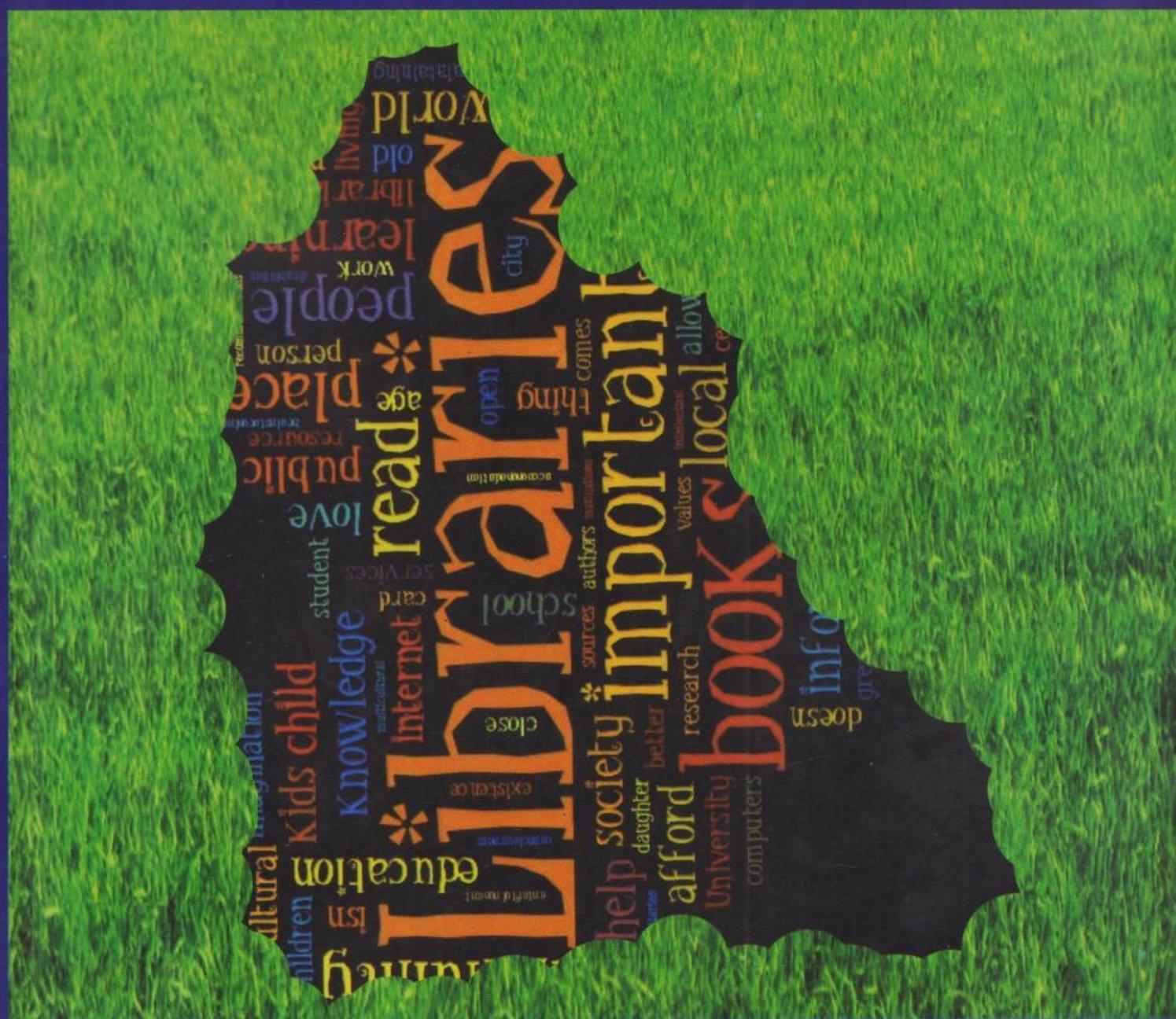


# AKWA IBOM STATE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

## • Antecedents • Perspectives • Prospects



# **Felicia Edu-uwem Etim Uduakobong Oscar Udoh Emem Paul Udoфia**

# Nigerian Library Association Akwa Ibom State

**AKWA IBOM STATE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES  
ANTECEDENTS, PERSPECTIVES PROSPECTS**

**Editor-in-Chief - Felicia Edu uwem Etim**  
**Editor - Uduakobong Oscar Udoh**  
**Editor - Emem Paul Udofia**

© Copyright 2017

No part of this publication may be reproduced or copied in any  
form without the written permission of the **NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,**  
**AKWA IBOM STATE CHAPTER**

The views expressed in the presentations are those of the authors

**ISBN: 978-012-577-9**

**First edition:**  
**April 2017**

**Published by**  
**Nigerian Library Association, Akwa Ibom State Chapter**

**Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| Z   |   |
| 665 |   |
| C6  | Akwa Ibom State Library and Information Services Antecedents,<br>perspectives and Prospects: a Publication of Nigerian Library<br>Association, Akwa Ibom State Chapter/edited by Felicia E. Etim,<br>Uduakobong O. Udoh and Emem P. Udofia - Uyo, Nigeria: NLA, 2017. |

Printed by Mida Communications  
08023746111, 07038009650

# **Chapter 29**

## **Signage as Conduit for Quality Service Delivery in Academic Libraries.**

Imaobong A. Etim

### **Introduction**

Signage is much more than posters, sign posts and symbols. In addition to its practical application, it helps to create an identity for a space and can add decorative flair to any built environment (Uebele, 2009). Signage may be referred to as visual oriented information systems, consisting of signs, maps, arrows, colour coding systems, pictograms and different typographic elements. They are used in most instances to refer to a group of signs with a coherent design and purpose. Signage are semiotics which differ from other methods of information presentation because they are typically used to guide people's passage through the physical world, examples include road overhead signs in an airport and signs in and out of the library building.

Informational graphics and signage are among the most basic and at the same time most indispensable forms of library instruction (Kupersmith, 1980). The author further stated that they are like other media employed to educate the library needs that users experience as they search for information. Therefore, the objectives of a library signage can range from simple orientation across library marketing to communicating library policies.

When patrons look around the library for the first time, they form an immediate visual impression which contributes to a positive or negative attitude about the library (Johnson, 1992). Therefore signage is a basic element most looked forward to in a visited or unfamiliar environment. Signage in a library must be rightly positioned, properly done and correct in a bid not to create a frustrating and stressful environment for library patrons. In the same vein, good signage communicates a lot of information, leaving library personnel to engage in very little but necessary directional questions. This is not however to say that visual signage clutter reflects the high degree of organization required to enhance and maintain library resources and services. However, a good signage can project the image of your library as a well organized, helpful and responsible organization (Johnson, 1992).

The advantages of signage include reduction in the number of simple directional questions asked at service desks as well as making users aware of the full range of library services and resources available to them (Woodward, 2009). These advantages of good signage are ultimately its ability to respond to user's needs especially in their bid to move from general to more specific directional information. They are also embodied in each category of signage which (Spencer and Reynold, 1977) lists as orientation, direction, identification, instruction, regulation and current awareness. While some authors define signage in terms of way finding, others look at it as a unit of communication, for instance, Daeson (1996) explained that signage is a basic unit of communication, creating massive possibilities, by combining meaningless indicators with a view to delivering messages. It is a generally known fact that hard sell, but clear, well-designed, visually appealing signage that convey message succinctly and in a friendly tone can do wonders to improve service to patrons and send the message that the library and its staff are there to help, not admonish and police behavior (White, 2010).

Libraries need to recognize that signage is a powerful communication medium with as much, if not more impact than more high-profile and profile more valued electronic and print media. In a definition by Adewoyin (1991), communication is seen as the exchange between two or more individuals or organizations, the purpose is to persuade, influence, modify or change the behavior of others. This goes to state that signage present visual stimulus which evoke some desirable changes in library patrons as they *navigate their way in and around the library environment*. Signs can therefore serve as communication devices when they present more concrete reference to meaning than the spoken or written words as shown in the diagram: signs. These components of a complete signage system, apart from communicating behavioural, moral and cognitive objectives of the library system also describe the various functions, content and location of signage in a typical academic library. This goes to state that the cognitive objectives of the system determine what category of signage to be used and how they are to function in conveying messages to patrons.

### **Concept of Signage**

Many users visit a library either to look for information resources in whatever form, **use** card or on-line catalogues or possibly to talk to a librarian. Irrespective of how **familiar** they are with operations of those libraries and how the building is organized, they **still** need intuitive signs to navigate their way. Therefore, Ahn (2011) also affirmed **that** signs improve and are most times integral to a clearly designed **way finding** programme whose function includes identifying, informing, direct, restricting, **or** permitting. The two definitions all emphasize signage as one of the most **important** tools of way finding. Wayfinding may therefore be seen as a system of arranging indicators such as signs, light, colour, materials and pathways to guide people to **their** destinations. Its ultimate purpose and design the authors say, lies in helping **library** patrons navigate their way round the library with a view to acquainting themselves **of** the full range of library services and resources available to them.

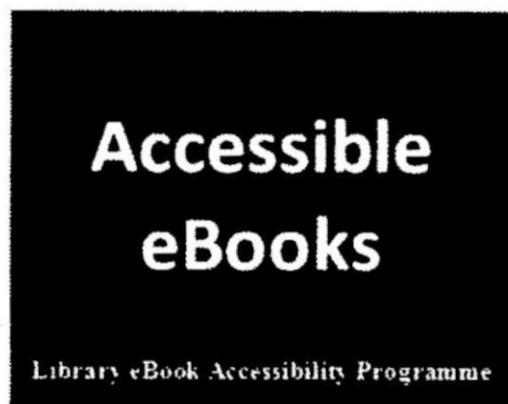


Sign giving information on reading area

The scope and range of signage seems broad as some authors have examined **it** aesthetically to include the library building itself, trees around the main entrance, **and** landmarks on the top of the building (Korea Library Association, 2009). Similarly, Uebel (2009) asserted that a signage, aside from its practical application, helps to create **an** identity for a space and can add decorative flair to any built environment. The author looked at signage as a point where graphic design and architecture come **together**. Library signage therefore, should be harmonized with building structures **and** decorations to create a positive mental and visual image for library patrons. All in all, **the** backbone of signage in any building as Barclay and Scott (2012) noted, should be built

on a unified architectural system that enhances way-finding and identifies spaces within a facility. A well signaged library can therefore be called a user friendly library as it offers opportunities for patrons to explore the facilities and services. This is not however to say that a user friendly library is self-service, but that patrons have a right to use the library without having to ask for assistance (Reynolds and Barrett, 1981). Signage may be categorized based on the varied functions, content, schema, semantics and location. Many authors have therefore categorized library signage systems based on their functions of providing guidance for library patrons in their utilization of library resources and services. Consequently, Yoon (2002) divides library signage into four; information, direction, location and regulation and stated further that it can also be divided by their installing methods; adhesions on the walls, hook types, stand types, hangings from ceiling and by their materials, metal, acrylic etc. In a similar view, Kupersmith (1980) explicated that the most common objectives of comprehensive signage structure can be grouped into six general categories, orientation, direction, identification, instruction, regulation and current awareness.

The behavioural and cognitive objectives of the system determine what kinds of signs and displays will be used and how they are to function (Kupersmith, 1980) particularly in helping users to access information without hitch as shown below:



Signage giving information on accessibility of electronic books

#### **Areas of the Library to which Signage are Applicable**

In order to create the customer-driven academic library, Woodward (2009) emphasized that libraries need much more carefully positioned and targeted signage areas than other large buildings because a sign that can be seen from one angle may be totally invisible to library users approaching from a different direction. This is especially true of first comers to the library or new students who have not had proper orientation from library staff or better still, properly positioned signage to guide them in their journey through the vast library world with stretch of tall stack ranges in most areas.

Authors (Beneicke, Biesek and Brandon, 2003; Ahn, 2011) have enumerated areas to which exterior library signs could be mounted to include: primary building identification, building entry identification (eye level at pedestrian entrances), delivery entrance, directional signing at key entrances and bridges to other facilities, donor recognition areas or building dedication cornerstone, touch screen interactive display areas, parking identification areas, disabled access parking areas.

These authors also outlined areas to which interior library signs could be mounted to include: main building directory at departments, personnel, resources, building floor directories on each department, destination and facility, directional signing to key destinations, circulation desk / information station interactive touch screen, desk bar (reception, station closed, circulation, etc.), suggestion board area or box with reply board, events board area, library shelve area, conference room area, room identification, office and workstation identification, emergency door identification, restroom identification, accessible facility maps (showing elevators, room numbers, restrooms, phones, etc.), stair code sign required at stairwells.

### **Problems of Signage in Academic Libraries**

Many users are simply unaware of the expenses in acquiring and managing information resources or the amount of value added by libraries and library administrators as well as librarians regarding signage design and implementation. Considerable professional time and vast amounts of paraprofessional and clerical time are devoted to the process of implementing signage design policies which pose a problem in itself.

A good number of factors hinder the adequate provision of library and information services and resources by university libraries. Federal university libraries according to Ifijeh (2011) are not only suffering from a low budgetary allocation for education but are also having challenges of poor signage system in the area of adequate information, orientation, directional, current awareness, etc. He tied these poor signage systems to poor budgetary allocation to education. In line with this, Ojuade and Ochai (2000) earlier on took note of funding as the crisis facing Nigerian university libraries and the book industry which invariably affects signage design and implementation.

Kamanda (2009) in a study at the East African School of Library and Information Science Library, Makerere University, Uganda observed that more than half of the students experience problems in locating library information materials. The author noted that majority of the students either located materials through browsing the shelves or seeking assistance from library staff, but did not make full use of the card catalogue. This, the author insinuated may have been due to lack of properly mounted signage systems to help users locate information resources easily. Also, in a study of Thammasat University Library, Nimsomboon & Nagata (2003) catalogued a list of problems encountered while using the library, ranging from inadequate and outdated

Resources (books, journal, newspaper, computer terminals); and shelving problems, to inability to locate books on shelves , though they are found in the online public access catalogue. This, the authors also implied may also have been due to lack of signage systems.

Library layouts have three critical environmental aspects that affect library way finding systems: **Visibility** offers visual access to an entire floor from all accessible locations. Some library areas that include tall furniture, such as book stacks or walls for different enclosed spaces have low visibility which will lead to less effective way finding. **Layout complexity** can be evaluated by the total number of intersections and connected paths in between intersections. **Connectivity** is assessed by the axial links that pass through spaces on an axial map. Results of the study revealed that layout complexity may be the most critical environmental factor that affects way finding. Even individuals who are very familiar with library have difficulties in way finding within an area in the library that has a high layout complexity. Furthermore, the layout complexity is related to visibility and connectivity; along with these environment factors, way finding aids such as signs and maps are important help for way finding.

### **Strategies for Improving Signage to Enhance Quality Service Delivery in Academic Libraries**

Utilization may be optimized in most areas in the library when patrons discern the full range of services and facilities available to them through properly designed signage system. Therefore Kupersmith (1980) was of the view that the same kinds of analysis and objective-setting that go into the planning of a class, lecture or an audiovisual presentation can and should be applied in designing effective graphics from a single information display to a comprehensive sign system. Selfridge in Kupersmith (2011) therefore focuses on those aspects of the design process that are most critical in determining the system's instructional value, namely: Research/Analysis, Schematic Design, Design Development and Fabrication/Installation, Maintenance, Evaluation. It is as essential to signage as it is to other forms of library instruction. Data on the system's effectiveness can be gathered through a variety of methods, ranging from relatively simple procedures, such as counting directional questions or recording relevant comments from a user suggestion box, to more sophisticated techniques, such as actively surveying users or systematically observing their way-finding behavior. Comparable data gathered before the system is installed will likely prove very useful, as will a set of measurable objectives for various parts and functions of the system. As in other instructional situations, evaluation should be used as an indicator of, and stimulus to any necessary modifications in the system. With all these elements in mind, Grube et al (1994) asserted that signs must be identified with respect to their permanent or temporary nature and distinguished in terms of what should be professionally manufactured and what can be created satisfactorily in-house. Conversely, the J. Paul Leonard library posited that all

Permanent signs, regardless of their function, should be treated consistently in terms of the principles used in determining their layout, specifically: lettering, colour, shape, size, design and placement and presents such sign elements in relationship to the various categories of signage. Authors (J. Paul Library (2011); Johnson (1992); Kupersmith (1980); Beneicke, Bieseck and Brandon (2003), all agree that sign elements at this phase must be consistent in their bid to impact positively on the user's way finding and utilization process. Since decisions made on each of these points will affect the system's instructional function, the library staff should carefully evaluate the design and conduct whatever on-site tests may be necessary to ascertain that the proposed solutions will actually work (Kupersmith, 1980). Since elements are components or parts which can be isolated and defined in any visual design or work of art, Jirousek (1995), stated they form the bulk and structure of aesthetics for which the principles of design act. These elements of signs both subtly and obviously convey a wide variety of meaning and messages which users need as the journey through the world of the library. Such elements as outlined by different authors (Johnson, 1992) include graphic design, message style, implementation, fabrication and personnel which are contained in the schematic design phase.

To read not only means to know all the letters of a word and to connect them to a word, it also means to understand the meaning of the word (the text). Therefore, to understand means to be able to activate knowledge. The same knowledge can be activated by different media (e.g. visually with pictures or text, acoustically with sound or spoken language). The main purpose of signs should be to provide clear designation of places, warnings and route information. In order to make signs useful to every library user, it should be designed so as to be easily seen from eye level, and well-lit for night time identification. The design of signs is a complex matter demanding interdisciplinary study. It is always desirable that the communication of information is not misleading or confusing and should on the other hand be as revealing as possible. Therefore, Bosman (1995) enumerated sixteen strategies for improving signage in libraries thus:

1. Investigate library literature for suggestions
2. Conduct an itemized list of current signs indicating message, size, type size, format, etc.
3. Take pictures of current signs and areas lacking signage
4. Possibly develop and conduct a public survey
5. Develop a prioritized list of needed signs, suggested message, size, format, etc.
6. Locate funding and develop budget (ie. Grants)
7. Identify sign companies or other sign producers
8. Investigate library literature to determine what others have done
9. Obtain or develop a detailed floor plan of the reference area
10. Improve signs in the reference area

11. Re-arrange furniture to accommodate computers, facilitate handicapped access and improve traffic patterns
12. Apply a marketing perspective to reference area's layout
13. Re-arrange the reference collection, possibly disregarding LC shelving
14. Adopt a proactive attitude towards the integration of technology in the reference area.
15. Look at the reference area and collections from the perspectives of various library users (ie handicapped, first-time user, etc.)
16. Investigate the possibility of developing and conducting a user survey.

Experience has shown that the key to helping users make maximal use of information resources is through the use of pictorial communication. Hence there is a need to emphasize using pictures in all signs to convey meaning. For signage to be clearly understood, messages must be consistent, as short as possible, stated positively and mean the same thing to all library users. The size of letters should be in proportion to the reading distance, in both horizontal and vertical directions, from the farthest point of viewing. Signs can combine graphic symbols with lettering so that everyone including illiterates can understand the message.

Signage should be more pictorial so that languages will not become a barrier for persons having no knowledge of the language used. The greatest readability is usually achieved through the use of light-colored characters or symbols on a dark background. The characters and background of signs should be eggshell, matte, or other non-glare finish. Certain colours can be powerful reinforcing agents in signage preparation. The commonly used colours are white, black, red, blue and green. Particularly when it is used in conjunction with colourful walls, proper intensity and colours that can create excitement, aesthetic appeal, dramatic emphasis, and emotional warmth as well as clarity of orientation and safety from crime and accidents.

### **Conclusion**

Academic libraries are an important component of the parent institutions of higher learning. As a result, they also provide unique services that are accessible to all members of the academic community. Utilisation of university libraries could mean linking users to adequate information resources through appropriate signage. Quality Service delivery in libraries therefore implies librarians' helping users in the actual consultation value of the library information resources and services provided. The library user is regarded as the most logical source to determine whether the library is playing its role satisfactorily or not (Behling and Gidd, 1969). The mission statement of any library should be the provision of quality services to its users. This invariably means that the library must strive to at all times ensure that the user is satisfied with the services offered them by providing well designed signage that will bridge the gap between library patrons and library resources.

## **Recommendations**

Central to the objectives of an academic library of which this study is based, are the users, without which all services provided will be unutilized. Therefore the presence of the students who use the library would enhance the accomplishment of the academic institutions' mandate to provide quality services that encourage teaching, research and learning. Based on these, the following recommendations were made:

- i), Students in tertiary institutions should receive quality education by the library managements' provision of adequate and well-stocked resources and expanded services backed up by good personnel who use appropriate communication channels (such as signage) to lead users to such resources and services.
- ii). University management should get Librarians involved in collection development and implementation process to better ensure that users are guided appropriately in the location and actual use of such resources, print or non print. Finding library resources through minimum efforts can therefore entail guiding users to access them through well-defined, well-positioned and clear signage.
- iii). Librarians should keep themselves abreast with the process and elements of developing, creating and mounting signage bearing in mind the students' characteristics and extent of need in order to be able to offer the type and level of information and service that meet such level of need.
- iv). Budgetary allocated to the library should be reviewed and made wholesome in order to make provision of signage service less cumbersome.

## **References**

- Adewoyin, J. A. (1991). *Introduction to Educational Technology*. Lagos: John Lad Publishers Limited.
- Ahn, I. J. (2011). Contents Development of Library Signage Manual in Korea. *International Journal of Knowledge Content Development and Technology*. Vol. 1 (2), 15-27.
- Barclay, D. A. & Scott, Eric D. (2012). Directions to Library Wayfinding: Directional and Informational Signs Guide Patrons into and Around the Library (2012 Library Design Showcase). *American Libraries*.
- Behling, O. and Gidd, K. (1967). A Library Looks at Itself. *College and Research Libraries*, 28(6): 416-422.
- Bell, J. B. (2008). Stop Having Fun and Start being Quite: Noise Management in the Academic Library. In *Library Issues: Briefing for Faculty and Administrators* Vol. 28 (4).
- Beneicke, A., Bieseck, J. & Brandon, K. (2003). Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2013 and Retrieved at <http://www.librisdesign.org/docs/Wayfidningsignage.pdf>. Supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services and Technology Act, Administered in California by the State Librarian.

Bosman, E. (1995). Creating a User Friendly Library with Signage: Library Sign Survey. Available at [web.nmsu.edu/~ebosman/signage/biblio.shtml](http://web.nmsu.edu/~ebosman/signage/biblio.shtml) Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2013.

Daeson, P. (1996). *The Glossary of Design*. Seoul: Design Office.

Grube, S., Teague, E. Primack, A. & Rinder Knecht, D. (1994). Sign System Report by the Library Sign Committee <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/preserve/disaster/signs/signage.html>.

Ifijeh, L. F. (2011). Library Use in Ogun State University: A Survey. *Gateway Library Journal* 1 (2): 81-87.

Jerousek, C. (1995). Art, Design and Visual Thinking; An Interactive Textbook. Retrieved Jan. 9, 2013 from <http://char-tax.cornell.edu/language/element/elementhtm>.

Johnson, G. R. (1992). "Library Signage Systems" Presented at making the most of what you've got: Effective renovation strategies, LAMA Buildings and Equipment Section. Preconference, American Library Association Conference, San Francisco, California, June 26-27.

Kamanda, B. (2009). "Keeping Them Enrolled: How Academic Libraries Contribute to Students' Retention," *Library Issues: Briefings for Faculty and Administrators* 29, 1-4.

Korea Library Association (2009). *The Library Handbook*. Seoul: KLA.

Kupersmith, J. (1980). Informational Graphics and Signs Systems as Library Instruction Media. *Drexel Library Quarterly* 16, (January): 54-68.

Lee, S., Kim, E. Y. and Platosh, P. (2015). Indoor Wayfinding Using Interactive Map IACSIT. *International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 7(1).

Leonard, J. P. Library (2011). Library Administrative Manual Available at [www.library.sfsu.edu/about/policy/lam/lam6.1](http://www.library.sfsu.edu/about/policy/lam/lam6.1) Accessed January 17, 2013.

Mandel, L. H. (2010). Towards an Understanding of Library Patron Wayfinding: Observing Patrons' Entry Route in a Public Library", *Library and Information Science Research*, Vol. 32, pp. 166-130.

Nimsomboon, N. & Nagata, H. (2003). Assessment of Library Service Quality at Thammasat University Library System. Retrieved October 10, 2016 and available at <http://www.kc.tsukuba.ac.jp/div-comm/pdf/report0403.pdf>

Ojuade, A. B., Ochai O. (2000). Income Generation as Alternative Source of Funding Libraries in Nigeria, Myth or Reality. Nig. Libs. 34 (1).

Reynolds, L. & Barnett, S. (1981). *Signs and Guiding for Libraries*. London: Clive Bingley.

Spencer, H. & Reynolds, L. (1977). *Directional Signing and Labelling in Libraries and Museums : A Review of Current Theory and Practice*.

Uebel, A. (2009). *Signage Systems & Information Graphics: A Professional Sourcebook*. Düsseldorf: Thames Hudson.

Woodward, J. (2009). *Creating the customer-Driven Academic Library*. United States: American Library Association.

Yoon, Heeyoon (2002). *Academic Library Management*. DaeGue: Tae-ilSA.