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When to Teach It and When to Trash It: Library Terminology, Instruction, and Content Strategy

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WHEN TO TEACH IT AND WHEN TO TRASH IT:
LIBRARY TERMINOLOGY, INSTRUCTION AND CONTENT STRATEGY

ADRIENNE ALGER
MAUREEN AND MIKE MANSFIELD LIBRARY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

ONLINE NORTHWEST 2017
MARCH 31, 2017: 1:15 PM

- PROJECT GOALS
- METHODOLOGY
- RESULTS
- RECOMMENDATIONS
- OUTCOMES
- FUTURE RESEARCH

PROJECT GOALS

- Identify terminology students are unfamiliar with or incorrectly define
- Inform student-centered changes to language on our website
- Create a better user experience by decreasing intimidation and frustration
- Improve library instruction and point-of-need assistance through commitment to meaningful language that forwards information literacy
- Indicate to students that we welcome their voice and care about their experience with the library
- Strategize and synchronize library content across digital and physical spaces
- Treat our users more like students and less like consumers
- Avoid acronyms and abbreviations

METHODOLOGY

Student-Centered Innovative Projects Grant

Undergraduate students: take a short survey on library terminology and receive your choice of $10 in Bear Bucks or a $10 gift card to the UM Bookstore.

No Thanks   Participation gifts may be taxable.   Participate

powered by SurveyMonkey

Website Pop-Up Invitation

Survey Link on Facebook page

Terms randomized to avoid bias or fatigue

37 UNDERGRADUATE PARTICIPANTS

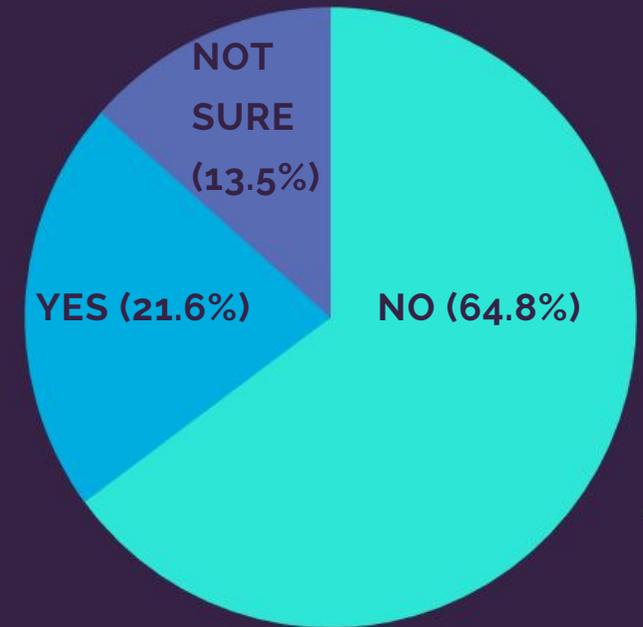**WORKING DEFINITIONS: REITZ, JOAN M., "DICTIONARY FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE" (2004).**

SURVEY QUESTIONS

"Have you had a library instruction class?"

"Here is a list of terms from the library's website. Without looking them up, please tell us what you think each term means in a library context."

"Are there any other terms on the library's website you don't understand?"

"Is there anything else you would like to share with us?"

NOT SURE (13.5%)

YES (21.6%)

NO (64.8%)

Circulation
Call Number
Course Reserve Materials
Interlibrary loan
Research guide   Reference book
Information Center
Serial   Liaison librarian
Bibliographic Management Services
Abstract
Citation   Database
Reference desk
Government documents
Periodical
Boolean operator

RESULTS

	Correct	Incorrect	Don't Know	Some Understanding
Abstract	86.49%	5.41%	5.41%	2.70%
Information Center	81.08%	16.22%	0.00%	2.70%
Citation	83.78%	2.70%	0.00%	13.51%
Interlibrary loan	70.27%	21.62%	5.41%	2.70%
Reference desk	72.97%	10.81%	0.00%	16.22%
Course Reserve Materials	59.46%	13.51%	0.00%	27.03%
Call Number	51.35%	21.62%	8.11%	18.92%
Government documents	48.65%	29.73%	0.00%	21.62%
Periodical	43.24%	27.03%	8.11%	21.62%
Circulation	24.32%	48.65%	13.51%	13.51%
Liaison librarian	18.92%	45.95%	27.03%	8.11%
Database	18.92%	48.65%	0.00%	32.43%
Research guide	16.22%	21.62%	8.11%	54.05%
Reference book	2.70%	45.95%	8.11%	43.24%
Serial	2.70%	70.27%	16.22%	10.81%
Boolean operator	2.70%	32.43%	62.16%	2.70%
Bibliographic Management Services	2.70%	64.86%	27.03%	5.41%

INCORRECT ANSWERS

- **CALL NUMBER:** (13% confused with phone number; 10% confused with position in hold queue) Number you are given to wait for checked-out materials

- **DATABASE:** (40% confused with "catalog"); Where the books are tracked; a catalogue of sources; where information about books is catalogued; a location where all the books/resources in a collection are kept and can be looked through; a cache of information

- **SERIAL:** (48% confused with "call number";) the individual serial numbers given to a book; a number specific to an item that helps you find it; the first few numbers tell you what subject it is; catalog code; the number on the book or library item

- **COURSE RESERVE MATERIALS:** Books unavailable to check-out

INCORRECT ANSWERS

- **LIAISON LIBRARIAN:** A librarian's assistant; person that helps the librarian; a librarians helper; a temporary librarian

- **BOOLEAN OPERATOR:** Someone who can use a ladder?; the hashtag of database research; someone responsible for determining whether something is true or false; help with library's coding system; a person who organizes the books; this isn't a real thing

- **BIBLIOGRAPHIC MANAGEMENT SERVICES:** (54% confused with citation management); Help used in writing a bibliography; where people make bibliographic decisions that confuse students; oversight of non-fictional information regarding historical figures; a source organizer like Mendeley

- **CIRCULATION:** The book is in the library, not checked out, but not where it should be; Range of publication for a work

LOW-COMPREHENSION TERMS

- **COURSE RESERVE MATERIALS**
- **CALL NUMBER**
- **GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS**
- **PERIODICAL**
- **CIRCULATION**
- **LIAISON LIBRARIAN**
- **DATABASE**
- **RESEARCH GUIDE**
- **REFERENCE BOOK**
- **SERIAL**
- **BOOLEAN OPERATOR**
- **BIBLIOGRAPHIC MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

1. Which terms need to be saved and taught due to transferable skills or importance to our research and information literacy goals?

2. Which terms with low understanding can be changed to alternate terms or natural language? What should they be changed to?

TEACH IT

"It is recommended that librarians work with faculty to make them aware of students' lack of understanding of information literacy terms and that librarians also reinforce their meaning during library instruction and in one-on-one consultations." (Schaub, Cadena, Bravender, 2017)

"Traditional library lingo has a place - it helps us describe the value of library as 'library'." (Pundsack, 2015)

"The library website should not only provide information but also be a learning tool." (House, 2007)

TRASH IT

"If our users do not understand us in a library instruction class, or on the reference desk, then they may exhibit frustration and resentment." (Butler & Byrd, 2015)

"A review of the literature shows that many of the problems that occur during library website usability testing have more to do with patron failure to comprehend library terms such as database, periodical, or catalog than with poor web design." (Imler and Eichelberger, 2014)

"The literature on library jargon and student learning is consistent. Authors either recommend minimizing the use of library jargon and some advocate avoiding it completely." (Polger, 2011)

TEACH IT

DATABASE
COURSE RESERVE MATERIALS
CALL NUMBER
RESEARCH GUIDES

- Tool-tip definitions
- Define in context on website and research guides
- Explain in reference desk/chat interaction, research consultations and instruction sessions

TRASH IT

LIAISON LIBRARIAN
REFERENCE BOOK
BOOLEAN OPERATOR

- Website content
- Research guides
- Reference desk/chat interactions
- Research consultations
- Instruction sessions

CHANGE IT

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS → GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

CIRCULATION → CHECK-OUT

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MANAGEMENT SERVICES → TECHNICAL SERVICES

SERIALS AND PERIODICALS → ARTICLES, JOURNALS, MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS

- Editorial Standards
- Instruction Guidelines
- Mappable LibGuides definitions

- Research Guide Glossary
- Website Glossary
- Tool-Tip Definitions

FOLLOW-UP

- POST-STUDY SURVEY AND NOTICE OF OUTCOMES
- REPEAT STUDY AFTER CHANGES ARE COMPLETED

FUTURE RESEARCH

- TASK SCENARIOS
- SEARCH LOGS
  REPEAT STUDY WITH:
- DISTANCE LEARNERS
- FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS
- GRADUATE STUDENTS

QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!

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