



MID-MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL LIBRARY SYTEM CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

(System Board approved October 21, 2015)

The Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System strives to provide excellent library services, which includes a welcoming and organized facility with a material collection that is current and varied. Successful library customer service involves a knowledgeable, friendly staff that provides accurate, efficient service at all times. The Library staff are the bridge between the customer and the material or information that he or she is seeking.

While at work, each staff member is a representative of the local library and the library system. The impression we make profoundly affects the library's public image and ongoing support. Every customer interaction is important; assisting the customer is our highest priority.

Customer service procedures

- **The Library should offer the same quality of service to everyone** regardless of age, race, sex, nationality, educational background, physical or mental limitations, or any other criteria which may be the source of discrimination.
- **Staff will treat every customer with equal respect and every request with equal importance.**
- **Staff will not let their personal feelings/opinions** about someone or previous encounter with someone **determine the quality of service they provide to a customer.**
- Staff will not let their own personal problems affect how they treat customers.
- **Staff will be familiar with and able to articulate the library's circulation and meeting room policies,** as well as be able to explain the rationale behind them.
- **Staff will do their best to meet customers' needs.** All MMRLS policies and procedures will be followed. The Branch Manager will at times need to make a judgement call (when Headquarter staff are not available to consult) on how a situation with a customer should be handled based on the current situation. She will report this situation to Headquarters. If the Branch Manager is not available, the Assistant Librarian may be required to make a decision on how the situation should be handled.
- **If a staff member is unable to comply with a request, every attempt will be made to offer an alternative solution.** Offer options such as interlibrary loan or electronic products if print materials are not available. Try not to let anyone leave the library without following through on every possible avenue for answering a customer's request.
- **Staff should be sufficiently familiar with library collections, programs, and resources to serve customers.** If a staff member is unable to provide the information or materials required, the customer should be referred to the Branch Manager. If the Branch Manager is unable to provide or locate the necessary information or materials, library staff should contact Headquarter Staff for assistance. It is important to provide the best information possible.

- **Every customer who comes into the library should be served as quickly as possible.** Customers always take precedence over paperwork. People aren't an interruption of our work, they are our work.
- **Customers who are present in the library take precedence over telephone inquiries.** If you are unable to work on a caller's request immediately, politely offer to call them back. If the customer is calling to renew items on their account and you are currently assisting someone in the library, ask the caller to please hold. Once you have completed assisting the customer in the library, you can renew the caller's items while they are on the telephone in case the items are not renewable.
- **Library volunteers and pages should not handle difficult situations or calls from difficult customers, incidents, complaints, etc.** These situations should be immediately directed to the Branch Manager or next staff member in charge. If the Branch Manager is not there, she should be notified of the situation as soon as possible. **Substitutes should only handle these situations if there is not a permanent staff member on duty.** If a permanent staff member is not on duty, the substitute, should contact Headquarters.
- **If a customer has a complaint, staff should listen attentively in a non-judgmental manner. Refer to the appropriate library policy, and when necessary refer the customer to the MMRLS Executive Director.** When at all possible library staff should notify the Director of this complaint in advance of the customer's call.
- **If library staff have a situation with a difficult customer in the library, the customer should quietly be directed to a more private area away from the circulation desk and other customers so that staff can discuss the situation with them.** Another staff member should be present during this conversation when at all possible. The Branch Manager or next staff member in charge should be included in this discussion.
- **Staff must follow the procedures stated in the MMRLS Incident Procedures to handle all significant incidents/situations** that warrant notification to persons in the Branch Manager's or Executive Director's chain of command including, but not limited to, customer/volunteer/staff accidents/injuries (regardless of the extent of the injury or medical attention required); safety/security incidents, including but not limited to, break-ins, vandalism, theft, physical altercations, missing persons, threats of physical harm; and other incidents such as angry customers and customers banned from computer use. **Headquarters must be notified with a verbal report as soon as possible.** A completed and signed Incident Report must be emailed to the Executive Director, Business Manager and Branch Services Coordinator **within the same day of the incident.** **Staff must use the Incident Report form located on the Help Desk.** In cases of customer accident/injury, branch staff should not give out any insurance information, but contact the MMRLS Business Manager. **For additional information related to Incident Reports, please refer to the MMRLS Incident Procedures.**

Demeanor

Demeanor is defined as: the way a person looks, speaks and acts; one's manner of behavior towards others; a personal mode of expressing attitude. Non-verbal demeanor conveys attitude via facial expression and posture – just as tone of voice and choice of word affect a verbal message.

The customer's perception of a staff member or a transaction can be very different from the staff member's intent. **In public service agencies such as the Library, it is imperative that every staff/customer interaction is a positive one for the customer.** A friendly, helpful demeanor can often ensure a positive experience even when the message conveyed is not a pleasant one.

Staff members are expected to act in a friendly, helpful manner which will ensure the customer will walk away feeling his/her experience with the Library has been a positive one.

Ethics/confidentiality guidelines

The needs and requests of library customers must always be taken seriously and be treated with respect. All interactions and transactions between the customer and library staff will be considered confidential and will be discussed only in a professional context. Such matters include, but are not limited to registration information, materials selected, circulation records, reference questions, customer's card status, etc.

Staff instructions

- **Be punctual.** Service commences at the advertised hour your library opens and full service should be available until the hour the library closes. Telephones should be answered when the library is open to the public.
- **Wear your name tag at all times during work hours.**
- **Answer the telephone in a pleasant manner,** using a greeting, identifying the library and yourself and offering help. "Good morning" and "May I help you?" goes a long way.
- **Greet your customers as they enter the library.** Acknowledge a customer's presence by looking up and making eye contact. If you are busy with another customer, acknowledge the customer who is waiting and explain that you will be with them soon.
- **Maintain friendly contact with customers without engaging in lengthy conversations.** If it is hard to break away, explain that you have enjoyed talking with them, but you need to get back to work.
- **If the customer is a new customer, make them feel welcome by giving them a tour of the library as time allows.** Answer any questions about the library they might have.
- **Always keep your voice low** so it doesn't disturb other library customers.
- **Never talk about other library customers or other staff members with anyone in public areas.** Many times other customers will assume you are talking about them, they will think you are socializing and are too busy to help them, or they will come to think of the library as a local resource for gossip.
- **Take personal calls away from the circulation desk.** Either tell the caller you will call them back when you are on break or away from the circulation desk or when possible, ask another staff member to attend the circulation desk while you take your call in private.
- **When possible, staff should walk around the library and notice if there are people in the stacks or at the computers who might need help.** Being helpful to customers takes precedence over desk work.

- **Never point.** If a customer needs assistance in finding material, escort the customer to the appropriate area.
- **Conduct all transactions in a helpful, pleasant tone of voice.** Keep any impatience, annoyance from your voice. It's always better to presume the customer is unfamiliar with the library, the cataloging system, etc.
- **If you don't know the answer, find someone on staff or at Headquarters who does.** Avoid saying "I don't know," use "I can find out!"
- **Value and respect the skills, abilities, and contributions of other staff.**
- **Be mutually supportive of other staff.** Keep in mind that the quality of your work always impacts that of another. Share resources and expertise.
- **If staff have questions about how the Branch Manager/other staff handle a situation they may quietly and respectfully discuss the situation with each other at a time when, where, and in a tone customers are not able to overhear the conversation.** Remember that sometimes it is not what we say to others, but how we say it, what tone we are using.
- **To provide customers the best access to library entrances, library staff will park in spaces furthest from the entrance unless staff require special parking.**