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Great to Be Back!

By Lyle J. Stucki
Owner

Hello everyone! It's my great pleasure to introduce the first issue of our new and improved newsletter: Material Matters!

And the timing couldn't be better. This year, Unique celebrates 25 wonderful years of service to public libraries — across the globe!—having gently nudged literally millions of long overdue patrons to return materials, enabling them to rejoin their libraries in good standing. Also, to keep highly sought after materials circulating and preserve library budgets for purchasing the latest and greatest materials available. That's a win for patrons, a win for the library and a win for taxpayers in the community.

I remember the very early days, when I met with many of you to explain our freshly developed Material Recovery service— patron friendly contacts; automated account transmissions; significant reduction in unreturned materials while remaining budget neutral / revenue positive! Many of you could immediately see the benefits and jumped on board and the rest is history! Twenty-five fruitful years and 1,800 customers later, we're still going and growing in partnership with you! We have truly enjoyed our relationship and value your business greatly.

Over the years we have tried to listen to you regarding your needs and how we can serve you better. Consequently, our services have been refined and improved over time to what they are today. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas regarding how we can better serve you. It is such a privilege to continue

our long-standing partnerships (and future partnerships) helping you actualize your vision of service to your communities. That strong sense of service is at the core of our being at Unique. It drives every effort and new idea. It makes our work rewarding and fulfilling, every day.

You'll read, further along in this newsletter, about an expansion of services—through our “new” Patron Services offering—such as phone call management, live chat and MessageBee notices. Many customers are already taking advantage of these services to great effect. We hope you consider them for what they are— innovative communication tools to help you be more flexible and adaptable to the needs of your patrons and communities.

So as we move forward, it is with humility and gratitude that we reflect on twenty-five years of service to you and reengage you with Material Matters. We will strive to make our publication interesting, informative and entertaining with diverse content. In the past, it was a real treat when librarians wrote articles for the newsletter, sharing their library's programs and innovations with the readership. All I can say is: The more of that, the better!! We welcome your contributions with open arms. Just let your Unique Customer Service Rep. know and we'll work with you to make it happen, easily.

Thank you all for your continuing trust in Unique. It is our mission, every day, to continually earn that trust from you, the finest customers on the planet.

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Patron Notifications



By Andy Harp
Director of Customer Service

In Terri Lynn Bullock's article about overdue fines, she mentioned the various ways in which libraries reach out to and communicate with their patrons.

In that vein, if the library is considering making changes to its internal notifications, or desires an improvement to its existing notification platform, please let us know! Many customers are taking the time to evaluate their circulation notification options – from the timing of notices to delivery options to the wording contained therein. Keep in mind that Unique offers circulation notification services and can cost effectively assist in the delivery of notices via print, TTS, SMS, and HTML based email.

A good example is our new service: "MessageBee", featured in the Product Spotlight for this issue.

Have questions? Please contact your customer service account manager or any member of the customer service team. We are happy to assist in any way you think through the process and will be happy to discuss the changes occurring at the library and work closely with you to make recommendations and suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you and working together to enhance the experience for all!



Solution Spotlight

By Melissa Fenton
Assistant Director of Customer Service

How Toledo Lucas County Public Library Maintained Continuity of Service with Unique's Patron Contact Center

Building projects can pose significant operational challenges for public libraries. When faced with the daunting, but welcome task of a year-long closure of a main or central library to provide a much needed, full renovation, there are many decisions to consider.

For the Toledo Lucas County Public Library, one of those was "how are we going to answer our centralized Information Line with staff dispersed to different locations without adding undue stress on staff?" The concern of all involved was ensuring continuity of service and a smooth transition for customers and staff, alike, at all service points – whether a physical location, via phone, or online. The solution to that problem was engaging Unique's patron contact center to handle incoming phone calls and live chats.

Unique's patron contact center provided the desired, flexible solution that allowed staff to focus on in-person customer service interactions while feeling confident patrons were receiving a high level of customer service from Unique on the phone and online. Library workers were able to focus on their transition to alternate locations and serving the needs of their valued community in person and via outreach programs, knowing the Information Line was being fully manned.

Over the course of the renovation, Unique's team handled a monthly average of 5,000 patron phone calls and 850 chats per month. Patron requests typically involve topics such as circulation needs, hours of

operation, information about library services and programs, e-media help, and ready reference. With Unique resolving a high percentage of the interactions without having to transfer or otherwise refer the patron back to library personnel for further assistance, feedback from patrons was overwhelmingly positive.

Toledo completed the Main Library renovation in late September 2019. Its positive experience with Unique's centralized customer service functions resulted in continued utilization of Unique services, expansion of phone assistance to several branch locations, and expansion plans to incorporate phone assistance at additional branches. Toledo Library officials praised Unique workers as exceptionally kind and accurate in interactions with the public.

“It changed the way we deploy our staff. They can instead focus on the people in front of them, or matters outside the building.”



Product Spotlight

By Cary Luckert
Director, Client Services & Marketing

Patron expectations for communication continues to increase as technology improves. Why be limited by software in how your library connects with your patrons?

MessageBee powered by Unique enhances your current library communications such as pre-due, hold, overdue, bill, or welcome notices by taking your existing limited options and turning them in to a rich marketing and engagement tool. And because Unique is involved, you can count on the service wowing patrons along with being easy to use and cost effective.

HOW DOES MESSAGEBEE WORK?

The process is simple, yet extremely powerful.

1. Decide which notices to send using MessageBee. Standard options include pre-due, hold, overdue, bill, or welcome notices, but custom notices are available as well.
2. Consider how you want your email notices to look and the message that the library wants to communicate. Incorporate logos, brand standards, marketing messages, links, and the exact patron and material information you want to provide. Need inspiration? Use a template already created by Unique.
3. Calibrate your ILS settings with the help of Unique's technical team and expertise using already developed and tested processes. No technical wizardry required as we have done the hard work already.
4. Approve the new design with no additional day-to-day work required and wow your patrons while increasing engagement.

WHAT ELSE DOES MESSAGEBEE DO?

PROVIDES DATA

Detailed analytics are included and are vital for any library looking to better understand your patrons. MessageBee includes a robust real-time report suite with metrics such as Delivery Rate, Open Rate, and Click-Thru Rate.

RESPONDS TO MOBILE

Per the most recent statistics available online, about 3 in 5 consumers check their email on the go, and 75% of Americans say they use their smartphones most often to check email. MessageBee makes sure your emails look great on all device platforms including mobile-responsive templates.

BUILDS SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Are you looking to grow your social media presence? Include direct links, and drive your patrons to the library's social media platforms in real time to continue to the conversation.

WHY IS MESSAGEBEE USEFUL TO LIBRARIES?

Email is the number one communication source between libraries and their patrons and transactional ILS emails make up a significant portion of this communication. While volume is certainly dependent on library size, most libraries will send well over 1 MILLION emails yearly.

MessageBee takes this basic communication and turns it into a vital engagement tool for your library brand. What can your marketing team do with 1 million impressions to your most active users? What kind of engagement and brand awareness will that build for your library?

OK, GREAT, I GET THE BENEFIT, BUT HOW MUCH IS THIS GOING TO COST MY LIBRARY?

MessageBee is very cost effective

considering the benefit at \$495/month for most libraries. Contact your Unique representative for a detailed quote today.

WHAT KIND OF LIBRARIES USE MESSAGEBEE?

Libraries of all demographics and sizes can use and will benefit from MessageBee. Currently, there is software support for the following ILS's: SirsiDynix Symphony, ILL Polaris, ILL Sierra, Evergreen and SirsiDynix Horizon. MessageBee is designed for libraries that:

- Understand the value of an excellent patron experience that creates raving fans.
- Look to build patron champions and engagement by involving patrons further in the library's services.
- Know the importance of effective communications including marketing and branding.
- Make better decisions based on data.

Think MessageBee might be a fit for your library?

Check out www.getmessagebee.com or drop us an email for a no-risk mock-up of your library notice for the future.

Mention this article and get 50% off the set-up fee until March 2020.





Making the Transition to a Fines Free Environment?

By Teri Lynn Bullock
Customer Service Rep

Many libraries are currently considering the adoption of fines-free policies as a way to increase the rate of return of overdue materials.

Indeed, adjusting fine structure or eliminating fines all together, may be an effective strategy for getting books back on shelves. More materials returned. Patrons restored to good standing with full access to all Library services. And staff engaging patrons without having to collect money—easier for everyone!

And, regardless of fine structure, Unique's Gentle Nudge® patron contacts will continue to reach those few patrons who have not responded to the library's internal texts, emails, phone calls and even mailed notices appealing for the return of overdue items.

Many of our clients have asked what other libraries are doing once they implement a fines-free structure. Here are a few suggestions that our fine-less customers have adopted:

Request a sync report from Unique once you have removed old fines. Many libraries have gone through patron accounts and removed old fines. Unique wants to insure that the balances at the library match the balances here at Unique. Unique will adjust these changes and continue contacting patrons to return materials.

Shorten the timing of when accounts are submitted to Unique.

The vast majority of libraries choosing to go Fines Free realize the heightened importance of prompt notification. To counter the tendency for patrons to hold onto materials longer, the timing of overdue, billing, and referral to collections is typically moved up to reflect the following: 1st overdue at day 1, 2nd overdue at 7-10, bill around day 21, and Unique sometime between day 30 and 45.

Be sure to change the internal notices and Unique's collection letters and call center processes to reflect that you no longer charge fines. Your customer service representative at Unique is happy to help change the wording for gentle letters and calls that reflect your library no longer charges fines.

Run a report of the outstanding value of materials and lower the threshold amount submitted to Unique. Unique's Regular Balance minimum is \$25. For those libraries already submitting at the \$25 minimum, consider Unique's Small Balance Program to help recover materials from where the patron's account has a block (usually \$5 or \$10) to the threshold of \$24.99. Many of our clients that have discontinued fines now want to get items back based on how long the item has been overdue as opposed to how few items are outstanding. Please contact your customer service representative for more information on lowering the threshold.

Unique continues to serve over 1,800 libraries, some of which never charged fines and some that recently discontinued fines. Unique is as vital as ever in helping to recover long- overdue materials while maintaining patron goodwill and we are forever grateful to our clients for our many successful years of service.



Don't Be Shy About Protecting PII

By Will Berger
Director of Information Services

Over the past 20 years, Unique has grown from a company devoted solely to providing Gentle Nudge® recovery services, to a company now offering

a wide array of communication and engagement tools for libraries worldwide. Regardless of the service(s) used, whether it be our Gentle Nudge® Recovery, National Change of Address, Print/SMS/ Phone Notifications, Inbound Call/

Chat or our newest MessageBee service, Unique is proud to receive and process your patron data in a process that ensures a secure and consistent workflow. Our dedication to handling patron Personally Identifiable Information (PII) began

Don't Be Shy About Protecting PII continued...

the day our company started. Our priority focus has always been on data security. Today, managing secure systems looks very different than it did 25 years ago. In its ever increasing complexity, we see data security as a crucial aspect of our service and a core tenet of Unique's thoroughness in protecting you and your patrons.

Most are familiar with either the European Union's GDPR regulation or California's CCPA act. Both laws help limit the amount of PII companies obtain and ensure that data is managed carefully and remains fully protected. Why are these laws so important? Think back to the Equifax data breach in 2017. That was only one of 1,579 reported data breaches in 2017. Data breaches such as these provide hackers, (or "bad actors" as we call them in IT), the leverage over each of us with the eventual goal of stealing our money or identity. We live in a world where vigilance is critical to ensure our data is secure. And ultimately it is up to all of us to keep it secure.

What does Unique do to help keep your patron data safe? Security at Unique is heavily emphasized from day one, in both systems and employee training. Unique employees undergo up-to-date

security training, on a continuing basis. We have enacted on-going training to help our employees identify anomalies and common threat vectors. We have firewalls, web/email filters and antivirus applications to help keep our systems safe. Whether you work at Unique, at your library, or move on to somewhere else, the number one asset in keeping data safe is your constant vigilance for attempted breaches. After the initial training, depending on the role of the staff person at Unique, we require additional training, such as bank fraud mitigation for our administrative staff, and additional security training certifications for our IT staff.

Another key point in data security at Unique is ensuring that our computer applications are processing the data in a protected manner. This starts with ensuring that data is securely transferred to our SFTP server over an encrypted connection, or for the libraries using the Sierra ILS in the coming months, transferring files to a secure AWS S3 instance. Once patron data hits our secure public server, it is immediately transferred to our internal systems and removed from our temporary server. Files are then processed

through the associated systems and stored only as long as necessary. At each step of the process above, the data is stored in one of our secure data centers. Each data center is protected physically through monitoring and, at least, two factor authentication. At the end of the life of a server, we first wipe the data we then physically destroy the drive using a specialized metal shredder. This leaves no recoverable data.

Unique also uses outside vendors to help assess areas for improvement. We subscribe to a "trust, but verify" philosophy. Unique trusts that we have well versed and trained teams, but verify through third parties that we are in fact on the correct track and are maintaining the strictest levels of data security.

We can continually learn about our strengths and weaknesses around data security and apply what we learn. This is critical because of the ever increasing sophistication in the strategies used by the "bad actors" to breach our systems. Unique has always been at the forefront of data security and will continue to protect the security of your patron data as a top, ongoing priority. We are library patrons ourselves, and hope that others secure our data as well.

Quotable Quotes

"Whatever the cost of our libraries the cost is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation." — *Walter Cronkite*

"A truly great library has something in it to offend everyone." — *Jo Godwin*

"This is a place of mystery.....a Sanctuary. Every book, every volume you see here, has a soul. The soul of the person who wrote it and of those who read it and lived and dreamed with it. Every time a book changes hands, every time someone runs his eyes down its pages, its spirit grows and strengthens." — *Carlos Ruiz Zafon, The Shadow of the Wind*

"So the America I loved still exists, if not in the White House or the Supreme Court or the Senate or the House of Representatives or the media. The America I love still exists at the front desks of our public libraries." — *Kurt Vonnegut*

"Don't join the book burners. Don't think you're going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book..." — *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

"Education is what you get when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get when you don't." — *Pete Seeger*

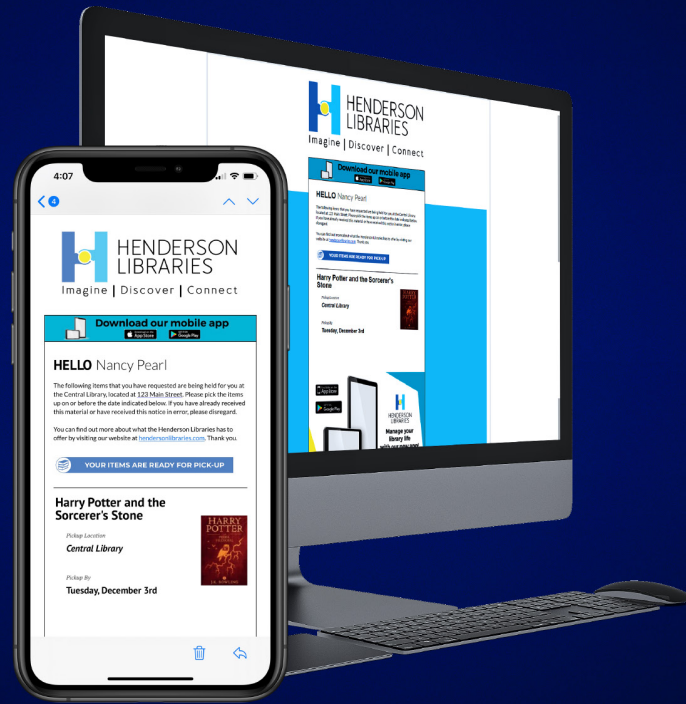


MESSAGE BEE

Creating Next-Level Patron Engagement

Easily send beautiful HTML email notifications using your brand standards and marketing messages to drive library usage and brand awareness.

See Page 3 for More Info



MATERIAL MATTERS

Winter 2020

UNIQUE

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