

# Customer Service: Giving Your Best

**T**his was the first of three sessions at the conference given by Val Solash from Edmonton Public Library. Here, she presented information aimed at making librarians better customer service providers.

She first described the customer service "scene" that libraries, particularly public libraries, find themselves in. Although people have different views of what good service is (perception varies), customers generally expect more and more these days. Libraries are affected when customers see other situations where there is increasing ease of doing business. A good example of this is the banking industry where quick access to many services is common. At the same time, as shown in an Alberta-wide survey, staff frequently rate their own customer service as being excellent; customers usually rate it less highly (staff also rate their service as being almost uniformly better than other organizations with a service focus).

A new customer service environment was the focus of the next part of the session. In this new situation, an organization is customer-focused and the staff that work in the organization are aware of a number of things. First, they realize that everyone in the organization has customers, either "outside" and/or "inside" customers. In the case of a library, there are obvious outside customers, patrons, but there are also inside customers, e.g. public services is the customer of technical services. Both external and internal customers are treated the same. As well, they know the importance of the "moment of truth." A moment of truth occurs when a customer comes into contact with "any aspect of an organization or company, however remote, and thereby has an opportunity to form an impression" about the organization or company. Moments of truth can be good, bad, or neutral. For public libraries, a moment of truth could be parking, hours of operation, decor,

layout, first staff contact, or first interlibrary loan experience, among many others.

The customer-focused organization also tries to "wow" the customer, gives genuine personal touches (though what sort of personal touch customers want and will see as genuine varies from person to person), and, overall, attempts to step into customers' shoes. The model that such an organization can follow is the Total Product Concept. This model can be seen as three concentric circles:

**The "Core":** The central circle is the "core." In the core are the services that customers cannot do without. In the case of a public library, the core could be books, information, and programs.

**The "Expected" Services:** The next circle or ring includes the "expected" services. Expected services are those that can be defined as the basic plus more. The services that can be assigned to this ring vary from person to person; however, if they are not met, disappointment can result. Expected services in a public library could be fast and friendly service and free personal service.

**The "Exceeded" Services:** The outer ring is made up of the services that were not expected by the customers. These are the services that make people say "Wow!" Public library services that fall into this category could include home delivery of library materials, drive-through check-out, renewals by telephone, and bagging of books by staff.

*Andrew Waller*



Wow! Audrey Mark as auctioneer. With no prior experience, our worthy president surprised everyone with her patter at an impromptu auction.

## Comments on the Conference

by Bryan Foran

### LIBRARY ERGONOMICS

In our eagerness to embrace new information technologies we must continually remind ourselves that their design should serve and accommodate our needs and not the other way around.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

No amount of fancy technology can replace our desire to provide the best possible service to people.

### FEES FOR SERVICE

We must resign ourselves to the fact that the debate over ways to best fund library services will never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. That may be a good thing too because we shall not be allowed to take libraries for granted.

### LITERACY (MDM LECTURE)

While we are concerned about the level of illiteracy in Canada it takes a dynamic and entertaining speaker like Ben Wicks to give literacy promotion greater cachet.