CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTERS

Many businesses, organisations and government departments have a customer service charter that sets out what its clients can expect. A quick Google search shows that many Australian libraries also have customer service charters. Far from being a declaration of clichéd exorbitant promises, a charter can, along with other key corporate documents, help library staff plan how to utilise its resources, set parameters in which a team will operate, and monitor its performance.

In the process of its development or review, a charter can serve as a reminder to all staff of their library's raison d'être. It can also identify the need for change. For example, a guarantee of timely electronic document delivery might highlight the need for new software and ICT systems, training of staff in the new technology, streamlined processes or altered rosters for some staff.

A charter doesn’t just apply to frontline service staff. Each section of a library has its part to play. For example, library technical services might have a policy of processing and cataloguing new items within a certain timeframe; acquisitions staff might aim to order ample copies of an anticipated popular work or consider how accessibility may be improved by purchasing electronic licenses versus one hard copy subscription of a journal.

So how do you go about writing a customer service charter? Look at your governing organisation's mission, objectives, annual report, corporate plan, etc. — the bigger picture. Determine what the core business of your organisation is and how your library contributes to that. Then look at things such as key performance indicators, outputs and outcomes, balanced scorecard, existing quality assurance measures, library rules and conditions of use. Can some wording that many Australian libraries also have customer service charters. Far from being a declaration of clichéd exorbitant promises, a charter can, along with other key corporate documents, help library staff plan how to utilise its resources, set parameters in which a team will operate, and monitor its performance.

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