

University of San Francisco Law Library
Legal Reference Service Policy
August 18, 2008

1. Purpose

This policy defines the reference services law librarians at the University of San Francisco Law Library will provide to the user groups of the Law Library. It provides guidelines for the levels of service that we offer to our library users.

This policy also defines circumstances in which reference service may be limited.

2. Summary of Service Policy

The University of San Francisco Law Library provides reference service to support to the fullest extent possible the reference and research needs of the faculty, law students, graduate students, undergraduate students, and staff of the University of San Francisco. The Law Library will provide reference service for the legal research questions of University of San Francisco Law School alumni, other attorneys, and law students from other ABA-accredited law schools whenever possible given the constraints of time, budget and staffing. The Law Library will provide assistance with the use of government documents for the public in accordance with our service policies, and as required by the California and Federal depository programs.

3. Guidelines for Service Groups

3.1 University of San Francisco Faculty

The Law Library reference staff will assist the faculty in securing all information necessary to support their teaching, research, and writing, within current budgetary limits.

Subject to the limitations set forth in Section 4 and to time and staffing constraints, the Law Library reference staff will assist faculty in securing information for their private legal practice.

3.2 University of San Francisco Students

The Law Library reference staff will assist students in securing all information that is related to their classes or otherwise in furtherance of their education. Where possible, the Law Library reference staff will also provide point-of-need instruction in legal research strategies, techniques, and materials to students.

Subject to the limitations set forth in Section 4 and to time and staffing constraints, the Law Library reference staff will provide reference service to USF law students employed by law firms, courts, government agencies or other legal service providers.

Subject to the limitations set forth in Section 4 and to time and staffing constraints, the Law Library reference staff will also assist University of San Francisco students in securing legal information needed for personal reasons.

3.3 University of San Francisco Staff

The Law Library reference staff will provide information service to University of San Francisco staff to meet all job-related information needs.

Subject to the limitations set forth in Section 4 and to time and staffing constraints, the Law Library reference staff will also assist University of San Francisco staff in securing legal information needed for personal reasons.

3.4 University of San Francisco School of Law Alumni, other Attorneys, Students from other ABA-accredited Law Schools

Where possible, given time and staffing constraints, the Law Library reference staff will provide legal reference service to University of San Francisco School of Law alumni, other attorney who are members of the California Bar, and students from other California ABA-accredited law schools.

3.5 Public Patrons

The Law Library reference staff will assist members of the public in using California and Federal government depository documents. Members of the public wishing to use government depository documents may be asked to meet with a reference librarian to ascertain which particular documents will be used. Public patrons may not use non-depository documents.

The Law Library reference staff will not provide other information or reference services to the public. Instead, the Law Library reference staff will refer public patrons to publicly-funded law libraries.

4. Service Limitations

4.1 Unauthorized Practice of Law

The Law Library reference staff will not provide legal assistance or interpret the law because doing so could result in a breach of the standards of practice for law librarians, violation of the California Rules of Professional Conduct, or the potential commission of the crime of unauthorized practice of law.

4.2 Commercial Databases and Computer Assisted Legal Research

Law Library reference staff will use LEXIS and WESTLAW to assist only current University of San Francisco law faculty, law students, and law staff, and only in accordance with the usage limitations promulgated by LEXIS and WESTLAW and communicated to the reference staff by these vendors.

The Law Library reference staff will use other commercial databases only in compliance with the provisions of the applicable contracts between the University of San Francisco and the database vendors.

4.3 Telephone Reference

The Law Library reference staff may answer simple reference questions over the phone for Law Library patrons eligible to receive reference service under this policy. Reference requests made in person will receive priority.

The Law Library reference staff will not read cases, statutes, regulations, court rules or definitions over the phone.

4.4 E-mail, Chat, and Instant Message Reference

The Law Library reference staff may answer simple reference questions received via e-mail, chat, and instant message services for persons currently affiliated with the University of San Francisco—with members of the University of San Francisco law school community having priority.

The Law Library reference staff may answer simple e-mail questions relating to the California and Federal depository government documents holdings of the University of San Francisco Law Library.

In all instances, reference requests made in person will receive priority.