


**Life After Desk:  
Implementing  
the New Service Models**

Presented by  
Joan Frye Williams  
Wednesday, December 4, 2013




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**My observations of  
new service models in action**



- What's working well
- What may need some rethinking
- How successful libraries manage implementation

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**Reference desk trends**

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|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Public libraries:</b>                   | <b>Academic libraries:</b>    |
| • 25-35% "real" reference                  | • 40-50% "real" reference     |
| • 15-20% basic catalog lookup and/or holds | • 20-25% printing and copying |
| • 30-35% technology                        | • 10-15% other technology     |
| • 10-30% directional                       | • 10-30% directional          |



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**Changing responsibility for**



- Intercept
- Triage
- Response
- Follow-up

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**Key concepts**

- Excellence defined by the user experience
- Service delivery at the point of need
- Right person, right task
- Cross-functional teamwork
- Improved efficiency
- Change, not loss




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**Co-located service desks**




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**Co-located service desks so far**



- No guesswork about where to go for service
- Right person always available
- Minimal adjustment for staff



- Not clear which staff member to ask for assistance
- Not clear where line is
- Requires at least 2 on desk "just in case"
- Service not at point of need

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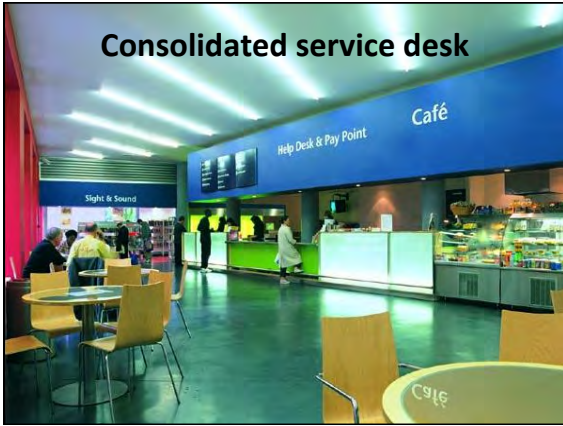
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**Consolidated service desk**

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**Consolidated service desks so far**



- No guesswork about where to go or which staff member to ask for service
- One stop shopping for a variety of services
- If librarians work "on call," they can focus more intently on other tasks



- Service not at point of need
- If professional staff work on desk rather than on call, they spend considerable time on tasks that do not require their level of training

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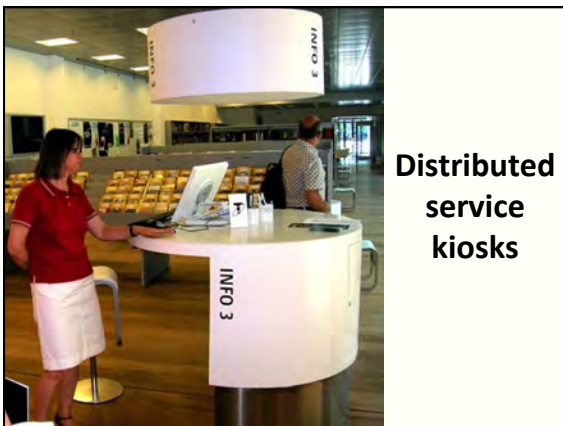
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**Distributed service kiosks**

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**Distributed service kiosks so far**



- Closer to point of need
- May function as landing place for roving service



- Frequently unstaffed – worse than no desk from the user’s standpoint
- Not clear who is entitled to use equipment

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**Flexible alternative: mobile desk**

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**Roving reference**

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### Roving reference so far



- Service delivered at the point of need
- Users less reluctant to approach staff
- No line – can work to completion
- Good way to learn exactly where users get stuck
- Especially useful for tech assistance



- Rovers not always clearly identifiable as library staff
- Can be seen as intrusive
- Some staff have trouble adjusting to proactive role

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### Examples of pre-loaded apps/links on public library rovers' tablets

- OPAC
- Overdrive
- Google search
- Google maps
- City/county web page
- Transit information
- Wikipedia
- FindLaw



- Goodreads
- FictFact
- Fantastic Fiction
- BiblioTravel
- Series and Sequels
- Juvenile Series and Sequels
- Common Sense Media

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### When staff won't rove

- Listen to their concerns
- Support them with training, tools, and content
- Link roving to user outcomes
- Schedule in 1-hour increments
- Be open to adjustments based on actual results
- Resist attempts to go back to "normal"
- Reconfigure the furniture
- As a last resort, reassign them




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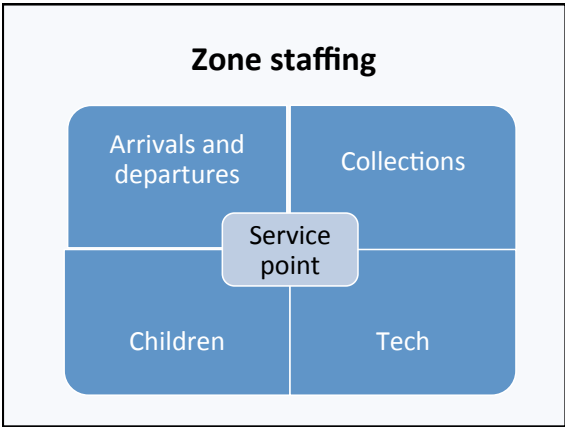
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**Zone staffing so far**



- Integrates all types of service, not just reference
- Holistic – staff are responsible for all that happens in their zone
- Easy to combine or divide zones to adjust to fluctuations in demand
- Opportunities for spontaneous programming



- Most work performed standing up
- Some staff have trouble adjusting to security/behavioral responsibilities

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**Trendy learning commons**



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**Effective learning commons**



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**Trendy maker space**



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**Effective maker space**



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**Another effective maker space**



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**All of these service models work best when**



- The service desk faces into the library, not out the door
- Engagement with users is at eye level
- Self check is the main form of checkout
- Collections are merchandised and well signed
- Phone calls and email requests are handled away from the desk
- Staff are trained well enough for the first response to add value

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**If staff are no longer on desk, make sure they're visible elsewhere**

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**After-hours circulation**

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**After-hours circulation so far** 

- Lockers seem most successful as “express library” in an area not otherwise served - 24/7 alternative to bookmobile stop
- Dispensers seem better suited to areas with high foot traffic or long waits
- Interest from hospitals, corporate campuses
- Weather sensitive
- Best to combine with catalog/holds function and book return
- Lockers much less temperamental – and less interesting to new users – than dispensers
- More activity during morning hours

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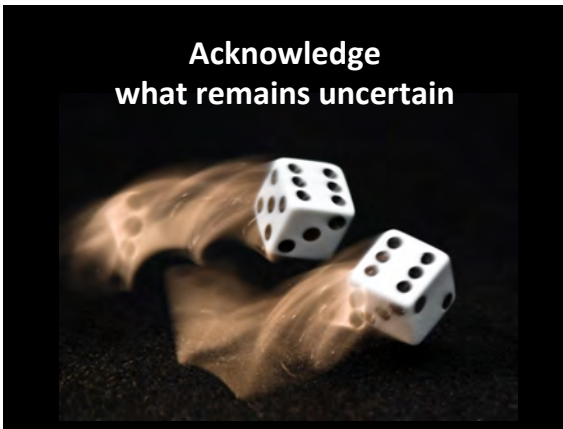
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**What could we accomplish  
if we didn't spend so much time  
covering all those desks?**



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*joan@jfwilliams.com*



**Let's continue  
the  
conversation...**

Photo by Martin Helmke

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