

CORRESPONDENCE POLICY

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4.11. Correspondence

Correspondence consists of written communication received by either electronic, U.S., campus, or library mail and received by the Department or by individual librarians in the Department.

4.11.1 Categories of inquirers

1. Current Yale faculty, student, or staff

To fall in this category, the inquirer's name must appear in the online Yale Directory. If they claim one of these statuses but cannot be found in the Directory -- which may be the case particularly with Associates or Visiting Fellows -- ask the person to verify their current departmental affiliation with the University, and check with the Registrar, Business Manager, or departmental Administrative Assistant to confirm their status before proceeding with the question.

2. Yale alumni

To fall in this category, the person's name must appear in the Yale Alumni Directory or be confirmed with the alumni records office (2-1100.)

3. Others who can claim some affiliation with the University

Spouses of employees or students;
Yale students not currently registered;
Persons listed in the printed Yale Directory, following the alphabetical listing of names, as "Members of the Yale Community".

4. All other inquirers (including cardholders).

4.11.2 Levels of service

The level of reference assistance offered through correspondence is determined by:

- The association of the inquirer with the University;
- The proximity of the inquirer to the library and its resources;
- The physical disability of the inquirer;
- The nature of the question

Service which involves drafting an individualized response to an inquiry, including the provision of answers requiring up to an hour of research, is offered to categories 1, 2, and 3 of inquirers listed above. This level of service is also offered to *anyone* inquiring about:

- Library policies or procedures
- Material unique or nearly unique to Yale

Non-University affiliates requesting reference assistance beyond these parameters receive the Department's standard regrets reply.

Responses to complex queries posed by those who live either on campus or are able to make a trip to the library a reasonable consideration may be somewhat briefer than those provided others who are physically disabled, live greater distances, or do not have access to Yale's electronic resources. In all cases, responses to lengthy or complex questions should include an educational component consisting of one or more of the following:

- Suggestions of sources or methods that may be used;
- Examples of search statements to be used in Orbis or other electronic sources;
- Pointing out the existence of an online tutorial;
- Suggesting that the inquirer ask in person at the Reference Desk for more detailed personal assistance.

At the librarian's discretion, a response may be made by telephone to an inquiry requiring clarification or a lengthy response.

4.11.3 Specific types of inquiry

A genealogical query, as understood in this statement, is any request for information about the descent of a person or family from an ancestor or ancestors. The following policy is based on the judgement arrived at by Yale Library staff in 1969, that genealogical research is undertaken primarily for private gratification rather than in pursuit of a scholarly objective. Forward questions relating to faculty, graduates and other persons affiliated with Yale University to Manuscripts & Archives; the staff will respond with biographical data when this data is readily available. All other genealogical queries, including requests for copies of obituaries, are considered outside the scope of normal service provided by the Yale University Library. Such inquiries are answered with the standard genealogical reply.

Inquiries specifically requesting photocopies of sources or photographs are referred to the Reproduction of Library Materials service of the Interlibrary Loan Office. Requests that ask for a copy of a photograph published with the credit line "Yale University Library" or "Yale Library" are replied to with the standard reply for unknown photographs unless the letter specifies the source from which the photograph was taken; in this case, refer the letter to Reproduction of Library Materials.

When in doubt about the level of service to provide, consult the Department Head.

4.11.4 Style

Make replies as brief, succinct and businesslike as possible. Use the salutation style "Dear [First Name] [Last Name]," in all correspondence. In the first paragraph of every non-electronic reply, cite the date and subject of the original inquiry; in email replies, where the original inquiry is included in the reply, make sure that the subject line reflects the nature of the question. If the inquiry was addressed to another party or department, include that information in the initial paragraph.

EXAMPLE: The Yale University Library received your letter of March 27 in which you inquire about the availability of the catalogs of the British Library, and it was forwarded to the Research Services and Collections Department for reply.

If photocopies of catalog cards or of pages from relevant sources will aid the reader, they should be included, particularly if they will enable you to draft a briefer reply. Use active voice whenever possible and minimize use of the first person.

The following form letters are available for use when replying to inquiries received in both printed and electronic forms:

- A. Buying time
- B. Database access (Yale affiliate)
- C. Database access (other)
- D. Genealogy
- E. Limited time
- F. Photographs
- G. Regrets
- H. Yale dissertations

4.11.5. General Procedures

1. The turn-around time for answering correspondence is one working day for email inquiries and one week for non-electronic inquiries. Keeping queries around for a long time does not make reply easier, and they may get lost among the paper; follow-up queries sometimes ensue. It is better to give a brief reply recommending sources in which the reader may find answers than to hold correspondence while drafting an involved reply.
2. You may find on searching that the materials needed to satisfy a request are held in another library at Yale. Forward email directly to the library unit responsible for offering reference assistance in the subject area of the question, and give non-electronic queries to the Reference Assistant in charge of correspondence with a request that it be forwarded to a specific library. If the inquiry itself makes it apparent why the message has been forwarded, no accompanying comment is necessary. If it isn't clear, or if

you've done some preliminary work on the question which suggested a reason for forwarding it, include this information in an accompanying message. Always report all sources you've already checked to avoid duplication of effort. Reply to the inquirer in a separate message or letter, reporting that the inquiry has been forwarded to a specific library, and supply the email reference address or mailing address of that library.

3. If a query can be partially answered from Sterling materials but partially from materials held elsewhere at Yale (e.g. Manuscripts/Archives), answer our part and inform the inquirer that the request will be forwarded. Accomplish this by Replying to the inquirer and cc'ing the other library unit. If the inquiry was received by surface mail, return the original inquiry with an attached copy of your reply to the Reference Assistant in charge of correspondence with a request that it be forwarded to a specific library or librarian.

4.11.6. Email

Methods of receipt

1. Sent directly to smlref@yale.edu
2. Sent to individual librarians either directly by the inquirer or forwarded from another source.

Responsibility for replies

Inquiries received by smlref@yale.edu that are general in nature or deal with subjects that fall within the collecting responsibilities of Research Services and Collections' librarians should in almost all instances be answered by staff on duty at the Reference Desk.

- A. If an inquiry is beyond the scope of Reference Assistants' responsibilities for service, the librarian on duty or next to come on duty assumes responsibility.
- B. Inquiries are forwarded to an RSC subject specialist **only** after preliminary consultation with them.

If you begin to answer an email inquiry received by smlref@yale.edu but find that you can't complete the answer while you're on the Reference Desk,

- A. Leave the inquiry in the In box, but alert staff following you at the Desk that you intend to complete the reply;
- B. Save the query and reply to your personal folder at the Reference Desk and complete the response as soon as possible; or,
- C. Forward the question to your own email account, but be sure to reply to the inquirer through the smlref@yale.edu account

General reference inquiries received by individual selectors may be forwarded to the smlref@yale.edu account for reply.

Logging and maintaining copies of replies

1. Inquiries received at smlref@yale.edu are logged automatically when a reply is sent. Include a copy of the original inquiry with your response by using

the Reply or Reply With (used with standard replies) functions. These electronic logs are organized monthly, and the current and previous two months' replies are maintained on the Reference Desk 2 workstation. Both the previous fiscal year's replies and the current fiscal year's replies to within the current two months are downloaded and maintained offline by the Reference Assistant assigned this responsibility.

2. Copies of email correspondence received directly and responded to by individual RSC members are maintained by each individual on their own workstation or in their own Pantheon account in a folder named "Department Correspondence FYXX". Include a copy of the original inquiry with your response by using the Reply or Reply With functions. Replies from the current and one previous fiscal year are archived.

Style of reply

All replies from smlref@yale.edu carry the following signature block appended automatically to every reply sent from the Reference Desk. In each case "xxx" is replaced by the responding staff member's initials; this is accomplished automatically by selecting individual signature files from within the email software:

Research Services and Collections
Sterling Memorial Library
Yale University/xxx

Statistics

1. Statistics on correspondence received by smlref @yale.edu are maintained on the reference desk statistics sheet in the following categories as replies are sent:
 - Responses from RSC:** the number of original replies composed by RSC members to incoming inquiries
 - Forwarded to other units or librarians:** the number of inquiries forwarded to other Library units or other librarians (including members of RSC)
 - Canned replies:** the number of replies generated through use of one of the Department's form replies
 - Instruction sign-ups:** the number of email inquiries received that only involve sign-ups for instruction sessions or workshops
2. Statistics on email correspondence answered by individual RSC librarians are maintained on the monthly Reference Inquiries statistics sheet.

Forwarding reader replies, responses, or thanks

Forward accolades and complaints concerning service provided to the person who provided the service and to the Department Head.

4.11.7. U.S., campus, and library mail

Methods of receipt

1. Sent to the Library
 - a. Letters addressed to "Yale University Library", "Librarian", "The Librarian", and those addressed to the University Librarian by name, but found to be general inquiries (not specific to the Beinecke, Manuscripts & Archives, Interlibrary Loan, or other Yale libraries), are forwarded by LAS to RSC
2. Sent to "Reference", "Collection Development", or Research Services and Collections
3. Sent to individual librarians

Logging and filing copies of replies

1. All original correspondence directed to either the Department in general or to individual selectors is given to the Reference Assistant with responsibility for correspondence. She notes the date of receipt and "RSC" in the upper right corner of the item and records its receipt in a monthly log detailing the following information: date received; source from which received (mail, selector, library unit); inquirer's name; brief topic; referred to; date referred; reply sent (date); form of reply.
2. If the inquiry falls within the guidelines of service offered by Reference Assistants at the Reference Desk (policy and procedural questions or requests for known item information) or if it involves forwarding the inquiry to another Library unit, the Reference Assistant forwards or responds to the inquiry. Direct any questions about individual pieces of correspondence to the Department Head.
3. If the inquiry is more detailed, she forwards the original inquiry to the selector in whose subject area it most closely falls; this may mean forwarding the request to a selector or curator outside of RSC.
4. Replies to correspondence written by RSC selectors are copied into folders for this purpose on each staff member's workstation and maintained for one year. A printed copy of the response (with an accompanying addressed envelope) is returned to the Reference Assistant for mailing, accompanied by the original inquiry with a copy of the response attached. The Reference Assistant logs the date of the response in the correspondence log and mails it; the original inquiry and attached response are filed in the Department's correspondence file chronologically by date of response.
5. At the end of every month, the Reference Assistant in charge of correspondence reports to the Reference Assistant in charge of reference statistics the number of items of correspondence which she either (a) referred to selectors or units *outside* of RSC, or (b) answered herself. Replies written

by other RSC members are reported by them individually on their monthly personal statistics sheets.

4/11/00