

# 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

***Did You Know?***

**Laptops & Calculators**



**Are now available for loan at the  
Technology Support Center  
Room 1L-109A**

 **College of  
Staten Island**  
Department of the Library

# 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.



Failure to comply may result in removal from the Library and a loss of Library privileges.

Learn more here:

<https://www.csi.cuny.edu/about-csi/sustainability/tobacco-free>

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/business/food-operators/smoking-legislation.page>

## 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



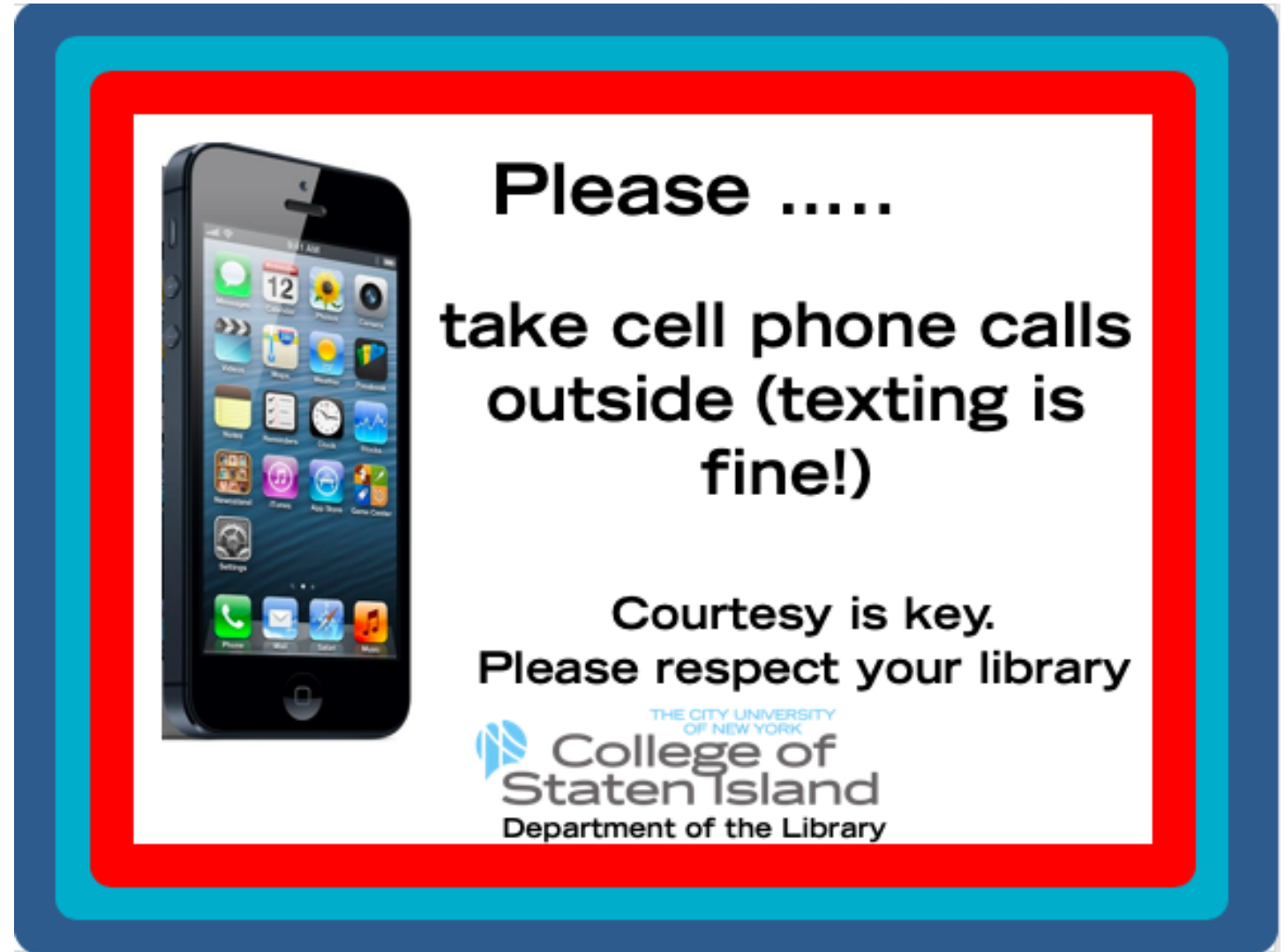
# \*Conduct Signage Research

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



# Cell Phone Policy Signs






# Textbook Promotional Signs

## TEXTBOOKS


Available in the CSI Library



Current textbooks are available on Reserves for your use in the Library.

These textbooks are funded by your Student Government and the CUNY Student Financial Aid Textbook Initiative.


## Textbooks



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


THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
College of Staten Island  
Department of the Library

## Got Textbooks?

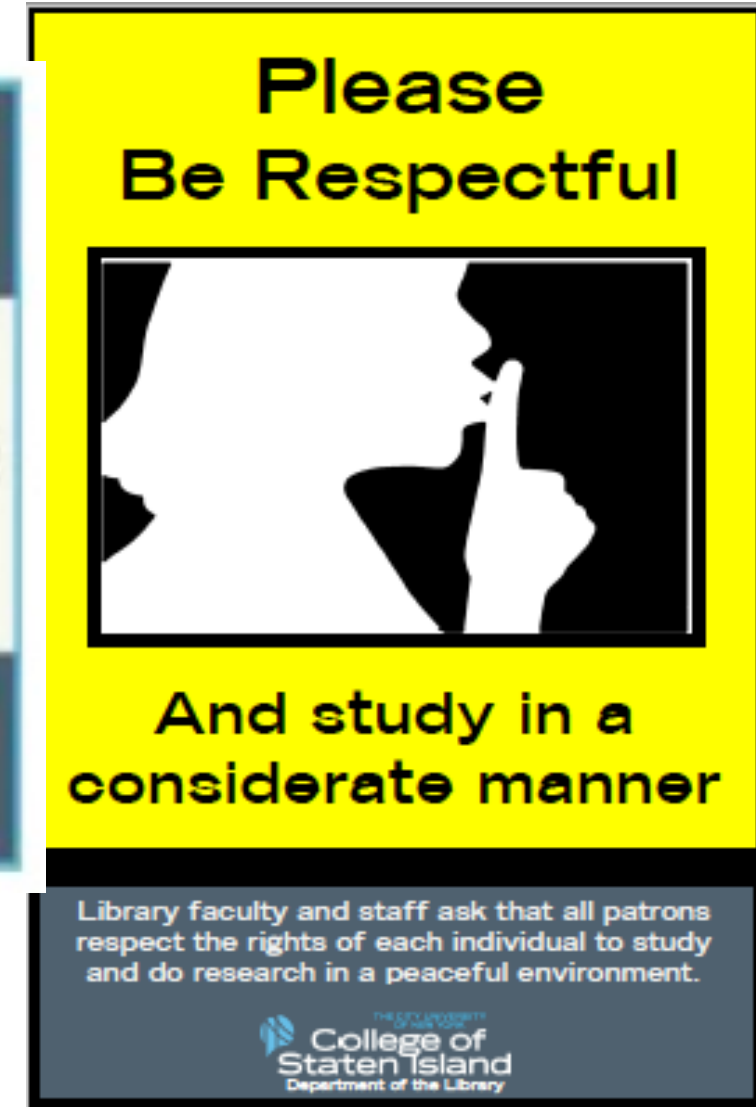


Textbooks are available for 2 hour loan periods at the Circulation/Reserves Desk, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

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Department of the Library



# Noise Policy Signs



# 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**



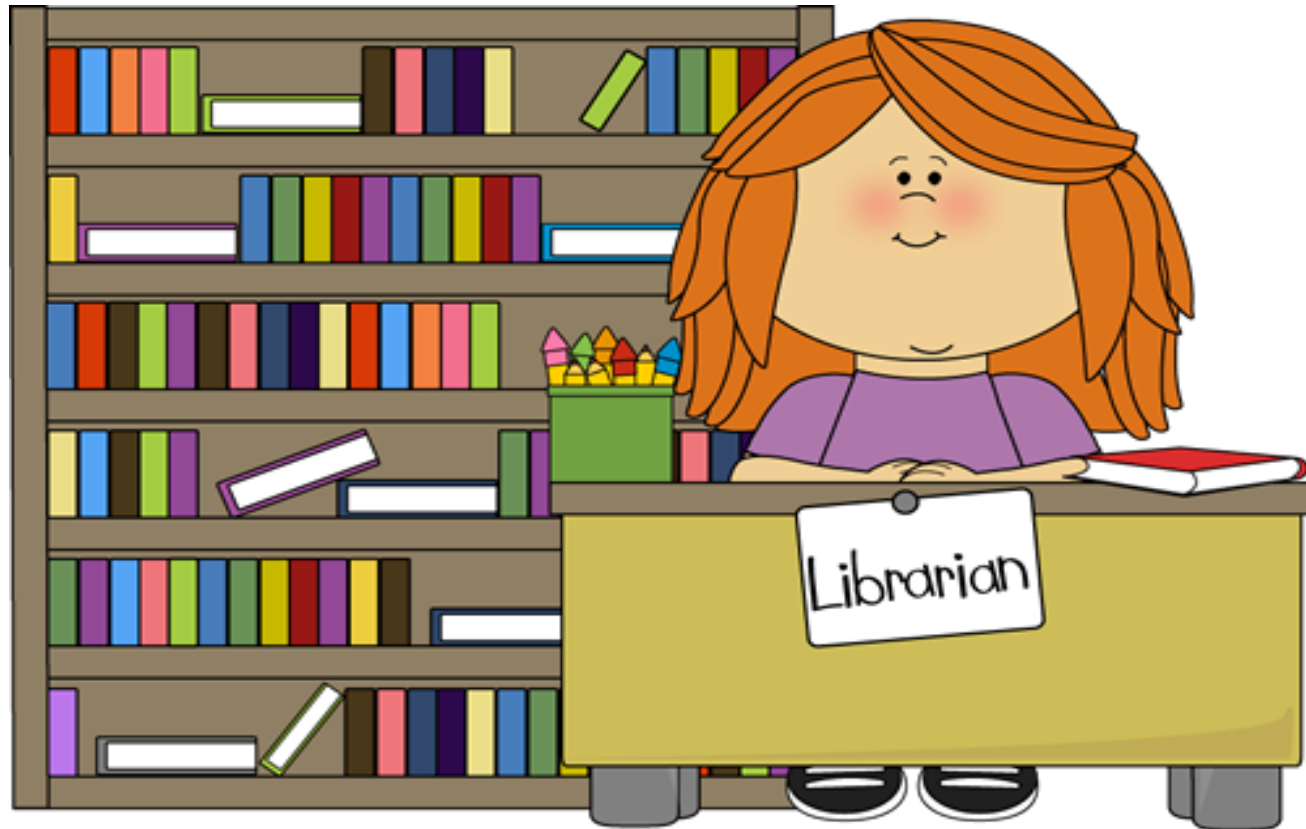
**INFERS THAT I AM YELLING!**

# Avoid Clutter

clutter= a negative user experience



# Avoid Clipart

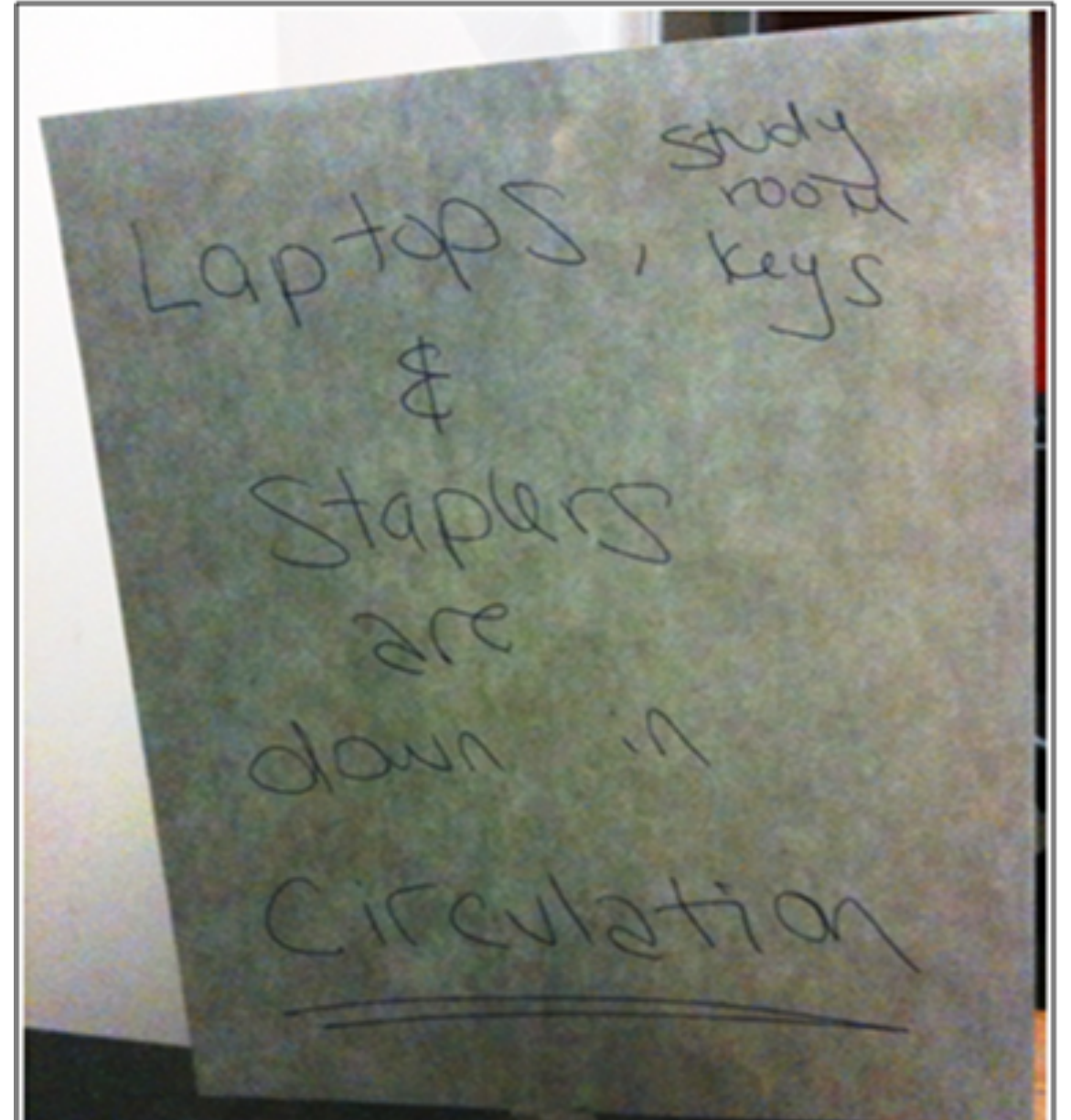




# Avoid Handwritten signs

Handwritten signs are:

- Ugly
- Unprofessional
- Unwelcoming
- Often illegible and are not considered official





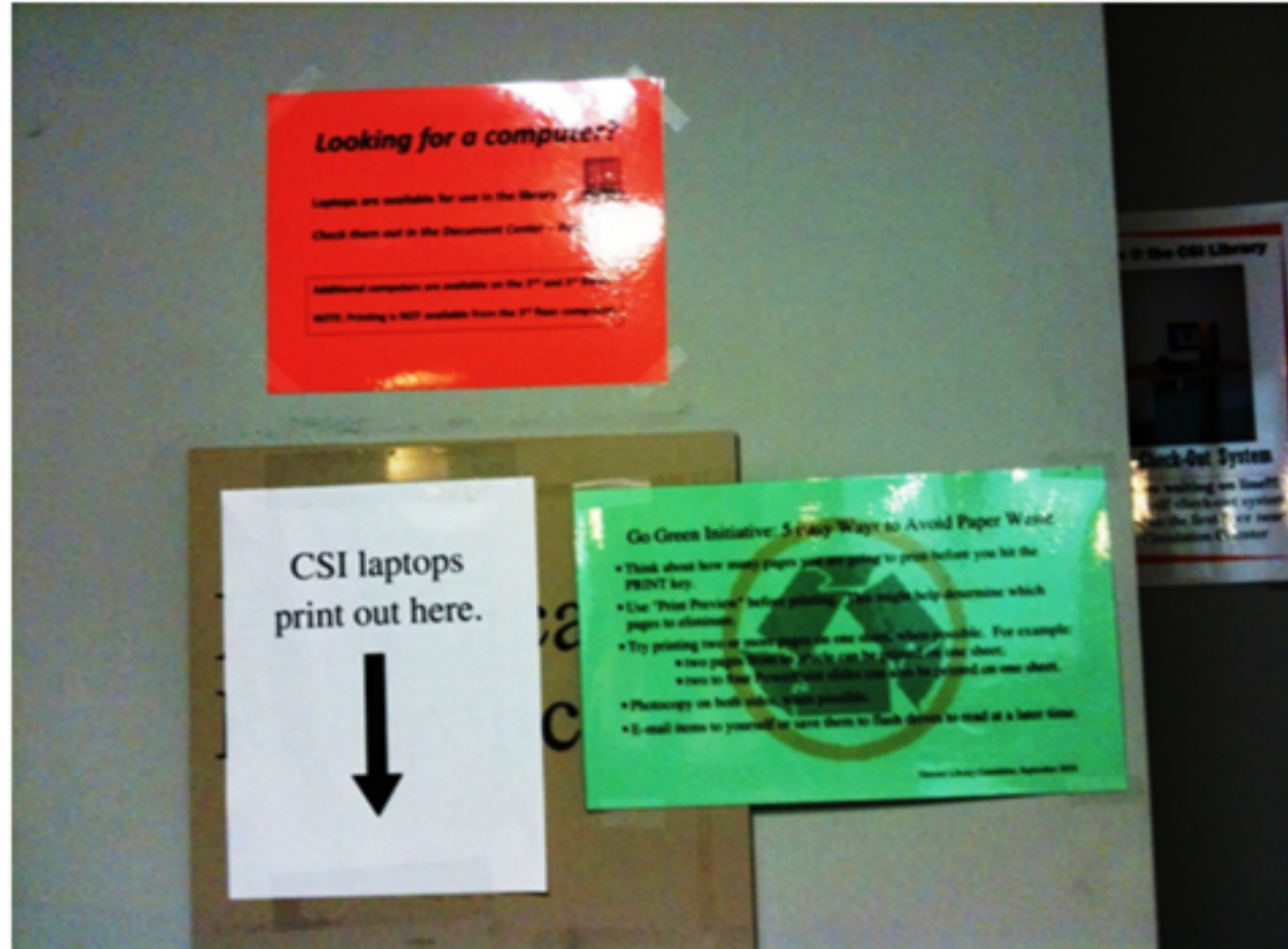
# Avoid Mounting on Walls, Doors, Furniture

(use frames, bulletin boards or easels)



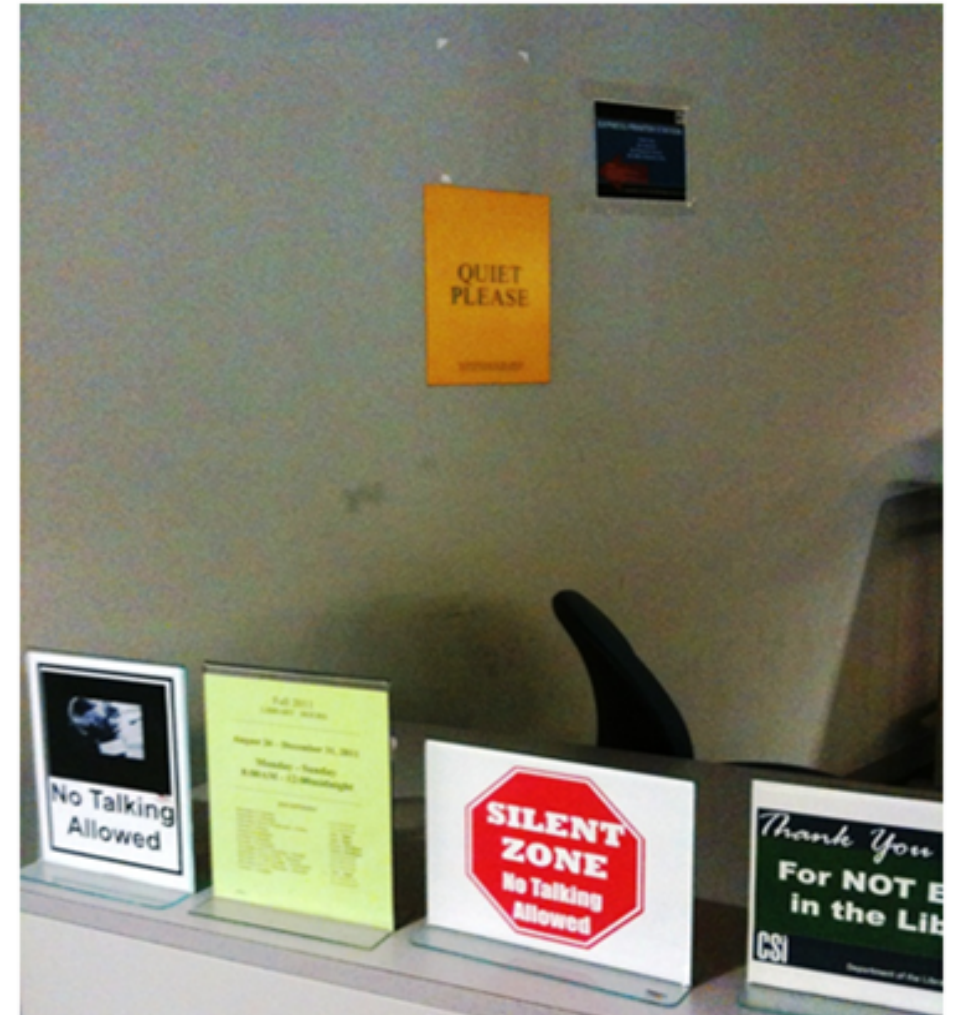
# ADA Compliance

avoid glare, use sans serif typeface, & high contrast





# Contradictory Messaging



# Be Welcoming, Not Mean\*

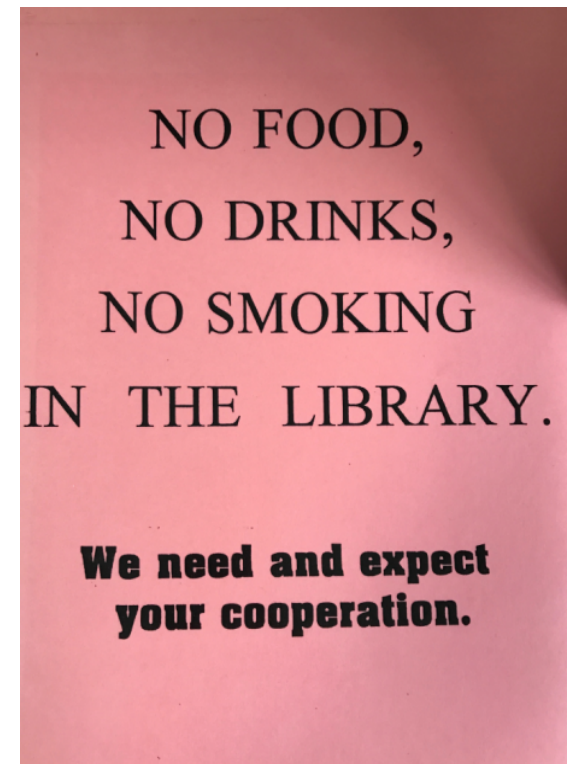
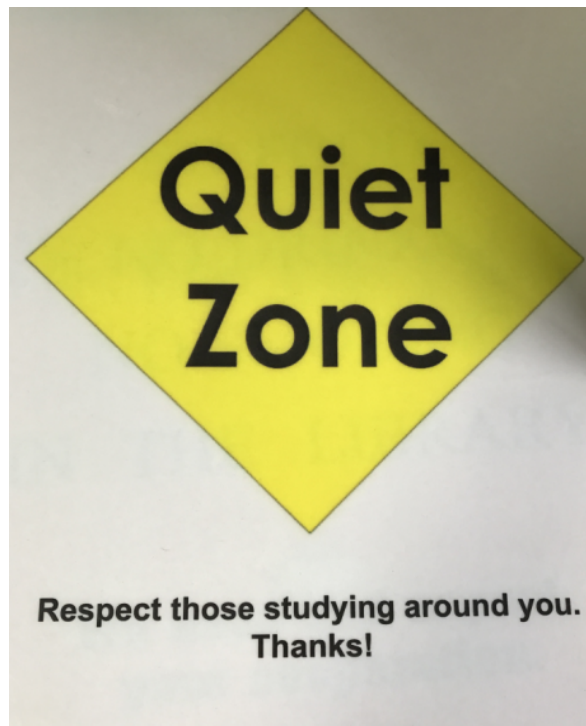
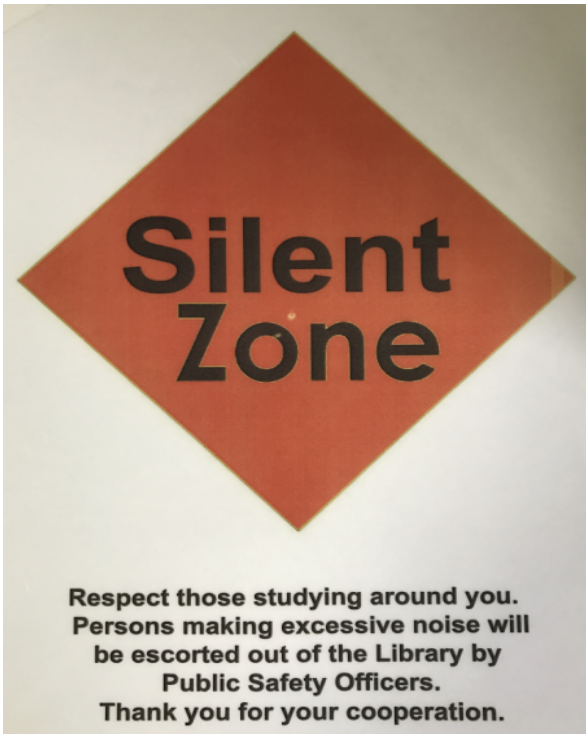
\*try reading them out loud

Threatening message?

Construction zone?

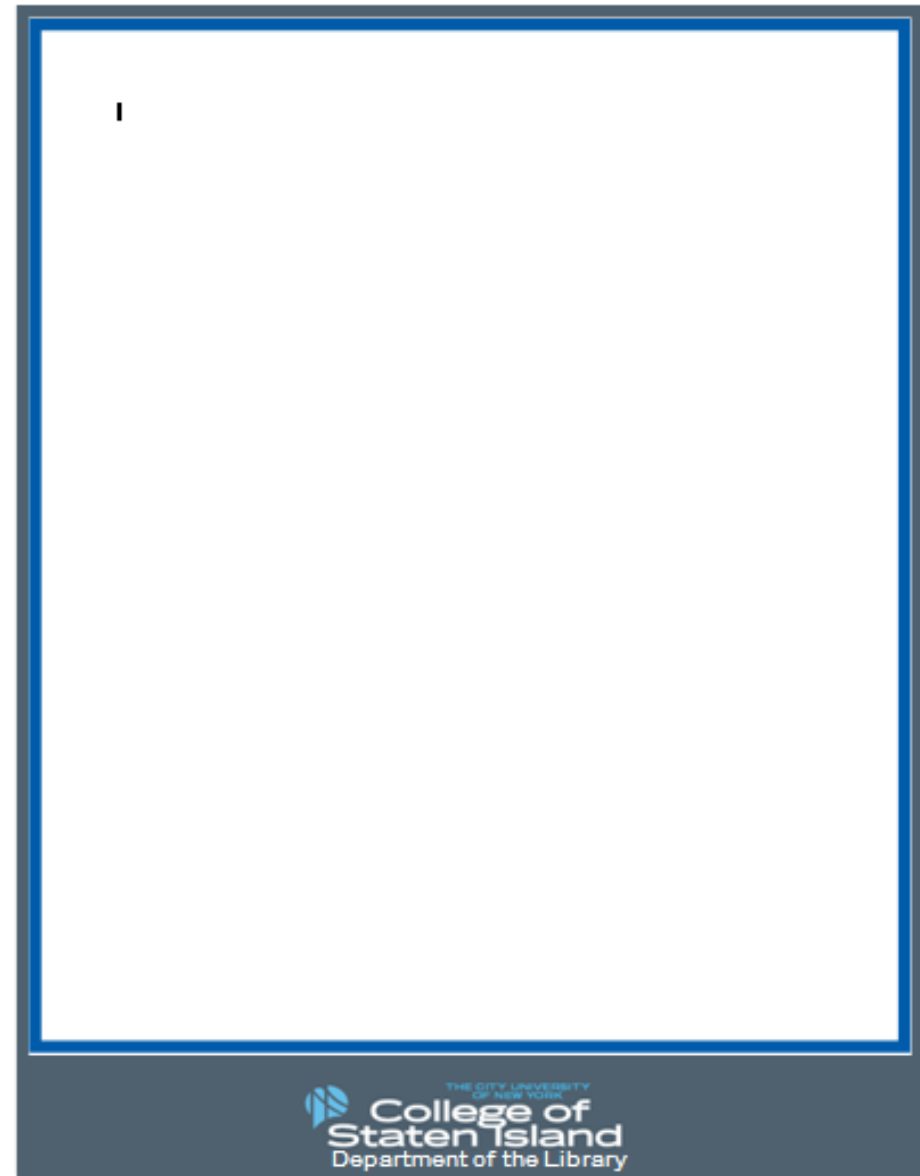
Red stop sign?

All caps = yelling





# Create Templates



# Embrace Simplicity

## Find Us On Social Media



**/csilibrary**



**@csilibrary**



**csi\_library**

# Three Iterations “code of conduct”

## College of Staten Island Library Code of Conduct

The College of Staten Island (CSI) Library is an academic library that serves a diverse population of students, staff and faculty, as well as the general public.

Library patrons can expect that the Library will protect their privacy and rights to research and education in a facility that supports learning in both group and individual settings. To ensure that all patrons and visitors are able to use library resources and services effectively, patrons must take responsibility for their behavior.

### Please Follow These Policies When Using the CSI Library

Some behavior and activity limits the Library's ability to offer services. Therefore, patrons of the Library are asked to refrain from activities including, but not limited to:

- 1 Disorderly or disruptive conduct
- 2 Mutilation, defacement or theft of library property
- 3 Use of furniture, library equipment and facilities in a manner for which they were not intended or designed
- 4 Harassing or threatening others
- 5 Obscene, profane or abusive language or acts
- 6 Smoking, or possession or use of alcohol or illegal drugs
- 7 Intoxication or impairment
- 8 Failure to evacuate in an emergency or during drill

The Department of the Library asks that all patrons respect the rights of each individual to study and do research in a peaceful environment. People who are found to be violating these policies will be asked to refrain from such behavior. If a person's actions continue to disturb library patrons or staff, the person will be asked to leave the Library. Public Safety will be notified in instances where a person's actions or behavior might jeopardize the safety of any library patrons or staff member, the reputation and property of the university, or for continued noncompliance of the above CSI Library policies.

1. Computer stations with Internet access are located on all three floors of the Library. Patrons are expected to use the Internet for academic purposes only. Use of all library computers must comply with City University of New York's Computer Use Policy.
2. Food and drink are not allowed in the library, with the exception of bottled water. Please take food and all other drinks out to the Cyber Café in 1L or outside the building.
3. Please keep conversation and noise at a low level. The third floor of the library is reserved for silent study. Group study should occur in group study rooms on the second floor or on the first floor of the library. Please use headphones when listening to music or watching a video.
4. Cell phone talking in the Library is disruptive to other library patrons and is prohibited. Please turn your cell phone to vibrate or turn your ringer off when you enter the building.
5. The Library welcomes children who are accompanied by a parent or adult caregiver. The supervision, safety, and security of children are the responsibility of the adult guardian.
6. Please do not interfere with Library employees in the performance of their duties. This includes engaging in inappropriate conversation or behavior, sexual advances or physical and/or verbal harassment.
7. All library patrons are expected to adhere to the City University of New York's "Campus Behavior Code: Henderson Rules," located in the CSI Student Handbook, *The Gateway*, under the section, Student Rights & Responsibilities and College Policies.

*Portions of this text have been adapted from the Shoen Library at Marylhurst University*

## This is **your** library

**R**eserve study rooms for quiet, group study.

**E**quipment, furniture, and books should be used properly to prevent damage.

**S**peak quietly to keep noise at a minimal level.

**P**lease enjoy food and drink (except bottled water) outside the library.

**E**ngage with library staff and other patrons in a courteous manner.

**C**omputers are reserved for academic purposes.

**T**alking on cell phones is prohibited in the library.

Please see our complete Code of Conduct at:  
[www.library.csi.cuny.edu/code-of-conduct](http://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**



# Go Large Scale

## 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.

## Food & Drink Policy

Please enjoy your food and drink in the Cyber Café.



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

## Noise Policy

Please keep conversations at a low level.



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

# 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.

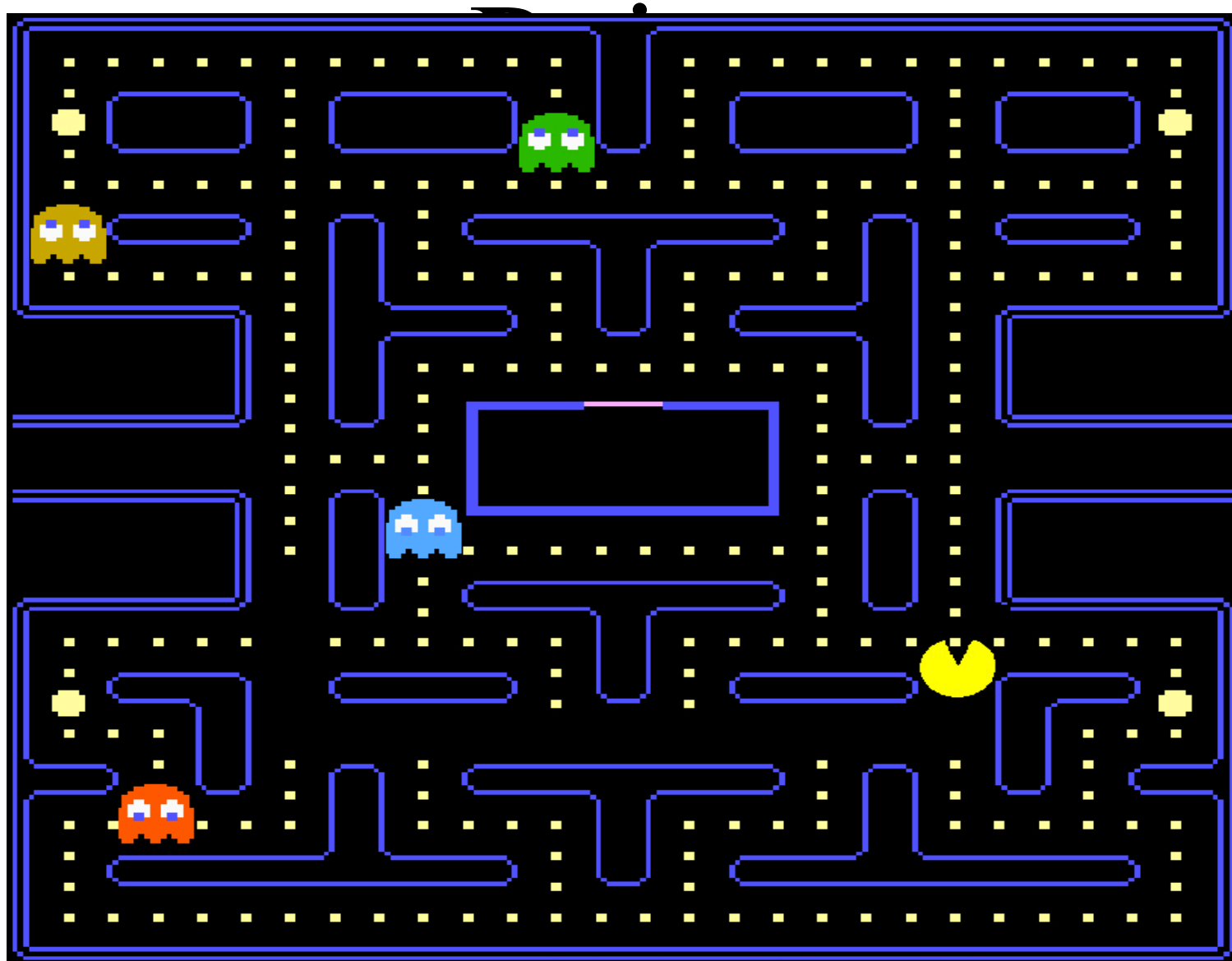
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# Discover Bump Points/Touch



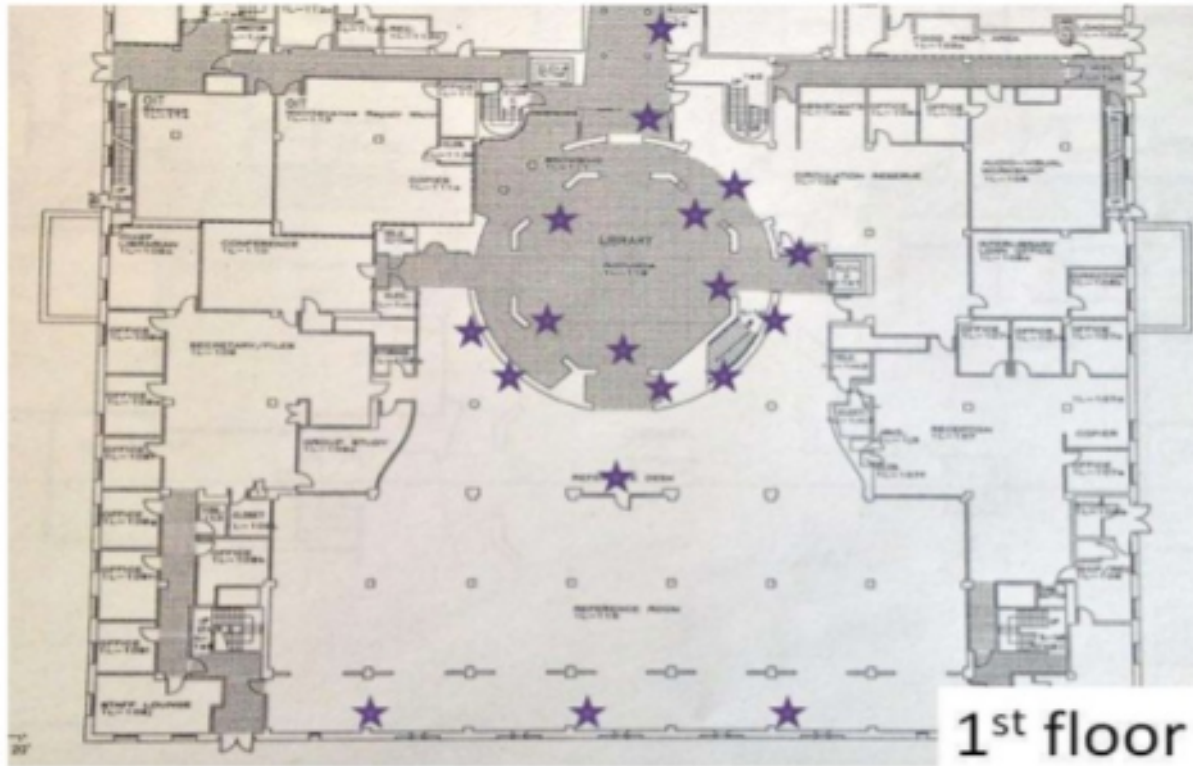


# Create a Signage Locator Map

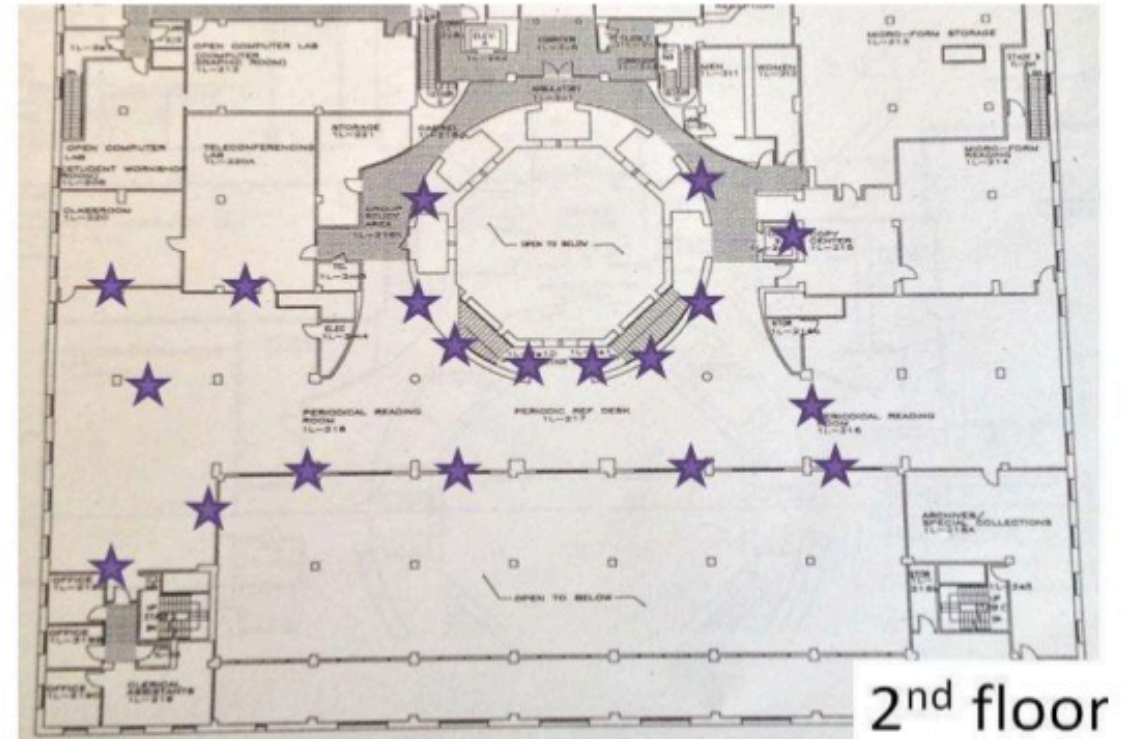
## Signage Locator Mapping Tool



entrance to library's main floor

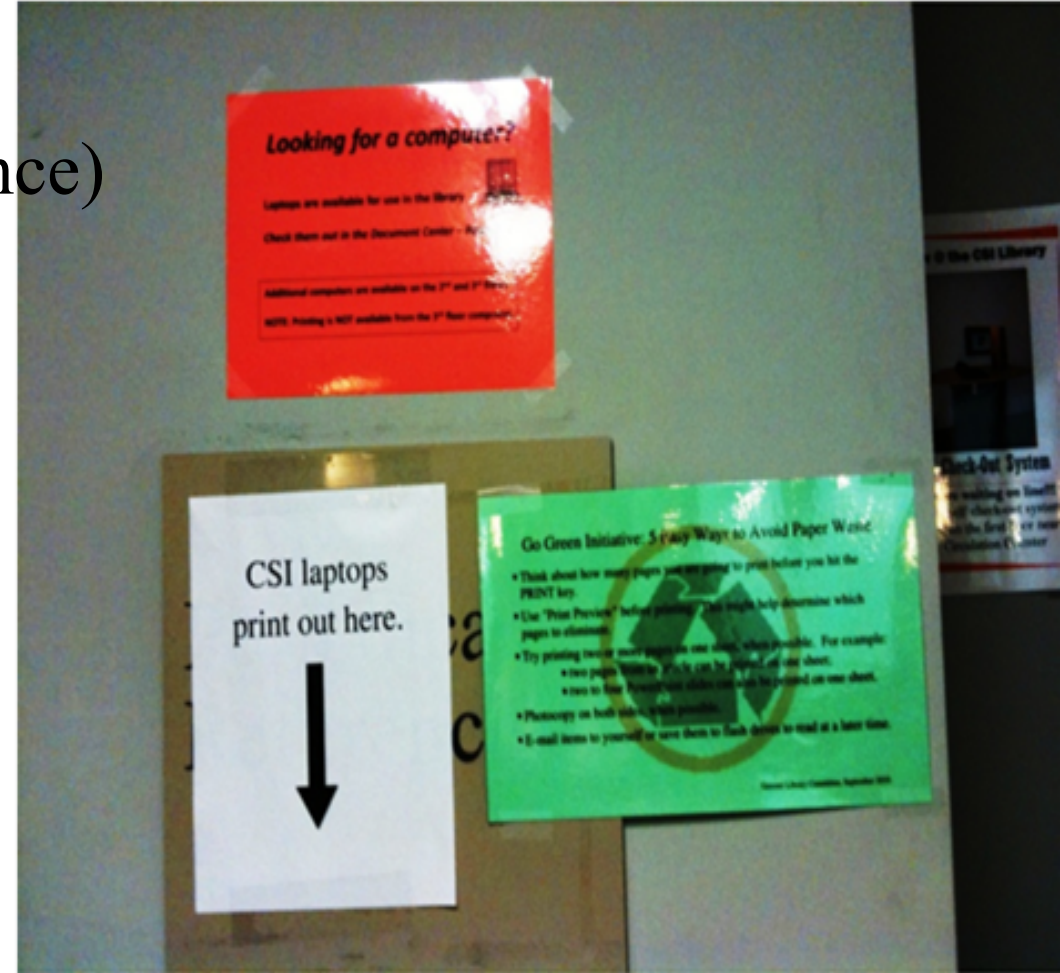


## Signage Locator Mapping Tool



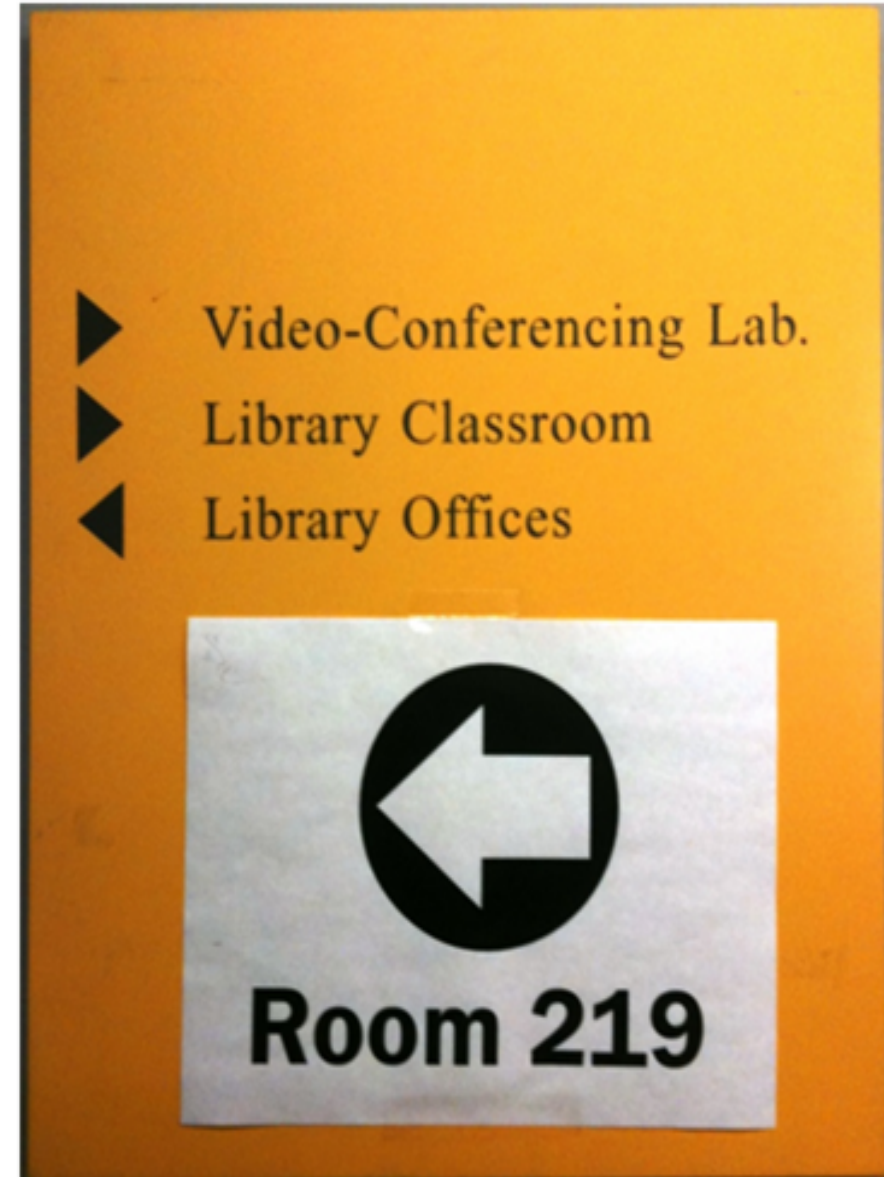
# Mounting Tips Part 1

- 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](https://alastore.ala.org/wayfinding)

# Thank you!

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