for the appointment.
 - 4.2.6 Staff assigned will be based on availability and expertise and will be either a librarian or a library staff member.

4.3 The BAL service is available to adult Library cardholders who want help with topics like:

- Downloading Library ebooks or audiobooks
- Filling out an online job application
- Using one of the Library's databases
- Setting up an email account
- Creating a reading list tailored to the patron's tastes
- A tour of the Library and/or introduction to our services
- Finding resources for a research topic

4.4 Due to staff expertise and availability, there are limits to the type of assistance we can provide through BAL. We cannot:

4.4.1 Offer medical, legal, business, or financial advice except to help the patron find reputable sources that can provide answers to these questions.

4.4.2 Provide technical support or troubleshooting for personal computers or devices except when it concerns utilizing Library services like using our catalog, checking out ebooks, or accessing our databases. Library staff members are not technology experts and may not be able to provide assistance with certain computer operating systems, software, or applications. In these cases, we will provide the patron with resources for self-directed learning.

4.4.3 Type or proofread documents.

4.4.4 Offer job hunting or career advice beyond connecting the patron with helpful resources. The patron should refer to our Event calendar for a full listing of available Library classes.

4.4.5 Offer general computer or software instruction outside of the Library's scheduled computer classes. However, through BAL, we can offer assistance with specific computer-related tasks such as setting up an email account or filling out an online job application.

4.4.6 Provide tutoring outside the Library's scheduled tutoring programs.

4.4.7 Provide genealogy research assistance.

4.4.8 Translate documents from one language to another.

Bedford Public Library

Book a Librarian

Book a Librarian is a by-appointment reference service that the Bedford Public Library provides for adult BPL cardholders who want one-on-one guidance. Topics we can help you with include:

- Filling out an online job application
- Using one of the Library's databases
- Setting up an email account
- A tour of the Library
- Creating a reading list
- Downloading Library ebooks or audiobooks to your eReader or tablet
- Downloading Zinio digital magazines to your device

*We cannot offer medical, legal, business, or financial advice but we can connect you to resources that can answer your questions. We do not provide troubleshooting or technical services for your electronic devices. **Book a Librarian appointments will not be made for topics already covered in one of the Library's free classes.***

Please complete the form below. A staff member will contact you within 7 days to arrange your appointment. A patron may make no more than 2 appointments per month.

Your Contact Information

You must provide either e-mail or phone contact information.

Full name _____ Best time to contact you _____
E-mail address _____
Your BPL card # _____ Phone # _____

Appointment Information

What days of the week are best for you?

This service is not available on Saturdays or Sundays.

___ Monday ___ Thursday
___ Tuesday ___ Friday
___ Wednesday

What time of day is best for you?

Check any that are convenient for you. No appointments are available between noon - 2pm due to staffing levels.

___ 10am ___ 11am ___ 2pm
___ 3pm ___ 4pm ___ 5pm

Is there anything else we need to know about your availability?

Describe your question or information need.

Please provide as much detail as possible about what you hope to achieve during the appointment.

How much time do you think we'll need for your appointment?

___ 15 minutes ___ 30 minutes