

Library's signs stir annoyance

■ Overhead directions misdirect customers, elevate frustrations at newly opened site.

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There are troubling signs in the multimillion dollar expansion of Hamilton East Public Library.

Just days after the grand opening of their spacious branch in Fishers, library officials are facing concerns about customer service problems at the circulation desk.

The concerns come from library staff and patrons alike.

Instead of experiencing the relaxing calm and friendly encounters that are typical in a library visit, clerks and customers are expressing annoyance at new overhead signs that direct people

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to the wrong lines for service and cause frustrating backups.

"If it doesn't work out, we're willing to change it," Library Director David Cooper said Wednesday. "But we at least want to give it a try."

Library workers who saw some people get upset after waiting in one line and then being directed to another are trying to help by putting customers in a single line now and directing them according to their needs — one at a time.

While the measure has had some success during weekdays, staffers have found it to be insufficient during busy weekend hours.

Basically, the overhead signs

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Signs

■ Directions were added to cut checkout problems.

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detail a variety of desk services, with no two signs alike. The lists relate to item checkouts, member registrations, returns, renewals, holds and overdue fee collections. Each sign appears to correspond with a work station below.

The problem is, the work stations do not always provide the services described above. To get a listed service, customers must

often go to a different station.

Ironically, Cooper said, the signs were meant to reduce time spent at the counter by directing those with time-consuming or money-related tasks to specific work stations.

"We've never before asked people to go to separate parts of the desk, so as an experiment we tried to divide checkout up a little bit," he said.

The library director said he was unaware the walk-up service had been modified to put people in a single line, or that visitors had been shuttled from one line to another.

He said most of the services

can be handled at any work station and that more training may be necessary for part-time staff.

A \$600,000 cut in funding that stopped plans to hire more desk help also was a factor, he said.

"We definitely don't want the public either to wait an undue amount of time or to face a lot of confusion," said Cooper, who cites a new self-service checkout machine as one customer service convenience.

"We understand that there is some waiting, and they're a little bit upset at the time, but we're doing our best."

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