

Reference and Bibliographic Instruction

The goal of the Reference Department is to provide accurate and complete information and assistance to meet the educational and informational needs of its patrons.

Northwestern provides reference service to its patrons in the spirit of the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Statement—that service shall not be denied or abridged on the basis of origin, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities, background, or views; that each patron's request shall be given due consideration regardless of the nature of the request; and that reference transactions shall remain confidential.

Requests for reference assistance will be handled in the order of receipt, regardless of patron status. In-person requests shall be given priority over telephone, FAX, email, or instant messaging.

The Library staff will not answer medical, legal, or tax questions. They may, however, lead patrons to sources that can answer such inquiries.

With regard to assisting students with classroom assignments, the Library staff will offer instruction on how to search for and analyze the validity of the desired materials, but will not do the assignments for the students. And while the staff may assist the students with research paper development and format, they will not aid in composition and style.

The Library attempts to play a major role in making Northwestern students library and information-literate. To that end, the Library provides bibliographic instruction (BI) in the use of the Library and its resources. BI is offered to Northwestern's classes at the request of the instructor, to area high school classes, and to individuals. Taught primarily by the Public Services Librarian, BI classes offer a general introduction to library research or may be tailored to specific fields of study, e.g. ecology, human services, or early childhood education. Arrangements shall be made in advance in order to accommodate all groups and to customize BI to the needs of each class.