



Editorial

Library Superstars Revisited: One More Time

Winners—even in mundane, declining, battered or regulated environments—don't do only a percent or two better than the norm. They do hundreds of percent better—at least.—*Tom Peters and Nancy Austin.*

In *A Passion for Excellence*, Tom Peters and Nancy Austin study winners, not so much to recognize their achievements, but rather to understand the characteristics of winners. Through this understanding the authors hope to learn about standards for excellence and how excellence is attained.

The Library Superstar series of editorials has a similar purpose. We can learn a lot from the winners in our professions. The standards that they set for themselves could potentially be adopted by many of us. This series, however, is only an incomplete substitute for what is most needed—in-depth study and analysis across the profession on questions such as:

- What is personal excellence?
- What is institutional excellence?
- How is it achieved?
- Who achieves it?
- What are the rewards or benefits of excellence?

The study of excellence can give us models to emulate. Perhaps more of us can acquire a passion for excellence; a passion for setting high goals, overcoming limitations, and doing whatever is necessary to achieve these goals. Peters and Austin find that their winners "believe in truly listening to the customer, taking the customer's views as more important than [their] own."

This user orientation goes beyond the typical library public service setting in which the needs of users and corresponding functions are structured a priori, e.g., channeling users to fixed service points such as circulation and reference although the needs of individual users may be much more varied and extensive/intensive than the respective service desks can handle.

In business, a truly listening spirit has sometimes led people in production, an area often removed from direct customer contact, to work directly with a customer often to tailor a product to the customer's unique specifications. Library technical service units are the closest equivalent to the production function in business.

The Library Superstar series concludes by listing each remaining nominee. They represent our colleagues' choices.

Ann Bristow is Head of Reference at Indiana University.

Bristow is frequently described by librarian and faculty colleagues as a model librarian who is devoted to outstanding library service.

Susan Griswold Blandy is Reference Librarian at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York.

Blandy has indomitable energy and concern for her college and community; she says "yes" when others say "no."

Deborah Cheney is Reference Librarian at Bucknell University.

Cheney commands great respect as a librarian of ability and intelligence.

John Edens is Director of Central Technical Services at SUNY-Buffalo.

A bright, hard-working, tough-minded, achievement-oriented librarian, Edens never loses sight of the service function of the library and of the unit he supervises.

Pat Ensor is Coordinator of Database Searching at Indiana State University.

In a single year Ensor conducted more than 400 one-on-one database search interviews with faculty and others.

Deborah Greene is Music Librarian at Cleveland State University.

Greene personifies the new academic librarian of the 1980s and 1990s. She inspires everyone around her to do more and better work and has limitless energy and a tremendous thirst for knowledge that she communicates to all who come in contact with her.

Katherine (Kathy) Jackson is Head of Reference at Texas A & M University.

Jackson epitomizes the quality and personality of those who best represent our profession—dedicated, with a spirit that always reflects enthusiasm, academic excellence, and a desire to serve all with whom she comes into contact.

Deborah Jones is Head of Reference at Butler University.

Not only does Jones work harder, smarter, longer, and better, she also works faster and with greater persistence.

Marcia Pankake is Bibliographer for English and American Literature at the University of Minnesota.

Pankake demonstrates a spirit of cooperation, the fostering of high standards, the mentoring of younger members of the staff, and the striving for excellence on all fronts. There is something about knowing her that does a person good.

Ruth Shipley is Clinical-Medical Librarian at the University of Missouri-Health Sciences Library.

Shipley goes the extra mile and meets challenges with great enthusiasm. Highly motivated and conscientious, she pays no attention to clocks, coffee breaks, lunch breaks, or whether it is time to go home.

Sandy Slade is Extension Librarian at the University of Victoria in British Columbia.

If Slade chose to run for public office in any of the communities he serves, he'd be a shoo-in!

Siegfried Vogt is Reference Librarian at Washington State University.

One of our professors is fond of telling the story of how Vogt found the answer to an elusive question six years after the original request. This personal, caring touch is one of the hallmarks of his reference service.

Antoinette (Toni) Paris Powell is Head of the Agricultural Library at the University of Kentucky.

The collaborative, supportive atmosphere she creates, combined with her ability to bring people and technology together with very favorable results, has made her branch a center of activity and innovation.

Judith Pryor is Coordinator of Library Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

Pryor is the glue that has held together and helped advance an innovative library program that has been recognized nationally and internationally. She has been a role model for her colleagues because of her commitment to excellence and high standards, her example as a learner, and her unselfishness in terms of time and expertise.

Each of the nominees may demonstrate what Peters and Austin cite as the only two ways to create and sustain superior performance over the long haul.

First, take exceptional care of your customers . . . via superior service and superior quality. Secondly, constantly innovate.

That's it.

CHARLES MARTELL

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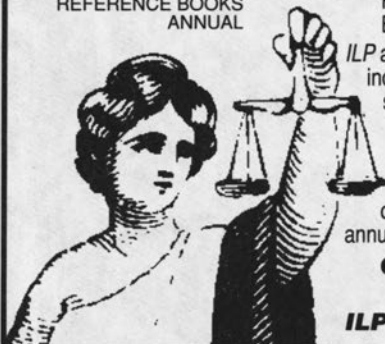
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