



POLICY

Policy Type: Library Services **Policy Number:** 03-10
Policy Title: Information and Readers' Advisory Services

Definition:

Information/Readers' Advisory services are those services which connect people with resources to fulfill informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs.

Service Philosophy:

St. Thomas Public Library is dedicated to supporting lifelong learning and access to information, knowledge and ideas. Staff strive to effectively meet the goals of the Library's mission statement by providing quality informational resources and services for our customers. All customers seeking assistance at the Library will be greeted in a friendly manner. Staff will answer all reference and readers' advisory questions efficiently, accurately, and as completely as possible and will be guided by St. Thomas Public Library's Policy on Intellectual Freedom.

Ethical Considerations:

Service shall be provided to all users on an equal, non-discriminatory and nonjudgmental basis without regard to: (1) race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, appearance, or personal view of the customer making the inquiry; (2) the subject matter being researched; or (3) the purpose of the inquiry. Transactions with customers will be treated as equally important. All questions and request for information shall be treated as confidential in compliance with government legislation. Customers are not asked to identify themselves in any way before reference or readers' advisory service is provided.

Types of Services:

St. Thomas Public Library provides a variety of information services to customers that are described below:

- Quick Reference

These questions can usually be answered immediately using library resources.

- General Reference
General reference usually requires a more lengthy search and/or the use of a number of sources to arrive at a complete answer. Staff will guide and assist the customer in pursuing the answer while simultaneously providing, as required, informal instruction in how to search and use library resources to the best advantage.
- Readers' Advisory
St. Thomas Public Library will ensure the operation of a readers' advisory service. Readers' advisory is the process of matching readers and viewers to materials. It has more to do with a customer's leisure reading than their informational needs. Any requests which fit into a readers' advisory category carry just as much weight as an informational request.
- Consultation/Interpretation
A customer will be referred to the information in the Library but information, particularly in the subject areas of law, medicine, consumer information, religion, politics and personal finance/tax information, is presented without interpretation, advice, analysis or personal recommendation.
- Library Orientation, Instruction and Student Assistance
An important component of the duties of the staff working at the Service Desks is that of familiarizing the customer with all library services and giving instruction in the use of the public access catalogue, indexes, databases, Internet resources, the George Thorman Local History collection, microfilm reader/printer, technology and other library materials and equipment. The level of assistance provided will depend on the resources and staff available.

Staff will provide formal library orientation and instruction to individuals or groups if requested, and if time available.

- Referral
It is the policy of St. Thomas Public Library to maintain active liaison with other service agencies in the community. This policy is reflected in mutual referral of customers and sharing of information whenever appropriate. If it has been established by staff that a request for information cannot be answered or has been answered only in part with the resources of St. Thomas Public Library, the customer will be referred, when appropriate, to another source and assisted, where circumstances warrant, in contacting that source.
- Special Information Collections
Staff will assist customers in performing genealogical searches to the extent of their resources and expertise. Reference material may, under exceptional circumstances,

be lent out on short term loan. These loans will be made at the discretion of the Manager, Customer Engagement and Collections.

- Telephone, Email, Mail, and other Electronic Requests
Customers initiating enquiries by telephone, email, mail and electronically will receive full staff attention. Staff will endeavour to respond to telephone, email, fax, mail, and other electronic requests within 24 hours.

Customers needing extensive research service (extended reference) will be requested to visit the Library to participate in the research process.

- Interlibrary Loan Service
St. Thomas Public Library provides interlibrary loan service in accordance with our Interlibrary Loan guidelines in the Circulation Services Policy.

Assessment and Evaluation:

To assess and evaluate information services, and to comply with the requirements of the Annual Survey of Public Libraries, statistics on reference questions will be kept and analyzed.

Related Documents:

- [OLA Position Statement on Intellectual Rights and Freedoms](#)
- Policy # 03-18 Intellectual Freedom Policy
- Policy # 03-01 Collection Management
- Policy # 03-11 Circulation
- Policy # 03-12 Children's & Teens' Services

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