
**Assessment of the Types of Library Signage as Determinants of Students' Utilisation of
Information Services in University Libraries in the United Kingdom**

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ABSTRACT

The quality of temporary signage must be reasonably good. Printed signs on foam-core backing make for acceptable temporary signage; anything on sheets of paper or handwritten is unacceptable. To determine placement, it is helpful to discover through observation where bump points are. No manual can answer these kinds of questions, but careful observation of how people behave at the bump point, combined with consideration of every option; go a long way toward finding the best solution. In this generation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) era, it is difficult to stop students from entering the library with their phones, laptops, tablets, and iPads. But regulatory signage can at best tell students not to make or receive calls within the library. Some of these phones are multifunctional. When students are bored reading, they often switch them on and watch movies. There are also those who come to the library to watch movies on purpose, sometimes in groups, disturbing the peace in the library. These are deviant behaviours associated with modern technology. It puts library personnel on their toes in checkmating these habits in recent times. With regulatory and other signage in academic libraries, student's deviant behaviour could be controlled and the stress of library personnel to checkmate student's deviant attitude could also be reduced. This study was able to establish the importance of library signage in students' utilization of information services in the university libraries. Library signage predicts students' utilization of information services in the university libraries. Therefore, the identified library signage could form part of the curricular content of education and library and information science in tertiary institutions.

KEYWORDS: Library Signage, Students' Utilisation, Information Services, University Libraries

Introduction

Li and Klippel (2012) assert that orientation in an unknown environment is an important factor for successfully reaching a specified destination and usually requires external knowledge sources. People need to know where they actually are in complex unfamiliar environments to feel secure and safe, and the difficulty of navigating unfamiliar environments suggests the need to support users' way-finding. Signs are major elements of information systems and can be used to enhance way-finding effectiveness. However, faulty signs can cause way-finding problems in unfamiliar environments. Location, content, and color of signs play important roles in representing beneficial and functional information systems. Location means that signs should be visible at transitional areas and at intersections;

at every decision point a new sign is needed (Arthur and Passini, 2012). Arthur and Passini, (2012) finds out that “signage resulted in a 13% increase in the rate of travel, a 59% decrease in the wrong turns, and a 62% decrease in backtracking. This means signage contribute significantly to successful way-finding even in library environment.

The content of messages on signs should be considered because the remembrances of signs decrease when the number of contained words increases. Design elements such as font type and color schemes must also be considered for contrast and readability (Jansen-Osmann and Wiedenbauer, 2004). Color is an important element to consider because it has a significant effect on children’s way-finding and spatial orientation abilities in school environments (Jansen-Osmann & Wiedenbauer, 2004). Children need their environment to be interesting, and they make associations with color and shapes rather than form. Therefore, using color in signage can provide visual interest, supply information for efficient navigation, and improve children’s way-finding and spatial orientation abilities in their environment but color must be considered carefully to ensure there is sufficient contrast between the text and background to allow a sign to be legible (Arthur and Passini, 2012).

In the same vein, Ugah (2007) opines that the more accessible information resources are, the more likely they would be used and the readers tend to use resources that require the minimum effort to access. This is due to the failure of our library professionals to provide complete access to those information resources due to poor indexing, abstracting and bibliographic work on their part.

Concept of Library Signage

While research on user way-finding in all library types is beginning to emerge, school library design manuals pay little attention to this topic and the supports that students need to successfully navigate the library in finding information, such as signage. In a handbook on designing school libraries for the future, the purpose of signage in school libraries is described as “to help users navigate and make it easier for them to find what they need; this removes psychological barriers and makes the library more inviting to the user” (Erikson and Markuson, 2007). However, the focus is on aesthetics of signage and the overall signage system, not on directional signage that actually helps users navigate. And the overall focus in facilities planning guides is not about way-finding, navigation, or signage. The few recommendations on signage covered by some manuals include suggestions such as using color-coding to designate areas of the library and ensuring ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance (Erikson and Markuson, 2007). Li and Klippel (2012) observed that the layout complexity of an environment has the most significant impact on human way-finding behaviours, and that even in areas with low layout complexity, a “misleading sign made participants choose the wrong bookshelf. Too many signs and signs dense with information can also cause information overload. Signage can be considered the filters we use to sift through the information in our environment. When that information overload, it results in filter failure (Asay, 2009). Hence, signage failure is a type of filter failure.

The literature provides a number of key issues to consider in designing signage. First and foremost, view signage as a system (Larsen and Tatarka, 2008). Then there is the question of how many is too many, with most advice saying to have neither too many nor too few. Where signs are placed matters; signs need to be short, clear, and installed where people need them. Signs need to be visible, simple, and legible (White, 2010). Consistency is key, both in use of terminology and design. When collections and services are relocated, signs also need to be relocated in order to remain current. Signs are for students so library jargon needs to be

avoided. Avoid ad hoc signs, especially handwritten signs, “perhaps the most egregious of all types of signs to avoid”. And use positive language, even when telling students what not to do.

Types of Library Signage

Directional Signage

San Jose Public Library contends that directional signs help to guide students and visitors to their final destination by indicating the route to that destination. Directional signage is usually located at the key decision-making areas. However, Jansen-Osmann and Wiedenbauer (2004) assert that directional signs can be overhead signs or wall-mounted signs. Overhead directional signs may use upper- and lower-case letters/ characters with a minimum 3”cap height. Minimum 80” clearance below the bottom of the sign. Usually mounted to the ceiling within hallway at key decision points. Directional signs must be installed where they can be approached closely enough to be read by a visually impaired person. Stempler and Polger (2013) maintain that wall-mounted signs must be installed to the center line the signs are 60 inches above floor facilities (signage and graphic standard).

Directional signage reduces frustration among students and other library users, timid and shy students can make more efficient use of the services that are provided in the library. Hahn and Zitron (2011) postulate that the presence of directional guide in academic library help to reduce noise and traffic at the pedestrian, creating free movement from one section to the other. The goal of directional signage is to allow someone who has never entered any facility be able to navigate to any department, work cell, machine or process without asking a single question. This implies that even new students can utilize effectively any information service they required in academic library with the aid of directional signage.

Multi-Colour Guide

Colour is only a small part of a vast electromagnetic spectrum that can be perceived by human eyes from about 400-nanometers to 700-nanometer measurement. Visible light is measure in nanometer and a nanometer is equal to 1 millionth of a millimeter. Interestingly, the energy of colour wave can also be sensed through skin (Jin, Yu, Kim, Kim, and Chung, 2005) probably used by people with visual impairment to recognize colour. Colour is divided into cool and warm colour, where it is differentiating by characteristic of its wavelengths. Blue, green and purple are regarded as cool colour range that has shorter wavelength compared to red, orange and yellow. Red, orange and yellow are categorized as warm colours with red as the longest wavelength perceived by our eyes.

Instructional Signage

Schmidt and Etches (2014) argue that paper signs are often put up because something isn’t working very well. Instead, librarians should address the core issue, which will improve the visual environment and make the library more pleasant to use. This idea is supported by Mollerup (2005), who argues that user instructions can sometimes be seen as “repair design for poorly designed products that cannot themselves explain how they should be used”. Creating a professional-looking version of the same sign does little to address the underlying issue. Brown (2002) suggests that “most library policies and instructions for complicated procedures should be presented to users by word of mouth or in a handout or flyer, rather than a sign”.

Luca and Narayan (2016) posit that printing is a common but often complicated procedure at academic libraries, and Library's Print & Copy Room proved to be a problematic user environment. Staff members at the library's reference desk receive many inquiries about printing and copying services. The room appeared to be thoroughly signposted, with many different signs explaining how to add money to one's account. Yet, there was little consistency to these instructions, with many signs created at different points in time and using different terminology and language. A key piece of information that users can print from their laptop or mobile device, not just the library computers was not to be found on any of the signage. The library's website did not provide information about this either, instead listing printing costs, how to add money to your account, and where to get help.

Informational Signage

Admi (2016) maintains that informational signage gives information. It provides knowledge of how what one requires could be seen. Informational signage in academic libraries serves as a guide to direct students to where they should locate any material needed. Ahn (2011) notes that signage plays a role as indicating information. Informational signage provides all basic information to library users; it is a tool to discern various books, service points and facilities. However, Ahn observed that delivering messages in signs should be simple and straight forward. Barclay and Scott (2012) aver that informational signage tells building users where they are and what they can (or cannot) do. Some informational signage, such as room identification signage, is also regulatory. Informational signage can also be directional. Barclay and Scott (2012) maintain that a special type of informational signage is donor-recognition signage. Whether it takes the form of generic engraved brass nameplates on a walnut plaque or elaborate tributes that move into the realm of high art, donor-recognition signage should not hinder way-finding or library operations. There is no single, simple solution for creating a library space that allows users to successfully find their way. Eliminating obstacles to way-finding cannot do it all. A building designed with way-finding in mind is a great asset, but even that cannot win the battle all by itself. These elements need to be combined and harmoniously tuned to allow successful way-finding. And finally, even in the best-tuned building, some users will still need, from time to time, human help to find their way.

Regulatory Signage

Regulatory signage is necessary in academic libraries to discourage mutilation of library materials. Mutilation is the defacement or damage of library materials. Mutilation of academic library collections has been reported by many researchers (Bello, 2003; Lorenzen 2006). Mutilation or vandalism occurs when users knowingly tear, mark, or otherwise damage or destroy materials. Lorenzen observes that collection mutilation takes many forms, ranging from underlining and highlighting text, tearing and or removing pages, and tampering with the content. Lorenzen identifies several causes for theft and mutilation to include; lack of awareness of library rules and regulations, lack of awareness of the penalties attached to breaching of library rules and regulations, students' dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, a lack of knowledge of replacement costs and time, a lack of concern for the needs of others and few students think of library mutilation and theft as a crime. Perhaps, this is because there are no regulatory signs in academic libraries to constantly inform students that theft and mutilation are crime and punishable.

The disturbances associated with students' deviant attitudes (especially with the use of ICT devices) come in different forms, such as the sharing of movies, songs, through Bluetooth

devices, and memory sticks, with a whole lot of movements up and down the library (Eruvwe, 2015). Uncontrolled behaviour disturbs and annoys library users, especially when the movements and noise get so intense through side talks, laughter, shifting of chairs, and whispering among Students. Omosekejimi, et al. (2015) maintain that, apart from the library staff, postgraduate students are more culpable of these behaviors; because they are the only ones officially allowed to make use of their laptops within the library.

Mason (2008) in his exposition on attitude of undergraduate to use of library affirmed that often students will use the library as a meeting place, to talk to classmates about upcoming exams, or as a quiet place to take a afternoon nap, but when it comes to actually using library resources to reach an end, anxiety is often the result. It is therefore cardinal to have a guide or sets of rules to control students in the use of the library. Such guide or set of rules should be translated into signage and placed at every strategic position to constantly remind students of the do and do not of the library. Montuiloff (2010), observes that libraries should formulate policies (including rules and regulations) to ensure effective and efficient use of information resources. According to Clarke (2009), Library policy statements are the regulations, principles, and strategies that help realize the needs of libraries. Since policies are guides to decision-making, they ensure that decisions of the organization or institution are kept in line with their philosophies. There is a need for library rules and regulations on the behavior of library patrons. Reactions to situations such as theft or mutilation of materials, or disruptive behavior, should not be left to an individual staff member's judgment. Regulatory signage plays significant role in checking unlawful acts in academic libraries.

Information Services Utilization

Goulding (2006) also observes that use of academic library by student's declines as other activities begin to take up their time. Academic library is to serve its users at any point in time and to do this effectively, there should be quality information in terms of its relevance, currency and accuracy that would meet and satisfy user's needs. If the library fails to meet the information need of users, then effective services have not been rendered. In other words, the library users must be satisfied with the services rendered by academic libraries. The basic function of any university is to conserve the existing knowledge, to transmit knowledge through teaching, and to create new knowledge through research.

According to Omotunde, Ehioghae, Aluko-Arowolo and Ayoola (2014), universities are to generate new knowledge and also encourage transferred and adopted of this new innovation. Since this requires an atmosphere of research, libraries are left with no options or choice than to provide access to relevant information resources by applying this to enable quick access, integrate and repackage information for the end user that will capacitate and enrich higher educational institutions means of conducting research. Basically, library resources are materials that users consult in making decisions and also for problem-solving. The uses of electronic information resources in the University libraries is aimed at broadening the range of available information within the library and adding value to the content by making them accessible through digital means so that students, researchers, and the entire members of the university community can access them anytime and anywhere.

One of the objectives of a university is to encourage acquisition of knowledge, that is, to encourage and promote scholarship and research in all fields of learning and human endeavor. Every tertiary institution library, including university library, is expected to meet the objectives of the institution that established and funds it. Libraries have been around for a very long time and are traditionally seen as collections of information and services. Libraries

have always played a significant role, enabling people to engage with all kinds of information and knowledge resources (Curran, Murray, Norrby & Christian, 2006).

Empirical Study

Yi (2016) conducted a study on effective techniques for the promotion of library services and resources in Australia. This study examines how Australian academic librarians perceive techniques for promoting services and resources, and the factors affecting the perceptions regarding effectiveness of techniques used. The population of the study was 400 academic librarians in thirty-seven Australian universities. The instrument used in the data collection was online questionnaire. The collected quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (ordinal regressions). The results from the study have clearly indicated that the Librarians used a variety of techniques (catalogues, e-mails, library website, online advertising, social media webcasts, website announcements, advertisements, booklets brochures, direct mail flyers, giveaways leaflets, newsletters print advertising, among others) to promote services and resources. The study concluded that Librarians may use the results to reflect on the effectiveness of these techniques, to balance the weight of the factors' influences and to better understand various promotion techniques.

Ikenwe and Adegbilero-Iwari (2014) conducted a study on utilization and user satisfaction of public library services in south west Nigeria. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the utilization and user satisfaction of public library services. A descriptive survey research design was employed for this research and a total of 400 (four hundred) library users chosen across four states in South-West Nigeria were used for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection. Frequency counts and simple percentages were used to analyze the obtained data. The results showed that there is an improvement in the use of these libraries. Also, lack of adequate facilities, inadequate/outdated information resources, internet /ICT services in Nigeria public libraries were revealed by the users as major factors affecting user satisfaction of public library services in this 21st century of information and communication technology. Based on the findings, it was recommended that funding should be increased by the government so that adequate information resources and ICT facilities can be acquired in public libraries. And this will also boost the utilization of public libraries among the Nigerian population who desperately need a place where their information needs would be met.

Conclusion

This study was able to establish the importance of library signage in students' utilization of information services in the university libraries. Library signage predicts students' utilization of information services in the university libraries. Therefore, the identified library signage could form part of the curricular content of education and library and information science in tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

1. Federal government should increase budgetary allocation to universities to ensure adequate fund for provision of library signage in academic libraries. This will contribute to effective way-finding and utilisation of information services by students and other library users.
2. University librarians should use regulatory signage to create more awareness of library rules and regulations and penalties attached to breaching the rules and

regulations. This will help to reduce mutilation, theft and other forms of crime and misbehaviour in academic libraries.

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