Designing Effective Library Signage: Communicating Strategically to Your Users

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Agenda

- What is a Sign?
- What exactly is Wayfinding?
- Signage as Marketing Communications
- Where I work
- Types of Signage
- What are Signage Audits?
- Three Phases of a Signage Audit
- Conducting Signage Research
- Best Practices for Print Signage
- Digital Signage Considerations
- Digital Signage Placement
- Best Practices for Digital Signage
- Getting Buy-In
- Maintaining Effectiveness
- Final Recommendations
What is a Sign?

Anything that can be interpreted, or decoded by individuals. Signs produce meaning by using codes, colors, pictures, or words.

Includes different elements:

- signified (“stop”) and signifier (red light), unite to create the sign’s meaning, according to Ferdinand De Saussure
- representamen (red light), object (cars), and interpretant (“stop”), according to Charles Sanders Peirce
What exactly is Wayfinding?

They are spatial literacy tools that help individuals navigate through physical or virtual spaces. It involves knowing how to enter, navigate, and exit buildings, airports, hospitals, train/bus stations, and even highways (built environments).

Wayfinding elements include:

- landmarks (physical structures)
- directional signage
- architectural features
- maps and directories
Signage as Marketing Communications

Signage is an example of visual marketing, and an example of marketing communications:

- promotes Library events, programs, and courses
- outlines Library policies
- provides directions to Library materials and facilities
- identifies services and spaces within the facility
Where I Work!

I am an academic librarian at the College of Staten Island (CSI), one of the 25 colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY). CSI is a comprehensive college and one of the seven 4-year colleges in the CUNY system.

- Largest campus in the CUNY system
- 204 acre campus
- 13,000 students
- Commuter campus with student residences (2%)
- Three floor library (30,000 square feet)
- 14 full time librarians, 10 adjuncts
- 65 staff in total
- Our signage is print and produced “in house”
Types of Signage

Policy

Promotional/
Instructional

Wayfinding
(directional)

Identification

Please Note
The use of e-cigarettes and vaping inside the Library is a violation of NYC Law and CUNY Policy.

Got Textbooks?
Textbooks are available for 2 hour loan periods at the Circulation/Reserves Desk, 1st floor

Green Printer
(opposite the map)

Room
1L-109F
What are Signage Audits?

Signage audits allow you to quantify and better understand your current signage, as well as to help identify issues that may be leading to less effective signage, such as:

- Unclear/mixed messages
- Outdated messages
- Too many signs
- Poorly placed signs
- Punitive or passive aggressive
- Inconsistent design
- Text heavy
Phase 1 - Inventory

- Count the number of signs in your library
- Document the types of signs; classify and organize into groups
- Identify the problems in your signs (physical damage, messaging, placement, design, currency, accuracy)
Phase 2 - Analysis and Assessment

- Conduct Signage Research* to study effectiveness and purpose of sign
- Are these signs responding to user concerns?
- Do they help raise awareness, help enforce policies
Phase 3- Replacement

- Remove and replace signs with updated designs messaging, and placement
- Document your changes
- Keep track of the number of signs replaced and their locations
*Conduct Signage Research*

Includes research methods often associated with UX (user experience) design;
- ethnographic research
- UX mapping
- cognitive mapping
- usability testing
- A/B testing
- interviewing / focus groups
- survey research
- case studies
- audits
- task completion
- eye tracking
Please use cell phones outside the library.

As a courtesy to everyone, please give library users the gift of quiet time.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please ..... take cell phone calls outside (texting is fine!)

Courtesy is key. Please respect your library.

College of Staten Island
Department of the Library
Textbook Promotional Signs

Textbooks are available for 2 hour loan at the Circulation/Reserves Desk, 1st floor.

Got Textbooks?

Textbooks are available for 2 hour loan periods at the Circulation/Reserves Desk, 1st floor.
Noise Policy Signs

SILENT ZONE
No Talking Allowed

Silent Study

Please Be Respectful
And study in a considerate manner

Library faculty and staff ask that all patrons respect the rights of each individual to study and do research in a peaceful environment.
Best Practices for Print Signage

1. Consistency (visual/textual)
2. Use Sans Serif typeface
3. High Contrast
4. Branding
5. Language/Controlled vocabulary
6. Your message (is it punitive?)
7. Use real images
8. Mounting/Placement
9. ADA compliance
10. Signs are living documents (revisit and make many iterations)
Digital Signage Considerations

1. Software
   (standalone vs. networked player)
2. Hardware
   (TV display vs. commercial display)
3. Passive versus interactive signage
4. Design
5. Strategy planning
   (placement, message, policy)
Digital Signage Placement

Point of Wait
- placed where library users need to wait (circulation desk, reference desk, elevator, IT help desk,

Point of Transfer
- placed in high traffic areas

Point of Sale
- placed at the end of a aisle (endcap display)
 Best Practices for Digital Signage

- 3 by 5 rule (3 lines of text, 5 words)
- Sans Serif font
- High contrast
- Justify to the left
- ADA compliance (display cannot be more than 4” deep)
- Digital screen interactive buttons (36-42 inches from the ground)
- No more than 2 font types
- “F” or “Z” pattern
- Placement (eye-level)
Best Practices for Digital Signage

- Timing of the sign message
- 60-30-10 colour rule
  (60% dominant, 30% secondary, 10% accent)
- Visual hierarchy (3 parts)
  (title, body text, & call to action)
- Add real images
- Pixilation 16:9 ratio- 1280 by 720, 1920 by 1080
- Distance (100-point font = 26 feet away)
Avoid ALL CAPS

Typing ALL IN CAPITALS

Infers that I am yelling!
Avoid Clutter

clutter = a negative user experience
Avoid Handwritten signs

Handwritten signs are:

- Ugly
- Unprofessional
- Unwelcoming
- Often illegible and are not considered official
Avoid Mounting on Walls, Doors, Furniture
(use frames, bulletin boards or easels)
ADA Compliance
avoid glare, use sans serif typeface, & high contrast
Contradictory Messaging
Be Welcoming, Not Mean*
*try reading them out loud

Threatening message? Construction zone? Red stop sign? All caps = yelling

Silent Zone
Respect those studying around you. Persons making excessive noise will be escorted out of the Library by Public Safety Officers. Thank you for your cooperation.

Quiet Zone
Respect those studying around you. Thanks!

SILENT ZONE
No Talking Allowed

NO FOOD, NO DRINKS, NO SMOKING IN THE LIBRARY.

We need and expect your cooperation.
Create Templates
Embrace Simplicity

Find Us On Social Media

Facebook: /csilibrary
Twitter: @csilibrary
Instagram: csi_library
Three Iterations “code of conduct”

This is your library

R

Reserve study rooms for quiet, group study.

E

Equipment, furniture, and books should be used properly to prevent damage.

S

Speak quietly to keep noise at a minimal level.

P

Please enjoy food and drink (except bottled water) outside the library.

E

Engage with library staff and other patrons in a courteous manner.

C

Computers are reserved for academic purposes.

T

Talking on cell phones is prohibited in the library.

Please see our complete Code of Conduct at:
www.library.csi.cuny.edu/code-of-conduct

Please Respect the Library’s Policies

Food is not allowed in the Library.

You may bring drinks in sealed bottles and spill-proof mugs.

Please use the 1L Lobby for phone conversations.

When in the Library, please switch cell phone to vibrate.

Please keep noise levels to a minimum in order to maintain an environment conducive to study.
Use Real Images

Before

Please leave the stapler on the table.

After

Please leave the stapler on the table.
Strive for Diversity

Please wait in line until you are called

College of Staten Island
Department of the Library
Go Large Scale

Cell Phone Policy
Please take cell phone conversations into the lobby of 1L.

Food & Drink Policy
Please enjoy your food and drink in the Cyber Café.

Noise Policy
Please keep conversations at a low level.

When texting, please switch cell phone to vibrate mode.

Food and drink are not allowed in the library, with the exception of bottled water.

The 3rd floor is reserved for silent study. Use group study rooms on the 2nd floor or the 1st floor for group study.

Library faculty and staff ask that all patrons respect the rights of each individual to study and do research in a peaceful environment.
Be Friendly
(avoid “no”)

**Cell Phone Policy**
Please take cell phone conversations into the lobby of 1L.

- **Txt, don’t talk**
- When texting, please switch cell phone to vibrate mode.

**Noise Policy**
Please keep conversations at a low level.

- The 3rd floor is reserved for silent study.
- Use group study rooms on the 2nd floor or the 1st floor for group study.
Discover Bump Points/Touch
Create a Signage Locator Map

Signage Locator Mapping Tool

entrance to library’s main floor

1st floor

Signage Locator Mapping Tool

2nd floor
Mounting Tips Part 1

- Avoid glare
- 48”-60” inches off the ground (ADA compliance)
- Mount on latch side of the door
- Avoid Visible Tape
- Use double sided tape.
- Avoid crooked signs.
- Mount signs in a straight and centered manner
Mounting Tips Part 2

- Mount at eye level
- Be mindful of sightlines
- Make use of holders, frames and bulletin boards
- Avoid mounting on furniture
Getting Buy-In

- Be patient and listen
- Compromise
- Hold in-person/Zoom meetings
- Designate a signage contact/team
- Create a succinct signage policy with flexible signage guidelines
- Show proposed changes with supporting data
- Develop allies like student government
Maintaining Effectiveness

Policy signs are ineffective if not enforced

Do research and study your audience:

- Ask questions of your patrons, use focus groups and partner with campus groups

Signs are living documents!

- Continuously evaluate signs
- Assess bump points
- Revise and improve signage and signage policy
Final Recommendations

- Be friendly and consistent
- Avoid jargon, all caps and “no”
- Develop a clear message with few words
- Incorporate realistic images
- Placement should be strategic and intentional
- Create a signage policy
- Create signage templates
- Get buy-in from your department
- Be mindful about ADA compliance
- Revisit your signs and bump points regularly
- Signs are living documents--be flexible and embrace change
My most recent book!!

Library Signage and Wayfinding Design: Communicating Effectively with your Users (ALA Editions, Nov. 2021)

https://alastore.ala.org/wayfinding
Thank you!

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