



State Library
of Oregon

ANSWERLAND

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Section 1: About Volunteering for the State Library

Our Vision

All Oregonians have the information essential to be engaged citizens, to strengthen our communities, and to build a prosperous state.

Our Mission

The State Library provides leadership and resources to continue growing vibrant library services for Oregonians who are print-disabled, the Legislature and state government, and all Oregonians through local libraries.

Our Core Values

Open to Opportunity: We innovate and problem solve

Excellent Customer Service: We deliver the best services to meet customer needs

Strong Community: We compromise, cooperate and connect to achieve mutual success

Professionalism: We are honest, keep our commitments and responsible for our actions

Personal Leadership: We take initiative and use open two-way communication to improve ourselves

Our Organization

The State Library is comprised of four divisions: Government Information and Library Services, Library Support and Development Services, Oregon Talking Book and Braille Library and Operations. Answerland is part of the Library Support and Development Services Division and supported with Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) as well as the contributions of staff at partner libraries. Leadership for the program is bolstered by an advisory committee comprised of information professionals from around Oregon.

Volunteer Program

The vision of the volunteer program is to create an environment where volunteers are able to donate the use of their knowledge and skills while contributing to the efficiency of services the State Library provides to the state of Oregon. All volunteers are held to the same standards as Oregon Library Staff and are responsible for upholding the State Library's vision and mission.

Benefits

As a volunteer, you will get to use your skills, along with developing new ones. You will be recognized for your service in a variety of ways. Upon request, we will provide documentation of hours volunteered and letters of recommendation.

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Mentor

You will be paired with a mentor for the first few months. Your mentor is there to support you and answer your questions related to Answerland. They may be available to work with you during your shifts (if schedules allow). They will also review your transcripts and provide you feedback.

Separation

If you can no longer volunteer for Answerland, please let the Volunteer or Answerland Coordinator know of your inability to remain with the program immediately. We can place your account on hold if that is desired and we will also conduct an exit survey.

Attending your shift is extremely important. If your schedule has changed and you need to take a week off, please let us know so we can plan accordingly. Not showing up for your minimum amount of time or for skipping your assigned shift without notification does not allow us to provide reliable service to our patrons. Please treat this role as you would an in-person work scenario. The first “no show” will be given a warning. If you have two no-shows and do not respond to our inquiries, you will be dismissed from the program.

Section 2: State Library Policies

Policy Access

All State Library policies can be found on the Oregon State Website by going to the “About Us” tab and then clicking on the “State Library Policies and Guidelines” link or by clicking here:

<http://www.oregon.gov/osl/Pages/Oregon-State-Library-Policies-and-Guidelines.aspx>

Patron Record Disclosure

The State Library is committed to ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of patrons. It is the policy of the State Library to not release any patron records except as stated in the policy.

Discrimination and Harassment-Free Workplace

The State of Oregon provides a work environment free from unlawful discrimination or workplace harassment based on or because of a volunteer’s protected class status. Everyone must conduct themselves in a business-like and professional manner at all times and not engage in any form of discrimination, workplace harassment or sexual harassment. Report violations to the Volunteer Program Coordinator or the Answerland Coordinator.

Public and Media Relations

The State Librarian is designated as the public information officer and primary spokesperson for the agency. Volunteers are not to have contact with the media or its representatives in regards to a library issue without approval by the State Librarian. If a volunteer has been contacted by the media, the volunteer will refer the contact to the Volunteer or Answerland Coordinator.

Volunteer Service Program Policy

All personal information acquired while volunteering will be kept confidential. The State Library may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to discontinue the volunteer’s relationship with the agency.

Oregon Government Ethics Law

Volunteers are considered public officials and are held personally responsible for complying with the provisions in Oregon Government Ethics law. (See the “Guide for Public Officials” on the Oregon Government Ethics Commission website: <http://www.oregon.gov/ogec>.) This means that you must make a personal judgment in deciding such matters as the use of official position for financial gain, what gifts are appropriate to accept, or when to disclose the nature of conflicts of interest. If in doubt, please check with the volunteer coordinator for clarification on any decisions that might be of conflict.

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Code of Conduct

Answerland volunteers will:

- Respond to the patron and requests as soon as feasibly possible
- Complete tasks in a timely manner
- Communicate clearly
- Operate with integrity
- Be reliable for every shift (if you cannot cover, you will notify staff of your absence)
- Be accountable for their actions
- Assume positive intent
- Show respect for the rights, safety and welfare of patrons
- Maintain a professional and respectful demeanor
- Document inappropriate conversations and report any concerns about personal safety, harassment or participation to the Volunteer or Answerland Coordinator

Answerland volunteers will not:

- Skip shifts without properly notifying staff of the absence
- Use any racist, sexist, discriminatory, offensive or culturally insensitive language
- Use, reveal or share patrons' personal information
- Exchange personal contact information with a patron
- Arrange to see patrons or invite patrons to their home
- Solicit business or broker any agreements to provide service

Section 3: Chat and Scheduling

Your Chat Shifts

We rely on our volunteers to cover their shift. Although you are covering chat virtually, your presence is as important as if you were sitting at a front desk in person. Please cover your shift or let us know if there is a week you will not be in attendance. Not showing up for a shift without proper notification is not acceptable behavior of professionals.

Volunteers are required to work a minimum of two hours per week; you are welcome to take extra shifts if you desire. Volunteers are not expected to work on observed state holidays (found at <http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/Pages/buildingclosure.aspx>).

All librarians who staff chat – including volunteers – are required to clock in and out of each shift. They are also required to drop shifts they cannot work, and pick up alternate shifts to make up for time they missed.

Using the Software and Scheduling System

See **QuestionPoint Chat: A Primer for Answerland Library Staff** at <https://libguides.osl.state.or.us/answerland/qp> for details.

Practicing Chat

You are welcome to practice chat by yourself, or you can contact the Answerland Coordinator to schedule a time to practice with you. To practice by yourself:

1. To be “Librarian,” click **Launch Chat** from the left column under Quick Links. When the chat monitor opens, select Monitor ‘**Practice Queue**’ (box in the lower left)
2. To be “Patron,” click on **Chat Practice Patron Form** in the left column under Quick Links. The form opens in a separate window. Fill out the form and submit. Be sure the **Practice** box is checked (top of form).
3. Librarian should see the Patron question, and you can practice.

Best Practices & Reference Resources

See the **Answerland Staff Toolkit** (<https://libguides.osl.state.or.us/answerland>).