

ASHBURTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
REPORT FOR SOUTH ISLAND LIBRARY MANAGERS' MEETING 2007

Customer Service Improvements Pay Off

Last year I reported on the customer survey carried out in late 2005, which resulted in many recommendations being made by a Library Committee which was convened to consider how to reverse the falling issues and make the library generally more user-friendly.

The rental fee of \$1.50 for all adult books under two years was reduced to \$1.00, despite the Committee's recommendation that it be scrapped. While this seemed a "too little, too late" concession at the time, this has been well-received by our customers, who are apparently chuffed at having been listened to at all. In money terms, at halfway through the year, revenue was down 22.5% on the 33.3% price reduction. Heck, that's a win.

Sunday opening from 1 pm to 4 pm was introduced in May 2006. The public seem very pleased with this, and still comment on how useful it is to them. Issues are not as high as they are for the three hours on Saturdays, but the foot traffic is about the same. The staffing has been taken care of with a roster so it comes around every seven weeks for each of the permanent full-timers, with a school student and a part-timer.

Three days' "grace" was reintroduced for overdue fines. It certainly makes a difference. Far fewer howls of protest and appeals to the hard-hearted headgirl. Revenue is down by about 6% in this area.

There has been a positive effect on issues, chiefly from these three measures, so that since April 2006, every month but one has had higher issues than for the previous year. The year to date figure is 211042 as against 201065.

Other improvements were:

The installation of a coffee vending machine, which will run at a loss of \$1,500 this year, but smells great.

An improved pay Internet system, CyberCafePro. This has drawn many people into the library, especially new settlers who find it good for email and writing CVs. Money is up by 40%, too.

More one hour parking spaces near the library building.

Playstation in the Children's area. Not well received by most commenting parents, and not many kids seem to use it, but Councillors want the darndest things.

All in all, a worthwhile exercise, which raised the Library profile both in the community and around the Council table. The news at estimates time of 8% rather than the official 12% cost recovery was accepted without demur.

Jill Watson, District Librarian, Ashburton.

