Why have library signage guidelines?

Signage is an important part of communication and is essential for promoting safety and accessibility for library patrons. Confusing floor plans, poor signage and use of library jargon confound library patrons, especially first-time visitors. It is important to have an attractive and effective sign system that is consistent throughout all public areas of the library. Great signage communicates your competence, understanding, and care for the people using your library.

Types of signs

1. **Orientation signs** present the physical layout of the building. They include location directories and maps.
2. **Directional signs** guide people to areas or services within the building. These signs use arrows pointing to specific locations.
3. **Identification signs** identify departments, resources, or specific functions within the library. They may incorporate symbols and words when appropriate. The text is usually brief, generally one to four words, naming the department or function where the sign is located.
4. **Information/Instruction signs** are explanatory in nature. They can explain library functions or instruct a patron on how to use a copy machine, for example.
5. **Regulatory/Lifesaving signs** are used to inform patrons of certain restrictions or to alert patrons to lifesaving devices or areas.
6. **Temporary/Current Awareness signs** are generally needed for a limited period of time and should be posted in high traffic areas. Examples: changes in library hours, announcements of library workshops.

Temporary and Permanent Signs

A temporary sign is one that is normally posted for less than 30 days. Such signs can be easily made on a word processor. Dating temporary signs is recommended. A permanent sign is one that is normally posted for more than 30 days.

Tips: Sign Design
Consistent signage is important because having varying sizes, and colors detracts from the message and gives a cluttered, unprofessional look. It is important that all signs, permanent and temporary, regardless of their function, are treated consistently in terms lettering, color, shape, size, design and placement.

**Lettering**

Use matching typeface throughout the library. Helvetica in regular, light, or bold is the typeface that is recommended for most signs due to its legibility at a distance. It is best to use both upper and lower case letters. All capital letters is harder to read.

**Color**

Signs that have white letters on dark background are clear and visible. Colors should be consistent within individual departments and complement colors in the library. All Identification and Directional signs should be done in the same way throughout the library.

**Size and Shape**

A standardized size and shape helps the patron distinguish between different kinds of signs at a glance. A limited number of sign shapes facilitates production and is economical.

**Library Brand**

Have a recognized “look and feel” (this can become your library brand)

**Guidelines:**

**Merchandise materials face out to minimize signage need**

**Less is More**

- Avoiding visual clutter is a hallmark of good signage. The more signs that exist in an area, the more people tend to ignore them.
- For every sign you want to put up, think about what current sign could come down or how you might be able to combine several signs into one.
- Some libraries take down all signs for a short period and then judge which are necessary by the questions patrons ask.
- Keep it concise for reading while moving
- Keep in-depth signage in wait areas only

**Text Layout**
• The layout of text on a sign is critical. Information grouped in 3s is more effective than long lists. Words should be used when arrows or other devices are confusing.

Terminology

• Be consistent with nomenclature - avoid using library jargon. Use standard terminology throughout the library.
• Pictures and graphics speak volumes (consider using pictures AND words in children's sections)
• Communication should be made in positive terms whenever possible and should be emotionally intelligent. For example, instead of saying "No food and drink" say "Drinks are allowed in closed containers".

Staff Training for Best Practices

• Conduct staff training to incorporate signage principles into practice
• Get everyone on board so that even temporary signs follow the standards
• Avoid posting handwritten signs. If a sign needs to be posted immediately and there is no opportunity to create that sign electronically, make sure the sign is removed in one or two days.

Maintenance

• Maintaining signs is much like maintaining the collection. It is an ongoing task, not only to keep the signs clean and in good repair, but also to ensure that signs continue to display accurate information and that any new or revised signs are consistent with the library's signage design.

Signs in Spanish:

WebJunction http://www.webjunction.org/294
Texas State Library and Archives Bilingual Library Signage http://tinyurl.com/2lkprx

Learning

Flyer Tutor is great for learning how to push forward your knowledge of Microsoft Word and Publisher’s flyer and sign making capabilities. http://www.flyertutor.com/templates-default.asp

Cool Tools

Wordle http://www.wordle.net
Html Colors http://www.w3schools.com/html/html_colors.asp
Sign Generator http://www.signgeneratormaker.com/
Warning Sign Generator with symbols http://www.warningsigngenerator.com/

Library signage links:


