

## Reference and Research Assistance

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### 1. Service Philosophy

All EOU Library policies are based on the ideals articulated in the following Mission Statement and Vision Statement of EOU Library:

#### Mission Statement

EOU Library will provide varying levels of access to quality and current research materials and services for students and faculty of Eastern Oregon University and persons in the eleven-county area of Eastern Oregon University in a thorough and timely manner.

#### Vision Statement

We are committed to creating and maintaining a dynamic environment, focused on service and guided by the principles of intellectual freedom, that encourages access to the cultural, historical, and intellectual achievements of humankind.

Reference service is primarily intended for current EOU faculty, staff and enrolled students, but it is also available to the general public. The service is generally available during all hours that the library is open.

The library is the primary academic information resource for the University. It promotes learning, supports teaching, and enhances scholarly, research and creative activities by building collections and providing expert services and innovative access to information.

Reference service at the library is an extremely valuable and important component of our service and identity, and it is a direct offshoot of the ideals articulated in our Vision Statement and our Mission Statement.

In addition, since more users are accessing the library from home or office, which the library has encouraged, it is imperative that reference services address this new trend. The library's building shall not be a boundary to its information services. By emphasizing real-time reference

service, the library's goal is to offer service to information seekers at the place where they are when they have a question.

## **2. Purpose of this Policy Statement**

The purpose of this policy statement is to provide the staff with a compendium of information policies that promote a uniform standard of service of the highest possible quality consistent with available resources. The statement is designed both to orient new staff members and student employees and to be an information resource for more experienced staff. The statement may be made available to any library patron. The Reference Librarians will review the policy annually for currency, accuracy and completeness. Individual changes will be made throughout the year as the need for them arises.

## **3. Position Statements**

The library subscribes to the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, and the Statement on Intellectual Freedom. (Appendices)

## **4. Specific Objectives of Reference Services**

The library's intention is to accord equal attention and effort to each inquiry, although the time spent by staff on a question may vary in response to the perceived needs of the patron, the information resources (both staff and collections) available and the method of receipt of the inquiry. There are some limits to service for non-EOU patrons (see sections 8 and 9 below). Generally, EOU Library strives to do the following:

- To maintain an up-to-date, relevant and readily accessible working collection of reference materials, (electronic and paper) relating primarily to the University's programs. The reference collection includes general and research-oriented dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, bibliographies, indexes, directories, almanacs, handbooks, and statistical sources.
- To give appropriate reference assistance to the library's clientele in real-time (i.e., when it is needed, regardless of where the patron is). In helping patrons, the reference staff determine the need of the patron, the exact information requested and try to find sources appropriate to the level of knowledge and interest of the patron. This service is provided regardless of whether the patron has come to the library, telephoned, emailed or engaged in an online chat session.
- To provide instruction in library use by the most effective means and with suitable cooperation with other library units.
- To provide access to remote bibliographic, numeric and full-text databases.
- To actively publicize the scope, nature, and availability of the information services we offer. We shall employ those media most effective in reaching our entire clientele or selected segments of that clientele.
- To facilitate access to library materials which are not available in the library.
- To create an environment for and a tradition of good service within the library and to promote the effective utilization of the staff and materials at our disposal.

- To cooperate with other library units by providing them with information about user needs derived from ongoing contact with our users.

## **5. Service to Non-University Patrons**

- Members of the public (non EOU affiliated individuals) may use library on-site collections during Public Open Hours.
- Electronic resources will be available according to the individual terms of product licensing agreements, and thus access may vary. No distinction is made between EOU and non-EOU patrons when giving routine reference service, but priority will be given to EOU patrons if funding, space or staffing is inadequate to meet demands for reference service either at any given time or over a prolonged time.
- As a general rule, patrons with time-consuming inquiries who are not affiliated with EOU may be referred to public libraries. In cases where EOU Library has special resources (e.g. Archives) and the needs of the user seem to warrant it, assistance beyond the routine may be given.

## **6. Types of Reference Service**

- Assistance in finding the answer to specific reference questions.
- Assistance in developing research strategies for reports, term papers, theses, and dissertations.
- Instruction in the use of the library and its resources.
- Verification of library holdings and referral to institutions which have materials EOU Library lacks.
- Orientation to the library through tours, tutorial sessions, subject specific workshops, etc.
- Compilation and production of various instructional aids.
- In-depth reference appointments for patrons engaged in research based endeavors.

## **7. Restrictions on Reference Service**

- Database access: Reference staff will adhere to the licensing agreements for any electronic resources and databases used. Only authorized users (current EOU students, faculty, and staff) may be given access to material from databases with restrictive licenses.
- Interpretation of Material
- Reference staff do not interpret information, such as legal, medical, financial, statistical information or class assignments.
- Appraisal of Books and Artifacts
- Reference staff do not appraise the private property of patrons. Patrons are advised to consult a professional appraiser, but specific appraisers are not recommended.
- Genealogical Questions
- Genealogical searches are not undertaken by library staff. Catalog assistance and help locating standard reference sources are offered.

- Bibliographies
- Staff do assist patrons in the use of bibliographical tools, but we do not normally compile or check bibliographies.
- Lending Reference Materials
- Reference materials generally do not circulate, however in some circumstances where special copying or a class presentation warrant, special loans of two hours may be issued by: the Reference Librarian; the Circulation Supervisor; any EOU Library Librarian.
- Reference sessions will be terminated for inappropriate or rude language; harassment of any kind; or repeated off-topic questions.

### **8. Ask A Librarian Service (telephone, email, chat)**

The Ask a Librarian service on the library's web site includes:

- information about our telephone reference service.
- an email reference link (questions to be answered within 24 hours)
- Ask A Librarian Live (real time chat reference)

### **Chat Reference Guidelines**

- Most virtual reference sessions will last about 15 – 20 minutes. If after 20 minutes of searching the library Reference Staff Member does not find anything authoritative to answer the patron's question s/he will refer the user to an appropriate resource or contact or offer to email an answer later. We may also advise the patron to come in to speak with a librarian, particularly a subject specialist.

### **9. Patron Privacy**

- EOU Library is dedicated to protecting the privacy of its users. Any reference questions may be used for internal research and training purposes, stripped of personally identifiable information.
- EOU Library maintains strict confidentiality and does not share email addresses or other personal information of library users with any other organization or individual, except as required by law.

### **Links**

[Code of Ethics of the American Library Association](#)

[RUSA: Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services](#)

[RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service](#)

[ALA Library Bill of Rights](#)