



Ask a Librarian Service Policy

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Maintained by:	Visitor and Information Services
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Next review date:	June 2026

1 Authority

State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer

2 Responsibilities

The Director, Visitor and Information Services is responsible for the management of the Ask a Librarian service and communicating this policy to staff and clients.

The Coordinator, Library and Client Services is responsible for managing day to day processes relevant to service standards outlined in this policy and ensuring adherence to these standards.

Staff in the Library and Client Services team are responsible for the delivery of Ask a Librarian services to clients and complying with this policy while doing so.

3 Policy statement

Ask a Librarian services exist to connect people to the expertise, content and resources appropriate to meet their information needs. The service also equips clients with the skills to carry out independent research. State Library's content and [resources](#) include books, maps, photographs, [newspapers](#), manuscripts, audio, [resources](#), video and digital material as well as self-help tools such as information or research guides, webinar recordings and instructional videos.

4 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the Ask a Librarian service as guidance for the delivery of this service to clients. This policy also enables clients and staff to understand the level of support provided.

Ask a Librarian includes enquiry services to provide an initial assistance at point of need, and a research service for more complex enquiries. These services are available through a range of channels, which include:

- face-to-face at service desks
- telephone

- web-forms and email
- letters
- online chat service
- face-to-face, online or telephone appointments.

This policy is underpinned by the National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) [Service Guidelines: Information and research services at NSLA libraries](#).

5 Scope

The policy covers research and information enquiries received through the Ask a Librarian service delivered by the Visitor and Information Services team.

The service is available to anyone who has an information need, including members of the public, government agencies, organisations and educational institutions.

State Library also provides research and information services to government departments through subscription services (GRAIL); these are outside the scope of this policy.

Enquiries received by other teams at State Library outside of the Ask a Librarian service are considered outside the scope of this policy.

6 Definitions

Word	Definition
Ask a Librarian Service	Research and information services offered to members of the public, government agencies, organisations and educational institutions, to assist with their information needs.
Extended Enquiries Service	Enquiries which cannot be responded to within a short timeframe (e.g. up to 10 minutes).
Digital resources	Queensland resources that have been digitised or born digital
Eresources	Subscription and free resources such as online databases, journals, newspapers, magazines, ebooks, online training courses, company information and Australian standards, music scores and encyclopaedias.

7 Service goals

To provide a range of enquiry services and channels to meet client needs, however people access collections and services. To enable clients to find and use information and offer capacity-building for independent research. To provide quality enquiry services as efficiently as possible.

8 What we can do initially

State Library staff can generally spend up to 10 minutes on initial enquiries received in person at State Library, on the telephone or via the online chat service:

- providing advice on a research strategy
- supporting the effective use of search tools

- suggesting appropriate resources.

Enquiries that cannot be answered in a short timeframe may be referred to the extended enquiries service.

Enquiries will be referred to another information provider if this is the most appropriate place to meet the information need.

9 Extended enquiries services

9.1 Who is eligible to use the extended enquiries service?

This service is provided for:

- Queensland residents
- anyone wishing to access information relating to the jurisdiction of State Library
- anyone wishing to access information which is unique to State Library collections.

9.2 What we provide for extended enquiries

- Up to one hour of research on most enquiries. We may spend more time on enquiries if researching materials unique to our collection.
- Up to 6 enquiries for any individual during a single calendar year.
- Up to 10 copied pages free of charge, within the provision of copyright legislation. You will be advised that the provision of additional material is possible through State Library's Document Delivery service and may incur a fee.
- We will provide guidance on search strategies and relevant resources to help with your research.

9.3 Appointments

In certain circumstances, an appointment may be more appropriate to meet a client's needs. This service is available face-to-face, via telephone and online.

9.4 Response time

Enquiries are allocated to staff on the day they are received. We aim to provide a response within 10 working days.

9.5 Feedback

Clients are invited to provide feedback on the quality of the Extended Enquiry service via an online evaluation survey link provided with each response.

10 What we are not able to provide

- Supervision of examinations, or proofreading private documents
- Interpretation or provision of legal or medical advice
- Detailed technical assistance with personal hardware or software
- Lengthy or ongoing research that exceed the parameters of an extended enquiry e.g. extended family history, newspaper searches, or searches through manuscript collections
- Extended research assistance to people interstate or overseas asking for information that is readily available in their own state, territory or country
- Detailed assistance with assignments
- Searches for missing persons
- Valuations

In these instances, we may give you guidance on search strategies and relevant resources to get you started in your research or refer you to your local library or another information provider.

11 Service disclaimer

We aim to provide the most current and accurate information. We do not assume responsibility for any errors or omissions in the information provided, or for any action which relies on this information. Information is provided in adherence to copyright legislation and [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections Commitments](#).

12 Privacy

State Library respects your privacy and is subject to privacy legislation which applied to the Queensland public sector through the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#). Personal information we collect is only used for our internal activities and functions (as outlined in the *Libraries Act 1988*) and will not be disclosed unless required by law. For more information, please read State Library's privacy statement at <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/home/privacy>

13 Essential considerations

Review of this policy has included consideration of the 23 fundamental human rights protected under the [Human Rights Act 2019](#). When applying this policy, the State Library will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to all human rights, including:

- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- Freedom of expression
- Peaceful assembly and freedom of association
- Taking part in public life
- Privacy and reputation
- Cultural rights – generally
- Cultural rights – Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Right to education

14 Risk management and mitigation

Risk	Description of risk	Mitigation management
Poor quality information provided by enquiry service	A staff member provides incorrect or misleading information to a client	Regular reviewing of responses by the Coordinator, Library and Client Services to assess the quality of advice provided. Appropriate training and professional development for all staff on a regular basis. Clients receive a service disclaimer statement with each response.

Risk	Description of risk	Mitigation management
Demand for the service is too high	The number of enquiries received is too high for the capability of State Library to respond within the stated timeframe	<p>Enquiries are tracked and reviewed weekly which would enable early identification of this issue.</p> <p>Messages to clients about the high level of enquiries and delayed timeframe would be automated</p> <p>State Library will identify additional resources to meet demand wherever possible</p> <p>Enquiries are prioritised by the order they were received at State Library</p>
Copyright infringement	In providing enquiry services, State Library infringes on copyright.	Appropriate training and professional development for all staff on a regular basis.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material is shared inappropriately	In providing enquiry services, State Library provides access to material which is found by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to be protected or sensitive.	<p>State Library's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection Commitments provide for access and usage, including responding to requests to remove material from public access.</p> <p>Ensure high levels of cultural competency and collection knowledge among State Library staff.</p>

15 References

The policy is supported by:

Queensland Government

- [Human Rights Act 2019](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009](#)
- [Libraries Act 1988](#)

State Library of Queensland

- [Responsible Client Conduct Policy](#)
- [Customer Complaints Management Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection Commitments](#)

Other

- [Copyright Act 1968](#)
- National and State Libraries Australasia [Service guidelines: Information and research services at NSLA libraries](#)

16 Approval

Approved by State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer 4 July 2023.

17 Creative Commons

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