Chapter 11
Library Signage and Information Graphics:
A Communication Tool for Library Users

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ABSTRACT

Libraries are gradually becoming spaces for discovery, innovation, and community empowerment by catering to the various needs of the public. To harness the unlimited resources in the library, library digital signage is the perfect tool to help transform old buildings and spaces into a place of collaboration and innovation. Since it's a content-centric solution at its core, digital signs can go beyond looping a series of pictures. It's an intelligent tool that can tailor-fit content relative to the audience, location, time of the day, and even process. This chapter will address the different roles of signages and buttress the fact that digital signage can play a major role in this communication process in addition to demonstrating a "green" environment for library patrons. Graphic information can be displayed to the public in meeting rooms, at the front desk, in vestibules or cafeterias/cafes. The messaging can range from programs being held at the library to public service announcements to emergency messaging and so much more. There is no limit to the information that a library signage can convey to its users.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Informational graphics and signages are among the most basic, and at the same time most indispensable, forms of library instruction and communication. Like other media employed to educate the library user, they derive their importance and usefulness from the needs that users experience as they search for information. Signages and information graphics include and are not limited to signs that identify individual areas and rooms, as well as signs that identify the objects and applications found in these rooms.

There are a variety of function to what information the signages can communicate the library users. For example, an informational signage need not only tell users about things that they are seeking information on but can also tell them things they may have never known about. Library digital signage is also the perfect tool to answer frequently asked questions (FAQs), how-to inquiries and even display upcoming events and highlight new library services. For optimal results, library kiosks should be placed in areas with high foot traffic, preferably placed near front desks, entrances and lobbies. Amongst other roles, library digital signage can provide people with the necessary information that they need and can even promote new things that the library wants to highlight.

Library signage is also there to help users to use the library, which could be anything from assisting a user in navigating the library collection, to explaining how to use a self-check loans machine. The role of the librarian is not only to connect people to information but communicate this information appropriately and accurately to them, to buttress this point, Schmidt and Etches (2014) posits that signages can be seen as tools to achieve this, and hence their design falls well within the scope of library work.

Getting Started With Library Signage as a Communication Tool

Every person who enters a library building in search of information must deal with the library's physical environment throughout the search process. The library environment is the medium through which the user moves and communicates, and it is also a source of informational cues that he/she uses in making a series of wayfinding choices like locating the library catalogue or for locating the bathroom.

Digital signage is a form of electronic display that shows information, advertising and other messages. Digital signs (such as LCD, LED or plasma displays) can be found in public and private environments and many building across campus. Signage is a powerful visual tool for communication and a crucial component of the library user experience. Signage can welcome, guide, instruct, and delight users, helping them navigate the complex information world of any library. The graphic signage system makes the sign information content system tangible, in that it embodies and conveys the library's program's informational content.

Sometimes aimlessly wandering through library aisles and browsing bookshelves can be considered a pleasurable experience when a user is possibly browsing through the collections in a library, but when one is new to a library, the maze of floors and the variety of resources can be daunting, making the library experience a very unpleasant and frustrating one. In our daily interactions and visits to places, especially to unknown places, we rely on signs and visual clues to help us find our way. According to Polger & Stempler (2014), regular visitors to a library need help to inform and guide them through the continual changes that a library undergoes. This assistance is often provided through signage, which must be regularly reviewed and updated.

Different authors have shared their perspective on what a library signage or information tool is. Schmidt (2010) considers the library signage as one of the many "touch points" in a library, and library signages as added by Hahn & Zitron, (2011) could be "any interaction the user has with library service. Effective signage contributes to a user-friendly environment and can "help users move throughout buildings more efficiently and accurately and may reduce questions at service points" Bosman & Rusinek (1997).

According to Serfass (2012), Library signage serves two broad purposes: "informing library users and trying to influence their behaviour". It is important to help users to feel comfortable and confident in using the library to achieve this. Librarians should be encouraged to undertake responsibilities around designing signage, brochures, informational handouts, web pages, and promotional and instructional

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