

Chambers County Library System - Reference Service Policy

Library System Mission Statement

The Chambers County Library System attempts, within its financial means, to collect, organize, make accessible and distribute library materials to meet the informational needs of individuals and groups, to facilitate informal self-education, to encourage positive recreation and constructive use of leisure time, and to act as a supplemental resource in the formal education of the children and young people in the community.

Chambers County Library Advisory Board
May, 1996

Reference Services Mission Statement

The Chambers County Library System will select an adequate, suitable, and up-to-date collection of materials, in keeping with the aims of the library system mission statement. Trained staff will be provided to assist patrons in locating resources and answering questions from a wide variety of subject fields for people of all ages, educational backgrounds, and personal and professional needs. Staff members will serve patrons efficiently, impartially, courteously, and in a timely manner. The library system upholds the principles of the American Library Association Code of Ethics.

ALA Code of Ethics

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

- I. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
 - II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
 - III. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
 - IV. We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.
 - V. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
 - VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
 - VII. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
 - VIII. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
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Adopted by the ALA Council

June 28, 1995

Philosophy & Scope of Reference Service

Reference services are provided with the belief that all information requests are valid; all patrons with a need for reference assistance deserve equal treatment and accurate responses; only staff with training in reference interviews and reference search techniques will handle reference questions; and that all requests for reference assistance are considered confidential.

The library system accepts requests in person at the library, or by phone, fax, mail, or through electronic mail. Priority is given to in-person requests. There are no fees charged for reference services. Queries that cannot be answered with local system resources will be researched on the Internet and through services provided by the Houston Area Library System and the Texas State Library and Archives.

Special Categories of Reference Service

Medical, financial, and legal questions, including Internal Revenue Service materials: The library system provides information, but not advice. Brief definitions and legal forms are provided for the patron, but the choice of what will apply to the patron is the patron's decision. The library staff members do not interpret medical, financial, or legal terms.

School assignments: Homework assignments are usually made for the purpose of teaching students how to gather and process information. Staff members will not provide extensive help on homework assignments; they will suggest basic reference materials, sources in the general collection, or online resources, and will make sure that students are aware of materials available through interlibrary loan.

Antique and rare material appraisals: Price guides and identification materials are provided in the library collection, but staff members are not trained in appraisal, and patrons must make their own valuation choices.

Local history and genealogy research: Chambers County is rich in history and local lore, and the library system has access to a variety of source materials, genealogical charts for local families, and traditional print materials on genealogy. Staff members are available to provide a general orientation to these resources, and will make every effort to supply helpful information but they are not able to undertake original research.

Proctoring examinations: The library system staff will provide test proctor services for patrons who need it. Advance notice for test proctoring is required.

Americans With Disabilities: Services for patrons with disabilities are extended to provide reasonable accommodation, but patrons are still required to do their own analysis, research, etc. Staff members will search for materials and bring them to a patron in a wheelchair, for example, if the patron has difficulty reaching those items.

Approved: Library Advisory Board– March, 2003