MentorNJ Presents

The Reality of Now:
Library Customer Service in a Pandemic

With Joanne P. Roukens, MLS
Wednesday, May 27, 2020
This program is NOT advocating for opening libraries sooner than would be safe for staff and the communities they serve.

It’s about applying the principles of good customer service in the new environment we will face when libraries reopen.

It will not cover legal issues, personnel issues or health/sanitation procedures in any detail.
Joanne P. Roukens, MLS

www.joanneroukensconsulting.com

Contact: jproukens@gmail.com
Online meetups organized by library staff

- Meetup Monday
- Tech
- Juggling Librarianship and Parenting
- Adventures in Administration
- Self-care
- Youth Services
Overview

• Our new reality
• Mutual care
• Best practices for reopening
• Delivering service
After This Program, You Will Be Able To:

• Identify steps to get services ready to open
• Describe good customer service
• Apply behaviors that ensure good customer service
• Share ideas and strategies on being a customer focused library
The Reality of Now
What is Your Current Employment Status?

• Working from home
• Working in the library building
• Working from home and in the building
• Laid off/Unemployed
• Furloughed
Our Reality

• Fear
• Uncertainty
• Death
• Job loss
• Paying the bills
• Parenting
Our Reality

- Caring for elders
- Overwhelmed
- Less staff
- Slashed budgets
- High health risk
- Privacy concerns
Our Reality

- Public health
- Non-compliant people
- Working conditions
- Job creep
- Collections
Our Reality

- Libraries closed
- Virtual services
- Social media
- Outreach
- Working from home
- Working harder
Our Reality

• New skills
• New habits
• New rules
• New risks
Reopening Our Libraries

- NJLA Webinar
- TOPCATS Best Practices
Who & What Are TOPCATS

• LibraryLinkNJ (LLNJ) convened the Taskforce On Post COVID-19 Alignment, Trends and Strategies
• Explore issues, strategies, and solutions
• LLNJ, NJSL, NJLA, NJLTA
• Staff from libraries across the state
TOPCATS Best Practices

• Phase 1: Libraries Closed to the Public
• Phase 2: Libraries Prepare for Opening
• Phase 3: Libraries Operate with Limited Services
• Phase 4: Libraries Open with Expanded Services
• Phase 5: Libraries Operate in a New Normal
Reopening Our Libraries

Each Phase: 3 sections

1. Safety & security
2. Library operations
3. Services, programming and customer support
Internal & External Support
Our Public Trusts Us
There is no more important asset than staff.
Mutual Care

- Management’s No. 1 job – PROTECT STAFF
- Human beings more important than services
- MUST - Staff feedback and inclusion
- Validate people’s real concerns
- Morale = safety
Mutual Care

- Total support of staff dealing with library users who don’t comply with health and safety measures
- Decisions have very serious consequences
- Emerge as stronger and healthier than before – a better workplace
Good Service - Four Behaviors

1. Approachable
2. Attentive
3. Helpful
4. Considerate
Communication

- Administration
- Staff
- Library users
How Are We Communicating

- Zoom
- Phone
- Email
- Social media
- In-person
Three Steps

1. Ask
2. Respond
3. Satisfy
Face-to-Face Communication

- Through our words
- Through our voice
- Through our body language
Face-to-Face Communication

- Words: 7 Percent
- Voice: 38 Percent
- Body Language: 55 Percent

Conveying the Message
Digital/Virtual Services

- Webpage
- Chat
- Messaging
- Social Media
- Email
Difficult Situations & Complaints

Every problem that can be found in the world at large can be found in a library.
First Impressions
Four Steps to Saying No

1. Express regret
2. Give the reason
3. Explain what you will do next
4. Offer alternatives
LED Method

1. Listen
2. Empathize
3. Diffuse
Empathy Fatigue

- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion
- Many of us are here already – staff & management
Help One Another

- Post rules
- Communicate
- Keep alert
- Be consistent
- Work out intervention
Hurdles

• Physical building
• Information access
• Policies and procedures
• Collections
• Attitudes
Policies and Procedures

The Reality of Now – ever changing

- Review at least once a month
- Reflect the developing now
- Policies are not for the 10%
- Positive, not negative
- Support the staff and patrons
Being Inclusive

- Personal barriers
- Health issues
- Living circumstances
A User Focused Library

1. Asks current users their expectations
2. Asks how you can communicate
3. Asks what services they need
A User Focused Library

4. Creates a system to provide the service
5. Gives them what they need
6. Refers them to services you can’t provide

And repeats this with non-customers!
How Are We Going to Do This?

- AAHC
- Ask, Respond, Satisfy
- Face-to-Face
- Support
Curbside Service - Planning

- Stay at home order lifted
- Health & hygiene
- Staff input
- Detailed/flexible
- Staff training
Curbside Service - Planning

- TOPCATS
- Many others
Curbside Service – Policies & Procedures

• No. 1 Goal – health & hygiene
• Board Approval
• Communicate
  • Staff
  • Local officials
  • Public
Curbside Service - Where, When & How

- Safety & hygiene
- Equipment
- Shelter & weather
- Staff comfort
- Make choices, parameters
Curbside Service - Signs

- Helpful
- Clear, large, colorful
- Welcoming
- Not too many
- Withstands weather
Curbside Service - Face-to-Face

- Staff PPE
- Personalize
  - Photograph
  - Button
  - Name tag
Curbside Service - Face-to-Face

- Verbal
- Greeting – smile!
- “Welcome! How can I help you today?”
- Yes, No, refer
- Thank them
Curbside Service - Face-to-Face

- Body Language
  - Wave!
  - Nod
  - Hand gestures
  - Stance/posture
Curbside Service - Problems

- Express regret
- Give a reason
- Explain what you will do
- Offer alternatives
Curbside Service – Learn, Adjust

- Observe
- Gather feedback
- Evaluate
- Change
- Try again
There is no magic wand to make people “behave” and comply
You will need to turn people away if they violate the law and library rules.
Focusing on Health

- Physical & emotional
- Self-care
- Well being
- Silence is damaging
Focusing on Each Other

- Teamwork
- Recognition of new dangers
- Tell staff they are appreciated
Focusing on Emotions

- Respected & valued
- Heard & understood
- Trusting & being trusted
- Being involved
We All Need

- Respect
- Patience
- Convenience
- Acknowledgement

- Approachable
- Attentive
- Helpful
- Considerate
Questions & Sharing
Review

- Mutual care
- Reality of now
- Reopening
- Service considerations
- Care & support
Joanne P. Roukens, MLS

Joanne served as the Assistant Director for LibraryLinkNJ, The New Jersey Library Cooperative (LLNJ) from 2010 - 2019. A very proud member of the Library Gods & Goddesses Trivia Team, her contribution is expertise in classic film, literary detectives/classic mysteries, British history, and food. Joanne is still waiting to apply her deep knowledge of royal tiaras in a competition.

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