

Piscataway Public Library

Reference Services Policy

The Piscataway Public Library provides reference services to assist and direct all members of our community in their search for materials to fulfill their learning, recreational, and informational needs. Reference services include access to print, non-print, and electronic media.

Reference services include assisting with the catalog and Library computers, research, library eContent, databases, reader's advisory, interlibrary loan, referral services, copying/scanning, and instruction in Library use. Reference inquiries are received and service is rendered in several settings: on-site, via telephone, or electronically. The Library protects each patron's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted. Staff will provide reference services, as time permits, in this order of priority: in-person queries, queries submitted by phone and online, bibliographic instruction and library orientation, queries submitted by email.

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICES

Ready Reference

When a patron asks a common question, the staff will identify the appropriate resource to answer it and report the information to the patron. These searches are quick and typically answered within 5 minutes.

Specific Search and In-Depth Research

Research is performed as time permits. The Reference staff and patron may discuss a date by which the research should be completed.

Item Requests

When a patron seeks a known title, staff will assist the patron with placing a hold on it using our online catalog if it can be obtained within the consortium. Staff may consider purchasing the item if it has been published in the past twelve months and will refer to the Library's collection development policy. Otherwise, staff will consider requesting the item through interlibrary loan.

Requests for Medical, Financial, Tax, and Legal Information

Staff will provide information from published resources. Staff will not interpret the information provided. Patrons are encouraged to consult with professionals in these areas.

Local History and Genealogy

Patrons requesting a cataloged item, may ask the librarian at the Kennedy Information Desk. For more in-depth research inquiries, staff will provide guidance in locating uncataloged materials within the Library's local history and genealogy resources by appointment. Staff members are not trained genealogists and thus cannot trace complete family histories or provide in-depth research services for local history and genealogy requests.

Reader's Advisory

Staff will provide reading recommendations for fiction and non-fiction titles based on the patron and staff's established criteria.

Computer and Device Questions

Staff will assist patrons with basic computer questions. Depending on the issue and amount of time required, appointments can be made for technical assistance.

Referrals

If the requested information is unavailable in Piscataway Public Library's resources, staff may advise patrons to contact other agencies, libraries, and organizations for further assistance.

For liability reasons, staff cannot answer financial, legal, or medical questions. Patrons are encouraged to consult with professionals in these areas and not rely solely on the Library's resources. For privacy reasons, staff cannot fill out online forms, type in login information, circumvent passwords, or compose personal documents for patrons. Reference services do not include completing assignments, filling out forms, appraisals, editing, proofreading, or typing documents, checking a long list of citations, tutoring services, translations, or installing or troubleshooting software on personal devices. Staff is limited in their ability to assist individuals in solving problems with their personal computers and electronic devices.

Disclaimer: The Library disclaims any liability or responsibility arising from using the Library's information services.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees 6/16/2025