



Creating Welcoming Environments

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Hedberg Public Library

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Learning Objectives

- Identify barriers to welcoming environments
- Identify welcoming behaviors and communication
- Identify resources to support welcoming facilities and behaviors



Michelle Dennis

2011 to Now Hedberg Public Library – Janesville (64,000)

- Head of Public Services & Security
- Dept. of 14 + (Library has 64 employees)
- Coordinate PIC's - 9

2002-2010 Ropes Challenge Course Facilitator

1994-2011 Clinton Public Library (pop. 2,192)

- Director
- Staff of 4 (2.75 fte)

Conferences – Trainings – UW iSchool

High school and college library aide

Always a library user



Also...

Group home for runaway teens (Portland, OR)

Aide in a psychiatric hospital

Group home for adults with multiple mental illnesses

Summer camp counselor/Scouts/4-H/Sunday school

Mother of two

Worked with horses and dogs

WE'RE ON
THE GO!



Limited Income

Limited access to resources

Services provided are not of good quality

Limited transportation

Other languages

Unknown level of education

Different etiquette

Disabled / Neurodivergent

???

What does "Underserved" mean?

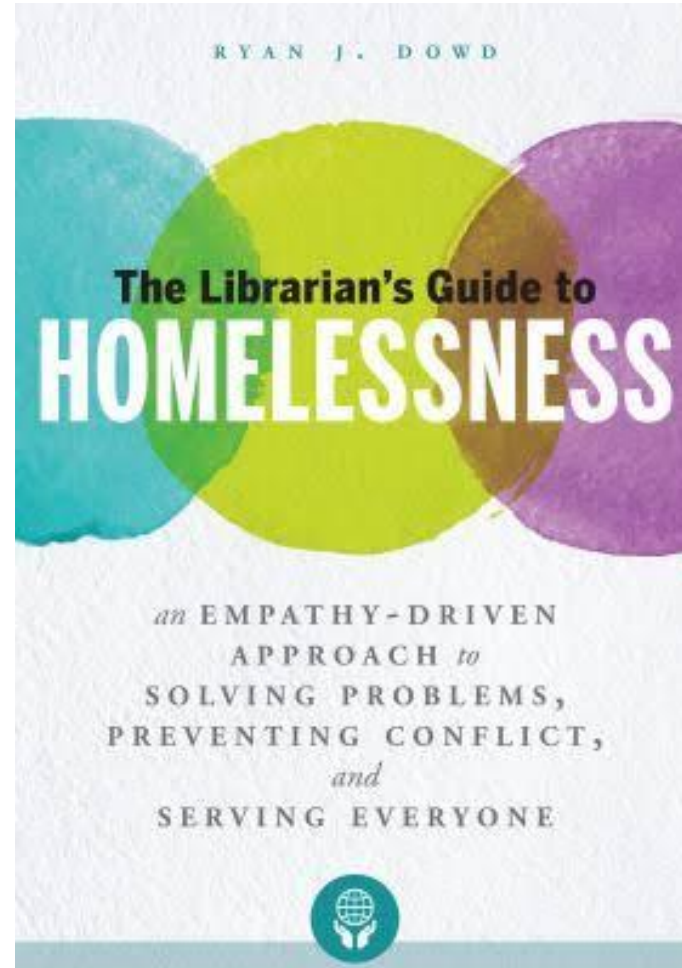
How does it affect the way we serve these library users?



Synonyms for MAD?

- Volume
- Profanity
- Our Rules

Are we scaring our new users right back out again with penalties for things they really did not understand?



Barriers

jargon

due date, overdues, returns
sorter, express bin, self check

language / idiom:

"Lemme grab my manager."

"Just a sec."

Panhandling / Soliciting

simply no knowledge

No public libraries in Mexico, Guatemala, Iran, Laos

Parents didn't bring them to the library

Not confident asking questions so "figure it out"

Barriers

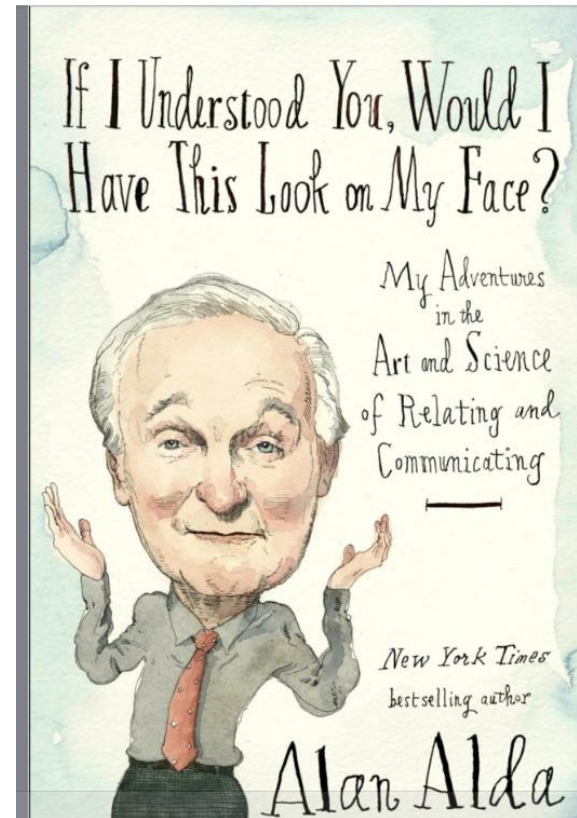
Don't _____ in here

- Eat
- Sleep
- Lay down
- Talk
- Swear
- Make my point
- Laugh out loud
- Talk to people



How can we be more welcoming?

- Adjust our language to meet the needs of the listener.
- Listen more
- Chose accessible vocabulary
- Slow down
- Choose empathy
- Explain the basics
- Respectful not condescending



How can we be more welcoming?

Five Universal Truths of Human Interaction:

from Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion by George Thompson

1. All people want to be treated with *dignity and respect*;
2. All people want to be *asked* rather than told to do something;
3. All people want to be informed as to *why* they are being asked or ordered to do something;
4. All people want to be given *options* rather than threats;
5. All people want a *second chance* when they make a mistake.

This global message promoting respect, understanding, and forgiveness can connect all people everywhere. Using our words for a defined purpose can create the forward momentum.

Barriers

What we ASSUME they know

- Materials must come back
- There is a deadline
- There is a penalty for being late \$\$\$
- There is a big penalty for not paying (collection fees)

When and where do we teach these things?

- At sign up
- In our brochure

What if they don't know and don't comply?

- Fines they cannot afford
- Loss of privileges
- Bad feelings – sense of betrayal?
- Another social service agency that has let them down?

How can we be more welcoming?

PlainLanguage.gov

Federal plain language guidelines

Official guidelines for the [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#).

Developed to help agencies to write clearly, so your users can:

- Find what they need
- Understand what they find
- Use what they find to meet their needs



Gut Check?

How can we be more welcoming?

County Aging and Disability Resource Center

<https://legacy.co.rock.wi.us/adrc> The ADRC of Rock County provides information about resources and support on all aspects of life related to aging or living with a disability.

Dementia Friendly America <https://www.dfamerica.org/>



Dementia Friendly Initiatives

Have you seen this symbol in a local business and wondered what it meant? These employees have been trained to recognize signs when someone is struggling to understand or communicate and they have been trained to better serve them.

Outreach to Immigrant & BIPOC



YWCA Immigrant Outreach

<https://www.ywcarockcounty.org/immigrant-outreach/> The YWCA's Immigrant Outreach Program serves the immigrant community by addressing systemic disparities for newcomers, eliminate barriers, and invest in the success of those who have come to our community to build a new life.

Local Churches

[https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/organization.614748-Faith Community Church Immigration Legal Services Outreach](https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/organization.614748-Faith%20Community%20Church%20Immigration%20Legal%20Services%20Outreach)

Faith Community Church seeks to reach out and serve the immigrants of Rock County and its surrounding areas through the Immigration Legal Services Outreach program. Our services include: determination of client's eligibility for immigration benefit and / or relief, preparation and submission of application / petition, representation before USCIS, and referral of cases outside our expertise.



Resources and ideas from Retail

Google welcome to store

Fit Small Business
Greeting Customers: 10 Tip...

UserGuiding
Engaging Welcome an...

LA's The Place | Los A...
4 Tips To Make Custo...

The Retail Doctor
How to Greet Customers in Retail ...

Tidio
10 Best Welcome Messages f...

UserGuiding
Engaging Welcome and Greeting Messag...

notariarbina.cl
Greeting Customers: 10 Tip...



Fit Small Business
Greeting Customers: 10 Tip...

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffit-small-business.com%2Fgreeting-customers%2F&psig=AOwVaw2BKZMb03irr1GX056SrP8G&ust=1694291635202000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CA0Q>


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Retail | How To


Greeting Customers: 10 Tips for Welcoming Shoppers to Your Store

PUBLISHED DECEMBER 14, 2022 | REVIEWED BY:  **Meaghan Brophy** | WRITTEN BY:  **Brigitte Korte**

Make the most of your space
Download our store layout guide





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Greeting customers is an important part of creating a positive shopping experience and setting the tone for your store's customer service. A good greeting will open the door for deeper interactions, create a welcoming environment, and let shoppers know what promotions or offers you currently have available.

Here we will take a look at the 10 tips for greeting customers effectively:

1. Write a Customer Greeting Script

The best way to set up you and your associates for successfully greeting customers is to write a sample script with an ideal or model customer greeting. I'm not implying that your staff should read off a document when talking to customers, but rather that you would have a training sheet employees can reference. I would recommend giving them the option of learning your script word for word or adapting it to their own wording, keeping all the important pieces in place.

This article is part of a larger series on [Retail](#)

Questions or discussion?

Making change can be messy and confusing. How do we help smooth it out?

Think about your physical library. What is one thing you do to help make your space more welcoming?

What concerns might come up in a small library with vintage staff?
How can we address that?

What Else?

- **Resources:**
- Dowd, Ryan, The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness: An Empathy-Driven Approach to Solving Problems, Preventing Conflict, and Serving Everyone. ALA Editions, 2018.
- Alda, Alan, If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face?: My Adventures in the Art and Science of Relating and Communicating. Random House, 2017.

- **Dementia Friendly @ Work** <https://www.dfamerica.org/business-training>
- **Your County Health Department** Division for Aging and Disability Services
- **YWCA Immigrant Outreach** <https://www.ywcarockcounty.org/immigrant-outreach/>

- <https://fitsmallbusiness.com/greeting-customers/>



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