



Improving Front Desks & Reading Rooms

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LIBRARIES AS **SPACE** & ARCHIVAL IMPLICATIONS



- Libraries offer tangible space to the public.
- It is this space that offers value and interest to the public and complements its collection.
- The space builds rapport and fond memories with the public, and in turn, support.

WE ARE **NOT** LIBRARIES

- We are not public spaces the public spends a great deal of time in.
- Therefore what little interaction we have has to have a great impact.
- The goal of every reading room and public-facing space should be to demonstrate the *value* we have to our respective communities.

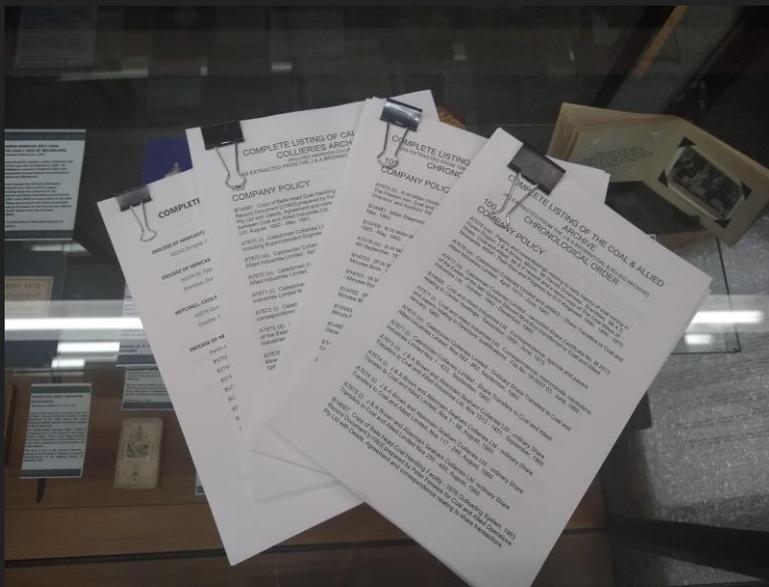
DEMONSTRATING VALUE THROUGH HOSPITALITY

“In short, library staff by the attitude they show to patrons, could affect patron’s attitudes towards libraries. These early writers recognised that welcoming, cheerful, helpful – that is – hospitable behaviour by library staff was paramount if the institution was to be successful in serving the public. The cost of failing to approach their work with this mindset is loss of patronage, and, by extension, the failure of the library as an institution of service. [There are benefits to selfless behaviour as] **the air of hospitality enhanced the position of the library in two ways – a stronger relationship with the public, and this in turn became better support for the institution.**”

Johnson & Kazmer (2011)

INTRODUCING CASUAL BROWSING AS AN OPTION

- The process of discovery drives repeat visits in a library.
- Readily accessible general material facilitates discovery.
- Patrons have difficulty finding complementary material unless it is explicitly indexed with their search topic.



Creating finding aids for popular topics is a great way to drive discovery for patrons. Topics could include:

- Major industries and associations of your region
- Births, deaths, marriages and other family history resources
- Early histories and illustrations of the area
- Military history
- Queer history
- Unusual and unique collections



IMPROVING FIRST IMPRESSIONS WITH **WELCOMING** SPACES

- As our reading rooms are often the only point of contact with the public, we need to make our impressions count





COMMUNITY **RAPPORT** THROUGH GREAT SERVICE

- Archivists have an unfair stereotype to break through of being grumpy, poorly dressed, and mercilessly bureaucratic.
- Collections bring people to archives but great service will make them explore and “own” their archives.
- Consistent industry-wide staffing problems mean that this is difficult to accomplish.
- If you have the time to hold a patron’s hand through the process, do so.
- Visitors are impressed by collections, but the service drives repeat visits.
- By giving to the community our time, service and records, we cement ourselves as valued and known institutions.

IN SUMMARY

- The best way to encourage use of your archive is to make those vital first impressions count.
- Community engagement is the golden key to making sure the public supports and values us as an institution; to show our value we must *demonstrate* that value.