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Situating the Customer

The Genealogy of Customer Language in Libraries

By way of Michel Foucault's genealogical method, in this article we hope to advance discussion within Library and Information Science (LIS) of customer language and "customer-driven librarianship," or those themes and practices "that both responds to and reinforces an economic vision of librarianship at its base, culminating in the 'customer' concept" (Buschman, 2003, p. 110).[1]

Genealogy, as Foucault (1980) expressed his vision, is the "union of erudite knowledge and local memories" which allows us to establish "historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today" (p. 83). Genealogy lends itself to the investigation of customer language in libraries in terms of the library profession's ongoing struggle to describe individuals who visit libraries to conduct research and pursue knowledge in some way. As a means to expose "the creation of objects through institutional practices" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 104), genealogy reveals "the dangers of research and delights in disturbing discoveries" (Foucault, 1984, p. 95). In drawing on genealogy, and this becomes apparent later in this article, we are better able to

Identify the accidents, the minute deviations–or conversely, the complete reversals–the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that

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gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (Foucault, 1984, p. 81)

Over the decades, various labels have been proposed for individuals, children, and family groups that utilize and support library services and programs. These categories range from visitors, the public, taxpayers, readers, borrowers (Asheim, 1953), clients (Johnson, 1961), "libraree" (Gorman, 1983), citizens (McNeill, 1997; Lomax-Smith, 1999), users and patrons (Trott, 2004), and stakeholders (Walton, 2012). Knowledge seeking individuals are also referred to as *customers* within LIS (e.g., Crum 1969; Franklin, 1993; Hernon & Matthews, 2011; Keating & Hafner, 2002; King, 2007; Mathews, 1997; Raphael, 2004; Sandy, 1997; Weingand, 1997). This linguistic miasma is summed up in part by Michael Gorman's (1983) "a borrower is a client is a patron is a user is a reader." However, the customer model is problematic on a few fronts, especially if we consider librarians (and archivists) as public servants in the employ of government (e.g., federal, state, and municipal libraries):

Emphasis on the citizen as a consumer of services and a focus by agencies on the identification and aggregation of individual preferences may weaken perceptions and understanding of the fundamental obligations of citizens and public servants. The customer satisfaction metaphor ignores and weakens the critical roles of representation and trusteeship intrinsic to both public officials and the public. (Fountain, 2001, p. 71)

Our project began as a straightforward question: how did the use of customer language enter into library discourse? Through a complex research agenda outlined below, we situate customer language within historical periods to better understand how the use of customer crossed into library practice to become the controversial issue it is today. In an interview with Raymond Bellour in 1966 titled "The Discourse of History," Foucault paints a picture of our research problem:

Of course we are interested in language; yet it's not that we have finally entered into its possession, but rather that it escapes us more than ever before. Its boundaries have collapsed and its calm universe has entered into fusion; and if we are submerged, it is not so much through its in temporal vigor as through the movement today of its wave. (Foucault, 1996, p. 27)

Extending Foucault, in our research we identified two "waves" that we believe influenced the use of customer language in library settings: the first wave occurred in 1876 within the overlapping historical periods of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, periods in U.S. history that are significant for the rise of the robber baron (Josephson, 1934), monopolies, bureaucracy, and the middle class, all within a social atmosphere of squalor, struggle for numerous rights, protest, and reform. These periods are also known for the efficiency and scientific management movements, "which promised greater production and less waste for all" (McMahon, 1999, p. 148). Seesawing between efficiency, corporatism, and the democratic urge, Progressive Era librarians applied efficiency principles in management of their libraries. Technology in the form of shelflists, catalogues, classification, tags, even the arrangement of desks and counters were evangelized to "efficiently" serve the public (Poole, 1876; The Library Bureau, 1908). The second wave in use of customer language in libraries, we pose, developed out of the Clinton-Gore Reinventing Government Initiative, which emphasized federal agency "customer service" to U.S. citizens. Reinventing Government policies refashioned citizen-government relations, which we suggest influenced the implementation of the customer model by libraries affiliated with federal, state, and municipal governments. Within LIS, there is a dearth of research linking customer language in libraries to reinventing government policies. In embarking on this investigation, we do not consider our project a search for origins or a truth, nor is it exhaustive in scope, a comprehensive literature review, or historiography. We merely open the door for researchers to build on our work and to explore the threads and associations offered here that led to the normalization of customer language within libraries. As Foucault (1984) notes, "genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things" (p. 81). Genealogy instead

> Must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most uncompromising places...it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. Finally, genealogy must define even those instances when they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized. (Foucault, 1984, p. 76)

Within this framework, we view our research as an inquiry into the diffusion of customer language into libraries, and the compatibility of such categorization with democratic and progressive visions of the library as a community center, an educational institution, and potential agent for empowerment. Our research is primarily influenced by John M. Budd (2006) who observes that

It is incumbent upon professionals to examine whether "customer" and "community" are congruent or discordant. "Customer" and "community" are theoretical terms, in this loose sense, that are components in a larger cognitive-professional framework that will affect action. Use of a word or term may have cognitive effects on the ways we think about and work in libraries. (p. 256)

Doing Genealogy: The Road to Customer

To better understand the contexts underlying customer language in library practice, our object became "the archive, that is to say the cumulated existence of discourse" (Foucault, 1996, p. 27). Our first research step was a review of the American history and LIS research literature. Particularly within the LIS literature, we located specific discussions on the influence of business practices and application of efficiency and scientific management principles in libraries by legendary leaders such as Melvil Dewey and John Cotton Dana (e.g., Casey, 1981; Garrison, 2003; Johnson & Kazmer, 2011; Mattson, 2000; Nardini, 2001; Stam, 1989; Van Slyck, 1998; Wiegand, 1996). While this literature does not expressly discuss the rise of customer language in libraries, it does point to periods in U.S. history termed as the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, where industrial management principles and techniques (Chamberlain, 1911; Emerson, 1909, 1911; Taylor, 1911a, 1911b, 1912) influenced the day-to-day "business" operations of libraries.[2] In order to locate the "singularity of events" (Foucault, 1984, p. 76) that underscores the use of customer language in libraries, we turned our attention to scholarly discussions of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in order to ascertain date ranges and background for our continued search. Perhaps a part of "doing genealogy," we were challenged by the complexity of the research literature on periodization of these significant moments in U.S. history.

For example, the Gilded Age is depicted "like gilding that covers a baser metal, a thin layer of speculative wealth covered up a deteriorating infrastructure laden with poverty and human suffering," and is attributed to the years 1865-1900 (Geraci, 2001, p. 158).[3] To make matters more confusing for the genealogist, the mid-to late nineteenth century has been variously described as the Gilded Age, the Era of Excess, and the Great Barbecue (Porter, 1996, p. 2), with some historians compressing both the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era into a wide date range of 1865-1917 (Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, n.d.). British historian J.A. Thompson (1979) further describes confusion caused by "common use of the two terms 'Progressive movement' and 'Progressive Era.' To some historians, Progressives are those who participated in a movement that had certain definable objectives – and was not confined to a particular historical period" (p. 7).[4] Michael E. McGerr (2003)

settled our problem with periodization by designating 1870-1920 as years covering the Progressive Era; he also noted the roots of progressivism in the

> Day-to-day lives of middle-class men and women in the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century. Progressivism was the way these Victorian men and women came to answer the basic questions of human life that have confronted all people in all times and places. (p. xiv)

Using McGerr's designation of 1870-1920 for the Progressive Era allowed us to investigate customer language within a variety of reference sources. With dates in hand, we searched the Google Books Ngram Viewer, which displays a graph of terms that occur "in a corpus of books" over selected years.[5] The Ngram Viewer is a powerful research tool that not only provides visual information on what terms occur within books, pamphlets, journals, magazines, proceedings – what Google defines as "corpora" – for specific years, but allows researchers to then followup *within* Google Books with additional terms. We followed our search of the Ngram and Google Books by consulting retrospective (subscription) library databases (e.g., *Library Literature & Information Science Retrospective* 1905-1983) and the contemporary LIS, American history, political science, and public administration literature to locate specific contexts of customer language specifically used by government bodies, businessmen – and librarians. Our findings are below and take the narrative form.

The First Wave: The Library Customer, 1876-1920

The Gilded Age witnessed a "capitalist revolution" that took place in the mid-19th century that "threatened to eclipse American democracy" (Brands, 2010, pp. 6-7). The "most powerful and influential institution of the twentieth century" appeared during this time – the modern corporation (Porter, 1996, p. 2). The modern corporation's

> Thoroughgoing use of system, of bureaucratic organization, and of what it saw as rational, conscious, and measurable ways of setting and reaching objectives would come in time to influence the way other institutions behaved – those in government, unions, agriculture, voluntary associations, the military, and the schools and universities. The business executive, the engineer, and the wizards of marketing would assume their roles as the most powerful shapers of American civilization. (Porter, 1996, p. 2)

Businessmen-speculators such as Andrew Carnegie, John W. Gates, Edward H. Harriman, Andrew Mellon, J.P. (John Pierpont) Morgan, John

D. Rockefeller, and Cornelius Vanderbilt among other tycoons, controlled banking, finance, steel, railroads, mining, and a plentitude of natural resources that fueled the industrial economy (Josephson, 1934), but "a secret of their success was their ability to harness the strength and skill of armies of men and women to their capitalist purpose" (Brands, 2010, p. 6). From 1870 to 1910, "the old middle class – business entrepreneurs and independent professional men – grew somewhat more than two times...but the new middle class grew more than eight times" (Hofstadter, 1955, p. 215).

It is under these complex conditions the earliest instances of customer language occur. Surprisingly, we located a reference to the public as customer within a 1876 article by F.B. Perkins[6] of the Boston Public Library, published in the U.S. Bureau of Education's *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Management: Special Report*. In his article, Perkins argues for the management of the library as a "business concern" (p. 419), but also likens the library as a form of "machinery" and admonishes the librarian's "sour face, gruff and disobliging manners, sharp or contemptuous answers, slowness to give information, or *to wait on customers* will promptly and deeply wound the usefulness of the library" (p. 427).[7]

The year 1876 is also noteworthy for three other reasons: the founding of the American Library Association (ALA), *The American Library Journal* (Wiegand, 1996, p. 47), later renamed *Library Journal*, and the Library Bureau, all of which hold Melvil Dewey's mark. Dewey's influence on ALA's motto as "the best reading for the largest number at the least cost" (Dewey, 1906, p. 55) illustrates Progressive Era values of efficiency and education. In the case of the Library Bureau, the library profession now had a source to purchase specialized technology, indexing rules, and other tools to organize and standardize collections and services:

> Up to 1876 no business had been organized with the definite purpose of supplying libraries with all needed appliances for administration, or in any way to consider their wants, aside from the attention, based on immediate profits, which they might receive from more or less enterprising booksellers and stationers. This was all the field seemed to justify from a business point of view. Few libraries used the same standards, or accomplished a given result by the same method. (The Library Bureau, 1897, p. 4)[8]

Continuing the journey into customer language, in 1877, comparisons between shopkeepers and librarians are reported in the professional literature (*The Library Journal*, volume 1, 1877[9]); in 1885, Dewey compared the merchant with librarian "*as glad to welcome a reader as the earnest merchant his customer*" (Dewey, 1885, p. 10).

Dewey or Dui, who out of "efficiency" shortened his name on his twenty-eighth birthday in 1879 (Wiegand, 1996, p. 63), mirrored Perkins' portrayal of librarians as slow and gruff. However, he went a few steps further in depicting the libraries of his time as "passive, asleep, a reservoir or a cistern" where the librarian was a "sentinel, a jailer" (Dewey, 1887, p. 46). Not only were certain libraries of the period described as unattractive, they were also damp, old, unventilated, dusty, and arranged in "a classification so coarse that a reader seeking matter on a minute topic might require a week to look over the disorganized mass of literature..." (Dewey, 1887, p. 46). As if this were not enough reason to discourage the knowledge seeking public to bypass the public library, Dewey (1887) also noted the "old type of librarian was a crabbed and unsympathetic fossil who did what he was forced to do with an air that said plainly he wished you hadn't come" (p. 46). Out of this chaos, Dewey (1887) proposed a fresh kind of appealing, "bright," organized, and efficient library "with simple and complete indexes and catalogues to tell almost instantly if any book or pamphlet wished is in the building" (p. 46). Dewey (1887) repeated the likening of librarians to merchants, and the individual to customer: "*a merchant to welcome a new customer*, anxious to give as far as possible to each applicant at each visit that book which will then, and to him, be most helpful" (p. 46).

It is interesting to note that customer language was often used in annual reports written by librarians, library directors and trustees. Progressive Era library annual reports as significant primary sources can "uncover interesting social dynamics among government officials, board members, managers, employees, and customers" (Lear, 2006, p. 468). For example, in a March 29, 1888 *Annual Report of the Board of Directors of Brooklyn Library*, the "modern librarian is glad to welcome a reader as the merchant a customer" (p. 10). However, the library annual report is also a testament, perhaps even a transparency report, to the more bureaucratic aspects of library administration, reporting revenue, expenditures, donors, state library law, and statistics that reflected the "general character of the collection" (Free Public Library of St. Joseph, Missouri, 1891, p. 7).

Spreading the gospel of Library Economy, or the "management of libraries (especially public libraries) viewed as administrative units to be controlled, with personnel and financial issues at stake and with their social environments to be taken into account; as systems of routines and processes; and as buildings with appropriate equipment" (Miksa, 1988, p. 257), the Library Bureau reflected the Era's pro-business philosophy. According to James R. Beniger (1986) the Bureau acted as a "management consultant, an early application of scientific management to bureaucracy" (p. 394). The Bureau supplied librarians with equipment that streamlined operations, including varieties of card catalogues, rotary book cases, arm rests, and tools such as the *Decimal Classification and Relative Index*.[10] The Library Bureau was the world's first library employment

agency (Rider, 1944, p. 63)[11] and had contracts with the New York Fire Insurance Exchange and advertised specialists "to classify and catalog or index libraries, books periodicals, or mss" (The Library Bureau, 1890, p. 4), Dewey's relationship with the business community, through his various endeavors selling specialized products and labor, appear to have partially shaped his vision of the efficient librarian, perhaps even as entrepreneur.[12] Playing off against the backdrop of the Progressive Era, a period of reform within a climate of social injustice, exploitation, taxation, "merger mania" (Porter, 1996, p. 16) as well as "industrial wastelands – centers of vice and poverty, ugly, full of crowded slums" (Hofstadter, 1963, p. 2), Dana's *Library Primer* gave librarians a way to connect "customer service" to the loftier goals of the Era:

> And his attention should be again and again called to the fact that of the millions of children who are getting an education in this country today, not over 5 or 6 per cent at the outside, and perhaps even less than that, ever get as far, even, as the high schools. The few, of course, rule and must keep the lamp burning, but the many must have sufficient education to know how to walk by it if democracy is to endure. (1899, p. 125)

Conversely, in our research we uncovered a criticism of business efficiency principles utilized by American libraries, and another piece that is significant in the associations made between customer service and the philosophical aspects of librarianship. For example, in 1903, a British librarian-commentator viewed American library efficiency in an unflattering way,

> American libraries are conducted on lines which closely resemble those of ordinary commercial practice, in which everything is subordinated to the furtherance of profits and economy. Their methods are standardised, and everything is more or less interchangeable, with the result that in America we witness practically the same phenomenon as in conservative France. Where methods are run on codified lines, there is always this danger of everything becoming fixed, and all the advantages arising from adjustability and the power of revision being lost in the unprofitable pursuit of the unalterable. (Brown, 1903, p. iv)

In the second example, Herbert E. Law (1905) pondered business practices; for while efficiency principles led to improved library management, they may also seem mechanical:

> Now, I do not insinuate that when a reader enters a public library he is not served courteously and intelligently. But do you go to him with that

idea that you simply have to place a book in his hand and to give him the feeling that he has come to the right place and will come again as soon as possible? If you do, you are pursuing good business methods. But if you let your customer wander about the library like a cat in a strange garret, if you do not eagerly as well as courteously and intelligently – then you are not maintaining your library as a business proposition. All this coupling of the words library and business leads me to ask what are the relations of the library to the practical man. (p. 407)

As we move through the research literature to locate additional cases of customer language in Progressive Era libraries, in 1905, individuals are described as *satisfied customers* in an article published in *Public Libraries*, where in "a business house the best advertisement is a satisfied *customer*, so it is in a *library*" (p. 336).

The Progressive Era's accent on reform through "scientific principles as a means to guide efficient structuring of organizations to purge government of political patronage and slovenly management" (White, 1999, p. 11) spilled over into citizen-government relations through philosophies of "efficient democracy" and the "ultimate efficient state" (Allen, 1907), as well as the "ideal of 'Efficient Citizenship'" (Waldo, 1948, p. 18). For example, the New York City's Bureau of Municipal Research equated efficient citizenship with an "obligation to prepare reports that were useful to a broad range of citizens," and changes in public administration of the City based on the philosophy that "citizen-owners had the duty to assume an active responsibility for improving government along with a perfect right to inquire into the affairs of their agents" (Schachter, 1995, p. 532). In part based on William H. Allen's model of the Bureau of Municipal Statistics (Allen, 1907; Stivers, 2000), central to efficient citizenship was the "metaphor of citizens as owner shareholders in city corporations" (Schachter, 1995, p. 531). Dwight Waldo (1948) explains seemingly "incompatible" views of business and democracy that government, libraries, businesses, and other institutions of the Progressive Era sought to reconcile:

The dilemma of democracy versus efficiency was avoided by the formula that true democracy and true efficiency are not necessarily perhaps not possibly incompatible. The assumptions and syllogisms of this line of thought are familiar: Democracy means an intelligent and informed citizenry organized into groups, preferably as few as possible, on the basis of issues. To realize this condition the proper institutions, such as the short ballot, a merit system, a budget system and a reporting system must function. (p. 14)

The Library Bureau continued to operate in this milieu, serving the business

community by printing rate cards and supplying labor that filed and collated the cards at Factory D (The Library Bureau, 1908). With an "army" of workers trained in the use of unique library technologies, efficiency and scientific management manifested in the corporate world, who "used products developed by the Library Bureau for sale to libraries, in order to systematize, control, coordinate, and manage their operations" (Flanzraich, 1993, p. 419). It is an interesting side note – and here again we refer to genealogy's identification of "insurrection of knowledges" (Foucault, 1980, p. 84) – that Dewey and his son Godfrey were members of the Efficiency Society, established in New York in 1912 and organized around "the root idea of efficiency in the use of power and mechanical effort" (Going, 1912, p. 11). Digging deeper, the Society had a larger mission rooted in "the propagandism of general hygiene and its extension into the wider sphere of eugenics, adapting the theory of conservation and ideals of waste-prevention to the individual human unit and to the race at large" (Going, 1912, pp. 11-12).[13]

As Progressive Era librarians gravitated to principles of efficiency and scientific management to organize, plan, standardize, and increase productivity through "methods and equipment" (Thompson, 1914, p. 515)[14], library reinvention took on a shining purpose. However, librarians of the period continued to question what seemed as a necessary coupling of business efficiency principles and customer language to the mission of the library:

> Much, perhaps too much, has been said about conducting our libraries on business principles. Businesslike methods must be adopted, without question, but this should not mean that we must look upon our readers and possible readers, with the same attitude of mind and the same commercial spirit as that shown by the merchant toward his customers. As soon as the commercial element enters into our work, we are in danger of losing that sympathy for our public which our interest in the public has created, but which competition will soon destroy. (Tobitt, Prouty, Van Dyne, & Paine, 1916, p. 277)

As we leave exploration of the first wave of customer language in Progressive Era libraries, Earl W. Browning (1918) of the Niagara Falls Public Library also appears to ponder the efficacy of the business model:

> I do not wish to commercialize the library or sacrifice 'atmosphere' to efficiency, but I feel sure that methods used by merchants to call the attention of customers to the contents of the store can be adapted to the library...We would not care to have a library run in imitation of any of the stores...but if we could make our public feel as much at ease as do the customers of the general store... (p. 128)

Customer Language Between the Waves, 1921-1992

Customer language periodically occurs in the library literature during the next ninety or so years until the second wave of distinct usage in 1993. For example, at the twenty-second annual Keystone State Library Association, Dr. W.O. Allen (1922) of Lafayette College "spoke of library customers, the regular customers and the prospects" (p. 636). In 1926, Businessman Edward L. Kopf delivered a speech titled "Musings of a Library Customer" at the Special Libraries Association conference in Atlantic City, where he defined customer as a "'consumer' of library service" (p. 313).[15] Sporadic uses of customer are found through the 1930s and 1960s library research literature, mostly in conjunction with special libraries and their view of researchers as customers (e.g., Crum, 1969). In 1975, two librarians at Dun and Bradstreet, Roberta J. Gardner and Linda Zelevansky drafted the "Ten Commandments for Library Customers," that appealed to researcher honesty and "patience" in reference interviews. A search of the *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text* for the years 1984-1992 reveals scattered articles on customer language and program planning in libraries not only in the United States, but in the United Kingdom and Australia.

In 1993, a significant development in public policy occurred that not only resurrected the Progressive Era's notion of efficient citizenship, but with it we believe, the contemporary usage of customer language into libraries affiliated with city, state, and federal government.

The Citizen as Customer: Second Wave, 1993-present

In 1901, Woodrow Wilson made an appeal that government "should devise a way of our own to be efficient, consonant with our principles, characteristic of our genius for organization"; in his observations, Wilson also equated "non-professionalism" in government with "non-efficiency" (p. 292). Ninety-two years after Wilson's appeal, President William J. Clinton created the National Performance Review on March 3, 1993. With Vice President Gore as its "leader" (Kamensky, 1999), on September 7, 1993, the National Performance Review (NPR) released its report *Creating A Government That Works Better & Costs Less: The Report of the National Performance Review*. A few days after release of the Report on September 11, President Clinton signed Executive Order (EO) 12862 "Setting Customer Service Standards." The Executive Order (1993) stated that "in order to carry out the principles of the National Performance Review, the Federal Government must be customer-driven. The standard of quality for services provided to the public shall be: Customer service equal to the best in business." It is interesting to note that EO 12862 defined customer not in terms of citizen, but as "an individual or entity who is directly served by a department or agency." The National Performance Review, later re-named

the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPRG), suggested the basis for reinventing government was in "recognizing that improved customer service is essential to restoring trust in government" (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 1994). By October 1995, 214 federal agencies identified over 3,000 standards of service to the public (Kamensky, 1999).

Institutionalization of NPR-NPRG principles opens speculation as to the driving force behind contemporary adoption of customer language within the LIS community. To investigate this question, we again turned to the Google Ngram searching from the date of the 1993 National Performance Review through 2008 (the Ngram defaulted to this end date). We discovered an increase in the use of customer language in the library literature, *possibly* in relation to diffusion of reinventing government principles. On the other hand, perhaps the increased flow of customer language can be attributed to former American Library Association President Hardy R. Franklin (1993-94), who made "customer service" the hallmark of his presidency.[16] In addition to Franklin, Hayes and Brown (1994) spell out the customer model in terms of Progressive Era efficiency principles, as the "concern for the patron, service orientation, high quality product, and cost benefit analysis are concepts that have come to the library field directly from business and have been accepted as central to the administrative model" (p. 413). In 1997, several works discuss Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management and the library customer (e.g., Lynch, 1997; Weingand, 1997); Auld (2004) discusses the use of customer language by way of the Chesterfield County Public Library's county government "customer service standards" (p. 81). A search of *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text* database from January, 2004 through September, 2013 reveals over 1,880 articles; a quick search of WorldCat during this same period retrieves over 200 LIS titles in the form of guides, manuals, anecdotes, and books on customer service, customer satisfaction, and customer relationship management (CRM).

In reflecting on the NPR-NPRG alongside Progressive Era history, reinventing government has the ring of the "efficient citizenship" and "efficient democracy" movements with a few (post)modern touches. It is also noteworthy that a similar critique of customer service as reported in the LIS literature (e.g., Buschman, 2004; Edwards & Krow-Lucal, 2004; Trosow, 2004) appears in the public administration literature (e.g., Box, 1999; Fountain 2001) with one significant difference: the critique of citizen as customer of government as envisioned by the National Partnership for Reinventing Government is lacking in LIS discussions.

These findings suggest a few things: first, increase in customer-related language since 1993 suggests a normalization of this language into LIS and the practice of librarianship. Secondly, our findings point to the need for sociological investigations into the role of customer language and its influence on community perceptions of the library. Our findings also suggest that studies

into the politics of customer language and the ways it shapes government services, including that of the public library, are also needed.

The Customer as Continuing Problematic

The use of customer language is not only a policy issue, but reflects political questions of the deepest kind, in the sense of sociologist Max Weber's (1958) politics as the "striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state" (p. 77). While all categories chosen to characterize the library-using public have implications for understanding power and its relation to policy, it is the use of customer and its association with corporatism that remains problematic for the library profession. The subject is polarizing, and challenges the very possibility of professional neutrality. As Robert Jensen (2006) observes, "In any situation, there exists a distribution of power. To either overtly endorse or reject that distribution is, of course, a political choice; such positions are not neutral" (p. 3). Customer language, whether it has its roots in business efficiency, scientific management, reinventing government, "hospitality" (Johnson & Kazmer, 2011), and/or "best practices" (Harmon & Messina, 2013), challenges how we think of libraries and the individuals who support them. As Jane E. Fountain (2001) observes,

> Service models may produce improvements in the operational performance of agencies, but those improvements do not replace–indeed, they obscure–political outcomes that render some customers much less powerful than others. These "market segments," the poor and the politically weak, will continue to be poorly served absent political change. (p. 56)

Perhaps by way of civic librarianship, which "seeks to strengthen communities through developmental strategies that renew the public library's mission of education for a democratic society" (McCabe, 2001, p. 77), the profession has an opportunity to recapture one aspect of the Progressive Era. That is, in restoring a "political democracy that was widely believed to have existed earlier in America and to have been destroyed by the great corporation and the corrupt political machine" (Hofstadter, 1955, p. 5). The practice of civic librarianship not only has roots in the Jeffersonian ideal of the educated, informed citizen, but in John Cotton Dana's (1899) philosophy that the library "helps in social and political education, in training citizens" (p. 9). In suggesting civic librarianship as a means to offset library "customer service." we need acknowledge that "librarians must be teachers in spirit" (Chamberlain, 1911, p. 156), who have in every exchange an opportunity to encourage capacity building, new learning, questions, and literacies.

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NOTES

1. Customer driven librarianship consists of accountability/quality measurement, "innovation" through the bookstore-coffee shop model, and an emphasis on marketing and public relations (Buschman, 2003).

2. The LIS literature is short on discussion of Harrington Emerson's influential work on efficiency.

3. The much used undergraduate reference tool *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the Gilded Age as a "period of gross materialism and blatant political corruption in U.S. history during the 1870s" ("The Gilded Age," 2013). Julie Husband and Jim O'Loughlin (2004) find the phrase the Gilded Age a "pejorative term that casts a negative light" on the period from 1870-1900 (p. 243). These scholars instead utilize the "heading 'the industrial era'" as the label of the Gilded Age, as the latter as "has had the unintentional effect of diminishing elements of this period that do not fit into the narrative of corruption and greed" (p. 243). Charles W. Calhoun (1996) describes the Gilded Age as "the last third of the century...which saw a rapid acceleration in the country's transformation" (p. xi). Both the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era are sparingly mentioned in Ray Ginger's *Age of Excess: The United State from 1877-1914*. In the end, perhaps we should take heed that "dates are always arbitrary" (Morgan, 1970, p. vi)).

4. The reference source *Facts on File Eyewitness History* series cites 1890-1920 as the Progressive Era (Jaycox, 2005). Historians Richard Hofstadter (1963) utilizes the dates 1900-1915 for the Progressive Era, while Steven J. Diner (1998) sets the

period from 1890 to 1918 to the conclusion of World War I. Lewis L. Gould (2001) focuses on the dates 1890-1920 for the Era, as do Buenker & Kantowicz (1988). For further study, also see Filler (1976) who offers additional reviews of periodization.

5.   Google states that corpora are generated in either July 2009 or July 2012; we utilized a smoothing of 0, which reflects actual values for specific years. We then filtered through Google Books for specific dates as shown on the Ngram. For information on the Ngram, see http://books.google.com/ngrams/info

6.   For details on this neglected figure in LIS, see Murray (2009) for details on Frederick Beecher Perkins' personal and professional work at Boston Public Library and San Francisco Public Library. His "subordinate" role to Dewey is also discussed. Perkins was the father of novelist-feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman who abandoned his family when Charlotte was a child. Gilman (1991) wrote in her autobiography "my childhood had no father."

7.   We identified customer language as it relates to libraries as occurring in 1876, but this does not imply that earlier uses do not exist; we stopped our search after discovering this date.

8.   See Flanzraich (1993) for a detailed history of the Bureau and of course, the Bureau's own materials, many available full text at Internet Archive and Google Books.

9.   Available full text in Google Books; many of the Progressive Era sources we cite in this article are also available.

10. See the Library Bureau's *Classified Illustrated Catalog of the Library Department*, many available in Google Books. For additional history of the Bureau, see Flanzraich (1993) and Wiegand (1996).

11. We wonder if this workforce 1.Was primarily composed of women, and 2. If so, were they trained as librarians at the Columbia School of Library Economy and then supplied labor through Library Bureau? Dee Garrison (1972-73) notes the "low cost of hiring women was perhaps the most important reason that male library leaders welcomed women assistants" (p. 132), but doesn't discuss the specifics of employment at the Library Bureau in her article. This in turn raises questions as to fair wages and labor rights – additional progressive Era themes – *and* Dewey's role. Additionally, we also wonder if the Library Bureau had a role in solidifying the use of customer language in public libraries. These are questions for future genealogists.

12. Dewey mentions librarian as merchant in quite a few of his writings; due to space considerations, we did not list them all here.

13. Note Taylor (1911) "advocates" for "high wages and low labor cost as the foundation of the best management" (p.22). See Boddewyn (1961) for a discussion of Taylor's original work and subsequent revisionism of his progressive ideas.

14. See the Library Bureau's numerous issues of the *Classified Illustrated Catalog of*

the Library Department, many available in Google Books. For additional history of the Bureau, see Flanzraich (1993) and Wiegand (1996).

15. Nardini (2001) writes that by "1920, however, business had moved in from the edges, replacing the school as librarians' first point of reference (p. 121), but we didn't necessarily find this in our research.

16. We are not certain if reinventing government principles had an influence on Franklin; further research is needed. It is interesting to note however, Progressive Era themes threading through Franklin's (1993) remarks, such as a "focus on improving services to the library user, expanding services to those underserved, and offering services to those whom we have been unable to serve" (p.677).