Customer Service in Academic Libraries

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Customer Service in Academic Libraries

Tales From the Front Line

Edited by

STEPHEN MOSSOP

ELSEVIER

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For Brenda, with all my love.

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AFL	Australian Football League
ALL	Academic Liaison Librarian
ARS	Automated Retrieval System
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
AV	Audio Visual
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CJN	China Journal Net
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
CRL	Center for Research Libraries
CRM	Customer Relations Management
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EU	European Union
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
FASS	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
FENS	Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences
FXU	Falmouth Exeter Union
FXU Plus	Falmouth Exeter Plus
GPS	Global Positioning System
HE	Higher Education
HEW	Higher Education Worker
HFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HKALL	Hong Kong Academic Library Link
HKU	Hong Kong University
HKUL	Hong Kong University Libraries
HRM	Human Resource Management
IC	Information Center
ILS	Integrated Library System
IRSI	Information Resources, Systems and Infrastructure
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IWOOT	I Want One Of These
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
KPI	Key Performance Indicator

LLDP	Library Leadership Development Program
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MSMS	Master of Science in Management Studies
NSS	National Student Survey
OCLC	Online Computer Library Center
OP	Operational Priority
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalogue
PIE	Professionals in International Education
QR	Quick Response
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification
SIS	Scholarly Information Services
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOM	School of Management
SSLC	Staff Student Liaison Committee
SSLG	Staff Student Liaison Group
SU	Sabancı University
SUNUM	Sabancı University Nanotechnology Research and Application Center
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
THE	Times Higher Education
TUBITAK	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VU	Victoria University
ZLOG	Zaragoza Master of Engineering in Logistics and Supply Chain Management

ABOUT THE EDITOR

STEPHEN MOSSOP

Stephen Mossop was, until his recent retirement, Head of Library Services at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom. He has published and presented widely on aspects of strategic organisational development and library management. He has special interests in library design, customer relationship management, and library technology. He was a member of the influential BIC/CILIP "RFID in Libraries" UK standards working party, and was the recipient of the prestigious RFID in Libraries Innovation Award in 2012. He is best known for his 2008 case study on RFID at the University of Central Lancashire (for the BIC e-libraries project), and for his 2013 book *Achieving Transformational Change in Academic Libraries*, published by Chandos.

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INTRODUCTION

I've done a lot of different things in my working life—starting with kitchen design and sales, then kitchen installation, and finally on to working in libraries. For a time, while working for my degree, I was even a car-park attendant at car boot sales! Whatever sphere I was operating in, however, I was always keen to make sure that I was "getting it right for my customer" … partly because if I didn't they either wouldn't buy my wares or wouldn't pay me for my services, but also because I really enjoyed helping people get what they were hoping for—which might have been the new kitchen that both looked good and worked well for them, or, more recently, finding the information resource or study space that would help them to grow and mature as a learning individual.

I have to say that although I really enjoyed creating new kitchens, and even quite enjoyed parking cars, the most satisfying part of my career was working in libraries—and in particular working with front-line teams. I was particularly thrilled (and not a little surprised) when Exeter invited me to take on the leadership of their front-line Library Customer Services team. I joined them at a particularly challenging time, at the very beginning of the four-year lead-up to creating their new and very ambitious Forum development, which was designed to draw together the majority of student services in one place in order to deliver as seamless a student-support service as it was possible to get—a "one-stop shop" on a grand scale! From the library's perspective, this concept would have a monumental impact not only on the range of services and resources we offered, but, and most importantly, on how we needed to deliver them in order to fulfill our part in this new multi-service environment. This called for some really radical changes not only in the ways we worked as a front-line team, but also in the ethos and philosophies that underpinned the whole operation. Exciting, sometimes difficult, and often frustrating times … but we managed the transition from old to new with time to spare before the grand opening—we were "Forum-ready," to the surprise of some of our leaders, but more importantly very much to the approval of our customers!

How we did it wasn't black magic—it just took a bit of imagination and hard graft. I lie … it took a LOT of imagination to fully understand how we could possibly fit into the new, wider Forum operation, and then it took a LOT of hard work from a great many people in order to make the much-needed changes. We sought and found examples of "best practice" from all over the place. We took the best and most appropriate of these best practices, and by adapting, scaling up, and inventing a few new bits of our own, we created the design we needed—and then we put it into operation. Clearly, although we achieved our task, this was just one key moment on a never-ending continuum and more changes and more adaptations would always be necessary in order to best meet the ever-changing needs of our customers—but that's the whole point of what we do as front-line teams … constantly striving for customer-service perfection.

This book is my own contribution to what academic libraries, as a community, do really well—the sharing of best practices. I hoped to bring together, in one place, examples of how libraries serving a wide variety of different types of institutions, of different backgrounds and environments, and of different sizes and constituent customer bases manage their own striving toward perfection in terms of "getting it right for their customers." To this end you will find contributions from a wide geographical area—Hong Kong, Australia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom—and covering a wide range of institutions and customer bases—including research-intensive, cross HE/FE, private establishments, and shared campuses. All have their own tales to tell, their own emphases, their own ways of doing things—and all bring their own examples of best practices, which I sincerely hope you will find useful in your own context.

CHAPTER 1

"Customer Service"—What's the Big Deal?

Stephen Mossop
Head of Library Services (Retired), University of Exeter, UK

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

There are many terms traditionally employed by academic libraries to describe those who make use of the services they offer—"patrons," "readers," "researchers," "students," and "users" to name but a few of the more commonly used ones. I'm certainly not going to argue that any are better or more appropriate than others, and I'm certainly aware of how strongly ingrained their use can be in different institutions. In the end, for me, they're all really just various disguises for the same thing—"customers"—and I happily concur with Bernstein's view that "While some may question comparing a library to a department store, and some may shudder at using the word customer instead of patron, keep in mind that our users are our customers. Whether they are taxpaying members of the public, attorneys in a firm, or faculty and students of an academic library, they are still our customers" (Bernstein, 2008: p. 21)—though it never fails to amaze me how vehemently some will argue against the use of that terrible word!

You'll have to forgive me, then, if you are one of those who prefer not to call your customers "customers." Let's agree to differ on that point, and, just for expediency, allow me to use it as a shorthand term—it's simply a useful portmanteau word to cover all the above. This book is about "customer service," and whatever descriptor you choose to replace the "customer" bit with, it is the depth, range, and above all the quality of the service that we provide which is far and away the most important element, and which will be the primary focus of this book.

We've probably all encountered instances of poor customer service. Do you recall a time when you couldn't find something in a store, and had to resort to asking a member of staff for help? Couldn't find one? That's one end of the scale—but how about the reception you got at the customer service desk? Did you get the blank stare, or the rolled eyes? Maybe

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you got the benefit of a pointed finger—"Aisle 5, probably"—or, better still … microphone snatched irritably from its slightly battered cradle, a high-pitched whistle, and a curt "Grocery colleague to the desk please … a 'customer' needs a personal tour of the shelves"? Made you feel really wanted and "cared for," didn't it? And I bet you probably didn't get what you went in for, either….

Compare that to how you feel when an assistant responds to your plea for help with a smile, stops what they're doing, and leads you to exactly the item you were looking for. Even if they couldn't find it, you felt at least that they'd tried to be helpful—but how was this handled? Was an appropriate alternative suggested? Did they check incoming stock delivery schedules to find out when it would arrive, or offer to order it in for you? In an extreme case, did they suggest where else you might try? Either way, you really did feel that the assistant actually wanted you to find what you needed, and that you would be satisfied with your overall experience of using the store.

In the more positive example, it is clear that the assistant was focused upon achieving customer satisfaction. In the negative example, who knows where their focus was? Certainly, customer satisfaction was not their highest priority. Obviously, there are a wide range of experiences between these two extremes, but wherever the marker falls will dictate the customer's opinion of the organisation as a whole. Of the two extremes, which would encourage you to return on a subsequent occasion? Would you be more likely to recommend one store over the other?

In reality, of course, the circumstances of business dictate that organisations will usually need their staff to perform more than one role at any given time. In a supermarket, for example, it is important that the shelves be well and attractively stocked, so that the shoppers' needs will be satisfied by the range of products they can buy. They won't buy much from empty or disordered shelves. There is pressure, then, upon staff to keep on top of restocking and tidying, otherwise their customers won't find what they're looking for—there is rarely time for staff to stand around looking for customers to help. However, if staff are unaware that this pressure needs also to be offset by the need to keep an eye out for "lost" customers, and to be ready to help as far as they can, then they are most unlikely to raise their eyes from the shelves long enough to see customers, let alone respond in a positive and helpful way. In this respect, it's all about priorities, and those need to be set out very clearly by the organisation. If the manager dictates that shelving is the highest priority, then that has to be the priority his staff work to—and no wonder, then, that customers have to continually dodge busily wheeled carts, lean over staff to get to the shelves, and are ignored when they need to ask for help. On the other hand, if the manager has set "customer service" as their store's priority, and has made it very clear what that means, then the opposite is true—carts are moved around customers, rather than the other way around, and assistants wait until shelves are clear of customers before restocking or tidying … and, most important of all, they are continually looking out for people who might need a hand to find what they need. The organisation dictates the ethos, then—but that doesn't necessarily mean that "customer focus" will come naturally to all staff, or that they won't let even high standards slip occasionally. Customer focus is high maintenance, and requires constant vigilance if it's to be maintained at a high enough level of quality to achieve consistent customer satisfaction—and in the end, that's what it's all about: satisfied customers who will come back again and again, but who in return expect to experience a level of service similar to what they did last time and the time before that.

It's more than likely that you'll have noted many examples of excellent customer service taking place in your own organisation, delivered by staff who just naturally like interacting with people and want to do their best for them. That's a really good place to start from, but it's not quite the same as knowing that every single member of your team is similarly focussed and delivering a consistently high level of service—all the time. How do you get to that exalted place? Well, I'm afraid, not without a lot of thought and planning, and certainly not without a lot of hard, sometimes grinding work.

Look around, and watch what's going on. Observe how your staff interact with their customers—your customers. Some will no doubt be performing well, while others will inevitably be falling somewhat short of your standards. The point is, though—do they know they are doing well (or otherwise)? Do they know what you and, more importantly, their customers need and expect from them? In terms of the service delivered, they probably do (well, they should, anyway!), but, assuming that as a given, how did they deliver it? Cheerfully, or with a degree of frustrated resignation? Did they help the person find what they needed, or just point vaguely to where it should be? How did they find out what was needed in the first place? Were they looking for the next question, or just waiting for it to come to them? Look at it from their point of view—do they know what's expected, what your standards are? Have you explained it to them, described what you need them to do and how you need them to handle interactions? They can't improve if they don't know what "improvement" looks like, so you really need to start by describing that through a well-crafted vision statement.

A true "customer service ethos" is much more than skin deep, a veneer that can be used to cover up all sorts of blemishes and impurities below the surface. Your customers are not stupid, and they'll see through that very quickly. It really does have to be something that is grown from deep within the organisation and encouraged to exude through every pore. Smiley staff are nice to have, but they do need to have something to smile about—and that, whatever their working environment, can only really come from pride in an organisation they believe in, and that they are confident will support their endeavours to give the best customer service they can. What confidence can they have if their managers are constantly chivvying them to get the stocking-up done, and who frown at them for leaving their area to help a customer find something in another? On the contrary, they need to know that their efforts are recognised and will be rewarded, even if only in their own sense of a job well done.

It doesn't end with staff who care about their customers, of course—there is an awful lot more to it than that. A thorough-going customer service ethos will influence the organisation's entire relationship with its customers, whether existing or potential, beginning with a deep understanding of their needs and aspirations, through service delivery to what happens after they're no longer on the premises. This makes sound business sense, and goes far beyond simply making people feel good—an organisation that doesn't know what its customers want and need is hardly likely to be able to deliver it, or even to attract customers in the first place; once on the premises customers won't buy what they can't see, which is where good product placement, stock presentation, and staff assistance walk hand in hand, and organisations that care enough about their customers to deal quickly and effectively when something goes wrong post-purchase is much more likely to succeed in terms of customer loyalty and retention than one that relies entirely upon manufacturers guarantees. All of these aspects and more contribute importantly to the holistic customer service jigsaw, and shouldn't be overlooked, but it's worth bearing in mind that it is people who bring it all together, and it is their performance which will most directly influence customers' opinion of the organisation as a whole. After all, it is those manning the front line who are the most visible face of the organisation and it is their interaction with customers that will be longest remembered.

No doubt the astute reader will have noted, probably with some confusion and chagrin, that much of the discussion so far has focussed upon the dreaded "R" word—Retail—and be wondering what on earth that has to do with delivering customer service in an academic library. The point is, of course, that "customer service," "customer focus," and "customer ethos" are all, essentially, context free, and whether it's delivered in a retail or a library environment the basics are very much the same—only the purpose differs, and even then, in many ways, not by much. The delivery context is of substantially less importance than the delivery itself—and if we can learn from good examples from another arena, we would be wise to take note.

Bearing in mind the arguments above, it is worth remembering here that the concept of "customer service" in an educational library setting refers to something subtly different from the equivalent in a shop, restaurant, hotel, etc. In other environments the emphasis must, in the end, be upon providing a range of goods or services that are of a quality, style, and price range to suit their target market; offering them in ways which attract attention and encourage customers to both trust the supplier and differentiate between them and their competitors, and then upon satisfying the demand created as quickly and efficiently as possible. The desired outcome is sale of stock, and the bottom line is profit for the organisation. For academic libraries, the emphasis must be upon satisfying an existing demand for knowledge through the provision of trusted resources which are appropriate to the needs of the student, which will encourage a growth of understanding and ultimately the building of new knowledge, and then offering them in ways which will make them accessible and encourage their use. The desired outcome here is the use of collections and resources, and the bottom line is profit for the student. Unlike in a retail environment, where perhaps an element of persuasion might be necessary in order to complete a sale, the relationship between student and librarian might be broadly described as being akin to the partnership between seeker and guide. Arguably, a good guide will know how to help his client reach the desired informational goal … and then when to get out of the way and let them complete their journey under their own steam.

So yes, academic libraries do have customers—even though they may not refer to them by that descriptor, and indeed even though their clientele may not recognise themselves as such. The point is, of course, that, ultimately, academic libraries measure their success in terms of the success of their customers, and the achievement of that success is to a great extent enabled through a combination of quality resources and quality customer service.

THINKING LIKE A CUSTOMER

Discussing how academic libraries were facing up to the challenge of servicing the needs of a new breed of students, now more focussed than ever on the educational quality and outcomes of their university experience, I recently claimed that "The relationship between this new breed of students and Higher Education was becoming increasingly transactional. They considered themselves to be customers, the University to be providing education as a service, and the quality of the education they received and the quality of the customer service they experienced would be their joint measures of success" (Mossop, 2013: p. 118). Little has happened since then to change my opinion, nor my view that the university's libraries should play a prominent role in ensuring the highest-quality experience for the institution's customers … but how do we know we've got it right?

So—you've worked hard to ensure that your library service is "fit for purpose," i.e., you've made sure that your stock supports the learning needs of your student customers; you've done your best to make sure that they can access resources in a variety of media (books in paper and e-formats, access to an appropriate range of e-journals, etc.); you've tried to ensure that your in-library study facilities are comfortable and sufficient for those who need to use them, and you're pretty sure that your opening hours allow access to the library when your students need it most—but have you done enough? Is the library truly benefitting your students? Is there more that you could, or should be doing?

Libraries have long grappled with the problem of how to measure library "quality," and much work has been done to explore the relationship between individual's library usage and academic achievement: a good recent example of this is the JISC "Library Impact Data Project," led by the University of Huddersfield, the outcomes of which "suggested a correlation or statistical significance between library usage—e-resources use, book loans, and gate entries—and student attainment" (Stone, 2014). What better motivation could there be for ensuring that the library is performing at its best, when there is a provable connection between library use and student attainment … all the more reason to encourage increased, and most importantly beneficial, usage by making sure that the library is operating in ways, and to a standard, that is appreciated by students. More generally, though, increasing numbers of libraries employ tools such as customer-satisfaction surveys, judging their service's impact-effectiveness by direct consultation with their clientele—after all, while we might think we're doing enough, they will undoubtedly have a view on how much of "enough" that is in reality. Do they think it is substandard? Or adequate? Appropriate? Exceptional?

As West (2002) puts it: "Davies (1998: p. 336) offers a succinct definition: 'Satisfying and maintaining customer needs profitably'. If one substituted 'effectively' for 'profitably', then most libraries could relate to this" (West, 2002: p. 98), and, exploring this concept further, he adds that "Discovering and understanding customer wishes is a key starting point in the marketing process" (ibid., p. 102). He describes the usefulness and importance of customer surveys, pointing out that relatively simple and cost-effective toolkits have been developed to allow libraries to create regular measures of customer satisfaction and needs:

> *Essentially, regular surveys of customer needs should be carried out to provide a current and longitudinal view of their:*
> - *satisfaction with the current range of services and resources provided*
> - *view of the relative importance of these services*
> - *other, more qualitative, opinions and ideas on additional services needed, and their prioritization of these*
>
> ***West (2002: p. 101)***

Chapter 7 explores the effectiveness and usefulness of surveys in detail. The reason for mentioning them here is to highlight their importance in terms of customer relations. They are but one of a wide range of tools—but any means of encouraging and maintaining a "conversation" with customers is an important one!

The point is that "Merely adding customer-centricity to your vision statement isn't enough. Thinking like your customer is the first challenge, and delivering a positive customer experience is even harder. Achieving customer-centricity requires rethinking the way business is done" (Robinson & Brown, 2012: p. 2). Unsupported aspirations really aren't going to cut the mustard with your customers—your claim has to have real substance behind it if they are to believe that you mean what you say. This means that everything about the way your library plans and operates needs to be constantly and determinedly focussed on fulfilling the customer's needs—and here I've quite deliberately used the singular form "customer," rather than the wider form "customers." Your customer base is made up of individuals, each with their own needs, opinions, and agendas, and these need to be addressed on an individual basis. Fair enough, that's not easy to achieve when your customer base numbers in the thousands, but the secret to delivering a superb service across the board is to make each individual feel as though you care about them as individuals … even though their questions might be no different than anyone else's. As colleagues would confirm, my strategy for front-line services has long been aimed at meeting the need to provide "personalised services on a global scale"—ensuring that each person gets what they need, even if it's only a welcoming smile when they come in.

How does that work, in practical terms, when clearly there would never be enough staff to provide one-to-one service for every customer? In reality, you don't have to. Even a very quick survey of the questions front-line colleagues are asked would probably (if our experience is anything to go on) reveal that these are very often clustered into a few types—generally directional, technical/procedural, and resource based, with directional way out front and resource questions by far the fewer—i.e., "where is it" and "how does it work" outweigh in-depth resource questions, especially for newer students and those who use the library less frequently than others. Adhering to our policy of offering personalised service clearly meant that staff were often hard-pressed to keep up with demand. Seeking a way through this dilemma, we recognised that there were actually two answers—first, that if we made the effort to show the questioners (normally students from a new intake) where the toilets were, or the printers, or whatever, they would know the next time and the next time, and so wouldn't need to ask again. They would probably also tell their friends, so they wouldn't need to ask either. Handling enquiries in this way, though hard work at the beginning of the academic year, meant that we were maintaining our "individualist" policy, and those individuals who had been helped felt that we had given them good service—which they remembered when it came time for them to complete a survey. The second answer took a little more time to address, but was probably the more fundamental and long-lasting resolution. We clearly hadn't made it easy enough for people to find what they needed for themselves, so we needed to address this through improved and more intuitively understandable signage, clearer maps, etc. That certainly helped, over time, to reduce the number of questions—but it didn't stop the questions altogether … sometimes people just didn't look at the signage, nor read the maps, nor studied our helpful online advice. So we continued the battle on both fronts, providing those who preferred to locate things for themselves with an improved experience, and providing those who preferred to ask for assistance with a more personalised service.

Although an obviously oversimplified example, I hope that the above illustration offers something of an indication of what customer focus, "thinking like a customer," means in a particular circumstance. It doesn't really matter that the problems described might have been addressed differently, or that other institutions will have faced and overcome them in their own ways—what does matter is that the example describes how, by designedly maintaining a full focus on addressing customer needs—better still, anticipating them whenever possible—an organisation can achieve improved services and customer satisfaction. It might also illustrate that there is often no one right way to address a problem, which of course is the issue which underlies the ambition to deliver "personalised services on a global scale"—an apparently straightforward problem (e.g., wayfinding) might require multiple alternative solutions in order to ensure that the highest level of customer satisfaction can be achieved.

MAPPING YOUR CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

> *A customer journey map is a way to describe all the experiences a customer has with your organization and the emotional responses they provoke—from their first impression of your building, to speaking to staff or receiving a service.*
>
> ***Government Communication Service (2015)***

Essentially, this is another example of "thinking like a customer," or at least trying to think like we think our customers think … if that makes sense! In reality it's not always an easy thing to do, nor does a completed exercise mean that we've solved all of the problems in one go—but it can offer a very helpful indication of where things might need to be changed or improved. Nor yet is it a tool designed to tackle on a "whole service" basis, but rather to let you and your team concentrate on one or two areas at a time—it's important to recognise that this isn't something an individual can do effectively, and that many perspectives are needed in order to build up the most accurate picture. Better small and in-depth, rather than global and shallow—and let's be honest, to try and do everything in one go is probably a recipe for disaster … staff interest would quickly wane, and one can imagine their growing sense of being overwhelmed by issues great and small.

There are several steps to the exercise, as described by the Government Communications Network (Government Communications Service). First, we need to identify some "hot spots" (where we can either win over or greatly disappoint people). Next, we need to lay down three or four "big journey steps"—instances that provide "moments of truth" in terms of our hot spots. Then we map out actions that matter to people at each step—i.e., what delivers a great (or not so great) experience for each step. Finally, we agree on key issues or opportunities identified, and what must be tackled as a priority. So let's work through a couple of examples.

The team assembles with a brief to focus on the library's front entrance and reception area. Starting at the beginning always seems like a good idea—and after all, this is where customers usually gain their first impression of the library!

"Hot spots" in this area might include (i) the general look and feel of the place, and (ii) the demeanor of staff. What's the first impression—is it warm and welcoming, is it neat and tidy, and how obvious is the function and purpose of the reception desk? Or is it intimidating and confusing, a clutter of signs, notices, and handouts? There really isn't much point in looking at these hot spots through our own eyes—after all, we know how it works, and what the purposes are of the reception desk—so we need to imagine that we're experiencing it for the first time, as someone who has never been here before. Is the first thing you see a succession of gates and barriers, and is the first thing you hear a cacophony of alarm bells? How does that make you feel, as someone trying to get into the library for the first time?

Were the reception staff welcoming and ready to help? Were you noticed and acknowledged? Or were their heads down, busy with their PCs, and didn't look like they wanted to be interrupted? Were they even visible, in fact, or were you left to wonder whether you're actually allowed in at all? How did that make you feel, as someone trying to get into the library for the first time?

The difference between whether we win people over at this point or greatly disappoint them can be as simple as whether approaching the reception area is an easy and pleasant experience or an intimidating and confusing one. These are the important "moments of truth" that we need to identify, after which we can begin to map out what steps need to be taken in order to make the experience a positive one, rather than negative. Go for gold here—you can only make one first impression, so it's really important to get it right!

If you've identified that the place is cluttered, confusing, and looks as welcoming as the entrance to a prison, then one of your key issues might be to de-clutter, simplify (signage, etc.), and to try to reduce the visual impact of those all-important security barriers. Perhaps a lick of paint might help too? If you've identified that reception staff are preoccupied and less than welcoming, then one of your key issues might be to review and reduce their workload to give them more time to concentrate on face-to-face customer contact, and to reinforce their customer-facing skills through retraining and greater clarity regarding their role—it's an extremely important one, given that they are the first members of staff that people see during their visits, so it's critical to the service that they make the right impression. Are the right people, with the right skills, tools, and attitudes, in the right place?

Having identified the key issues and devised remedies for them, the last task for this exercise would be to agree on what must be tackled as a priority. That's up to you, of course, but it's often the case that some remedies will take longer to put in place than others—perhaps this is a good moment to check with a sample of your customers to find out what's most important to them. After all, so far the decisions have all been made based on your own observations, influenced by what you imagine would be their requirements. Asking them might well be useful, if only to ensure that you've got it right! After that, and based on constructive feedback, you will be in a position to begin to improve the "customer journey" for this area.

Bearing in mind that the "customer journey" can take many forms, and most certainly will not always be a physical one, this might be a good opportunity to look at another increasingly critical point of contact between your service and its customers—your website. Following a similar route, we need to locate "hot spots," identify "big journey steps," map out the actions that matter, agree on key issues, and prioritise remedies.

You might want to look first at how easy it is to actually find the library's website in the first place—it's surprising how often the route to this important, popular, and well-used portal can be found to have been hidden away in the corporate website, locatable only by those with insider knowledge … or a handy search box! However, as getting a button on the university's front page might prove extremely difficult and time-consuming, we won't dwell on it here—unfortunately, what might be offered as a critical improvement for the library may well not be considered at all important by those with the power to make it happen. Ah well, such is life.

So we will look at what might influence the customer journey once they've found us—you might consider hot spots here to include, as with the reception area, the general "look and feel" of the front page, and the ease of navigation through the website.

What's the first impression—is it warm and welcoming, is it neat and tidy, and how obvious are the access routes to further information? Or is it intimidating and confusing, a clutter of stories, notices, and obscurely titled buttons? Is the language used clear and unambiguous, or is it jargon-laden and mystifying (to all but library staff)? Are the headline stories interesting, informative, and relevant to the varied readership, or are they a jungle of library notices? Are there clear links to background information, the library catalogue, etc., and is the information up-to-date and well maintained … or full of broken links because nobody bothers to check?

Essentially, if you were a first-time visitor to the site, how does the experience make you feel? If you didn't know what the terminology meant, would you easily be able to navigate your way to the important information you need? Again, if you were a frequent visitor, what aspects would you find irritating, unclear, or difficult? As with all aspects of the library's role, the underlying reason for having a website is so that customers can make use of our resources when, where, and how they prefer—so if there are barriers that make it less than straightforward to use, it's going to lessen its effectiveness—perhaps, in extreme cases, to the point of getting in the way of student attainment.

The difference between whether we win people over at this point or greatly disappoint them can be as simple as whether locating information through your website is an easy and pleasant experience or an intimidating and confusing one. These are the important "moments of truth" that we need to identify, after which we can begin to map out what steps need to be taken in order to make the experience a positive one, rather than negative. As with the reception area, the front page of your library's website is a critical opportunity to make a first impression—so again, it's vital that you get it right!

If you've identified that the website is cluttered, confusing, and difficult to navigate, then one of your key issues might be to de-clutter, simplify (terminology, etc.), and ensure that links are clearly visible and unambiguously titled. Assuming that you don't have a dedicated web team, are those staff who work on the website sufficiently skilled for the task—not only in terms of managing the technical and design aspects and uploading content, but in composing the content itself (bearing in mind that online content requires a different writing style than writing in paper formats)? If you offer a contact facility through your website, are the staffing structures to support this sufficiently robust to avoid unnecessary delays in responding?

Having identified the key issues and devised remedies for them, the last task for this exercise would be to agree what must be tackled as a priority. Again, inviting feedback and suggestions from your customers will help to ensure that their priorities guide your decisions, and will help you to make the right changes in the right order—and the invitation alone will enhance their perception of your customer focus!

"Customer journey mapping" isn't black magic—nor is it an alternative to actually talking to your customers and seeking their input, suggestions, and observations on what sort of service they need you to supply. What it can do, though, is to help focus your thoughts and those of your team on how your customers might think and feel about every aspect of your offer, and (possibly beneficially) away from what might have become ingrained ideas about best practices based on habit and assumption—focusing, in other words, on what customers actually need, rather than what we think they need.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

So—we've examined our navels and are convinced that we really are a customer-focussed organisation; we consider the impact and effect of the services and facilities we offer from the customer's perspective, doing our best to make sure that everything we do is in their best interests, and we utilise tools such as "customer journey mapping" to help us identify where there are areas that might need improving. Surely there can't be much more to it than that? Is there anything else that we can or should do to ensure that this "customer focus" is thoroughly embraced as fundamental to the organisation's ethos? Well, there might be….

Bodies such as Customer First and Customer Service Excellence in the United Kingdom, the Customer Service Institutes of America, Australia, and Canada, and others exist to promote the ethos and to help and advise organisations on their journey toward customer service perfection—not just because it was a nice thing to do, but because a robust customer service culture is fundamental to organisational success in a highly competitive world. Leeds Metropolitan University, for example, elected to achieve the standards set by Customer Service Excellence because "The University identified that the Standard could help promote and embed a customer focussed culture, which was essential to both thrive in an increasingly competitive environment and to continue to deliver a high quality service to its students, staff and other customers" (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2015).

The process of achieving a standard is not complicated, but it is exacting and involves a thorough and holistic review of organisational practices. It needs to be holistic, since "Achieving customer-centricity requires rethinking the way business is done. And this, in turn, requires a holistic approach that encompasses everything from analytics and insights to strategy and customer experience, from operating model design and execution to governance and transformation management" (Robinson & Brown, 2012). Customer First describes the process thus: "Your journey to achieving the Standard is focussed on three pillars of business planning that look at the strategic, tactical and operational delivery of your organisation" (Customer First, 2013), with the aim of shifting the business focus "from Product or Service OUT to Customer IN. This means creating an environment where customer input is largely responsible for determining the product or service output, rather than where the supplier or service giver, attempts to force their product or service on the customer in the hope that it will meet customer needs and generate loyalty" (Customer Service Institute of America, 2015a).

Is this, then, simply an extension of customer journey mapping? In a way it is, since it provides a way of focussing the organisation upon what it does and what the effect is upon its customers. Here, though, the focus is very much wider and deeper than might normally be managed through mapping exercises, scrutinising, as it does, all aspects of the organisation's business and testing them in relation to their impact on the customer experience. The Customer First system, for example, looks in depth at three core areas of business—customer relations, market awareness, and staff development—to test how focussed the strategic, tactical, and operational delivery of your organisation is upon achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction. All of these categories inform the overall organisational ability to provide excellent customer service, but I would argue that probably chief among these would be customer relations, since it incorporates all possible areas of interaction with your customers, both individually and as a body—everything from how you find out what they need to how you handle and respond to their comments and complaints. Not only can the library derive enormous benefit from this internally, but the effort contributes importantly to the wider aspirations in terms of customer relations management.

BUILDING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Universities have had a growing interest, for some time, in the area of customer relations management, or CRM for short, and as competition between universities increases to retain, and ideally to grow, their share of the market, CRM has become almost an obsession for many. Universities can no longer rely upon speaking just to prospective students as they are on the verge of making a decision on their choice of course and university, etc., but are finding it needful to begin that conversation with students at a much earlier stage—and increasingly, this begins by organising visits to and by primary school and early secondary school classes in an effort to attract even quite young children to the concept of the university as a natural progression of their studies. The idea of awakening an early aspiration in young minds is very laudable, and by using specialist CRM applications to follow the careers and choices of the individuals who participate in such outreach events, universities are beginning to build up bodies of evidence to support the benefits to the sector in terms of increased student numbers generally, and in particular of the widening participation of children from schools and social backgrounds with a limited tradition of progression into higher education. While there can be no guarantee that participants will automatically progress to the universities they might have visited, it must naturally be the hope that their familiarity with a particular institution will entice them to do so.

At the other end of the spectrum, much effort is expended in following the careers of graduates, either as they enter the world of work or as they move on to postgraduate studies. As mentioned above, students are becoming increasingly transactional in their relationships with universities, regarding their attainment of a good degree as a vital stepping stone on their career path. Much attention is paid by prospective students, therefore, to how successful their preferred university has been in enabling previous students to gain a secure foothold in the job market, so it is very much in the university's interests to keep track of alumni and to maintain good relations with them throughout their careers. The more successful their alumni have been, the more attractive the university will be to prospective students.

Of course, if universities are to be successful in maintaining relations with their alumni after graduation, those relationships are going to be very much easier and more long-lasting if the individuals targeted actually want a continuing relationship with their university—and that is dependent on factors ranging from how well they felt they had been treated during their undergraduate years to how much weight employers placed upon the institution's reputation and the quality and pertinence of the knowledge gained. It is always worth bearing in mind, when considering the effectiveness of relationship management regimes, that while the university might need to handle this on a mass scale, and to contact hundreds, perhaps thousands, of alumni with every mail shot, it is actually hundreds or thousands of individuals who receive the letters, and who, on an individual basis, might choose either to read and respond, or simply to throw it in the recycling bin. Which choice they make depends on their individual appreciation of how important a part the university played in helping them to establish a successful career. Lots of organisations, in all walks of life, use these techniques to help them establish long-lasting and consequently profitable relationships with their customers—and of course none of them would do that if it wasn't valuable and cost-effective. Those who have been successful at it, though, have been able to build upon a relationship that was good to begin with, one in which their customer received good service and was consequently disposed to allow an ongoing, mutually rewarding relationship to blossom.

While the university's library can clearly contribute to the institution's reputation, and indeed would be failing in its duty if it did not strongly support the overall academic endeavour, it can also exert a vital influence at the individual level. Of course, libraries relate to their customers on a multitude of levels. A busy library might register several thousand visitors a day, either through its doors or through its online portal, and it is easy just to see a mass of bodies moving in and out. However, it really is worth bearing in mind that each of those visitors has their own purpose for being there, their own needs to be fulfilled, and it is important that the library interacts with them as individuals—fulfilling their needs and building positive relations with them as individuals by providing "personalised services on a global scale," in order to encourage greater and better use of the library's resources, which, as discussed above, can be beneficially linked to improved student attainment.

CHAPTER 2

Staffing the Front Line

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RECRUITING, DEVELOPING, AND REWARDING STAFF

As mentioned above, excellent customer service doesn't end with staff who care about their customers—but in reality, it certainly wouldn't happen without them! Putting together a front-line team which will help you along the journey is critical to reaching the journey's end. Teams are, of course, made up of a diverse range of individuals—some of whom will naturally "deliver," and others of whom might need a little more encouragement and coaching. How you go about ensuring that this vital team will operate with knowledge, confidence, and willingness to deliver for their customers, often in a super-busy environment—not just sometimes, but all of the time—will directly affect your speed of travel toward your goal, and, more importantly, the ultimate quality of your end result.

All too often, organisations that traditionally experience high or regular staff turnover tend to utilise fairly generic recruitment processes and procedures—job descriptions, vacancy advertisements, contracts, interview questions, etc. There are good logistical reasons for this, of course, in that there would seem to be little benefit in creating individualised instances for each new member of staff who might be employed at similar grades to perform very similar roles as a number of their peers. However, ensuring that strategically aligned recruitment policies are considered, designed, and implemented at a very early stage can have a critical and beneficial effect on the successful outcome of the programme.

If, as in the current discussion, a key part of an organisation's strategic change agenda is to ensure that staff provide excellent customer service at all times, they would undoubtedly initiate a range of training and development exercises to provide current staff with the skills and confidence that would enable them to perform to the necessary standards. They might also find it prudent, however, to ensure that future vacancies were filled by people with a successful customer service background, even if this meant that their gaining some of the more traditional and technical skills required additional

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training after appointment. Whatever the scenario, the point is, of course, that a different balance of skills can often be achieved more quickly and more effectively through the careful alignment of recruitment policies to strategic direction than might otherwise be possible, and avoids the necessity for potentially difficult post-recruitment renegotiation on a case-by-case basis.

Adapting recruitment policies to ensure that the skills and attributes of new staff align with and support the strategic requirements of the organisation will help to reinforce adherence to the new direction, and to ensure a continuing growth in appropriate staff resource skills capacity into the future. However, staff turnover is generally not so high that this will make a sufficiently immediate beneficial impact, so, clearly, alongside this long-term process there is also a very strong need to ensure that current staff skills are recognised and utilised, or, if not already in place, are developed to appropriate levels to support the strategy from within existing resources.

Universities have long recognised that their staff represent a valued resource whose personal well-being and professional development play an important part in the achievement of the organisation's goals, and that the benefits of ensuring that individuals are enabled to contribute to the best of their ability, and are suitably rewarded for their endeavours, ultimately produces a worthwhile return in terms of the time, effort, and capital invested in their development.

Once unveiled from the mystique with which they have traditionally been surrounded, it may be recognised that universities are in reality a strange hybrid of pragmatism and altruism. While it is undoubtedly true that there are approximations of altruism, in their unrivaled ability to provide individuals with the opportunity to develop, especially in terms of personal philosophy, to extremes that might otherwise have been difficult to achieve, it is the underlying business of universities to support the needs of the wider community as a provider of higher education. Viewed in this way, they are a business much like any other, and are, essentially, just as pragmatic in the achievement of their business goals. Universities operate in a defined market sector, and their saleable product is knowledge. Since this product is delivered in an educational setting which relies in large part on the transfer of knowledge from one person to another, it is clear that the success of the organisation's business goals is heavily reliant upon the expertise and dedication of its staff. By extension, therefore, it must also be clear that, no matter how well designed, the success or failure of the university's strategies for dealing with such matters as expansion, corporate identity, and market position are ultimately dependent upon the quality of its Human Resource policies.

The "Human Resources Strategy," for many universities, is designed to expand upon the functions of the previous "Personnel Services," which were confined largely to giving administrative support and ensuring compliance with proper procedure, by placing increased focus upon the effective recruitment and retention of new staff with the skills and qualities desired and upon ensuring that the existing workforce are given the opportunity and encouragement to enhance their personal skills and attributes in alignment with the university's present and future requirements so that each member of the staff is able to contribute to the best of their ability to meet the university's challenging goals and objectives.

As this implies, there has been a dramatic shift in emphasis away from what was, in simple terms, a supportive function to ensure that the necessary documentary and legal requirements of recruitment were observed, to one which, derived from a holistic assessment of the university's strategic requirements, both performs an advisory function and actively drives recruitment and development policies toward the fulfilment of the overall staffing profile. Human Resources have, therefore, gained a very high profile compared to the peripheral position of the former Personnel Services, and now offer an important central, and sometimes critical, contribution to the overall strategic development of the organisation.

As illustrated above, Human Resources has a far wider brief than the simple performance of recruitment processes, and is equipped with a far wider portfolio of aims and objectives. Wide-ranging Human Resources strategies address the problems of ensuring that the workforce is both fully motivated toward the achievement of the university's strategies, and are adequately equipped with the range of skills required in order to do so.

The philosophy of motivation as a spur to productivity has a long and checkered history, but at each stage of its development the objective has been to maximise work output and quality whilst at the same time maintaining the level of rewards in balance with the productivity gained. F. W. Taylor's model is, perhaps, one of the most basic, regarding motivation in purely financial terms, through which increases in output are intrinsically allied to the use of scales of financial reward for their achievement (Sheldrake, 1996). However, today's Human Resources Strategies recognise that motivation can be achieved in a number of ways, and that these must be addressed individually and severally in order to encourage maximum achievement.

Abraham Maslow's theory of human nature proposes that motivation occurs according to a hierarchy of need, and that individuals progress upward through this hierarchy as each of the various stages in turn becomes satisfied and ceases, in consequence, to be a motivational factor. He describes this hierarchy as a pyramid, with "Physiological" as its base and rising through "Safety," "Social," and "Ego" to its apex, "Self-Actualisation." Roberts (1997) describes these various layers thus:

- *Physiological needs are basic biological needs essential for survival. They include food, drink, shelter, rest, sleep, oxygen.*
- *Safety and security needs include protection from physical and psychological threats in the environment such as freedom from fear, and a wish for certainty.*
- *Social and belonging needs include a need for love, affection, friendship, social interaction and acceptance of others.*
- *Ego and esteem needs include a need for self-respect, confidence, recognition, respect from others, status, power and competence.*
- *Self-actualisation includes self-fulfilment, achievement, individual growth, and the realisation of potential.*

Roberts (1997: p. 551)

Porter and Lawler's model of motivation recognises the importance of pay as one of a set of "extrinsic rewards" in the relationship between effort, performance, and reward (Roberts, 1997: pp. 552–553), and several of the aims set out in HR strategies are geared toward establishing a fair system of monetary rewards in recognition of the importance of such matters as a means of attracting and retaining staff with the right skills, interests, and qualities to fulfill the university's requirements, and as a means of reward and recognition.

However, as Maslow's theory illustrates, money is not the only motivator and, their basic needs having been met, for many people the upper layers of the hierarchy hold an attraction which has at least an equal strength. These less tangible aspects of motivation need also to be acknowledged as being of high importance in support of the university's wider strategies, and in many places much emphasis is given to the nurturing of a sense of self-worth and the importance of recognising the contribution individuals make to the organisation. Porter and Lawler's model recognises these intrinsic variables as including, importantly:

- *Sense of being part of the whole 'value adding' process;*
- *Belief that they are a valuable member of a team;*
- *Increased responsibility and autonomy;*
- *Sense of accomplishment;*
- *Participation in setting targets and opportunities to achieve them;*
- *Recognition;*
- *Opportunities to learn and grow.*

Roberts (1997: p. 552/3)

The introduction of initiatives such as a Continuous Quality Improvement scheme, through which individuals as members of Continuous Improvement Teams are encouraged to review the working practices of a particular function or range of functions with a view to reassessing the viability of traditional procedures and suggesting appropriate improvements wherever possible—exercises similar to those involved in "Customer Journey Mapping," discussed above, offer not only intrinsic value to the individual, but wide-ranging benefits to the organisation including, for example, the streamlining of current processes and reduction of waste (in terms of both time and materials); the promotion of both a stronger sense of ownership of the tasks performed by individuals and of the benefits of teamwork, and a greater willingness to communicate and work collaboratively across organisational boundaries. It also offers an opportunity to identify more clearly the skills, behaviours, and competencies needed to perform each job successfully; to identify training needs; to form part of the performance review process and to reshape the relationship and responsibilities of managers and their teams. Importantly, on the wider front, the establishment of continuous improvement, both as a process and as a "culture", is essential if universities are to achieve their goals without disproportionately increasing the overhead and administrative costs.

The question of recognition, it will have been noted, has been addressed in several ways—recognition in the form of financial reward (Maslow's Physiological and Safety); recognition in the form of comparability and parity with a peer group, both internally across the institution and externally across the sector (Maslow's Social), and recognition in the form of the establishment of a means of differentiating between peers in terms of individual skills, qualities, and the contribution made (Maslow's Ego). Recognition can also be offered in the form of assistance in the achievement of self-fulfillment, individual growth, and the realisation of potential (Maslow's Self-actualisation), and the identification and fulfillment of training needs can speak very loudly in this regard. While for the employer there are many obvious and immediate benefits to be gained through staff participation in well-organised and relevant training and development events, there can also be a strong sense of achievement and individual growth for the members of staff themselves. The added competence and confidence that arises from the learning process can be equally balanced by the increased sense of self-value which can be read into the initial recommendation for development. Obviously, this is heavily dependent upon how the topic is introduced, which in turn is dependent upon the quality of the managers involved.

A critical aspect of staff development is to ensure that the various activities undertaken in pursuit of operational and service improvement are not only strategically aligned, but are encouraged and modelled by leaders at all levels. It is important, therefore, not to assume that all leaders have sufficient levels of the qualities required in order to perform this role well, and that appropriate measures are set in motion to understand what qualities will be necessary to deliver the desired outcomes, and to assess what leadership-level skills might need to be enhanced. The need for the development of managerial skills at all levels of the organisation is a matter of great importance for Human Resource departments, since the fulfillment of organisational strategies will depend very heavily on managerial competence. While this might seem an obvious extension to the holistic climate of change resulting from strategies for expansion and modernisation, it is also extremely important that the sense of forward motion is not only felt by management but is seen by all to impact upon every level of the organisation. The impetus already achieved at lower levels would soon falter if it was perceived that managers at every level were reluctant to subject themselves to the same rigours. Change, transformational or otherwise, cannot be accomplished solely by the efforts of the workforce, but must necessarily entail a willingness to change on the part of those who design the strategies if the desired improvements are to be effected: "For example, the 'quality' guru Deming argues that about 80% of improvement requires management effort and major change in the work system, while only 20% of improvement can be actioned by front-line employees" (Roberts, 1997: p. 597).

Saskatchewan's Library Leadership Development Program (LLDP) offers an excellent example of how this might be accomplished. As Williamson (2009) explains, "Our vision to be leaders and innovators by in a dynamic information environment … is dependent upon a significant change in organizational culture and the development of a set of leadership skills and competency that will be achieved through LLDP" (ibid.: p. 622). Employing the services of an organisational development specialist, who worked in close consultation with the library leadership team to "form and shape the development of the program" (ibid.: p. 623), resulted in an agreed definition of library leadership as "… being motivated to inspire others through one's actions, behaviours and communication to influence them to pursue common goals or a vision, all for the common good. It is about creating hope and enthusiasm through shared values and beliefs" (ibid.: p. 624) and the delivery of a set of modules covering leadership and relationship building; team building; leading change; performance planning and accountability; leadership and organisational culture; and "personal mastery and organisational effectiveness" (ibid.: p. 624). Williamson concludes in her article that "… enthusiasm levels from participants in LLDP1 are high and have been from the start. Enthusiasm levels from non-participants are also high and for this reason we have brought the scheduling of LLDP2 and LLDP3 forward and condensed the timeframe for rollout across the University library" (ibid.: p. 626).

Clearly, the alignment of staff training and development exercises to the achievement of strategic objectives at all levels ensures that effort and resources are fully focused on the delivery of beneficial outcomes. Again, while some aspects of this might well be generic, possibly delivered en masse as part of a campaign of mandatory courses, other, perhaps more intensive or focused training may be more effectively accomplished on an individual basis. When initiating a wide-ranging change agenda, for example, it might be considered wise to prepare staff, and hopefully to mitigate some of the more unsettling effects, by running a series of "understanding change" sessions to raise awareness of the normal and natural range of statuses that they as individuals are almost certain to experience as they approach and move through the process. Other large-scale development events might include, to pre-empt the "roving customer service" example discussed in Chapter 4, those which offer opportunities for employees to gain awareness of and confidence in techniques of delivering on-demand, direct, non-desk-based support and advice; telephone and email enquiry handling; using different approaches to customers from various ethnic and ability groups; focused, investigative visits to other establishments, etc.—whatever the general theme, however, such large group sessions need to be very much aligned with "headline" objectives, and carefully designed to maximize their cumulative effectiveness in terms of widening awareness and appreciation of the strategic direction the organisation is intent on pursuing.

It is just as important that small-scale and individual development opportunities be as much focused on the achievement of a strategic objective as they are on fulfilling the needs of a particular individual. It is often no less difficult to create time out for an individual to attend a course or conference as it is to arrange for large groups to do so, so it is important that clear outcomes will be forthcoming which will bring benefit to the organisation—courses in project management, or the acquisition of particular software skills, for example, might be extremely useful to the accomplishment of a particular project, but might also bring wider benefits if the skills gained can be utilised in other contexts, or cascaded for others to take advantage of. Undertaking regular skills audits and maintaining centralised records of individual training and development activities can prove extremely useful in recognising where knowledge might already be available in-house, and of recognising where unhelpful skills gaps need to be bridged in order to cover particular known or anticipated strategic requirements.

An increasingly popular means of encouraging and enabling individual staff development is the use of virtual learning environments. Over the last few years, the library at Exeter, for example, has been rolling out a scheme which allows staff an hour's "personal development time," during which they are encouraged to undertake mostly desk-based learning, either utilising a growing number of online courses, developed in-house, or guided and agreed web-based research into topics which are of personal interest to them in support of their work. Alongside this provision, which also provides a valuable contribution to the library's induction process, staff are encouraged to take part in schemes to enable them to grow their awareness of the work of other teams and sections by observing and shadowing colleagues on an individual basis. This often includes areas outside of the normal library domain: Student Services and IT Help Desks in particular, but also, occasionally, the university's museum and Special Collections departments. These have proved very popular and increasingly useful, as the role, and with it the knowledge and awareness requirements, of front-line library staff develops and widens in response to student-led demands for increasing levels of support in locating non-library-specific advice and assistance.

As discussed above, it is important that the closure of projects and the accomplishment of key milestones in the strategic agenda be marked and celebrated, and that individual and team efforts and achievements be recorded and rewarded. For some, the personal satisfaction of a task successfully completed, of a project put into operation, or of a target exceeded, is enough. They ask no more than that, and would be embarrassed if more was forthcoming. Some people, that is … but I suspect not many. For most, they wouldn't feel that their task had been properly completed, or that their project had actually produced something useful unless they receive an indication from others that it was so. As mentioned previously, it can be surprising how effective a simple "well done" or "thanks" can be, especially if it comes from someone whose opinion they respect, and often that is enough. However, especially during times of great change, it can be particularly beneficial to mark progress in more formal ways—perhaps annually, through the staff appraisal process, or more publicly, to celebrate the end of an especially taxing phase.

Formal events, in particular, can evoke a wide range of reactions: from the thrill of having been nominated for a particular prize—offset by a sense of abject horror at the prospect of being placed in the spotlight, through to absolute delight at the prospect of public recognition of one's hard work and success—tinged, possibly, by the sense of disappointment and embarrassment at not receiving a much-coveted award. However, if approached in the right spirit, and carefully balanced to ensure that the majority are comfortable with the process, formal and public events can be used to good effect not only to highlight particular team and individual accomplishments, but to summarise the journey travelled so far, emphasising especially the lengthening distance from "where we were" and the shortening distance to "where we are going." However it's handled, the importance of celebrating success, large and small, cannot be overstated—there is no better way to encourage positive and engaged commitment through a time of change, and the deeper the change and the longer the process, the more important it becomes.

LISTEN AND LEARN

On a day-to-day basis, a very valuable source of staff recognition can come from outside the organisation altogether, perhaps in the form of unsolicited notes of thanks from customers, or gleaned from comments gathered through a suggestions scheme. These comments, suitably anonymized and displayed perhaps on bulletin boards or in staff newsletters, etc., can be used to great effect to celebrate both individual and corporate success, but just as importantly offer a very valuable insight into the impact of the change program on customers and stakeholders.

Talking to your staff and customers, maintaining a dialogue with them throughout a change cycle, is probably the only way you'll really be able to judge what impact your strategies are having: with respect to staff, how various aspects of the change programme are affecting them as individuals, and how they as individuals are affecting the change programme; with respect to your customers and stakeholders, whether the objectives you are delivering are in fact moving the organisation in the direction you hoped and planned for, and, overall, whether your original vision is still valid.

Your customers, of course, are fundamental to any change agenda. Their approval of and support for the changes you are introducing will be vital to its success—so there is a strong need to involve them in the initial consultation and planning process, and throughout the change program. The problem is, however, how do you put this into practice?

Establishing a meaningful, consistent, and reliable method of consulting and communicating with the student body, however well intended, is not easy to accomplish. The problem here, of course, is that the student body does not have one head, one pair of eyes, or one pair of ears—it has several thousand, and each one of those will see, hear, and understand only what they have time for or are interested in at any given time. Get the timing wrong, or the means of transmission, and you might only reach a small fraction of the intended receivership. Get those things right, but issue a poorly considered message, and almost everyone will instantly know about it and come knocking at your door to complain. It really is a balancing act, but a good communications strategy is a vital asset that is worth the time and effort involved in putting it together. You will certainly still get complaints from students whose favourite chair has been moved, or who simply can't get on with the new technologies you're introducing, but those will be offset by the positive comments you might occasionally receive from those who are particularly pleased with your efforts on their behalf. Most of the time, if you're lucky, the silence you hear from the majority might indicate tacit approval. Enjoy it.

Many libraries have faced these difficulties, and there are numerous examples of best practices available, but each library will have a slightly different relationship with its students, and will need to design their communications strategies to suit their local circumstances. In general, it is useful to employ the various tools and methods recommended by customer service experts—essentially, the wider the range of communication methods available, and the wider the range of feedback mechanisms used, the more accurate will be the readings when you take the student temperature. Simple comments cards, as long as they are backed up by fast and reliable response arrangements, offer an ideal opportunity for customers to tell you what they think on a day-to-day basis; short, explanatory news stories on the library website, backed up by Tweets at appropriate times, will help to ensure that some people are aware of an impending change—and, importantly, why it's happening; clear local signage displaying a considerately worded message will probably be noted by those using a particular area—if you've moved that favourite chair or a particular range of books, at least help people find its new home. Well-supported telephone, email, and online enquiry services can have a similar effect, as can ensuring that sufficient numbers of well-placed, well-briefed staff are on hand to help, console, and sympathise. The point here is, of course, that changes, especially physical changes, need to be flagged well in advance and well managed locally on the day—few people might see or take note of any individual form of communication, but their availability, and more importantly how you deal with those individuals who didn't see them, will have a positive effect accumulatively.

As with staff appraisals, discussed below, many of those who don't contact you otherwise will take advantage of the opportunity to offer their opinion of your services through the less regular, more formal routes offered by the survey devices increasingly employed by libraries. These can be extremely useful, if timed and promoted with care, as they allow libraries to build an understanding of how attitudes and requirements change over time. Often run on an annual basis, such surveys offer an opportunity for customers to respond in depth to a wide variety of focussed questions, from which the service can plot and track changes in users' perception of their service, and can respond accordingly. However, as with all such tools, they can leave libraries open to complaint as well as praise, and as such a good degree of honesty, openness, and care is required in any follow-up communications—if students tell you they don't like the colour of the walls, apologise, thank them for their patience while you're improving the infrastructure, and tell them when you're going to fix it; if they tell you they like the new equipment you've installed, or a marked improvement in staff-delivered services, celebrate that—and tell them how you're going to make it even better.

There are two important elements here—first, while your customers might be the focus and main driver for the changes you're making, and in fact may even have demanded them in the first place, they, like everybody else, are unlikely to enjoy the actual process of change. Keeping them informed and up to date on progress and, importantly, reminding them of the ultimate vision and when you expect the programme of change to reach a conclusion, will both keep them on your side during the process and encourage their support in its completion. Second, while their expectations at the start will have been honest, valid, and important to them at the time, their views may well have evolved and changed in the interim: maintaining contact with their current views and expectations will help to ensure that what is finally delivered is actually useful and wanted, rather than out of date and no longer valid. As previously considered, your strategy, and possibly even your ultimate vision, may need to evolve to meet current expectations, demands, and circumstances—and it is your customers, possibly more than any other body, who will influence its shape and direction, and who will ultimately judge its appropriateness for them.

Staff, as discussed above, are probably your most valuable asset—it is they, after all, who are in day-to-day contact with your customers, and it is they who are most ideally placed to observe how various changes to working practices, systems, and processes are impacting on the customer experience. Allowance must of course be made for the influence of personal preferences and objections on particular issues, but it is usually possible to gain an overview, and to approximate a consensus of opinion that probably isn't too far away from reality. If, for example, everyone seems in agreement that a new course of action is having an overall negative impact on customers, it probably needs to be reviewed and modified to better fit customer requirements. If the majority of staff report a positive impact, it's probably going all right—and you can overlook the muttering disapproval of a small cross-section of staff … apart from noting, perhaps, that a review of their individual training and development programs might be timely.

While reviews of operational progress might be an almost everyday occurrence, more formal contact with staff is usually rather less frequent—but no less important. Most organisations utilise a system of regular one-on-one meetings with line managers, together with an annual (or sometimes biannual) full appraisal. While appraisal interviews are, in their role as reviews of performance and progress, more formal than other meetings, they offer an opportunity for both sides to explore and clarify the organisation's strategic direction, and to consider and agree on what role the interviewee will play in support of that. Summarising and discussing past performance is a key aspect in this, but perhaps less influential than the setting of personal targets to be achieved going forward—if well designed, these will clearly describe the projects and operational developments that the individual will be expected to take part in, and highlight what additional skills and experience they might need to gain in order to do so successfully.

How the more regular one-on-one meetings are handled, and how regular they need to be, is, of course, dictated largely by the personal preference of the staff and managers concerned—some managers prefer formally structured meetings, with notes taken and recorded throughout; others prefer a more relaxed model, perhaps in the form of a face-to-face chat over coffee. Whatever the mode, however, these meetings present an opportunity for the manager to note the employee's progress on tasks, to assess how they're feeling about things generally, and to offer advice on handling particular current issues. For the staff member, they are an opportunity to gain their leader's undivided attention; to discuss problems; and to solicit guidance, help, and advice. For both parties they present an opportunity to mark and celebrate milestones and successes, and to chart a mutually agreed path through the next section of the maze.

In terms of achieving a climate of customer service excellence, these interactions with staff, maintaining continual contact, listening as much as talking, and learning as much as encouraging, are vital. Services might be transformed through the implementation of new processes and procedures, the installation of time- and labor-saving equipment, and completed refurbishments, but the cultural change that is such an integral part of an organisation's journey toward perfection in the eyes of its customers can most clearly be seen, and most effectively driven, at the grass-roots level. It is the people, and the culture they create and inhabit, who need to be challenged to change and grow.

CHAPTER 3

Marshalling a Century of Experience: Customizing Services for the Next Generation of Users

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> *The scenery he [Albert Einstein] beheld upon entering the harbor of Hong Kong (in November [1922]) was the most beautiful he had seen on the entire journey: with long mountainous islands alongside the rocky shore, the harbor between them, and the many small islands rising steeply from the sea, the scene reminded him of a 'half-drowned' Alpine landscape.*
>
> ***Eisinger (2011: p. 31)***

AN INSTITUTION AMIDST RAPID CHANGES

Hong Kong, a small city nestled in the southern part of China, has been famous for its high density of population among the more developed places of the world (with over 7 million people living in 1,104 km^2) and miraculous development from a tiny fishing village into an international center of finance and commerce in the last century. Founded in the year 1910, the University of Hong Kong (or HKU, as it is familiarly known to its students, staff, and alumni) is the oldest tertiary education institution in this legendary city. When HKU was officially opened in 1912, there were only three faculties, namely Arts, Engineering, and Medicine. The Faculty of Medicine actually evolved from the Hong Kong College of Medicine, which was established in 1887. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, often regarded as the father of modern China, was the most renowned early alumnus of that college. As the home of many top government officials, professionals, and executives in big corporations, HKU's contributions to the rapid transformation of Hong Kong are undeniable.

Today, HKU is a research university offering a wide variety of programs from 10 faculties (namely, Architecture, Arts, Business and Economics,

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Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Science, and Social Science). In the 2014 Quacquarelli Symonds and Times Higher Education World University Rankings, HKU was ranked 28th and 43rd, respectively, among surveyed institutions. The total headcounts of students and academic staff in 2014/2015 were 27,933 and 7,197 respectively. With English as its teaching medium and the well-established position of Hong Kong as a hub for Eastern and Western culture, HKU has recorded an increasing number of international students in recent years. These students constitute 34.77% of the total number of students in 2014/15, excluding exchange students.

The year 2012 not only marked the centenary of the University but also the start of an educational reform unique in Hong Kong history. All the eight local universities funded by the government have now converted their curriculum from three years to four years, bringing unprecedented changes to the support services and facilities as required by a younger freshmen population and an additional year of undergraduate study. The University of Hong Kong Libraries (HKUL) is one of the few founding departments that witnessed the evolution of the institution. When the Main Library started operating in October 1912, it only occupied two small rooms with a floor area of 288 m^2. The collection had been growing slowly, reaching 25,000 volumes in 1926. Currently, HKUL is comprised of a Main Library, six branch libraries (i.e., Fung Ping Shan Library, Medical Library, Law Library, Dental Library, Education Library and Music Library), and two off-campus sites for the Technical Services Division and the Preservation and Conservation Division, respectively. As the largest academic library system in Hong Kong, the total bound volume and e-books of the Libraries have reached 3.03 and 4.65 million, respectively, in June 2015. Over 80% of the total library resource fund is spent on electronic resources annually. The collections and services are managed by 32 professionals and around 150 support staff (lib.hku.hk/files/annualreport/AR2015.pdf).

HKUL's reputation as an internationally acclaimed research library is mainly attributed to its outstanding collections (such as the East Asia Collection of Fung Ping Shan Library, the Morrison Collection, the Hankow Collection, the Hong Kong Collection in the Hung On-To Memorial Library), client-centred services, and innovative approaches. The commitment of the libraries in these directions is clearly reflected in its vision, mission statements, and values (http://www.lib.hku.hk/general/vision.html). However, the rapid changes in clientele, technology, and academic environment, especially in recent decades, have brought unprecedented challenges to its steadfast efforts in delivering client-centered services.

HISTORICAL AND EMERGING ROLES OF THE LIBRARIES

In its formative years from 1912 to the early 1960s, HKUL had successfully performed the traditional library duties of a gatekeeper for its physical collections and provided patrons with valuable and useful materials. During the Japanese occupation in the 1940s, the library assumed a truly historic role and helped preserve 240,000 volumes transferred there from private and institutional libraries in Hong Kong. These books were returned to their rightful owners after the war with the tremendous effort of the library staff. In the peaceful decade of 1950s, the library experienced a significant growth of its book stock from 110,000 volumes to 233,000 volumes. At the same time, the increasing sizes of collections, readers, and staff had to compete for the some 1,000 m^2 of stack, reading, and office areas in the Main Library, which was comprised of ten large rooms and four smaller rooms on the ground floor of the Main Building on campus. The planning and construction of a new library was finally approved before the dawn of the 1960s. Then in the ensuing years of rapid growth from the 1960s to the 1990s, HKUL had emerged as a helpful assistant in connecting customers to an array of facilities and services like many other academic libraries in the world. Major investments were made in the establishment and expansion of the new Main Library and six branch libraries, significant acquisitions of both print and electronic resources, and, last but not the least, library automation.

Entering the twenty-first century, the management of HKUL saw waves of threats and opportunities whipped up by the information explosion, globalization, technological innovations, and many other new developments. Quick responses had to be made to ride these waves and survive in the new Internet era. The libraries embarked on a series of strategic moves: actively enriching library resources in a wide variety of subjects and formats; digitizing its unique contents; engaging many latest technologies; investing heavily in its network as well as building infrastructure; recruiting new talent to render quality services in collection building, material access, information literacy, support to teaching, learning and research, etc.

The decade from 2000 to 2010 was another major turning point for the libraries in its transformation toward a service collaboration model. After the transfer of sovereignty back to China in 1997, Hong Kong continued to be one of the international meeting points of East and West with its good geographical location, well-established legal and financial systems, advanced information and communication technology, and its vigorous working population. Taking advantage of all these favorable factors and the insight of the library management, HKUL started playing a key role in library collaboration in the regional and international arena. It became the mirror site outside China for the China Journal Net (CJN), the first and foremost full-text database for mainland Chinese journals, and has served as the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) Database Exchange Centre since 2002. As a major stride out of Asia in the rapid globalization trend, it joined the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and participated in record sharing with the world's largest consortium of libraries in the same year. Under its OCLC membership, HKUL has been the world's largest contributor of original cataloging records for many times since 2006. To allow users to benefit from the large number of Western publications through interlibrary loan and electronic delivery, the libraries joined the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in 2005 as its first member from outside North America.

While collaboration with libraries around the world has become its long-term development strategy, HKUL never stops exploring opportunities to work with local institutions and organizations. In 2005, the libraries took a leading role in establishing the Hong Kong Academic Library Link (HKALL) offering a union catalog and interuniversity service to students and staff of the eight government-funded local universities. The users can enjoy efficient access to a combined collection of over 9 million printed books. Two years later, HKUL partnered with the Hong Kong Central Library to launch the first referral service for public library readers to apply for a temporary pass to an academic library in Hong Kong. Taking into account the benefits of HKALL and the limited space of many local academic libraries, HKUL has led a team in the past few years to plan and seek public funding for a remote storage with an automated retrieval system. If the project is approved by the government, the ultimate capacity may reach a total of over 9 million, which will greatly relieve the pressure on shelving for the participating libraries and release precious space for other purposes to meet emerging user needs.

After celebrating a century of services to the HKU community and sailing through the first few years of the curriculum reform, it is an opportune moment for the libraries to revisit past experience and plan for future customer services. The following analysis will start with a review of the strategy adopted by the HKUL and then look into the frameworks laid for building a service culture. Various kinds of tools and measures tested or used will be discussed.

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO BUILDING A SERVICE CULTURE

Since 2001, HKUL has organized its Annual Planning Day (formerly called Annual Retreat)—a major event gathering all the professional librarians and support staff nominated from all divisions to brainstorm new ideas and actions in pursuit of the libraries' mission and vision. On most such occasions, faculty and student representatives have also been invited to participate in discussion and brainstorming sessions. The ideas gleaned from the Annual Planning Days will be further discussed, selected, and prioritized by the management based on their potential value and resource implications. Ad-hoc working groups known as operational priority (a strategic plan objective that we call OP) teams will be formed by staff members drawn from relevant divisions to accomplish the selected projects. Customer service has been a main theme or subtheme of the Annual Planning Day since its inception. This event is the incubator of many new ideas for services or facilities such as our online booking system for study places and workstations. The OP teams serve as a powerful mechanism to help flesh out good ideas and turn them into actual action plans or products. On the other hand, the cross-divisional composition of OP teams will ensure the needed expertise is provided and each project will be accomplished with collective wisdom and teamwork. More importantly, engagement of stakeholders at the very beginning will increase their buy-in to a project and thus improve the rate of success.

Individual projects may contribute to a certain customer focus over a period of time. However, as pointed out by Melling and Little (2002), "one of the challenges facing managers is not an acknowledgment of the importance of a customer focus but rather acquiring an understanding of how this focus can be embedded in the culture of our services via their strategic and operational management." With a view to defining, developing, and strengthening a service culture in HKUL, one strategic move was the introduction of a set of service standards in 2002 (http://lib.hku.hk/general/services/standards.html). It is hoped that by spelling out a set of specific standards that should be reached under normal circumstances, users can enjoy quality service as committed to by the libraries in their mission. The management also recognized that the process of consultation, review, and finally implementation was most beneficial to staff who actively and rigorously participated and debated the standards and expectations (Sidorko & Woo, 2008).

As part of the service standards, users are provided with multiple channels to send feedback to the libraries. User feedback with personal details removed is open for public access on the library webpage so that the

Table 3.1 Values of the University of Hong Kong Libraries

- Excellence in customer service with a focus on user-centred approaches;
- Collaboration, innovation, and creativity;
- Accountability in our resource management, actions, and decisions;
- High degree of flexibility to serve a diverse community of users;
- Caring, friendly, and helpful;
- Timely and efficient service;
- Dedication to our organization and society;
- Self-awareness and initiative for continuous improvement.

Source: The University of Hong Kong Libraries webpage—about HKU libraries—Policy—vision and mission—values (2012 version).

solutions and improvement efforts can be made known to both users and staff immediately. It is worth mentioning that as a condition for receiving quality service, library users are requested to take up some basic responsibilities such as complying with library regulations and being courteous and respectful to library staff. This reciprocal approach is clearly explained in the service standards to ensure that both users and staff are treated on an equal footing in case of a dispute. As service providers facing more demanding users these days, staff must be protected from abusive or challenging behaviors under unusual circumstances. With legitimate and spiritual support by regulations and from management, staff will be more willing and assertive in handling difficult cases, thus helping to maintain the order in the libraries for a conducive learning environment for all users.

The libraries also made use of a branding exercise between 2004 and 2012 to clarify expectations of staff in terms of customer service behavior. The exercise sought to capture the libraries' philosophy in terms of its relations with the user community (Sidorko & Woo, 2008). Some of its core values (Table 3.1) were selected and highlighted in the branding slogan "Caring, collaborative, creative. Your partner of academic excellence." With its appearance on many of the materials produced by the libraries such as stationery, name cards, publications, and webpage, it was hoped that these values would be manifestly seen and practiced by all staff members regardless of their roles.

KNOWING THE USERS AND STRIVING FOR CONTINUOUS QUALITY ASSURANCE

As of June 2015, there were 129,472 registered users with HKUL; they can be divided into six major groups, namely HKU students (27.49%),

Table 3.2 Distribution of international students (excl. exchange-in students) and professoriate staff (excl. honorary/visiting) by country in 2014/15

	Student headcount	%	Faculty headcount	%
Mainland China	6,238	64.2	220	32.6
Other Asian countries	1,520	15.6	96	14.2
Australia and New Zealand	293	3.0	52	7.7
European countries	879	9.0	148	22.0
North American countries	710	7.3	156	23.1
Others (e.g., Central and South American, African countries)	73	0.8	2	0.3
Total	9,713	100	674	100

HKU staff (7.57%), HKU alumni (41.26%), students and staff from the HKU School for Professional and Continuous Education as well as the self-funded Centenary College affiliated with HKU (17.89% and 1.17%, respectively), and others (4.62%). Some characteristics of the user population are the wide variety of categories and the notably large number of alumni users. The demography of HKUL's non-local clientele is shown by the nationality of students and faculties in Table 3.2.

As a result of globalization, the increasing ratio of international to local users has impacted on the provision of services ranging from language of communication to physical facilities. How to take care of the needs of users with different cultural backgrounds and levels of exposure to technology has become a challenge for many academic libraries around the world. In the case of HKUL, we have developed some tactics through constant observation and analysis of user behavior at the operational level. The feedback collected from various sources such as user surveys conducted by the libraries and other departments such as the Registry, the Graduate School, and the Centre of Development and Resources for Students are also taken into consideration during our planning and review of services for an increasingly globalized clientele. On the one hand, we must respect and appreciate every culture and individual in order to make the libraries a harmonious place for learning. On the other hand, it will not be feasible to customize services to a very minute level with our limited resources. The libraries have therefore adopted a flexible and practical approach to strike a balance between these two principles.

In order to help users immerse themselves in a new library environment, HKUL offers student orientation, popular instruction sessions, and information services in English, Putonghua, and Cantonese (a Chinese dialect that most Hong Kong people speak) to break the language barrier. Apart from the medium of instruction, we are also aware that some users prefer a self-learning mode to face-to-face interaction with library staff due to various reasons. Research guides on how to use library resources are available on the library website for user access anytime, anywhere. However, we must also be mindful of the issue of the digital divide when providing online library services. Communication with users is therefore maintained in many modes, ranging from the traditional ones such as in-person, telephone, mail, and email to text messaging and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter.

Users from different cultures will also have their own preferences of physical environment or facilities. As an academic library in a warm and humid city, our premises are air conditioned most of the time to keep a stable preservation environment for collections. Complaints or inquiries are received from time to time about the temperature setting. Besides offering a clear explanation on the libraries' preservation policy, users will be advised to find a seat distant from or closer to air vents. International and Mainland China students tend to hang out in the libraries for long hours. Seat hogging has become a common phenomenon and a potential source of user complaints or even conflicts. The online facility booking system introduced in the last few years to the Main Library and branch libraries is a success story of how resources are allocated to those in need based on patterns of usage we have observed among different kinds of users. With the timely assistance of librarians in removing personal belongings from hogged seats, the online booking system is found to be an efficient way to ensure that computing equipment and seats are optimized during busy hours and high seasons. Other culturally sensitive services include the introduction of squat toilets, more adjustable chairs for users of different height, different kinds of food and drink available from vending machines, as well as increasing use of pictograms as library signage.

The local curriculum reform mentioned above is yet another new concern for the service design and provision of HKUL. For example, the enrollment of younger students resulting from earlier university education has triggered a change in the lending procedures for the AV materials restricted to adults, as many first-year students are now under the legal age of 18 for viewing those items. Regardless of the complexity involved in designing and delivering all these ideas, it is the service attitude of library staff and management that counts in forecasting and meeting the needs of a diversified clientele.

As in many academic libraries, service review and consultation of library users are constantly carried out in HKUL by monitoring outputs in terms of key performance indicators, and quantitative data collected from user surveys. Prior to 2002, these surveys were single-dimensional, general user satisfaction surveys in that they simply asked users to rate the libraries' overall performance in a range of categories dealing with services and resources. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best possible score, users were asked to respond to the question "Overall, how satisfied are you with library staff?" Average scores of 3.80 (1999), 3.65 (2000), and 3.75 (2001) were attained. On the surface, these scores appear respectable, with only minor deviations in the years. When we analyzed users' free-form comments, however, we were surprised to see that in the 2001 survey, the third most common feedback (first and second most frequent were cold air conditioning and opening hours, respectively) was about staff service, in particular responses that demonstrated that we had poor customer service focus in the eyes of a number of our users (Sidorko & Woo, 2008). A series of customer service enhancement initiatives were implemented, and the outcome was reviewed by analyzing data collected from subsequent staff and user surveys.

Starting from 2010, we have engaged the services of InSync (an Australian provider of educational surveys and consulting), from which statistical services such as data compilation and benchmarking with peer institutions are readily available. The results, presented in the form of gap analysis (i.e., the difference between user perception on the performance of the libraries and importance users place on the range of services) from InSync, help the management diagnose areas in which we excel or fail to meet user expectations. Recurring comments will especially draw great attention from the management and in-depth analysis will be conducted to find out why certain issues are still haunting the libraries and how they can be resolved in the long run. Besides inviting remedial actions for perceived deficiencies from divisions, the management will also publicize the top 10 issues with the biggest gap in user perception on the library website together with responses from relevant division heads, including the follow-up actions taken (such as http://lib.hku.hk/survey2014) so as to demonstrate the libraries' commitment to continuous improvement. In return, those who participated in the survey will be more willing to provide feedback again in future.

Other means of soliciting opinions such as focus groups are occasionally used for special projects such as soliciting input for building renovations and new services. To gauge timely and constructive feedback from customers, all suggestions, complaints, inquiries, and compliments are carefully analyzed by heads. A standard item for discussion of user feedback will be put on the meeting agenda of the libraries' quality assurance team, comprised of the deputy librarian and heads of all the divisions. By sharing user feedback as well as responses from the library staff concerned on a regular basis, heads can learn from others' experience and identify room for improvement in their own area of service. Through joint discussion of cases, cross-divisional efforts can be coordinated efficiently to reach system-wide solutions when needed. Feedback with far-reaching implications for policy and resources will be escalated to a meeting of the senior management team chaired by the university librarian for further deliberation.

In addition to reviewing services within the campus community, HKUL also carried out benchmarking of budget, collections, and human resources in 2003, 2004, and 2005 with 15 local and overseas libraries whose mother institutions were of similar international standing as HKU. The results were submitted together with the libraries' activity level and findings of our user surveys as part of the annual budget request to the university management so as to show the decision makers how our performance in different areas of customer service might correlate to overall resource provision.

Insofar as the measurement of performance is concerned, HKUL has migrated from the transaction mode, that is, a mode in which the inputs or investments are the focus, to the service mode, where the outputs are translated into the level of activities for measurement. However, as reflected in the design of the user survey tools mentioned above, good personal perceptions or meeting individuals' expectations (more commonly described as "customer experience" in the commercial field) have become the deliverable that many businesses need to engage their customers. "It's the value that the experience holds for the individual that determines the worth of the offering and the work of the business" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Educational institutions will be no exception in this trend, especially when students are looking for more value from their education. For instance, the *PIE* (Professionals in International Education) *News* (2013) published a "Sea Turtle Index" from the Bank of Communications in China ranking cities that offer the best returns on an overseas education investment. Hong Kong is ranked third after Montreal and London as one of the top 10 cities on the list. Despite the controversial mechanisms adopted in this kind of assessment exercise, it can serve as an interesting if not a highly valid indicator of the quality of educational services that academic libraries can ponder.

Realizing the fast-changing nature of the education sector, HKUL sees the need to serve its users in a more proactive and agile manner. In consultation with all staff members, the libraries underwent a reorganization in 2012, transforming the original team approach into a matrix structure (Figure 3.1). The team leaders who formerly led one to several operational

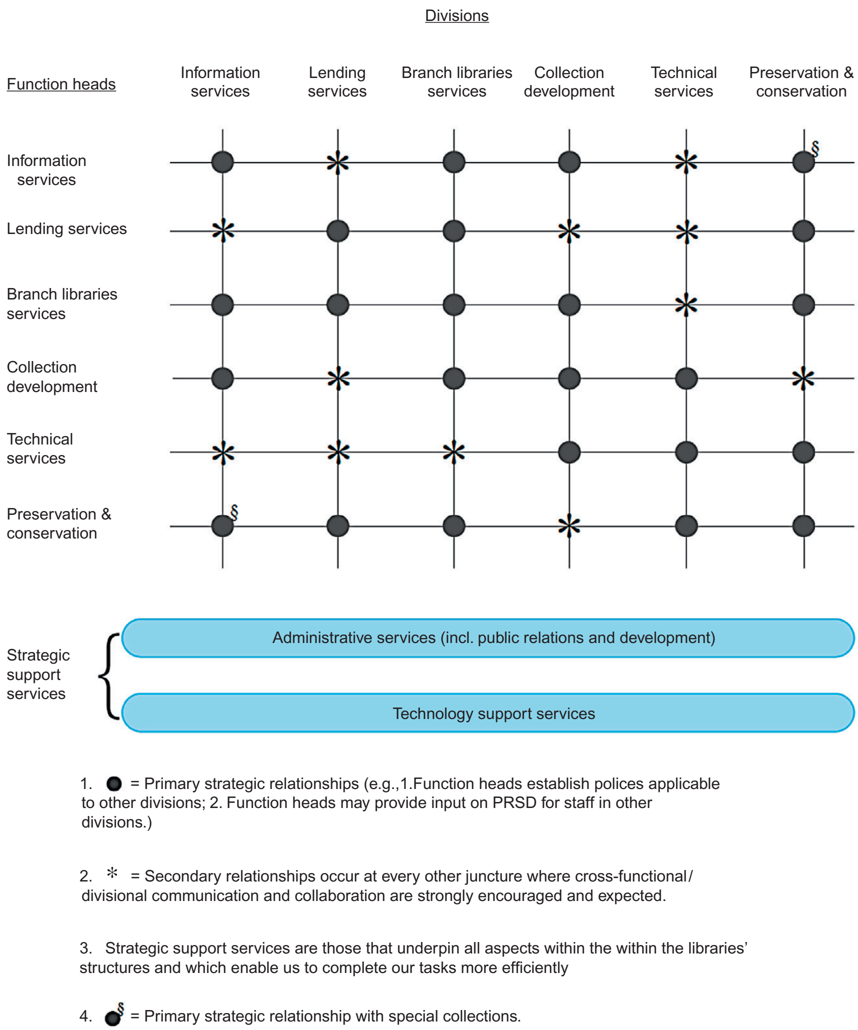

Figure 3.1 Matrix structure of the University of Hong Kong Libraries. *(Internal document of the University of Hong Kong Libraries).*

units were reassigned to take up the revamped posts of divisional heads and assume cross-divisional supervision and coordination duties in some cases. One of the purposes of this organizational change is to deepen the collaboration between divisions for better service planning, delivery, and management. The shifting of the supervision of faculty librarians from the former collection development team to the new Information Services Division is another major move to enhance the role of these faculty-based professionals in meeting the information needs of students and staff in various disciplines. Although it will take some time to assess the outcome of the reorganization, the effort has demonstrated the commitment of library management to better serving user needs.

NURTURING A CUSTOMER-CENTERED TEAM

Even with the most exemplary collections and hardware, good library service will not come naturally without the full support of a team of skilled and dedicated staff. Many leaders and managers know this fact, but mastering the skills to build a strong team is not an easy task. Human resource management (HRM) has become more complicated in the global competition for talent, and the mobility of young staff and contract workers is relatively high. Worst still, people nowadays are living in a cynical world (Kouzes & Posner, 2004) where distrust may spread like a virus if the leader fails to demonstrate the attributes expected by staff and stakeholders. In a large nonprofit organization like HKU, the management faces challenges every day in developing and inspiring a highly diversified workforce in terms of demography, employment terms, and skill sets. Apart from realigning the library functions to increase its organizational capacity, a series of strategic efforts have been made by HKUL since the early 2000s to meet the challenges mentioned above:

1. Established a Staff Development Committee in 2002 and a Staff Relations Committee in 2004, with members nominated or elected from various library divisions and ranks to help plan and organize annual programs and activities for the sake of staff development and relations. These efforts cover a spectrum of topics and formats ranging from subsidies for attending conferences or pursuing formal/informal programs, training workshops, staff exchange with overseas libraries, library visits, lunchtime sharing sessions among library staff, talks by overseas librarians or experts on current trends, staff recognition awards, annual dinners, farewell for retirees, and so forth. The two

committees were merged into the Staff Committee in 2013 with a view that the merger will bring corporate synergy.

2. Undertook three staff communication surveys in 2003, 2004, 2007 and most recently in 2015 with the belief that better communication within the libraries and between the libraries and its user community should result in better relationships between service providers and customers.
3. Conducted a staff engagement survey in 2013 to identify areas for improvement in engaging all library staff to increase the leadership depth of individuals. Discussion of findings were carried out at the Annual Planning Day in September 2013.
4. Compiled a set of staff competencies and skill sets for incorporation into the HRM functions including recruitment, performance review, staff development, redeployment, advancement, etc.
5. Ongoing review of departmental HRM policies, guidelines, and procedures to catch up with operational needs.

Although these initiatives may be designed with multiple purposes in mind, all of them have contributed in one way or another to the over-arching goal of a sustainable environment for quality service. The library management believes that only when the philosophy of customer service penetrates the organization through HRM functions can a staff with the required aptitude and competencies be attracted, nurtured, and retained.

Among all the efforts mentioned above, the earliest and most straight-forward approach was to initiate a range of customer service–related workshops for library staff. Back in mid-2002, HKUL employed a local consultancy firm with experience in customer service training to develop a program in consultation with the management and the Staff Development Committee. The aim of this program was to strengthen staff's service mentality, strengthen team spirit for service excellence, sharpen telephone etiquette for handling internal/external customers, and develop attitudes and skills for handling complaints. Resulting from these objectives were three workshops: Delivering Quality Service Training Programme (a series of one-day workshops delivered to 115 staff); Effective Telephone Handling for Service Excellence (a series of one-day workshops delivered to 104 staff); and Service Leadership (a one and a half day workshop delivered to 23 staff).

Although these workshops were very well received by participants, the management was mindful that their effectiveness in improving customer service was yet to be tested and a continual program of customer service training was necessary to include staff members at all levels. Another comment from the workshop participants was that this series of training sessions conducted by external consultants might lack a library-specific focus in their content delivery despite their very genuine attempts to utilize library-specific examples in their case studies. There was a suggestion that facilitators of this kind of training should be able to demonstrate how they put theories into practice, not only during workshops but in real-life library situations (Sidorko & Woo, 2008).

Then, during one of the libraries' annual retreats in 2005, an operational priority was created to develop an internal staff training program with an emphasis on customer service. A library-wide OP team was established to pursue this objective. Resulting from this team's deliberations was the need for a series of customer service training sessions targeting all library staff. To address the concern about a more library-oriented context, in-house trainers were identified from senior library staff who were responsible for developing the content and delivering the workshops with a focus on local situation. The aims of this program were:

1. To update the skills and cultivate appropriate attitude of all library staff for the provision of consistent and up-to-standard services to both internal and external customers;
2. To develop a supportive management that ensures successful delivery of customer services by staff;
3. To provide a platform for continuous communication on customer service issues and sharing of good practices among all levels of staff.

It was divided into five parts under three modules (Table 3.3), with contents ranging from the theoretical and introductory to the very detailed and specific. The three modules were covered by a series of three workshops delivered to around 200 regular library staff during the academic year of 2006/2007. Focus was put on areas identified as being of direct concern to library staff, while the workshops were packaged as customer service sharing sessions to emphasize the point that they were more about communicating in multiple ways than merely training.

A total of 90% of attendees responded to an evaluation at the end of each workshop. In general, they agreed that the sessions had achieved their objectives and met the expectations of those participated. A majority of the attendees also indicated that they would be able to apply on the job what they learned and that the sharing sessions would be useful to their colleagues or staff. The most interesting finding was that around 40% (70) of the respondents believed that management should communicate more with staff and users to understand their needs as well as to explain policies

Table 3.3 Modules of HKUL customer service sharing sessions 2006/2007

Module 1

Part I. The Philosophy of Customer Service

i. What is customer service?
   – library customer service
   – service culture

ii. Who is the customer?
   – internal customers
   – external customers

iii. Organizational culture and customer service
   – Supportive management (concept of service profit chain)
   – Management's roles:
      a. develop objectives
      b. empowerment
      c. encouragement/show appreciation
      d. motivation
      e. future planning for continuous improvement (training staff at all levels, performance measurement, keeping up standards)

iv. Responding to change [by means of emotional quotient (EQ), adversity quotient (AQ) etc.]

Module 2

Part II. Focusing on Library Customers

How customers want to be served?
– customer values (e.g., basic, expected, desired, unanticipated)
– customer expectations
– skills required

Part III. Problem-Solving Process

Managing conflict
– customer frustration
– skills of conflict resolution

Part IV. Communication with Customers

– Telephone skills
– Listening skills
– Nonverbal communication
– Etiquette/netiquette/behavior
– How to say "No" to patrons (assertiveness)
– Phrases of customer service in library

Module 3

Part V. Internal Communication

– Communication between staff/supervisors/department heads
– Interpersonal skills
– Conflict resolution

Source: Internal document of the University of Hong Kong Libraries.

and decisions. In fact, quite a number of attendees remarked that what they greatly valued was care and support from the management. They simply wished their supervisors or top management would listen to their feelings, sympathize with their difficulties, trust in their work, and appreciate their efforts. The second largest category of responses [about 20% (35)] recognized the importance of training in skills and knowledge in the areas of one's work and other library services. With formal staff development programs introduced in the libraries for six years by then, the results demonstrated that staff members were beginning to realize the value of continuous professional development in improving service delivery. Other comments worth mentioning included the need for "clear and consistent policy and procedures," "recognition and reward for performance," and "appropriate allocation of human resources". All of which are areas that the library management was attempting to address.

STRATEGIC APPLICATION OF USER AND STAFF SURVEYS

In our user surveys between 2004 and 2009, participants were asked to rate their perception of the importance and staff performance in three questions. The analysis of scores showed that the mean gap was narrowed down in all these areas from 2006 to 2008 (Table 3.4), the period during which the customer service sessions were conducted. However, the gaps started to widen in 2009, especially in the politeness and friendliness of staff. It was hard to determine the real reason(s) for this decline in performance, but some possible factors could be derived from the activities and developments of the libraries around 2008 and 2009. During that period, staff members were committed to many big projects: the Main Library began introducing a radio-frequency identification (RFID) collection management system to over a million of open stack items; the whole Technical Services Division was relocated to an off-campus site to make way for the installation of a large compact shelving system in order to cope with the ever-expanding collection; the food and drink policy was modified to allow users to take snacks and beverages in secured containers into designated zones of the Main Library; more discussion areas were introduced to facilitate group learning, etc. All these changes further stretched the capacity of the shrinking library workforce, challenged the communication and collaboration between off- and on-campus divisions, and tested the agility of staff in handling potential conflicts between users and staff.

Table 3.4 User survey feedback on staff, 2004–2008 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest)

Question	2004			2006			2008			2009		
	Mean importance	Mean performance	Mean gap	Mean importance	Mean performance	Mean gap	Mean importance	Mean performance	Mean gap	Mean importance	Mean performance	Mean gap
Q1. Library staff are readily available to provide assistance and respond in a timely manner	4.24	4.04	**0.209**	4.22	4.04	**0.18**	4.22	4.13	**0.09**	4.17	4.04	**0.13**
Q2. Library staff are polite and friendly	4.14	4.06	**0.084**	4.18	4.06	**0.12**	4.17	4.14	**0.03**	4.14	4.01	**0.13**
Q3. Library staff are knowledgeable and answer inquiries accurately and clearly	4.23	3.99	**0.253**	4.24	4.00	**0.24**	4.21	4.08	**0.13**	4.19	4.02	**0.17**

Source: Internal document of the University of Hong Kong Libraries.

After switching to the InSync survey in 2010, there were four questions focusing on library staff, though they were phrased in a slightly different way and the rating was changed from a 5-point to a 7-point scale. The rating of the four staff-related questions showed that both the perceived importance and staff performance were going upward. The gap analysis indicated a downward trend, meaning that service provided by HKUL staff was improving again (Table 3.5). With the RFID self-check machines properly introduced in the Main Library and then the branches, more staff time was gradually redeployed to more sophisticated services such as data collection and processing, facility support and reference inquiries. Staff members were getting more used to a distributed physical working environment and becoming more skilful in handling problems arising from the food and drink policy as well as the more diversified nature of library activities.

Participation in this kind of international survey helped HKUL understand its strengths and weaknesses by comparing the scores with other institutions and identifying the changes in our performance over time. Attention will be given to specific areas such as communication, service delivery, information resources, facilities, and equipment where the biggest gaps appeared, while further in-depth analysis of free-form comments can be conducted from a qualitative perspective. In addition to regular library services, HKUL has from time to time solicited feedback on new initiatives via these user surveys. This feedback is valuable for the libraries to fine-tune efforts and continuously improve new services such as the RFID collection management system, online room booking system, and revamped library webpage.

By juxtaposing the user survey results with those from our staff surveys, management gained more insight on how empathy with staff and practical measures to address their pressure at/after work will impact the sustainability of a healthy and productive workforce. Relevant efforts are never enough and should always be carefully driven to their full implementation. For example, in the 2013 Annual Planning Day, the libraries seriously reviewed the results of our staff survey and worked out ways to enhance the level of engagement and leadership depth of supervisors and individual staff.

NEXT GOAL—ALL-DIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCE

We recognize that good customer service enables the libraries to be seen as a partner in learning, teaching, and research by its community, which in

Table 3.5 User survey feedback on staff, 2010–2013 (1 = lowest, 7 = highest)

Question	**2010**			**2011**			**2013**			**2014**		
	Mean importance	**Mean performance**	**Mean gap**	**Mean importance**	**Mean performance**	**Mean gap**	**Mean importance**	**Mean performance**	**Mean gap**	**Mean importance**	**Mean performance**	**Mean gap**
Q1. Library staff treat me fairly and without discrimination	6.09	5.83	**0.26**	6.11	5.88	**0.23**	6.23	6.03	**0.20**	6.15	6.08	**0.07**
Q2. Library staff are approachable and helpful	6.24	5.74	**0.50**	6.21	5.78	**0.43**	6.27	5.95	**0.32**	6.21	6.00	**0.22**
Q3. Library staff provide accurate answers to my inquiries	6.18	5.71	**0.47**	6.19	5.76	**0.43**	6.29	5.92	**0.37**	6.24	6.01	**0.23**
Q.4 Library staff are readily available to assist me	6.15	5.67	**0.48**	6.14	5.66	**0.48**	6.25	5.84	**0.41**	6.15	5.95	**0.20**

Source: Internal document of the University of Hong Kong Libraries.

turn may have an impact on our funding (Sidorko & Woo, 2008) or even support from our stakeholders, as demonstrated in a self-initiated petition by a group of library users for an increase in our library resource funding in early 2013 (Evans, 2013). The libraries have gone a long way from a few modest reading rooms to its present scale. Tremendous investment and hard work will have to be put into keeping our collections, facilities, and environment, both physical and virtual, abreast with the developments of HKU. Pine and Gilmore (1999) forecasted the arrival of the experience economy at the dawn of the twenty-first century and pointed out that "nothing is more important than the wisdom required to transform customers." Engaging our customers with richer and more comprehensive experiences during their daily or occasional visits to the libraries will probably be our next major goal. Many of us in HKUL understand that our future will not simply rely on our prestigious collections, user-friendly and efficient technology, increasing amount and variety of facilities, or high-quality service. Like a stage performance, it is the combined experience that counts. How to put on a great performance with an engaged team will be our mission in the coming decade or century.

CHAPTER 4

Customer Service in a 24/7 Environment: The Exeter Experience

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BACKGROUND

The University of Exeter is a Russell Group university with approximately 18,500 students across three campuses in Exeter and Cornwall. Of this figure, around 13% are international students, a number set to increase steadily, in part due to the success of the university's partnership with INTO, a company that provides pathways for international students to progress onto Exeter degree programs (INTO, 2014). In Exeter, students are served by a Main Library, with a capacity of over 1,000 seats, and two site libraries, Research Commons and St. Luke's, offering an additional 300 seats between them. In May 2012, work was completed on the extension and refurbishment of the Main Library as part of the university's prestigious Forum development. This ambitious project created a centerpiece for the campus and took the library from being a separate building to being part of a covered complex of student services, shops, social, and learning spaces. In short, it became a crucial chamber in the beating heart of campus life.

The year 2012 was a landmark for Exeter with the completion of the Forum, designed to coincide with the new £9,000 a year tuition fees. This change was set to intensify what Mossop has called an "increasingly transactional" relationship, with students viewing themselves as customers and expecting high levels of customer service in return for their investment in higher education (Mossop, 2013: p. 118). Not only were students demanding a higher level of service from their libraries, but they were also looking for increased accessibility of library spaces. Two factors can be seen to influence this behavior. The first is the appeal of the new development—what Exeter staff have dubbed "the Forum factor." Where

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students might previously have gone home to study after lectures, post-Forum, more were electing to stay on campus, and library footfalls increased dramatically, with average daily headcounts measured by staff almost doubling from August 2012 to August 2013 (from an average of 215 visitors to 396). The second factor is a change to study regimes. A recent national survey found 57% of students now working part-time alongside their full-time studies. While paid employment certainly helps cover spiraling living costs, the research shows that students are also seeking work in order to gain skills, knowledge, and experience to enhance their future employability (Richmond, 2013). Exeter supports this trend, offering increasing opportunities for paid internships and part-time jobs for students within the institution—including library work as shelvers and student information assistants. The stretched schedules of those who are balancing study and work highlight the need for extended library hours. The Forum Library has been open 24/7 in term time since September 2007, with self-service issuing and returns and a porter present to provide overnight security. In response to student demand, this provision increased to year-round 24/7 swipe access in September 2013.

Yet, combined, these two pressures create what could be seen as a conundrum for library staff. How do we ensure we are meeting demand for advanced levels of customer service when increasingly our customers may be accessing our facilities at a time when fully trained library staff are not present? In Exeter's Library Customer Services team, our efforts to meet this challenge have involved developing a "roving" service. By training mobile staff to foster an ethos of supported self-service, and later, by expanding our marketing activities, we have sought to meet the challenge of ensuring that customers feel connected to the library whatever time of day or night they use our facilities. This case study outlines our efforts, evaluating the lessons learned along the way.

WHY ROVE?

"Roving," "roaming," "floor-walking," "peripatetic library staff": lots of terms have been coined to describe a more mobile model for staff engagement with library users, and discussion continues as to which most fully captures the spirit of this way of working. Yet to debate the semantics too intensively is to miss the point. "Roving" (the term we tend to use at Exeter) is all about getting out there and doing, about showing rather than describing, and looking back 3 years after we first began roving training we certainly see how actions can speak louder than words. Delivering excellent customer service is a priority for Exeter's libraries, with "customer approval" one of the key value statements of our strategy for 2010–2015: "the library will be customer-led and will understand, anticipate, respond to and exceed customer expectation" (University of Exeter, 2010: p. 2). Previous studies have shown that students find standing staff more approachable than those seated behind a desk (Kazlauskas, 1976: p. 133), so mobilizing front-line staff seemed a promising way to help meet these aspirations. Roving has also been noted to allow staff to better engage with those patrons who may use the building regularly but who would never ask for help of their own accord (Kramer, 1996: p. 68). This group—often termed "hidden customers"—are a key target in the ongoing quest to improve satisfaction with library services since they are unlikely to be taking full advantage of the services we offer (Giannone, n.d.: p. 1).

In a 24/7 library, the concept of "hidden" users should be extended to include the significant proportion of our students who regularly use the facilities overnight. Library staff are present 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the weekends, but statistics reveal increasing levels of library occupancy outside of these times. In December 2013, for example, out-of-hours users comprised 23% of overall visitor numbers. The layout of the new Forum Library supports this group by further facilitating self-service with self-issue machines on each floor and a separate space, known as "Express Collections," located by the main entrance allowing easier access to the highest demand textbooks. This arrangement certainly befits a 24/7 library, helping to support the increasingly flexible way that students need to study; but it also creates a challenge for library staff. We must be more active to ensure that self-service is supported in positive terms, ensuring autonomy rather than alienation.

The introduction of roving at Exeter was also necessary preparation for some of the practical demands of the new workspaces created by the Forum development. Before 2010, our front-line team of information assistants were primarily desk-based. At this time, technology was already in place at the Main Library (as it was then called) to support self-issue and return, but the main desk continued to operate as the focal point of services. Partly, this was dictated by practicality: our "hold shelf" was located behind the desk and all books that had been reserved needed to be manually issued. This popular recall facility, together with the issuing of interlibrary loan items, accounted for much of the traffic across the desk. But the centrality of the desk was also cultural: even as our self-service machines saw heavy usage, revealingly, library staff still tended to use the term "issue desk." Helpfulness, friendliness, and the ability to handle inquiries well have long been key recruitment criteria for both shelving and information assistants, but at this time the general expectation remained for students to approach us, either out on the floor, by visiting one of the subject librarians' offices, or most usually by heading to the "issue" desk.

For our service to exceed customer expectations, and with plans developing for the Forum, this status quo needed to change. Designs for the new library radically revised the function of the desk. There would no longer be space to store reserved items behind it; instead these would be labeled and housed in a designated area, allowing them to be self-issued. In the finished Forum, there would also be two access routes to the library rather than just the one, meaning it was no longer the case that all entering or exiting visitors would have to pass by the desk. Maintaining a primary, welcoming reception point will always be important, but the days of serving customers in a largely static way were, rightly, numbered.

INITIAL TRAINING AND MOBILIZATION

Beginning to rove in 2010 was a huge change to work practices for Exeter staff and inevitably met with resistance. Despite—or perhaps because of—the changes taking place in our library environment, some colleagues were reluctant to commit to such a radical redeployment of staff time. Even many of those who accepted the need for change harbored reservations. In early discussions of how roving could work, the specter of the "shop assistant" was never far away. Some colleagues feared that to rove was to borrow too heavily from the world of retail, and most of us could recall unpleasant experiences of having been hassled in shops by over-pushy sales assistants. Other fears related to a perceived invasion of our patrons' privacy (Reynolds, 2005: p. 62). To help combat such negative stereotypes, it helped to draw on the positive experiences of other institutions that had already begun their roving journey. To do this, our Head of Library Customer Services hired external trainers to lead our initial training, an intensive one-day course, "Roving with a Purpose in HE and FE Libraries," delivered through CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals). Attendance was mandatory for all staff, including those who did not have significant front-line duties. Extending participation in this way incurred a considerable extra cost, requiring more sessions to be run, but it also sent a clear message of just how seriously this development was to be taken. This helped to establish an important ground rule: to operate successfully, roving was something everyone needed to support. It was only after we had been roving for some time that we came to realize how its effects rippled through even to those teams with a more back-of-house role. Once students get used to interacting with us out on the library floor, then any staff member they spot becomes a potential target for questions. If roving information assistants are doing their job well, then they should identify and target those most in need of help, reducing the chance that other colleagues will be approached. However, in a large library it is impossible to cover everywhere at once, so it is always possible that staff with more office-based roles will be asked to help while crossing the building. Even those who would not have regular shifts on the floor needed to be on board with the roving model.

The CILIP course was a useful introduction to this more active way of delivering front-line support. The trainers outlined how other libraries had included roving in their daily routine, highlighting the positive ways roving staff can build and maintain relationships with patrons and—importantly—helping attendees to overcome any initial misconceptions born from negative "retail type" experiences. The trainers demonstrated, as Giannone has also noted, that successful roving is "both an Art and a Science" (n.d.: p. 2). It is a science in that there are established techniques of psychology and communication that can be employed to improve its effectiveness. For example, learning to interpret body language can help staff recognize those customers who seem lost but lack the confidence to ask for help, or it can help us to avoid disturbing those visitors who are concentrating deeply or are clearly self-sufficient. But roving is also an art—open to interpretation, requiring a level of performance and judgment, and without a one size fits all model. Putting roving into practice at Exeter has borne out this duality.

After the training session, supervisors in Library Customer Services began including roving shifts of 1 h at a time on their weekly rotas. By this point, the Forum development was well underway, with two floors of the library remaining open at a time while the third was refurbished. The theories outlined by our CILIP trainers were inspiring, stressing the desirability of roving as the best way to connect with a wider range of library users. But the reality was that in the midst of the building work, our early roving experiences inevitably became an exercise in damage limitation. With stock being temporarily moved during each refurbishment phase, it was imperative for library staff to be accessible and visible in order to help limit disruption for our users. To ensure visibility, we adopted a temporary uniform of brightly colored T-shirts printed front and back with the phrase "Ask Me." Hardly the most flattering garments, these were unpopular with colleagues; yet although we disliked the shirts, library staff could quickly observe the impact of wearing them. The T-shirts ensured we were instantly recognizable, and their emblazoned "Ask Me" sent a clear message that was being received by our customers: the number of inquiries our rovers handled increased rapidly during this period. Though not perhaps a sophisticated long-term solution, the T-shirts were a suitably high-impact way to kick-start our roving activities. The initial gaudy design was retired once the building work was finished. Yet while the "Ask Me" shirts are not mourned by library staff, our time wearing them taught us that being identifiable is a key ingredient in the recipe for successful roving. In line with other front-line services in the new Forum complex, library staff now wear brightly colored lanyards and can choose from a range of more professional uniform garments such as polo shirts and gilets, options we continue to be fine-tune in an effort to negotiate the ongoing challenges of balancing visibility with comfort, style, and, of course, cost.

During our initial roving phase, operating in such close proximity to a building site also made noise management a priority. Colleagues working out on the floors were best placed to identify those library spaces least affected by outside noise and direct our customers to them. By liaising closely with the builders we could also ensure our users were kept up to date with developments and the expected duration of any major disruptions. If building work was scheduled that would be particularly noisy, we placed signs in movable stands throughout the affected areas, apologizing and offering a timescale for the disturbance. At this trying time, more personal interactions were especially valued: roving staff could target customers who looked unsettled by the noise and, by approaching them individually, reassure them in a way that made them feel much more valued. An email sent at this time to our head of the library by a member of academic staff shows that our efforts were being appreciated:

> *I have been very impressed with the additional help that has been available during the current building works, and on several occasions have been helped by a member of Library staff on level + 1 as I have been looking lost! … Do please carry on having plenty of staff on hand to show staff/students where things are, and please do disseminate to your colleagues that the hard work they are putting in, and cheerful way that they are dealing with lost looking staff/students, has been noticed.*
> ***(Professor Steve Rippon, private email December 9, 2010).***

Like other examples of positive feedback, this was shared with all staff via our weekly email bulletin, "The Noticeboard." For those colleagues still struggling to embrace the roving rationale it provided a welcome morale boost.

The challenges of the library refurbishment gave the introduction of roving at Exeter a sense of immediacy that made it easier to accept, but there were still obstacles to overcome. Perhaps the greatest of these was relinquishing an over-reliance on our library management system, Millennium. When we first started roving we maintained on our middle floor a hot-desk staff PC with access to the Internet and to Millennium. This was intended as a drop-in point, allowing staff to access details that could assist in customer transactions—such as the last return date of a missing book—without having to take a patron back to the main reception. However, the lure of this desk and stool proved too tempting for some, and we quickly discovered that the more reluctant rovers would happily spend a whole hour sitting there rather than approaching customers. Was this due to laziness? There is no doubt that roving properly should be tiring, but what this behavior really showed was that some staff were not yet confident as rovers, and for them to become so we needed to reevaluate some of our definitions of best practice in customer service. For roving to become culturally ingrained, our culture itself needed to shift: moving from a model of *serving* our users to *empowering* them.

Of course, there will always be questions that cannot be solved without accessing circulation data, but a surprisingly high percentage of inquiries can be handled by consulting information widely available on our online public access catalogs (OPACs). If a student complained that the book they wanted was on loan, desk-based staff would previously have scanned their card and placed the reservation for them using Millennium. By contrast, rovers use an OPAC to perform a search alongside the student, ensuring they understand how to read results and due dates correctly before going on to demonstrate how they can recall a book themselves. This more pedagogical interaction might take a few minutes longer in the short term, but overall it actually saves staff time, since the student in question is now equipped to recall any future title themselves rather than queuing each time to have staff do it for them. Initially, some colleagues continued trying to do everything for the student, such as manually issuing a book rather than walking them to the machine to demonstrate self-issue. This is understandable since such complete service often generates immediate positive feedback: "the librarians gave me exactly what I needed." But it does not equip students to be the long-term, confidently independent library users that they need to be to get the most out of our services in a post-Forum 24/7, £9,000 fee environment. Making good use of signage, of our webpages, and increasingly of social media such as our Twitter and Facebook pages and Library News Blog are all ways of ensuring out-of-hours users remain connected, but it is also vital that library staff "think 24/7" and go the extra mile, setting out to educate as well as to assist. The old adage first coined by Victorian author Anne Thackeray Ritchie is appropriate here: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

MAINTAINING A ROVING CULTURE

By the time the newly completed Forum opened its doors in May 2012, roving had become part of our work culture within University of Exeter libraries. It is a culture that we are still refining and which becomes more embedded over time. Part of the roving model will always be reactive: rovers are best placed to identify and respond to maintenance or IT problems around the building and to help implement our behavior policies, ensuring that noise levels are appropriate and that hot food is consumed only in breakout spaces. These are crucial aspects of the job, but our ongoing in-house roving training has also encouraged staff to become increasingly proactive. Front-line staff now receive a handbook, "Your Guide to Roving," and induction training for new information assistants concentrates on the user's perspective first. Before they are introduced to our library management system, staff are first taught to search, place reservations and bookings, make renewals, and request inter-site loans through the catalog, as a student would. This reinforces the message of thinking 24/7 and supporting self-service that is at the heart of our library strategy. We no longer maintain a staff PC on the library floor, but we do have 12 iPads. Carrying these while roving is encouraged but not mandatory. These devices contain much that is useful such as the iExeter app, which includes details of Freshers' week activities, a link to printing FAQs, and real-time campus-wide PC cluster availability. The iPads also have a shortcut to the mobile version of the library catalog, but they are not loaded with Millennium. Roving staff either solve problems using the same facilities available to the public—teaching as they go—or they refer users to colleagues at the reception or staff office. To help reinforce this message and summarize the key responsibilities of rovers we have developed the mnemonic HERO: "**H**elp, **E**mpower, **R**efer, **O**wn the Space"—a little corny perhaps, but a useful training tool nonetheless.

One potential criticism of this way of working is that it oversimplifies the role of information assistants. Many previous roving case studies have explored the challenges of librarians handling some quite complex reference inquiries on the go (Kramer, 1996). Although Exeter's team of subject specialists support the roving model and do patrol the floors at peak times of day, most scheduled roving is undertaken by our information assistants. Statistics show that the majority of inquiries handled by this team are less in-depth, such as directional and fines queries, or help with basic searches, reservations, or with print and copy (Figure 4.1). Rovers operate an informal triage system: quick inquiries can be resolved on the spot, sometimes with the aid of an OPAC, iPad, or the student's own mobile device; more complex queries can be passed to the library reception desk or other student services as required; while customers needing in-depth support can be referred to subject librarians for a one-on-one session. Rather than oversimplifying their responsibilities, roving helps better to differentiate the many different aspects of an information assistant's job. Handling the quicker inquiries *in situ* reduces queues and relieves the pressure on colleagues at the busy reception desk. When a roving shift

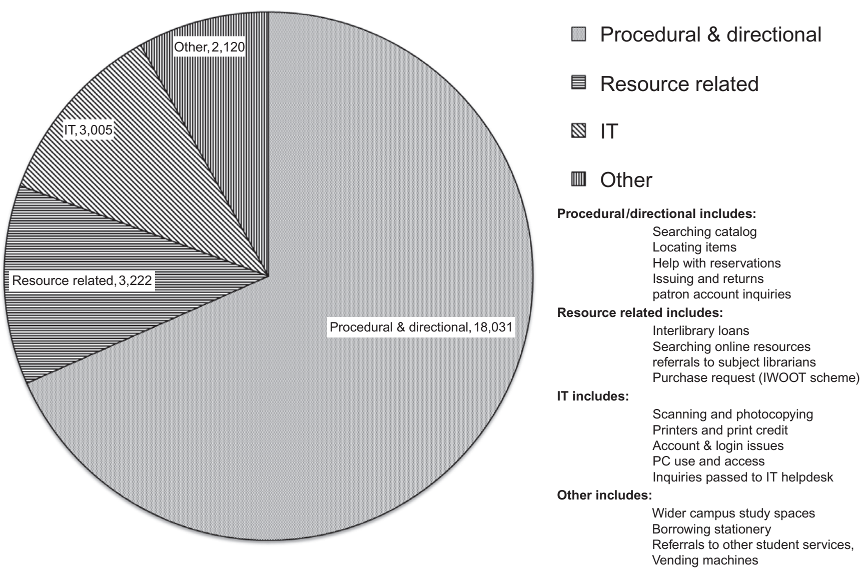

Figure 4.1 Inquiries handled by reception desk staff August 2013–January 2014.

ends and information assistants take their turn on the reception desk, they can expect more space to tackle the slightly more in-depth queries that, for many of us, can be the most rewarding challenges of front-line library work.

Using a triage system in this way also overcomes the objection voiced by some critics of roving in academic libraries, who argue that users researching potentially sensitive topics could feel their privacy is being violated if approached by staff (Reynolds, 2005: p. 62). Rovers will engage people using the OPACs but, with their primary remit to resolve basic queries and support self-service, our staff do not comment uninvited on search practices. Rather, we have learned to begin interactions with open questions: "How are you getting on there? Are you finding everything you need?" These kinds of friendly introductions eschew a one-word answer and tend to generate better responses from the customer, but they still preserve privacy by allowing for a polite refusal. If invited to assist, rovers can help interpret and filter search results, but difficult or sensitive topics are referred to a subject librarian. Each of our team of subject librarians has a business card with their photograph, availability, and full contact details, information replicated on the subject support webpages and on a large display board within the Forum Library. Roving staff give out these business cards, but students can also just pick them up any time from holders on the display board. So even if a librarian is not available for an immediate consultation they are shown to be accessible and the customer never leaves empty handed.

ROVING AND COMMUNICATION

Exeter library staff face a dual challenge: improving our customer service while at the same time increasing access to our facilities outside of staffed hours. Another way we have responded to these twin goals has been by overhauling our communication strategy. Like roving, marketing is a concept that can generate some unpopular misconceptions about over-aggressive execution that need to be overcome before its benefits can be unlocked (Corrall & Brewerton, 1999: p. 233–235). As Levitt neatly puts it, "selling focuses on the needs of the seller, marketing on the needs of the buyer" (1960: p. 50). By creating a coherent marketing strategy we hoped to increase customer satisfaction by expanding awareness of the many services our library had to offer. In 2012, for the first time, our digital library manager formed a marketing group consisting of eight representatives from across the spectrum of our services, including our heritage and art sections. Key objectives for the group included:

- To encourage "word of mouth" about our services
- To make our users feel their opinion and feedback was valued and to try and make them feel part of the development of our library services
- To create "the library" as a recognizable entity within the university so our users are aware of what part we play in their learning experience

To achieve these goals, and to further cement the library as a specific brand within the university, the group developed a year-long plan with new topics scheduled for promotion each week, using a variety of media including, at various times, posters, leaflets (largely produced and printed in-house), a purpose-bought display stand, digital signage, and updates on Twitter, Facebook, and the library blog. Our marketing calendar took into account the different patterns of library usage throughout the year, the peaks and troughs of the wider university timetable, and some more general cultural and seasonal happenings. The plan helped us to identify what customers would need to know and precisely when they would need to know it, so staff could prepare well in advance to highlight different library services at the time each promotion would achieve maximum impact. Examples include promoting wider on-campus study spaces in the run-up to exams and advertising our alumni membership scheme in the same week as the graduation ceremonies, when recent graduates would be on campus. Our coordinated effort also made the most of limited staff time by dividing marketing topics among the teams. This ensured all library social media sites were updated regularly—surely the key to gaining and maintaining followers—while sharing the workload in a way that helped to avoid repetition.

The relationship between roving and marketing is reciprocal. It has been important to advertise the fact that our staff rove: that information assistants out on the floor are approachable and may well approach customers first. Finding fresh ways to publicize this message is an ongoing challenge. But rovers also have a role to play as marketers. Our roving handbook sets out the following expectation:

> Don't just answer questions; actively promote our services
> Sometimes customers ask for *what they think we can provide rather than what they'd really like* and there can be a huge difference!
> Roving library staff are not sales assistants. We don't have a special offer to push in aisle 4 but the idea of promoting our services is one that we can borrow from retail, to help our customers get the best out of our

facilities. We should be proud of all the services we offer, and roving interactions are an excellent way to spread the word.

Here we try to appropriate in a positive way the stubborn connection between roving and retail. At the start of each week, the topic scheduled for promotion is highlighted in our staff email bulletin, giving everyone a chance to ensure they are familiar with it. Not only are rovers more likely to be asked questions about particular services during a promotional period, but our teams are encouraged to think of these topics as our "special offer of the week" and make extra efforts to promote them where appropriate during roving interactions.

After the first year of operation our marketing activities had yielded some measurable results. A campaign designed to increase awareness of our leisure-oriented Library Lounge fiction range saw a 53% increase in checkouts of titles from this collection during the campaign and two subsequent months compared to the same period in the previous year. Meanwhile, regular promotion of our purchase suggestion scheme "IWOOT" (I Want One of These) generated a 99% increase in the number of suggestions received: from 161 in 2011/2012 period to 321 in the year after the marketing campaign began. These encouraging figures have inspired us to continue marketing efforts, formulating a new plan for the 2013–2014 academic year. But in general, successful library marketing does not yield overnight results but a slow-burn increase, with awareness growing over time (Potter, 2013).

As numbers of out-of-hours users in the Forum Library continue to grow, we see marketing as a key way to ensure this group does not become disconnected and therefore "hidden." The publication of regular "Library Know How" guides on our blog—guides subsequently promoted via a wide range of other media, both digital and physical—can help build customer confidence with our self-service facilities. Of course, there will always be demands that require interaction with trained library professionals; these can't be fulfilled in the middle of the night. But marketing can support our out-of-hours users by helping to raise awareness of what immediate options are available. For example, at 3:00 a.m. a student can't get guidance from their librarian about searching for viable alternatives to a title that we do not stock. But if our promotional activities have been successful then they might be aware of the IWOOT scheme or how to request interlibrary loans online. While neither of these alternatives can immediately produce the book, the forms for both can be completed at any time, and the sense of having taken some positive action should help alleviate frustration. Developing from this, marketing can also help foster a greater sense of connection. As our Twitter presence has become more established we often find that we are mentioned in student tweets such as "Early morning start at the @ExeterUniLib for the bois #9amexam #lastminutecramming." Neither question, suggestion nor complaint, such verbalizations do not demand a specific response from staff but they do demonstrate the value of social media in helping to foster a distinct identity for the library as a supportive place even at times when library staff may not be present.

It has always been possible for our users to leave feedback outside of staffed hours: our main email address is well advertised, and comments cards boxes can be found around all library sites along with a related "You Said … We Did …" campaign showing how comments have been taken onboard. Yet such feedback avenues usually inspire more complex suggestions or complaints, for instance, responses to our fines or collections management policies. Developing a Twitter presence has been beneficial since the site's immediacy, simplicity, and ease of access encourages people to share feedback that is seemingly more casual but no less important in terms of ensuring customer satisfaction. For instance, we have received tweets complaining that certain study spaces are cold—a problem that library staff may not otherwise have picked up on, especially if the issue occurs overnight. Although tweets won't get an official response until staff log-in the next morning, they are still likely to generate a public reaction much more quickly than email or paper-based feedback mechanisms. Social media, then, and Twitter in particular—which has proven more active and engaging than the library Facebook page—are useful ways to support and to promote the roving agenda and to ensure continued connection in a 24/7 environment.

RECOGNITION AND FEEDBACK

It is now more than 5 years since we first began our roving journey, more than 3 years since the opening of the Forum, and more than 2 years since 24/7 access to the Forum Library was extended to cover 365 days a year. We are still far from arriving at our destination, but signs that we are on the right path have emerged, not only from customer survey responses but also from professional assessment results and institution-wide recognition schemes. From 2010 to 2012, we undertook a series of LibQUAL+ surveys to gain a better understanding of our customers' priorities and the extent to which we were meeting them. By the final year of the survey (2012), roving had become an ingrained operational element in Library Customer Services. So it is encouraging that survey responses for this year highlighted customer service as the area in which we most consistently exceeded customer expectations with "Library staff who instil confidence in users" emerging as the top result (University of Exeter, 2012a: pp. 1–2). These results cannot be taken uncritically, emphasizing by comparison the challenges we still face in satisfying other areas of user expectation, but our LibQUAL+ results certainly indicate the success of our roving model.

November 2011 saw Exeter's Academic Services awarded the prestigious Customer First Standard, with successful reaccreditation in November 2013. On both occasions, library colleagues were involved in the interview process, with evidence of our roving training and marketing activities included in the portfolio of documents submitted for assessment. Of course, the final achievement recognizes the combined efforts of staff from across Academic Services, but it has been encouraging to note how the aims of our roving campaign mirror the three key milestones of the Customer First Standard: "building customer relationships, maximizing market awareness and developing your people" (Customer First, 2013).

Also in 2011, Library Customer Services were honored as "Outstanding Team of the Year" at the University's inaugural Professional Services Recognition awards ceremony. This accolade recognized the wide variety of efforts made by library staff to provide excellent services throughout the disruptive period of the Forum development. Yet coming within that particularly challenging first year of our roving initiative, it also sent a clear and encouraging signal: by coming out from behind the desk we had increased our visibility, not only to our students but to colleagues elsewhere in the university. A key aspect of good customer service, we have learned, is not only delivering excellent services but also ensuring our community *knows* that we deliver them. It is not too far-fetched to surmise that cementing roving as part of our library culture has contributed to the subsequent nominations achieved by our team at this annual recognition ceremony. In 2012, we were nominated for "Outstanding Customer Service," while in 2013 we were finalists in the "Outstanding Value for Money" category for our self-service locker key project. This is a joint initiative with Exeter IT that enabled the keys to lockers containing slim-line laptops to be self-issued and returned via the library using specially designed RFID key fobs. While extremely popular, locker checkouts are among the more complicated of library self-service facilities. Explaining and demonstrating the locker key scheme is therefore an ongoing priority for rovers and a vivid demonstration of the "teach a man to fish" principle: taking the time to help new students understand our rules and master this process early ensures this facility is available for them 24/7 for the rest of their university careers.

ONGOING CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS

In March 2013, supervisors in Library Customer Services conducted a roving review, calling a meeting of all information assistants, designed to provide a "safe" forum for them to share their experiences of what was and wasn't working. During this meeting, staff compiled a list of how roving benefits both customers and colleagues:

- Targeting customers who look lost or in need of help;
- Reducing inquiries at the desk;
- Helping staff learn library orientation;
- Providing a visual presence to manage noise and behavior;
- Monitoring usage of our space and resources;
- Noting unused study seats and directing customers to them;
- Tidying as we go;
- Checking regularly that equipment is working and reporting it if not;
- More rapidly identifying and reporting building and equipment faults;
- Customers who may not bother to queue at the desk will ask rovers for assistance;
- Students are more willing to ask for help if they see us actively helping others;
- Empowering our users so they can become more confident and self-sufficient;
- Observing how people are using the library at different times lets us plan future improvements more effectively.

Now reproduced in every copy of our roving training handbook, these points demonstrate just how important an aspect of our work culture and customer service ethos the practice has become. But information assistants also used the meeting to air some concerns. One notable issue that arose was that of confidence in our policies. Information assistants understood the importance of being visible around the library to help enforce our behavior rules, but many of them admitted to a lack of confidence in the rules themselves. The expectations around noise in our silent and group work rooms were clear enough, but what about the rest of the library?

What are the practical differences between a "silent" space and a "quiet" one—and at what point should staff intervene to enforce them? These questions inspired an important new project for library supervisors during the summer of 2013: first to assess and clarify our expectations around behavior in each of our different library spaces, then to ensure that this information was clearly communicated to colleagues and customers alike, work culminating in the creation of an entirely new section of the library website, focused on behavior. Once again roving and library publicity would valuably intersect.

What is the most valuable lesson we have learned since we first emerged, nervously, from behind the issue desk in the autumn of 2010? The answer may just lie in the kind of intensely practical questions that were aired at the roving review meeting. Implementing a roving model creates many challenges, particularly in terms of staffing, and during times when sickness and annual leave absences coincide it has not been easy to maintain a mobile presence as well as covering the reception desk. Yet roving and its associated "think 24/7" philosophy have proved invaluable strategies in the Exeter mission to exceed customer expectations. There is always more to be done toward this goal, but—perhaps most importantly of all—our roving activities have helped us learn how to learn. That is to say, by truly inhabiting our library spaces and focusing on the facilities from a user's perspective first, roving has helped us assess practically issues like the functional difference between "quiet" and "silent" spaces and their relative popularity. These may seem like basic distinctions, but their impact on customer satisfaction can be huge. Sometimes the right questions need to be asked before the right solutions can be implemented. I believe roving has an ongoing role to play in helping Exeter staff to formulate the questions, and hopefully also develop the answers that will help our library spaces to be used to their full potential, 24 hours a day.

CHAPTER 5

Customer Service at Victoria University, St. Albans Campus Library

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CUSTOMER SERVICE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

In my current position as Campus Services Librarian at Victoria University Library, I am responsible for a team of front-line services staff consisting of reference librarians, library technicians, library officers, and library assistants. I have spent the last 20 years working in customer services in academic libraries in Australia and the United Kingdom on the service desk, on the reference desk, as a librarian, as a supervisor, and as a service manager. Prior to working for Victoria University, I was responsible for coordinating the IT and library helpdesk at the University of Central Lancashire.

Before working in libraries, I spent some time as a student working as a checkout operator in a supermarket. I learned very early on that every customer is different. Standard generalizations just don't work, people can have good days and bad days. The same customer may buy a few things on one day and stop for a chat, the next day they might be in a rush and buying a full week's worth of groceries. Customer loyalty is also determined by the individual; loyalty may be defined by convenience, by brand loyalty, or just because the staff at a particular store are always friendly.

In academic libraries, our clientele is similarly diverse. We have staff and students who are with us for the long haul, those who started as undergraduates, continued to postgraduate study, and are now employed by the university. We have sessional staff and students on short courses who may only visit the library once or twice. We have students who go from course to course, who epitomize the idea of lifelong learning. We have researchers who feel that the library is their second home and students who dash in and out so quickly that you scarcely recognize their presence.

At the core of it, people are social animals with the visceral need to "connect" with other people; it is part of our makeup and the reason why

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"fake" customer service such as the call centers who contact us during our downtime, the weekends, and early evening, really rub us all the wrong way. It is the reason that menu-driven phone systems and hold messages stating "your call is really important to us" make us want to throw the phone against a hard surface, and the reason that the poor customer service person who eventually answers the phone spends half their time apologizing for the delay and trying to calm the caller down.

Many companies use people to advertise their product, or to create a "face" to market their brand. This is an attempt to connect with their market, to engage the client by providing a sense of the type of person who would buy, use, eat, drink, and invest in this particular product. The most successful marketing campaigns all have an identifiable face, voice, or image associated with them. The more a brand connects with the audience, the more successful it is.

It is no accident that several GPS systems, and applications such as Apple's Siri, all have distinctive voices with personality. The intention is to connect with the user on a basic level, to initiate trust and buy-in.

The Feel Good Factor Really Does Count

We also know that we also have a significant number of clients who never visit the physical library space at all. Some of these are distance learners, including our international students, but others appear to be content with the information they are finding online and access to the e-resources that we subscribe to.

As funding for physical resources is reduced in favor of e-resources, and circulation statistics and library gate counts continue to decline, we are facing the inevitable reduction of *traditiona*l front-line customer services. The challenge is to adapt to the online environment, to utilize the tools available to us, and to continue to provide the high level of customer service that our reputation is built on.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Victoria University is one of Australia's new breed of universities, splitting service provision between vocational education and higher education, and supporting the tertiary education needs of the western suburbs and outlying areas of Melbourne.

We do not have the wealth of tradition or prestige of some of the more established universities; we're the "little Aussie battler" in the sector, a little like our AFL partners, the Western Bulldogs. Our students are also battlers, coming from diverse and predominantly underprivileged backgrounds, or choosing courses which are aligned with health and community services. Our students are hard workers, trying to make life better for themselves and their families.

The western suburbs of Melbourne are historically blue-collar areas. As housing has tended to be more affordable to the west and north of Melbourne, and essential community services have been established, this has attracted many new settlers to the area. A high proportion of our students come from non-English-speaking backgrounds, many are the first in their family to reach tertiary education, and most are on a steep learning curve.

We do have high achievers among our student cohort, researchers who have opted to specialize in areas with direct relevance to the social conditions of the western suburbs, academics who are attached to the caring professions and areas of scientific research which provide direct benefit to the local community.

As a library we currently provide service to nine VU campuses with approximately 48,200 students and 2,760 staff. We also provide access to online resources to 17 offshore sites; as the focus of our collection development has shifted from physical resources to e-books and e-resources, our service delivery has also refocused toward providing an online presence and improving online service delivery.

In our campus libraries, the model is that of a library and learning commons incorporating library, IT, careers, and learning support services. The emphasis is on enhancing the student experience by providing study spaces which encourage collaborative learning. The challenge is to ensure that our online services complement our face-to-face service in order that our library clients are provided with high-quality customer service in whatever format they choose.

VU FOCUS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE, DRIVERS, ETC.

Victoria University was founded in 1916, and as an organization we are proud of our history, which is grounded in the postwar programs retraining returned servicemen. Currently, we continue this tradition by providing access to university education to those who would not normally consider university study. As a university, we feel that we are "inclusive" rather than "exclusive," and our role is to help our students to recognize and make the most of their potential.

VU recognizes that our students require additional support to make them university ready and, eventually, employment ready; therefore resources have been diverted to support various student mentoring schemes and study support in the key skills areas of mathematics and writing.

As the library building is a shared space for the learning commons, our librarians and service desk staff work with staff from other services in the university, principally IT and the learning development unit. Our librarians share their expertise in searching databases and referencing, and work with our academic staff in order to ensure that research skills are embedded into the curriculum.

LIBRARY STRUCTURE

We have recently restructured VU library services in order to ensure that the library is equipped to support the strategic goals of the University. We are headed by our university librarian and two associate librarians who head the strategic arms of the library, which are Scholarly Information Services (SIS) and Information Resources, Systems and Infrastructure (IRSI).

The SIS team are defined as "college facing" and consist of college librarians and librarians who are responsible for ensuring that the library meets the needs of our academic staff and colleges. The SIS team directly support the colleges of Arts, Education, Business, Engineering and Science, Health and Biomedicine, Law and Justice, and Sports and Exercise Science.

The SIS team also supports our Trades College and VU College, which provide training for apprentices as well as bridging courses and pathways into higher education.

The IRSI team is responsible for ensuring that our library resources meet the needs of our library users. IRSI includes cataloging, acquisitions, and library systems but also incorporates areas of policy and governance such as copyright and quality assurance.

In addition to SIS and IRSI, we also have three managers reporting directly to the university librarian who are in charge of service delivery at our nine campus libraries. Customer service staff working on the service desk at the campus libraries report to the university librarian via their supervisors and campus managers.

Front-line customer services within the library and learning commons are comprised of three main groups, library staff (library assistants, library officers, and librarians), student assistants employed by the library and IT, and peer support mentors including rovers.

OUR LIBRARIES

Victoria University's nine campuses are located across Melbourne's western suburbs and the city center, and we have a library presence on each campus, ranging from campus libraries with substantial collections to learning spaces consisting of workstations with network access and printing/photocopying facilities.

We also offer online and off-site Victoria University courses which are delivered by several partner organizations. Two of the largest affiliates are Sunway University College in Malaysia and Liaoning University in China.

Footscray Park

The Footscray Park campus on Ballarat Road, Footscray, is the university's primary campus. It occupies a 7-ha site overlooking Flemington Racecourse and the Maribyrnong River. A $68.5 million sport and learning precinct, including sport and exercise science research labs, was completed in early 2011. The campus also has a 25-m swimming pool and childcare center.

As Victoria University's primary campus, Footscray Park is also our administrative hub and home to our library management team and SIS team. It is also our busiest campus, covering a broad range of higher education courses. Customer service at Footscray Park emphasizes self-service, an approach which works due to the particular student cohort at that campus. Footscray Park specializes in arts, engineering, and sport and exercise science.

St. Albans

The St. Albans campus on McKecknie Street, St. Albans, is the university's health and education hub, with a focus on psychology, nursing, arts, paramedicine, and biomedical science. It is set on 32 ha of native grasslands and sugar gums. The new St. Albans Health and Fitness Centre was opened in 2013.

Courses taught at St. Albans are a mixture of higher education and TAFE, specializing in health sciences and education, but we also have arts and media. The customer service culture at St. Albans is a mixture of self-service and hand-holding, as we have such a broad range of students. Whereas Footscray Park and our city campuses have an average age range of 18–25 for their student cohort, our students range from 16 to 60+. The courses taught at St. Albans lean heavily toward the caring professions of nursing and education; therefore, our students appear to be inclined to seek assistance from staff rather than consult the library website.

Footscray Nicholson

The Footscray Nicholson campus is in central Footscray, on the corner of Nicholson and Buckley Streets. It delivers TAFE, VCE, and short courses. It has a new learning commons offering a conglomeration of educational services.

As courses at Footscray Nicholson are primarily TAFE and short courses, the mode of customer service employed is bucketloads of encouragement. As the student cohort tends toward the younger end of the spectrum, we are dealing with a great deal of potential. It is highly possible that students undertaking VCE and TAFE certificates may elect to progress to higher education diploma and degree courses. The learning commons at Footscray Nicholson is geared toward providing students with the services that they require now and also those that they may need in the future.

City Flinders

City Flinders is situated in two buildings at 300 Flinders Street and 301 Flinders Lane in central Melbourne. The Flinders Lane building focuses on osteopathy and English language training. The 19-story Flinders Street building overlooks Melbourne's historic Flinders Street Station, the Yarra River, and the Southbank precinct. Many of VU's courses in graphic design, visual art, multimedia, and postgraduate business courses are taught at this campus. The Flinders Street building also contains convention facilities.

City Flinders is one of our busiest campuses with a high proportion of international students studying business and accounting. The courses taught at City Flinders are HE undergraduate and postgraduate business and media studies. The customer service model at City Flinders differs from some of our other campuses as they have a small staff of professionals who work closely with student rovers. Of all of our campuses, City Flinders has the most successful rover program. A higher number of students, city location, small number of professional staff, and a floor plan which encourages roving are factors which keep the rovers "roving."

City Queen

The City Queen campus occupies two heritage buildings in the heart of Melbourne's legal precinct; 295 Queen Street houses the university's

College of Law and Justice, the Law Library, and the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre. The building also contains two moot courts, computer laboratories, lecture theatres, and seminar rooms. Some of the university's business and law activities, including postgraduate business programs, undergraduate law, and continuing legal education, are housed at 283 Queen Street.

Customer service at the law library is determined by the close links that the staff in the library have to the law faculty and chancellery. The staff working in the law library have developed a strong understanding and professional knowledge of the services required by VU's law students and the law faculty. Self-service is encouraged, but staff are readily available if assistance is required.

Werribee

The Werribee campus is located in the Werribee agricultural research/tertiary education precinct in two diagonally adjacent sections spread over 16 ha. It includes trades training; facilities for water, food, and fire safety research; and an animal care and breeding facility.

The main clientele at Werribee has traditionally been a mix of TAFE and postgraduate research students; therefore, customer service staff at Werribee have the broadest range of client expectations to deal with.

Sunshine

The Sunshine campus is located on Ballarat Road, Sunshine, and offers TAFE courses, focusing mainly on business and construction. The $44 million Sunshine Construction Futures building was opened in 2013 for building and construction training. The campus also contains a convention center with a 200-seat auditorium.

As Sunshine is a TAFE campus, the customer service staff in the library play an active part in ensuring that the students know how to find the standards, policies, and procedures which are pertinent to their course and to their future employment.

LIBRARY FOCUS: WHAT DOES CUSTOMER SERVICE MEAN TO US AS A SERVICE

On the face of it, customer service means everything to us as all of the work that we do within the library is geared toward customer satisfaction. We purchase library resources with the needs of our clientele in mind, we organize our spaces in order to satisfy the perceived needs of our students, and we undertake customer service training in order to meet the needs of our clients.

As individuals we do our utmost to make sure the people that we interact with, whether on the phone, at the service desk, or via email, are happy with the service that we provide. We listen to what they have to say, address their concerns, make sure that we are professional and courteous, and make sure that the information provided is correct. As far as we are concerned, our clients are more than satisfied with the service that we provide. So why do students still complain about library services?

We know that a significant proportion of the library's clientele never make contact with the library until they believe they have cause for complaint. The issue for us is that 9 times out of 10 we could have sorted out the problem immediately if only we'd known.

Our contact details are posted prominently on our webpage, our signage, on publicity material such as bookmarks and newsletters, and within each e-mail sent out to our clients. We still have people out there who will never think to make contact.

What can we do to resolve this issue? The way forward, I believe, is to win their hearts and minds, and we need to start with orientation. We need to make the library and library staff the "go to people" for the university; we need to make it known that even if we don't know the answer straight away, we'll find it for you.

We also need to make the library the knowledge hub of the university, not just storage for books. The library needs to be a place to find the information you need, and the staff need to be knowledgeable and approachable. They also need to be easy to find.

We have retained our service desk as it was important to retain a point of contact and somewhere for clients to go in order to seek assistance. There is nothing more annoying than to have to ask someone to point out a staff member to you when you only want to ask a quick question.

Libraries have an interesting part to play in supporting the needs of university staff and students. As we have the longest opening hours of any university service, we become a one-stop shop for advice, counseling, and general guidance. As more services become accessible online, library staff are becoming more involved in activities outside of the library. Library and research skills are being embedded in HE courses and are taught by library staff, or are developed with the input of library staff.

ST. ALBANS CAMPUS FOCUS: WHAT DOES CUSTOMER SERVICE MEAN TO OUR STAFF?

I'm concentrating on the St. Albans campus for this case study, partly because it is the campus that I am most familiar with, but mostly because we have a wide range of students studying both TAFE and HE courses, undergraduates and postgraduate research as well.

As we cater to such a wide range of students, our customer service staff are highly skilled at assessing the experience level of each student. Our preference is to encourage as many of our clients as possible to use self-service options as this allows us to concentrate on those who really need our help.

The last is also a key point as, increasingly, there is a fine line between the services that the library provides and those that are provided by other student services such as TLS.

We also have an established learning commons, offering services from IT, Careers, and teaching and learning. We have been in operation as a learning commons at St. Albans since 2007 and are justifiably proud of the student spaces that have been created within the library building. Our students use our spaces to work together on collaborative projects, to socialize, to share knowledge, and to find a quiet place for independent study.

We have worked hard to create spaces that are accessible, practical, and comfortable, but also retain the essential feeling of a library. Our students still feel that a library is a place to study and absorb knowledge. Our physical collection, although diminishing rapidly, provides an ambience that is missing from other student spaces throughout the university.

To the staff at St. Albans, "customer service" means that we treat everyone as an individual but make sure that, in order to ensure equity, we follow our policies and procedures to the best of our ability. At times this can be a bit of a balancing act, and we spend a lot of time negotiating the invariable gray areas between customer expectations and service delivery.

As our team is specifically responsible for VU Library's infringement processes, we also deal with some of the more difficult areas of our service, which includes dealing with clients who owe us money and those that have lost or damaged library resources. All our clients are treated with equity, and we will do all that we can to make sure that the infringement process is painless as possible. Library fines are not a money-making exercise, and most of our students understand that we do need to exact penalties to make sure that library items are returned to us. Our staff are, however, sympathetic to hardship and we do waive penalties on a case-by-case basis.

Due to our hours of operation, particularly during the evenings and weekends, our staff are often the only university staff available to answer client inquiries. If we can answer a question, we will; if not we will make every effort to find the answer. Our staff have become experts in searching the VU website for that difficult to find information and the "right person" or the "right service" to refer our students to. Our staff also act as de facto counselors and general troubleshooters and, particularly during orientation for new students, probably spend as much time answering general inquiries on behalf of other VU services as they do on handling questions related to library resources.

We used to compile statistics on all inquiries taken at the library service desks, including referrals, but this practice has been subsumed by a general move toward corporate citizenship. In terms of library customer service, we feel that it is our responsibility to our employer and our clientele to minimize the need for referral as much as possible. We have gradually become less library-centric and more student-centric in our approach, and our clients appreciate our efforts in this area.

As a learning commons we already have Careers, IT, TLS, and VU College working within the library building. It is highly likely that we will continue to bring additional services into the learning commons in order to provide a one-stop shop for our staff and students.

We have already proven that our staff are highly adaptable and that they are excellent corporate citizens. Traditional library services are being replaced by a more generalized approach to university services; therefore, our staff know that they will need to continue to adapt, learn, and develop new skills in order to survive. As experts in customer service, information retrieval, and access to knowledge, we are ideally placed to promote ourselves as a highly valuable resource. The only trouble is that, as a profession, we are not known for our abilities in self-promotion; this is one of the reasons that many of us have chosen to work in libraries.

The swift uptake of e-resources, the continually diminishing physical collection, and the inevitable shift toward flexible modes of education and e-learning have meant that we have all needed to evaluate the work that we do. We know that the work that we do has value; we just need to make sure that everyone else knows that as well.

HOW DO WE RECRUIT FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE?

The position descriptions that we use are generic; therefore, the selection criteria that we use need to ensure that we end up with customer service staff who have the skill set that we require and the personal qualities to make them an ambassador for library services.

What we are looking for is service desk staff who are approachable, knowledgeable about library resources (increasingly online, web-based), calm under pressure, able to impart information clearly and concisely, conscious that they are working in a team, able to work independently, able to multitask and flexible in their approach, great active listeners, and able to be firm but fair.

One of the questions that we should be asking when interviewing potential customer service staff is whether or not they are approached for help outside of work, if random strangers come up to them when they are shopping, assuming that they work in the shop. I just took a straw poll with my customer service staff and they all said, "Yes, happens to me all the time!"

The key to customer service is approachability; we can teach the hard skills, but it is that indefinable quality that shouts out "I'm here to help!" that we are really looking for.

We can teach people active listening skills, how to conduct a reference interview and "customer service" skills such as intercultural communication techniques, handling aggression, and dealing with difficult customers; however, if our clients will not approach our staff for assistance then all this training is put to waste.

The position descriptions for our HEW 4 include the following selection criteria:

1. Knowledge or Training Equivalent to: Completion of an associate's diploma level qualification with relevant work-related experience, or a certificate level qualification with post-certificate relevant work, or completion of a post–trades certificate, or advanced certificate and extensive relevant experience and on-the-job training, or an equivalent combination of relevant experience and/or education/training.
2. Demonstrated library experience in assisting students and staff with basic reference and information queries, including lending services, ITS support, and basic troubleshooting.
3. Knowledge and experience in using library management systems and library classification schemes.
4. Well-developed communication and interpersonal skills, including the ability to interact effectively with a diverse range of staff and students while maintaining confidentiality.
5. Demonstrated ability to work cooperatively and effectively as part of a team, together with the capability to work alone/independently and meet the position objectives.

6. Demonstrated commitment and capacity to deliver quality client/customer service.
7. Demonstrated ability in the exercise of initiative, judgment, and decision making.
8. Demonstrated ability to organize and prioritize workload in a busy/demanding environment and complete work tasks within specified timeframes.
9. Proficiency in using MS Suite, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Outlook, together with the skill base to work with relevant university systems and databases, e.g., VU Connect, Staff Connect.
10. Demonstrated capacity to understand and comply with employer policy and practices in all aspects of work and conduct, including OHS and anti-discrimination responsibilities and complete/attend relevant training.
11. Willingness to commit to the VU values and behaviors:
    a. Values—access, excellence, respect
    b. Behaviors—engagement, collegiality, courage

HOW DO WE TRAIN STAFF?

Staff training is a combination of centralized orientation, on-the-job training, including shadowing more experienced colleagues, and formal staff development.

In addition to standard customer service skills, the primary focus is on diversity and cultural awareness. The wide variety of cultural backgrounds within our student population means that our staff are continually walking a fine line between library policies and procedures and student expectations. Some cultures have particular difficulties in dealing with authority figures; therefore, our staff need to be able to discuss issues about overdue books with a great deal of sensitivity.

Some of our staff are also trained in mental health first aid, especially in relation to youth mental health. As a high proportion of our students do not have access to study support at home, and university education is unfamiliar territory, we find that a friendly face at the library service desk does make a difference.

As our communication with clients can be face-to-face, over the telephone, or increasingly via email, we do concentrate on developing communication skills. This is particularly important when dealing with students whose first language is not English. Clear, concise explanations and a professional approach are what we hope to achieve.

The priority is always customer service. In some cases this means that we are looking out for the best interests of the library clientele as a whole. This means that it is not necessarily "the customer is always right" but rather "what would a reasonable person expect to happen" given this scenario.

STUDENT MENTORS: ROVERS, STUDENT ASSISTANTS, RESEARCH AMBASSADORS, AND WRITING SPACE MENTORS

The library, and our learning commons partners in Teaching and Learning Services, has become a primary employer for VU students. The TLS student rover program began in 2007 and was swiftly following by the library's student assistant program. The rovers are defined as experienced students who provide a point of contact for advice, assistance with using the VU network, printing, and tips on study techniques and referencing. Writing Space mentors are experienced students with particular skills as writers and as such offer students assistance with their writing.

Student assistants are employed by the library during extended opening hours in order to assist students working during study hall conditions. Student assistants help with photocopying and scanning, show students how to use our self-service checkout and returns, and assist with using the library catalog. As experienced students they can also assist students with other VU services including timetables, the student portal, and the email system.

The student assistants are the only student employees directly employed by the library. The rovers are employed and managed by TLS, the research ambassadors are employed by the Research Office and supervised by the research librarian, and the Writing Space mentors are employed and managed by VU College.

The positives of these rather complex arrangements are that the library has been able to establish successful working relationships with our learning commons partners and also that we have many extra bodies helping our students to make the most of their learning. The negatives are that the rovers, Writing Space mentors, and research ambassadors are not employed by us, but as they are based in the library our clients think that they are library staff. This means that "the library" is at fault if the service offered is deficient in any way. As the rovers, Writing Space mentors, and research ambassadors are only available during term time and their contact hours are limited, the library tends to receive complaints from students who feel that they are disadvantaged by these arrangements.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN WE ARE GETTING IT RIGHT?

We have just completed our latest library client survey, which is conducted by a local (Australian!) company called InSyncSurveys. The survey is very similar to LibQual and asks our clients a series of questions covering our key service areas, i.e., staffing, resources, facilities, environment, communication. Each question asks clients to rank their expectations against our perceived performance; the results are then assessed by InSync and a report is compiled. Areas which are identified as demonstrating a clear gap between expectation and performance become prioritized as areas for improvement. We use InSync as they also poll our direct competitors and have a number of TAFE and HE libraries in their database, which means that we can tell how we are doing within the sector.

We are particularly proud of our performance in customer service, and the survey responses indicate that our clients believe that our staff are approachable, knowledgeable, and treat clients equitably. We can always do better, though!

We know that we are getting it right when our library clients are happy to see us, are prepared to approach our staff for help, and are willing to contact us when things do go wrong. We can't afford to rest on our laurels, though; as each new batch of students arrives we need to continue to promote our services and let our clientele know exactly what we can do for them.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT SO FAR?

We've learned that it is not wise to make assumptions about user behavior, that some people can take things a little too literally, that there is no such thing as one solution fits all when it comes to customer service. I've also learned that if an issue is reported by one person, chances are that it is an issue experienced by many others and that it is better to act on the first report rather than adopt a wait-and-see attitude.

As far as we are concerned, customer service is as much about providing a suitable learning environment in our campus libraries as providing access to information. Our campus libraries have become the social hub of the university, and as we begin to incorporate additional services such as cafés, this trend is set to continue. Our clients enjoy the environment that we can provide; our physical collection acts as a reminder that libraries provide access to information and are a repository of knowledge. For some of our students the books on our library shelves act as inspiration as they feel that one day their own research may be published. For others, the ambience is enough, along with the opportunity to study and conduct their research in relative peace.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS?

As our campus libraries have developed and areas have been repurposed, quiet study spaces have given way to collaborative learning areas and vice versa. This is a particular issue at our City and Footscray campuses, where a greater concentration of student numbers leads to a constant battle for space. One of the few negatives to the learning commons model is that the collaborative learning environment does lead to increased noise. Drawing a balance between the needs of our various cohorts of students can be difficult at times, especially as requirements change during the academic year.

We find that our students will move furniture, repurpose rooms, and create collaborative areas according to specific needs. As social networking has taken off, our students also set up their own study groups and send out invitations, which can result in some interesting situations.

Our study rooms have been created to cater for groups of six … maximum. Recently, though, we have found groups of 12 and on one occasion 20 crammed into the rooms. Apparently invitations had been sent out and retweeted, so the organizers had no idea of numbers until people started to arrive.

If we could start from scratch, we would be looking at soundproofed study rooms which could be designated quiet study or group discussion areas depending on the time of year. This would allow us to flip the open access areas to group discussion or quiet study depending on student demand.

The furniture would all be modular and on wheels, easily moved between areas. We would also have plenty of movable screens and whiteboards so that study spaces could be created, resized, or repurposed as required.

We have already started to do this with our more recent furniture purchases, and the concept has worked well with our students. As funding becomes available we will continue this process.

Our students feel that the library spaces are theirs and, for the most part, respect the environment that has been created for them. We do have some noise issues at St. Albans at certain times of the year, but generally speaking it is due to lively debate and our students forgetting where they are. The old library "shh" has been taken over by the students themselves, and they have become a self-regulating bunch.

The constant drive to increase study spaces within our libraries has meant that we are now looking outside our library walls in order to meet student needs. Existing Wi-Fi hotspots are being upgraded to increase coverage and provide additional connections. As wireless access improves, the potential to utilize our exterior spaces and courtyards becomes a practical consideration. Outdoor seating, shade sails, and power points mean that al fresco study areas would become a real alternative for our student cohort.

So where do we go from here? We need to continue to promote our services, promote ourselves as customer service experts, use all of our resources, skills, and knowledge to prove that libraries, librarians, and librarianship still have relevance in a digital world.

Since completing the above case study in 2013 much has changed at Victoria University. Funding cuts to the TAFE and VE sector by both the Federal and State Government meant that the university needed to re-evaluate the courses that we offer and reduce costs across the board. The number of enrolled TAFE students dropped by about two thirds but we have increased our student numbers in HE courses and our intake of international students.

Both academic and professional services have been involved in an organisational reform process and, as a result, we have streamlined our service model. We are happy to say that our commitment to customer service and student satisfaction has not wavered. We are actively involved in student engagement and continue to broaden our outlook, working closely with other university services, to improve the student experience at Victoria University.

As our staffing levels decrease we have found that we are constantly streamlining our services and procedures in order that we can continue to meet the service needs of our students. Our team at St Albans are now rostered to work across three campuses, St Albans, Werribee and Sunshine. New skills have been learnt, our existing customer service models have been adjusted to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students, and our staff have, on the whole, proven themselves to be highly adaptable and willing to take on new challenges.

The past few years have not been easy but what we've managed to do is to come through with our core values intact. We are now providing customer service via online chat, as well as email, phone and face to face, and we hope that all of our students feel that they can ask us for help and know that are part of the greater VU community no matter where they are.

CHAPTER 6

Innovations in User Services at Sabancı University Information Center

Mine Akkurt
Information Center, Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey

There are 193 universities in Turkey, and approximately more than half of these universities are private foundations as of 2015 (Council of Higher Education, 2015). Both state and foundation universities are ruled by the Turkish Council of Higher Education, private foundations having gained the right to establish universities in 1984. More initiatives have been taken to form international and global educational and research networks by private universities.

English is the language of instruction in most private universities. Almost all the private universities have a year of English instruction for the first year, in cases where the students' level of English is insufficient. Annual fees for private universities are typically between US$7,000 and US$20,000.

ABOUT SABANCI UNIVERSITY

Sabancı University (SU) is a nonprofit private research institution. SU was founded in İstanbul by Sabancı Holding, one of the two largest international industrial and financial companies in Turkey. Since its first academic year in 1999, the university has attempted to establish itself as a world-class institution. SU meets the demands of the twenty-first century and offers an interdisciplinary education.

SU's main distinction is the unique educational system. The academic programs at SU are interdisciplinary. The educational system of the university is based on the Common Foundations Development Year, which all students must complete regardless of their subsequent program choices. During this year, students gain critical thinking skills, and develop an interdisciplinary approach and a foundation of knowledge.

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There are three faculties at SU: the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences (FENS), the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), and the Sabancı School of Management. All faculties offer undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs.

FENS offers undergraduate programs in biological sciences and bioengineering, computer science and engineering, electronic engineering, manufacturing systems engineering, materials science and engineering, mechatronics engineering, chemistry, mathematics, and physics and graduate programs in biological sciences and bioengineering, computer science and engineering, electronic engineering, industrial engineering, materials science and engineering, mathematics, mechatronics, physics, energy technologies and management, information technology, and nanotechnology.

The programs of FASS include cultural studies, economics, international studies, social and political sciences, visual arts and communication design, art theory and criticism, philosophy, and psychology at the undergraduate level, in addition to graduate programs in conflict analysis and resolution, cultural studies, economics, European studies, history, political science, public policy, Turkish studies, and visual arts and communication design.

The Sabancı School of Management offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate degrees in management and executive programs at the graduate level in management and finance. Starting with the 2011 to 2012 academic year, Sabancı School launched its MBA program/MIT Sloan MSMS dual degree program. Sabancı School and MIT-Zaragoza Logistics Center offer a dual degree option where candidates can earn a Sabancı MBA degree and a Zaragoza master of engineering degree (ZLOG) in logistics and supply chain management in 2 years. Sabancı University School of Management is also accredited by AACSB International.

The Sabancı University Nanotechnology Research and Application Center (SUNUM) was developed with approximately €25 million provided by the State Planning Organization and Sabancı Foundation and became operational in July 2011. The Center provides valuable capabilities in addition to the existing research infrastructure of the FENS of the university.

The "Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index" is a measurement tool that has been prepared by the leadership of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK). In 2012, SU ranked first among the most entrepreneurial and innovative universities in Turkey. SU was followed by Middle East Technical University, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Özyeğin University, and Istanbul Technical

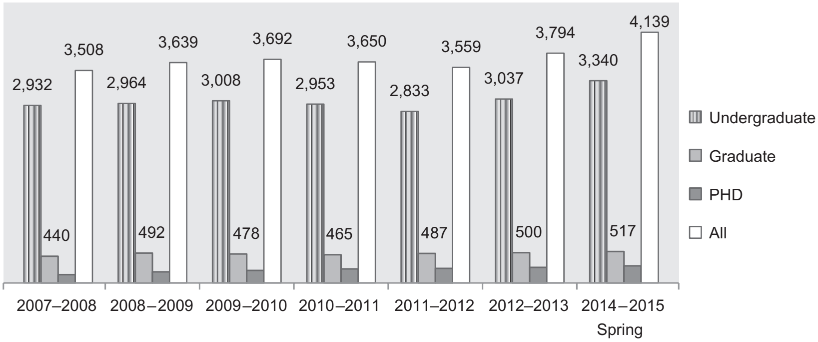

Figure 6.1 Number of SU students by year.

University (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, 2013). In 2013, when compared to the results of the previous year, SU had increased its score by 1.8 points to the score of 85.8. Sabancı University is the winner of the 2015 Index with 88.40 points, and had topped the inaugural index revealed in 2012.

SU entered the Times Higher Education BRICS and Emerging Economies Rankings in 15th place, and was among a handful of Turkish universities in the top 100. In October 2014, SU had entered the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings in 182nd position, becoming the Turkish university with the highest position upon first entry to the rankings, and was the only private Turkish university among the top 200 universities of the world. Sabancı University ranked 13th worldwide and 1st in Turkey on the Times Higher Education (THE) "100 Under 50" Rankings'.

Intellectual migration has reversed, with the return of 117 Turkish academics to Turkey up to this point in time, with 10 of those returning to SU. Eighty-six percent of the 177 full-time faculty members of SU have completed their postgraduate studies and worked in various universities and institutions abroad, returning to Turkey specifically to work at SU. As such, the university is converting intellectual migration to intellectual magnification (Figure 6.1).

ABOUT THE INFORMATION CENTER

The Information Center (IC) supports the education and research programs of SU. The aim of the IC is to meet the information and documentation needs of all users, while also contributing to the accumulation of knowledge on a national and international scale.

The service that the IC gives is based on access to information rather than having a collection of millions of items on the shelves. We are trying to keep the most recent resources in our collection.

With the help of our collections, which provide contemporary resources to our users, according to SciVal, which is a comparison of research networking tools and research profiling systems, SU is ranked in first place in state of the art, which relates to the recency of the work cited by articles from SU, relative to the average recency for all institutions in Turkey.

The IC is 9,165 m^2 in area with a large dome covering the building. The dome is intended as a reflection of Ottoman architecture. The IC has a seating capacity of 600 and a shelving capacity of 300,000 volumes.

There are five group study rooms, four group multimedia rooms, two projection rooms, two staff meeting rooms, and 118 electronically equipped individual working carrels in the IC. The users may access the Internet via wireless connection, as is the case throughout the campus. There are 480 Internet connection ports and as well as search terminals in the IC.

Including one director and two managers (User Services, and Collection and Information Access Systems), six senior librarians, four specialists, three librarians, six officers, and six support officers, there are a total of 28 staff in the IC (SU). I have been a member of the Reference Team as a reference specialist since 2010. I graduated from İstanbul University, Documentation and Information Department, in 2000. In the same year, I started to work in Koç University Suna Kıraç Library. In 2005, I received my MA degree from İstanbul University, Information and Documentation Management Department. In 2007, I moved to the United States and worked in San Mateo Public Library as a volunteer. In July 2009, I came back to Turkey and began work in SU Information Center as a reference specialist. Today I am responsible for circulation, the reserve collection, collection maintenance, and am also a member of the Reference Team.

INTRODUCTION

The study habits of graduate and undergraduate students have been changing (Eisner, 2004) according to curriculum, technology, and social behavior since the 1990s (Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999). Students have more project-based research to do, plus studying for final and mid-term exams as a group, and during these sessions there can be a noisy environment. As a result, university buildings that were built in the 1990s may not be fully effective for today's university education needs. Library buildings have also seen great change according to resources, users' needs, and environmental needs. To keep up to date, libraries must change accordingly. Also, we can say that Generation X was quieter in the libraries in comparison to Generation Y.

We needed to support the users who need to study as a group. The IC has five group study and four group multimedia rooms, as well as 15 individual multimedia carrels which can be booked through a self-service online booking system. Group study and multimedia rooms are suitable for up to eight people at the same time. There are TVs, video/DVD players, and whiteboards in each group multimedia room. Over time, individual carrels were added and today there are 68 individual study carrels.

The rules for room booking are: the maximum period for reserving a room is 4 h. One user can make two reservations per day at most. After 15 min delay, bookings are canceled automatically and there must be at least 15 min between reservations (Figures 6.2 and 6.3).

Figure 6.2 Group multimedia room.

Figure 6.3 Group study room.

ROOMS BOOKING SYSTEM

The demand for group study room use has grown over time. We therefore need to use a reservation system. For the sake of convenience it should be online and self-service.

The IC has been using an integrated library system (ILS), Innovative Interfaces, Inc.'s Millennium, since 2001. As a part of the ILS, the IC used the booking option for online reservation of the rooms and carrels. It worked in a compatible way with the system, and users could book the rooms with the same username and password that they use for their university email address. It worked fine until some problems were encountered that IC management has struggled to solve using the current booking system.

Eventually, IC management came up with various ideas in order to solve the problems and fulfill users' needs according to changing conditions. In this study, IC users' needs, the study room reservation form, and the solutions for these needs are examined.

NOTHING ENDURES BUT CHANGE. (HERACLITUS, 540 –480 BC) (FECHETE 2014)

Since the establishment of the campus, IC users' needs have changed. For instance, graduate and PhD student numbers have increased; however, the amenities offered have stayed the same. Additionally, students' midterm exam dates have been spread over various times rather than predetermined dates. Therefore, students who usually prefer to study in groups now spread the group study rooms occupancy rate throughout the year.

Due to the architectural design of the IC, noise can be amplified and cause a problem for those who need quiet for their studies. Since IC doesn't have complete silence zones, we needed to provide individual study areas as well as group study rooms.

There are a total of nine rooms. Three of these are in the right wing and the other three in the left wing on the second floor. Each has a seating capacity of 8 to 10 and a large table. Three of them have TVs and essential multimedia devices. Two other rooms are on the ground floor and one of them also has multimedia devices. The last one is on the first floor, with a seating capacity of 8 to 10 and a large table.

The IC used to use Millennium's booking option for online reservations; however, due to the increase in usage since 2010, and to meet the users' needs, management decided to cease using this option and started to search for available alternatives (Table 6.1).

Below are described the reasons (and the needs of the users) that caused the IC management to start to search for alternative room booking options.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Feedback from users is very important to improve all of our services. Our users can reach us in several ways. One of them is the "general questionnaire" that has been prepared by the university. The others include an annually prepared questionnaire; the "Submit Your Idea" function on our website and comments via emails; or writing a note to our suggestion box. These comments from our users help us to provide better services to them. Our users can send their feedback in the form of requests, comments, suggestions, complaints, or they can signal their satisfaction by

Table 6.1 Room bookings, 2011–2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014
January	474	447	520	503
February	76	141	211	236
March	478	471	779	713
April	356	349	568	574
May	500	496	844	539
June	256	265	240	263
July	136	141	208	257
August	127	130	298	316
September	58	83	119	299
October	397	316	484	582
November	450	797	922	995
December	459	811	773	1,022
Total	3,767	4,447	5,966	6,299

The increase in bookings can be seen monthly, starting from 2011.

sending an email to generic email addresses or by telephone. Any kind of feedback from our users is highly important in order to be more efficient in terms of our user services process. In response to the feedback that we receive, we make updates in our services, in the guidelines, and in our equipment. These requests are evaluated by the IC management and, if required, action is taken for a possible solution.

IC employees are also users of the IC and at specific times IC staff perform activities such as brainstorming, and thus are involved in the improvement efforts. During the brainstorming event, the IC staff comes together for one whole day and imagine new services and facilities. For this event there is no limit to the imagination. The event generates hundreds of ideas. At the end of the day it takes up to a week to sort and group them into possible and impossible ideas.

Examples of ideas that have been implemented include to have a self-check machine, to put a billboard to the service bus area to promote our resources, to put flowers in some corners of the IC, to invite a popular author or poet to the IC during the National Library Week, to prepare an online donation form, to modernize the chairs and lights on the desks for users, the necessity of wearing name tags all the time for both user services and technical services staff, the ability to loan current periodicals for a day, to have a suggestion box, to prepare a book collection and reading events for the kids of SU staff, to place lockers at the entrance for two-day loans, to prepare events together with student clubs such as a chess tournament with the IC chess team and SU Chess Club, and hosting an author with the Literature Club.

Some of the ideas that have not been accepted due to financial limits and because they run counter to the IC's mission are: to send reminder notices to users by SMS, to have a piano in the IC and have concerts, to have a banking POS system at the circulation desk in order for users to pay overdue fines, to have billiard and ping-pong tables, to loan reference items for a day, and to put an ATM at the front of the IC.

IMPROVING IDEAS COMES WITH ERASMUS

I had a chance to visit Exeter University Library within the Staff Training Program of Erasmus in July 2012. During that visit I examined lots of eye-opening ideas. One of them was using a QR code application on the shelves together with the printed books in order to make visible some of the e-books for users (Figure 6.4).

When I came back to Istanbul, I shared all of my Erasmus experiences with my colleagues. The QR code application inspired us to promote our e-book collection. We have a shelf which we were using for newly added books or for exhibitions of specific subject-matter books. Today we use half of this shelf to promote our e-books with QR codes (Figure 6.5). We also prepared double-sided fliers to give to the users to fulfill the aim of promoting e-books (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.4 QR codes for e-books in Exeter University Library.

Figure 6.5 Using QR codes to promote e-books.

We have started to use QR codes for reservations for the group rooms. We have put the QR codes for the links on the reservation webpage. When a user arrives in front of a room, by scanning the QR code on the signboard of the room, a reservation can be made with a smartphone (Figure 6.7). We have also applied QR codes to periodical shelves. Users can access available issues and acquire detailed information about the periodical by just scanning the QR code and accessing our catalog (Figure 6.8).

STANDARDS

The services that have been given regularly and systematically to SU stakeholders are made in accordance with legislation in force, primarily to enhance the satisfaction of SU students with the continuously optimized quality management system and at the same time to document that the objectives are applicable to the TSE EN ISO 9001: 2008 standard, according to the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of ISO 9001: 2008 Quality Management System.

SU follows ISO 9001 standards in all units, including the IC. Corrective and preventive action forms are prepared regarding ISO certification in order to update our rules when required. When we receive a complaint from a user about our services and facilities, we create a corrective action form. The form contains action plans to solve the problem; if the problem cannot be solved, then the reason is added to the form. With this form we can follow similar problems in the future. The preventive form is created before we receive a similar complaint from users.

Figure 6.6 Using fliers to promote e-books.

For instance, users were regularly complaining about the late return fees incurred during IC's closed hours. In response to this feedback, a corrective and preventive action form was prepared and, as a result, a Return Box was planned and then implemented. After this action, positive user feedback was received.

In particular, PhD and other graduate students were complaining about the working hours, the result being that working hours were extended and, along with this, cleaning and security staff were reorganized. Also, a self-check machine has been bought and implemented to solve that issue.

Figure 6.7 Using QR codes to reserve rooms.

After the extension of its hours the IC started to be open 24 h a day for four days out of the week. More lighting has been provided to the entrance of the IC and to the dome.

Since 2006, Metalib and SFX software have been implemented for more efficient use of an increasing number of databases, especially for the research of graduate students and faculty members.

In 2007, an online form was created to let outside users benefit from the services of the IC, and to define the rules for different type of user groups.

To promote the IC's services and facilities, a decision was made to prepare a bulletin called bilMER in 2008.

Looking at undergraduate students' research habits, we realized that they like to search on Google. After a benchmarking study, the decision was made to use the software called AquaBrowser (ProQuest) in 2009.

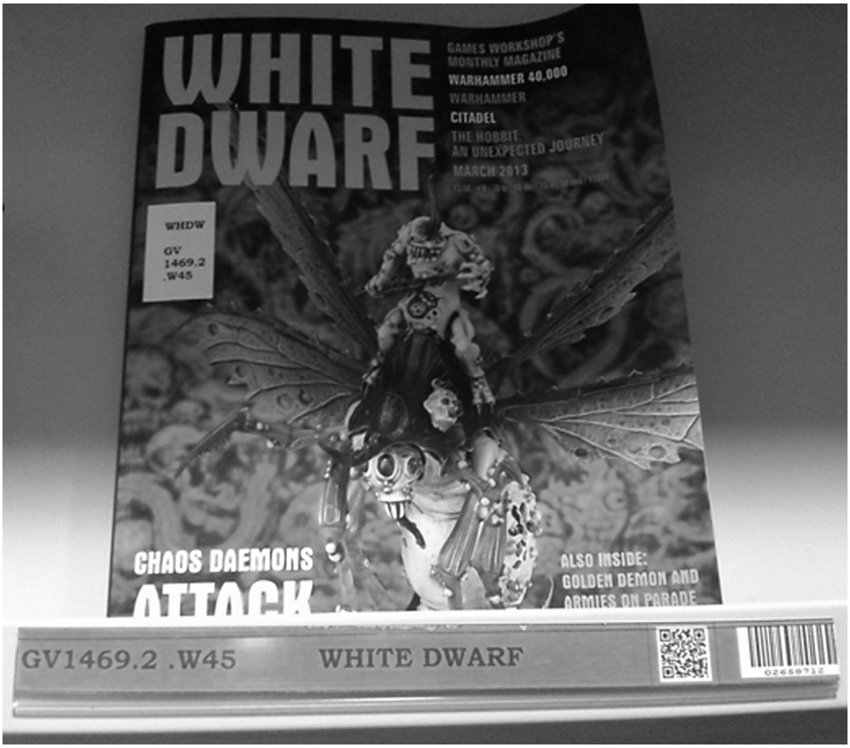

Figure 6.8 Using QR codes on the periodicals shelves.

PROBLEMS WITH THE RESERVATION SYSTEM

Starting in 2010 the Millennium room booking system was no longer able to keep up with user demand and started to cause difficulties. One difficulty was a weakness in Millennium's room booking service system.

- When a reservation was not used by the person making it, the system did not make a cancellation for this reservation, and so the room was blocked until the end of the reservation time. We asked Innovative to resolve this problem; unfortunately, they couldn't come up with a solution.
- Only a full hour could be reserved; a minute-based reservation was not be available. If a user wanted to stay only for 10 min, the system blocked it for at least 1 h.
- The feedback from our color-blind users was that there was difficulty in making a room reservation on their own, since the Millennium

booking system indicated booked rooms in red, while available rooms were green. After discussion with Innovative representatives and other Millennium user libraries on the matter, we learned that no solution was available .

Since Innovative couldn't come up with solutions, we wanted to contact other Millennium user libraries for their feedback on these matters. We were able to obtain some valuable feedback, despite not being able to solve our problems.

TEAMWORK

We came to the conclusion that we would not be able to solve issues with Millennium. The circulation team were assigned to conduct research on this matter. In the list of the Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings, the 110 best university libraries examined this issue. Some of the universities' systems ask for a username and password to examine the reservation system, whereas the webpage of some universities doesn't support English. In this list of 110 universities, we had chance to examine only 27 university libraries' reservation systems. Eight libraries are using the LibCal system (Springshare). Nine libraries are using the LibCal system integrated into their own webpage, while two of the universities were using the "Google Calendar" application (Google). The "RoomWizard" system (Steelcase) has one user and the others have their own individual systems.

Additionally, SU is using Google's email as its email system; therefore, we examined the integrated Google Calendar application for our system. We discussed having an open source resource like OpenRoom (Sourceforge), as well as other solutions such as LibCal. The open-source OpenRoom system was therefore examined.

Although other libraries are using the system and improving on a daily basis because of the open-source codes, IC management eventually decided to implement and improve our own system to meet the specific needs of our users and rules.

The circulation team is the one that directly comes into contact with the problems and the users regarding room reservations. The team came together and decided what they needed in terms of the administrative part of the system and what the users' needs were. The team put criteria together, broken down into (1) must have, (2) should have, and (3) nice to have. According to these criteria, the technical software staff of the IC created software that meets the needs of staff and users.

To allow for slow change, we implemented the system at the end of a term. During this period, and up to the beginning of the new term, the system worked well for a time.

A short time after implementation of the new system, the opening hours of the IC changed. Before, IC working hours went until midnight; however, management decided to open 24 h for four days a week. With this increase in working hours, our new room booking system had new problems, such as the ability to make reservations overnight. We decided to improve our systems for users, as well as the administrative side. The circulation team came together once more to revisit the problems, and let the software staff work on them. For example, we used to type the username of the patron to find the reservation, but now we can find the reservation by just scanning the user's barcode on the back of their ID card; now it is quicker to find the reservation.

FINALLY

We needed to shape our services and facilities according to user needs as much as possible. We tried to solve our group study room booking system problems with in-house software.

Our software department produced room booking software in line with our current ILS, since Millennium couldn't meet our needs. In the beginning of the project a basic version of the software was produced with limited resources. Since the demand was not that high and working hours were shorter, the system worked without a problem. After the working hours were updated to 4 days/24 h, the new reservation system started to cause problems. Since those individual problems were solved on a daily basis, the system still required a major update. Our software staff worked on the updates and improvements and now our system is more efficient and works without problems.

At present, the system is working smoothly, according to our rules and user needs. Today, our color-blind users can make online reservations without help, and reservations can be made for 15 min blocks, rather than reserving the whole hour. In addition, reservations that have not been checked out within 15 min are deleted automatically by the system (Figures 6.9–6.11).

This is the first screen where users can find the list of the rooms with descriptions:

Group Multimedia Rooms	
See Calendar for Group Multimedia Room--2006	Seating capacity: 6 / **Available equipments:** Video and DVD player, television. Booked for group only (minimum 3 users). **Location:** 2nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Multimedia Room--2007	Seating capacity: 6 / **Available equipments:** Video and DVD player, television. Booked for group only (minimum 3 users). **Location:** 2nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Multimedia Room--2008	Seating capacity: 6 / **Available equipments:** Video and DVD player, television. Booked for group only (minimum 3 users). **Location:** 2nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Muldimedia Room-G012	Seating capacity: 6 / **Available equipments:** Video and DVD player, television. Booked for group only (minimum 3-8 users). **Location:**Ground floor.

Group Study Rooms	
See Calendar for Group Study Room--2014	Seating capacity: 8 / Booked for group only (minimum 2 users). **Location:** 2nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Study Room--2017	Seating capacity: 8 / **Available equipments:** Meeting table. Booked for group only (minimum 2 users). **Location:** 2nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Study Room--2023	Seating capacity: 8 / Booked for group only (minimum 2 users). **Location:** 2nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Study Room--1005	Seating capacity: 8 / Booked for group only (minimum 2 users). **Location:** 1nd floor.
See Calendar for Group Study Room--G008	Seating capacity: 8 / Booked for group only (minimum 2 users). **Location:** Ground floor.

Figure 6.9 Rooms list.

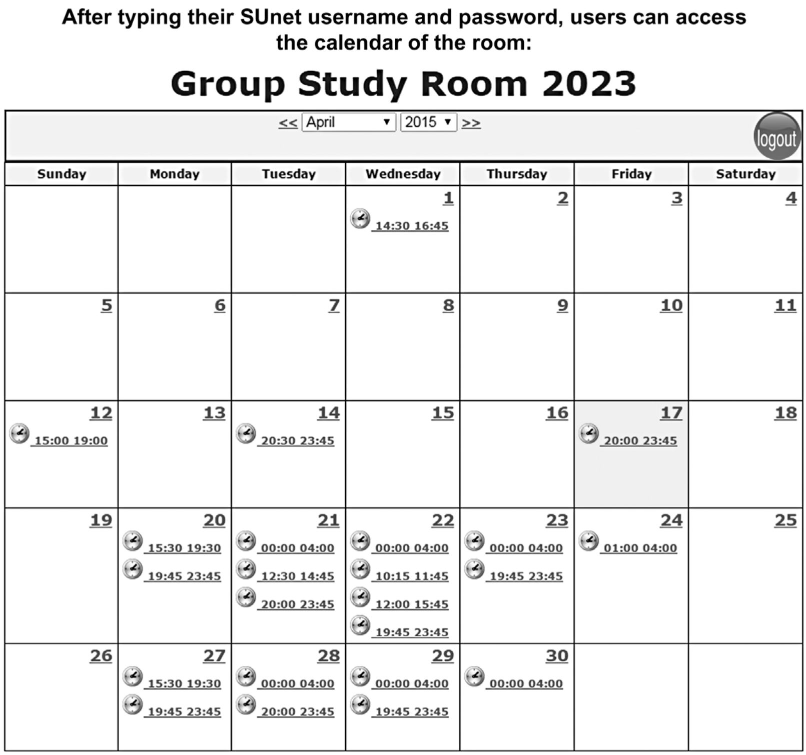

Figure 6.10 Room availability calendar.

CONCLUSION

SU as a whole (and the IC in particular) is an innovative and proactive institution that seeks perfection in its delivery services. The IC is trying to keep up to date in its services and facilities. User satisfaction is the most important value in all of our services.

After some minor changes in our procedures, we have certified our practices with ISO. With the help of ISO, we are trying to fulfill our mission for the users of the SU Information Center.

Improving customer satisfaction comes as a result of all the effort that has been made to improve services and facilities. We get feedback from our users, we evaluate it, and then benchmark and try to solve problems in the best way that we can. When we started to get positive feedback from our users about our improvements, we took courage for other projects.

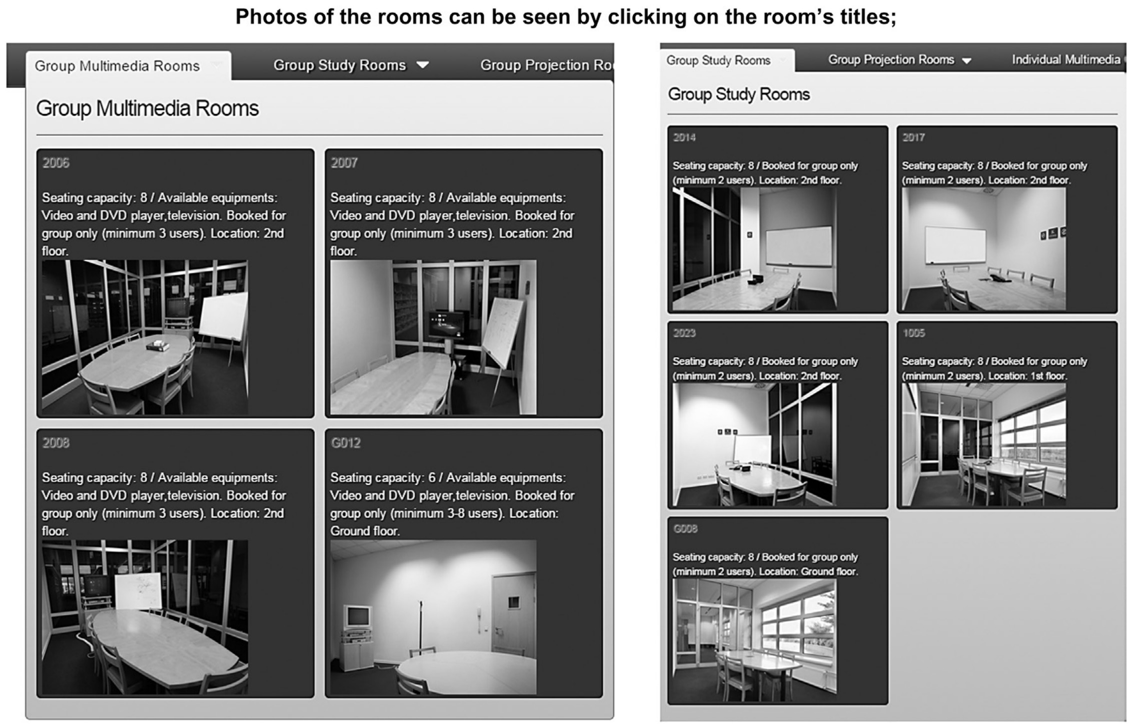

Figure 6.11 Room photos via the reservation system.

We like to hear from our users to improve our services and facilities in order to enhance their happiness and success.

The progress in the room reservation system is an example of how we enhance user satisfaction. Trying to get inspiration and implementing QR codes in our services is also an example of our innovative approach.

CHAPTER 7

Library Services for Falmouth University and the University of Exeter, Penryn Campus: Listening to Our Customers in a Shared Services Environment

Doreen Pinfold
Falmouth University/FX Plus, Cornwall, United Kingdom

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The library service in this case study is a shared services one based within a shared services organization called FX Plus (Falmouth Exeter Plus). FX Plus is an exempt educational charity owned 50% by Falmouth University and 50% by the University of Exeter, and the two universities share a campus in Penryn, a small town based on the river Fal in Cornwall, United Kingdom. Cornwall is a beautiful and remote southwestern peninsula in the UK. Falmouth is the only university solely within the county, although there is other provision for higher education within the Further and Higher Education Colleges and the University of Exeter Medical School, which is based in nearby Truro, the administrative city within the county. The University of Exeter is concentrated in Exeter, Devon, but with branches in Cornwall at the Penryn and Truro Campuses. Cornwall has a mix of areas of wealth, predominantly around the coast, with a number of second homes mixed with areas of deprivation and poverty in what were formerly mining and quarrying areas. The scale of poverty and deprivation was recognized by the European Economic Community, and Cornwall has benefited from EU funding aimed at regenerating the economy. The two universities have been recipients of EU grants, and this has transformed the campus at Penryn. The universities in turn have had a huge impact on the local and regional economy, as illustrated in a recent economic impact study:

Customer Service in Academic Libraries.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-84334-758-3.00007-4

> *A study by independent economic analysts, Oxford Economics, confirms that the University of Exeter (UoE) and Falmouth University (Falmouth), who share and jointly manage the* Penryn Campus, *have contributed £491 million to the economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly between 2002 and 2012.*
>
> *The universities have also contributed £144 million to the UK Exchequer during this period.*
>
> *The study demonstrates that the universities' economic impact has grown sharply over the past decade, with their contribution to Cornwall's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increasing by almost 300% and the number of jobs supported by them increasing by almost 200%, with the universities accounting for 1 in every 155 jobs in the county.*
>
> ***Exeter (2012)***

When I joined the library service in 2005 as head of the Library and Information Service, the library was part of a wider department, Academic Services, and based within Falmouth University whilst additionally delivering services to the University of Exeter staff, students, and researchers based at the shared campus. This shared service has had a major impact on how we deliver services in terms of strategy and strategic developments. Falmouth University has two campuses, one in Falmouth and the larger shared campus in neighboring Penryn. The Penryn campus has been shared since 2004 with the University of Exeter. Whilst there are similar partnerships within the United Kingdom, when this partnership of two entirely separate and quite different universities sharing a campus began it was unique in the United Kingdom and is now one of the most mature of all such partnerships. These are two very different universities: Falmouth University is a small specialist arts institution and the University of Exeter is a much larger Russell Group research-intensive university. Numbers within Cornwall, however, mean Falmouth is the larger of the two in terms of student numbers:

Academic year 2014–2015

Falmouth University 4,407

University of Exeter, Penryn Campus 2,000

Subject areas for the two universities overlap very little. Falmouth University offers fine art and design courses on the Falmouth campus, and on the Penryn campus offers performance, media, and design courses along with research and entrepreneurship. The University of Exeter's courses include biosciences, geography, humanities, mining, politics, English, and will shortly include business.

The two universities remain separate; however, they do share a number of services within the joint venture company, FX Plus. These services include Estates and Campus Services, which contains Catering and Accommodation and more commercial elements through Hospitality and Events. In 2012, the two universities agreed to move further services into the joint venture company, and Academic and Student Services (consisting of the Library, Academic Skills, and Student Services) along with IT were transferred from Falmouth University into FX Plus. This again is an innovation within the higher education sector in the United Kingdom, and currently there is a Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) study into the economic impact and benefits of sharing services in this way.

The shared services partnership has impacted on all areas of university life and on the library service. Initial negotiations between the two universities resulted in the decision to establish a shared university library on the Penryn Campus rather than set up independent university libraries for each institution. This was a key decision for the library service and has influenced developments ever since. A considerable amount of preparation and discussion took place to resolve differences and establish common standards between the library services of Falmouth University and the University of Exeter. It is testament to the collaborative ethos that libraries generally have that these discussions were generally both positive and productive. When I joined, a number of key decisions had already been taken, the space for the library on the shared campus has been established, staff structures were in place, and initial services had been scoped. Numbers initially were quite small, particularly for Exeter, and one characteristic that has endured even with growth in student numbers is the concept of a "personalized" environment. Student comments on why they chose to study at this campus show that for some students the smaller, more personalized campus played a part in their decision to study here, as did the location in Cornwall, and this is a factor we need to build into decisions on shaping services and scalability as numbers increase. The challenge will be to maintain the "personal" environment while providing services to larger cohorts of users.

Since the partnership was set up, there has been continuous development. In 2008, Falmouth University merged with Dartington College of Arts, adding a third campus some 80 miles away for 18 months, after which in 2010 the courses and library were transferred to Cornwall, with stock being allocated to each campus according to subject area. Falmouth obtained Taught Degree Awarding powers in 2005 and full university status in 2012. The library service benefited from a £12 million extension which opened in 2012, and it is arguable that a number of developments such as the extension or 24/7 opening would not have happened without the partnership between the two universities. Further developments include new buildings and new partnerships, including distance learning ones and local agreements with schools.

LIBRARY STRUCTURE

The library structure is currently team-based, with teams in the following areas: Acquisitions, Academic Liaison, Archives and Special Collections, Multimedia and Visual Resources, Systems, User Services, and the Falmouth Campus Library team. Alongside this are the teams for academic skills: ASK and EAP (English for academic purposes). The structure is currently under review and we are looking to streamline, moving from campus-based teams to a more unified single team aligning more with partner services at the University of Exeter and to harmonize more of our processes. This is following a review of library strategy, looking at evidence-based statistics which show that usage of the libraries is changing and that we need to realign services and staff roles accordingly particularly as we move into a far more digital world.

CUSTOMER CARE AND OUR CUSTOMERS

The library service prides itself on high levels of customer satisfaction, and indeed recruits, particularly within User Services, staff who demonstrate attributes of approachability and willingness to help and support users. There is an expectation that they will be able to effectively manage relationships with students, researchers, and academics. As a recruitment approach coupled with staff development and training, this has proved successful, as evidenced by a decrease in negative comments about staff in comments received in numerous undergraduate surveys; these were never high in number, and generally it is a surprise and disappointment to see any negative comments about staff behavior where users are concerned. External benchmarks from, for example, the Times Higher Student Satisfaction Survey Student Experience Survey demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, as for the last two years Falmouth university has been joint first in the United Kingdom for "Good library and library opening hours." There is, however, no room for complacency, and continual monitoring of this area in all our feedback is essential. There is also a need to maintain staff development and skills training so that library staff are able to answer increasingly complex questions on resources and be able to use and promote digital as well as print materials. Increasingly staff are required to have the skills to interact with users in whatever environment they are working in and this is changing to a predominantly digital one.

Our customers are mainly undergraduate students, postgraduate students (both taught and research), academic staff, and professional services staff, from either Falmouth University or the University of Exeter. Services are also accessible to the local community and to researchers from other academic institutions anywhere in the world.

CUSTOMER CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK

User Feedback in a Shared Services Environment

User feedback is regularly sought in a multiplicity of ways with the aims of maintaining and improving customer satisfaction, testing development ideas, and informing decision making. There are national surveys such as the UK National Student Survey sent out to all final-year students, the Student Experience Survey, and the International Student Barometer. We have internal surveys such as the FX Plus survey, Early Experience survey, and LibQual. There are other mechanisms for feedback through attendance by the Academic Liaison Team at Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) for Exeter and Staff Student Liaison Groups (SSLGs) for Falmouth. With the formal routes, these tend to be university-specific, while internal surveys and informal feedback mechanisms may be addressed to the general student body and staff from both universities.

Student Union—The FXU

There are regular meetings with the student union, FXU (Falmouth Exeter Union), which was one of the earliest areas to work collaboratively across the partnership between Falmouth and Exeter; they, in fact, took the lead in finding ways to work together. There is a student president for Falmouth and one for Exeter, with two other sabbatical officers who can be appointed from either student body. A recent example of the benefit of building the relationship with the FXU is the lead they have provided on consulting with students on the future of fines and how these might be made simpler and be perceived to be fairer. A number of options have been agreed to by the joint library services, FX Plus, and Exeter, and these have been taken forward by the FXU to the student body for comments. The shape of future service in this area will therefore be influenced by the students themselves, and as many of their recommendations as are practicable will be implemented. Staff have also been asked to comment on the proposed options.

Over the past 2 years the FXU presidents have created lists of their key objectives for the universities to deliver, and this year has featured better signage for the library on the shared campus. This was agreed to, funding was made available, and color coding and signage of the different study areas has been implemented, with positive feedback to date.

This is an ongoing relationship as the FXU presidents change annually, so every year this relationship starts again and is dependent on the commitment and interest of the FXU sabbatical officers and the work of the library in seeking to build the links year on year. This means that as a service we need to work hard to develop and maintain this relationship, as the benefits in terms of access to student opinion and feedback are crucial in helping us to make services relevant and for students to feel their opinions are listened to and acted upon. There is also a Student Experience and Enhancement Group which meets regularly with the FXU.

Partnerships with Students

Another way of working with students and obtaining their input has been through a "Students as Agents of Change" program; this was particularly helpful when plans were being drawn up for the £12 million extension to the library on the shared Penryn campus. Focus groups and workshops were held using a "World Café" setting to discuss with students what they wanted the additional space to look like, what they wanted it to contain, and how it might best be designed to deliver what they wanted. Part of the World Café event was led by the architect, and from this came the concept for the building with a riverine theme, with users flowing in and through the building, stopping off at various spaces to study formally and informally; outside the very open library areas are eddy spaces, technology rich with glass boards to write on, screens, and semiprivate and public areas. Within the library itself the group study space was increased, with larger tables for maps, textiles, and materials to be spread out; quiet study space was also increased, and one area was turned into a more traditional reading room for research students. This was all devised using feedback from the student body. One aspect we were concerned about in the extension was the openness on the upper level where noise was an issue from the open atrium. Student feedback on noise issues helped us to prepare a case for the installation of a glass wall as a solution to stop the noise carrying into the quiet study space while preserving the feeling of space and light through the use of glass. This has proved very successful, and it would have been much harder to secure funding for this without the very vocal student feedback.

Formal Feedback

Attendance at SSLCs (University of Exeter) and SSLGs (Falmouth) can be time consuming; however, the Academic Liaison Librarians (ALLs) value these as part of the course team, viewed as peers alongside academic staff, being able to respond immediately to some issues raised and to take others away to prepare more comprehensive responses, and to provide action and feedback on completed actions. Following each meeting the ALL sends a brief email report to me and other interested parties, covering the main issues raised and their relevance for the service. This interpretive commentary is invaluable, and sometimes either I or another senior manager will see implications in the notes that can be followed up. It is having a finger on the pulse of what is happening at a very granular level.

Formal feedback through surveys, both national and internal, provides judgments on the services, particularly through the comments. While the results from the NSS for Falmouth have over past years been very high, this must not lead to complacency, and the monitoring of feedback from students needs to be constant. The NSS consists of third-year students commenting on their time at university, and they will be commenting about the whole of their period of study, not just their third year (Table 7.1).

We have been pleased by the results generally for Falmouth from the NSS, although it is difficult to predict the results year on year. The feedback from our Exeter students is more mixed, and annual action plans are drawn up to respond to those areas where results have been lower than expected or desired. Key areas identified for the Exeter students on the shared campus over the past few years have been around the depth of the book stock and space. In response to this, new initiatives have been implemented, such as the setting up of library champions who hold a small budget to be able to respond immediately to student requests without any

Table 7.1 NSS results (National Student Survey, 2013)

NSS results—Falmouth University

Falmouth University	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Learning resources (%)	84	88	90	90	90
Library (%)	88	91	90	95	94

intervention by library staff other than to place the orders, so this is placed firmly in the remit of the students themselves.

The internal FX Plus survey asks students about the range of services provided by the shared services company, including the library and Academic Skills. Following the survey, all departments complete "you said …we did" responses. Each department has a liaison group which brings together users such as students through FXU representation and academic and professional services representatives with the following remit:

Specific role:

1. To explore the development and enhancement of these areas of library and Academic Skills to meet changing institutional and student needs.
2. To oversee the current service provision and any issues in service delivery
3. To review trends in service and performance against SLAs and KPIs

Informal Feedback

Informal feedback is generally aimed at the whole of the student body. Some of the informal feedback mechanisms have been easy and quick to arrange, and effective, with at times simply a board and Post-it notes asking for feedback on a particular topic or question (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Informal feedback.

There are suggestion forms and suggestion boxes in both campus libraries; a library email that users use to correspond with us; and Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter accounts that are regularly monitored and users responded to.

https://www.facebook.com/pages/FXLibrary/459458947501173
https://www.pinterest.com/penryncampus/
https://twitter.com/FXLibrary

Within the department is a post of communications and quality officer, and the incumbent regularly conducts focus groups with students on areas such as post-inductions to assess how successful the inductions offered by the department have been that academic year and how we can improve them. We have moved to online inductions, however, and have shortened these in response to user feedback.

LibQual

LibQual (LibQUAL+) is a key survey that gives the most detailed results for the library service. This is one survey where we do distinguish between the universities, and the University of Exeter runs its own version of LibQual including the Penryn campus students.

LibQual for Falmouth University has been run twice so far, in 2011 and 2013, for 3 weeks in May on each occasion. An incentive was offered to students in the form of an iPad as it was felt this would be needed, as this is not the most user-friendly survey and students are increasingly being asked to complete various surveys. LibQual is complex to complete, and it was decided that we would on both occasions use the Lite option of the questionnaire, which retains the validity of the full survey but with fewer questions. The questionnaire was publicized in a variety of ways using all of the social media channels, mailshots, posters, fliers, newsletters, banners on the student virtual learning environment, and a link on the library webpage. Even with all the publicity, the return was disappointing, with a drop in returns between 2011 and 2013. What we found was that a number of users started the survey but failed to complete it, with a high noncompletion rate of 50.1%.

The survey in both 2011 and 2013 reviewed three elements of our library provision:

- Library as place
- Affect of service
- Information control

It also included five specifically determined local questions and included the opportunity for respondents to supply comments, and these proved particularly interesting and useful. We wanted to obtain information about the respondents themselves, their disciplines, campus, and whether undergraduate or postgraduate or staff.

Overall, students were pleased with the services the library provides, although some of the issues identified in the 2011 surveys were still apparent in 2013, especially relating to space, noise, accessibility, and the catalog. A subset of question relating to information literacy scored positively for all user groups.

There were interesting differences between undergraduate and postgraduate responses:

UCF LIBQUAL SURVEY 2013

Undergraduate Summary of Core and Local Questions

There were no areas where respondents' perception of service provision was less than their minimum stated—although conversely there were no areas where respondents' perception of service provision exceeded their desired level.

In all areas including our local questions, the perceptions of service provision were better than respondents' minimum stated desires.

The data were very evenly distributed and showed no major positive or negative aspects.

Postgraduate Summary of Core and Local Questions

On three questions, respondents' perception of service provision was less than their minimum desire:

AS3 Library staff who are consistently courteous (0.25)
IC3 The printed library materials I need for my work (0.33)
LP1 Library space that inspires study and learning (0.15)

On four questions, respondents' perception of service provision exceeded their desired level:

AS1 Library staff who instill confidence in users (+0.50)
AS4 Readiness to respond to users' inquiries (+0.57)
AS8 Willingness to help users (+0.11)
LP5 Space for group learning and group study (+0.83)

In all other areas, the perceptions of service provision were better than respondents' minimum.

Local Questions

On one local question, respondents' perception of service provision was less than the minimum:

The library provides access to archival materials (documents, manuscripts, and photographs) (1.0)

Academic Staff Summary of Core and Local Questions

The data set for this group was particularly fragmented given the low numbers of respondents.

On 11 core questions, respondents' perception of service provision was less than their minimum:

AS2 Giving users individual attention (1.33)
AS4 Readiness to respond to users' inquiries (2.0)
AS7 Library staff who understand the needs of their users (1.50)
IC2 A library website enabling me to locate information on my own (1.0)
IC3 The printed library materials I need for my work (0.25)
IC5 Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information (0.25)
IC 8 Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work (3.0)
LP1 Library space that inspires study and learning (0.10)
LP2 Quiet space for individual work (2.33)
LP3 A comfortable and inviting location (0.87)
LP5 Space for group learning and group study (0.80)

On two core questions, respondents' perception of service provision exceeded their desired levels:

AS5 Library staff who have the knowledge to answer users' questions (+0.67)
IC7 Making information easily accessible for independent use (+0.25)

Local Questions

On two local question, respondents' perception of service provision was less than their minimum:

An online catalog that is user-friendly for finding materials (1.50)
Space for group/individual study and research needs (0.75)

On one local question, respondents' perception of service provision exceeded their desired levels:

Library staff teaching me how to effectively use the electronically available databases, journals, and books

Doherty (2013)

We were pleased with the undergraduate responses, which were generally positive about services; however, concerns raised by postgraduate students and academic staff need more attention. These concerns were primarily around space, ease of access to content, and our understanding of their individual needs. We have, following the survey, publicized the more traditional reading room space for research students and academics. We have also introduced a one-stop search resource discovery tool, Summon, and publicized this, and are investigating more online help created by the ALL team. The webpages have been updated and more outreach sessions on use of the archives and special collections for research have been carried out.

CONCLUSION

The shared services environment is a complex one and the library service uses as many means as possible to obtain feedback, informal and formal, with a continuing dialog with users from both universities. Increasingly, we are analyzing user data so that we can make evidence-based decisions on content and services alongside qualitative feedback from focus groups. The variety of ways to obtain feedback is likely to continue; however, alongside this is the requirement to set aside time to analyze the data and feedback and both respond to this and make strategic decisions on services, content, and space. We will need to ensure that the increasing numbers of students off campus who use library services remotely are also asked for their feedback.

Assumptions are often made about student behavior and requirements, and there are challenges about the student voice for those who are not regular library users. There are interesting ethnographic projects and studies being carried out which may well challenge some of the assumptions. The future of academic libraries depends on our understanding of our users and our responses to them. A shared services environment brings additional complexity at the same time as it brings a richness of experience for users and staff.

CHAPTER 8

Where Next for the "Front Line"?

Stephen Mossop
Head of Library Services (Retired), University of Exeter, UK

Probably one of the most telling themes to emerge from the case study chapters, certainly in terms of the future nature and purpose of the Front Line, is that of the inexorable shift toward digital rather than paper-based information. I have no doubt that the majority of academic libraries will, in the not-too-distant future, find themselves in agreement with Sabanci's position, that is, that their role is to offer "access to information rather than having a collection of millions of items on the shelves" (Chapter 6 of this volume), and that most would almost certainly, even now, sympathise with Victoria's challenge: "As funding for physical resources is reduced in favour of e-resources, and circulation statistics and library gate counts continue to decline, we are facing the inevitable reduction of traditional front-line customer services" (Chapter 5). Is there a case, then, as a former colleague suggested to me quite recently, for regarding the front-line team as an expensive and unnecessary luxury that should be disbanded?

She may have a point, but let's consider.

I'm sure that most would agree, by now, that the days of manually stamping books have long gone … and good riddance, especially given that self-service machines are able to do that job much more quickly, and much more cost-effectively, than humans. That onerous, boring, and time-consuming task having been dispensed with, staff are now free to undertake much more interesting and useful roles. As in the Exeter experience, mobile staff are now not only better able to monitor and supervise behaviors and to identify structural issues within the library, but are actively involved in enabling students to become confident and independent library users—which is of critical importance "out of hours" in a 24/7 environment, and vital in terms of their ability to identify, locate, and make use of the e-resources they need, whether accessed within the library building or remotely.

The range of skills employed by front-line staff is not limited simply to library resources, of course, and many libraries find that, as in Victoria's experience, "Due to our hours of operation, particularly during the

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evenings and weekends, our staff are often the only university staff available to answer client inquiries. If we can answer a question, we will; if not, we will make every effort to find the answer. Our staff have become experts in searching the VU website for that difficult to find information and the 'right person' or the 'right service' to refer our students to. Our staff also act as de facto counsellors and general troubleshooters and, particularly during orientation for new students, probably spend as much time answering general enquiries on behalf of other VU services as they do on handling questions related to library resources." (Chapter 5). Other services could offer such facilities, of course, but in reality, increasingly long library opening hours make them prime targets for a wide range of enquiries—so wouldn't simply moving the responsibility surely just add cost to another service, and provide (at least for a long while) customers with an added layer of complication and delay? To add a brief anecdote from my own experience, I recall that one of my night team colleagues once spent an hour talking a distraught student out of taking a bottle-full of tablets … all the while killing time waiting for the more expert, but over-stretched, campus security team to arrive on site and deal with the problem. The question is, of course, what could have replaced my colleague on that occasion? In a digital world, perhaps a set of FAQs? Or a telephone menu and queue system?

In many libraries, the shelving team forms part of a wider front-line/customer services section, given their availability for questioning. They're almost perpetually "on the ground," essentially where many customers need advice, and, as Exeter reminds us, "after we had been roving for some time … we came to realise how its effects rippled through even to those teams with a more back-of-house role. Once students get used to interacting with us out on the library floor, then any staff member they spot becomes a potential target for questions" (Chapter 4). If they were no longer part of a front-line team, and had been (in an extreme example) given a clear lead that their chief responsibility was to shelve rather than to answer questions, what sort of "customer service" face would that offer the library as an organisation? Remembering, of course, the examples of poor service from Chapter 1 … not exactly a reputation-enhancing stance for the library generally.

It's all about value to the individual—as Hong Kong reminds us: "good personal perceptions or meeting individuals' expectations (more commonly described as 'customer experience' in the commercial field) have become the deliverable that many businesses need to engage their customers. 'It's the value that the experience holds for the individual that determines the worth of the offering and the work of the business' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Educational institutions will be no exception in this trend, especially when students are looking for more value from their education" (Chapter 3). What value to the individual, or (by extension) to the institution, if front-line services—the opportunity to meet with, speak to, and take instant advice from a real-life expert—are supplanted by the opportunity to search online for the needed information, or to follow expertly designed signage (with pictograms, of course) to the desired source of information? Will the online search ask searching questions of the enquirer, or will the signage subtly change to reflect a subvocal inflection? Maybe in the future, but not at present, for sure!

As important as the individual customer, individual staff members are crucial to the overall impact and effectiveness of the organisation—and visibility and approachability seem to be the keys to success. Visibility is so important—after all, if a customer doesn't know who to approach, where should they direct their urgent questions? As Victoria informs us, "The key to customer service is approachability; we can teach the hard skills, but it is that indefinable quality that shouts out 'I'm here to help!' that we are really looking for" (Chapter 5). "I'm here to help" is certainly the message that Exeter recognised as the key to increasing both visibility and accessibility: "The T-shirts ensured we were instantly recognisable, and their emblazoned 'Ask Me' sent a clear message that was being received by our customers: the number of enquiries our rovers handled increased rapidly during this period. Though not perhaps a sophisticated long-term solution, the T-shirts were a suitably high-impact way to kick-start our roving activities.… While the 'Ask Me' shirts are not mourned by library staff, our time wearing them taught us that being identifiable is a key ingredient in the recipe for successful roving" (Chapter 4). Natural approachability is another key aspect in the front-line staff member's armour: "One of the questions that we should be asking when interviewing potential customer service staff is whether or not they are approached for help outside of work, if random strangers come up to them when they are shopping, assuming that they work in the shop. I just took a straw poll with my customer service staff and they all said, 'Yes, happens to me all the time!'" (Chapter 5). It's a natural talent. "We can teach people active listening skills, how to conduct a reference interview and 'customer service' skills such as intercultural communication techniques, handling aggression, and dealing with difficult customers; however, if our clients will not approach our staff for assistance then all this training is put to waste" (Chapter 5), a fact reinforced by Falmouth, which "recruits, particularly within User Services, staff who demonstrate attributes of approachability and willingness to help and support users" (Chapter 7).

It has been interesting, and not a little gratifying, to note that one of the major themes that has emerged very clearly from the case studies has been the need to consult with the client base. Each of the chapters has described their efforts in this, and it has been clear that all have used a combination of "local" surveying (exit polls, staff/student consultation, and the like), and major, often annual, broad-brush "library quality" surveys. Much has been learned by all of the participants, sometimes to their surprise—witness Hong Kong, where it was found that, while early, broad surveys intimated an overall satisfaction with their services, a later, more in-depth analysis "demonstrated that we had poor customer service focus in the eyes of a number of our users" (Chapter 3). However, as Falmouth has illustrated, survey results can sometimes be biased or compromised by low returns from certain sectors: "the return was disappointing, with a drop in returns between 2011and 2013. What we found was that a number of users started the survey but failed to complete it, with a high non-completion rate of 50.1%" (Chapter 7). However, many of the major surveying tools allow open-ended comments, which can be massively important to the organisation's deeper understanding of its customers' feelings: "Recurring comments will especially draw great attention from the management and in-depth analysis will be conducted to find out why certain issues are still haunting the libraries and how they can be resolved in the long run" (Chapter 3).

Major "service quality" surveys, of course, along with the increasingly granular responses gained through staff/student focus groups, staff/faculty liaison meetings, and direct customer comments, suggestions, and complaints all contribute to the overall picture of how well you're managing to "get it right for your customer." They are all extremely important—indeed, "The future of academic libraries depends on our understanding of our users and our responses to them" (Chapter 7). In terms of the argument regarding "front-line services," however, it is worth remembering that they can all be handled by non-front-facing services. So—what benefit is there from retaining a customer-facing resource?

I think that our case study contributors have nailed the argument perfectly—"The challenge is to adapt to the online environment, to utilise the tools available to us, and to continue to provide the high level of customer service that our reputation is built on" (Chapter 5), However, there is "no room for complacency, and continual monitoring of this area in all our feedback is essential. There is also a need to maintain staff development and skills training so that library staff are able to answer increasingly complex questions on resources and be able to use and promote digital as well as print materials" (Chapter 7). Most importantly, while "Many of us … understand that our future will not simply rely on our prestigious collections, user-friendly and efficient technology, increasing amount and variety of facilities, or high-quality service. Like a stage performance, it is the combined experience that counts. How to put on a great performance with an engaged team will be our mission in the coming decade or century" (Chapter 3).

To my mind, the argument that front-line teams are an expensive and unnecessary luxury that should be disbanded is spurious and misguided. The basis for such an argument must be either that the institution is financially bankrupt (in which case it really should be referred back to the relevant funding council for assistance), or that the proposer prefers to disregard the fact that evidence-based research indicates exactly the opposite view, and has totally ignored the fact that "The feel-good factor really does count" (Chapter 5). If you fail to maintain a customer service environment that contributes effectively to that "feel-good factor," they're going to let you know!

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