
St. Marys Public Library



Policy Type: **Operational Policy**

Policy Number: **OP-06**

Policy Title: **Reference and Information Services Policy**

Policy Approval Date: January 2020

Policy Review Date: February 2023

1. Objective

- 1.1 The St. Marys Public Library Board believes information services is a vital element of library services, and makes every effort to ensure staff are well equipped to provide assistance to the public. As a result, staff will be provided with this policy to promote a uniformed standard of service in the highest possible quality, consistent with the available resources.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 This policy represents the Library's standards for the delivery of reference and information services to the public.

3. Philosophy

- 3.1 The Mission of the St., Marys Public Library is *to provide free and equitable access to library services. The Library preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment;*
- 3.2 As information service is one of the most vital and visible expressions of the Library's purpose and mission, it is critical to the Library's service roles: to serve as a hub for information, research, readers' advisory, education and technical assistance; and
- 3.3 Because information services continuously changes with technology, and more users interact with the library in a virtual world, the Library will explore means to offer service to information seekers at the place where they have questions: in person, through email, over the phone, online or via social media.

4. Services

- 4.1 All patrons seeking assistance in acquiring reader's advisory, research and/or information services will be treated equally, with respect and courtesy, and in Accordance to the Canadian Library Association Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom (Appendix A);
- 4.2 Efforts will be made to provide information in an accessible manner as requested Membership is not transferable to other individuals;
- 4.3 All Staff are able to provide reference and information services. Where staff are uncomfortable or unable to assist the patron, they will seek another staff member to assist. If the questions still cannot be answered, the request shall be forwarded to the CEO;

- 4.4 If the information is unavailable at the St. Marys Library, staff will make the appropriate inquiries on acquiring the information ie. From the Museum, other PCIN libraries, Adult Learning centre etc. Staff will direct patrons to the appropriate organizations, when necessary;
- 4.5 Patron confidentiality will be respected at all times, and in accordance to the St. Marys Public Library's policy *Privacy and Access to Information* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56*;
- 4.6 Patrons initiating inquiries via telephone will receive the full attention of St. Marys Public Library Staff. If a Staff member is unable to fully address the request immediately, arrangements will be made to return the call on an agreed upon time period;
- 4.7 Requests received by mail, email, fax or other electronic means will be answered in a timely manner, generally within one to two business days;
- 4.8 Staff at the St. Marys Public Library will guide and assist patrons in in-depth searches, while providing instruction to the patron in an attempts to teach them the how-to's for finding specific information, as time permits;
- 4.9 Staff may be asked to provide information from medical, legal, census or tax sources. Staff will do so readily and without prejudice, but will not offer any interpretation of the information in any circumstances;
- 4.10 Records for reference and information transactions are not kept. Emailed reference transactions will be deleted upon answering the query; and
- 4.11 Statistics for reference and information services will be collected periodically, and reported to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Generally, this will occur during the Typical Week Survey, however, it may happen more frequently as the CEO deems necessary.

5. Community

- 5.1 To facilitate sharing community information, the St. Marys Public Library will provide a bulletin board for community information. All postings must be approved by staff and in conjunction with the St. Marys Public Library's policy on *Community Information*;
- 5.2 Notices of community events will be posted; however, content will be limited to non-profit and non-personal purposes, including events that support educational, cultural or non-profit organizations. The exception is that all Town of St. Marys events may be posted on the bulletin board;
- 5.3 Information may be promoted for new small businesses in the community, with a posting date up to two (2) months; and
- 5.4 Postings must include a date. Staff will remove postings for events that have passed or that do not have a date.

6. Readers' Advisory

- 6.1 The St. Marys Public Library Board believes that a patron-oriented service aimed at assisting patrons in selecting resources/leisurely reading materials a core service;
- 6.2 Fundamentally, Readers' Advisory is an unbiased consultation between St. Marys Public Library Staff and a reader that results in a literacy selection;
- 6.3 All staff will be trained and provided resources to facilitate Readers' Advisory for any patron, including children, young adults and newcomers;
- 6.4 The St. Marys Public Library Staff will be proactive in offering Reader's Advisory, initiating conversations with patrons in the Library to assist with selection of materials;
- 6.5 Staff will consider a reader's interests and abilities when offering Readers' Advisory through dialogue and open-ended questions; and

6.6 Where possible, reading aids will be placed strategically throughout the Library to assist patrons in material selection.

7. Related Documents

Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P44

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56

CLA's Statement on Intellectual Freedom, Canadian Library Association 2015

Accessibility Policy, St. Marys Public Library Policy

Community Information Policy, St. Marys Public Library Policy

Privacy and Access to Information Policy, St. Marys Public Library Policy

8. History

Date of Latest Board Approval: March 2014, January 2020

Date(s) of Revision(s): May 2003, October 2019, January 2020

Date of next scheduled review: February 2023

Appendix A

The Canadian Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries

The Canadian Library Association recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html> as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Library Association supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Library Association affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada.

The Canadian Library Association affirms further that libraries have a core responsibility to support, defend and promote the universal principles of intellectual freedom and privacy.

The Canadian Library Association holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and defend privacy in the individual's pursuit of expressive content. To this end, libraries protect the identities and activities of library users except when required by the courts to cede them.

Furthermore, in accordance with established library policies, procedures and due process, libraries resist efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Library employees, volunteers and employers as well as library governing entities have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the performance of their respective library roles.

*Approved by Executive Council ~ June 27, 1974
Amended November 17, 1983; November 18, 1985; and September 27, 2015*