

Getting Beyond Statistics to Value: The Untold Story of Canadian Libraries *Turning Features into Benefits*

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Conditions for a user-centred culture of library service:

- vision, passion, courage, core values
- client-centred
- research-based — evidence of all kinds including library user stories
- ethic of service, commitment, stewardship, accountability
- an open mind, curiosity, flexibility, innovation!

Framing the issues and questions:

- What does a library “use” mean to our clients?
- What business are we in? – or businesses? What value do we add to the universe of cultural records and information? What value do we add to the quality of life of the people we serve?
- In short, how do we answer the big “So what?” questions? And what are the hooks to get people’s attention once we have some answers?
- Do we provide service through supplier eyes or client eyes? Do we know if our actions and activities have made a difference to clients? Do clients have anything to tell us about our services? Does our evidence include stories of service as told by clients?
- If we focus on people making choices in their daily lives, we will see that every library use is an affirmative choice. Every library use (transaction, event, data point) is a *moment of truth* in the quality and impact of service on human behaviour, values, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, feelings, satisfaction, and loyalty.
- Can we move from the insider vision to the “outsider” vision? Can we grasp that our service outputs are merely client inputs to real-life outcomes and benefits? Can we refocus our goals from service transactions to client transformations — from what we do to what they experience and feel?

Turning Features into Benefits

Affirmative responses to these criteria, questions, and issues will require a different positioning of libraries and librarians. This repositioning helps us to turn library features into client benefits. Our perspective shifts to collections of library users, beyond collections of library materials and information. We adopt a customer focus, not just customer service. Our reorientation is grounded in the knowledge that library user value is not just “library value-added”; that value-added is not value experienced; that satisfaction is not the same as benefits, outcomes, and differences in people's lives.

Transformations not transactions.

Benefits not features.

Making a difference in people's lives.

Telling their stories — telling ours.