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TODARO, Julie and SMITH, Mark L. Training library staff and volunteers to provide extraordinary customer service. London: Facet Publishing. 2006. 160 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-85604-599-5. £39.95.

The desire to meet the customer's needs in an effective and appropriate manner has always been the lynchpin of successful information services so customer service is something that information and library services (ILS) staff have always been concerned about. In recent times, however, customer service has achieved new significance due to a number of trends. Chief among these are the increasing diversity of library users and the development of an increasingly competitive and consumer-driven education market. In this context a review of this book seemed like a good idea given that it describes itself as a manual that will give ILS staff the 'what to say' and 'what to do' to establish and maintain 'the best possible customer service'.

This book comprises eight chapters and a further seven resources (effectively useful appendices). It starts with the basics of determining customer service (CS) essentials, continues through general and specific CS-related training issues before concluding with chapters about continuous learning and its integration into CS and libraries. There is some really useful material here. For example chapter 4 (Assessing and Anticipating the Needs of Customers) includes a plethora of useful scenarios and scripts to standardize services and assist staff during stressful encounters. Similarly, chapter 5 (Tracking and Responding to Customer Feedback) acknowledges both the traditional (e.g. response cards) and more recent means (e.g. blogs) through which feedback can be obtained. During the discussion in chapters 7 and 8 the authors posit their core thesis about the importance of instituting continuous learning into Libraries and integrating continuous learning with CS for a level of excellence to be achieved. In chapter 7 there is a useful discussion about who should be responsible for continuous learning. We all acknowledge the need for, and importance of, continuous learning in ever-changing library environments yet each of us is busy performing our day-to-day roles. The authors suggest some possible solutions to this conundrum, tailored to reflect the type of library and training involved. CS, the authors explain in chapter 8, goes beyond common courtesy as it entails technical skill, requires consistency and necessitates thoroughness. It is, they argue, this very mix that makes CS training so complex and demands that it be an ongoing feature of working in libraries. There are seven resources at the end of the book, including some CS self-assessment tools, details of useful resources to inform the development of an appropriate training programme and sample forms for use in various CS-related situations. These resources are full of practical advice and are tools which could be applied in any library even if a fundamental CS overhaul was not immediately possible.

While overall I believe that this book merits consideration by any library facing customer service challenges (and which library isn't!), there are some aspects of it which detract from its general success. Some basic points include: why does chapter 7 include a list of references when the others chapters do not? Indeed, resource A includes a list of print and web sources. For sure, the content of

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chapter 7 differs from that of preceding chapters, but as a presentational detail I found it irritating. Another feature that some readers, or their colleagues, may find testing is the transatlantic style and terminology the authors use. They talk about 'wow service' for example. Despite the danger that this language might engender cynicism, it should be borne in mind that both authors are US-based librarians and it is widely acknowledged that customer service is one of the core strengths of US organizations. These issues are minor relative to my final concern about this book. At several stages e.g. in chapter 2, when describing training guidelines, and in chapter 8 when discussing the need to categorise skill sets, it is apparent that this approach best suits the traditional distribution of roles and responsibilities within libraries. Is such an approach sustainable in the era of merged service desks and users' expectations of one-stop shops?

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