#### Efficient Customers Service: A Necessary Skill for a Proactive, Responsive and Relevant 21" Century Librarian

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to sensitize librarians on contemporary realities and the importance of inhibiting the principles of efficient customer service in dealing with library customers as a strategic tool in ensuring that librarians remain proactive, responsive and relevant in the ever changing information landscape. Literatures reviewed brought to the fore issues and trends that are challenging the conventional roles of librarians in the 21st century such as transition to digital content, computer that is almost replacing librarians' roles, and others. Possible solutions were carefully articulated such as provision of librarians with the requisite technological literacy needed for a 21st century library service. The paper concluded with the remark that, regardless of changes in technology which has adversely affected the library's capacity, and the dynamic change in the information seeking behaviour of our users which has redefined the concept of service provision, by cultivating and displaying the outlined skills for efficient customer service, library remains relevant and the role of librarians in the digital age indispensible

Keywords: 21st century librarian, library customers, proactive librarian and responsive librarian.

cutting across academic, social and economic spheres, come age. With new technological developments and innovations studies conducted by various authors showed that libraries Adigun, Kotso and Kolajo (2013) pointed out that empirical libraries in today's rapidly changing information landscape. saying; new opportunities and challenges are confronting new challenges and new expectations. There is no gain entrenched in libraries, particularly in academic institutions and Satpath (2009) the role of a librarian in the 21st century technologies, new access methods, and new ways to get and people appear to share a voracious appetite for new inquiry in the face of emerging digital technology. Young are struggling to keep their place as the major source of The 21st century is undoubtedly acclaimed the technological all over the world. Similarly Webstar cited in Hermon and brought in by technological applications that are now fully has changed considerably in keeping with the changes the information landscape. As observed by Dukshinamurti Digital technology has indeed immensely revolutionized use information. Adults are in no way immune to this trend. information landscape is uncertainty. Now more than in any this transition is fundamentally the issue. proceeding era, libraries must change, but just how to make Alman, (2010) argued that the only constant in the

satisfaction is at the heart of the selling process. The customers are crucial to the success of any business since relationship between the customer and the organization is, they represent its fundamental source of revenue. Customer studies Limited Liability Partnership (2016) argued that library can never place too much emphasis on its customer if therefore, an important one. Going by this assertion, the they are the reason for the libraries' existence. Business case Library customers are more than a source for data collection;

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the need of the customer is not met. The customer is the foundation of the library's success. According to the American Library Association (2013) an explicit function of the library is to organize, preserve, and make knowledge accessible. To achieve this, it is imperative to identify and meet the needs of the customer. It becomes very essential to insights gained to improve library services. listen to and learn from the library customers and to use

Unfortunately, a number of librarians and libraries have ignored customers because they perceive customers as a captive audience. In general, the library became an organization that served all customers not only with similar tools but in similar ways. The era when academic libraries enjoyed monopoly and custody of knowledge; incontestable administrative support and when librarians important to understand societal trends and changes in held sway the information landscape are long gone. It is information landscape. Libraries are predominantly a service- oriented organization and good customer service is the key to the library's image, growth and stability.

of inhibiting the principles of efficient customer service in This paper intends to sensitize librarians on the importance dealing with library customers as a strategic tool in ensuring that librarians remain proactive, responsive and relevant in the ever changing information landscape. To that end, the paper strives to help librarians understand, based on contemporary realities, the current answer to the question of 'how should librarians advance the course of librarianship in the 21st century?"

compassionate, personalized, and or simply put, human Customer service is about serving people. It is the genuine, Concept of Customer Service Benue Journal of Library, Management and Information Science (BJLMIS) 101 Vol. 8 No 2. Dec. 2018

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approach used to win customers loyalty. According to approach used to win customer service is the summer service. often, customer-service takes place while performing a of ensuring customer satisfaction with a product or service Salesroice comers both before and after they buy product offer your customers both before and aniovable avenue. approach user (2016) customer service is the support you Salesforce.com (2016) rustomer service is the support you approach to meeting the needs of customers. It is the tactical Investopedia (2018) defined customer service as the process part of the success of your business. Similarly, it is critical to the success of your business. part of the promise your brand makes to its customers. And you. It's more than just providing answers: it's an important otter your customers an easy and enjoyable experience with that helps them have an easy and enjoyable experience with returning an item. Customer service can take a form of an intransaction for the customer such as making a sale or person interaction, a phone call, self-service systems or by

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m Vol.~8~No~2.~Dec.~2018}$ companies; and social media sites loaded with content, technology-information and data storage or retrieval powerful competitors including search engines; distributed across the globe. The emergence, however, of and not-for-profit organizations, libraries are extensively competitive service-led economy. Libraries have always and disseminating information and knowledge in a globally Culture, Media, & Sports-UK.gov, 2016a). As public sector been integral to the communities they serve (Department for enjoyable venue to attract users for their information needs. Libraries can shape the future as to accessing, providing, search, Yahoo Answers, or watching a YouTube video. It is customers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The bricks-and-mortar intangibles are highly valued by organizations and products such as knowledge, information, and ideas. These incumbent for library managers to build an interesting and personal experience cannot be replicated by a Google Libraries are institutions that focus on creating unique

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underfunded cities, have had to shut down or have become libraries in the United States, especially those in rural and former and potential users away from libraries. Some information portals, and webpages, have steered millions of almost desolate except for the occasional few visitors both a marketing and technology basis. because they have not kept up with the pace of change on

the following: Good customer service in the library can be characterized by Characteristics of Good Customer Service in the Library

charged with a weighty responsibility. IFLA (2011) posits on time. As members of a professional society, librarians are that the core mission of library and information Promptness: This is the quality or habit of arriving or being economic activity and informed participation in and personal development, education, cultural enrichment, professionals is to facilitate access to information for all for attending to library customers, promptness should be the enhancement of democracy. In recognition of this fact, when watch word. Unnecessary delays should be avoided.

"how may we/I be of service, using good manners is greeting, addressing customers respectfully (sir/madam), or etiquette. Politeness is almost a lost art. Saying a warm Politeness: This is the practical application of good manners appropriate whether the customer makes a purchase or not appropriate courteous responses. highest level of politeness to all library customers through (salesforce.com, 2016. Librarian is expected to show the

treated professionally, which means the use of competent Professionalism: This means that all customers should be

Librarians process with respect to information sought, and confidentiality with respect to information sought, and commentations consulted, borrowed, acquired or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or Professionalish and library customer's right to privacy Librarians protest each library customer's right to privacy hands and appropriate technology where applicable. transmitted. hands and approximate the customers that they're cared for professionalism shows the customer's right to an approximate the professionalism shows the customer's right to an approximate the professionalism shows the customer's right to an approximate the professionalism shows the customer's right to an approximate the professionalism shows the customer's right to a custome

loyalty. Customers like the idea that whom they do business customer satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat visits with knows them on a personal level (salesforce.com, 2016) Using the customer's name is very effective in producing interactions faster and easier and, consequently, increasing rersunaucanon personal matter and consequently making customer's needs more effectively and efficiently, making personalization: is a tailored means of meeting the

## Importance of Customer Service

to serve members of our constituent. beyond capacity to keep pace is making ineffective attempts library customers and being inundated with technology information seeking behaviour of the younger demographic from new technology. The dynamic change in the information access and information service delivery arising the other the library is experiencing stiff competition for has grossly undermined the capacity of the library; while on profession. On the one hand, understanding of the library Nowhere is change more evident than in the librarian

attention to emails and phone calls is critical to maintaining should receive timely attention to the issue. Prompt retaining a customer. When problems arise, customers representative can mean the difference between losing and empathetic interaction with a trained customer service providing outstanding customer service. A courteous and Most successful businesses recognize the important of

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case studies LLP (2016). sit on hold can sour an interaction before it begins (Business good relations. Requiring customers to stand in long lines or

Patience: This is the capacity to accept or tolerate setbacks, Skills of Efficient Customer Services Staff

problems, or pressures from customers without becoming customers on a daily basis, be ensuing to say patient when annoyed or anxious when the need arise. If you deal with library in the long run when competent service is provided truly figure out what they want. It pays the customer and the they come to you confused and frustrated. Take the time to patiently than when customers are hurriedly rushed out the

very polite or courteous atmosphere. This is fundamental in attending to the comfort or wishes of library customers in a observant and attentive) to customers. It means assiduously Attentiveness: The ability to really listen (being alert, service. It is very important to be mindful and attentive to providing great service. Why the need arises being attentive to customers is the best barometer to gauge quality of the feedback that you receive.

personal and professional convictions and professional way it is easily understood. Librarians distinguish between convey information to customers clearly and simply, in a Good Communication Skills: This implies being able to duties and do not allow personal beliefs to interfere with the provision of access to information resources. There is need on how to take cautious of some personal communication clearly; keep it simple and leave nothing to doubt. that needs to be relayed to customers, it must be conveyed habits to customers. When it comes to an important message

objections, boosting confidence, enthusiasm and can be recommended highlighting their features and knowledge of library services is a key to overcoming chances of information anxiety and frustration. Adequate need ausco. ....... and their services, suitable services divisions/ extensions and their services, suitable services matching use removed knowledge of the various library need arises. With proper knowledge of the various library Knowledge ... ... with customer's need. when the matching the right service with customer's need. when the Knowledge of the Library Services: This is essential in benefits thus saving customer's time and reducing the

customer engagement. is "the king", 'always right", using positive phrases enhances sincere and positive position. In that position, the customer imperative that helping a customer should start from a based on the language that you use. It is therefore customers create perceptions about you and your library very important part of persuasion. Why the need arises. the most important customer service skills. Language is a Ability to use "Positive Language": Being positive is one of

and you will go far in keeping your customer interactions about their current mood, patience level, personality, e.t.c. What to take NOTE OF. Look and listen for subtle clues a valuable skill in business. This is an important part of the your customers to create a personal experience for them. personalization processes as well, because it takes knowing Ability to "Read" Customers: Ability to "read" customer is

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Vol. 8 No 2. Dec. 2018 unruly customer, force them to lose their cool; in fact it is unacceptable for a librarian to allow a heated, rude or even influence others when things get a little hectic is critical for effective service delivery. What to take note of. It is Ability to Work under Pressure: Ability to stay calm and

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customer. their duty to take charge of the situation and pacify the

service that people talk about. To most customers, what is who goes beyond the "status quo" when it comes to helping considered memorable service created by a single employee needs to be done is akey skill when providing the kind of Tenacity: A great work ethic and a willingness to do what in that "extra effort" is priceless in value should be the them out. What to take note of. Bearing in mind that putting lazy service. driving motivations to never "cheat" your customers with

skills. This is because to succeed in the librarian profession, colleagues about how to improve your customer services Willingness to Learn: Seek feedback from customers and changing nature of the information seeking behaviour successful colleagues. seek mentorship. conditioned by advances in digital technologies. Learn from there is a need to be learning constantly because of the rapid

### The Proactive Librarian

significant changes occurring in the librarian profession, responding to it after it has happened. In the light of the defined as creating or controlling a situation rather than just According to Dictionary.com (2016) proactive can be proactive manner. Below are some practical areas librarians the products of information has paradoxically made it all the fact that technology allows the users to have direct access to Dukshinamurti and Saphathy (2009) asserts that, the very can demonstrate proactiveness in the discharge of their more necessary for the librarian to reach out to the users in a

Punctuality to work: The official resumption time prescribed by the federal civil service is 8.00am.

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you can display to your organization. It is a clear Punctuality is the most obvious form of proactiveness

paraphrase of 5 vital steps as put forward by mind success personally and professionally. Here is a situation of the library customer. It will lead to greater demonstrate empathy when you are able to put in the feelings, emotions and experiences. As librarians you of others. It is the ability to understand someone else's identification with the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes Empathy to library customers: According to Dictionary. com (2016) empathetic is the psychological indication of preparedness for service provision.

situation with the knowledge they have or unreasonable- they are probably just reacting to the Pay attention, physically and mentally, to what's do this, you will realize that library customers most likely are not being inconsiderate, stubborn, rude or things from the other person's point of view. When you happening. Put aside your viewpoint, and try to see tools Ltd (2016).

those opinions. acknowledgement does not always equal agreement. customer's perspective, acknowledge it. Remember: Listen carefully, and note the key words and phrases from your own, and that they have good reason to hold that the customer uses. Once you understand the experiencing a mood swing. You can accept that people have different opinions

substantial part lieshidden beneath the surface. Even whether you should give a direct answer or direct the respond, consider why the question was asked, when the inquirer is eager for the answer, before you viewpoint. Some questions are like icebergs. The most To be effective, you need to discern the customer's Respond encouragingly to library customer enquiries.

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user to a reference material or give a referral. Express

user" language, understanding their concerns and library customers. This require communicating in the Take initiative in developing active partnerships with yourself kindly and respectfully.

effective sign system that is consistent throughout all information: It is important to have an attractive and Provide library signage to facilitate access to care for the people using your library (Santy, 2012). communicates your competence understanding, and public areas of the library. Great signage being part of their team. (Brophy, (2007).

Types of Signs Directional signs guide people to areas or services within the building. These signs use arrows pointing to

specific locations.

Identify access difficulty areas, offer possible solutions facilitates access to resources, specific areas or before they are requested using identification signs to

explanatory in nature to briefly explain library Use information/ instruction signs which are functions or instruct patrons on how to use certain functions within the library.

areas to draw attention to very important information, Use current awareness signs posted in high traffic changes in library hours, new arrivals, library rules/ information resources and services. Examples: resources example; OPC, Wi-Fie.t.c.

Benue Journal of Library, Management and Information Science (BJLMIS) 109The Library Ambassador: Generally speaking, an requirements of library workshops/seminars. ambassador is a respected official acting in a representative sovereign body that gave him authority. Library an ambassador is to reflect the official position of the capacity on behalf of his nation or organization. The role of

about library services and create, participate in, and reflect comprehensive reference and instruction, provide feedback to facilitate research and information literacy. They provide spaces and resources. Ambassadors provide active support knowledgeable and courteous advocates for our services, ambassadors represent the library as professional, Goshie Rhoda Wusa, Fati Abubakar & Hajara Jibril

Getto know faculty personally and actively engage with faculty and students in assigned department or on existing and new library programs and services. institutes in order to develop strong working

communication about faculty and students Take initiative to identify, meet, and facilitate ingoing

Knowledgeable expert on the library's division and information. Guide users on open source download services they provide as well as open sources of collection development (e.g creating digital Acquaint users with the Ahmadu Bello university and seek opportunities for collaboration in areas of Institutional Repository interface, subscribed database  ${\tt collections}; contributing \ to \ institutional \ repository).$ information needs and service expectations.

#### The Responsive Librarian

service. Being responsive is critical for successful customer customer needs to deliver the highest standards of customer responsive librarian uses technology to learn more about competitive advantages an organization can have. A engagement with customers are the only sustainable organize and respond to changing customer needs. According to Godsell et al (2006) knowledge of and responsiveness is used to ensure the capacity of a business to requirements in timely and satisfactory manner. Customer Customer responsiveness is the ability to deliver customer

development. It requires that one

online these days, way beyond basic catalogues and responsiveness as librarians. Librarians need to do so much able to troubleshoot problems users are having accessing up e- mail and teach basic internet skills. They need to be quality open source resources. They need to help patrons set engines and use them well. They need to be able to find database searching. Librarians have to be able to use search ideas in technology and librarianship is crucial to our online library resources, atleast to the extent where they can Embrace Digital Technology. Ability to keep up with new the users' side (Farkas, 2006) figure out if the problem is on the library's side or the side of

importance cannot be overstated. Farkas (2006) explained listed part of one's basic weekly job duties, but its Keep up with new technology. This is often not an explicitly and Information Management in libraries, but now so many that Five years ago, few people were talking about blogs and what libraries are (or could be) doing with it. Reference mail, synchronous chat blogs and Information Management librarians are now providing reference service online via e-We need to be able to keep up with what's new in technology libraries are using these tools to provide services to patrons. to serve library customers will increase, while problems and service issues will decrease. When customer responsiveness is a priority, opportunities

promptly. This is critical because, failing to meet deadlines information they need quickly and/or their concerns platforms, e.t.c. to help ensure customers get the phone calls, short message service (SMS), social media Areas Librarians can Demonstrate Responsiveness. Use of technology. This includes library website, email, Benne Journal of Library, Alana Sement and Information Science (BJLMIS) 111 Vol. 8 No 2, Dec. 2018

or ignoring inquiries can increase client dissatisfaction with

your service.

circulation to patrons while some libraries produce complete or selective lists for designated shelves to draw attention to recent additions, development. Most libraries use notice boards and to inform library users generally about new acquisition and Use of current awareness service. The purpose of a (CAS) is

conduct regular searches of databases to find references to referred to (SDI) is a form of CAS, whereby librarians resources consulted or requested. maintain library customers profile and information searches to the customer. It is important to create and customer's interest profile and forward the results to these new articles or other materials that fit a particular Use of selective dissemination of information. Sometimes

courses offered are adequately taken into consideration means that the research focus of lecturers, departments, and information resources consulted and align accordingly. This Monitoring usage statistics. Compile statistics of

plan and organize library orientation and workshops used to promote library services and collections. Work with Identify potential topics for workshops or events that can be Kashim Ibrahim Library, deans and head of department to Use of library orientation and workshops effectively.

112 Benue Journal of Library, Management and Information Science (BJLMIS) Adjust opening and closing time accordingly so as to most patronage. Example, before and during examination. schedule to peak times. Keep track of when you receive the Responsiveness often comes down to adjusting your Use of opening and closing hours effectively. Vol. 8 No 2. Dec. 2018

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users. demonstrate your level of responsiveness to your library

#### The Relevant Librarian

everything is online?" -Why do we need a well equipped libraries spend money for books and journals when What is the role of librarians in the digital age?"-Why should assignments and research on the internet or at the comfort of their home?' faculty/departmental library when students can do their

engage in which aims at garnering public support and advocacy have a critical role to play in answering these revolutionized the way information is accessed. Library It is undeniable fact that technology has questions. Library advocacy is the activity that librarians or off, librarians have countless opportunities to build both influencing decision makers in their institutions. On the job public understanding and support for the library, its information resources, services and personnel. However, goal, come up with a plan of action, get stakeholders for library advocacy to be effective, identify a need, set a involved and ensure proper coordination.

Practical suggestion for planning a library advocacy American Library Association, (2015) includes: (excerpts from " I Love Libraries" an initiative of the

Set Goals: Determine what you want to accomplish. accessories e.t.c.) Once you have identified your goals, information resources (books, computers and and on going public awareness program. In advocacy should be tied to the library's overall goals you are ready to organize. Bear in mind, library Does your library require a bigger space, more Identifyingcritical tasks - important areas include;

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administrators or alumni involved. You can host the opportunity that will get friends of the library, or promotion that will get friends of the library, opportunity to showcase your library. Create an event of Nigerian Library Association and fundraising. Critical elements include: Defining the key message media to attend. Develop a communication plan. hall or any strategic campus venue and invite the event at the library or immediate department/ faculty of Nigeria. Any event during the tear is an plan a library event: Any event library Cross coordinates university librarian and the state chapter departments, university librarian and fundraising departments. developing of activities with the deans, head of coordinating of activities with the deans, head of developing a budget, recruiting volunteers,

things the library needs, information about upcoming include the library's hours and services, a wish list of materials that can be passed along to others. These can can be distributed in writing for people to read later or information about the library, its services and needs Make and distribute | Handouts: important and targeting key audiences. or know someone who does, work to build written pass on to others. If you have desktop publishing skills,

an op-ed piece for your local paper, or ask students / publicly about the specific value of your library. Write Involve the press: Are you good at public speaking? a one page newsletter or library bulletins. faculty to write editorials for the campus paper. Write Call your local radio talk show or TV news. Speak events or any pertinent library information.

services delivery and are prepared to seize opportunities to research, are responsive in embracing digital technology in take a proactive role in advancing teaching, learning and principles of efficient customer services that when librarians The case made above of the need for librarians to imbibe the

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radically transformed the information landscape, appreciation that can translate into goodwill and tangible they will increase their visibility and appreciation, an build both public understanding and support for the library, seeking behaviour of our users which has redefined the capacity, and the dynamic change in the information dwindling budget which has adversely affected the library's benefits. Regardless of changes in technology which has concept of service provision, by cultivating and displaying remains relevant and the role of librarians in the digital age the outlined skills for efficient customer service, library indispensable.

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- by case studies from India and Canada. A paper at the world library and lnformar by case studies from ...
  presented at the world library and lnformation

  TEth Ifla general conference and council 25 presented at the ...
  congree: 75th Ifla general conference and council 23.25 congree: 75<sup>th</sup> Itla general.

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