

SOP: Reference and Information Services Protocols

This SOP defines the **reference and information services protocols**, detailing procedures for effectively managing patron inquiries, sourcing accurate information, utilizing digital and physical resources, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring timely and reliable service delivery in libraries or information centers. The goal is to enhance user experience through consistent, professional, and efficient reference support while adhering to ethical standards and promoting information literacy.

1. Purpose

To provide structured guidelines for delivering high-quality reference and information services to patrons, ensuring accuracy, confidentiality, and consistency in all interactions.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all library and information center staff responsible for handling reference and information requests, whether received in-person, online, via telephone, or in written form.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Reference Services	Assistance provided to patrons seeking information or resources.
Patron	Any individual using the library or information center's services.
Confidentiality	Protection of the identity and queries of patrons from unauthorized disclosure.
Information Literacy	The ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.

4. Responsibilities

- All staff must respond to patron inquiries professionally and promptly.
- Supervisors oversee adherence to protocols and provide training.
- Staff must maintain up-to-date knowledge of resources and reference tools.

5. Protocols and Procedures

- 1. Inquiry Reception**
 - Greet and acknowledge patrons cordially.
 - Listen actively to fully understand the patron's request.
 - Clarify questions to ensure accurate interpretation of needs.
- 2. Information Sourcing**
 - Identify the most reliable and relevant digital or print resources.
 - Verify information accuracy using multiple authoritative sources when possible.
 - Document sources consulted for complex queries.
- 3. Service Delivery**
 - Present information clearly, objectively, and free from personal bias.
 - Refer patrons to specialized staff or external resources if needed.
 - Follow up on delayed responses or referred inquiries within a defined timeframe (e.g., 24-48 hours).
- 4. Utilization of Resources**
 - Maintain familiarity with physical collections, digital databases, and reference tools.
 - Assist patrons in developing search strategies and using resources.
- 5. Confidentiality**
 - Handle all patron interactions and queries discreetly.
 - Do not record or share patron information except as required by law or with explicit consent.
- 6. Ethical Standards**
 - Abide by the library's professional code of ethics.
 - Promote equitable information access for all patrons without discrimination.
- 7. Information Literacy Promotion**
 - Encourage patrons to critically assess information sources.

- Offer guidance and workshops on information-seeking skills.

6. Documentation and Record-keeping

- Maintain records of complex or recurring inquiries for service improvement.
- Respect data privacy and security in documentation.
- Regularly review and update protocols as service needs evolve.

7. Training and Review

- Provide regular staff training on evolving resources, technologies, and best practices.
- Conduct periodic reviews of protocol compliance and user feedback.

8. References

- [Insert relevant library association professional standards]
- [List institutional policies and applicable legislation]

9. Revision History

Date	Version	Description	Approved by
2024-06-01	1.0	SOP template created for reference and information services	[Insert title/name]