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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 utility 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 trickier 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 continued on page 20