

## **508 Reference and Reader's Advisory Service**

The Nippersink Public Library District serves a diverse public with individual needs and levels of ability to conduct research independently. The most recent standards document, *Serving Our Public: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries*, provides the model for this reference policy.

The Board of Trustees and Library Director of the Nippersink Public Library District encourages all staff members to pursue continuing education opportunities which will enable them to better meet the needs of the library's patrons. All staff members receive in-house training regarding appropriate responses to patron questions, including reference questions. This training includes reference interviewing techniques, reader's advisory service, bibliographic instruction and Internet instruction. All staff members are to treat patrons and their questions with respect. Names of patrons and the transactions which occur between patrons and staff are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context.

### **Scope and Responsibility**

Reference service and materials are available to all persons who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the library regardless of the age, race, sex, disability, social or economic status of the patron. Reference service and materials are available during all hours the library is open and is provided in response to all forms of inquiry including but not limited to patrons in the library, the telephone, mail and email. At times of peak activity within the library, it is mandatory that rules for providing reference assistance be established. In general, in-person reference questions will take priority over other forms of requests. The time that can be spent on a reference question depends upon whether other questions or patrons are waiting. To insure that patrons do not have to wait too long for reference service, a maximum of 10 minutes will be spent with a patron while others are waiting. If the question cannot be answered within that time, the staff member will continue the search and contact the patron at a later time. Every attempt will be made to answer reference questions within one working day. Questions which cannot be answered with on-site resources are referred to another agency. Such referrals are verified and/or mediated by library staff.

In the instance of legal, medical, financial, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic. The staff may not evaluate or interpret the information provided nor may the staff define the meaning of terms, offer advice, select forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields listed above.

### **Service to Schools**

In recognition of the library's role as an educational support center, staff will cooperate with the schools in handling homework assignments. Assignment alerts will be solicited from school librarians and teachers, and some books may be placed on temporary reserve to ensure that adequate resources are available for all students. The librarian's primary role is to guide students to reference tools and assist them in finding the necessary materials. The level of assistance given may vary, depending upon the difficulty of the request and the age and sophistication of the student.

### **Fees**

If fees are charged by outside sources used in answering a reference question, those costs may be charged to the patron. Examples of such charges are photocopy charges for articles over 10 pages and genealogy microfilm. Advance notice of charges will be given to the patron before the request is referred to those outside sources.