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Group Therapy: Librarians Who Don't Keep Appointments

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Group Therapy

Librarians Who Don't Keep Appointments

Column Editor: **Rosann Bazirjian** (Syracuse University)

Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes? Come to your therapist!
Try rvbazirj@hawk.syr.edu or FAX (315) 443-9510.

GRIPLE

Submitted by an **Anonymous Vendor**

My "gripe" is about librarians who make appointments to see vendors and sales representatives and then they do not show up. Do they forget that they have scheduled the appointment? This happens more frequently than I ever expected, and I think it is inconsiderate. Librarians do not realize that vendors often need to travel many hours to get to an appointment, and meeting a clerk instead of a librarian is a waste of a visit. Why does this happen, and do you think this is right?

RESPONSE

Submitted by **Carol Pitts Hawks**

(Head, Acquisition Department, The Ohio State University Libraries)

No, I don't think it is right for librarians to make appointments to see vendors and sales representatives and then be unavailable when the vendor or rep arrives. A vendor's time should be respected in the same manner in which you would expect your own time to be respected. However, I can imagine several scenarios in which this could occur.

1. Leaving a message where an appointment is "assumed".

Vendors sometimes call and leave a message that they will be visiting on a particular date and time. If they leave a phone number, the librarian should call and confirm the appointment or indicate that the appointment is not possible. Availability should never be assumed; all appointments should be confirmed by both parties with a firm time and place. Statements from a vendor such as "I'll call you when I leave Cincinnati," does not constitute a firm appointment in my opinion. The librarian should feel no obligation to agree to such a loose commitment.

2. Calling for an appointment with little notice.

Vendors who call for an appointment on very short notice should not be surprised if the librarian is unavailable. I find it particularly irritating for a vendor to assume that my calendar is free

for an appointment with just a few days notice. Most academic librarians work in a very collegial environment where meetings run rampant. The time we set aside to get our real work done is very valuable to us. Yes, I may have a free hour next week, but that doesn't mean that I can spare the time to meet with a vendor. My annual report may be due (or be late as is usually the case). Two weeks notice for scheduling appointments will ensure my availability and good humor!

3. Being late to a scheduled appointment.

If an appointment was scheduled for 2:00 p.m. but the vendor does not arrive until 2:45, don't assume that I will be available for more than 15 minutes. Most days are tightly scheduled and a missed appointment cannot necessarily be shifted into the following hour.

4. Unexpected crisis.

Yes, there are unexpected crises in acquisitions -- the automated system fails without a backup having been performed; the president of the University has called for detailed financial information needed for the Trustees meeting at 1:00, etc. In those cases, there is little that the acquisitions librarian can do, other than apologize, to compensate for missing a scheduled appointment. Meeting with library staff in this circumstance may be preferred to a completely wasted trip.

I recognize that the author of this "gripe" has a legitimate complaint. I do consider it unprofessional to make appointments and not keep them. However, there are some actions that the vendor can take to ensure that more appointments are kept. Otherwise, it's up to us to recognize the importance of meeting our obligations to vendors and sales representatives. To acquisitions librarians I would add that you do not have to meet with everyone who calls you for an appointment. It would be better to be firm about your unavailability rather than miss the scheduled appointment. And, one final word to vendor representatives, I was somewhat offended by the vendor's assumption that meeting with library staff is a waste of time. That may be true for sales calls, but when ongoing service is under discussion it is often very useful to meet with those library clerks. Often, they're the ones who really know what is going on in the customer service area of the vendor's company.

Papa Lyman Remembers from page 75

Avenue location, published an autobiographical account of his bookselling experiences entitled *Seven Stairs*. Bella Mell, who represented Brent's publisher, Houghton Mifflin was one of the first female book "travelers." When she offered *Seven Stairs* to Kroch's, a meeting of top brass was called and it was decided that Brent who had a weekly book review radio broadcast would certainly capitalize on the martyr theme if K & B didn't have his book when he announced it. So Goody added a sizable quantity to the order.

Because of this meeting, the order was sent directly to Houghton bypassing Mrs. Mell, and no one in Boston noticed that the Brent title was not on it -- that is not until just a few days before publication -- too late to get stock out to Chicago. Luckily, McClurg's, our wholesaler, was able to supply enough copies for a window display and to fill customers' requests until copies came in from the East. The postscript to this story was that Goody always claimed that he did mark Bella's catalog with the quantity to be ordered and Elsie always claimed that the pages of her catalog describing *Seven Stairs* stuck together. My theory was that it was a Freudian error.

Enough for today. More next time!