

# You Talkin' to Me? Communicating Service Expectations to Users through Service Philosophy Statements

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## OVERVIEW

We examined service philosophy statements to understand how their content and form communicate service expectations.

**Service Philosophy Statements communicate to users what they can—and should—expect from library services.**

“Probably the most critically important factor is to ensure that . . . all statements should include specific qualitative and quantitative measures of performance” (Hirshon, 1999, 69).

“In essence, promises need sufficient precision to provide a basis for accountability or measurement” (Hernon & Altman, 2015, 31).

## METHOD

We examined service philosophy statements at libraries from institutions in the **Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU)**. We used *qualitative content analysis* to identify themes, trends, and ideas.

**Qualitative Content Analysis** – a method of describing the meaning of texts or documents in a systematic way

**Content** – what is being communicated  
**Form** – how it is being communicated

## MODEL STATEMENTS

### Library

We will make eye contact, smile, and greet each customer as he or she enters the building.  
We will be identifiable.  
—*Public Service Promise, St. Paul Public Library*

### Retail

We commit to:

- Provide you with an accurate time and cost estimation
- Thoroughly explain all repairs performed and review all costs

—*Customer Promise, Hyundai*

### Hospitality

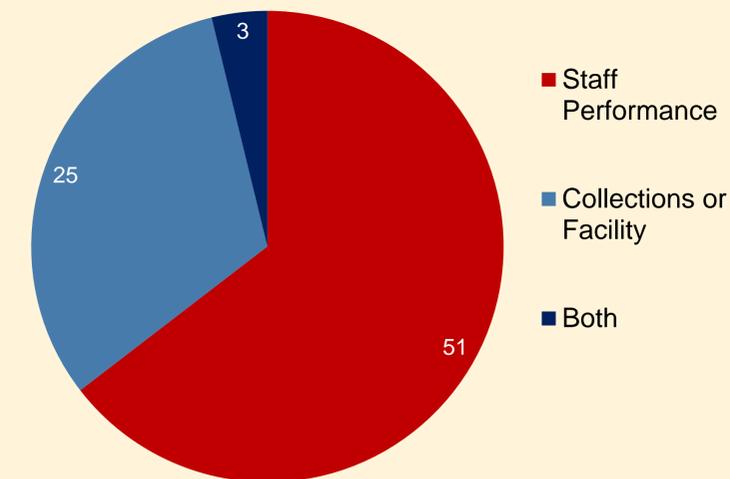
- A warm and sincere greeting.
- Use the guest's name. Anticipation and fulfillment of each guest's needs.
- Fond farewell. Give a warm good-bye and use the guest's name.

—*Three Steps of Service, Ritz Carlton*

### Government

We will a) be able to answer questions about agency services, or b) provide the name and phone number of someone who can answer the question, or c) find the answer to the question posed.  
— *Customer Service Standards, Hopewell, Virginia City Government*

## CUMU THEMES & TRENDS



## CUMU EXAMPLES

### Access

“Our customers . . . are . . . shown courteous and concerned attention to their unique needs.”  
“All users of the library are entitled to access to library resources.”

### Courtesy

“We will treat all library users with courtesy, professionalism, and respect.”  
“Library users have a right to expect courteous service in all circumstances at all times.”

### Dignity & Respect

“We will display empathy in our treatment of others - considering and respecting their points of view.”  
“We will be respectful of our diverse customers.”

### Knowledgeability

“In the event staff members are unable to help a customer immediately, they will always research the question, follow-up and/or make an appropriate referral.”  
“Our service-providers ... are knowledgeable about library services”