



Information Services Policy

Operational

Purpose

The purpose of the Brantford Public Library's Information Services Policy is to communicate the Library's standards and responsibilities for the delivery of information services to the public based on resources available.

Principles

The Brantford Public Library endeavors to:

- Deliver a high-quality, consistent level of service, aligned with the Library's Mission Statement: "The Brantford Public Library enhances the quality of life in our diverse community. We invest in valuable experiences, resources, and services, in a welcoming and equitable environment for all."
- Give personalized, equitable assistance to customers seeking assistance.
- Provide accurate information, producing and maintaining information that meets the specific needs of the public.
- Refer customers to appropriate outside sources or alternative options, if the Library does not have the resources needed to resolve customer requests.

The Brantford Public Library supports intellectual freedom, providing equitable access to information and resources. Staff respect customer privacy and do not restrict access based on beliefs, opinions, or values. For more information, see the Library's *Intellectual Freedom Policy*.

Policy

1. General Standards

1.1 Service Priorities

During a Public Service shift, the delivery of service to the public takes priority over all other duties. Staff will respond to customer requests in the following order of priority:

1. Requests made in person
2. Requests by telephone
3. Requests by email or online form
4. Requests by mail

If a staff member cannot respond to a request immediately, they will collect the customer's

contact information and ensure a response is provided as soon as possible, communicating to alternative staff members, as needed.

Staff who require additional support or subject expertise are encouraged to consult colleagues to ensure customers receive accurate and complete information.

1.2 Service Standards

The Brantford Public Library provides information services through trained staff during all open hours. Staff use current and accurate information available from reputable print and online sources, and reliable authorities.

Staff do not provide personal opinions, analysis, or interpretation for information provided. This includes, but is not limited to: medical, legal, financial, political, consumer, or religious information. Customers will be encouraged to consult qualified professionals in the appropriate field for advice. Customers are responsible for interpreting and applying the information obtained.

The selection of information sources and the amount of time devoted to a question are at the discretion of library staff. Staff will guide customers in developing search strategies and using information tools but will not conduct research on their behalf.

Public Service staff will:

- Be knowledgeable about library materials and services
- Be courteous and approachable
- Communicate effectively with all customers
- Exercise discretion when handling questions that may be confidential or sensitive.

Whenever possible, staff will offer to accompany customers to the appropriate area of the Library. If customers prefer to locate materials independently, staff may provide verbal directions or indicate the location as needed.

As information sources and customer needs evolve, the Library remains committed to maintaining high-quality, responsive, and professional information service standards.

1.3 Accessibility Standards

The Brantford Public Library provides a range of tools and services to support access to information, including physical and digital resources, technology, and staff expertise. The Library is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive access for customers. Staff recognize that each customer and their information needs are unique. Accommodations may be provided, as needed. For more information, refer to the Library's *Accessibility Policy*.

1.4 Statistical Data

To assess and improve information services, and to meet the Government of Ontario's reporting requirements of the Annual Survey of Public Libraries, the Library collects, maintains, and analyzes statistical data related to information service use. This data is used to inform service planning and ensure continued responsiveness to community needs.

As community needs and technologies evolve, the Library continually reviews its tools and services to provide the most effective and accessible information support possible.

1.5 Range of Services

The Library is committed to providing the following general types of information services:

- Assistance using the library's catalogue, databases, and equipment
- Support conducting research for personal, educational, or professional purposes
- Help locating materials and placing holds
- Guidance in accessing community resources
- Access to materials from other institutions
- Access to the Internet
- Provision of accessibility tools to assist customers with information needs.

Section 2 of this policy, *Specific Services*, provides specific descriptions and guidelines for various services.

2. Specific Services

2.1 Quick Reference

Short, factual answers will be provided for specific requests. Responses are based on ready reference materials or electronic resources.

2.2 Genealogical/Local History Requests

The Library supports genealogical and local history research by providing access to specialized resources, databases, and equipment. Library staff are available to assist researchers in locating and using these materials effectively.

Customers may receive instruction and assistance in the following areas:

- Searching the Library's Birth, Marriage, and Death database and other local indexes
- Accessing digital archives
- Using online genealogical resources
- Locating genealogical reference materials in print and electronic formats
- Operating specialized equipment such as microfilm readers and printers
- Requesting interlibrary loans from provincial archives.

Fee-based services are also available for some forms of local history and genealogical research.

2.3 Government Documents Research

Library staff will assist customers searching for government information, including:

- Locating and accessing appropriate in-library and online government resources
- Referrals to the appropriate municipal, provincial or federal government agency.

2.4 Health/Medical/Legal/Consumer/Political Research

Library staff will:

- Assist customers in locating reputable and authoritative resources in print and online formats
- Refer customers to appropriate community agencies, government departments, or professional organizations for specialized assistance
- Provide guidance on accessing reliable sources for political information, including election materials, government platforms, and reputable news or data sources.

Library staff will not complete applications, provide witness signatures, or perform notarization services.

2.5 Internet Assistance

The Brantford Public Library provides free access to computers and Wi-Fi at all branchess. Library staff offer basic assistance to help customers navigate the internet, use online databases, and access the Library's digital resources.

Staff do not enter personal information, create personal accounts, or conduct transactions on behalf of customers. Customers are responsible for protecting their personal information and completing their own online activities.

2.6 Instructional Assistance

The Brantford Public Library provides instructional assistance to help customers develop the skills needed to use library space, resources, and technology independently. Staff offer both formal and informal instruction, including help with searching the catalogue, using lendable tools and technologies, printing/scanning and accessing digital resources. Instruction may be provided through individual or group sessions, or library programs. Assistance focuses on teaching customers how to complete tasks on their own.

Staff will not complete personal tasks or create documents on behalf of customers.

Availability of instructional assistance depends on staff resources at the time of request. When immediate help is not possible, staff will arrange an alternative time or referral.

2.7 Reader's Advisory

The Brantford Public Library provides Readers' Advisory service to help customers discover materials that match their reading interests and preferences. Staff offer personalized recommendations based on customers' past and current reading habits and interests, while the final selection remains the customer's choice. Customers are also encouraged to use online resources to explore additional reading suggestions independently.

2.8 School Assignment Assistance (Elementary and Secondary)

The Brantford Public Library supports students in completing school assignments by providing guidance and access to library resources. Staff assist students with:

- Using the library's catalogue and electronic databases
- Locating and placing holds on relevant materials

Staff do not complete or interpret assignments for students.

2.9 Career Planning and Employment Support

Staff assist customers with:

- Identifying and accessing print and electronic resources related to careers and employment
- Locating career guides and online employment listings
- Conducting basic market research and job searches
- Accessing tools for creating resumes and applications
- Referring customers to community agencies for additional support.

Staff provide guidance and instruction only; they do not complete applications or job materials on behalf of customers.

2.10 Requesting Materials

If material requested by a customer is not available in the Brantford Public Library's collection or does not align with the Library's *Collection Development Policy*, staff may assist in obtaining it through interlibrary loan from other libraries or government agencies. Borrowing is subject to the rules and policies of the lending institution, and fees may apply.

As an alternative, customers are encouraged to use the "Suggest a Purchase" service to request that the Library consider acquiring the item for its own collection, if it aligns with the Library's collection priorities.

2.11 Library Orientation

Library staff provide orientation sessions for individuals and groups to help customers become familiar with library services, spaces, and resources. Group orientations are subject to staff availability and must be booked in advance.

2.12 Community Information

The Brantford Public Library is a central resource for community information, connecting customers with local organizations and services. Library staff assist customers in identifying and contacting appropriate community agencies in Brantford and surrounding areas.

As community information and resources frequently change, the Library makes efforts to ensure accuracy and remain up to date.

2.13 Research Skills

Library staff support the development of research and information literacy skills, including providing information about how to critically evaluate and refine data as accurate, relevant, and well-sourced, particularly for topics that are sensitive, complex, or rapidly changing.

3. Special Services

Service guidelines for specific groups of customers are outlined below.

3.1 Out of Town Customers

Customers not residing in Brantford can expect to receive the same level of service as those living in the area, with respect to:

- Internet access
- Instruction on using the library catalogue and in-library access to databases
- Locating material
- Help using equipment (microfilm readers, photocopier)
- In-library access to all materials.

The Brantford Public Library maintains reciprocal borrowing agreements with multiple neighbouring library systems, which allow residents of participating municipalities to receive free membership privileges at the Brantford Public Library, and vice versa. The Library website provides current information about reciprocal borrowing arrangements.

For customers in other municipalities, borrowing materials is possible with a non-resident card and an annual fee. See the *Membership and Circulation* policy for more information.

3.2 Home Delivery Service

Residents of Brantford who are unable to visit the Library may participate in the Home Delivery Service through either delivery or pick-up options. Library staff provide and/or arrange for the following services:

- Selecting appropriate materials for customers based on reading preferences or personal requests
- Delivering and picking up materials from the customer's residence.

The delivery service provides customers with new materials every four weeks. The pick-up service offers greater flexibility for customers who have family, friends, or a caregiver available to collect library materials at a prearranged time.

History

Supersedes: Not applicable

Background documents, related policies: Brantford Public Library Privacy Policy; Brantford Public Library Internet Access Policy; Brantford Public Library Collection Development Policy; Brantford Public Library Membership and Circulation Policy; Brantford Public Library Intellectual Freedom Policy, Ontario Public Libraries Act R.S.O. 1990 Chapter P.44, Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990

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