# Clayton State University Library

Policy Name:      Reference Services

Effective Date:     May 2002

Review Date:      November 12, 2019

## Policy

The Clayton State University Reference Services policy follows the guidelines of two divisions of the American Library Association (ALA): the Reference and User Services Association Division Guidelines (RUSA) and the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Guidelines, Standards, and Frameworks.

The Clayton State University Library serves the instructional, research and general information needs of the campus community through the provision of books, periodicals, microform, DVD's, sound recordings, electronic resources, and other library materials.

The primary purpose and philosophy of the Clayton State University Library is to offer service to patrons at the place where they are when they have a question. During library open hours, a professional librarian shall be available for reference inquiries.

Employees of the Clayton State University Library who staff reference service points should:

- Be approachable.
- Listen to requests carefully and ask questions directed at finding what the person truly wants.
- Provide accurate, timely, up-to-date reference services whether questions are asked in person, over the telephone, or online.
- Refer patrons to other possible services or resources outside of the Library, if information or service is not available at the Clayton State University Library.
- Promote information literacy through library resources, services, and library sponsored programs, and instruction. (See Instructional Services Policy)
- Periodically evaluate patron satisfaction and reference services by various methods.
- Cooperate and collaborate with other departments of Clayton State University in their efforts to better serve the University.
- Utilize online research guides created by liaison librarians to assist with instruction and reference.
- Accurately record statistics to reflect the type of reference experience.

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Staff are encouraged to refer to the guidelines and resources listed in the Resources section below regarding reference services. The following guidelines are recommended for conducting reference interviews:

1. Be aware that the patron's first question may not accurately reflect the information need. Follow-up questions are sometimes necessary to verify and clarify the actual information need.
2. Recast the question in your own words to verify that you understand the patron's question.
3. Ask about the scope of the patron's project or inquiry to establish how much information is needed.
4. If the inquiry is related to an academic assignment, ask for details of the assignment in order to determine the type and amount of research required. Are specific types of resources (such as scholarly research articles, book reviews, government documents, statistics, magazine articles, newspapers, or original research) needed by the assignment?
5. Use open-ended questioning techniques to draw out further information about the topic. Possible approaches include:
   - What is it about [topic] that you are trying to find out?
   - What additional information can you give me?
   - How much information do you need?
   - We have books and other information on [topic]. What kind of information do you need?
   - How did this question arise?
6. Use closed and/or clarifying questions to refine the search query. Some examples include:
   - What have you already found?
   - What type(s) of sources do you need?
   - Are you looking for current or historical information?
7. Call on a colleague for help if you are having trouble either with communication during the reference interview itself or with finding resources to answer the question. Often, a second viewpoint can help with brainstorming new search strategies or suggesting overlooked resources.
8. Maintain objectivity and do not interject value judgments about the subject matter or the nature of the question.

If the wording of an assignment seems to be causing confusion for multiple students as to what library resources or research strategies are appropriate, either the Access, Research, and Instructional Services (ARIS) department head or the subject area liaison librarian should contact the faculty member teaching the course for clarification, and share the answer with all reference services personnel.

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## Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, service desk staff are responsible for contacting Clayton State University's Public Safety Department at (678) 466-4050 or (770) 961-3540*.

*Note: The (770) 961-3540 number should work even if the AVAYA VOIP (Voice over internet protocol) phone system stops functioning.

## Resources

[American Library Association Guidelines for the Reference Interview](#)

[American Library Association Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers](#)

[American Library Association Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Services](#)

[American Library Association of College & Research Libraries Standards](#)

[Reference and User Services Association Guidelines and Recommendations](#)

[RefAnalytics Training](#)

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