

Service Excellence in Challenging Times

Keep calm, confident, and capable of
guiding your library through difficult times

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Meet Pat

- Consultant/trainer for libraries since 1978
- Experienced in community organizing
- Born and raised: South Side of Chicago

Images: Pixabay.com
Wagner family





Key Idea

Evolve and sustain
a welcoming library,
consistently,
for all customers.

Agenda

- Introduction: Our Roles
- The Welcoming Library
 - Planning, execution, and evaluation
 - Creating new standards and policies
- The Ethics of Excellent Customer Service
 - Behavior: How we listen and how we act
- Our collections, services, programs and staffing
- Our physical environment
- Next steps

Section One

- **Introduction: Our Roles**
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Our Roles



Roles for Service Excellence

Service excellence is
everyone's job.

And often the same people will
be playing **different roles.**

Roles: Different Points of View

Different points of view

- Leadership: Principles, Values, Mission, Vision
- Management: Projects, Goals, Consistency
- Supervision: People
- Staff: Professional and technical skills, Service
- Internal Customer Service means that everyone who works for your library treats each other well.

Roles: Leadership

- Director, trustees, elected and appointed officials, governing and advisory boards, community representatives.
- Makes decisions regarding top priorities, with input from all.
- **Champions causes and initiatives.**
- Communicates directly with political and financial decision-makers.

Roles: Management

- Administrators, branch and building managers, department heads, work team leaders, project managers.
- Ensures goals are met by setting project priorities and providing resources.
- **Coordinate and maintain consistency within and between departments and buildings and throughout the library.**

Roles: Supervision

- Supervisors, work team leaders, and those who supervise other supervisors and managers.
- Translate goals into action where the “rubber hits the road.”
- Support frontline and backroom staff decisions.
- Gather input from staff regarding customer interactions for tweaking policies and procedures.
- **Uphold library standards through education and positive reinforcement.**
- Identify and share better practices among staff.

Roles: Staff



Roles: Staff

- Frontline staff (Access services): Circulation, reference, shelving, children's, YA, outreach, online tech support, and direct interactions with external library customers.
- Support staff (Technical services and administration): Cataloging, collection development, acquisitions, processing, IT and technical support, web user experience (UX), finance.
- **External customer service**
- Collect data and information re success of library services, collections, programming, and staffing.

Internal Customer Service

- Everyone who works with and for your library, in all roles, at all times, treats each other well.
- How **you treat each other** will impact how you interact with your library's customers.

Section Two

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The Welcoming Library



The Welcoming Library

Five Principles: What is Today's Score?

- Consistency
- Safety for the stranger
- The details count
- Partner with customers
- We take this seriously.

Welcoming Library: Examples

- **Consistency:** Everyone is treated **with the same courtesy**, regardless of age, appearance, ethnicity, political creed, socioeconomic status, or what information they ask for.
- **Safety for the stranger:** Newcomers and longtime friends receive the **same level of service**.
- **The details count:** We **smile at everyone**.
- **Partner with customers:** We **ask for advice** about programming and collection development.
- **We take this seriously:** We **write down complaints**, and **provide a deadline for responses**.

Planning

Customer service excellence is a goal, meaning **a priority**, in the strategic plan, with specific outcomes, leadership support, budgets, and a plan for evaluation.

Execution



Execution

Customer service excellence
is **a priority** for every supervisor
and manager.

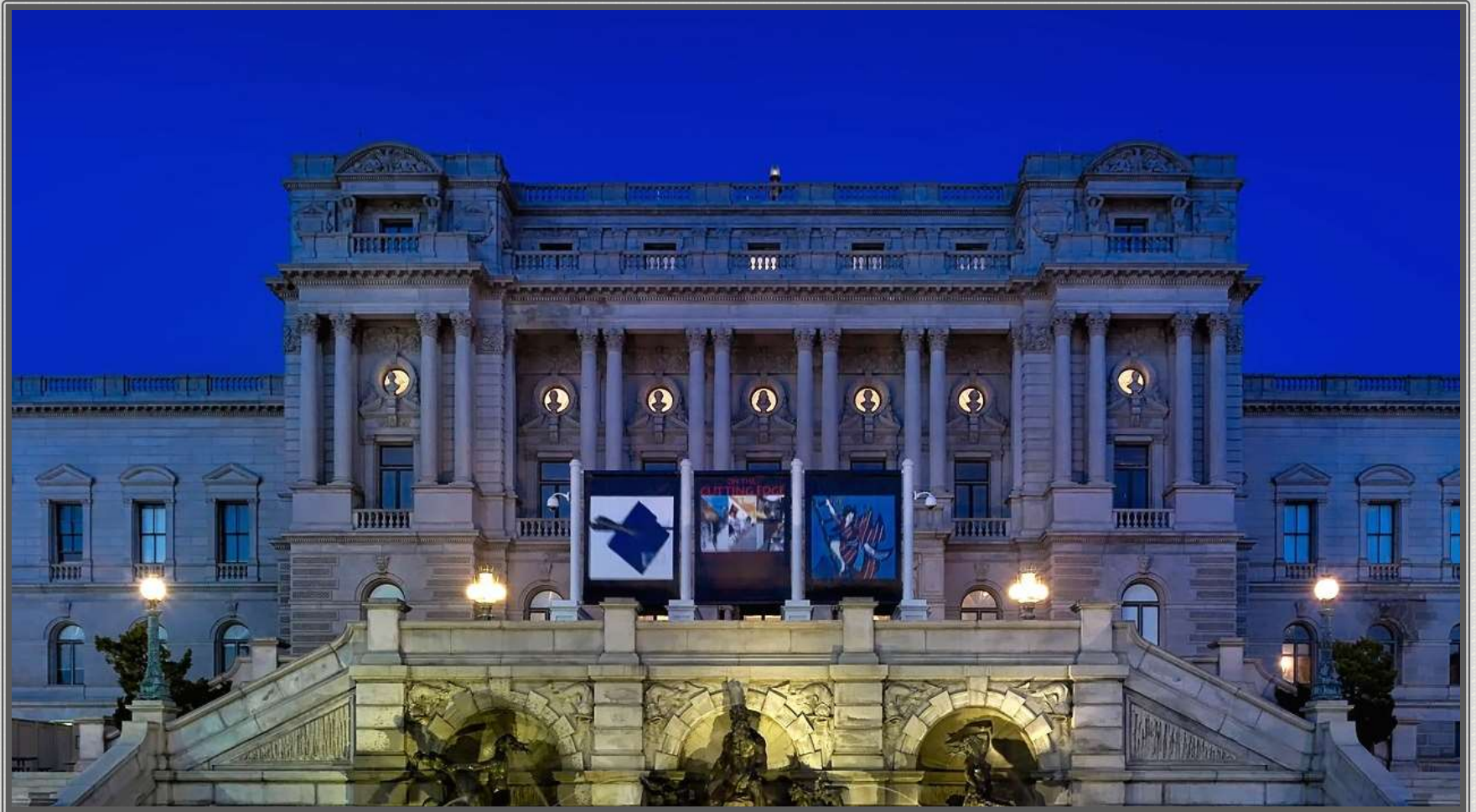
Standards: Exercise

- How would you describe a welcoming library?
- What is your library and its staff already doing?
- What could your library be doing better or differently?

Section Three

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Ethics and Behavior



Library Ethics

- **Fairness:** People are treated the same, regardless of status
- **Access:** Everyone has access to the information available.
- **Transparency:** Decisions are made by the standards of “open meeting.”
- **Privacy:** Individuals are protected.

Library Ethics: Examples

- **Fairness:** No exception from rules for friends and relatives.
- **Access:** No books behind the counter.
- **Transparency:** Plan meetings so not just middle class people can attend.
- **Privacy:** Staff does not gossip about unpopular customers and their books.

Self-Awareness: Consistency

Unintentional different standards

One for those **we know;**

one for those we don't know

One for those **we like;**

one for those we don't like

One for those **who look and talk like us;**

one for those who don't look and talk like us

Welcoming



Welcoming

The details of our behavior

- The **look** on our face
- The **tone** of our voice
- The **pace** of the interaction
- The **thoroughness** of our responses

Customers as Partners: Exercise

- Whom do we ask for **advice**?
- Whom do we invite to make **decisions**?
- Whom do we **neglect** to ask?
 - We **forget** or **avoid** them.
 - We **don't know** they **exist**.

Section Four

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Collections, Services, Programs, Staff



Customers as Partners

- **Our collections:** What we acquire
- **Services:** What we offer
- **Programs:** What we offer
- **Staffing:** Who we hire

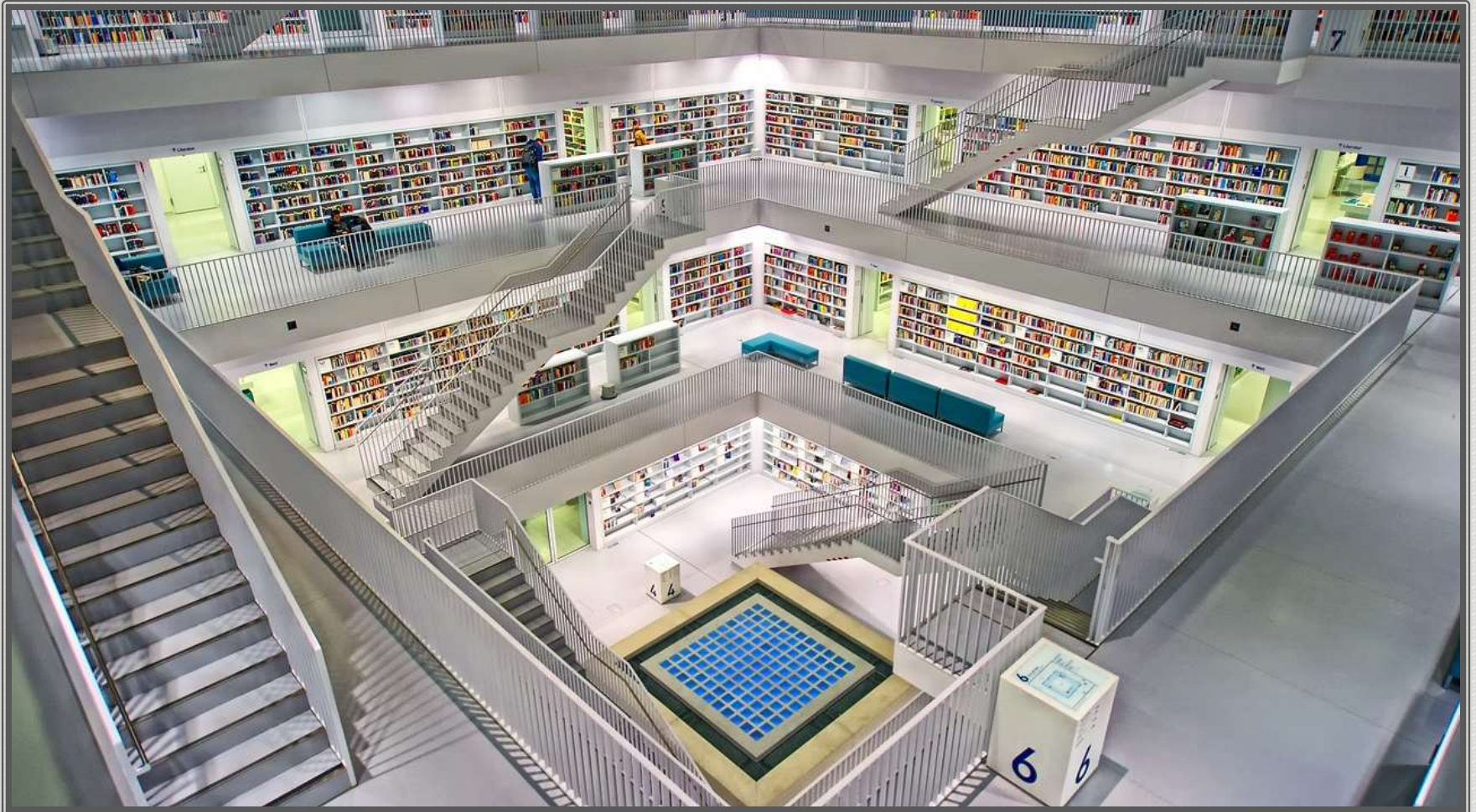
Customers as Partners

- **Our collections:** Ask for specific advice about book choices
- **Services:** What do they need that they can't get elsewhere.
- **Programs:** What do they want that they can't get elsewhere.
- **Staffing:** The 20-year staffing plan

Section Five

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Our Physical Environment



Physical Environment: Exercises

- Invite people of different ages and abilities to visit the library for the purpose of **auditing** the physical space.
- How easy would it be to maneuver if you were using a walker, wheelchair, cane, or could not kneel or bend at the waist, or had to wear dark glasses?

Physical Environment: Examples

The Warehouse: Shelves too close together

Signs: Obscure position or color

Library jargon: Phonological awareness

Physical barriers: Steep steps to basement

Lighting: dark corners, no lights outside

Staff: Speak too softly, too quickly

Phone tree: Voice speaks too softly, too quickly

Comfort: No place to sit at service desks

Cramped: No privacy to talk at service desks

Section Six

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Next Steps



Next Steps

- Support for change
 - Internal leadership and **staff**
 - External leadership and **community**
- **Sacred cows**
- You will be judged by your **deeds.**

Next Steps: Examples

- **Ask advice/input of people you know**
- Identify community leaders:
 - Government, charities, businesses
 - Different points of view
- **Make small changes, and let people know what, and why:**
 - New signs, collection diversity, outreach

Next Steps: Exercise

It's easy to make popular decisions.

**How do we prepare
to make unpopular decisions?**

The Welcoming Library: Exercise

Five Principles: How can you improve?

- Consistency
- Safety for the stranger
- The details count
- Partner with customers
- We take this seriously.

Learner Guide: use it, customize it!

Service Excellence in Challenging Times Learner Guide

<http://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/service-excellence-in-challenging-times.html>

Event Description: In turbulent times, many Americans turn to their libraries. While this is a true affirmation of the value our country places on its libraries, it increases the responsibility for library staff to meet the public with the best customer service. During times of community turmoil, it is an extra challenge to convey patience, good humor, an accurate knowledge of your collections and services, and a willingness to serve. Learn how to ramp up your skills to maintain a safe, welcoming environment where everyone can visit, work, and play without feeling uncomfortable. Keep calm, confident and capable of guiding your community through difficult times.

Presented by: Pat Wagner

What are your goals for viewing this webinar?

Personal Goals

Team Goals

Roles at Your Library

Pat emphasized the importance of roles in defining and prioritizing service excellence at your library. You may serve in more than one of these roles, or perhaps in all of them, but for those libraries with more defined roles, review the slides (10-14) for the following roles, and **identify facets within each role that could be refined or improved upon at your library**. Is there one facet per role that could become a learning priority for your team? If you wear more than one hat at your library, clarify what roles you see as your priority, and discuss with the rest of your team.

1. Leadership
2. Management
3. Supervision
4. Staff
5. Internal Customer Service

Welcoming Library

Discuss or reflect on the following:

How would you **describe a welcoming library**?

What is your library and its staff **already doing**?

What could you **do better or differently**?

Customers as Partners

Whom in your community do you ask for advice related to customer service practices, collections, services, programs, and staffing?

Whom from the community is **invited into the decision-making process**?

Whom are you not asking? How can you begin to make those connections?

For additional learning in this area, see the webinar and resources on [Community-Led Libraries](#).

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