

DATE: April 15, 2024

TO: Board of Library Trustees

FROM: Court Fields, Senior Librarian

SUBJECT: **Proposed Revisions to the City of Mountain View Library Reference and Information Services Policy**

INTRODUCTION

The City of Mountain View Library Reference and Information Services Policy (“Policy”) was approved by the Board of Library Trustees on November 21, 2005 and revised on December 12, 2016. The Policy sets the guidelines and expectations for Library reference services and defines the level of service provided by staff at all Library service points.

The Library has three main service desks in addition to other public-facing service points, either in person, online, or via telephone, that also offer reference service, such as the History Center, Bookmobile, Homebound Service, and outreach events. In Fiscal Year 2022-23, Library staff answered 21,627 reference questions with most of the service provided at one of the three main desks.

Due to the volume and variety of reference questions received by staff, the Policy was created to set clear standards that can be utilized by staff to feel confident in their service approach. Setting established guidelines helps to codify our collective approach to reference service across all points of service.

The Policy follows basic guidelines laid out in the American Library Association’s (ALA) Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement. These policies highlight the importance of open and free access to resources, establishing a right to privacy and confidentiality, and advocating for the freedom to read regardless of origin, age, background, or views.

In reviewing the current Policy, staff proposes the following changes with a focus on the following items:

- Establish guidelines for basic standards and conditions of service.
- Emphasize nondiscriminatory practices and right to privacy.
- Eliminate subjective language and redundant statements.
- Revise and organize sections for clarity and succinctness.

PROPOSED CHANGES SUMMARY

1. Policy section:
 - a. Bullet points have been removed and reworded to incorporate into the opening paragraph.
 - b. Redundant “reference and information services” has been removed since it is referenced in the previous sentence.
 - c. Added reference to when (“when the Library is open to the public”) and how (“via telephone, online, or in person”) services are available are made more prominent to clearly define the Policy.
 - d. Nondiscrimination and privacy statements have been moved to the Policy Statement to highlight their importance.
 - e. Link to the ALA’s Freedom to Read Statement has been added as a reference and included as an attachment.
2. Guidelines and Conditions section:
 - a. Created two sections (“Guidelines and Conditions”) to distinguish what staff can provide and what the scope of service will be.
 - b. Removed opening statement on “successful reference service” due to subjective language and to make the section more succinct.
 - c. Changed “the Library” to “Library staff” to use more people-centered language.
 - d. Added bullet point on identifying resources to assess and provide for continued research either inside or outside the Library.
 - e. Eliminated superfluous “the use of” and “to each person” in “Provide information directly” statement and defined resources more specifically.
 - f. Removed sentence on providing training since it is included in the previous bullet point.

- g. Removed “Cooperate with other community agencies” statement since this would fall outside the scope of the Policy. Referring to other resources and agencies is added under Conditions.
- h. Definitions of “lifelong learning” and “good reference service” have been removed since they are not relevant to the Policy.
- i. Statement on “interpretive questions” has been removed and incorporated into the bullet point on medical, legal, and tax questions.
- j. Wording has been updated in the medical, legal, and tax questions bullet point, and specific references to resources (“Santa Clara County Law Library”) and superfluous language (“fields that require special training”) have been removed.
- k. Technology statement has been reworded to define service as “Library-related technology” and removed specific language about what staff can and cannot help with and referring customers to outside classes, which is mentioned in the next bullet point.
- l. “Exhaustive or lengthy research” statement has been reworded to be more positive and focuses on staff discretion to assessing needs and referring to outside resources.
- m. Statement on staff being the “link between resources and community” has been removed since it is outside the scope of the Policy.
- n. Statement on staff being “knowledgeable” removed due to redundancy.
- o. Statement on discretion added to the Policy section, which focuses on privacy and confidentiality as part of ALA’s Library Bill of Rights.
- p. “Library users” changed to “Customers” to remain consistent with other policies.
- q. Behavior Policy statement reworded for clarity and to be more inclusive of the service.

CF/JP/6/LIB
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- Attachments:
- 1. City of Mountain View Library Reference and Information Services Policy (redline)
 - 2. City of Mountain View Library Reference and Information Services Policy