

Goffstown Public Library Reference Policy

Mission of the Goffstown Public Library

The Goffstown Public Library provides a comfortable, inclusive place for citizens to access quality materials and programs, enhance cultural and societal awareness, and explore issues of local, national, and global interest.

Goals

1. The Goffstown Public Library will assist its visitors in locating accurate answers to their questions through either its own resources or appropriate referrals.
2. The Library will provide its visitors with accurate, up-to-date resources in a variety of formats.
3. The Library will inform community residents of the reference services and resources available to them, both in house and through outside channels.

Definition of Reference

According to the American Library Association's Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), the definition of reference is "providing assistance by using expertise in response to an information need". (Approved by the RUSA Board of Directors, December 13, 2021)

Extent of Reference Search

Library staff will treat all visitors with equal respect, and all questions with equal attention. The way the individual contacts the Library may limit the scope of the reference search.

Telephone, social media, and chat reference will be limited to information that does not require extensive amounts of time and research. Brief facts and information can be supplied, and a source cited. If the question cannot be answered quickly and easily, the staff member can take the person's contact information and respond with an answer or referral as quickly as possible. If the question will take a lengthy amount of research and staff time, then the staff should encourage the individual to visit the Library for assistance.

Written requests for information received by mail will be acknowledged by the Library staff within one week of its arrival.

Email requests for information will be acknowledged within one business day and answered completely or referred within one week of its arrival.

Request Priority

Reference requests can be made using many methods of communication. Priority will be given to the individual who is in-house over all others making a request. Library staff shall serve in-house visitors on a first-come, first-served basis. If visitors are waiting, they will be informed that they will be assisted in order of arrival and as soon as possible.

Level of Assistance

The Library staff will endeavor to find an answer to every question or make an appropriate referral; this may require the individual to view, process, and organize the information provided. A reference search may include phone calls, on-line and interlibrary loan if requested and the question requires a comprehensive search. The staff should always use good

judgment and will adhere to the ALA Code of Ethics (see Appendix) in all reference transactions.

The visitor and Library staff may make a special appointment for more specific instruction, particularly in the use of electronic resources, as time permits.

Interpretation of Materials

Laws, statutes, medical information, and financial information can be read to the individual verbatim and assistance may be given to help a person reach an understanding of the material. Library staff will make no attempt to interpret the material or provide any personal advice on legal, medical, or financial matters, nor offer to appraise the value of books or any other items. Likewise, during income tax season, when the Library provides tax forms as a public service, Library staff will not attempt to give tax advice.

Impartiality

Under no circumstances will Library staff promote or recommend individual doctors, medical professionals, lawyers, legal services, or financial services providers; however, staff may supply individuals with directories of such providers. Library staff will conduct the reference interview and provide reference service in a non-judgmental manner.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Reference topics will remain confidential between the visitor and the Library staff handling the request for information. Library staff may divulge a reference question to another Library staff member, or colleague in another library, who is better able to answer the visitor's question, if necessary.

Referrals

Unanswered questions will be referred to sources such as other libraries, various types of agencies, or individuals when all our sources have been exhausted.

Community Resources

Library staff shall continuously assess community needs, collect, and if necessary, create materials and resources containing information that can't be found elsewhere. Such materials may include cemetery records, local ordinances, emergency management, and policies.

Genealogy and Local History

The Library will collect materials covering the history of Goffstown and the state of New Hampshire when appropriate. The Library shall work collaboratively with other local organizations and develop services and collections which minimize overlap with existing services.

Electronic Resources

Library staff will use all electronic resources—including subscription databases, recommended websites, and Library catalogs—available to aid the visitor in their information needs. If the visitor is in-house, they should be instructed in the use of any sources they may use themselves. Library staff will be available to instruct in-house visitors on the use of our electronic resources.

Statistics

Library staff will make a note of each reference question asked in the manner prescribed by Library supervisors. The Library Director will compile statistics monthly.

Approved by Library Board of Trustees 9/21/05. Revised and approved by Library Board of Trustees 1/16/2013, 7/15/2015, 4/18/2018, 2/17/2021, 9/20/2023, 10/1/2025.

Appendix: Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

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.

1. 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.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. 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.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. 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.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; January 22, 2008; and June 29, 2021.