

# **Amesbury Public Library**

## **Reference Services Policy**

### **Objectives**

To select, acquire, and organize both print and electronic sources of information and other services that meet the personal, educational and professional needs of library users.

To identify and promote the information needs of potential library users in the community.

To cooperate with community agencies and organizations in their effort to serve the community's needs.

To identify a user's specific information needs through a reference interview and then meet those needs by using all resources available including the expertise of colleagues and referral to other organizations.

To employ staff who possess the qualifications and skills to assist patrons in an efficient and courteous manner.

### **Standards**

The reference staff at the Amesbury Public Library offers the same quality of services to all regardless of age, race, gender, nationality, educational background, disability, sexual orientation or any other criteria.

Reference services will be provided at all times the library is open.

Professionally trained personnel will provide reference assistance in order to provide quality service.

All reference transactions with a library patron, whether adult or child, will be considered confidential and will be discussed only in a professional context.

Services to the public receive priority over any other duties, and in-person reference receives priority over telephone queries. Inquiries received via email or written requests will be answered in the order in which they are received, as staff time permits.

Time Limits: Because no two reference questions are alike, no concrete limits can be placed on how much time the reference staff spends on a particular request. The reference staff will use their own best judgment in limiting the time spent with one particular patron, according to the urgency of the question and the number of patrons waiting to be served. When a question or request requires more time than is immediately available, the reference librarian will take the patron's name and contact information and follow-up within 24 hours.

Reference staff will rely upon information obtained from reputable sources in order to give the most accurate and authoritative answer to questions.

Reference staff will refer the patron to other appropriate sources or institutions when the query cannot be answered to the satisfaction of the patron using APL resources.

Reference staff does not give medical, legal, financial or tax advice.

The reference staff will be able to instruct patrons in the use of all of the library's print and electronic resources.

## Services

### *Reference materials*

The library provides a collection of resources (print and electronic materials) that assure library users of access to reference materials at all times that the library is open. For this reason, some reference materials will never circulate.

### *Interlibrary loan*

Books or materials not owned by the Amesbury Public Library can be obtained for patrons through our membership in the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC). Materials not available within the Consortium may be available to request from other Massachusetts library networks that participate in the point-to-point interlibrary loan system. The reference staff can borrow directly from these libraries via an email request. When necessary, reference staff may also request materials from out-of-state libraries, and patrons may be asked to pay the shipping costs of said items. Loan periods on non-MVLC items are determined by the lending institution.

### *Amesbury Information*

The Library maintains its own web page that includes information about the library and links to the other town departments. We also provide a Community Information area, where we distribute information about area services, post announcements about upcoming local events, and house other municipal documents. This information is updated continually and new organizations are added regularly. (For more information, please refer to our *Community Information Policy*).

### *Genealogy and Local History*

Assistance with genealogy and local history research is limited to basic instruction in using the library collection and general research assistance. As time and staffing levels allow, the reference staff will do genealogy research for those patrons unable to come to the library due to distance or disability.

### *Tax Information*

The Library participates annually in the IRS tax form distribution program and we receive a small number of tax forms from the Mass Department of Revenue. Most forms and publications are available on the Internet and the reference staff is glad to help our users retrieve the necessary forms. There is no charge for printing forms, but patrons wishing to print instructions will be asked to pay for their printing costs. Specific tax questions will be treated as any other reference question, but tax advice or interpretation will not be given. Further referral may be made to the appropriate state and federal tax offices.

### *Medical or Legal Information*

Questions on these topics will be treated like any other reference question. The Library will provide information from authoritative sources and make referrals to appropriate outside resources or research institutions. At no time will the reference staff interpret legal or medical information, nor offer personal advice on these topics.

### *Exam Proctoring*

Reference staff will proctor examinations for students taking correspondence courses. Arrangements should be made at least two weeks prior to the exam date to ensure staff availability.