

Supporting & troubleshooting consumer devices on the fly

- So you're minding your own business when a customer comes up to you and thrusts a piece of electronic equipment into your hands. "I don't know how to work this darn thing," they say. "The grandkids gave it to me for my birthday. What can I do with it?" Or you get a call from a customer who says "I need to find out how to download audiobooks to my Kindle Fire." The problem is – you've never seen or worked with this particular device before.

No need to panic – here are some tips and tricks you can use.

- **If the person is a walk-in**, it is perfectly acceptable to say that you can't help them right now but that you will be happy to make an appointment with them for later. (I often do this when I am working the Ref Desk – otherwise I end up trying to help someone with their device while simultaneously putting books on hold for another customer and looking up a phone number.)
- Tell the customer: "I've never worked on this kind of device before, so please be patient with me." Next, take a deep breath and get curious (not nervous). Remind yourself that you **don't** need to have everything figured out yet – that's why you just told the customer they will need to be patient with you!
- Think back to other devices that you've encountered/used in the past. Look for similarities between this new device and the one(s) that you are already familiar with. Chances are, you can already figure out the basics of how to use it (where the power button is, for example).
- It's almost a guarantee that someone else had the same (or a similar) problem and wrote about it on the Internet. Learn from them!! **Google** the problem's symptoms, or Google the task you're trying to complete – e.g. *archive kindle book* or "*the exact error message*" (if it's an exact error message, use quotations, so it'll search for the error message as a phrase). Scan the results page and select links that look like they might be able to help. In at least 70 – 80% of cases, this will give you enough information to figure it out.
- *Note:* At first, it may take you a few tries to find what you need because you're not sure of the best way to search, and also, sometimes it is hard to figure out the correct language to describe a problem. This kind of thing gets easier with

practice. Often you won't find exactly what you need, but you can find enough to extrapolate from.

- Often you can locate the manual online (quickest way to find the manual: Google the device brand, model number and the word *Manual*) – but be aware that most manuals' troubleshooting sections are pretty weak.
- If you remain stumped, remember you don't have to solve the problem RIGHT THIS MINUTE. Tell the customer you can't figure out a solution just yet, and you need to do some more research. Take their contact info and device info, and then get back to them, or have them make an appointment to bring the device in again.
- Find the contact information of Customer Service for the device. You can at least give that to the customer if all else fails. (Need a phone #? Use GetHuman.com.)

Times that you really may not be able to help a customer right away

- Their device isn't charged. You can't do much with a dead device.
- They don't remember their Amazon password. (Their user ID is usually their email address.) Google *forgot Amazon password*. One of the first links is for Amazon's **Forgot Your Password** page. Amazon will email a new password to the customer.
- They can't remember the password for their Adobe ID. (Their Adobe ID is usually their email address.) Google *forgot adobe id password*. The link you're looking for will probably be in the top 5. Adobe will email a new password to the customer.

When I make one-on-one appointments with people I always ask:

- Please make sure your device is charged overnight before you come to the library.
- Please bring your login and password information (for Amazon, B&N or Adobe)
- Please bring your library card with you.
- I will try to bring my laptop, smartphone or an iPad to the appointment, so that I can look stuff up when I need help figuring out how the device works.

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