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Reference and Information Services

03.04.01.G1 Reference Service Guidelines

PCCLD is committed to providing Reference Services in accordance with the guidelines and best practices set by the American Library Association's (ALA), *Library's Bill of Rights*, The Reference and User Services (RUSA) section of ALA, and the Public Library Association (PLA) section of ALA. This document established guidelines to ensure consistent and high-quality reference services at PCCLD.

Reference services address customer inquiries that are received in-person, over the phone, by email, written correspondence, or through PCCLD's Ask Us Service on the PCCLD website. Reference services provided by PCCLD include the development and maintenance of research collections, research guides, finding aids, bibliographies, databases, resource lists and webpages, that customers can use independently, in-house or remotely, to satisfy their information needs in a timely and efficient manner. PCCLD provides assistance locating and using these resources, as well as readers' advisory services.

PCCLD staff strives to provide a welcoming environment for patrons to receive accurate and detailed answers to a wide range of questions. Staff seek to fulfill the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs of our diverse community in a professional and impartial way.

General Reference Guidelines:

- Reference questions are treated confidentially.
- Given the complexity of reference work, there are no definitive time limits per interaction; the amount of time spent per query will be left to the discretion of staff. Reference appointments may be offered for in-depth research support.
- Reference questions will be responded to in the order received. In cases of time restraint, priority service will be given to in person requests. All other requests will receive a response as promptly as possible.
- Library staff will conduct reference interviews to determine the needs of the library user. Staff strive to proactively anticipate patron needs and accompany patrons to locate materials if desired.

- Staff will rely upon information from reputable sources in order to give the most accurate and authoritative answers to questions and will cite the source of answers to the best of their ability.
- Staff promote information literacy and show users how to search for and evaluate information whenever possible. Library staff will assist customers requesting information to complete assignment. Assistance will focus on instruction in using library materials and resources, rather than only supplying answers.
- Library staff will assist patrons with accessing online forms and applications, but are not permitted to type or enter personal information for patrons.

PCCLD reference services do not include:

- provision of medical, legal, copyright, financial or tax advice
- referral to individual practitioners (physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, etc.)
- appraisal of books, art, antiques or collectibles
- personal analyses, interpretations or judgements regarding the merit of literary works
- editorial or translation services
- patent or trademark assistance (PCCLD is not a designated Patent and Trademark Center)

Customer service staff are the first point of contact for in-person reference and phone inquiries. They will make decisions on whether or not they can answer an inquiry in a timely manner, or if they need to refer the customer to another service within the library. Referrals may be forwarded to other departments or branch locations for assistance with in-depth or specialized inquiries which include but are not limited to: database and library resource inquiries, research support, homebound assistance, adult education, makerspace services, program inquiries, local history and genealogy research, meeting room information, and community referrals.

Periods of high request volume may result in longer wait time response. Reference requests will be addressed in the order in which they are received. Ask Us inquiries will be checked and responses will be sent on a daily basis. When the Reference Librarian is not available, Ask Us inquiries will be fielded by other professional staff in the User Services Department.

Reference services are also available internally to other library staff and departments upon request/need. This includes providing information literacy skills assistance, resource information help, database literacy, reference interview skills/practice, etc.