

Section:	Operational	Chairperson's Signature:	2025
Board Motion Number:	2022-23	Date Approved:	September 19, 2022
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INFORMATION AND READERS' ADVISORY SERVICES POLICY

BACKGROUND

The Oxford County Library Board endorses the key principle of library service, that all people have the right to information and that access to information should be universal and equitable.

Information services and readers' advisory are provided to all patrons of the Oxford County Library. Library membership is not required except when accessing licensed databases or borrowing items from the Library's physical or digital collections.

Staff who provide these services will strive to ensure patrons are provided with access to the information and resources they need and will respect and protect the confidential and private nature of a request. Patrons shall receive assistance in navigating the complexity of the Library's collections, whether provided in a physical or digital format.

PURPOSE

This policy will set out a framework for providing information services and readers' advisory to the patrons of the Oxford County Library.

DEFINITIONS

Readers' Advisory refers to the one-on-one process of matching readers with library materials across formats, including print, audio, visual and other emerging media. It requires specialized readers' advisory skills and competencies as outlined in the Ontario Public Library Association Readers' Advisory Committee *Readers' Advisory Core Competencies*.

Information Services refers to a process by which trained library staff endeavour to satisfy the information needs of individual library patrons by accurately identifying the information they require and then either guiding them to the most appropriate information sources or providing the information itself.

PROCEDURES

1.0 Service Standards and Limitations

- 1.1. All patrons seeking information or readers' advisory services will be treated equitably and with respect to meet their individual needs, regardless of sex, age, ability, and ethnicity. The Library will strive to provide welcoming spaces and library services to Indigenous, Inuit, and Métis peoples and share elements of their culture with non-Indigenous persons.

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- 1.2. The Library is committed to meeting the needs of patrons with disabilities and will aim to provide alternate formats and communication supports upon request. Assistance retrieving resources from the shelves will be provided.
- 1.3. Library staff will ensure patron confidentiality and protect the private nature of all information service and/or readers' advisory requests.
- 1.4. Library Staff are committed to engage in ongoing professional development to maintain and enhance readers' advisory and information service competencies.
- 1.5. Library staff may not complete print or online applications, registrations or financial transactions on behalf of patrons, including setting up email account passwords and/or security questions.
- 1.6. Library staff may set reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patron requests for information in order to ensure equitable access to library services for all patrons.
- 1.7. To uphold a high standard of service, library staff will make reasonable efforts to limit the use of AI or AI-generated sources when fulfilling requests. Library staff will rely on materials that have been reviewed, vetted or otherwise known to offer accurate, current and factual information. When AI-generated materials are intentionally used as a tool or resource, staff will inform the patron that the answer was AI-generated and offer to verify the accuracy of the information.

2.0 Readers' Advisory Service

- 2.1. As a fundamental library service, Readers' Advisory fosters an environment where reading is a valued activity, and advocates for the importance and joy of reading in the community.
 - 2.1.1. All Branches of the Oxford County Library shall offer one-on-one Readers' Advisory Service.
 - 2.1.2. Library staff will aim to provide inclusive and diverse recommendations that reflect a broad range of lived experiences.
 - 2.1.3. Oxford County Library provides web-based readers' advisory tools and engages with patrons virtually to build a reading community.
 - 2.1.4. Branch staff are trained to have the skills and abilities to provide Readers' Advisory Service to patrons of all ages. In order to meet patrons' content and format preferences, staff will refer to the Library's catalogue and digital resources. Staff may also submit purchase requests, source materials through inter-library loan, or refer patrons to specialized services such as CELA.
 - 2.1.5. In-house materials such as booklists, read-alikes and signage may be

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prepared or printed at Headquarters and Resource Branches and shared among branches as needed.

3.0 Information Services

- 3.1. Information Service, also known as reference service, is an essential library service with a goal to meet the information needs of library patrons in an accurate and efficient manner.
 - 3.1.1. All branches of the Oxford County Library offer one-on-one Information Service during regular library hours.
 - 3.1.2. The Library website provides links to local sources and organizes those links intuitively for ease of use.
 - 3.1.3. Branch staff are trained in the provision of Information Service and use all available resources to assist patrons. In-depth or complex questions and/or technology help may be referred to Resource Branches for further support.
 - 3.1.4. Information Service is offered to the public during open hours in a variety of situations. The Library accepts questions from the public in person, by telephone, by mail, by e-mail, and through the website and social media.
 - 3.1.5. When an answer is not found using library resources, patrons may be referred to other libraries, agencies and/or community resources.
 - 3.1.6. Library staff will not provide personal opinions, analysis or interpretation of information. The responsibility for interpreting and applying information received at the library rests with the patron.
 - 3.1.7. Library staff evaluate, select and purchase information resources in print and electronic format to meet the information needs of the Oxford County community and in accordance with the *Collection Development Policy*.

4.0 Intellectual Freedom

- 4.1. The Oxford County Library Board has adopted the Canadian Federation of Library Association's (CFLA) *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries* (2019) and the Ontario Library Association's *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and the Intellectual Rights of the Individual* (2020).
- 4.2. The Library's Information and Readers' Advisory Services will incorporate and endorse these Intellectual Freedom statements by endeavouring to meet the information and readers' advisory needs of all individuals and by encouraging Freedom of Expression and access to library services and resources.

5.0 References and Related Documents

5.1. Oxford County Library Policies

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5.1.1. Oxford County Library. (2022, June). *Collection Development Policy*.

5.1.2. Oxford County Library. (2022, June). *Code of Conduct*.

5.1.3. Oxford County Library. (2022, September). *Privacy and Access to Personal Information Policy*.

5.2. Position Statements and Other Documents

5.2.1. Ontario Public Library Association, Readers' Advisory Committee. (2024, April). *Readers' Advisory Core Competencies*.

5.2.2. Canadian Federation of Library Associations. (2019, April). *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries*. CFLA-FCAB.

5.2.3. Ontario Library Association. (2020, January). *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and the Intellectual Rights of the Individual*. OLA: Ontario Library Association.