EXPECTATIONS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN THE LIBRARY:

1. When someone approaches you at a public service desk, you must always be ready to make eye contact as they arrive. You never want to have patrons standing on the other side of the desk waiting for you to notice them. You must be sure to give them your full attention. Do not bring work or deep reading materials (either print or online) to the desk during a work shift.

2. A smile is preferred, but if that feels artificial, make sure you at least have a welcoming look on your face. Always greet them pleasantly. A simple “can I help you?” or something similar is all it takes. But it must sound sincere. Don’t just go through the motions.

3. A little extra chat will be seen as friendly. One thing you can always do is ask if they found everything they were looking for.

4. If the patron wants something which can either be answered by pointing or walking with them somewhere, when possible, always walk them over.

BEHAVIORS TO AVOID:

1. Failing to greet patrons when they approach the desk. If you are already engaged in helping someone else, try to let the new patron know you see them and will help them as soon as you can. A patron that is not acknowledged will not feel like the valuable commodity that they are.

2. Hanging up on an angry patron. No one likes being yelled at, but disgruntled patrons sometimes need time to vent before dealing with their concerns in a rational manner. If the patron becomes abusive, get a manager.

3. Eating in front of patrons. No one wants to watch someone eat their lunch - or even a mid-morning donut. Leave the food for the break room and keep your mouth clear for talking to your patrons.

4. Putting a call on hold without asking first. It is a simple courtesy to ask before putting someone on hold.

5. Avoiding eye contact with a patron. When you are talking to someone, you want to know that other person is listening to what you say. Patron service representatives who do not make eye contact look rude at best, and downright shiftless or dishonest to others.

6. Socializing with other employees when patrons are present. Patrons do not care to hear about your plans for Friday night. Unless you are asking a question about your patron's business specifically, stop all personal conversations until there are no patrons in the vicinity.

7. Forgetting to use common courtesies. "Please" and "thank you" are mainstays in patron service. Unfortunately, they are not used nearly as often as they should be. Common niceties exude professionalism, as well as courtesy, and should be used without fail.

8. Yelling at a patron. Let the patron vent and then deal with their complaint in a calm, rational manner.

9. Using technical jargon when talking to patrons. You do not need to talk down to your patrons, but it is helpful to use language they understand when explaining company policies and procedures. Leave the technical jargon for your coworkers.

10. Complaining about the company to patrons. There are no exceptions to this rule. There is never an appropriate time to bad-mouth your own company to a patron. This could potentially cost your company money or even lose the patron altogether.
ANGRY PATRONS:

The first step in resolving a difficult situation is to diffuse the patron's anger so they are ready to listen to your solution. We have five ways to take the wind out of an angry patron's sails.

Begin by Listening
Most irate patrons need time to vent before they are ready to listen to what you have to say. Give them that time right from the beginning – actively listening to the complaint so you can get to the underlying problem and a possible solution.

Sometimes it helps to repeat the problem back to the patron to ensure you have heard them correctly and understand the problem accurately. Clarifying questions can also help you get a good grasp of the situation so you can recommend a viable solution as quickly as possible.

Do Not Answer Emotion with Emotion
It is easy to get emotional when someone gets angry with you. However, the furious patron on the other side of the counter or phone line is likely not mad at you – but rather angry at your company. If you can avoid taking the complaint personally, you will be more likely to respond to the patron's anger with calm and patience.

If you feel your temperature rising, excuse yourself for just a moment to calm down or bring another staff member into the picture that can provide a calming influence.

Watch Your Tone and Volume
The best way to counter a high volume from a patron is with a low one that exudes calm and patience. By the same token, watch your tone when you are responding to an angry patron. If the client senses sarcasm, nastiness or condescension in your voice, you are more likely to escalate the situation, rather than diffuse it.

Apologize When Warranted
There are times when a patron is angry over a legitimate mistake made by your company. In these circumstances, an apology is in order, and since you are the official representative of the company at that time, you are the right person to offer that apology.

Take Responsibility, Take Action
Once you understand the patron's complaint, it is time to take action. Since you are the front line for this particular issue, you automatically become the "go-to" person to find a resolution. Even if you have to bring in another employee or department to rectify the situation, it is important to follow up with the patron personally so that they know you are seeing the issue through to the end.

Angry patrons are one of the most challenging aspects of patron service, but they are also an opportunity. If you can successfully diffuse an irate patron and find an acceptable solution to their complaint, you can transform that angry person into a loyal patron for life.
Supervisor expectations

Always hear all sides of a story before deciding on a course of action.

Compliment your staff publicly when it is appropriate. If you need to criticize, always do it privately.

Give subordinates credit when they have good ideas, especially when you are making use of them.

Always be willing to listen. If you haven’t the time at the moment, say so but schedule a good time.

Remember that as a supervisor, more is expected of you. You must approach every discussion with a subordinate with a calm attitude. You must not be prone to anger; that always makes a situation worse.

Keep a little distance from those you supervise. Being close friends with someone you supervise can cause awkwardness if you must discipline the person, and in addition, other staff will suspect you are not impartial.

When someone you supervise asks why something is done a certain way, begin with the assumption that she/he is interested in knowing more about the topic. Don’t begin with the assumption that she/he is questioning whether it is a good idea. There are many policies and procedures that inexperienced employees truly do not understand, and often these are things which experienced people have understood for so long that they forget others do not understand.

Employee expectations

Work your assigned schedule. If you need to be out for any reason, always contact your supervisor for permission and an explanation. Ask your supervisor as far in advance as possible if you will be allowed to be off.

If you are having a personal issue with another employee, it is a good idea for the two of you to try to work things out between you. If it is a business issue, it is best to start with the person’s supervisor.

If you are in an argument or conflict with another individual, bring it to the attention of your supervisor. But do not talk to third parties about your issue.

Conflict issues should be brought to the Dean only on rare occasions when departmental solutions have not solved the problem.

If someone in another department or someone in your department whom you don’t report to sees a problem with something you have done, that person is likely going to explain it to your supervisor to handle. This is not disrespecting you, it is simply the way these things are handled in organizations.

Loud laughter and raucous behavior in the work place to not reflect well on you or the Henderson Library. Keep that to a minimum.
Standard public services transactions

When someone approaches you at a public service desk, you must always be ready to make eye contact as they arrive. You never want to have patrons standing on the other side of the desk waiting for you to notice them. You must be sure to stop whatever you are doing as they approach and give them your full attention.

A smile is preferred, but if that feels artificial, make sure you at least have a welcoming look on your face.

Always greet them pleasantly. A simple “can I help you?” or something similar is all it takes. But it must sounds sincere. If it sounds like you are just going through the motions, it will be counterproductive.

If there is something you can think of to comment on, do it. A little extra chat will be seen as friendly. One thing you can always do is ask if they found everything they were looking for.

If the patron wants something which can either be answered by pointing or walking with them somewhere, when possible, always walk them over.

A few points on difficult issues

Begin with the attitude that you can help.

Repeat back the patron’s request or question, and be sure to do it in a neutral tone.

Make sure the conversation stays about the issue, not the individuals.

Ask a second staff person if that person can think of a way to satisfy the request, if there is a chance.

Be sympathetic. Convey that you are sorry if policy prohibits something.