

BOOK REVIEW

Customer Service in Academic Libraries: Tales from the Front Line. Edited by Stephen Mossop; Chandos Publishing, Watham, 2016. ISBN 978-1-84334-758-3, 153 pages.

Resources, users and staff are important components of library services. Libraries strive for maximum utilization of resources, fulfilling user needs and enhancing user satisfaction levels irrespective of the changing library environment in the internet era. The Reference Librarian usually assists the users with their various requirements. Beyond the reference desk, there are other library outreach initiatives such as library orientation tours, distribution of brochures, feedback surveys, inviting suggestions and so on. There is also the all important role of the internet that includes the library website, email, social network, etc., that play a very effective role in not only outreach activities but also providing information services.

Customer service in libraries is not a new topic. However, views of front line staff or the library staff who interact directly with the library users in different library environments are difficult to come by. Stephen Mossop who has not only edited the book but who has also authored three chapters (the first two and the seventh) has done a good job of getting five other chapters from as many libraries to elaborate the customer service based on the authors' experiences in these libraries.

The first chapter 'Customer Service – what's the Big Deal' by Mossop discusses terminological issues (customer, user, patron, reader, etc), thinking like a customer, mapping customer's experience, customer service standards and building customer relationships. In the second chapter, the author describes staffing the front line, dwells on recruiting, developing and rewarding staff and listening & learning.

The next five chapters (3 to 7) are actually five case studies of customer services in different academic libraries in different parts of the world. Ester Woo narrates about the University of Hong

Kong Libraries experiences in the chapter titled, "Marshalling a century experience: Customizing services for next generation of users" highlighting how university libraries grow continuously in respect of customer service along with the physical environment of libraries.

Chapter 4, "Customer Service in 24/7 Environment: The Exeter Experience" authored by Roxanne Crabb describes the University of Exeter Library, UK experience. The author speaks about roving, roaming, floor-walking, etc., for deeper engagement with library users. In chapter five, Tracy Dexter-Ingram, shares her experiences while dealing with customers at St. Albans Campus Library, Victoria University, and Melbourne, Australia. In chapter six, Mine Akkurt discusses about innovations in user services at Sabanci University Information center, Istanbul, Turkey. The author stresses about the formulation of service standards for uniform implementation.

In chapter 7, Doreen Pinfold narrates experiences on sharing library services in Falmouth University and the University of Exeter, Penryn Campus. Chapter 8, which is also the last chapter with the title "Where next for the "Front Line"?", Stephen Mossop summarizes and draws conclusions from the case studies. He argues the case that based on experiences that front line staff have, they are quite successful even in the digital library environment.

This book is an essential read for the teachers and students of library & information science, particularly those interested in academic library system. Librarians may also enjoy reading the book and get some ideas for improving customer service in their own libraries.

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