

Burlington Public Library

Reference and Instruction Policy

The library staff team supports the community's informational, educational, and personal goals by providing factual information on a wide variety of topics using reference, readers' advisory, instruction, and interlibrary loan.

Reference

Library staff are information consultants trained to give knowledgeable, personalized assistance to help individuals find information and select and use library resources. Requests can be made in-person, by phone, or through chat, email, social media, or standard mail.

To give the most accurate and authoritative answers possible, staff members rely upon information published from reliable sources that are cited for the user. In consultation with the user, the staff member recommends sources and assists with interpretation and evaluation. Staff members do not give medical, legal, copyright, political, financial, or tax advice nor do they provide appraisals.

No two reference transactions are the same. Complex questions may require collaboration between the staff and user with the staff serving as a professional research consultant providing guidance and advice on search strategy and process. Depending on the number of people needing assistance and the amount of time required for a question, staff may need to limit the time and level of response provided to a customer and/or make an appointment for another time. For example, homework assignments and in-depth research are the responsibility of the student/researcher. General assistance is provided in genealogical research. Researchers who are not present may request records searches for local history/genealogy in a limited number of cases using the appropriate forms and with the assigned fee.

The user is responsible for inputting their data in forms, applications, and documents to ensure privacy is maintained. Library staff avoid touching other people's devices and instead guide users.

Readers' advisory

Readers' advisory services assist customers who seek recommendations for books or other library materials to suit their particular tastes and interests. Staff members are trained to suggest specific titles based on their professional knowledge and experience as well as through consultation of print and online sources.

Instruction

Teaching customers how to find information and use technology is an integral part of library service. Library staff will provide basic instruction ranging from how to use the computer catalog or library resources and how to download online materials to formal tours and classes on various computer and technology related topics. Formal instruction for individuals and groups in the use of information resources may be arranged by request or at times designated by the library staff. Customers with lengthy or involved questions are encouraged to make a one-on-one appointment for assistance.

Exam Proctoring

Appointments must be made in advance of the test date for a librarian to proctor a test. Staff are unable to provide dedicated, close supervision and refer users to the community college if that level of proctoring is required.

Revised and re-adopted: September 16, 2020, September 20, 2017, June 18, 2014, July 20, 2011, August 20, 2008, July 22, 1998, April 17, 1996, April 1990