

Information, Research & Instructional Services Department (IRIS)

Reference Service Policy Statement

We facilitate access to information by connecting users to the most appropriate resources and services and promote lifelong critical thinking and research skills through instruction, personal consultation, and referrals.

GOALS:

1. To enhance the development, maintenance, and organization of a comprehensive reference collection in order to support the research and instructional needs of the ND academic community, citizens of the area, and the national academic community.
2. To enhance users' access to information through state of the art technology and resources.
3. To enhance teaching and learning through a multi-faceted library instruction program.
4. To enhance reference and outreach services provided to the University of Notre Dame community

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this reference service policy statement is to provide library staff with guidelines that promote a uniform, consistent standard of service of the highest possible quality consistent with available resources. This statement is designed as an information resource for new and experienced staff and may be made available, upon request, to any library user.

Types of reference services provided:

In the library

- Respond to ready reference inquiries, which generally require the use of a single resource to answer a quick, factual question
- Instruct users in searching the catalog, research databases, print reference materials, and other library resources
- Offer help in clarifying research problems, developing good search strategies and finding information
- Help users navigate the Libraries' website

- Help library users evaluate information resources
- Verify bibliographic citations
- Respond to directional questions
- Verify library holdings and advise methods of getting materials now owned by ND Libraries
- Locate known items
- Refer people to other libraries when appropriate
- Refer people to subject specialists
- Offer in-depth consultations by appointment (ND students and faculty only)

On the telephone

Telephone reference assistance is available for “ready reference” or brief questions. Individuals with more extensive research needs will be encouraged to visit the library or referred either to their local library or to a subject specialist, as appropriate.

Priority will be given to patrons at the desk. Staff are encouraged to use voice mail when working with individuals present at the desk.

Online (Ask-A-Librarian)

The Ask a Librarian service is for students, faculty, staff, and other affiliates of the University of Notre Dame. If you are not affiliated with Notre Dame, we will answer questions about services and collections unique to the university. Other inquiries may be referred to more appropriate libraries or sources of information.

Clientele

No distinction is made between University and non-university patrons when giving routine reference service. As a general rule, patrons with time consuming inquiries who are not affiliated with the University of Notre Dame may be referred to a public library or to their own organization, if appropriate. In cases where the ND Libraries has special resources or collections and the needs of the user warrant it, assistance beyond the routine may be given.

Electronic Resources Access & Limitations

Access to electronic journals and research databases is available both in-library and from off campus for University of Notre Dame faculty, staff, and students.

Due to licensing restrictions, guests and alumni are limited to in-library access to electronic resources.

Limitations to Reference Services

Reference Staff will not:

- Interpret materials and assignments. Reference staff do not interpret information, such as medical, legal, financial, statistical or tax information, or class assignments. Students with questions about a class assignment are referred to the professor.
- Violate copyright law.
- Knowingly act in a manner that violates the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association.
- Make recommendations regarding personal purchases of resources, but will refer users to standard reviews of the works in question. Reference personnel may share their personal opinions but must so indicate.
- Appraise books or artifacts.
- Perform genealogical research.
- Answer contest, quiz, or trivia questions. Assistance is limited to advising individuals about where they might locate such information.

Reference Staff will not except in extraordinary circumstances:

- Perform research. Users will be instructed in how to conduct their own research.
- Photocopy materials for library users.
- Pull books or other items from outside the Reference Collection in response to a telephone call to hold for a person.
- Lend reference materials.