Information Services Policy

Policy Number: 17-54
Policy Approval Date: June 12, 2017
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Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide the staff with a compendium of information that promotes a uniform standard of service of the highest possible quality consistent with available resources.

This policy for the provision of information service addresses such issues as:

- Definitions of information service
- Which members of the staff are responsible for providing information service
- Accessibility of information for persons with disabilities
- Limits to assistance provided
- How telephone, online, email and other electronic requests are handled
- Timeliness and accuracy of responses
- How the reference collection is maintained and by whom
- How unanswered questions are dealt with
- When users are referred to other agencies
- What statistics and other records are kept

Definition in Information Services

Accreditation: Achievement of conditions set by the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council. An information services policy is mandatory.

A.O.D.A.: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

HPL: Huntsville Public Library

Information Services: Information services are defined as those services that connect people to the resources they require for education, recreation, and culture.

Interlibrary Loan (ILLO): the borrowing/lending of materials from/to other public libraries in the Province of Ontario.

Library: Huntsville Public Library

Technical Assistance: assistance with technologies, software and the Internet.

Philosophy

The Mission of Huntsville Public Library is *to provide accessible services, programs, collections and spaces designed to inspire and enrich the community.*

Information service at the Library is one of the most vital and visible expressions of the Library's purpose, mission, and is key to the Library's service roles: to serve as a hub for information, research, readers' advisory, education and technical assistance.

The Library is aware that more users are accessing the Library from home or office and it is imperative that reference services address this new trend. The Library's building will not be a boundary to its information services. The Library will explore means to offer service to information seekers at the place where they are when they have a question.

Staff Roles

Teen Tech: provide basic and intermediate level technical assistance to users.

Clerk: provide basic level information service to users.

Public Service Assistant: provides basic information service to users.

Librarian: provides intermediate level information service to users; includes Coordinator and eLibrarian.

eLibrarian – provide intermediate or advanced technical assistance to users.

Accessibility

Staff will be trained to respond to customer service requests according to AODA legislation and its applicable Service standards that includes:

1. Review of the Library Accessibility Standard for Customer Service Policy (Motion 11-31 | June 15, 2011).

2. Introduction to Library technologies and software.

Reference Collection Development

1. The Library strives to maintain an up-to-date, relevant and readily accessible working collection of reference materials, (electronic and print) relating primarily to community needs and interests. The reference collection includes general and research-oriented dictionaries, encyclopedia, directories, almanacs, handbooks, government documents, and statistical sources.

2. The Library collection development plan includes guidelines for the building and weeding of the reference collection (electronic and print).

Statistics & Other Records

1. To assess and evaluate information services, and to comply with the requirements of the Annual Survey of Public Libraries, statistics on reference questions will be kept for analysis.

2. The Library uses a reference widget that is accessible at all service points in the Library. It is web based and is accessible via the Internet.

Policy

1. All users seeking information assistance will be treated equally regardless of sex, age, ability and ethnicity.

2. The staff will respect and protect the confidential and private nature of requests for information at all times.

3. The staff will answer all reference questions efficiently, accurately and as completely as possible and will be guided by the Board's policy on *Intellectual Freedom*. All questions will be considered important and legitimate, unless it becomes clearly apparent that they are otherwise.

4. The staff will assist the user in finding information and will provide instruction on how to use Library resources based upon the user's needs.

There are categories of queries are set by the **Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport** and reported each year in the **Annual Survey of Public Libraries**. They include:

Standard Reference Transactions (criteria):

A request for information made directly by a library user that involves the knowledge, use, recommendation, interpretation or instruction in the use of one or more information sources or bibliographic tools by library staff.

Readers' Advisory Transaction (criteria):

A request for information made directly by a library user for the purpose of obtaining recommendations, guidance or specific materials relating to a library user's choice of reading material which focuses on a genre, topic or link between the library user's interests and the expansion of their literary interests.

Electronic Reference Transaction (criteria):

A request for information which follows the same criteria as a standard reference request but is received via electronic means (e.g. via email or web page or social media).

Information Communication Technology, software and social media support requests (criteria):

An information communications technology, software and social media support request is a request for information made directly by a library user for the purpose of obtaining information or help on information Communication Technology, software and social media. Examples include requests for help or information on E-book readers and their applications, blogs, social media such as Twitter or Facebook, computer software, and the Internet.

Accessible material, equipment or devices (criteria):

A purpose of this question is to measure some of the accessibility assistance people receive at the library that meets the intent and spirit of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (AODA). Count the number of times that staff provides accessible material, equipment or devices to members of the public requesting them because of their accessibility features. Include in-person, phoned or emailed requests for accessible format material of any kind, including through inter library loan. Include the number of times staff retrieve material within the library to meet accessibility needs. This can include material acquired through CNIB or CELA initiatives assisted by any library level data provided from those initiatives.

Accessibility devices equipment or furniture include but are not limited to magnification devices, large print screens on computers, audio book and Braille readers, or adjustable chairs and desks. If a member of the public seeks more than one accessible material item or accessible equipment item during the same request to staff, count it as one request.

Other types of queries recorded include these areas:

Quick Reference (criteria): Immediate answers to questions using resources readily available in the Library. Staff will assist users in locating additional information, and may provide informal instruction on the use of Library resources and search tools.

In Person, by Telephone and Email - Staff provide information service in person or by telephone or email. In person or telephone requests for information are completed in the order they are submitted. In order to ensure efficiency staff may take the name and telephone number of the user submitting the request by telephone and will respond to the users query in a timely manner. Email and mail requests for information will be responded to in a timely manner.

Referral – If an information request cannot be fulfilled using resources available at the Huntsville Public Library, staff should refer users to another source, and if necessary, assist them in contacting that source. Staff will make every effort to fulfill information requests using resources available in the Library before referring users to other external sources

Library Instruction and Orientation – Staff will familiarize users with all Library services and provide them with instruction in the use of Library materials and

equipment, the public access catalogue, databases and other e-resources provided by the Library is an important part of the provision of information services. The level of assistance provided by staff will depend on the needs of the user as well as staff availability and resources. Staff will provide formal Library orientation and instruction for groups where arrangements have been made in advance.

Local History & Genealogy – Staff will assist users in using the Local History collection, and the equipment required in accessing items in that collection.

Interlibrary Loan Service – Huntsville Public Library is part of an information network within the community, within the Southern Ontario Library System (SOLS) and in cooperation with other Library systems throughout Ontario and Canada. This service will be offered to users when the information request cannot be fulfilled by the resources of Huntsville Public Library. Staff can access the interlibrary loan system via the INFO service provided by SOLS in order to place or track requests on behalf of users. In return, Huntsville Public Library will share its resources with other Library systems, while always giving priority in the use of its resources to its own users.

5. The extent of individual service to each person will depend on the number of users needing to be served. The following priorities will apply.

   1st priority - requests presented in person
   2nd priority - requests presented by telephone/voice mail
   3rd priority - requests sent in by e-mail
   4th priority - requests received via the interlibrary loan network
   5th priority - requests received by mail

6. The Library is committed to meeting the needs of users with disabilities and learning challenges and will provide, upon request, alternate formats and communication supports.

7. Provision of Information Services follows the Federation of Canadian Library Associations (formerly CLA) *Statement on Intellectual Freedom* (Appendix A).

Related Documents

Accessible Standards for Customer Service Policy
Community Information Policy
Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy - Town of Huntsville
Intellectual Freedom Policy
Interlibrary Loan Policy
Interlibrary Loan Procedures
Materials Selection Policy
Safety, Security and Emergency Policy
Technology @ HPL Policy

Policy History
Approved by the Board June 12, 2017 | Motion: 17-54
Supersedes the policy approved August 28, 2014 | Motion: 14-55

Appendix A

Canadian Federation of Library Associations | Statement on Intellectual Freedom

Approval History: ~ June 27, 1974 Amended November 17, 1983; November 18, 1985; and September 27, 2015

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms further that libraries have a core responsibility to support, defend and promote the universal principles of intellectual freedom and privacy.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination.
Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and defend privacy in the individual's pursuit of expressive content. To this end, libraries protect the identities and activities of library users except when required by the courts to cede them.

Furthermore, in accordance with established library policies, procedures and due process, libraries resist efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Library employees, volunteers and employers as well as library governing entities have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the performance of their respective library roles.

Ontario Library Association | Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) has also affirmed its support of the principle of intellectual freedom.

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and the freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality.

That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations that may be unconventional or unpopular.

That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.

That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic.

That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and to implement it consistently in their selection of books, films, recordings, other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet.

That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by an individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.

That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of materials is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but

determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation.

Approved by the Ontario Library Association, November 7, 1998.
Reaffirmed, OLA Board of Directors, December 2003
Reaffirmed, OLA Board of Directors, December 2005