

Hamburg Public Library Reference Policy

I. Reference Services

A. Reference service shall be provided to all users on an equal, nondiscriminatory, and nonjudgmental basis without regard to race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, background, or appearance of the patron making the inquiry.

B. Basic reference assistance is available during all hours the library is open to the public.

C. Reference service, along with other services provided directly to patrons, take priority over other libraries duties.

D. Requests submitted by patrons in the library are given priority over telephone or email requests that are received at the same time.

E. Generally, reference services are limited to such services as can be provided in five or ten minutes. More complex and time intensive requests will be handled on an individual basis, at the discretion of the library director.

F. When the library lacks the resources necessary to answer inquiries, the library staff will ask the patron to contact the District Library Center, Reading Public Library, or advise patrons of sources from which the desired information may be obtained

G. In answering reference inquiries, the source of the answer shall always be cited and, when relevant, the date of publication of the source. Library staff will strive to find the most scholarly sources of information available. The producers of that resource, not the library itself, are responsible for the accuracy of the information, not library staff.

H. Staff will provide their professional opinion when recommending the best source to answer a question or when providing reader's advisory service. Staff members will not give opinions, advice, or interpretation of information beyond the scope of their training and expertise.

I. Whenever feasible, staff will promote information literacy by showing users how to search for information on their own.

J. Staff will assist as they are able in helping patrons with computer applications or electronic devices and may refer patrons to appropriate books, online tutorials, or classes for further assistance. When assisting patrons with computer resources, staff will not enter personal information for patrons.

II. Limitations

- A. Interpretation, advice, or personal recommendations in any area other than the use of library resources. This includes, but is not limited to, legal, medical, or tax advice.
- B. Critiquing or editing patron documents, including resumes.
- C. Completing (including online forms) for patrons or assisting patrons in completing such forms.
- D. Solving or troubleshooting problems with patron's personal computers or other electronic devices.
- E. Translations will not be provided.

III. Reference Collection

- A. Scope: Hamburg Public Library maintains a collection of reference materials to answer information requests from its patrons. The District Library Center, Reading Public Library, serves as an additional resource by supplying the Hamburg Public Library with materials through interlibrary loan and by providing reference services when needed.
- B. Priorities and Limitations: In accordance with its collection development policy, Hamburg Public Library purchases resources to support the needs and interests of the general public. The library does not purchase reference resources that are highly technical, business-specific, or scholarly, though some of these resources can be obtained through interlibrary loan.
- C. Collection Management: Hamburg Public Library is committed to building and maintaining a reference collection according to the criteria stated in the Collection Development Policy. The Reference Collection is non-circulating, except at the discretion of the Library Director.