

City of Pacific Grove, California
Council Policy

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General policy:

All questions asked by a patron are considered valid questions, and equal consideration and effort will be given in answering them as accurately and completely as possible within the conditions set by the patron. Sources for the information/answers are given as a matter of course. (Staff members do not rely on their own opinions to answer questions.) If published information is not available in the library collection, the patron may be referred to an outside source, or the Reference Librarian will contact another library resource, such as the Monterey Bay Area Cooperative System headquarters (MOBAC), the State of California Answering Network (SCAN) or the California State Library.

In general, telephone reference service will be limited to specific requests for information. If an answer is not immediately available, the Librarian will either phone the patron back or ask the patron to call back. Since time and staff are limited, the Librarian cannot conduct long reference searches in response to telephone questions. For questions involving prolonged reference use of periodicals, bibliographic and biographic sources and indices, the patron is asked to come to the Library. Patrons with physical disabilities will, of course, receive all over-the-phone reference assistance we are able to provide.

The reference collection consists of materials which may not be borrowed or used outside the Library. These materials are classified as reference so that they may always be available to answer patron needs as well as for Reference staff to use in helping patrons.

Definition of a reference question: Any question which requires a search of the card catalog, reference to any book or material in the collection, or to other informational source, including community resources.

Procedures:

WHO ANSWERS WHAT:

Directional questions, and questions relating to Circulation Desk procedures may be answered at the Circulation Desk. (Shelvers and volunteers answer only directional questions.) All other questions should be referred to the appropriate Librarian. Questions on library policy, history, programs, and resources may be directed to the Library Director; questions having to do with the Children's Department may go to the Children's Librarian.

Note: Because of staff limitations, there may be periods when no Librarian is available. If this happens, Library Assistants may do author/title card catalog checks, and provide answers involving the spelling of a word, an address, a date and the like, if they feel competent to do so.

Procedure for Staff Referral:

In transferring a reference call, or sending a patron to the Reference Librarian on duty, the desk staff should explain to the inquirer that he/she is being referred to the Reference Librarian. If the Librarian is working on another question, explain to the patron that there will be a short delay. If it is a telephone question, ask if he/she would like the Librarian to return the call. If the Reference Librarian is not on duty at a particular time, the staff should consult the posted schedule and refer as needed to the Library Director or Children's Librarian. If none of these are available, take the caller's name and phone number, and a Librarian will call back as soon as possible.

Limitations and restrictions:

The following guidelines are observed in answering certain types of questions:

1. **Ready Reference telephone service.** Ready reference telephone service is supplied for information that is readily available, does not require extensive searching, and may be accurately given over the phone. These inquiries are answered in the initial telephone call and are limited to up to 3 items of information. Generally these type of questions would take 1-3 minutes.
2. **Medical questions.** Factual information can be provided from medical dictionaries and reference books but for questions which involve interpretation and opinion, the patron will be referred to his/her physician, the Monterey County Health Department or other resource agency which may be found in the Directory of Community and Human Services for Monterey County.

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3. Legal questions. Citations from codes can be given and other legal resources may be suggested, but for legal recommendations and/or explanations the patron will be referred to his/her attorney or to Legal Aid.
 4. Art:
 - A. Art, antiques, and rare-book appraisals. The Librarian can provide published information on the subject but for estimations of value the patron will be referred to experts in the field.
 - B. Identification of works of art. The Librarian will assist the patron in searching for information on artists and their works, but, for the identification or verification of works of art, the patron will be referred to experts.
 5. Original translations. Short phrases may be translated depending on the resources of the library's collection and staff, but, for long or difficult passages, the patron will be referred to a translator or to other community resources.
 6. Genealogical searches. The Librarian can guide the patron to documents and biographical information from published sources and can suggest sources for further investigation.
 7. Original research and bibliographies. The Librarian will assist the patron in searching for existing bibliographies and will suggest additional resources available on the subject.
 8. Consumer information. The Librarian will assist the patron in searching the published material on various consumer products. For recommendations or value judgments, the patron will be asked to consult dealers and other experts.
 9. Mathematical calculations and formulae. Formulae may be read over the phone but the Librarian takes no responsibility for accuracy. No mathematical computations of any sort are undertaken for patrons. If a formula involves words or symbols which the Librarian or patron cannot understand, the Librarian will suggest alternate sources for an explanation.
 10. Contests. The Librarian will assist in the search for, but cannot provide answers for contests, crossword puzzles or school tests.
 11. School papers. The Librarian will help the student in any type of school research project or homework. However, for this type of assistance, the patron is asked to come to the Library in person. The Librarian will assist the student in developing library skills.

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12. Locked case, special collection, and local history materials. These materials are available to the public for in-library use. Because of time, space and staffing restrictions, patrons are requested to apply in advance to the Reference Department for any prolonged use of these collections.
 13. Consumer price index. The Librarian will read over the phone the current CPI figures, but will not, in the interest of accuracy, make lists of CPI changes nor compute index changes. The patron may be referred to other sources for this information.
 14. Recommendations. The Librarian will not make specific recommendations on restaurants, doctors and dentists, mechanics, second-hand book dealers or other community resources, but will suggest a number of alternatives to the patron, or refer him/her to appropriate agencies or printed sources.
 15. City directory or criss-cross questions. Requests for address or telephone numbers from the city directory or the criss-cross directory will be limited to the specific address or telephone number and near-by numbers will not be given. Patrons may come in to use the directories themselves for additional information.

Library policy, 1982

Approved by Pacific Grove Library Board, July 14, 1992

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