

Your voice

Caveat emptor

I write with a cautionary tale for any colleagues considering the purchase of a computer system direct from the manufacturer.

In early May, my wife and I took delivery of a new desktop system for home use. We had shopped around for months and finally took their advice — 'buy direct and cut out the middleman'. 'Cut out the responsibility' would be a better description.

Our CPU failed within 24 hours of delivery, after less than 30 minutes uptime. We telephoned technical support immediately and spent close to two hours taking the machine apart and attempting to reseat the RAM card. The machine still failed to work.

The following Monday, we phoned the supplier bright and early to express our disappointment and arrange a replacement or refund — this in line with the terms of their 'total customer satisfaction policy'. Three phone calls, numerous transfers and forty minutes later, someone in Singapore (we think) gave us an 'escalation case number' and promised to call back in 24 to 48 hours. That was the last we heard from the computer supplier for over three days, until I again wasted thirty minutes trying to find someone who would take my call seriously. This pattern of behaviour was to be repeated consistently for over a month.

Six weeks later, we have logged more than 30 telephone calls and e-mails to the company, had colleagues raise the matter with business account

representatives in Australia, and spoken to rich diversity of people from India to Malaysia — all with very little effect until finally, in desperation, we advised that the matter would be handed to Queensland's Office of Fair Trading. At this point, and only at this point, things started to happen — very slowly!

Based on our interactions with this supplier I would caution prospective customers to consider carefully whether saving a little money on avoiding the 'middleman' is actually worthwhile if the product fails to work and the company refuses to take responsibility. Our small saving has more than evaporated in lost work time, frustration and heartache.

Five weeks to the day from when our new machine was delivered and failed, we finally secured a full refund. For us the lesson is clear. When it comes to purchasing computers, caveat emptor — let the buyer beware!

Richard Sayers, Aspley, Qld

Library romance

I am working on a book, to be published by Scarecrow Press, on the romance of libraries. I am seeking true stories from people who experienced romance in a library or library-related setting.

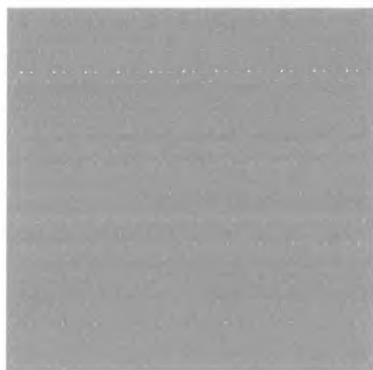
Potential contributors can find more details on my website, <http://www.libraryromance.com>.

Madeleine Lefebvre AALIA

Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

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