

Low- and No-Cost Customer Service Improvements

To improve **IMPRESSION**:

- Make frequent, temporary changes to the outside of the building - signs, banners, balloons, flags, etc.
- Temper posted bans, rules or regulations with positive messages
- Display a highly visible sign, flag, etc. to show that the library is open
- Display the library's URL so it can be seen from the street
- Make a point of smiling and welcoming visitors
- Rearrange furniture to face windows, preferably with views of greenery
- If your windows face a public thoroughfare, arrange furniture so passers-by can see people and activities
- Ask local furniture stores to loan comfy reading chairs or rocking chairs
- Add footstools
- Designate a quiet zone
- Allow food and drink in designated areas
- Offer secure stroller parking and coat/package check, staffed by volunteer

To improve **INTERACTION**:

- Clearly identify all staff as staff (names not necessary) - badges, t-shirts, etc.
- Get staff out from behind the desk and train them to make eye contact with users
- Move ready reference materials out from behind the desk
- Switch to portable (or cellular, if your reception is good) phones in public service areas
- Arrange PCs so you can pass by on the other side of the screen rather than behind the user
- Wear a button that says "Please Interrupt Me"
- Train ALL staff so they know library hours, policies, types/formats of materials available, basic circ functions, basic catalog searches, and how to operate the equipment in public areas
- When assisting someone, break the session into small segments and check in frequently to see if the user wants to continue
- Switch to self-service holds pickup
- Adjust hiring criteria to recruit staff who reflect community demographics

To improve **NAVIGATION**:

- De-clutter
- Limit the number of pieces of information you feature (1-7), and rotate them frequently
- Add a "Today at Your Library" board near the entrance
- Provide bibliographies and pathfinders keyed to situations as well as to subjects
- Describe bibliographies and pathfinders as "shortcuts"
- Experiment with arranging lists or other information by importance or popularity rather than in alphabetical order
- Add copies of book jackets or other graphics to stack ends to indicate what kinds of materials can be found in that area
- "Merchandise" the collection to improve browsing and enhance serendipity
- Arrange furniture to direct visitors away from circ and towards collections and catalog workstations when they first arrive
- Recruit and train volunteer greeters to answer directional questions

To improve INFORMATION:

- Negotiate with community organizations to add "For More Information" links from their own pages to the library's catalog
- If you have back issues of any community publications (newspapers, directories, etc.) make sure the publisher links to the library on its Web site
- Prepare simple Internet tips and tricks - or an "Internet Tip of the Week" - for other community organizations to publish on their own Web sites, with attribution and a link to the library
- Publish EVERYTHING you print on your Web site as well – if you don't know how to turn a Word document into a downloadable pdf file, learn!
- Provide power strips in public areas for users who want to plug in laptops
- Implement email notification for holds and overdues – if possible, set your automated system to generate "return alerts" before items become overdue
- Show off your bandwidth with a LAN party
- Experiment with instant messaging for homework help
- Make basic computer troubleshooting a required skill for all public service staff - and then train, train, train until they are comfortable helping the public with computer problems
- Provide office software and train staff or docents to help the people who are using it

To improve PROMOTION:

- Supply all staff with generic business cards giving the library address, hours, phone number, and URL
- Identify staff who participate in community groups or activities and invite them to sponsor outreach efforts aimed at those groups
- Highlight users and their testimonials in your communications - give the public someone to identify with
- Always describe library services in terms of benefits to the user, not content or source of the information
- Don't compete - differentiate! Use your communications to highlight things the library offers (e.g. full text databases) that aren't available elsewhere
- If you have plenty of free parking, be sure to say that on all program announcements
- Take appointments
- Designate some services as "express"
- Train all staff in youth services
- Treat local authors as royalty - and have an annual local authors reception and invite the public
- Participate as library representatives in as many community events as possible
- Create a library t-shirt and wear it when you're out and about
- Show some enthusiasm!

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