



Library Standard Operating Procedures

Approved by the Library Board: December 1, 2015

INSTANT MESSAGING

PURPOSE

To make library services available to online users, the Library needs to use IM to answer reference questions. The Library also needs to establish criteria for acceptable behavior in this service. The Library also needs to authorize the use of IM among staff as a library service and a communication method.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all library staff and patrons.

POLICY

The Library will use IM to answer reference questions and as an intra-staff communication method.

PROCEDURES

- Anyone with internet access may use this service.
- Requests for factual information (who, what, when, where, why or how) or policy and procedure questions are appropriate using IM.
- We cannot answer complex questions that require us to do additional research to narrow or refine the request, but we can suggest resources for your own further research. We cannot answer legal, medical, or other types of questions requiring professional interpretation.
- If the questions are too complex for an instant answer or need follow up, the librarian on duty will use email, phone, or refer the patron to another librarian with expert knowledge. The librarian may also recommend that the patron come to the Library to inquire at the Reference Desk or utilize print resources only available at the Library.
- The librarian on duty at the reference desk will monitor IM service, and will try to respond to IM questions as soon as possible, within the regular hours of operation. Staff will respond to reference questions in this order: in person requests, telephone requests, IM requests.

- Los Gatos Library respects patron privacy, but cannot guarantee the privacy of files, email, or other information stored or transmitted electronically. Please do not submit sensitive information to the Library via email or IM. When providing virtual reference, the Library will collect the minimum personal information necessary for providing effective reference.
- The Library reserves the right to refuse to answer questions that are offensive and/or inappropriate, in accordance with the Library's [Rules of Conduct](#). If a patron does not abide by these rules, the session will be terminated, and the screen name blocked.
- Staff will use IM as a method of communication when on duty.