

Halifax Regional Municipality Archives

Public Reference and Research Policy

Policy Statement

In accordance with its mandate, the Halifax Regional Municipality Archives will provide public reference service to assist access to its archival holdings and reference collection. The Municipal Archives is committed to facilitating on-site and remote access to a diverse researching public. Reference service is the Municipal Archives' most public activity; its reputation is built primarily through the quality of its response to reference requests. Research, however, is what the Municipal Archives enables others to do, and the Municipal Archives will conduct research on behalf of researchers only in limited circumstances.

Objective

This policy identifies the scope of reference service and offers guidelines for providing cost-effective, researcher-focussed service.

Scope

This policy applies to all external requests received by Municipal Archives staff for reference or research, from any source, via any technology.

Pertinent Policies and Procedures

- IM Reference and Research Policy - provides guidelines for internal HRM requests, as well as requests that involve the Records Centre.
- Retrieval Procedures
- Research Room Rules
- Handling Archival Records

Definitions

Reference service - assisting researchers in accessing and making use of the available reference tools (finding aids, databases, etc.), and providing advice concerning sources relevant to the researcher's query. Researchers can then conduct their own research, with assistance from the Municipal Archives, if required.

Research - going beyond the provision of reference tools and information on sources to actually identifying and locating the specific information requested.

Policy Statements

1. The Municipal Archives will give fair and impartial, fast and attentive service to all reference requests.
2. The Municipal Archives is committed to removing barriers to access for disabled researchers. This means that the Archives will facilitate the retrieval and handling of records by making descriptions available in alternative formats and by providing copies of original material when possible or for safe handling purposes.

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The Archives will also maintain a contact list of local service or volunteer agencies that researchers may consult.

3. The Municipal Archives will facilitate remote access by providing descriptions of its holdings on the Municipal Archives' web-site and participating in Nova Scotian and Canadian archival information networks.
4. Because of finite resources, the Municipal Archives limits the amount of research it can conduct on behalf of an external researcher to one hour per year, within the discretion of the Municipal Archivist. Situations of legal or humanitarian urgency may justify additional research service. If further research assistance is required, the Municipal Archives will refer the researcher to a list of Professional Researchers for hire.
5. The Municipal Archives will provide researchers with the names, contact information and a brief description of the services supplied by professional researchers available for hire within the Municipality. The Municipal Archives does not endorse the list and will not assume any responsibility for their work. It is the responsibility of the professional researchers to inform the Municipal Archives of any changes to their listed information.
6. The Municipal Archives will maintain statistics on the number and sources of reference requests and copying requests.
7. The Municipal Archives will survey clients about the quality of its customer service, and respond to suggestions for improvements.

Roles and Responsibilities

Manager, Information Management - will ensure staff have time and resources to respond to reference requests quickly and thoroughly.

Municipal Archivist will:

- Ensure that reference requests are responded to fairly and equitably, quickly and thoroughly.
- Conduct and track research conducted on behalf of researchers, and, using appropriate discretion, communicate any limits.
- Maintain a list of Professional Researchers for Hire.
- Compile reference statistics and conduct customer satisfaction surveys.
- Maintain current and adequate Reference and Research Policies and Procedures.

Staff and volunteers, Information Management - will provide reference service and research according to this policy.

Researchers - Individuals wishing to consult the Municipal Archives' holdings will visit the Research Room if physically possible; however, remote researchers can expect research assistance within limitations.

Review

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This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Municipal Archivist. Comments or concerns should be directed to the Municipal Archivist.