Service Desk Basics

Welcome to the Circulation Desk!

Now that you have completed levels 1-3 of your training, we will begin your desk training.

💡 Keep in mind: This does not mean that you will no longer be assigned to stacks maintenance tasks; rather, it means that working the desk will be one more task that staff will be able to delegate to you at their discretion, based on the needs of the department.

Think about a time when you needed assistance at a service desk.

Perhaps you needed help finding an item in a retail store, or maybe you asked for directions in an unfamiliar building. Were the employees helpful? How did they make you feel? Oftentimes, seeking assistance at a service desk can induce mild to moderate anxiety because it requires a person to: a) admit a need for/lack of knowledge, and b) interact with and trust a stranger. This can be exacerbated by a person’s stress level, familiarity with a predominant language, ability/disability, and many other factors.

 располагает своим столом. Основной статус, который занимает здесь персонал, – это доверие и расположение. Но при этом нельзя забывать о том, что сотрудники также имеют свои нужды и права.

It is your responsibility when working at the circulation desk to ensure that patrons feel at ease.

Desk Etiquette

When working the circulation desk, you are the “face” of the library. You are often the first person a patron sees as they enter the building. Following these guidelines will ensure that you help to cultivate an inviting atmosphere for our library and offer our patrons exceptional customer service.

Be approachable:

- Be aware of your surroundings. especially of what is happening in front of the desk.
- Be aware of your body language. Sit up straight, and keep your eyesight above the computer monitor.
- Be aware of your facial expressions. Smile and make gentle eye contact. 😊
- Ask patrons who linger in front of the doorway how you can help them.

⚠️ Do not put your feet up or lay your head down at any time while you are assigned to the desk. If you are feeling ill, inform a supervisor so you can go home.

Keep personal conversations short:

- It is okay to greet friends and classmates if they come into the library, but socializing for an extended period while working at the desk is unacceptable. Keep personal conversations brief. Say something like, “It was good to see you; I’ll catch you on my break or when I get off work.”
- Don’t let conversations with your coworkers distract you from the patrons. As soon as you see a patron enter the building, your conversation should be put on hold so you can ask the patron if they need assistance. Also, remember to talk at a low volume to avoid distracting patrons from their work. Voices carry, especially in open spaces like the first floor.

Smartphones at the desk:

- You may have your phone on your person while at work in case of an emergency. You may check incoming texts to see if they are urgent. You may not, however, text back or take phone calls while working the desk. If you see your coworker violating this, do not follow their example. Set a good example for others.
- If you need to answer an urgent phone call or text, you must get prior approval from the student supervisor. Under no circumstances should you be on the phone or FaceTime while working at the desk.
- While headphones are acceptable in the stacks, they are never permitted at the desk or while interacting with your coworkers or patrons.
- Social media and browsing on your phone can and should wait until your shift is done.

Homework at the desk:

- While at work, your first priority is work. We do allow you to read and complete light homework when the desk is slow, but homework should never distract you from assisting patrons and taking direction from your supervisors. Be responsible, and put distracting assignments away for later. If a supervisor determines that your homework is distracting you, they will direct you to put it away – so don’t plan to meet homework deadlines while at work.
- Covered drinks are acceptable, but eating is not. If you need to step away from the desk to have a snack, you must get approval from staff.

Customer Service

Safety, Conflict Resolution, and Reporting

Let’s recap from your orientation:

Working in front-line public services means you will be interacting with a very diverse array of patronage, which makes our work dynamic and exciting. Overall, your interactions with our patronage should be positive. Occasionally, however, you may interact with patrons who are stressed or anxious, patrons who are upset or angry, or patrons who have special behavioral or emotional needs. You may also encounter patrons who try to maintain lengthy conversations, who may not realize their behavior is inappropriate.

Remember that you are never expected to take abuse – physical or emotional. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, seek the support of a supervisor.

We care about our student assistants and the environment in which you work. We want your time here to be positive, so please make sure you refer disgruntled or suspicious patrons to staff – do not try to handle the situation on your own.

If you are experiencing persistent conversation from a patron who does not need work-related assistance, politely tell the patron that you have to go complete a task. Then, report the situation to staff immediately.
Patrons will approach the desk for any number or reasons. When a patron needs our assistance, providing excellent customer service is our top priority.

- Remember that you are a representative for the library, and your actions while at work reflect on the library. Behave professionally.
- Complete circulation transactions accurately and in a timely manner.
- There will be times when a patron will require assistance searching for a book in the stacks. As long as there is adequate desk coverage, you may ask your supervisor if you can leave the desk to assist them. If not, we can always help them to request the item.
- If a line begins to form, ask for backup from someone near you who is not already working the desk. Politely let the patron behind the one you’re currently assisting know that you will be right with them.
- If there is ever a question that you cannot answer or a request that you cannot fulfill, refer the patron to a supervisor so we can find another solution.

If you are interacting with a disgruntled patron, or with a patron whose disposition makes you uncomfortable or is otherwise out-of-the-ordinary, refer the patron to staff in a pleasant and courteous tone. Remain calm, and model for the patron the behavior that you expect them to emulate – do not raise your voice or argue with the patron.

Once you refer the patron to staff, you can remove yourself from the situation by going into the back office until the patron is no longer at the desk. Staff will then assist the patron and work toward a resolution.

REMEMBER

If you are ever at work and feel that you are in immediate danger, or that there is a threat of violence, you are absolutely permitted to contact UPD without the prior approval of a supervisor.

Save their number in your phone, just in case: 518-442-3131.

In the event of an emergency that prevents you from accessing a phone, the circulation desk is equipped with a panic button that will alert the University Police Department to report immediately to the building.

If you feel like your interaction with someone is discriminatory in nature (i.e. based on race, gender, or age), report it to the Title IX office as soon as possible. Their phone number is 518-442-3800. They are located in the Hudson Building (Building 25), Suite 117. If you feel comfortable doing so, you can ask any full-time staff member whom you trust to assist you in this process.

Major incidents will be documented in an incident/suspicious behavior form that will be sent to all library staff (when appropriate) and communicated to the proper authorities.