

Delaware Reference Services Group and Liaison Meeting

Wednesday May 21, 2014

10am to 12pm at Dover Public Library, Meeting Room



<http://aalstaff.lib.de.us/>

Notes

In attendance: Wendy Roberts (Laurel PL), Katie McDonough (DDL), Stacy Teffreau (Seaford), Lisa Burris (Bear), Alta Porterfield (DDL/IS), Catherine Wimberley (Dover), Patty Hartmannsgruber (DTCC-Owens), Renee O'Donnell (Wilmington PL), Sarena Fletcher (DDL), Beverly LaFazia (Millsboro PL), Kevin Swed (Claymont PL), Beth-Ann Ryan (DDL – Deputy Director), Dr. Annie Norman (DDL – State Librarian), Cathay Keough (DDL)

(10:00) Welcome!

- I. One year review
 - a. From AaLDE to Delaware Reference Services – what's next?

Annie introduced the group to new ways of looking at reference services. She gave an example from career cards she obtained from the US Department of Labor. On these, there is a card for “librarian” which, while the image of a librarian is updated, the description of what a librarian does is outdated. (She has been in contact with the Department of Labor to get this updated.)

She pointed out that the Dewey Delaware Data (shown from July 2013 through January 2014) gives us some important insight about what library staff are doing, what types of questions are being asked, but that ‘we need more information’ about what we are doing. A book called “Staffing for Results: a guide to working smarter” (Mayo/Goodrich, 2002) was also shown to the group. We are encouraged to have copies, but as these are more expensive (out of print), there may be some in our libraries from a previous initiative to work with this book. It has ideas and samples that may be relevant to the questions we are asking about our change in reference services. For example, Annie distributed a copy of Workform 7 from the book, that provides a template and sample for tracking a ‘look at your day.’ This is one idea for figuring out how library staffs’ days are filled, and may help in justifying more staff be hired.

It also can help us redefine our reference services as we move from “Delaware Reference Services Group” to “Delaware Public Services Group.” Annie announced that this new name will help us coordinate, plan and organize holistically (move from silos) in our libraries, beyond the desks. Annie stated that reference librarians are the group that can lead the way in this

change and that we need a broader perspective; representatives from circulation staff, computer aides, programming staff, IS/MakerSpace, youth services, etc.

It was mentioned that the term “Public Services” may be more understandable to the general public and to staff, and more will be able to grasp this concept. She pointed out that smaller libraries are ‘multitasking like crazy’ and we want to strengthen reference.

It was reiterated that while reference statistics show a decline, staff who provide reference services consistently state that they are very busy. It would be good to know what is happening on the desk, in our libraries. Professional development needs may then be better designed.

Staff who provide reference services can take a broader leadership role – the other services are “add-ons” (see “The Rule of 1965” handed out at this meeting*).

One participant noted that “it seems like I have to learn, master, take on something new every six months.” She gave the example of the upcoming roll-out of 3D printers. These add-ons are being added on, and makes her job busier with very little new staff to help.

Cathay offered to visit some public libraries to participate in a typical day on the reference desk or in the library. She’d like to stay a day at a public library in each county, at a minimum. Brandywine Hundred may be the first. It was pointed out that BH, Newark and Bear in New Castle County are the three busiest, and to get a varied perspective, it may be good to visit others, too. Bear (Lisa), Claymont (Kevin), Wilmington/North Wilmington (Renee) offered their locations for these visits. Cathay will arrange time to spend in some of these libraries soon and would like to have Kent and Sussex County opportunities, too.

b. Capturing Library Stories

- i. Impactful example from Colorado Librarian Pam Sandlian Smith/TedTalk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa6ERdxyYdo>

Pam has also developed Anythink (<https://www.anythinklibraries.org>)

- ii. We have a place to submit library stories for Delaware library interactions online: <http://bit.ly/1aNBRye> This will help with advocacy efforts, too!

c. Some specific changes in Delaware reference services (IS, Descriptive Codes, Resources)

- i. IS (Inspiration Spaces) are more than the former job centers and the former job centers are changing to accommodate a broader range of community needs (entrepreneurship, health care/tax needs, etc. in addition to job seekers). These needs are in all of our public libraries and the spaces can be anywhere there.

There was discussion of 3D printers (Sarena Fletcher) including consideration for training, placement, portability. (Contact Sarena Fletcher if you have 3D printer questions: sarena.fletcher@lib.de.us)

- ii. Descriptive Codes are growing in use on chat/email and we are beginning to see patterns. It was pointed out that what is happening online shows a bit difference in what patrons may be asking in person, such as the number of ebook-related questions.
- iii. Resources – There was a discussion about what library staff use while helping patrons. As libraries change, the resources we are accustomed to sometimes change (from physical to digital), but we must make sure there are no gaps. The LibGuides can be an ‘go-to’ place for much of our information needs (beyond Google).

The idea of having a survey for patrons to quickly use to indicate whether they found the information they needed or not (and what it was they needed) was suggested. DDL/Beth-Ann will see about adding this soon.

There was also mention of a search feature that can be more federated to cover what is in our databases. Different software/vendors do not communicate well with each other in this way, but there are ways to improve searching capabilities. DDL/Beth-Ann will check on this.

- II. AalDE Reports and Discussion about Software – revisiting local vs. global and 24/7 usage (see supplement information showing comparison January and April 2014 hourly usage of chat sessions requested by Delaware patrons. The details reveal what general types of questions are being asked during which hours in April, and gives a look at the amount of Delaware traffic after library hours. Mondays and Wednesdays are the busiest days, from the hours of 10am to 3 or 4pm. We currently have most of these hours covered, thanks to our current Delaware providers of chat.

We’re looking at this very closely as we consider changing to a different software. Springshare’s products work together and they have chat and texting capabilities. We may see if LibChat and LibAnswers (a knowledge base we can well develop for Delaware patrons’ needs) can improve our online access, and it easily ties connects patrons with the resources found in the LibGuides.

LibChat and LibAnswers are under review now. No decision has been made as of this meeting and QuestionPoint software will not be immediately or abruptly dropped.

- III. Database Review Summary – As discussed at Database Days, the support from Steering and the Council on Libraries allow us to examine databases on a very deep level, even to consider a major shift away from these. We’ve been tracking statistics and the low use from public libraries is apparent. We’re upping the open source journals and resources, such as found in our LibGuides.

Annie gave an update earlier in the meeting, indicating that we are likely going to drop ProQuest (very little use and libraries can subscribe to News Journal, if desired, independently, since this is the main product used in this database, when it was used). We are looking at Ebsco's Flipster (instead of Zinio) as it may link to the Ebsco MasterFile database as way to search for articles while also having the browsing feature of an online magazine, in addition to Ebsco's Academic File Premier or MasterFile, Novelist (that is tied into our catalog), and Reference USA (as provided through Ebsco) as a bundled product. Prices are being negotiated now but nothing has been finalized one way or another as of this meeting. Mango and Credo Reference will not be added statewide.

Database page on <http://delawarelibraries.org> (emagazines and more) is changing to bring in our LibGuides. The development page was shown and as of May 22, is live:
<http://lib.de.us/ebooks-more/>

IV. Changes to our Reference Services Meetings – monthly and alternate virtual with F2F

For June's meeting, please consider having a headset if possible (with a microphone so we can more easily talk among our group). A webcam is encouraged but is not necessary (unless you are presenting).

If you would like to set up a few moments to make sure your computer and equipment function well, please email Cathay (cathay.keough@lib.de.us).

Upcoming:

June: Wednesday June 18, **online via Adobe Connect** 10am – 12pm

July: Wednesday July 16, at the Dover Public Library

August: Wednesday August 20, **online via Adobe Connect**

September: Wednesday September 17, at the Dover Public Library

October: Wednesday October 15, **online via Adobe Connect**

All meeting times are normally scheduled from 10am to 12pm. If we add a presentation or learning opportunity, the meeting time may change to accommodate this.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05pm

*Hyman, K. (1999). Customer Service and the 'Rule of 1965'. *American Libraries*, 30(9), 54.

Delaware Division of Libraries

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References

Hyman, K. (1999). Customer Service and the 'Rule of 1965'. *American Libraries*, 30(9), 54.

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Section:

Customer Service

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND THE "RULE OF 1965"

Some libraries retain a bias that keeps attitudes Stuck in the past, no matter How much reality changes

I am rethinking customer service basics in an electronic environment. I begin with the premise that today's failures in customer service are largely attributable to the turbulence of massive change and the anxiety and amnesia that come with it. As I explore the use of technology to provide poor service in new and irritating ways, however, I encounter a familiar and enduring motif. I name it the Rule of 1965; while the choice of year is arbitrary, the phenomenon is not new.

Simply put, customer service, according to the Rule of 1965, defines anything the library did prior to 1965 as basic; everything else is extra. For decades, libraries have dealt with change by setting limits that marginalize what we do and ensure that library services are sometimes good but rarely essential to any but the neediest or the most determined. Often the limits hang around forever, well beyond growing pains or economic imperative, defended vociferously by those born after the original change took place.

Libraries are well behind airlines, banks, and retail businesses in the use of technology to provide poor service. Conversely, our own town halls--with building-permit processes preserved in amber since 1935 far eclipse us in complete resistance to change. Libraries do change, but our penchant for stalling on the way makes the Rule of 1965 our specialty.

For example, look at an old and ubiquitous technology. We started offering some kind of reference service over the telephone at least 30 years ago. Most of us still place the caller in a losing competition with in-library users for staff attention. Perhaps we don't publicize the service at all. Is it because calling is not as legitimate as coming in person? Because it's bad to make the person in front of us wait while we talk on the phone? Isn't that more reason to get telephone reference away from the public desk and into an environment where it can be delivered efficiently? Doing that might require refocusing staff, space, and collections, and rethinking our role in doing research for individual and recurring needs.

We've had 30 years to work on it and most libraries haven't started. The Rule of 1965 says we don't have to: In-library reference service is basic, telephone reference is extra--if and when we have time. Is it surprising, then, when e-mail reference, an electronic help desk, or an actually useful Web page fall even further down on the food chain?

[What's wrong with this picture?](#)

- Your reference staff refuses to fax responses, even when it's cheaper than reading the answer on the phone, because "it's not fair when everybody doesn't have a fax machine."
- Your library treats \$20 videos like the Hope Diamond with user fees and special loss or damage agreements more restrictive than those for \$75 books.
- You charge handling fees for "individual services" like interlibrary loans.
- You offer services that you don't publicize because too many people might want them.
- Your voice mail says you're busy serving library users and people should call back or come in if they want service.

There is no statute of limitations on the Rule of 1965. Following the rule, it's possible to offer a new service begrudgingly for decades, to offer mediocre service and make people jump through hoops to get it, as long as it falls outside of our chronologically determined primary responsibility. Rule of 1965 axioms-user demand equals pesky annoyance, and fairness means doing less for somebody--help to maintain the attitudinal status quo in the face of all evidence to the contrary.

Is the Rule still relevant when new technology has transformed most libraries? Check out the latest library-related Internet discussion lists, where combatants vie for the clincher analogy with

the past to justify "just say no" positions. Service, according to the Rule of 1965, is daily proof that having new machines is not the same as embracing new roles.

[What's wrong with this picture, round two](#)

Arrogance, myopia, negativity, double standards, and excessive hoop-jumping are telltale signs of new services according to the Rule. Is this your library? Add up your yeses.

- Negative statements outnumber positive statements in your Internet access policy by more than two to one. If you have three or more disclaimers, add an additional yes.
- Multiple staff still share PCs and e-mail addresses.
- You're "thinking about" offering e-mail reference.
- Your e-mail reference form begins with a disclaimer. Add another yes if your disclaimer looks anything like the following: "While e-mail allows you to transmit your request instantaneously, we cannot guarantee the speed of response. All questions transmitted to the library through e-mail are downloaded once daily when time permits."
- Your public access to the Internet is also at the "thinking about it" stage. Also count this as a yes if your ratio of public PCs is one for every 10,000 registered borrowers. Add an additional yes, if one or more PCs are usually out of order and/or you continually grouse about users' unwillingness to share the three PCs nicely.
- Your open-access procedures involve five or more rules. Example: "An individual has up to one hour on the Internet if others are waiting and up to two hours maximum if no one is waiting and is limited to two hours per day, regardless of how many terminals are used except on Sundays when an individual has up to one half-hour on the Internet if others are waiting and up to one hour maximum if others are not waiting"
- Your computer sign-up procedures involve five or more rules. Example: "An individual may sign up no more than two weeks in advance for a maximum of two one-hour noncontiguous time periods weekly for a total maximum of four one-hour time periods monthly but will relinquish said time period upon arrival more than 10 minutes late and will be restricted from signing up for additional time periods for a period of"
- Your policy still says anything like the following: "The library cannot guarantee that Internet-trained staff will be available to assist users. Library staff is not able to offer explanations of the Internet or computer jargon or offer individual training." Add an additional yes if a sanctimonious statement about intellectual freedom appears in close proximity to the above.
- Your public Internet training sessions are nonexistent or a National Library Week special. Add an additional yes if you've decided that you can't offer help because too many people want it.
- Your Web page was last updated three or more months ago and links to bullet lists with names like "2,000 Best Investment Resources." Add an additional yes if it's alternated in Dewey Decimal order.
- You disallow all public use of the Internet for personal communication (e-mail, chat, etc.). Add an additional yes if your decision rests on precedent ("We never offered a room full of phones, did we?") or if you also describe yourself as an Internet safety net for those without access.
- Your policy defines Internet access as a tax-funded privilege. Example: "Internet access is a privilege, not a right, which may be revoked at any time for inappropriate conduct." To check if you would say the same about a pre-1965 service, even if true, try substituting "checking out books" for "Internet access" to see how it sounds. Consider the PR value of putting a large sign to this effect over the circulation desk.

So how are you doing? If most of the questions don't apply to your library at all, you're devoting effort and resources to new technology. If you answered yes 10 or more times, however, your customer service is somewhere in the pre-Woodstock generation, whatever the size or budget of your institution or the state of your technology. Five or more yeses? You may be a good library that is grasping mediocrity from the jaws of victory. No yeses? You could be dishonest. You could be delusional. Or you could be wonderful.

[Choosing new services: five hard questions](#)

Are you looking at new delivery mechanisms for services you currently provide and still want to provide? Library Web pages, e-mail reference, electronic pathfinders, and remote access to library resources are not new services, they're new delivery mechanisms. Use of the latest relevant technology to deliver a basic service is basic.

Are you considering what business you're in, want to be in, or need to be in? If you're still struggling with training or electronic publishing, how will you handle the personal use and converging-technology issues that are five minutes down the pike?

If you really are the Internet safety net, how do you justify not offering access to options available to private users? Options are mushrooming that are not necessarily a good fit with public space as we've defined it thus far.

Are you avoiding (or paying lip service to) great services that you could be providing right now, because they would transform the way we do business?

Are you defining realistic expectations in terms of what you can provide or what people need and want today?

[Choosing new services: five easy questions](#)

Do you have the skills? No.

Do you have the time? No.

Do you have the resources? No.

Is it difficult to manage? Yes.

Can it be abused? Yes.

None of the above is a reason not to do something, because the answers are always the same for any significant change.

[Five things you can start today](#)

1. Remember that the customer is not the enemy. Many libraries seem to operate on the theory that 40,000 customers can't be right. If you're spending a lot of time explaining to people why they can't have or do what they want, look for a way to let them do it. Lose the adversarial, parental tone in your signage, rules, and verbal communication. The bad children are 40 now and they don't have to take it anymore.

- 2. Create a climate in your library that supports change. This takes time, teamwork, appreciation for different styles, and whatever reward system can be created within your antediluvian personnel system. If you haven't started yet, start now. Use some of the time you spend grousing about staff who don't like change.
- 3. Survey the environment continuously. People give us free marketing information every day by telling us what they like and don't like. Start by paying attention and sharing this information and continue with library staff at every kind of community group listening to the people who don't use the library. Look at what other libraries are doing, steal from the best, and give them credit.
- 4. Redirect resources. Go after a bigger budget and outside funding, but don't wait for them or the proverbial "extra time" to make significant changes. Look at the whole picture--the status quo and the potential--on the same playing field and choose based on today's priorities. If your choice is between doing more things less well or really delivering on the highest priorities, consider the latter. Remember that no service is so useless that somebody doesn't love it.
- 5. Treat every customer like a person. When we categorize people--problem patron, angry mother, deadbeat borrower, greedy computer user--we feel free to ignore their feelings and their messages and transform ourselves into hall monitors or victims. Remember the last time that you felt really good about dealing with someone, even if you didn't get what you wanted? Chances are you were treated like a person, not a type.

[Why is all this important?](#)

- Because most libraries are making a heroic effort to offer new technology, often without new resources, and it's a shame to put in 80% of the effort for 20% of the effect.
- Because old-style thinking makes good libraries mediocre and mediocre libraries untenable.
- Because the visibility that technology brings is a double-edged sword.
- Because we have a long way to go in delivering service so in tune with our customer's lives and needs that we are essential.

[The Rule of 1965 dictates:](#)

- Anything the library did prior to 1965 is basic; everything else is extra.
- Any new service must be offered begrudgingly--for decades.
- Patrons must jump through hoops to get it.

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By Karen Hyman

KAREN HYMAN ([hyman@sjrlc.org](mailto:hyman@sjrlc.org)) is the executive director of the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative. This article is adapted from a talk about customer service and the Internet that she gave for the University of Maryland's Public Library Leadership Institute.