Give ‘em the Pickle: Customer Service Improvement

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“Service is the heart of our profession. Thinking of patrons as ‘customers’ is an apt way to remind ourselves - and our staffs - of the manner in which we wish to associate with the public. Our customers - whether they be students, faculty, or members of the general public - are why libraries exist. We must not take them for granted.”

Customer Service: The Heart of a Library.”

Customer Service in Libraries: Not New!

Mr. Green’s Axiom

“A librarian should be as unwilling to allow an inquirer to leave the library with his question unanswered as a shopkeeper to have a customer go out of his store without a purchase. Receive investigators with something of the cordiality displayed by an old time shopkeeper. Hold on to them until they have obtained the information they are seeking, and show a persistency in supplying their wants similar to that manifested by a successful clerk in effecting a sale.”
Emporia State University

- Regional university in Kansas
- Approximately 6,000 students
- Both on campus and distance programs
- Library has:
  - 5 departments
  - 20 fulltime staff (4 in Access Services)
Why Emphasize Customer Service?

- Libraries have:
  - Variety of patrons, varying needs
  - Different employees and tiered services

- Perception of Library
  - “Each individual encounter has power”

- Double Standard – “Define own vision of customer service”
Evaluating Customer Service

- 360° Review
- Surveys
- Unobtrusive Evaluation
- Comment Box
- Qualitative Methods
- Other methods???
Improvement

- Training, Training, Training
  - All Staff including Students
  - All Departments
- New Employee Orientation
- Customer Service Philosophy
- Be Aware of Customer Service Experiences
- Empower Employees
Customer Service: Not Just for Front Line Employees

- Circulation / Reference
- Interlibrary Loan
- Shelvers
- Technical Services / Acquisitions / Collection Development
- Internal / External Customers
Service: Make serving others your #1 Priority.
Attitude: Choose your Attitude.
Consistency: Set high standards, and stick to them.
Library Pickles???
Customer Service Models: Seattle’s Pike Place Fish Market
Other Models:
Celebration!
“Customer service is more art than science. Like art, where beauty is in the eye of the beholder, learning the art of customer service takes training, patience, and an “eye.” Skills associated with customer service can best be gained through example, practice, and mentoring. For the challenging staff member, stress that the positive response from customers is, for many of us in public service, the reward that makes our work most enjoyable.”

“Mr. Green’s Axiom” Reference and User Services Quarterly 42:1 (Fall 2002)
“So, for today, let’s transform our own individual, professional behavior – reflect not on a colleague’s, an employee’s, the dean’s or director’s behavior – reflect upon our own behavior.”

“It’s not who is right, but what is right.”

Chief Keith Ranney, Bloomington Fire Dept.

Bibliography of Sources
