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People Profile: Corey Seeman

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ensure that they remain viable and in business. Libraries are driven here by a philosophy of customer service that resonates in the field. However, with libraries, we often find ourselves in virtual monopolies, that can change our relationship with the patrons. While a librarian can move to a different vendor if they are unhappy, a university has but one academic library, and most communities have but one public library system. So the experience from the vendor's point of view can present great opportunities for the library community. At **Innovative**, I felt that it was critically important that I make sure that the customer was happy. And while you can easily make the argument that many companies are more interested in profit than services, a company will fail if they do not understand and annoy the customer. If a company does not take care of their customers, they will lose them. As a library training consultant, my role was focused on ensuring that they were happy with their decision to move to **Innovative** by helping them with the best possible implementation of their system.

In the end, my goal as a vendor was to follow the Golden Rule. My intent has been to be the type of trainer that I would have wanted to have when I moved into a new system. In not every case was I able to provide everything that the library wanted. But in understanding where the customer is and where they needed to go, this became a transformation for me that I have carried forward to my academic librarian positions. Even today, while I am unable to always provide answers, especially to very specific data requests, I try to go about my work with a broader understanding of what the customer needs and how I can support them so that they are best able to utilize my service.

Where do you Meet?

This is one of the biggest issues that all organizations face — how do we work with our customers and where do we meet? When money exchanges hands and agreements are signed, it is easier to determine what we should be providing. However, in the library space, things can get tricky when there is no money exchanging hands. When money does not exchange hands, it can be trickier to figure out what we should be doing. This might be one of our biggest challenges in librarianship.

At **Innovative**, I aspired to meet the customer where they needed me to be. So if they needed basic assistance in getting a module rolling, I wanted to be there. If they needed more advanced understanding of a concept or a part of the system, I wanted to be there. While I had this as my goal, the reality was not always so clear. There were instances where I could not get the system to do what they wanted. As the ILS is under continual improvement through enhancements, it only makes sense that libraries have ideas that are not possible yet. There were also instances where I was asked to help them design a system that would enable them to work as their old system had

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against the grain people profile

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Corey Seeman

BORN & LIVED: Born October 4, 1964 in West Long Branch, NJ. Lived in New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Michigan (that is a lot of electoral votes, not that I am counting).

EARLY LIFE: All I can say is this...if someone knew me when I was a kid — and was told that I would grow up to be a librarian — they would never believe it.

FAMILY: Married to **Pam (Holland) Seeman** since 1988. Two sons, **Jeremy** (18 – freshman at **University of Chicago**) and **Chris** (16 – junior at **Saline (MI) High School**).

EDUCATION: A.B., **University of Chicago**, 1986 (European History) & M.A.L.S., **Dominican University**, 1992.

FIRST JOB: First job out of college was three weeks and one day in the **JC Penney** Management Training Program. Just wasn't for me — a good call. First professional job was as an archival assistant at the **Chicago Historical Society**. That started me on my path through libraries and archives.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Been Active with the Innovative Users Group, serving as Steering Committee Member-at-Large and Chair. I have also been active with the Academic Business Library Directors, serving as a board member since 2008. Over the past dozen or so years, I have been active at regional and national conferences.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Cook and take photos. Sometimes I take pictures of food I cooked — so it ties everything together very nicely. I also love dragging my family to lighthouses to (wait for it) take pictures.

FAVORITE BOOKS: **Collins's Not Even Wrong: A Father's Journey into the Lost History of Autism** (2005). **Greene's Our Man in Havana** (1958). **Halberstam's The Reckoning** (1986). **Hill's Stargazing: Memoirs of a Young Lighthouse Keeper** (2005). **Karasik's The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family** (2004). **Mandel's Minor Players, Major Dreams** (1987).

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: I have always been annoyed with people who slow things down without contributing to what is being considered. You know who they are — you have been on committees with them.

PHILOSOPHY: Everyday, help build and create the library you would want to use. Bonus Philosophy: Practice the Golden Rule — do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Coining the phrase "Patron-Driven Services" for libraries (OK — it is something that I am working on — gonna be big).

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Senator **Corey Seeman**...well, maybe not. I want to spread the word about customer service in libraries and how it can change the perceptions about our need and role in campuses, communities, and companies.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I see more and more administrators that see libraries as storage facilities, not service facilities. This is a key concept that will indicate how we will survive and possibly thrive in the future. I also see smaller academic institutions working with aggregators and creating 100% virtual libraries with minimal staff. The fantasy will be driven by the theory that our patrons do not need help in the library. 🐼

