

Library Customers And The "Marketing Funnel"

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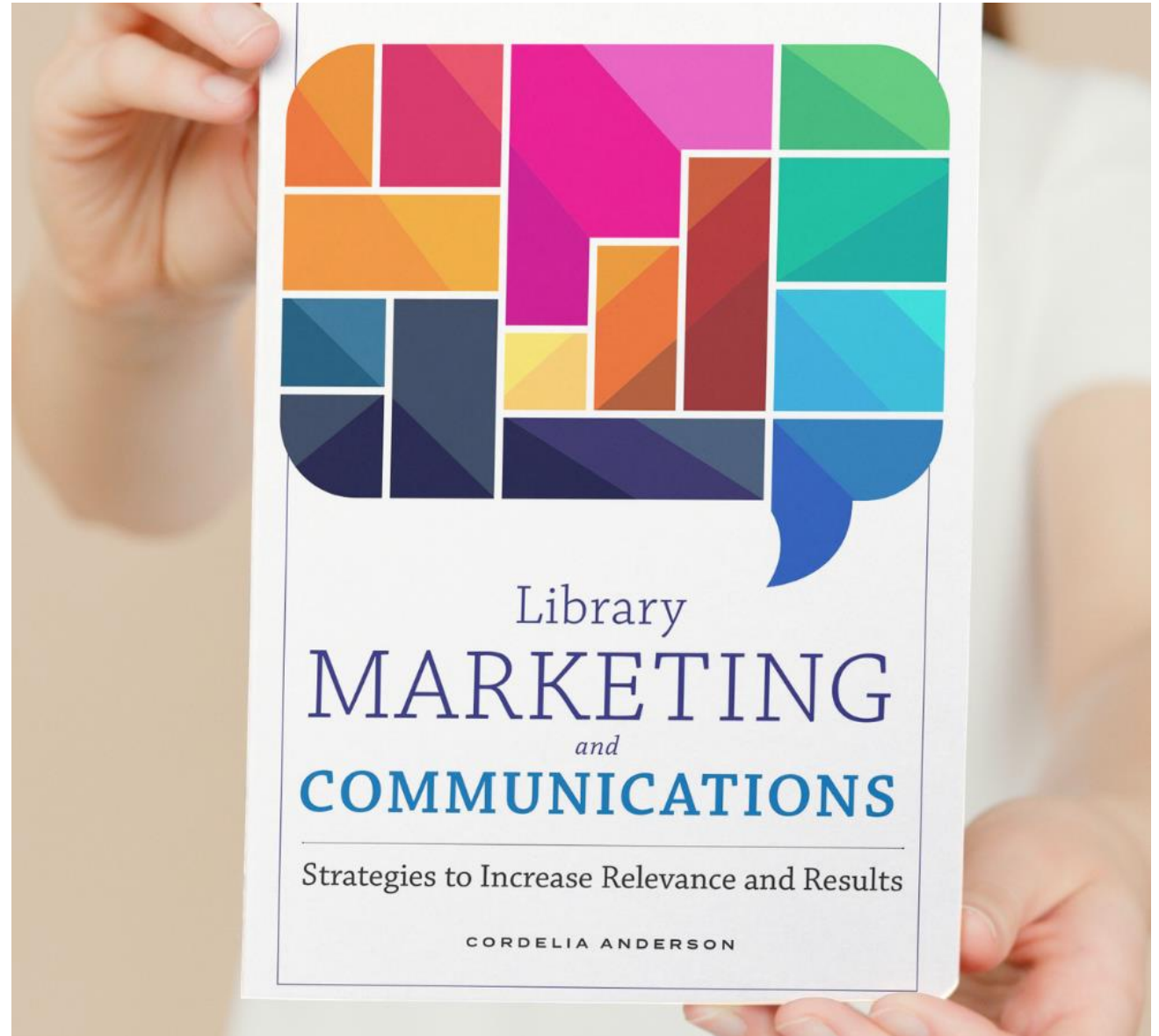
Background



- Library Marketing & Communications Consultant
- 20+ years in Library Marketing & Communications; 15 at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
- Accredited in Public Relations
- 2016 Library Journal Marketer of the Year, Two-time John Cotton Dana winner
- Advisory Board Member, UNC Charlotte Atkins Library

For More on These Topics

- Register for my on-demand training and receive \$10 off my book from ALA Editions.
- Topics include email marketing, social media, and creating a Marketing & Communications Plan.
- Go to bit.ly/CACOnDemand to see offerings, and you will receive the discount code when you register.



Today's Objectives



- Introduce the “marketing funnel” concept.
- Discuss how libraries can move people from being potential customers to library users to advocates.
- Review the many possible barriers or “holes” in the library's marketing funnel.
- Discuss what we can do to remove those barriers.



Where Did This Idea Come From?

What is the Marketing Funnel?



- The marketing funnel is a way of visualizing the process of turning potential customers into customers.
- Marketers cast a broad net to capture as many leads as possible, and then slowly nurture prospective customers.
- The goal is to keep as many leads as possible until they turn into customers.
- Some leads naturally drop off, hence the funnel. Otherwise it would be a cylinder!
- It is the marketer's job to make the funnel as cylindrical as possible by keeping customers engaged.

Basic Marketing Funnel

Awareness

Interest

Consideration

Evaluation

Decision

Action/Transaction

Repeat

Loyalty

Advocacy

Library Marketing Funnel

Members of your community



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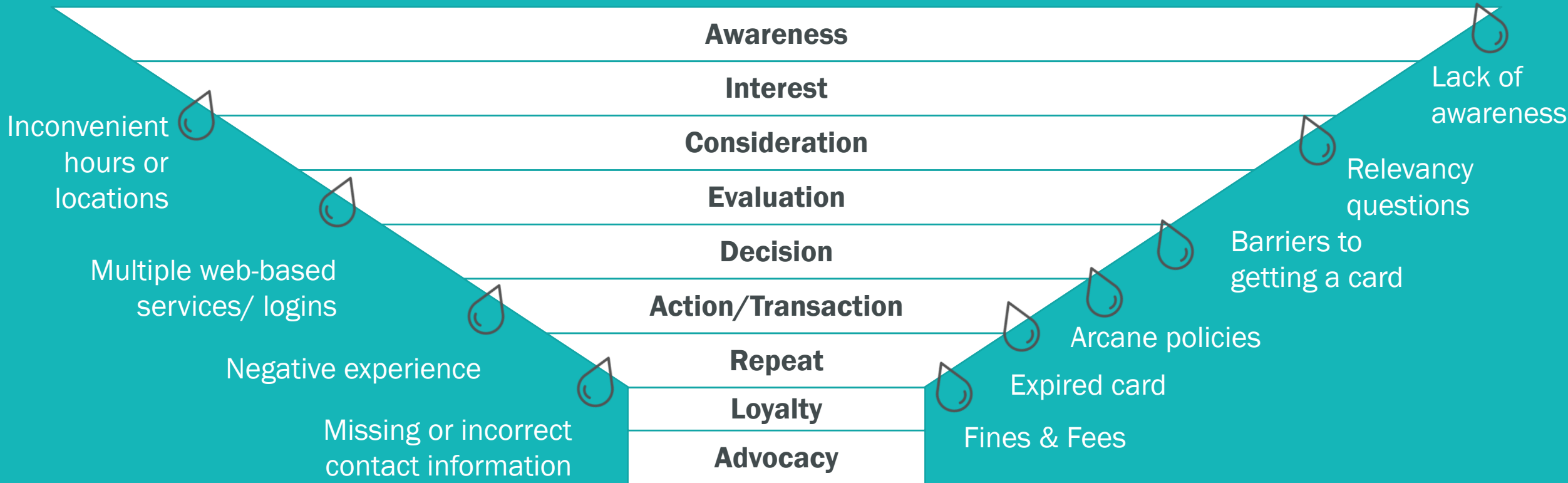
Advocacy



- Checks out a book
- Downloads from website
- Books a study room
- Attends a program
- Visits a branch
- Other

Holes in the Funnel

Members of your community 

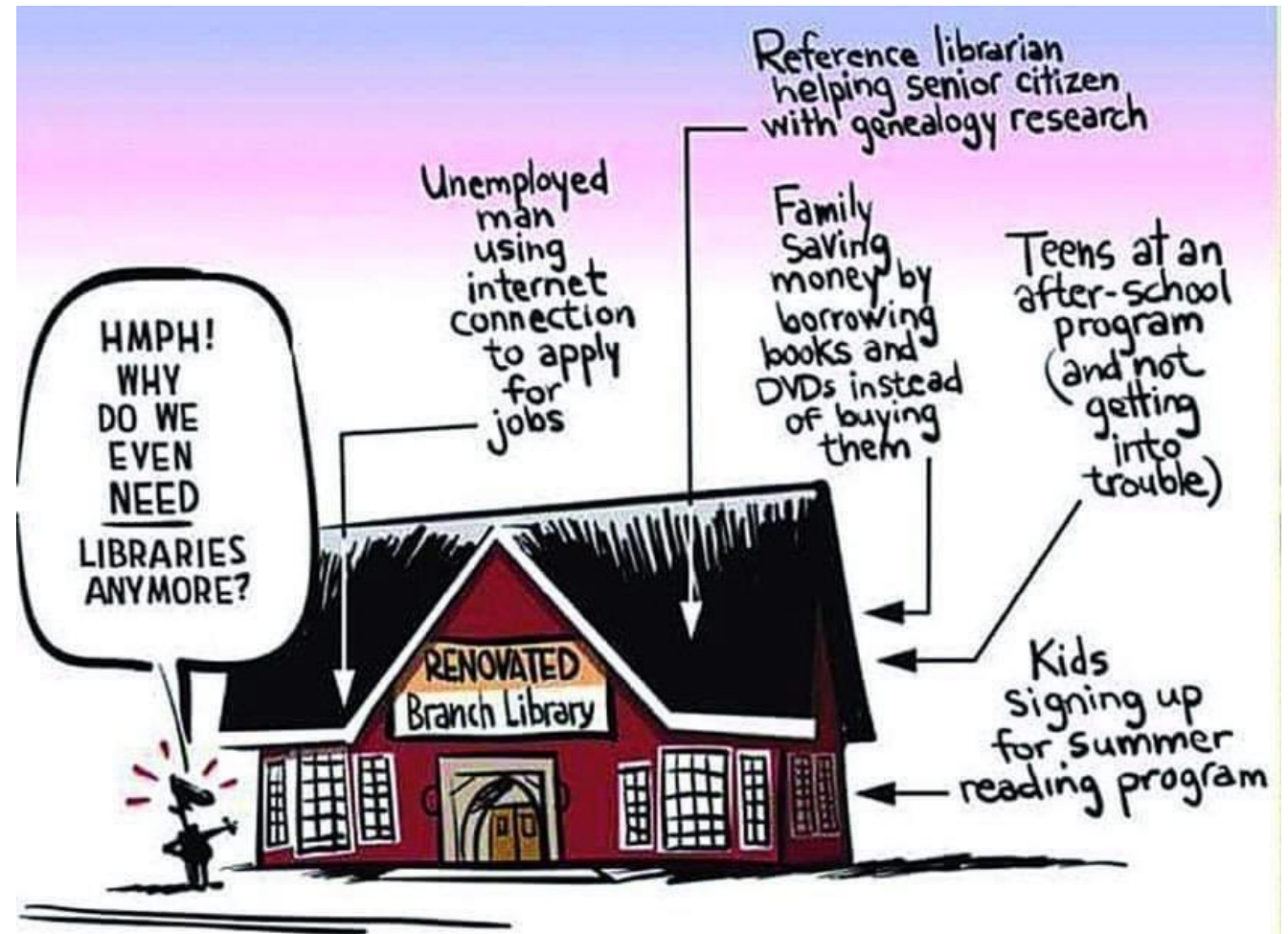


Note: We'll go through each of these individually.

Lack of Awareness

Examples:

- Customers use you for one service (ex: students using study rooms) but aren't aware of your many other services (ex: research databases).
- Non-customers have an outdated perception of the library.
- Libraries don't invest in marketing – and if they do, a lot of that investment is in print.





Inconvenient Hours or Locations

Examples:

- Limited weekend hours (programs, access).
- Branch too far away.
- Branch closed for renovation.
- Website not mobile-friendly (yes, your website can be a location!).

Multiple Web-Based Services and Logins

Examples:

- Customers have to keep track of multiples accounts and logins for your catalog, third-party vendors and e-resources.
- Information is stored in different “silos,” affecting access, search, discovery and tracking of customer behavior.
- Inaccurate web analytics (bounces, stickiness).

The logo for Hoopla, featuring the word "hoopla" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.The logo for rb digital audiobooks, featuring a red lowercase "rb" followed by the words "digital audiobooks" in a grey, lowercase, sans-serif font.The logo for OverDrive, featuring the word "OverDrive" in a bold, blue, italicized, sans-serif font.The logo for freegal music, featuring the word "freegal" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font, with "music" in a smaller, blue, lowercase, sans-serif font below it.

Negative Experience

I am a library patron because I don't feel like it is utilized [enough] ... But to be spoken to by [a staff member] rudely ... is not welcoming or inviting.

First she [had a negative] attitude because I brought her my returned books instead of dropping them in the slot out front and then she told me next time "I better" bring my card because I got a temporary pass.

I said thank you and please, I am not a rude person ... but I will not be talked down to because her conversation [with the security guard was] interrupted. Even though I did not speak but waited for her to notice me [I] got tired of security glancing at me behind her time and time again.

I will not return to this branch again.

- Real Google Review





Missing or Incorrect Customer Contact Information

- It's hard to conduct targeted communications or marketing without contact information!
- Academic Library : Student accounts are centralized under university, not library.
- Public Library: Lots of different staff entering data, inconsistencies, mistyped or missing info.
- Ask yourselves:
 - Do you have access to accurate contact info for customers?
 - Are you able to contact them and tell them about programs and services? (Ex: [SirsiDynix Customer Engagement Platform](#))
 - What about account notices? (i.e. helping them avoid fines and fees)

Relevancy Questions

Dreaded (yet familiar) scenario:

- You're at a party and someone asks, "Do we still need libraries now that we have Google and everyone can get books on Kindle?"
- Even your own customers wonder about this, and may not use all your services as a result!



Barriers to Getting a Library Account



Examples:

- Can't apply online OR online application still has several steps.
- Waiting period - no instant access.
- Card must be mailed.
- Must show ID and proof of address, can't get to a branch.

Arcane Policies & Procedures

Examples:

- Paper-based processes and forms.
- Must appear in person for certain transactions. (ex: meeting room rental)
- Placing “blocks” on accounts.
- Auto-expiring accounts.
- Computer use limitations.



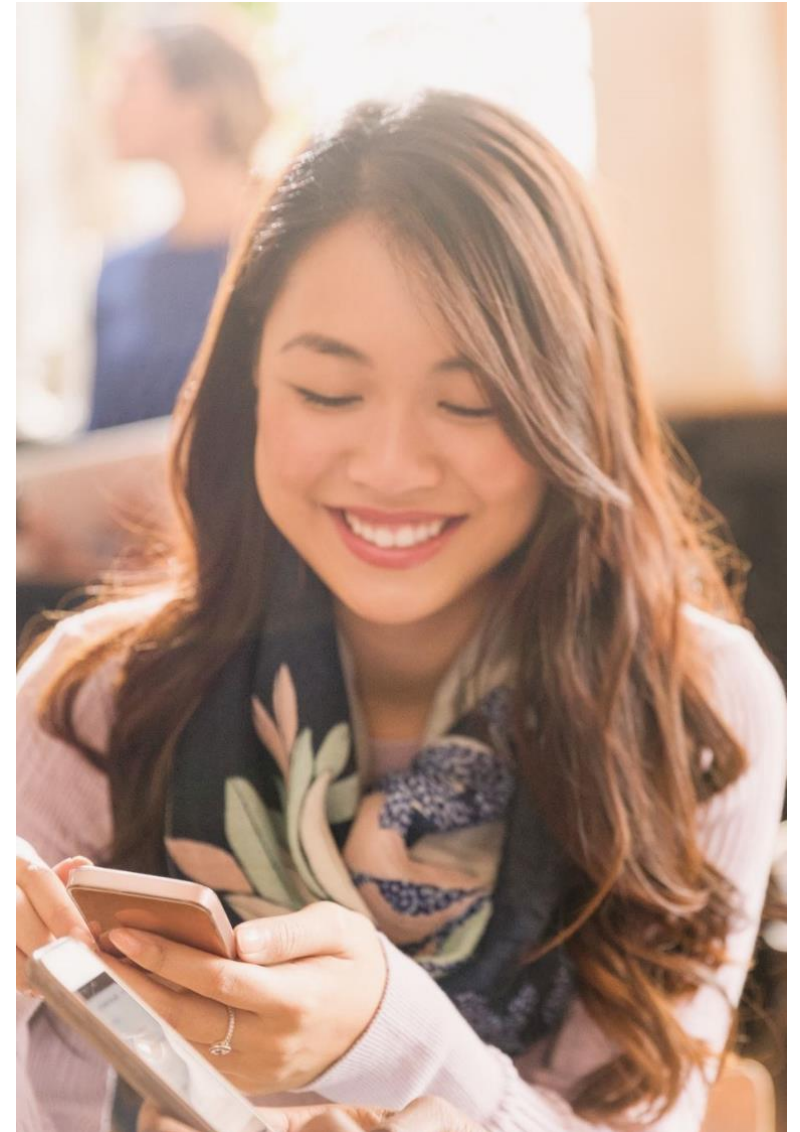
Unable or Unwilling to Email Customers



- In some libraries, there is a fear of being perceived as “spammers.”
- We require customers to “opt in” to our email messages, resulting in a low percentage of customers receiving information about what the library has to offer.
- This is an opportunity to communicate with more customers about the great services and programs you offer!
- With well-planned email communication, following applicable laws and standards, you can grow usership, increase program attendance, and make staff and customers happier!

The Case for Email Marketing

- The one piece of contact information that most customers are used to giving out is their email address.
- Libraries should make getting email addresses a routine part of customer signups and onboarding.
- Many libraries made the shift in COVID-19 and had few to no unsubscribes or complaints from customers.
- Getting to “Yes” – Making a Case for Email Marketing bit.ly/CACOnDemand





Expired Card/ Account

- It is a common practice to auto-expire accounts, even among active customers, to get them to verify their account information and ensure that they still live in the service area.
- How many loyal customers are negatively impacted by this practice?
- What's the worst thing that would happen if we didn't expire cards?
- An we find other ways to verify residency?

Fines & Fees

- Let's not kid ourselves: Fines and fees are punitive.
- They were originally designed to get people to return items.
- Studies by fine-free libraries have found it doesn't have an impact on whether items are stolen or returned.
- Fines disproportionately impact the lower-income people who need you the most.





Overall Mindset: Self-imposed Limitations

- Sometimes we get bogged down by all the reasons why something might be difficult or might not work.
- Rather than starting with all the reasons that you *can't* do something, begin with the assertion that you *will*.
- Set a goal and work backward from there.
- Look at everything with fresh eyes and knock down barriers when possible.

Example: One Access™

ONE Access™ uses students' school identification numbers instead of separate library cards. With their ONE Access account, students can:

- Access Library research databases
- Borrow digital materials such as e-books, e-audiobooks, magazines, music and video
- Borrow up to 10 print or audiobooks (no DVDs or music CDs)
- There are no overdue fines for ONE Access accounts, but users are responsible for fees on lost or damaged books.
- Students can also have a “regular” library card with normal borrowing privileges.

Reasons we said it couldn't be done:

- “The school system will never agree to share their data.”
- “Our ILS doesn't work that way.”
- “Student ID numbers don't have the same number of digits as library cards.”
- “If we don't charge overdue fines, students will never return the books! And parents might use the card.”
- “We've never done something like this before.”



How Did We Overcome These Concerns?



We knew this was the best way to have the biggest possible impact on the lives of students in our community.



We started with the assertion that we *would* make this happen and worked backward from there.



**Ask Yourself: Does
Your Library Have a
Cylinder, Funnel or
Sieve?**



Most Libraries Have a Sieve

- Don't worry! You can take steps to convert your sieve into a working funnel.
- The first step is *finding* the holes in your funnel.
- The next step is *fixing* the holes in your funnel.





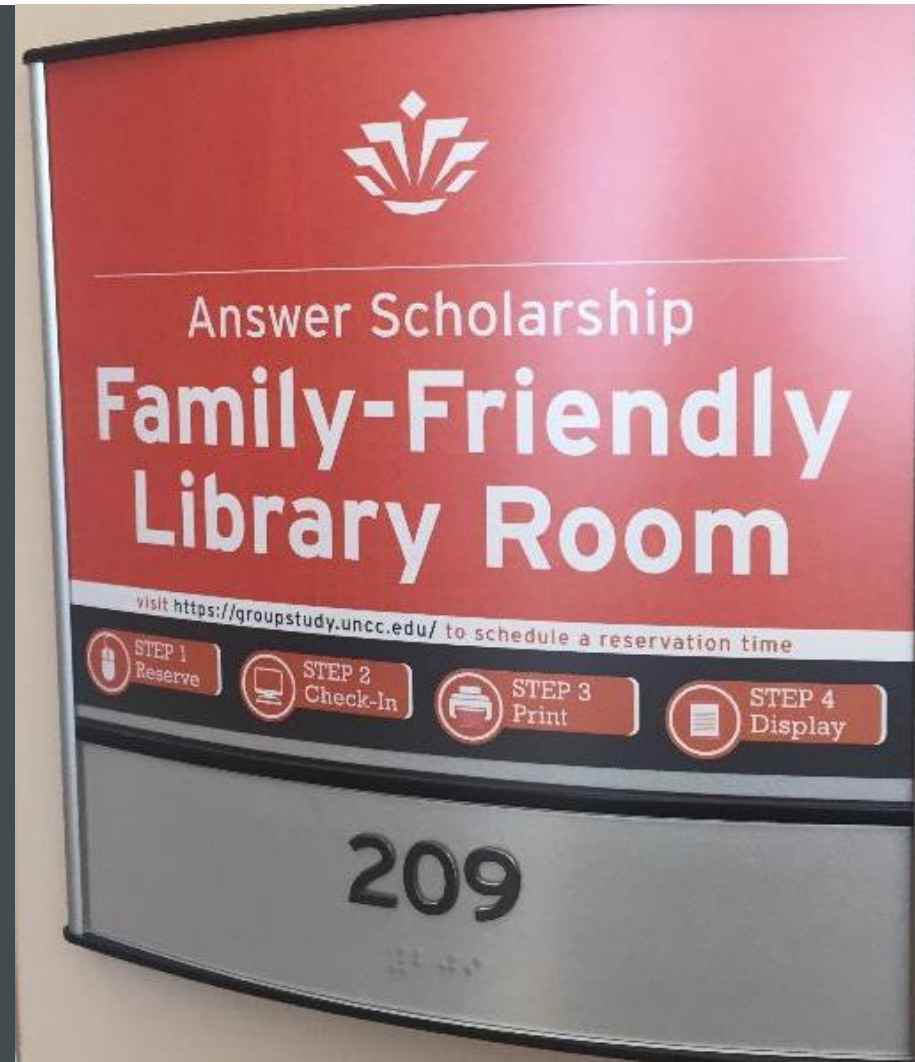
Finding & Fixing the Holes

- Begin with the assertion that you *will* find and close the holes in your funnel.
- Determine where the holes are.
- Put customers (not staff) at the center of the equation.
- Ask customers for feedback.
- *Tell customers* when you make changes. Let them know what you did and why!

Example: Policy Change

Barrier: Students who were also parents with young children didn't have childcare and didn't feel comfortable bringing their children with them to the library to study or work.

- Under the old policy, these smaller children might not be welcome in an academic setting.
- UNCC Atkins Library created study rooms for students with children.
- There are resources for parents *and* a play area for kids.
- They are continually booked!



Example: Fine Elimination



Barrier: Many people can't pay or would rather avoid the shame of fines.

- Many libraries are going fine free to remove the barrier and stigma.
- This is a great marketing opportunity as well as an access and equity win!
- At left: Fine Free Map from ULC.
urbanlibraries.org/resources/fine-free-map

Example: Email Marketing & Digital Cards

- Barriers: Customers have to opt into an e-newsletter and/or don't get emails from the library telling them what services they can use.
- They also have to come to a branch to activate their cards.
- Spartanburg County Public Libraries started opting all existing customers into marketing emails after the COVID-19 pandemic started.
- They also started offering Digital Cards that didn't require people to show ID or come to a branch in person.





Final Thoughts

- Change takes time! Be patient and keep the momentum going.
- Prioritize.
 - You can prioritize based on level of impact - i.e. the things that affect the most customers.
 - You can also prioritize based on the level of difficulty, starting with easier fixes.
 - Try for a mix of “quick wins” that are easy to implement and “heavy lifts” that make a big impact.
- Remember: It all comes back to the customer. If you’re putting the customer first, and asserting that you will make it better for them, you’ll be successful.

Q&A + Additional Resources

- Short video explaining library marketing funnel: bit.ly/libraryfunnel
- Marketing Library Services article on Marketing Funnel: infoday.com/mls/jan21
- Public Libraries Podcast interview: cordeliaandersonapr.com/2020/01/07/podcast-interview-library-marketing-with-cordelia-anderson
- Additional training available at bit.ly/CACOnDemand and book available at alastore.ala.org/relevanceresults



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