

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

**Presented by  
Joan Frye Williams  
Wednesday, December 4, 2013**



**I do this so  
you don't  
have to**

# My observations of new service models in action



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



WORK IN PROGRESS

# Reference desk trends

## Public libraries:

- 25-35% “real” reference
- 15-20% basic catalog lookup and/or holds
- 30-35% technology
- 10-30% directional

## Academic libraries:

- 40-50% “real” reference
- 20-25% printing and copying
- 10-15% other technology
- 10-30% directional



# Changing responsibility for



- Intercept
- Triage
- Response
- Follow-up

# 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



# Co-located service desks





# 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

# Consolidated service desk



# 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



# Distributed service kiosks

# 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



**Flexible  
alternative:  
mobile desk**

# Roving reference



# 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

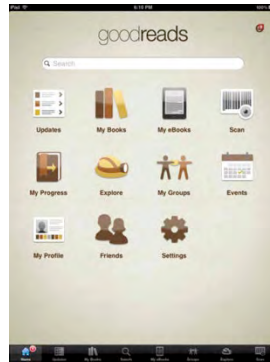


- Rovers not always clearly identifiable as library staff
- Can be seen as intrusive
- Some staff have trouble adjusting to proactive role



# 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

# When staff won't rove

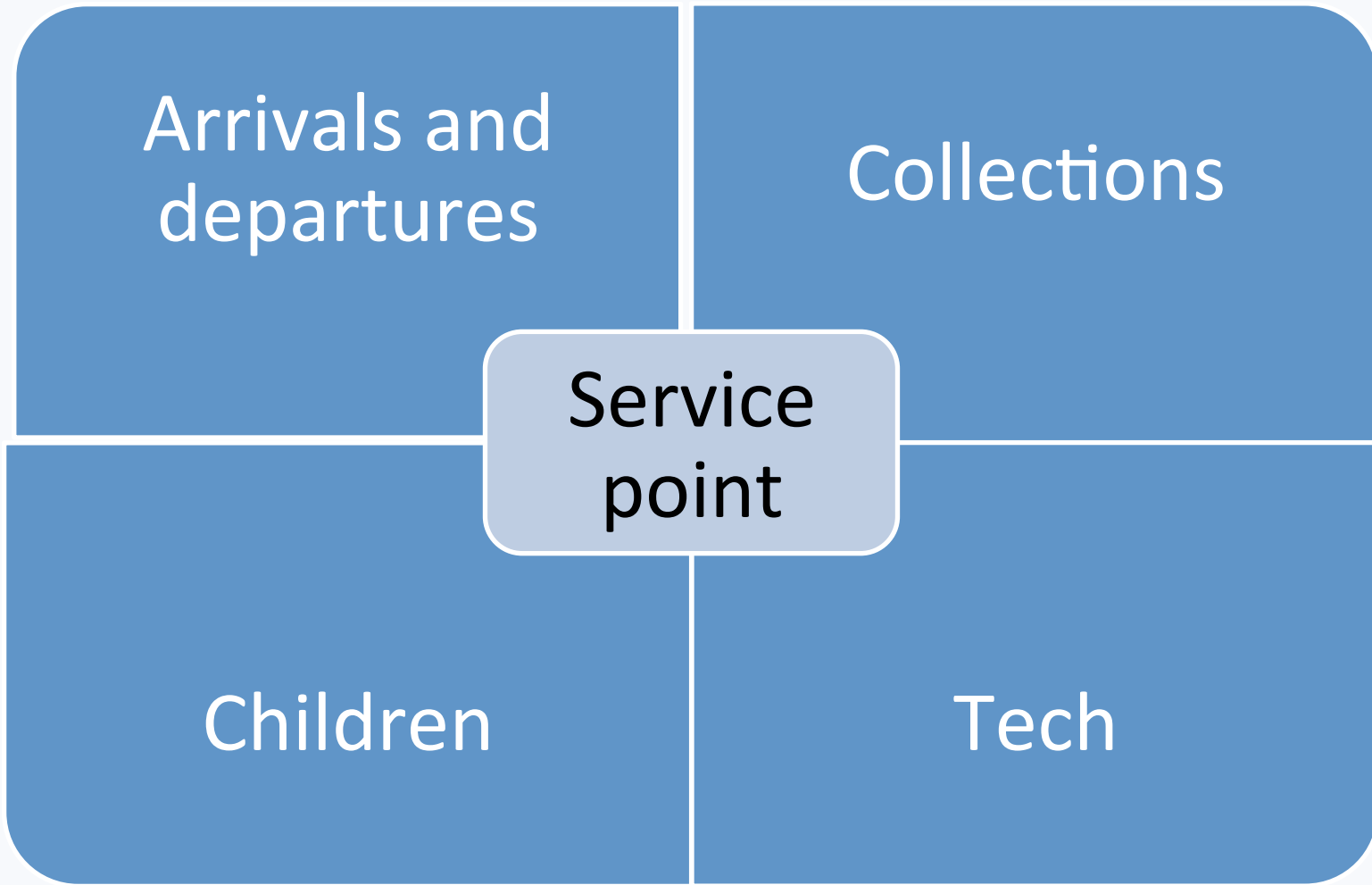
- Listen to their concerns
- Support them with training, tools, and content
- Link roving to user outcomes
- Schedule in 1-hour increments
- Be open to adjustments based on actual results
- Resist attempts to go back to “normal”
- Reconfigure the furniture
- As a last resort, reassign them





**Flexible  
alternative:  
prepare  
everyone  
to be a  
first responder**

# Zone staffing



# 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

# Trendy learning commons



# Effective learning commons



# Trendy maker space





# Effective maker space



# Another effective maker space



# 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



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



**After-hours circulation**

# 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



Success

Failure

**Consult with  
front line staff**





**Be forthright about why  
you want to do this**





**Be specific  
about what  
you know  
will change**

**Acknowledge  
what remains uncertain**



**Anticipate new situations  
and develop tools to match them**



**Prototype with volunteer staff,  
then have them train others**



# Set clear behavioral expectations



**Hold everyone accountable**

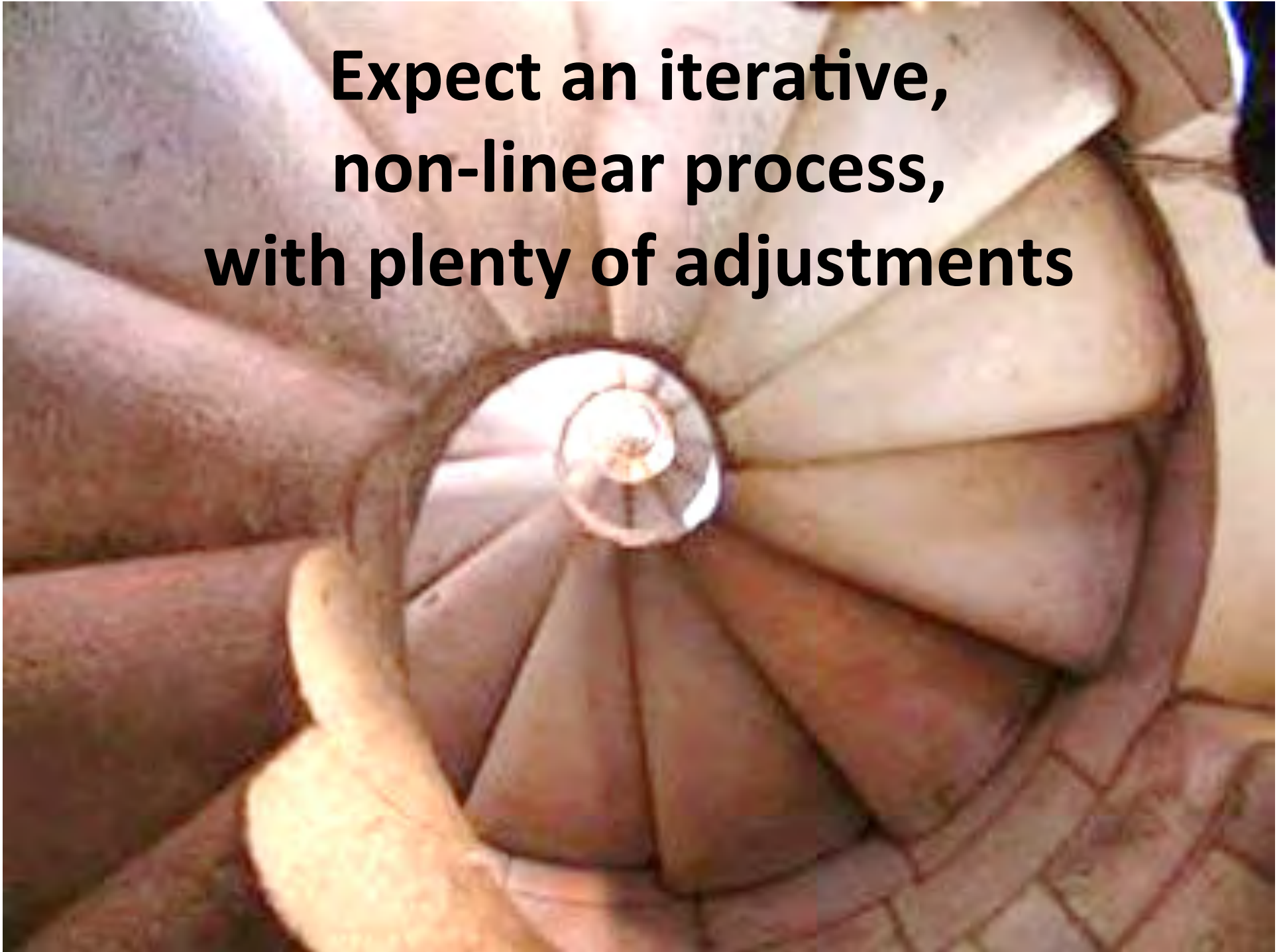


# **Report progress from the user's perspective**





**Expect an iterative,  
non-linear process,  
with plenty of adjustments**





**Keep moving forward**

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



*joan@jfwilliams.com*



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

Photo by Martin Helmke

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