

Chapter 9 (Public Services: Reference and Reader's Advisory Services)

Through public services, a library offers assistance to patrons in the use of its collections and resources. The library also provides patrons with resources beyond those owned by the library through interlibrary loan and other resource-sharing arrangements. Basic public services include reference and reader's advisory. These services should be provided to all age groups.

Reference Service

Reference service is the provision of information in response to a patron's question. All Illinois public libraries should provide reference service for their patrons.

Reference Service Standards

1. All basic services are available when the library is open. For the purpose of this document, basic services are circulation, reference, reader's advisory, and computer/Internet access.
2. The library has a board-approved reference service policy developed by reference staff and administration and it is reviewed biennially.
3. The library provides staff trained in reference service to meet the needs of patrons who have challenges with disabilities, language, and literacy.
4. The library participates in interlibrary loan and resource sharing to help provide accurate and timely reference service.
5. The library is aware of the importance of accuracy in reference service and relies on information sources of demonstrated currency and authority.
6. The library supports training in the use of technologies necessary to access electronic resources, including training for persons with disabilities in the use of adaptive equipment and software.
7. The library provides easy access to accurate and up-to-date community information/resource files.
8. The library provides current issues of at least one community or local newspaper and retains hard copy or online back issues for a minimum of six months.
9. The library provides access to local ordinances or codes of all municipalities within its service boundaries.
10. The library provides access to local and state maps.
11. The library strives to provide access to the minutes of local government meetings. These include but are not limited to municipal (village, township, or city) and school board meetings.
12. The library provides voter information, including precinct boundaries and location of polling places.
13. The library provides information about local history and events.
14. The library will include at least one current reference resource for each subject area. Electronic resources may fulfill this requirement.

15. Staff has access to a telephone or computer to receive and respond to requests for information and materials and to contact other agencies for information.
16. Staff members are encouraged to attend at least one relevant continuing education event each year.
17. The library annually evaluates its reference service for accuracy, timeliness, staff friendliness, and patron ease.

Reference Service Checklist

- All basic services are available when the library is open.
- The library has a reference service policy.
- The library provides staff trained in reference service to meet the needs of patrons who have challenges with disabilities, language, and literacy.
- The library participates in interlibrary loan and resource sharing to help provide accurate and timely reference service.
- The library is aware of the importance of accuracy in reference service and relies on information sources of demonstrated currency and authority.
- The library supports training in the use of technologies necessary to access electronic resources, including training for persons with disabilities in the use of adaptive equipment and software.
- The library provides easy access to accurate and up-to-date community information.
- The library provides current issues of at least one community or local newspaper and retains hard copy or online back issues for a minimum of six months.
- The library provides access to local ordinances or codes of all municipalities within its service boundaries.
- The library provides access to local and state maps.
- The library provides access to the minutes of local government meetings. These include but are not limited to municipal (village, township, or city) and school board meetings.
- The library provides voter information, including precinct boundaries and location of polling places.
- The library provides information about local history and events.
- The library has at least one current reference resource for each subject area.
- Staff has access to a telephone or computer to receive and respond to requests for information and materials and to contact other agencies for information.
- Staff members are encouraged to attend at least one relevant continuing education event each year.
- The library evaluates its reference service on an annual basis.

Reader's Advisory Service

Reader's advisory service is a patron focused service that promotes and encourages the use of collections for recreational purposes, including but not limited to recreational reading, watching, and listening. Reader's advisory service offers advice, suggestions, recommendations, and selections to library users to help them identify authors, titles, and genres which they may enjoy. It should also strive to respond to the recreational reading, viewing, and listening tastes of individual patrons using the resources of the library and its staff to link readers with books, movies, and music. Reader's advisory is instrumental in creating relationships and encouraging conversations with users and the community about leisure reading, viewing, and listening needs.

All Illinois public libraries should provide some sort of reader's advisory service to their patrons. This can be done formally with a separate designated service desk, through conversation with a librarian, or informally through conversations throughout the library such as at the circulation desk where library staff members interact with patrons as they are checking out and returning materials and are able to discuss these items with them, getting to know their preferences in the process. This can lead to suggestions of similar titles that the patrons may enjoy.

Reader's Advisory Service Standards

1. All basic services are available when the library is open. For the purposes of this document, basic services are circulation and reference and reader's advisory services. If reference and reader's advisory services are provided to children and adults from two separate points, then the library provides adequate staffing at both locations all hours the library is open.
2. The library has competently trained staff that has thorough knowledge of popular authors and titles.
3. The library participates in interlibrary loan and resource sharing to help provide accurate and timely reader's advisory service.
4. The library is aware of the importance of quality in reader's advisory service and relies on information sources of demonstrated currency and authority.
5. Staff has access to a telephone and computer to receive and respond to requests for information and materials and to contact other agencies for information.
6. Staff members who are responsible for reader's advisory services should attempt to stay current with community events by participating in community organizations, clubs, or councils.
7. Staff members who are responsible for reader's advisory services should attempt to attend as many workshops, reading roundtables, or continuing education events as possible to stay current.
8. The library accepts and responds to reader's advisory requests received in person, on the phone, or electronically.
9. The library promotes and cultivates popular collections which are inclusive, representing all people and their actual experiences to provide an accurate portrayal of the diverse world in which we live.

Reader's Advisory Service Checklist

- All basic services are available when the library is open.
- The library has competently trained staff that has thorough knowledge of popular authors and titles.
- The library maintains a well-rounded collection of both fiction and nonfiction titles.
- The library participates in interlibrary loan and resource sharing to help provide accurate and timely reader's advisory service.
- The library maintains a basic collection of reader's advisory reference materials.
- All staff members attend at least one relevant continuing education event each year.
- Staff members who are responsible for reader's advisory service in their library join at least one community organization, club, or council.
- Staff members who are responsible for reader's advisory service in their library attend at least one workshop, reading roundtable, or continuing education event.
- The library accepts and responds to reader's advisory requests received in person, on the phone, or electronically.