

**Client Need**  
**As a Basis**  
**For Information Center Growth**

“The Library Company flourished because it adopted a purchasing policy responsive to the needs of its intellectually alert, economically ambitious, but non-elite membership” (LCP History, 2005). Benjamin Franklin would lament the state of our public libraries today. He and a group of his peers, known as the Junto, prepared the “Articles of Agreement” to found a library, On July 1, 1731. The Philadelphia Library Company formed a blueprint for libraries that followed in Colonial America. Yet it was not the eventual physical structure, or the books that made the library a success, it was the meeting of a perceived need by its members. Mr. Franklin, an apprenticed businessman, printer, with an economically deprived basis to work from, identified a colonial social need, and began a process to fulfill that need. In his lifetime, he used his understanding of the authority of the word to spread ideas, to study science, and skillfully manipulate negotiations with the French during the American Revolution. He remains perhaps the most influential American marketing representative in our history. His ability to identify the needs within American society, at a given time, led to lightning rods, Franklin Stoves, a host of other inventions.

Robert B. Cialdini presents theories of human cognitive behavior that Franklin could identify as being true in the 1700’s, as well as today. A marketing mix employing a combination of Cialdini’s identified human cognitive shortcuts and Benjamin Franklin’s ability to identify society’s needs can produce a model for modern American libraries. A model to enhance use of today’s information centers, by the American public and by its organizations. Those who worry about the state of today’s libraries need to look away from their budgets, buildings, and inventory to identify the needs of their constituents and ponder how to meet those needs first.

Cialdini presents the reader with seven cognitive shortcuts, supported by data generated from experiments and although his given examples of the use are based upon modern life and business, they can be applied to any endeavor throughout history. The information centers of today exist to provide a solution to the needs of society. It is the stayed compliance to the needs and vehicles of delivery from the past, which keeps today's centers from fulfilling their mission to the client. The universal rule of reciprocation held true for the members of the Junto, as they paid their dues, traded books, and slowly enabled each other to climb the ladder of ambition.

It is the interaction of the information worker with the client, which provides an opportunity for a reciprocal agreement to be initiated. A set of problems can be recognized that led to the client's absence from the physical building of the library. Shortages of client time, lack of knowledge regarding the provided services, and an institutional attitude that emphasizes place instead of social process has kept the Information worker from their clients. A first step to initiating the reciprocal agreement is to research the client base. Identify client needs and wants, to creatively initiate contact in a manner which saves clients time, does not impede their progress and presents them with solutions to their problems. In most instances, this will require the librarian to initiate contact outside the confines of the library. Rural communities and urban centers alike have tax- based libraries that can offer meeting rooms for business groups, and organizations once contact is made. Offering amenities such as refreshments and on the spot responses for research questions can present these groups with a cost saving solution to meeting at a hotel and present valued added library services to the groups. Having offered the library services as a gift to the public, in a manner the public perceives as a

welcome gift, the rule of reciprocity is initiated. The businessperson, now comfortable and knowledgeable about library services, promotes the service to his peers and family. This is an example of reciprocity leading to Commitment and Consistency and to building ground for Social Proof. There are other manners of initiating contacts and support for libraries, but each would be enhanced by building a foundation of reciprocal behavior prior to initiation.

Aligning libraries with social, educational, business, and governmental agencies, can bring a cross section of the community to the doors of the library. A reorientation of thinking towards viewing the clients as entities of objects can allow the librarian to target the objects through marketing. Identification of a main object whether it is education, business, social groups, or governmental agencies is essential to define marketing goals. Once there, every effort should be made to define the needs of the group. The library is then in position to offer a gift of services specific to the needs of the group. In many ways, the job of need and want identification is simpler in a specialized library already in existence to serve a particular group. The tax-based community library must attend to all age groups, economic groups, interest groups, and their resulting dueling challenges. One way to cope with the competing needs is to identify time usage by the groups. Scheduling children and business groups at different times, to avert disaster, and scheduling children and elderly groups at the same time to enhance their experience can make the best use of space.

The gift of meeting space should be viewed as only a first step towards initiating the agreement. The information worker ideally should be observing the meeting, offering help, and taking in data that can further refine the group need. The data can then generate

further gifts of help. Once acclimated to receiving aid from the library services, the foundation for support by those individuals can be processed. The gifts can be traditional library services such as help with research for all age groups. School age children need help with homework, offering to host a study group after school, can be a gift to the children and the parents. Hosting a class for hobby enthusiasts such as genealogists, to familiarize them with the advantages of library research can promote greater library use. Present a lunchtime gathering for local workers to view a film or hear a book review. Host a regular business breakfast. Offering to be on call, for research questions for businesses, could be a service that possibly could be fee based, but competitive with online services, generating revenue for the library. The library can host a community discussion board on its web site. This is a great way to elicit comments and information from the public, aiding in information gathering for the library. Perhaps the library's website can be tied to a school site or community government site thereby promoting community interaction and act as a community focal point, fostering thoughtful consideration amongst various groups. Alternatively, the library can act as a website for the community need as many communities are doing by creating sites exclusively for teens within the library site. They give teens a place to speak, gather information about health, education, and social issues.

While employing Cialdini's rule of reciprocation to increase client use, the library, should also remember to use the principle of reciprocation to fund its support for the offered services. Reciprocal lending agreements amongst regional libraries can be arranged. Building allegiances between town and city authority figures can increase the librarians' knowledge of funding opportunities and the non-profit community object in

which the library plays a role. Soliciting vendors to offer concessions on their products, in the form of lower price or additional product support is a way the reciprocal rule can be used help acquisitions. Solicit donations from local businesses as a gift for your support of their initiatives. If the Fire department hosts a dinner for fundraising, rally library volunteers to help them in exchange for a strategically placed book table for the library. If the library is understaffed, begin a program in a high school and issue credit for volunteerism and library studies. Consider possible for-profit ventures that parallel the mission of the information center. Extra space can become a used bookstore and coffee house.

Cialdini states, “According to sociologists and anthropologists, one of the most widespread and basic norms of human culture is embodied in the rule for reciprocation.” (Cialdini et al, 2001). Accepting the rule as the starting point for a process to rejuvenate American libraries is a foundation and once acted upon, leads to adherence to Cialdini’s Commitment and Consistency rule as the new library patrons become regulars. Librarians, information workers, and library workers should be expected to initiate the reciprocal behavior. They cannot accomplish this unless they realize they are victims of commitment and consistency within the stayed world of old generation library function. To be effective in using the rules of cognitive shortcuts, those that practice influence must be free of preconceptions about previous role models and limitations.

Assuming the library has successfully exerted itself and initiated the rule of reciprocity, the next step is to extract commitments from authority figures to aid the library in funding and publicity. The authority figure could be a traditional figure such as a politician, or government official. These commitments should ideally be formalized in

writing to firm commitment in the future. However, the most useful authority figure could be a person with a talent for grant writing in a government office. A patron whose relative is a famous person or a popular local entertainer can offer free promotion of your library. A small bakery, Gesine's Confectionary, offering pastries prepared by a formally trained pastry chef, opened in the summer of 2005, in Barre, Vermont. On the day of the opening, word spread throughout the state of a special counter worker. By 2 pm., the shelves were empty, completely sold out and the crowd kept growing. Several radio, newspapers, and TV reporters appeared and waited with the crowd. Finally after the shop was cleaned and set up for the next day, the special worker appeared. She was the sister of the owner and just incidentally was the actress, Sandra Bullock. One day of help gave her sister's business priceless advertising and product branding. A business leader with an extensive network of connections to other businesses can offer end of the year tax-deductible contributions. A technical high school can offer student help with technical issues. Situate your library within a network of communicating individuals to defray normal expenses as much as possible, all the while giving and receiving gifts; keeping the reciprocity rule alive and vigorous. Employ the new authority contacts in spreading the word about library services. Employ them in soliciting information about other possible solutions to library problems. Let them get gratification from being supporters of your message. Make their promotion of the library a commitment they enjoy and can consistently adhere to by offering them the opportunity to have credit for their actions, by publicizing your business supporters. The Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC), made this statement about the beginning of its resurrection 20 years ago. "At PLCMC, with its 20 branches and law library, we have emphasized the

importance of raising visibility in the political and business community and developing relationships with people and organizations who can benefit it. We have targeted the County Commission, local business and industry, the Chamber of Commerce, and local colleges and universities--groups that can make the difference in whether or not our budget gets approved. This proactive approach represents the difference between where PLCMC was 20 years ago and where it is today.” (Fleming, 1993).

The librarian as an authority figure should be utilized in an aggressive manner. Whether contacting a newspaper and offering to write a regular library column, contributing to television news stories, or creating a newsletter for the library, utilizing relationships in the media are necessary when it comes time to have a favorable media outlook on library funding issues. A library in Tulsa has taken a very aggressive stance on this issue. “Cathy Audley, PR manager at the Tulsa City-County Library, told LJ that two key marketing strategies have allowed her library to achieve its excellent visibility: establishing personal relationships with the local media and involving as many people as possible in library projects. Besides writing two weekly columns in Tulsa's daily newspaper, Tulsa World, Tulsa librarians frequently appear as guests on the city's local radio and TV stations. The library and local media also collaborate on two annual fund-raising and literacy projects. "The long-range result is that it has increased the use of the library and given us the support we need when the time comes to pass bond issues and millage increases." (Fleming, 1993). Utilizing a relationship with an Authority figure gives the library a competitive edge in the race for resources, while promoting its updated image throughout the community, leading to enhanced funding and increased usage.

Of all the cognitive shortcuts that Cialdini presents and supports, the rule of Likeness must be practiced in conjunction with the others. If the librarian is found disinterested, retiring, apathetic, or just unlikable, attempts at initiating a client – library reciprocal agreement will be difficult at best. Cultivating a genuine desire to help clients beyond meeting their information needs is necessary. Practice the art of listening and empathy. Follow up on connections, both with clients and benefactors. Several times a year the librarian at the Conway, NH. public library makes contact with me by e-mail. Several years ago, I visited the Henny reading room in his library to conduct genealogical research. He made a folder with my interests, name, telephone number, and e-mail address. His attentiveness has worked. I regularly e-mail him with research questions, and yearly he receives a check for a library support. I also have a link to his library website on my website. Small acts of thoughtful kindness can reap great benefits for the institution and the individual when likeness is a factor in practicing the art of influence. According to Cialdini, “Other experiments have demonstrated that attractive people are more likely to obtain help when in need (Benson, Karabenic, & Lerner, 1976) and more persuasive in changing opinions of an audience (Chaiken, 1979).” Most cannot change their physical appearance but can modify their dress to mimic that of the client group, since people are comfortable with others who are similar. In case this means of being likable, is viewed as being misleading, another way of viewing this type of behavior is that by mimicking someone we are flattering him or her. Flattery is an act of kindness and recognition of another’s value. Likeness acts as a variable in marketing the social value of a library. If librarians frame marketing in terms of competing businesses within a region, competing with internet availability, or competing for small slices of the client’s

time, they will create a view of the library as a competing entity. If however, they create a common goal for the community to strive to attain, they will find themselves surrounded by diverse groups, willing to help the library complete the community goal. “The crucial procedure was the experimenters’ imposition of common goals that finally allowed the rival group members to experience one another as reasonable fellows, valued helpers, friends, and friends of friends” (Cialdini et al, 2001) . The public goal and its presentation to the community is the greatest reciprocal agreement a library can enter into with clients. This act alone uplifts the client stakeholders to a position of central focus, an extreme form of flattery and consideration, which provides a necessary sensation of community to the client. A sensation that has been diminished in modern life. The loss of communal common space, the speed of life, and the complexity of our society all lead to the isolation of community members. The information center can function as a community center, although it will require dedication on the part of the librarian and its workers to format delivery in a way the public can utilize given its modern restrictions.

“The members of the Junto were drawn from diverse occupations and backgrounds, but they all shared a spirit of inquiry and a desire to improve themselves, their community, and to help others. Ben Franklin was a gregarious person, who loved sitting down and having long conversations with friends and acquaintances.” (Citizen Ben, 2002) Mr. Franklin was gifted with a personality that people liked and an inquisitive mind that lead him to identifying social needs and then to gratifying social need. His resourcefulness led him to make use of his surroundings and accomplish his goals by delivering his message framed for his audience. This will be the major challenge for Information professional of today and the future. Information Scientists cannot afford to

dwell on our tools and their uses in our profession. We are all responsible to our primary mission of assuring delivery of content. Marcia J. Bates, in explaining the roles of Information Scientists lists three “Big Questions”. “The physical question: What are the features and laws of the recorded universe? The social question: How do people relate to, seek, and use information? The design question: How can access to recorded information be made most rapid and effective?” (Bates, 1999). However helpful these questions might be, the second would probably have been phrased differently by Franklin. How and why do people relate to, seek, and use information. Renewed interest in libraries will happen only when we address the nature of our social circumstances and not the tools that it has created.

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