

ADAMS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

SECTION 4.240 – REFERENCE SERVICES (adopted 9/11/2013; revised 4/9/14)

Staff will offer their best professional opinion when providing reader's advisory service or recommending the best source to answer a question. However, staff will not give opinions, advice, or interpretation of information beyond the scope of their expertise and training in library reference work.

Staff will attempt to guide and instruct patrons in the use of library resources when responding to reference inquiries. When answering a patron's reference question, staff will cite the resource(s) from which the information is obtained. Therefore, the producers of that resource, not the library itself, are responsible for that resource's accuracy.

The staff member will decide when all reasonable resource options have been exhausted at the library and when the time to cease working on a question and refer the patron elsewhere. Patrons will be encouraged to personally use the reference resources listed on the library's webpage, particularly Ohio's online research databases.

Staff will not provide the following kinds of assistance, which are deemed to be beyond the scope of the library's service responsibilities:

Interpretation, advice, or personal recommendations in any area other than the use of library resources. This includes, but is not limited to legal, medical, insurance, or tax advice.

Creating or editing patron documents, including resumes for job seekers. Staff may offer limited critique of resumes, especially for obvious spelling and grammar mistakes, as time permits.

Completing forms (including online forms) for patrons, or assisting patrons in completing such forms. Staff will, however, give direction to patrons in filling out forms, as time permits.

When assisting patrons with electronic resources, staff will not enter personal information for patrons.

Translations will be provided only if a person on staff with appropriate expertise is available. For all other translations, staff will refer patrons to other appropriate resources to obtain information regarding translators.

Specific Reference Question Guidelines

Book, Antique and Art Appraisals – Patrons will be referred to appropriate reference sources, consultants, or experts. Staff members will never give a personal appraisal of the value of an object.

Computers, Applications, and Devices – Staff with appropriate expertise may assist patrons with questions regarding computers, applications, or electronic reading/listening devices,

but will decide the amount of time that he/she can reasonably devote to the question. Staff may also refer the patron to other resources such as books, online tutorials, classes, or the library's Information Technology staff.

Consumer Evaluations – Staff will help patrons locate objective consumer product information using the online resources and magazines. Short published consumer ratings will be read over the phone. However, in depth consumer information must be read by the patron. The staff does not offer personal opinions recommending one product over another.

Contest Questions – Contest questions will be approached with the same guidelines and time limits as any other type of reference question. The staff will not interpret contest rules.

Genealogical/Local History Questions – Staff members will provide assistance in locating books or other items in the collection and help in accessing electronic resources to answer genealogical questions. For answers to specific genealogical questions, patrons will be referred to the Adams County Genealogical Society.

Medical, Legal, and Insurance Questions – The library does not provide advice in the areas of medicine, law, or insurance. Staff will provide information but will not interpret or evaluate that information. They will provide instruction in the use of resources, enabling users to pursue information independently and effectively if so desired. If no appropriate sources can be located, the patron may be referred to local medical, legal, insurance, or tax services for interpretation of the information.

Research – Patrons needing extensive bibliographies, lists, statistics, or research will be directed to the appropriate resources and offered as much assistance as staff time allows. Patrons may be referred to other libraries or agencies for further assistance.

School Assignments – Every effort will be made to satisfactorily answer student questions and to provide sources of information and instruction needed to use those resources. If every effort has been made by the staff member and the student to locate information without results, the student will be encouraged to use <http://www.knowitnow.org/>, Ohio's online reference service, or return to the teacher for further instructions.

Tax Forms and Questions – The Library does not provide advice in the areas of taxes. Staff will provide resources but will not interpret or evaluate the information found in these resources. They will provide instruction in the use of resources, enabling users to pursue information independently and effectively if so desired. Patrons will be referred to online resources provided by state/federal Internal Revenue Services for interpretation of information.

During the tax season, the library attempts to stock basic Ohio and Federal tax forms. If patrons request a form that the library does not have, the patron will be given contact information to online resources for the requested form.