

Code	<i>OPS-024</i>	
Policy Title	Reference and Information Services Policy	
Category	Operational & Facility Policies (OPS)	
Cross-Reference	OPS-004 Collection Development Policy OPS-018 Patron Code of Conduct OPS-019 Privacy and Confidentiality Policy OPS-021 Public Computer Use and Wi-Fi Policy	Page 41 Page 82 Page 85 Page 89
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Date Adopted	January 2026	
Date Reviewed	--	

Policy Statement

The Robert R. Jones Public Library District is committed to providing accurate, timely, and impartial reference and information services to all patrons. This policy establishes the standards and guidelines for delivering high-quality reference and information assistance in person, by phone, email, and through other communication channels.

All library staff play a role in providing information services, with primary responsibility held by the Library Director, Adult Services Coordinator, and Youth Services Coordinator. Trained staff are available during all business hours to assist patrons in locating and using information resources effectively.

Reference and information services are provided without discrimination based on age, race, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or creed. All inquiries are treated with respect, confidentiality, and equal consideration.

PROCEDURE

1. Professional and Equitable Assistance

- Library staff will provide professional, accurate, and unbiased assistance to all patrons.
- Staff may guide patrons to appropriate resources, suggest search strategies, and provide instruction in the use of library tools, databases, and technology.
- The confidentiality of patron inquiries will be respected in accordance with the Illinois

Library Records Confidentiality Act (75 ILCS 70/1).

2. Scope of Service

- Staff will assist patrons to the extent of their training and available resources but cannot perform extensive research projects or provide legal, medical, or financial advice.
- Definitions and factual information may be provided, but interpretation or personal opinion is not offered.
- Patrons may be referred to appropriate professionals, agencies, or specialized institutions when questions exceed the library's scope.

3. Access to Resources

- All reference and information services are provided free of charge.
- Patrons are expected to follow library rules regarding the use of materials, computers, and equipment.
- Staff will assist patrons in accessing both in-library and remote resources, including print and digital materials, databases, and e-books.

4. Technology Assistance

- Library staff will provide guidance on using library computers, databases, and electronic resources.
- Limited assistance with personal devices may be offered at staff discretion.
- Limits may be placed on the time or depth of technology assistance to ensure equitable service to all patrons.

5. Information Desk Guidelines

- Accurate statistics of reference and information transactions will be collected as required by the Illinois Public Libraries Annual Report (IPLAR).
- If requested information cannot be located within 24 hours, staff will notify the patron of the status of their request and offer appropriate referrals.
- Patrons may be referred to another library after verification that materials are available; staff may offer to place a hold in PrairieCat or initiate an interlibrary loan for cardholders in good standing.
- Staff will rely on authoritative and reputable sources and cite sources when providing factual answers.
- Patrons present in the library have priority over phone, email, and text inquiries. Remote information requests are generally limited to five questions or resources per patron.

6. Local History, Genealogy, and Homework Assistance

- The library maintains a basic collection of local history and genealogy materials. Staff may provide assistance with these resources and refer patrons to other local or regional history organizations as needed.
- Library staff are not trained genealogists and do not conduct extensive genealogical research.
- Staff will assist students by helping them locate appropriate resources but will not complete assignments or projects on their behalf.

7. Library Instruction and Tours

- Library instruction, including tours and classes in the use of library resources, may be scheduled upon request.
- Requests for tours should be made to a Coordinator at least one day in advance of the desired date.

8. Service Limitations and Prioritization

- During high-demand periods, staff may prioritize service to ensure fair access for all patrons.
- Time limits on one-on-one assistance sessions may be established as needed.

9. Staff Training and Professional Development

- Library staff will participate in ongoing training to maintain current knowledge of resources, reference techniques, and emerging technologies.

Patron Responsibilities

- Patrons are expected to clearly state their information needs and to be courteous and respectful to staff.
- Patrons must comply with all library policies while using reference and information services.