

EASTERN REGIONAL LIBRARIES INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Eastern Regional Libraries regards Information Resources and Services as one of the most vital and visible expressions of the Library's purpose and mission and is the key to each of the Library's four primary service roles; to serve as a centre for information, education, research and lifelong learning. Eastern Regional Libraries will provide information vital for daily living, will support formal education and independent learning efforts and will assist researchers and students.

Eastern Regional Libraries will fulfil its unique responsibility to ensure open and equal access to information for all the people that the Library serves. It affirms a commitment to preserve, promote and celebrate the heritage of the communities served by its Libraries.

It is the policy of Eastern Regional Libraries to consider each individual's information query to be of equal merit regardless of the age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual preference, language proficiency or status of the inquirer. Eastern Regional Libraries will accord equal attention and effort to each enquiry, although the time spent by staff assisting customers may vary in response to the perceived needs of the customer and the information resources (both staff and collections) available.

Definition

Eastern Regional Libraries defines Information Resources and Services as the provision of resources and staff assistance to customers and potential customers of information.

Access to information

Eastern Regional Libraries recognises that different customers have different needs. Eastern Regional Libraries will therefore offer a varied range of means of access to information.

- Direct personal assistance, in person, by phone, fax or email
- Guides and library signs
- Online public access catalogues
- Reference collections in each branch
- Access to electronic databases and other information via the Internet

Information Desk Staff

Eastern Regional Libraries recognises that to offer a high quality service, trained and qualified staff are required to be available to assist customers at all times. Information desks will be staffed during library opening hours, with additional staff at peak periods.

Eastern Regional Libraries staff will have:

- A friendly and helpful approach to their customers
- Training in enquiry techniques to deal with all members of the community
- An understanding of customer expectations and demands
- Impartiality and respect for confidentiality in dealing with customers
- A detailed knowledge of the range of information resources available
- Knowledge and understanding of community needs
- Detailed knowledge of other information agencies
- Knowledge of educational trends and developments
- Familiarity with contemporary culture
- Skills for the effective promotion of the service

Eastern Regional Libraries will ensure that all staff have the skills and resources to respond to changing information resources and customer demands in the field of information service provision.

Collections

Information resources are provided in every branch. The size and composition of the reference collections depends on the demands of the customers in each branch.

Resources may be provided in many different formats and all will be of high quality, accessible and current.

There will be times when customers need to be referred to a bigger branch or another agency or external library which can provide the needed information.

Information Service Standards

Principles of Service:

- **Approachability**

Library customers are made to feel welcome and staff are approachable and willing to help. Staff are prepared to approach library customers whom they judge to be in need of assistance.

- **Efficient retrieval of information**

Library staff find the relevant material in a minimum time frame.

- **Equal access to information**

At whichever service point that a library customer first makes an enquiry, they ultimately receive the same information.

- **Equal Service**

All library customers receive the same level of assistance. Care is taken that library customers with disabilities of any kind, children and customers making phone enquiries receive equal assistance.

- **Objectivity of staff**

Staff aim for objectivity and do not allow personal attitudes, beliefs and values to enter into the reference process.

- **Respect for the customer's request**

Confidentiality of customers' requests must be respected at all times. Questions shall not be discussed outside the Library, and names shall never be mentioned without the customers' permission.

As in all situations, librarians shall use discretion when interviewing customers regarding medical, legal and business questions. Whilst it is important to conduct a thorough reference interview, this shall be done in such a way as to minimise discomfort to the customer. The librarian shall try to identify the issue in question without intruding on the customer's privacy. Librarians shall be impartial and non-judgmental in handling customer queries.

Standards:

- **Accuracy and currency of information**

Information supplied is as up-to-date as possible using the Library's resources. Library customers are alerted to the date of materials supplied, source, edition and imprint are always quoted for telephone and written enquiries.

- **Use all resources available**

All collections are considered for their relevance to each enquiry. These can include print, Internet, electronic, periodical indexes and other institutions.

- **Self-help for customers**

Library staff have a role in educating customers to use the library. When library customers indicate a wish to conduct their own searches, staff are prepared to spend time to teach them how to use bibliographic tools.

- **Time**

The amount of time that should be spent on any enquiry requires the exercise of discretion. Ideally there would be no limit on time i.e. search until a satisfactory answer is found.

Constraints such as enquirer's own time limits and queues of other customers and staffing limitations have to be balanced. As mentioned above, the telephone can frequently be used to extend search times.

The nature of the enquiry can also be a factor in determining the amount of time to be spent on any one enquiry. Consideration should also be given to whether a search might be more profitably followed up elsewhere e.g. a bigger branch or an outside information service provider.

- **Staff**

Sufficient staff are rostered on information desks to manage normal anticipated levels of usage but when these levels are exceeded, information desk staff should call for assistance, if any is available.