



Reference and Readers' Advisory Policy

The Vespasian Warner Public Library District serves a diverse population with unique, individual needs and levels of ability to conduct research independently. Providing reference service is one of the roles of the library. Providing both a trained staff and materials to meet users' needs for timely, accurate, and useful information are goals of the library. The library encourages all patrons to seek the assistance of staff to meet their information needs.

Effort is made to answer all types of questions with no distinction made about the purpose of the inquiry or use of the information. All questions are handled in confidence and with impartiality. Staff shall not divulge the content of reference questions to any member of the public. Staff shall not ask the patron for more information than is necessary to answer the reference question.

Reference service and materials are available to all persons. Reference service and materials are available during all hours the library is open and are provided in response to all forms of inquiry including, but not limited to, patrons in the library, telephone, and electronic means. The reference questions of patrons visiting the library in person are given the highest priority.

Staff will complete a search of in-house and electronic sources to answer a question. Patrons are given the source of the information as well as the answer. If determining the answer requires reading and evaluating an extensive amount of text, the staff will direct the patron to the appropriate sources. The patron will be responsible for completing the necessary synthesis. A staff member's personal opinion will not be given as fact. In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. Staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff define the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select income tax forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above. If all materials within the library are beyond the understanding of the patron, the patron will be advised to consult with a professional from the above listed field for additional information or advice.

If information appropriate to a patron's need is not available in the library, a referral will be made to the appropriate institution or agency. Library staff may also utilize the Illinois State Library reference department on the patron's behalf.

Staff will make every attempt to answer a patron's question during the patron's visit or telephone call. Otherwise, questions usually will be answered within 24 hours. When a library patron cannot come to the library due to a disability or unusual circumstances, staff will mail materials, excluding tax forms. Patrons will be charged fees related to requests. Non-VWPLD patrons whose libraries participate in SHARE may place interlibrary loan requests at VWPLD for items within SHARE. Non-SHARE patrons must place interlibrary loan requests at their home libraries.



Staff will attempt to answer all local history or genealogical requests. However, if the request requires an excessive amount of research, staff will refer the patron to the DeWitt County Genealogical Society.

Adopted January 9, 2019