



# SERVICE TRIAGE A SUCCESS FOR SWINBURNE

*The library service desk is the main point of contact for most library users. It is the location for borrowing, renewing and returning items, paying fines, finding information, and asking questions about using the library and its resources. How do you implement changes that embrace proactive approaches to the idea of service delivery? Frank Ponte reports on a concept called 'service triage' at Swinburne University Library's Hawthorn Campus.*

At Swinburne Library – Hawthorn Campus, we decided to implement a process called 'service triage'. This concept was first proposed by Reference Librarian Jo Gillespie and originally trialled for a two week period at the beginning of semester between 11am -2pm. It has now become entrenched as a semester activity and is considered a valued component of our library support services.

This service has many advantages. Staff can put on their best marketing hat and tout many of the library services. The removal of physical barriers such as a service desk enables more conversational interactions with students. Students feel more comfortable expressing opinion and asking a myriad and variety of questions. In fact, students will often approach a library staff member without provocation.

The library service ethos is to be approachable, friendly and knowledgeable. These key themes underpin all interactions with our clients - even if the question does not relate to library services.

**The aim of the interchange is to engage with the client and provide the best possible result.**

Mainly liaison librarians and reference librarians are involved, however service desk staff have been encouraged to participate in this activity as it encourages cross collaboration and also instils confidence in the service desk staff member, who primarily would be answering queries in a more comfortable and reactive way from behind the service desk.

The library staff member is co-located in the public space with the clients, usually near the entry point with an identifiable lanyard to indicate they are Swinburne Library staff. The staff member is encouraged to approach all clients entering the library and ask if there is anything with which they can assist. We often find it is easier to approach students with a student diary as a method of breaking the ice before the conversation begins.

We do need to gauge the level of interest before launching into a diatribe about the numerous services and advantages to student learning each liaison librarian can offer. Body language and eye contact will often provide the best cues in relation to interest. Learning when to resist saying too much and when to elucidate is a critical factor in achieving customer service success.

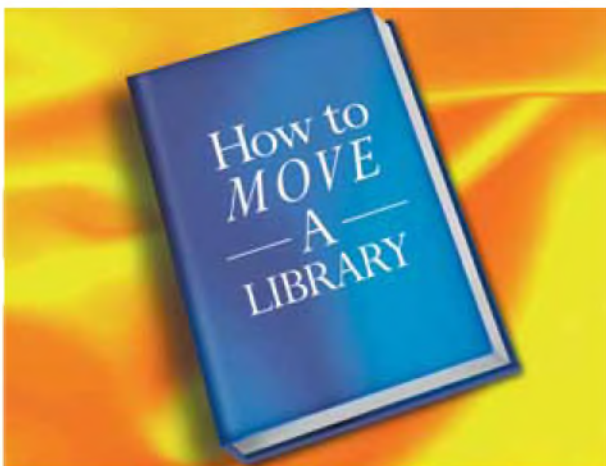
Queries are diverse and typically include questions such as, "how do I access to the learning management software?", "where do I find this building?", "how do I get wifi on my hand-held device or computer?", "how do I borrow library material?", or "how do I enrol in this subject?".

Anecdotally service triage has proven popular, with staff receiving instant positive feedback from students who have said how helpful it is to have someone approach them directly. Feedback forms documenting how proactive library staff are in assisting students have also been received.

Moving into the future, we are considering extending the time frame from 11am-3pm and running our triage service during the busy first three to four weeks of semester.

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