

Clayton State University Library

Policy Name: Virtual Reference Policy

Effective Date: 2014

Review Date: May 2015

Policy

The Clayton State University Library Virtual Reference Policy follows the recommendations outlined in the Reference and Users Services (RUSA) Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services of the American Library Association.

- This service is for anyone who has a question relating to Clayton State University or for any informational question.
- Currently, we use LibChat from Springshare as our virtual reference and messaging platform.
- Transcripts for frequently asked questions or for complex questions may be saved or adapted for LibAnswers or for purposes of training.
- Statistics will be collected.
- Patrons may anonymously request help.
- Patrons will need to be able to access library services utilizing the internet.

Level of Service

- The service will be staffed by librarians and appropriately trained staff during designated hours when the Library is open, and during the academic semester when classes are in session.
- If a library staff member or librarian is not able to answer the question, requests for collaborative assistance through the group chat feature may be requested. Otherwise, the library staff person may make arrangements with a librarian to contact the patron for further assistance and more expertise in the area of the patron's question.
- Library reference staff will not answer questions about patrons' library transactions (overdue fines, material checked out, renewals, etc.) through virtual reference. These questions will be referred to the circulation desk and to circulation staff (x4345).
- Patrons will need to access electronic databases (off campus access) in order to view and receive full-text articles. Those patrons who are students, staff, or faculty of Clayton State University, but unable to get access to full text journal articles, will be given citation information and informed of the steps in completing an interlibrary loan request.

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- There is no set amount of time to be spent with a patron: however some questions may require the patron to be referred to a liaison librarian, depending on the subject area, asked to come into the library for more assistance, assisted by phone, or emailed a more in-depth response.
- This service will not offer legal, medical, or financial advice, in line with the Library's overall reference assistance policy related to these three areas.

Appropriate Behavior

- Staff will not tolerate inappropriate behavior on the service. This will be handled at the discretion of the staff member.
- No obscene or derogatory remarks will be tolerated.
- No solicitation of goods, services or "spam will be tolerated.
- Please refrain from typing in all capital letters.
- Patrons should not give out personal information such as credit card numbers or social security numbers.

Definitions

Virtual reference is reference service initiated electronically where patrons employ computers, tablets, smartphones, or any other Internet technology to communicate with reference staff, without being physically present.

Resources

Reference and Users Services (RUSA) Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services of the American Library Association

<http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/virtrefguidelines>

Compliance

Each user of virtual reference is expected to use appropriate behavior, as described above, when utilizing virtual reference services.