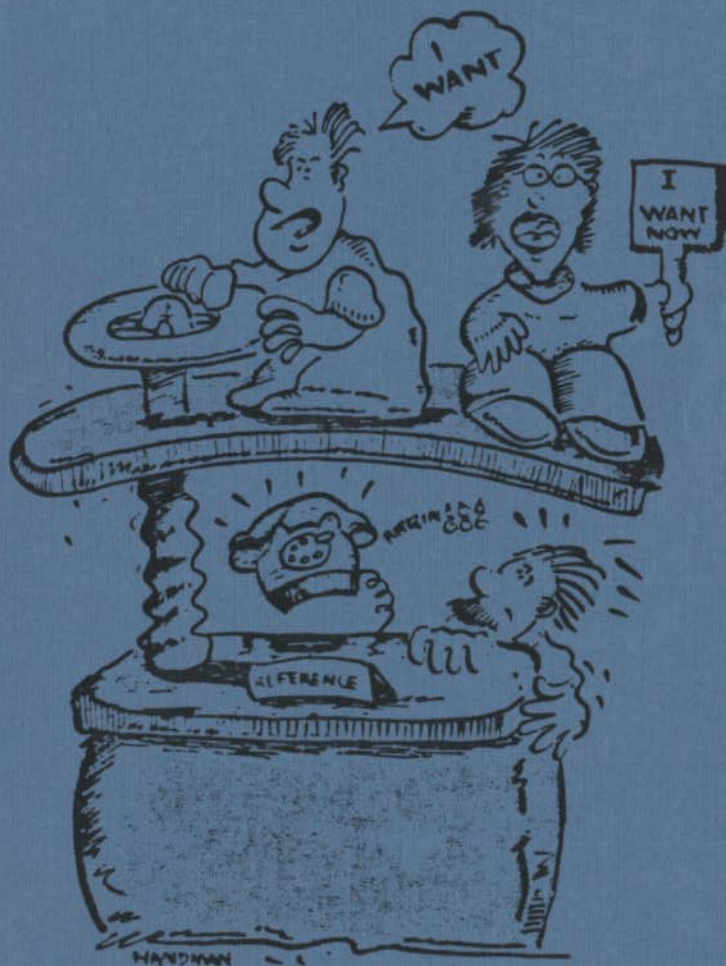

PUBLIC SERVICE UNDER PRESSURE: IMPROVING THE RESPONSE

A Handbook of Themes

by Anne G. Lipow and Suzanne Gallup



Copyright 1986 by Anne G. Lipow and Suzanne Gallup
Cover drawing by Gary Handman

PUBLIC SERVICE UNDER PRESSURE: IMPROVING THE RESPONSE

A Summary of Themes

covered in the
UC Berkeley General Library Workshop, August 6, 1986
prepared by Anne G. Lipow and Suzanne Gallup

	<u>Page</u>
Preface.....	2
I. Why this program?.....	2
II. Recognizing the unmet service goal.....	3
III. Identifying the source of pressure.....	3
IV. Basic approach to anger.....	4
V. Improved responses.....	4
Theme 1: When we are pressed for time.....	5
Theme 2: When the patron is pressuring to bend the rules, to make an exception.....	6
GUIDELINES FOR MAKING EXCEPTIONS.....	7
Theme 3: When the patron expects/demands service we cannot/do not have time to give.....	8
Theme 4: When patron is negative about another service in our library.....	9
TIPS FOR "BUYING TIME".....	9
Theme 5: When patron's question, appearance or manner irritates us.....	10
Theme 6: When patron's accent or speech is hard to understand..	10
Theme 7: When we feel we are losing control and our responses are having a negative effect.....	12
Theme 8: When we have helped the patron in all ways we can think of, but to no avail; when we seem to be at a dead end...12	12
Theme 9: When we are dealing with an angry patron who uses abusive, hurtful, inappropriate language.....	13
Theme 10: Pressure caused by objective conditions.....	14
VI. A final note: Focus on the method.....	15
Appendix A: Patron as the source of pressure.....	16
Appendix B: Environment as the source of pressure.....	17
Appendix C: Self as the source of pressure.....	18

PUBLIC SERVICE UNDER PRESSURE: IMPROVING THE RESPONSE

A Summary of Program Themes

Preface

This summary of themes is intended as a reminder of many of the ideas and suggestions that were discussed in the workshop. It contains the highlights of past workshops with staff from every kind of library. For this reason, a particular situation or response that was dealt with in your session may not be included here, and, conversely, you are likely to find some ideas that were not discussed at all in your session. However, all of the issues presented come out of the real and recurring public service situations which library personnel have identified as causing undue pressure, and the solutions they devised represent a better way to handle those situations.

* * * * *

I. Why this program?

Most of the time we give very effective service; most of the time we handle tough situations very well: pushy patrons, patrons frustrated at the roadblocks in getting what they need, long lines of patrons. So isn't the small percent of our responses that give us or the patron trouble inevitable? Luckily, no. Negative interchanges are not inevitable. Many are avoidable by the use of learnable techniques. This program dealt with those techniques.

Also, the few negative interchanges patrons experience have a more powerful impact on the organization's image than the more common positive (or neutral) interchanges. Therefore, reducing the frequency of negative interchanges should improve the library's reputation. This program dealt with ways of reducing the incidence of negative interchanges.

To put it another way, our goal is to achieve consistently high quality public service, regardless of which staff member in the library the patron meets with, regardless of the personal characteristics of the patron, or regardless of the staff member's mood at the moment. This program dealt with ways to achieve that consistency.

II. Recognizing the unmet service goal

A major cause of poor response under pressure is a failure to meet one or more of our public service goals. One way to define our service goals is in terms of attributes or behavior we look for in the ideal co-worker--e.g., accurate, competent, and thorough; able to be fair and consistent, yet flexible in the application of rules; patient, understanding, tactful; possessing a sense of humor; accessible and approachable; knows limitations; is persistent in pursuit of the right answer; takes pride in work; is a good listener; is trusting; shows enthusiasm and respect for patron's question; has good communication skills.

When poor performance under pressure is examined against our ideal performance standards, it becomes apparent that the poor responses result when we allow our personal goal of the moment (e.g., wanting to get rid of or get even with the patron, because of personal feelings such as anger, frustration, inadequacy) to overtake our professional or public service goal (e.g., to be thorough, patient, flexible).

III. Identifying the source of pressure

Understanding the source of pressure is the first step toward analyzing our negative responses and knowing how to change those responses. In the library environment, the three major sources of pressure are: the patron, the environment, and self.

The more sources of pressure in a given situation, the more likely it is that we will lose control of our ability to provide the "professional" response consistent with our public service goals. For example, if the library staff member (self) is relaxed and feeling fine, and the desk is well staffed (environment), we would generally handle very well the patron who insisted on borrowing an important reference book for home use (patron). But, to take another example, if we are short-staffed (environment), and we are late in getting a report done (self), and the microfilm machines are all down (environment), and we have dealt with several difficult problems at the desk with relatively little time in between each to relax (self and environment), our spontaneous response to that same patron wanting to take home the non-circulating reference book might be abrupt or less than sympathetic.

For lists of the specific pressure we experience from the three sources -- patron, environment, and self--see Appendixes A, B, and C.

IV. Basic approach to anger

Step 1. Reduce your own anger.

Say to yourself, "It's OK for the patron to hold an opinion different from mine."

Step 2. Reduce patron's anger by ACTIVE LISTENING.

BEFORE attempting to solve the problem, show that you understand how the patron feels and what the patron is trying to say, in the following ways:

- a. Listen with your ears, eyes, and voice.
- b. "Reflect": paraphrase patron's problem empathetically.
- c. Do not judge or question or argue.
- d. Do not respond immediately.
- e. Ask open-ended questions to keep the dialogue going and to clarify.
- f. Answer questions with tentative answers to keep the dialogue going.
- g. Disagree supportively.

Step 3. Work WITH the patron to resolve the problem.

Solve a piece of the problem if you can't deal with the whole problem.

V. Improved responses

A repertoire of prepared responses with which you are comfortable can go a long way in carrying you through times when your feelings of frustration or anger inhibit your effectiveness; when your negative personal feelings interfere with your ability to use common sense, be courteous, show respect, maintain a sense of humor, etc. In the sections that follow are selections from the many group discussions in which participants devised more effective responses to rough situations, and analyzed both the poor and better responses in the context of our public service goals. The responses are in no special order. They do not all apply in all situations, nor are they all effective for all people.

As you try on, or try out, the various phrases and messages, some will work better and feel more comfortable for you as an individual than others. Use the ones you adopt at every appropriate opportunity until they become as natural to you as "please" and "thank you." Remember that the goal is to have the effective responses ready in tight situations in order to:

- reduce pressure as felt by you and/or the patron;
- solve problems in a mutually satisfactory way rather than escalate them;
- foster dialogues with patrons that result in the patron feeling positive about the interchange and about the library, even when the patron's request could not be filled as stated;
- enable you to give a consistently "professional" response, regardless of how you are feeling about yourself, the patron, or the library at the moment.

Theme 1. When we are pressed for time

- We tend to:
- say only part of what we normally would say if we had more time
("Sorry, it's closing time." Translation: "The library is more important than you."; "My needs take precedence over yours.")
 - be defensive; blame patron
("You should have come sooner...")
 - describe OUR situation only
("I can't answer that right now; there are too many people in line here." Translation: "I don't have time for you.")
 - appear indifferent to the patron's problem (as above)
 - begin with the negative (as above)
 - close options (as above)
 - show the anger we feel
("Can't you read the sign?" Translation: "Can't you read the sign, stupid?!")

We should instead strive to:

- Start by saying, "What I can do for you is..."
- Explain the time problem in terms of the PATRON's needs.
("Your question is more complex than you might think...")
("Your question deserves more time than I have right now...")
("We can do justice to your question tomorrow...")
- Give the patron even a small starter.
("I can get you started...begin with those green books over there, but they are hard to use, so if you don't find what you need in them, come back...")
- Suggest alternatives.
("We're closing right now, but Library X is open till ___; here's their address and phone number.")
- Be explicit about what little we can do now (or have done), and give an idea of what we'd be willing to do when we have more time.
("I can look up one citation now [of the 20]; will that help?")
("I'll be glad to hold this material for you till tomorrow morning...")

Theme 2. When the patron is pressuring to bend the rules, to make an exception

- We tend to:
- appear arbitrary and rigid by repeating the rule
("Sorry, a rule's a rule. We simply don't lend reference books.")
 - dig in our heels with anger at the patron
("I don't care if you're the Queen of England; you have to show a proper ID to get a card, just like everyone else.")
 - become defensive
("We're very understaffed...")
 - make the patron feel foolish/wrong
("You've got to be kidding!")
("You want it WHEN?!")

We should instead strive to:

- Buy time: do not respond immediately; remain silent for several seconds; take a deep breath.
- When re-explaining, add new information rather than repeat what the patron did not accept/understand the first time.
- Acknowledge that the patron's request is an understandable one.
("I know you must be disappointed, having come all this way and expecting to take out the reference book, but...")
("Your request is perfectly reasonable, but we must see a proper ID to enable follow-up if something goes wrong.")
- Enlist the patron's sympathy to your difficult situation.
("If I let you take this book out, how would I respond to the next person who wants an exception made?")
("How would you be feeling now if I had yielded 10 minutes ago to the person who wanted to take the same book home?")
("On what basis would I deny another sighted person the use of machines reserved for the blind...?")
("I understand this policy doesn't serve your needs right now, but I'm sure you understand why we have the policy...")
- Explain the reason for the policy, in terms of benefit to the patron.
("This is heavily used...the reason it was here for you is that we didn't make an exception for someone else...")
- Appeal to the patron's sense of cooperation, which, after all is the underlying principle of libraries and why they work.
- Recognize early signs that the patron will not accept our "no" and refer to someone else before the patron complains to a higher authority.
("I'm not authorized to make the exception you ask; one moment and I'll call the head of the department so that you may discuss your situation further..."[i.e., make no promises])
("It seems we're at an impasse; perhaps my supervisor or one of my colleagues can help you...just a moment while I call...")

[Note: These responses have the added advantage of involving others in the solution to your problem. Also, explaining the problem to a colleague in the presence of the patron makes it less possible for the patron to embellish the truth later on.]

(This section continues on next page)

Theme 2...Making exceptions (continued from page 6)

--Make the exception out of a sense of supporting the basic policy rather than out of a feeling of weakness that we were badgered into it.

("Because of your unusual situation, I will make an exception this once, and I will leave a note for my colleagues so they will understand the circumstance. Since we cannot make this exception again, in the future I suggest that you...")

MAKING EXCEPTIONS

Policies regarding exceptions require team cooperation to be effectively implemented. Below are guidelines for achieving teamwork when dealing with exceptions to policy.

- a. The person making the exception, whether staff or supervisor, should make clear to the patron that this is a one-time exception; and inform the patron what to do next time the same situation arises.
- b. The person making the exception should inform other relevant colleagues, including the circumstances and reason; and inform the patron that this is the practice.
- c. When the staff member judges that the patron will not accept a "no" answer, the staff member should suggest referral, and whenever possible call, within earshot of the patron, to arrange the referral. ("I appreciate your problem, but I'm not authorized to; One moment while I see if there is someone else whom you can speak to about it." Then, on the phone, "I have someone here who[doesn't have proper I.D.] [has come a long way to take out a book, but his fines haven't been cleared]")
- d. Both staff and colleague(s)/supervisor should trust that each other's judgment was the best possible at the time.
- e. Before reversing a staff member's decision and making an exception for the patron, the supervisor should contact the staff member for a full picture (if the staff member hasn't already supplied the details--as in c above).
- f. A supervisor who overturns a staff member's decision should show support of the staff member to the patron ("My staff member was correct..." "... was carrying out policy" "... is one of our most competent employees.")
- g. A supervisor who overturns a staff member's decision to uphold policy should give a reason for reversal--to both patron and staff member.
- h. A supervisor should indicate to the staff member support of the staff member's direct handling of the situation ("You handled that difficult situation correctly. Congratulations.") or advise how to handle it differently in the future.
- i. Both staff and supervisor should review policies or rules that are frequently relaxed to determine their current validity, or whether staff training is called for.

Theme 3. When patron expects/demands service we cannot/do not have time to give

We tend to: --feel inadequate to the situation

--want to take a stab at an answer when we know it's the wrong thing to do

--give a closed response

("We don't answer that sort of question.")

--become defensive

--drop other work and resentfully comply with the patron's demands

We should instead strive to:

--Show a willingness to help, without making promises

("We'll do what we can.")

("I'll do my best.")

--Explain what we can do.

("I see you're in a bind. I can do part of this later.")

("Can you send someone from your staff to help? I'll be glad to give that person direction...")

--Remember that to refer is to be helpful.

("The reference librarian will return in 1 hour; if you'll write down your question with your name and the number where she can reach you, she'll get back to you with an answer.")

--Review salient conditions.

("Let me be sure I understand what you need.")

("When is the last possible time you need this information?"

[i.e., What's the real deadline? or How urgent is "urgent?"])

--Explain the limits imposed by the library profession or library rules.

("Your question requires a legal judgment.")

("Regulations prohibit...")

("Our policy does not allow...")

--Show the patron the benefit of seeking an alternative.

("I would not want to mislead you with partial information.")

--Show support for/sympathy with the patron's question.

("I appreciate your need for the information...")

--Help the patron to be self-sufficient (i.e., the patron may be demanding because of not knowing where to turn)

("Let me get you started by showing you how to use this resource. Come back as you have questions.")

--Make the patron aware of the complexity of the request

("You may not realize that this takes more time than you've allowed.")

("Let's go over a couple of these [searches/citations/___] together.")

Theme 4. When patron is negative about another service in our library,
or when patron pressures us to comply with the request by saying that the other
service, or another library staff member, said to come to us:

We tend to: --join in the negativisms about the other service to defend our-
selves, or to make ourselves look good.

("They told you I could do such and such for you? They don't
know what they are talking about!")

("You were treated badly at that other desk? How terrible.
Let me help you...")

--deny the patron's experience.

("I don't know anyone who could have told you that.")

("No one would have said that.")

--feel resentful/angry at our co-worker for causing this burden.

We should instead strive to:

--Support the colleague/other unit and concentrate on the request.
("They must have had something else in mind that I don't under-
stand; let me give them a call..." [i.e., teamwork])

("That's a desk with a lot of heavy pressure; perhaps you caught
them at a wrong time. I'm sure they didn't mean to be rude.
How can I be of help?")

--Refrain from commenting on the other service/colleague--concen-
trate only on the patron's need of the moment.

("Is there something you need that I can help you with?")

("Let's see if I understand correctly what it is you want...")

--Do not respond immediately. Buy time.

TIPS FOR "BUYING TIME"

Below are ways to give yourself the few seconds you need in a pinch to gather
your thoughts.

- a. Don't respond immediately.
- b. Remain silent for several seconds. (Silently count slowly to 5.)
- c. Take a deep breath.
- d. Take another deep breath.
- e. Drop your pencil.
- f. Say "Hmmm" (which keeps the ball in the patron's court a while longer).
- g. If you need more time, excuse yourself "for just one moment...while I
(answer the phone/locate the written policy...)"
- h. If you must say something, use throw-away, time-stalling words ("I haven't
dealt with this situation before...")
- i. If you must say something more substantive, make it instant sympathy for
patron's feeling (frustration, hurt, anger) without agreeing with patron's
description of situation ("Sorry you're having such trouble...")

Theme 5. When patron's question, appearance or manner irritates us

- We tend to:
- brush them off curtly.
 - give the impression we think their question is frivolous, shocking, or bad.
("Why would anyone want to do research on THAT?")
("You're pulling my leg!")
 - give the impression we want to get rid of them.
("My shift is up; someone else will be able to help you in a moment.")

We should instead strive to:

- Keep in mind that our personal feelings about the patron or the patron's question are irrelevant.
- Buy time; do not respond immediately; count to ten before responding.
- Start patron off on something AWAY from you.
("Let me start you off using this heading in our subject catalog.")
- Avoid showing judgment with a neutral statement.
("That's a bit specialized.")
- Avoid engaging in dialogue. Use closed sentences; give instructions rather than ask questions.
("Let me start you off with those volumes...")

Theme 6. When the patron's accent or speech is hard to understand

- We tend to:
- simply ask the patron to repeat what he/she said.
(It's likely that we will not understand the second time around.)
 - act on what we think (hope) was meant without being sure, in order to get the uncomfortable transaction over with.
 - feel agony for the patron.
 - assume the patron will be embarrassed if we say certain words
(such as "I see" to a blind person).
 - become impatient with the patron.
 - feel embarrassed at having others view the interchange.

(Theme 6 continues on page 11)

Theme 6.... patron is hard to understand (continued from previous page)

We should instead strive to:

- Be direct about our inability to understand. The patron is well aware of the problem and generally appreciates the chance to be understood better.
("I didn't understand what you said; could you say that again a bit slower?")
- Avoid asking patron simply to repeat; e.g., suggest how, as above (as above: "...a bit slower")
- Give our understanding of what the patron said.
("Am I understanding you correctly? Are you saying that...?")
- Ask questions that can be answered by yes or no.
("I can't tell whether you are saying 'chicken feed' or 'chicken feet'; are you saying feet with a 't'?)
("Are you asking how to renew the book in your hand?" [no]
"Are you asking if we have other books on the same subject as the book in your hand?" [i.e., play 20 Questions])
- Reduce the pressure caused by a growing line of patrons.
("It may take a while for me to understand your question. Can you wait just a moment while I take care of some quickies among the people standing here?...while I call another staff person to take care of the people standing here?")
- Enlist the help of someone else (two-heads-are-better-than-one theory).
("I'm having trouble understanding a particular word this patron is saying; perhaps you can help...")
- Try alternative ways of communicating--e.g., writing, or spelling.
("Please write down what you are saying.")
("Let me write down what I think you are saying.")
("Does the word begin with 'A'? 'B'? etc...")
- Pave the way in referring the patron elsewhere by calling ahead or accompanying the patron.

Theme 7. When we feel that we are losing control and our responses are having a negative effect.

We tend to: --continue to justify ourselves, making matters worse.
 --concentrate on our negative feelings, losing sight of the goal of solving the patron's problem.

We should instead strive to:

- Reverse the course of the interchange by acknowledging that we are not ourselves today.
 ("You've caught me at a bad time...")
 ("This has been an extraordinary day for me...")
- Reverse the course of the interchange by injecting some humor.
 ("I'm afraid I'm not thinking on all cylinders today...")
 ("You caught me on one of my better days...")
 ("I'm afraid I'm all you've got today. Let's try again.")
- Objectify the problem.
 ("You have obviously spent a lot more time thinking about this than I. I need to understand your question better in order to know the best course of action.")
- End the interchange, while relaxing the patron's defenses.
 (It's possible that we made an error on your bill. You check at home for the book and I'll check further here, and in a week...)
- Remove ourselves from the interchange.
 ("Sorry, I don't seem to be making my point very well. Let me see if someone else can help you.")
- Describe the effect on us of the patron's behavior.
 ("Your impatience (rudeness/temper/anger) is preventing me from being able to help you.")
- Ignore (don't challenge or respond to) buzzwords that set you off (e.g., 'incompetent,' 'slow').

Theme 8. When we have helped the patron in all ways we can think of but to no avail; when we seem to be at a dead end.

We tend to: --feel apologetic that our collection is inadequate.
 --feel that we ourselves are inadequate.
 --make the patron feel stupid/foolish for coming to the wrong place.
 --convey the sentiment "That's it, buddy."

We should instead strive to:

- Think of an alternative beyond the resources at hand; beyond the resources of the library.
- If true, admit to not being an expert in the field.
 ("This is not my specialty...")
 ("I'm not an expert...")
 ("Let me call ___, who might be able to suggest something further.")
- Explain the limitations of the collection at hand.
 ("We don't have the resources here to fully answer your question. A better place might be ___; let me call to be sure.")

Theme 9. When we are dealing with an angry patron who uses abusive, hurtful, inappropriate language.

We tend to: --take it personally.

--return in kind, escalating the situation.

--angrily refuse to give further service, period.

--accept the abuse because, after all, "the patron is always right."

We should instead strive to:

--Achieve emotional distance;

--Remember that it is highly unlikely that the offensive language is meant personally. Rather, it is the uncontrolled expression of people, angry at not getting what they came for, or the way some people who feel boxed in think they can get results.

--Remember that two outlets can be better than one, and refer. Sometimes the first-line staff member serves the function of a verbal punching bag that the patron uses to let off steam. In this case, a second staff member who tells the patron exactly the same thing as you're saying is heard with a more accepting ear. In this case, you will be regarded as helpful by the patron and reduce the pressure on yourself if you initiate the referral (for a specific way to do this, see Making Exceptions, page 7, Guideline c).

--Discontinue further dialogue, respectfully explaining why.
 ("Your offensive language [impatience/rudeness] is getting in the way of my efforts to help...")
 ("I'm here to help, but I can't do that if you continue to use such language...Shall we try to start again? Would you like to come back later when you feel you can talk without the insults?")
 ("...Let's try again in a few minutes when we've both calmed down.")

--Recognize when you are at an impasse and refer by calling ahead.
 ("Perhaps you would rather deal with someone else...")

--Explain the situation to the referred staff member within earshot of the patron.
 ("I'd like to refer a patron who is waiting here...whose language is so offensive to me that I feel we can't have a productive interchange..." "...who is so angry, he isn't hearing what I'm trying to tell him....Can you see this person now, or should he arrange an appointment?")

[NOTE: For dealing with patrons who continue abusive language despite your efforts, or are extremely annoying or threatening, follow your practices for handling "disruptive" patrons--e.g., call police.]

Theme 10. Pressure caused by objective conditions.

- We tend to:
- take for granted the poor conditions.
 - feel it's up to us to solve, and since we don't have the resources, give up.
 - feel resentful toward the administration which should be taking responsibility for improving the objective conditions.
 - suffer poor morale--which affects others around us.

We should instead strive to:

- Recognize that some pressures result from the difference between the patron's expectations about service and the actual service we provide, and attempt to bring the two in line.
- Break down a large problem caused by the environment or objective conditions, and begin tackling the problem in smaller doses.
- With environmental problems, or problems caused by objective conditions, we should take the initiative in alerting others to the problem with the expressed purpose of either correcting the problem or educating the patrons or other staff members about the shortcoming and instructing how to get around it.

EXAMPLES:

Short-staffed? No reference staff to cover certain hours? Identify clearly what can and cannot be done, and make that clear to patrons. Advise patrons via a sign such as "Reference assistance during lunch hour available by appointment..." "In-depth assistance offered [time]." Create a form for patron to write down (a) reference question, (b) need for information, (c) spade work already done by patron, (d) name and number (and best times to call), etc.--to be dealt with by reference librarian later. Remember, reference librarians can't answer everything and refer to other libraries/-information outlets.

Fellow staff members are making inappropriate referrals? Time for a staff meeting on the subject. Institute a training program. Try short-term staff rotation in other library units for better understanding/appreciation.

Microfilm machines down? Put a sign on the machine informing patrons: OUT OF ORDER / Repair requested [date] / Nearest available machine: _____. Assign staff to monitor machines; don't wait for patrons to alert you to machine problems.

Patrons have a tendency to talk aloud? Provide space/cubicle for that purpose. Then you can say what the patron can do: "If you wish to continue talking, you can use the room over there."

Students from nearby school ask too much of library staff? Unruly? Call for meeting with teachers/librarian in that school.

(Theme 10 continues on next page)

Theme 10...objective conditions (continued from previous page)

One person on desk and long lines? Try a take-a-number system. It enables patrons to judge when they'll be served; reduces the length of line (last patrons sit or leave for a while), thus reducing the pressure on you. Perhaps a sign suggesting when desk is less busy.

Can't defend a policy? (E.g., differential waiting period for in- vs. out-of-town card applicants; different policies regarding overdue books for in-library vs. bookmobile borrowers.) Learn why the policy exists (especially from someone who supports it), and if you still cannot defend it, gather facts in support of changing it (e.g., number of times exceptions are made that cause extra work; evidence of patrons' ill feelings that result), propose a change that would work better; and raise it among fellow staff members for discussion.

Your supervisor wasn't here to hear the ideas from this seminar that you think would work in your library but require the supervisor's endorsement? Share/discuss this report with your supervisor. Specify the part(s) that you think are important to work on, giving reasons (e.g., "I think I'd feel a lot better about your overturning my ruling of a patron if we tried to follow the procedures outlined in 'Making an Exception'...")

VI. A FINAL NOTE: FOCUS ON THE METHOD

This program was designed to cover in a relatively short time period a broad range of public service pressure situations, rather than any single one in depth. To make the techniques learned in the workshop work for you, apply the analytical methods to particular situations in which you want to delve deeper. Practice appropriate responses at every opportunity. At first your responses may seem awkward, but, as with any new learning, with time, consistently effective responses will come easily.

APPENDIX A
PATRON AS THE SOURCE OF PRESSURE

We deal with patrons who:

- come to us with misinformation
- are unaware of the library's limitations
- are demanding, pushy
- are insatiable; impossible to please
- are VIPs; act like VIPS
- are unsanitary; smell bad
- need/want more time than we usually give
- misinterpret what we say
- compare us with the wrong type of library
- are angry at having to wait
- do not accept our judgment
- don't believe we're doing enough
- want quick answers, unrealistically
- will not take responsibility for their end of the search work; refuse to help themselves
- have accents/speech patterns that are hard to understand
- insist they returned a book or equipment that our records show as still outstanding
- are rude; unreasonable
- play staff against each other
- change their story
- are oblivious to our situation
- have erroneous expectations
- resist cooperating with rules and policies
- pull rank
- are "non-primary" users but expect "primary" treatment
- require us to be police (accuse other patrons of misconduct)
- need/want more time than we can give
- need faster service than we can give
- do not understand our workload, mission, money shortages, space problems, security problems, pressures
- are difficult personalities
- have needs that do not match with our collections
- cannot/will not understand/accept our rules
- are slightly kooky
- are angry at having been misreferred
- are angry at being made to feel incompetent, dependent
- are impatient, interrupting; finish your sentences
- are clever at hiding their ignorance (so they ask a question different from what they really want to know)
- regard library staff as public servants, with the emphasis on "servants"
- don't read signs
- abuse library materials

APPENDIX B
ENVIRONMENT AS THE SOURCE OF PRESSURE

We work in an environment in which:

- staffing levels are often insufficient to meet the patron's needs or expectations;
- staff have conflicting interpretations or uneven understanding of policies;
- there is unequal enforcement of policy; abuse of rules is tacitly encouraged;
- there is no policy on some important questions;
- some policies are vaguely worded, open to widely different interpretations;
- colleagues/co-workers communicate poorly;
- training to job tasks/job responsibilities is inadequate;
- patrons must ask for assistance if they are to be effective;
- answers to patrons' questions involve more than one department;
- machines malfunction; machines are insufficient in number;
- there are queuing problems;
- there is uneven delivery of service;
- resources are insufficient to support intelligent or easy answers to patrons' questions;
- staff must juggle too many responsibilities at once;
- policies don't meet patron's need;
- management is not supportive enough of staff;
- shortages of staff or materials foster patron anger;
- staff must deal with mentally disturbed patrons;
- we deal with VIPs who expect/demand VIP treatment;
- the mission of the library is not always clear/understood/known;
- there is a tendency to want to give priority to a "primary" clientele but a policy that there is no "primary;"
- erroneous information is given out by unknowledgeable staff;
- library personnel regard themselves as being in positions of less authority than patrons.

APPENDIX C

SELF AS THE SOURCE OF PRESSURE

Pressure builds up within ourselves when we feel:

- defensive at having to defend a library policy or practice that is hard to defend;
- sympathy with a patron's question and helplessness to do anything about it;
- frustration at having our judgment or knowledge questioned by a patron;
- frustration at our inability to explain library policy to a patron who will not accept our explanation;
- anger at a colleague or other library unit that misrefers a patron to us; resentful at having to use up precious time in the unnecessary, difficult job of dealing with the misreferred patron;
- reluctant to refer because it would be an admission that the patron was in the wrong place, that our collection was inadequate to the patron's need, or that we are personally limited in our ability to answer the question;
- uncomfortable at having to force the patron to cooperate;
- like treating a rude patron in kind;
- our blood pressure rising as patrons insist on getting their way;
- pushed to the wall from trying to handle many competing demands at once or over a sustained period of time;
- antagonistic toward the patron or the patron's question;
- fear at angering or alienating a patron;
- misunderstood, unappreciated, dumped on;
- resentful at being used as a doormat or regarded as a "soft touch;"
- conflict between our service standards and a patron's unreasonable/overbearing demands;
- we should say "no" or "no more" but do not want to deal with the consequences;
- tense when overextended or rushed;
- embarrassed for the library when its shortcomings cause patrons to feel negatively about the library;
- out of our depth in having to calm an angry patron, explain what appears to be library sloppiness/incompetence/indifference;
- disgusted/shocked by some of the patrons' personal habits;
- desperate when "the more I help, the worse it gets;"--punished by having been judged wrong by the patron;
- responsible for library materials that patrons abuse;
- stupid when we can't adequately satisfy a patron's request;
- fear of being overruled by a supervisor because of the implication in the eyes of the patron that we are incompetent;
- we are violating our professional code of "equal treatment" by giving better/preferential service to VIPs.
- deprived of expressing anger at an undefensible rule by having to take the the library's side in dealing with a complaining patron.