

# MATERIAL MATTERS

U N I Q U E M A N A G E M E N T S E R V I C E S , I N C .

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Library Specialists

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## Creating a Quality Experience

Lyle J. Stucki  
President

After my wife and children return from visits to our local public library, I like to ask about their experience. Unique Management works exclusively with libraries. Therefore, I am always interested to learn about the experiences library patrons are having. I ask questions like: "So how did you enjoy the library today? What do you like most about the library? Did you have a good experience at the library?" I frequently hear comments like: "They helped me find what I was looking for. They were really nice to me. Good selection. Comfortable. Friendly people."

It seems to me that one of the most important things for libraries is: "Will your customers/patrons use the library again, and will they talk positively about their experience with other people?" Obviously, a lot goes into creating a positive experience for customers/patrons. All staff members contribute, and a lot of planning and preparation are necessary.

Discovering the most important needs of your patrons and then developing world-class capabilities and expertise to deliver is an ongoing process. It is much more of a journey than a destination. Working at getting better is a quest. It is being proactive like identifying the top five things that you could begin to offer

*"Discovering the most important needs of your patrons and then developing world-class capabilities and expertise to deliver is an ongoing process."*

your customers that would make them value the library even more. Then developing and implementing plans to deliver and thus create true value and quality experiences.

We all know that getting better at delivering exceptional customer service experiences takes constant effort. All of us need to keep sharpening our personal saws so we can become more effective. I have learned that training others helps us internalize important principles and practices. When we teach others something, we think about the material and we know we become what we think about. We are more likely to internalize something if we teach it. I have watched our staff members become more customer service oriented as a result of teaching their peers customer service principles.

To win in this world of meeting high customer service expectations we must do as Zig Ziglar has taught for many years; we must plan to win, prepare to win and then expect to win. Vince Lombardi said something like; the will to win is nothing without the will to prepare to win. I hope that each of us, myself included, will continue to work hard at preparing to deliver exceptional customer service experiences. Everybody wins when we do that.

## Wanted: Leaders

Bert A. Lumetta  
Customer Service Specialist

"Results are obtained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems." - Peter Drucker

Some may see that a lack of leaders is a problem facing the future of libraries. Others may see this as a great opportunity to find and develop a new class of leaders that will lead our libraries in a new millennium. The Monroe County Library System and the Rochester Regional Library Council recently sponsored a leadership seminar that looks to exploit the opportunity of finding new leaders.

The seminar, conducted by library consultants Louella Wetherbee and Florence Mason, was a six-day event that sought to teach participants the skills needed to lead their libraries in these technologically complex times.

The seminar was open to anyone interested in obtaining leadership skills and was not restricted to librarians only. To

become a participant, the interested persons from a five-county area had to submit in writing a statement of why they would like to attend the seminar. In addition, participants obtained a recommendation by their supervisors or coworkers. The full-day sessions were well received by the 40 selected participants. Terry Bennett, a participant and employee at the Rochester Regional Library stated that the attitude of all participants was "very positive." Terry continued, "We are looking for additional funding to continue the training."

The seminar focused on equipping participants with the tools necessary to succeed as leaders. These tools were drawn from James Kouzes and Barry Posner's book titled *The Leadership Challenge*. The outline that dictated the schedule for the seminar consisted of five fundamental practices of exemplary leaders.

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## Top Ten Things to Know when a Patron Declares Bankruptcy

Kenes Bowling  
Director of Customer Service

Patron declarations of bankruptcy have become more frequent in recent months. They must be handled in accordance with the law and in a manner that best serves the library. Following are our “Top Ten” facts and tips for bankruptcy claims filed by patrons who have been referred to UMS for material recovery. We hope you find these useful.

10. Bankruptcy law is federal statutory law contained in Title 11 of the United States Code. However, not all bankruptcies are the same. In a bankruptcy proceeding under Chapter 7 (also called liquidation), a trustee is appointed for the debtor, who then collects and sells the debtor’s non-exempt property and distributes the proceeds to eligible creditors. Proceedings under Chapters 11, 12, and 13 permit the debtor to remain “intact” in order to use future earnings to pay off creditors. Most patrons, who declare bankruptcy, do so under Chapter 7.

9. If a patron tells you that he/she has declared bankruptcy, ask for documentation. That documentation should include the date of filing, which confirms that the claim of bankruptcy is current.

8. Do not attempt to collect from the patron. Once bankruptcy has been filed, an automatic stay that, for a time, protects him/her from contact by creditors protects the patron.

7. Let us know immediately, via e-mail, so that we can suspend activity on the patron’s account.

It is not necessary to send copies of documentation to UMS.

6. Often, the notifications of bankruptcy claims come directly to UMS. In those instances, we will notify the library via fax or e-mail so that you can update the patron’s record and decide the advisability of pursuing a claim.

5. If the library wishes to pursue the account, contact legal counsel. Specific rules apply for responding to the court, and it is important to follow them to be eligible to recover your claim and to avoid penalties for violating them.

4. Creditors are prioritized based on various provisions in the Bankruptcy Code. Your attorney can help you determine your relative standing.

3. Evaluate your return on investment before pursuing. The time and expense of attempting to recover from the patron may be greater than the value of the account. Unless the account balance is relatively large, it may be more cost effective to close the account.

2. You are allowed to block the patron’s card. Many library board attorneys have determined you may not be able to collect from the patron, but it is okay to protect the library’s materials.

1. If you or any of your staff have a question regarding a bankruptcy claim, please call or e-mail any of the customer service staff at UMS. We cannot give legal advice, but we can help you evaluate the cost/benefit of pursuing a specific claim.

## Percentage Small but Dollars Tall

Dick Neal & Jonathan Hayes

Libraries from across the country have always recognized the need to recover overdue materials. Overdue notices and bills are sent to past due patrons to encourage them to return materials and pay their fines and fees. What happens to those materials that are not returned after that final notice?

Statistically, the library can run a lost status report and find that approximately 0.5 to 1.5% percent of patrons are causing the problem of never returning past due materials. That percentage may sound small, but what does this mean in relationship to lost dollars and value of material not paid or returned? In most cases the numbers can be shocking:

“I did run a few reports to see what the outstanding balance was...I just know the results were large enough to convince us to start using Unique.”

*Kristen Hewitt, Westerville Public Library.*

What will also be noticed in the report is that many of the items outstanding will be your more popular items. How do you respond to your patrons who are waiting for

these materials to come back? How do you justify to your 98.5% of patrons who are doing things right, that the materials they have requested are still outstanding?

Is it really that many items?

**“ How do you justify to your 98.5% of patrons who are doing things right, that the materials they have requested are still outstanding? ”**

“About 2% of our materials did not come back after 8 weeks. That doesn’t sound like much, but if you multiply that by 30 days per month, it begins to add up.”

*Richard Nesmith, Sarasota County Library System*

Our challenge to the library is to run the report and learn what is outstanding. See for yourself how your numbers compare to statistics around the country.

As you review these outstanding amounts, know there is a “gentle nudge” approach—used by over 450 libraries throughout the United States and Canada. With this solution there is no loss of “patron goodwill,” a minimum amount of staff time required, and little or no out of pocket expense to the library.

**GO AHEAD...RUN THOSE REPORTS**

# Why You Oughta Auto Send

John Goodyear  
Manager, Technical Services

**Auto•send (ô't'o send) v. [auto + send] to use the Day End Process of your library computer system (or similar system scripts) to automatically generate and send your submission and update reports on a regular basis to Unique Management Services: see TIME-SAVING, LIBRARY AUTOMATION.**

Libraries have a large number of options available to them when deciding how to transmit their weekly collection reports to us for processing at Unique. At the top of the hierarchy of methods is the preferred option: auto send. When libraries send collection reports automatically, it allows us to work "in the background", processing delinquent patrons, encouraging material returns, and generating funds for the library allowing your staff to keep their focus on their most important task: serving your patrons.

Auto sending is beneficial for several reasons. It simplifies the entire collection process, fosters consistency, reduces staff time demands, and reduces clerical errors.

The library's weekly collection process is usually threefold: generation of the new patron account report, generation of the old account update report, and finally the transmission of the report(s) to Unique. When created automatically, as far as your staff is concerned, the reports are done—and sent—with no further intervention on your part.

If the system is set up to auto send, the process is removed from dependence on a particular staff member or small group of staff members to be on hand to run the process. UMS will consistently receive files through the automated process with-

out the library staff having to scramble to cover a vacation or a sick day. And with auto sending, the files are in our email inbox ready to be processed first thing in the morning—with manually sent reports, we may not receive them until late after-

noon. When your reports arrive at the same time each week, it reduces unnecessary contact between UMS and your staff when we try to confirm if you have a weekly report for us or not. Auto sending helps us process your accounts in a timely manner.

In addition, there is less demand on library staff time. The files are sent independently of your staff's other responsibilities.

This frees them for other important duties. The only attention required would be in monitoring patrons sent to UMS and following up on any "case-by-case" issues that should arise such as suspending or resuming contact with a patron.

And a consistent flow of files from the library, UMS will have the most up-to-date information available and, therefore, be more accurate in our contact with your patrons. This matters to us as much as it does to you. This supports our efforts to promote patron goodwill.

In conclusion, we'd like to share a few testimonials from some of our clients who have recently switched from manual to automatic transmission of their own collection reports:

"Not having to manually generate the report is the best process you've come up with. Not because it's such a difficult process, it's just one more thing to remember to do.

*(continued on page 4)*

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We hope you enjoy

## MATERIAL MATTERS

*A newsletter designed and produced for library professionals.*

If you have comments or suggestions please don't hesitate to call us at (800) 879-5453.

Or send e-mail to:  
lyle@unique-mgmt.com

- Please make corrections to my name and/or address information as shown below.
- Please add the person listed below to your mailing list for this newsletter.
- Please send the person below more information about your material-recovery service.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Library: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## Why You Oughta Auto Send

(continued from page 3)

Sending the accounts to Unique Management with the Day End process is wonderful.”

*Marisa Kalt, Head of Technical Services*

*Hamden Library System*

“When we began working with Unique Management, Inc...we saved approximately 4-5 hours of staff time per week processing the collection of lost, damaged, and overdue material. The entire preparation of collection processing (including preparing, printing and e-mailing a weekly report to Unique) was reduced to less than 30 minutes per month. Now that these functions are all part of Day End Processing they occur automatically each week and result in the elimination of one more task that we need to deal with.”

*Laura Veckey, Head of Circulation  
Carol Stream Public Library*

“Perhaps the biggest benefit is in knowing this helps Unique process accounts more accurately and efficiently, receiving untouched data early in the day. Although I was initially resistant to the concept, thinking it would mean less local control, I’ve come to realize it is actually empowering in that the responsible staff person does not have to be present for the reports to be run and sent. A modest amount of staff time is saved, but the significant advantage is

this “delegation” of work. I also appreciated Unique’s willingness to change the day of the week that we send reports to fit the new work flow better.”

*Ellen Walden, Computer Systems Specialist*

*Hedberg Public Library*

“With the help of Unique’s considerate staff, I have recently switched our manual file sending to an automatic file sending with Day End. I am most pleased with how easy the transition was. Now I can have my reports run independently, even when I am not physically in the library. This has made an already efficient system even more convenient for me to use.”

*Lorrie Taylor, Circulation Manager  
Alma Public Library*

A few circumstances can keep a library from utilizing this option such as a city or county government firewall, lack of a direct internet connection to the server, or having a collection module that doesn’t have a feature for automatic transmission of reports.

However, if your main server has an Internet connection and your collection module supports automatic sending of reports, please contact your Customer Service Representative or Customer Service Technician. We would love to explore this option with you and do our best to get one more item removed from your list of weekly tasks.

## Wanted: Leaders

(continued from page 1)

Kouzes and Posner explain that, when they are at their best, successful leaders:

1. Challenge the process
2. Inspire a shared vision
3. Enable others to act
4. Model the way
5. Encourage the heart

Participants were asked to choose a specific issue or project that they would address during the sessions. Some examples of the types of issues or projects addressed were: redesigning a library’s web site, training library staff on new software, relocating to a new facility, and developing an electronic chat environment in a library.

While the issues addressed were theoretical, the seminar leaders sought to make it practical as well. Participants had the opportunity to speak with Barbara Gubbin, the director of the Houston Public Library, to gain insight on current and real issues facing her library. A Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) grant of \$32,140 made the seminar possible.

## Did You Know?

- ☉ Melvil Dewey (creator of the Dewey Decimal system) invented the vertical file and won a gold medal at the 1893 World’s Fair for his design.
- ☉ On April 25, 1889, The Kansas Times and Star was the first newspaper to use the phrase “bestseller.”
- ☉ William Shakespeare used a vocabulary of 29,066 different words. By comparison, the average person uses about 8,000 different words.
- ☉ In 1955, a book was returned to Cambridge University Library – it was 288 years overdue.
- ☉ Ten books on a shelf can be arranged in 3,628,800 different ways.

Sources

<http://www.newyorker.com/critics/books/>

<http://www.mindlesscrap.com/trivia/artlit.htm>

<http://www.uselessknowledge.com>

Please visit our  
newsletter online at  
[www.unique-mgmt.com](http://www.unique-mgmt.com)

## Hope You Didn't Notice We Moved...

Shannon M. Daley  
Production Manager

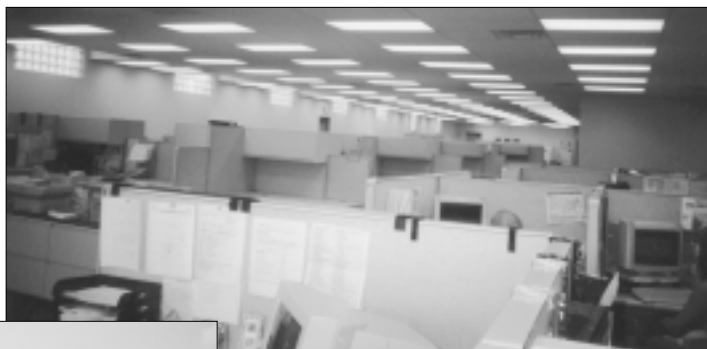
Growing pains are inevitable with small businesses. Over the past few years, Unique Management Services has more than doubled its staff in order to assure top quality and prompt service for our clients. With the growth in employees, Unique Management Services needed more space in which to house the operations.

Therefore, in the last quarter of 2001, Unique Management

Services purchased a former Dollar General Store in downtown Jeffersonville, IN, a few blocks from the current location and began renovations. With the building having been built in the 1920s, there was a vast amount

of work to be done. While the contractors were charging forward with the six-month project, the employees of Unique continued to work hard to provide exceptional service while looking forward to an adjustment to the new environment.

Months of planning occurred in order to assure that the move would be flawless and our clients would experience little to no interruption in service. As May 2002 quickly approached, crunch time was upon us. All the Unique employees came through with flying colors the week of our move. Everyone did their part to assure our client expectations were met during this time. Many of our contact specialists came in before their scheduled shifts from May 13th to 16th to assist in packing and transporting our office. The bulk of our move (computers, office supplies, personal workspaces, etc.) occurred on May 16th and 17th. The



contact specialists began hauling computers and other office items to our new building when calls were finished on May 16th. Our technical staff was anxiously awaiting the delivery of the computers to the new building in order to set them up that evening. Thanks to everyone's diligence and hard work that night, production staff, customer service representatives, and our sales department were able to come in Friday, May 17th and

begin work at 9 am. While hired movers were transporting our larger office equipment on May 17th, our employees were diligently processing files and responding to patrons and clients as well as unpacking and settling into our new environment. Even during the down time of our phone system, which is inevitable when dealing with the phone company, our receptionist was answering client and patron calls from a cell phone to which we had forwarded our main numbers. Our local bank was accepting our faxes as we had forwarded our fax phone numbers to them and collected the faxes several times over the course of the day.

Our main goal was to make the move with little to no interruption in the service we provide to our clients. That is why we hope you did not notice we moved. Due to the months of planning and a great group of employees, you, the client, hopefully did not have to feel our growing pains.

### ANNOUNCEMENT "UNIQUE" RECOVERY CONTEST

Unique will hold a contest among our clients for the most "unique" recovery for the library. Are you ready for the details? Library staff will submit an entry for the most unique recovery Unique has helped them with. For example, a patron may have returned videos while living in a foreign country.

To submit your entry, email Katie Hoard at [khoard@unique-mgmt.com](mailto:khoard@unique-mgmt.com) with your *name, library name, and what was recovered* with any details you would like to share with us by September 30, 2002. UMS will compile the top 10 unique recoveries and list them in the next newsletter. A prize tailored to your library will be awarded to the library with the most unique recovery.

### EXCUSES, EXCUSES... Contest for the "Best" Excuse

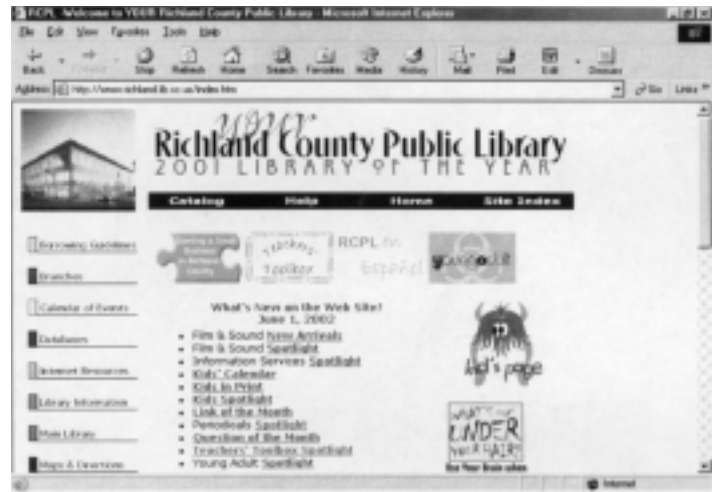
Unique is also having a contest for the "Best" excuse. We know that you have heard everything and anything about why a patron has not returned their materials. So for fun, we would like to hear some of those excuses. Starting September 1, 2002 through October 10, 2002, our website [www.unique-mgmt.com](http://www.unique-mgmt.com) will have an entry ballot for the best excuse. Once the top 10 are compiled we will let you know so that you can vote for your personal favorite.

## When Silver is Second to None

Chris Whorton  
Customer Service Specialist

The Richland County Public Library in Columbia, SC has recently been honored for their web site with the Silver Wing Award from the South Carolina Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. All industry types are considered, however, the Silver Wing Award is presented only to those that excel in public relations. Richland County's Michelle Miller-Shutt and a staff Web Committee are responsible for the award winning site. "We were very excited to learn we had won the Silver Wing Award. It was great to have our efforts recognized. We think our site is pretty special and it was nice to discover that others agree." Michelle Miller-Shutt.

There is a difficulty with trying to make a vast amount of information accessible and, at the same time, keeping it simple. RCPL's site offers a plethora of informational resources and yet is recognized for its ease of use. This has made the site popular and many users visit regularly, even daily, producing thousands of hits per day. There is an extensive number of pages devoted to kids, including: Homework Help, Just for Fun, History, World Culture, Hidden pages, and more. The trendy, Young Adult pages include informational links such as: College and Career, Homework Help,



Sports, links for teens in crisis, etc. For the adult, RCPL's web site is an effortless link to many informational resources from starting a business and raising a child to teaching a classroom full of them. Future plans for the site include links to book-related web sites, information about RCPL book clubs, and forums where readers can write reviews on books for anyone to view. Michelle said, "These are just a few of the plans in the works!" After a few minutes of viewing RCPL's web site it becomes apparent why they were honored with the Silver Wing Award. Log on to see for yourself at [www.richland.lib.sc.us](http://www.richland.lib.sc.us) (pictured).

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