

Appendix I

Reference Policy

Whitman County Library strives to provide accurate information and referrals in all 14 of our locations, on-line through our website and by telephone. Staff will initiate and maintain a dialogue with customers requesting information. The exchange enables staff to better serve the public by completely understanding the nature of the information being requested. Examples of services provided in all locations include: help answering specific questions or locating items for checkout, readers' advisory, assistance with basic research, orientation and instructional tours to new patrons or local groups, searching and instruction on the use of library computers, searching and requesting on the library catalog, using the Internet, and use of online databases.

Reference services are provided in a timely manner. If staff cannot meet the customer's information needs immediately, they will request a deadline for which the information must be received. The Colfax Library has been identified as the reference center to answer reference questions from Colfax and the thirteen rural branch libraries. If customer deadlines permit, referrals will be made to this reference center. To expedite the process, branch library staff should phone or email the reference center.

Basic Service Guidelines:

1. Confidentiality: Whitman County Library staff guarantee the customer's right to confidentiality in all reference transactions. Information obtained to fill a request is delivered directly to the customer who placed the request; exceptions to this practice are made only with prior instruction from the customer.
2. Timeliness: Information requests are filled as soon as possible from the time they are received. Whenever a customer provides staff with a deadline for filling a request, every attempt is made to meet the deadline. In the event the deadline cannot be met, staff will contact the customer to explain the situation or negotiate a new deadline.
3. Service Priorities: Customers are served on a first-come, first-serve basis, with priority given to those who make the request in person. When requests require extended searches or workload must be prioritized, requesters' deadlines will be used as the deciding factor.
4. Reference Interview: Staff will communicate with the requester to verify or clarify the request. When providing information to fill the request, staff members will seek verification or satisfaction on the part of the library user to insure the transaction is complete.
5. Documentation of Information: All information provided by Whitman County Library staff is documented. Sources are cited verbally or in writing depending on the format of the information. Staff does not summarize or interpret any information given to customers.
6. Non-Resident Service: Basic questions are answered for all customers. If a customer resides outside the Whitman County Library District and their request will consume an inordinate amount of time or research, they will be advised of and assessed a \$30 per hour non-resident reference fee.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees June 18, 2001