REFERENCE AND READER SERVICES
POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I. POLICIES

A. Reference Policy

The purpose of the Reference and Readers Services Departments at the St. Charles Public Library is to meet the information needs of eligible patrons accurately and efficiently. The Library serves a diverse public with unique individual needs and levels of ability to conduct searches independently. This policy exists to fully inform the Library staff and the public of services available to them, and to clarify the nature and extent of the services provided. The most recent Illinois Library Association standards document, *Serving our Public: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries*, provides the model for this policy.

All requests are treated confidentially, courteously, and without regard to age, race, sex, social, or economic status of the patron. Names of users and the transactions which occur between users and the staff are confidential and not discussed outside a professional context.

Staff at all levels are required to pursue continuing education opportunities which will enable them to better meet the needs of the Library’s patrons. Staff receive in-house training regarding appropriate responses to patron questions, including reference questions. This training includes reference interview techniques, reader’s advisory service, and bibliographic instruction. All staff are taught to treat each question with respect insofar as the level of assistance required and the topic of the question, including assisting patrons with special needs.

Assistance is given to patrons in the identification, location, and use of desired information through local resources, outside sources, and referrals. Information requests are taken in person, by telephone, by facsimile transmission, by mail, by email and live over the Internet, with priority given to in-person requests. Reference services and materials are available during all hours the Library is open. All requests for information receive an answer or status report within one working day. Questions which cannot be answered with onsite resources are referred to another agency. Such referrals are verified and/or mediated by staff.

In the instance of legal, medical investment, or tax questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the resources covering that topic. No evaluations or interpretations of the information are provided, nor may staff define the meaning of terms, offer investment advice, select tax forms, or serve as a surrogate for a professional in any of the fields mentioned above. If patrons need such additional interpretations and explanations, they are advised to consult with their professional from the above-mentioned specialties.

Reference materials regardless of format must remain in the Library.
A copy of this written policy statement is available in the Library at the Reference Desk and on the Library’s web site.

1. Eligible patrons are St. Charles Public Library District taxpayers, residents and cardholders, or residents of cooperating library districts.

**B. Interlibrary Loan Policy**

It is the policy of the St. Charles Public Library District to make every effort to meet the information and reading needs of its cardholders. Given the extremely wide range of individual user needs, local needs cannot be met solely by the local collection. Therefore, it is the Library’s policy to request from other libraries most materials needed for the purposes of study, instruction, information, recreation, or research, with the exception of puzzles, which the library does not make available for ILL. Audiovisual materials are both borrowed and loaned among cooperating Illinois libraries. Transactions in which library materials are made available from one library to another are called interlibrary loans. St. Charles is an ILLINET Library and adheres to the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code, a copy of which is available at [http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/libraries/pdfs/illcode.pdf](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/libraries/pdfs/illcode.pdf) Interlibrary loan services are extended to St. Charles Public Library District cardholders in good standing.

**Supplying Policy**

The St. Charles Public Library undertakes to meet interlibrary loan requests in a timely fashion, within the limits of staffing and scheduling. The Library does not lend Reference materials.

**Requesting Policy**

The collection of the Library is shaped by the guidelines in the Collection Development Statement and the Library’s official Selection Policy. When a St. Charles patron requests material the St. Charles Public Library does not own or is not able to provide immediately from its collection, Interlibrary Loan Service is offered. The Library will attempt to borrow any items that lenders will agree to loan in accordance with reciprocal agreements. ILL service is not intended to supply textbooks or materials required for coursework or other long term exclusive use. Lending libraries determine the cost of lost or damaged items. The Library may refuse to borrow items that are rare or valuable, and whose replacement value would exceed a reasonable amount.

Loan periods are determined by the lending library. ILL items are not eligible for renewal. For security, items must be returned directly to the St. Charles Public Library building. In instances when availability is limited, items may be requested again 3 months after the initial loan period.

Loan periods must be observed and failure to return items when due may result in suspension of ILL borrowing privileges.

**Photocopies**
The Library will obtain photocopies needed by individual patrons, again depending on staff availability.

The Library adheres to the copyright laws which limit the number of copies allowed annually from recent years’ issues of an individual title. For this reason, patrons may be referred to a neighboring library where the title is owned.

C. READERS SERVICES POLICY

The St. Charles Public Library provides services to promote recreational enjoyment of books and authors of all genres and formats by providing patrons with personalized consultation, suggestions, and assistance in locating and choosing materials. Readers Services also promotes reading and encourages use of Library resources.

D. INTERNET ACCESS POLICY

The St. Charles Public Library provides access to Internet information sources to expand the availability of resources outside its own collection. In offering the Internet as an information resource, the Library’s goal is to enhance its existing collection in size and depth and, as a public access agency, enable any user to participate in navigating the Internet. Minimal personal orientation is offered, and introductory classes are scheduled regularly.

E. ASK A LIBRARIAN LIVE, IM, TEXT REFERENCE SERVICE

All requests are answered at least briefly and may be referred to a patron’s home library or other appropriate source. St. Charles Public Library cardholders and district residents are afforded the highest level of reference service. Information requests should be left open until confirmation of customer satisfaction is received. If this cannot be accomplished in a live online environment, the patron should be given every opportunity to have the request pursued further. An offer should be made to follow-up via email or other response.

F. POLICY REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Library Board reviews this Policy biennially.

Reference and Reader Services are evaluated annually and as required by the State Library, focusing on such factors as staff approachability, expertise in conducting reference interviews, accuracy, usefulness, and completeness of answers, and timeliness of answers.