

Things That Make Us Look Stupid - A Survey

Chris Rippel, Central Kansas Library System

After realizing that the front desk staff did not know where the library policies could be found, Chris Rippel wondered if this type of problem frequently arises. He compiled an informal survey that he sent to two electronic discussion lists asking for opinions about what type of information library staff should know. He requested information about what types of "things" might fall through the cracks, or not get done, that could make library staff look incompetent or stupid.

Rippel received responses to his survey from librarians across the country and examples of situations in which library personnel were unable to provide appropriate responses to inquiries regarding available services within their own systems.

Rippel's investigation is timely. It demonstrates how critically important it is for all library staff and board members to be able to communicate effectively about the policies, procedures, and program information in place within the library they serve.

At your work, can everyone on staff easily provide information about the library's:

- Mission statement, goals, and objectives
- Budget, policies, annual report
- Hours
- Program schedule
- Board of Trustees, officers, meeting times
- Friends membership, meeting times, and officers
- Meeting room events
- Internet policy and guidelines
- Circulation policy outlining services and fees
- Interlibrary loan services
- Web site and URL
- Online catalog URL
- Collections and circulation statistics
- Objectionable material policy
- Genealogy collection
- Summer Reading and other programming
- Response to CIPA and the U. S. Patriot Act
- Filtering and Intellectual Freedom policy
- Reserve procedures