Abstract
The intent of this research study was to analyze and evaluate the transition to a self-service customer service model with the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL). The study used customer satisfaction surveys with questions specifically aimed at the various self-service options provided by BCPL to its customers. The 115 surveys collected were from the branches with the highest, lowest, and median circulation totals via self-checkout. The methodology included several interviews with the branch managerial staff and system directors to gain more in-depth information about how the transition affected the whole library system, its policies, procedures, and staffing.

Where to draw the line?
Red shows transactions staff must perform for the patron
Blue shows transactions patrons can complete on their own

Basic vs. Complex
When determining where to draw the line of service burden between patrons and staff, an organization needs to determine which transactions are easy enough to trust to the patron, and which must stay a staff responsibility.

Usage and Effects
The success of having patrons adopt the self service options presented by BCPL has allowed for a reallocation of staff time. This staff time has been used to passively reduce staffing costs while offering expanded services similar to a retail model:
- Expanded service hours, including Sundays
- More materials available on release date
- Expanded programming and outreach
- Specialized Customer Service

Note the low usage of the catalog and the high percentage of customers speaking with staff for reference and title help.

Self Service does not replace the reference interview

The Big Four in Adoption
1. Prepare The Collection
   • Simplify the processes for the patron. Reduce the skills necessary to complete basic transactions.
   • RFID
2. Analyze the Technology available
   • Vending reliability
   • Cost effectiveness of automation
3. Evaluate Policies as Barriers to Service
   • Additional fee elimination
   • Material security
4. Re-education and Communication
   • Teach the staff to teach the patron
   • Encourage self service with positivity
   • Set clear quotas and goals

Show Me the Money
BCPL reported some astonishing fiscal savings.
Part Time budget - $1.3 million
Materials Budget - $800,000

Selected References

Average Satisfaction Ratings 0 to 5

"...if the customer likes it, the staff will like it."
– Cindy Pol, Human Resources Manager