

REFERENCE SERVICES POLICY

Reference service at the Library is the personal assistance provided by members of the reference staff to library patrons in pursuit of information. Reference services are defined as all the activities performed by a librarian to meet the information needs of any patron, whether in person, by telephone, or via e-mail. These include, but are not limited to: answering substantive questions, instructing users in the selection and use of appropriate tools and techniques for finding the location of specific resources, assisting in the evaluation of information, keeping reference statistics, and developing the reference collection. The Library has a central reference desk located on the 2nd floor. In addition to the services offered at the reference desk, patrons seeking reference services should request assistance from the Public Services librarian(s) on the appropriate floor(s).

1. Reference Staff:

The library's staff includes professional librarians who are available to address informational needs requiring the recommendation, interpretation, or instruction in the use of a reference source. A librarian, on a rotating basis, staffs the central reference desk on the 2nd floor. Circulation staff and student assistants are available to offer directional and referral assistance to users.

2. Library Users:

The instructional, informational, and pedagogical needs of the Library's patrons are the primary responsibilities and priority of Reference Services. Courtesy, accuracy, and timeliness are responsibilities of all librarians.

3. List of Reference Services:

A. Information

Members of the reference staff provide personal assistance to library users in pursuit of information, whether in person, by telephone, or via e-mail.

B. Referrals to Other Libraries and Services:

It is the policy of the Library to make referrals to other libraries or resources when information or material is unavailable. If possible, the librarian should verify that another institution has the requested information or materials before informing the patron to seek help outside the Library. Librarians are encouraged to consult with other librarians before making a referral.

C. Telephone Reference:

Telephone reference service is encouraged; however, assistance to patrons in the building takes priority over telephone queries. If confronted with a reference telephone query while

engaged in reference assistance, the librarian will take a brief message and phone number and respond when it is more convenient.

D. E-mail Reference:

This service is intended primarily for faculty, staff and students affiliated with the University. This service is also available to non-affiliated patrons as time and staffing permit. While e-mail reference queries are welcomed, assistance to patrons in the building has priority.

E. Faculty Liaison:

An important component of the Public Services librarian's role is that of faculty liaison. This component includes direct contact with the respective academic departments and individual faculty to promote awareness of library programs, collections, and services. Among the most important areas are cooperative planning and development of collections, formal and informal library instruction, and reference services. For more information on faculty liaison activities, please refer to the *LIBRARY LIAISON NETWORK POLICY*.

F. Library Instruction:

Library Instruction services range from orientation tours of the Library for schools and other groups to instructional sessions with faculty and students in subject-related or research methodology courses. Individuals may also receive similar assistance by making an individual appointment with the appropriate Public Services librarian or the Head of Public Services. Public Services librarians should always notify the Head of Public Services of an instruction session taught. For more information on Library Instruction services please refer to the *LIBRARY ORIENTATION AND INSTRUCTION POLICY*.

I. Distance Education Reference Services:

Students and faculty who need assistance with searching particular databases, preparing bibliographic citations for papers and projects, evaluating sources, or other questions should call the reference desk or e-mail a Public Services librarian. Some questions may be referred to a subject specialist. Further information related to distance education services can be found in the *DISTANCE EDUCATION SERVICES POLICY*.

J. Photocopy Policy:

The Houston Cole Library adheres to the Copyright Laws as promulgated in the United States Code Title 17, Sections 106-107.

Librarians are expected to assist patrons with the mechanical usage and supply needs of the library's photocopy and reader/printer machines. Copyright adherence is the responsibility of the individual patron.

K. Inquiries for In-Process, Pre-Order, or On Order Materials:

Materials that have the status "In Process" can be located and made ready for circulation at the request of a patron. Patrons should discuss these requests with the Public Services librarian to ascertain if the item is unique. The Public Services librarian can contact the Cataloging Department on behalf of the patron to determine the processing status of the item. Those items in the last stages of processing may be rushed on demand. Requested material will be available for pick up by 10:00 a.m. on the weekday following the request. It will be held for the patron at the Circulation Desk in the lobby for up to 7 days.

It is recommended that requests for items with the status "Pre Order" or "On Order" be discussed with the Public Services librarian to ascertain if the item is unique. Patrons needing materials that have the status "Pre-Order" or "On Order" should contact the Acquisitions Department to request that they be notified when the material is received and processed.