

Policy Title:

17. Information Services (formerly Reference Services)

Policy Type	Approval Date	Motion No.	Review Date
Operational	September 2023	13-2023	2026

General Policy

Information services are defined as those services which connect people to the resources they require for education, recreation, and culture.

The purpose of the Information Services Policy of the Brockville Public Library (BPL) is to ensure the delivery of high quality, responsive and accessible information services. This policy also serves as promotion for the range of services available at BPL.

BPL adheres to the Canadian Library Association’s Statement of Intellectual Freedom (Appendix A) and the Ontario Library Association’s Children’s Rights in a Public Library (Appendix B).

Guidelines

1. Service Standards

- Each person seeking information assistance will be treated equally with respect and courtesy.
- Information services are available during regular business hours and delivered by trained Library staff.
- Employees will ensure customer confidentiality and protect the private nature of the information requested.
- BPL is committed to meeting the needs of customers with disabilities and will provide alternate formats and communication supports upon request. Assistance retrieving resources from the shelves will be provided.
- Requests will be answered efficiently, accurately and as completely as possible.
- Formal and informal assistance for search and use of Library resources is available. Formal instruction may require scheduling an appointment with Library staff.
- Library employees at BPL are facilitators in search strategies and information tools but do not complete a research project for a customer (exception is for a special

collection search; please see below). Customers are encouraged to take an active role in locating information and using the resources to empower independent discovery and solutions.

- When an answer is not found using Library resources, customers will be referred to other libraries, agencies and/or community resources.
- The responsibility for interpreting and applying information received at the Library rests with the customer. Library staff will not provide personal opinions, analysis, or interpretation of information. Customers will be encouraged to seek professional guidance.
- Library staff may not complete or print online applications, registrations, or financial transactions on behalf of customers, including setting up email account passwords and security questions.
- The level of service will depend on the number of people requiring assistance and the available staff resources at any given time. During peak request times, staff will record customer information requests including contact information and respond within an agreed upon timeframe.
- Guests and visitors to the City of Brockville may expect the same service levels as mentioned above. Guest library cards and borrowing privileges are determined by the Joining the Library Policy – 14 and Borrowing Library Resources Policy – 15.

2. Types of Information Services

- **Quick Directional and Reference Questions:** Short, easy answers to ‘who, what, where, when, why’ questions. The answers are readily accessible at the service desks or by completing a quick electronic search.
- **In-depth Research:** These requests require a lengthier search and the use of several sources, both print and electronic, to arrive at a complete answer. Staff will guide and assist the customer in pursuing this search while simultaneously providing informal instruction on how to search and use Library resources. Please note that BPL does not offer a paid research service, nor do we provide in-depth genealogy research services to customers. Library staff will attempt, however, to “point you in the right direction” through our referral services mentioned below or suggest other search strategies.
- **Readers’ Advisory:** Answers to questions that strive to connect readers with the authors, subjects, and formats they will enjoy.
- **Interlibrary Loan Service:** BPL’s Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service offers cardholding customers an opportunity to obtain resources not owned by BPL. This service is coordinated province-wide through the Southern Ontario Library Service. Please note that other libraries are not obligated to share their materials. Resources from other

library systems are subject to the borrowing conditions specified by the lending library. Refer to Borrowing Library Resources Policy – 14 for further details.

- **Referral:** Employees will make every effort to fulfill information requests using resources available in the Library before referring customers to external sources. However, if an information request cannot be fulfilled using resources available at BPL, employees will refer customers to other known sources and if necessary, assist them with making contact, if available.
- **Library Resource Orientation and Technological Requests:** Employees will respond to technical queries such as the use of Library equipment, devices, software, and catalogue. This also includes assistance with personal devices, equipment, and software. Employees will assist customers in developing basic technical competencies. During heavy traffic periods and/or based on the complexity of the instruction required, this service may require booking an appointment in advance.
- **Special Information Collections:** BPL's special collections include community information, local history, Brockville newspapers on microfilm, specialty databases and rare books. It is recommended that customers make a reservation for the microfilm reader. Visitors to the Library will be offered information services as mentioned above under 'in-depth research'.

3. General Service Priorities

Service to the public has priority over all other duties and is generally based on a first come, first serve sequence.

During peak times and/or unavailability of staff, customer requests will be responded to in the following priority:

1. in person
2. on the telephone
3. by e-mail
4. through interlibrary loan
5. by mail

4. Statistics, Outcomes and Feedback

To assess and evaluate information services and to comply with the requirements of the Annual Survey of Public Libraries, statistics and outcomes will be recorded daily, tabulated monthly and analyzed annually.

Customer feedback regarding all Library services is encouraged through our website, comment form, email contact, in-library suggestion boxes and verbal comments to Library staff.

Sources: Brantford Public Library
 Whitby Public Library
 Leeds and the Thousand Islands Public Library
 Huntsville Public Library

Appendix A: Canadian Library Association's Statement of Intellectual Freedom

All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity, and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the law, is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available all the library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.

Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Both employees and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles.

Appendix B: Ontario Library Association's Children's Rights in a Public Library

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom.
2. Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
3. A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
4. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
7. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
8. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council, and community to make people aware of the goals of children's services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.