
Library language: words and their definitions

A glossary of frequently used words
to help international students at the
University of Bradford

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CREATING THE LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL GROUP

There are currently students of over 120 different nationalities studying at the University of Bradford. All library staff are involved with helping them with enquires and with teaching information skills. In December 2010 we decided to formalise our approach and create a group of library staff to focus on the support given to our international students. It draws on a wide range of staff: the systems team, distance learning librarian, two subject librarians, welcome team manager and graduate trainee; it is small enough to organise meetings on a regular basis, thus helping us to maintain the momentum and pace to achieve our targets. The group has achieved many objectives over the last two years and in this article we shall describe the process we went through to produce a web page with a glossary, which developed into the publication of a booklet called *Library lan-*

guage: words and their definitions and a smart phone application.

EXPERIENCES OF OUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In order to help us understand the difficulties our international students encounter, it was important for us to collaborate with colleagues in other areas of the university. The university supports international students in many ways, including providing a fun, safe room where international students meet and work. They have a regular 'debating' hour where we heard some fascinating stories about the very different culture in the students' own local libraries. A Filipino student said: 'In my country the university libraries have a sleeping room. We can stay in the library and study for longer, we don't have to waste time going all the way home. I use it a lot.' A Syrian student said 'We love to go to the library theatre. There is singing and dancing, things for adults and for children.' On National Libraries Day we created a display of these comments and found pictures of the libraries they were referring to.

SCONUL GUIDELINES

To give us a structure and a list of aims and objectives to work on over the following year we followed the advice in the SCONUL guidelines 'Library services for international students' (SCONUL, 2008), which includes examples of best practice and case studies. We wrote a mission statement, designed a dedicated web page for international students on the library home page, compiled a glossary of specialist terminology, organised some training for our library staff and talked to the students at the university international student induction session.

As we felt it is important to recognise that we also support academic staff and researchers from across the world, our mission statement reads: 'The library aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all our international staff and students via our services, resources and information skills teaching.'

We created a page for international students on the library home page because the SCONUL key concept 14 states that 'Library web pages specifically for international students can help create a welcoming impression and manage expectations, even if many of the links point straight back to the main library web pages.' We found it useful to refer to the report to support our new initiatives because sometimes it is argued that web pages

are for all students and that specific pages are not needed for different cohorts of students. We tried to include information that students wouldn't find elsewhere on the library home page to avoid duplication, including information about local public libraries that provide books, films and newspapers in other languages and a list of useful study support books. (See <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/help/international-students/>)

CREATING A WELCOME MESSAGE FOR THE WEB PAGE

Initially we created a simple 'wordle' out of the word 'welcome' in many different languages – something the SCONUL report recommended as a 'special touch' (SCONUL guidelines, p. 47). We decided to try to do so using the original script than an English translation. We encountered difficulties because the Wordle programme did not recognise different scripts so we decided to create a Microsoft Word document. The International Office informed us that the top ten languages currently spoken at the university were Chinese, Arabic, Greek, Urdu, Hindi, Romanian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Malay and Bulgarian, so we ensured that all of them were included. We used Google Translate, created the pictures in Microsoft Word and saved them using Jing (free software) to turn it into a jpeg.

DEVELOPING THE ORIGINAL GLOSSARY FOR THE WEBSITE

After creating the web pages we started to compile the glossary of words frequently used in the library. Initially the group put forward their own suggestions as to which Bradford-specific words should be included. We sent this preliminary list to all staff for comment. After gathering feedback we started to create definitions, and again sent the first draft to library staff for comment. Subsequently we sent drafts only to those library staff who had initially responded. We made the content available via the web page we had created for international students support. Because we thought it would be easier for users to understand the content and function of the document if the title was in plain English, we called the glossary 'Library language: words and their definitions'. We designed the content to be web based, which meant it was possible to create hyperlinks to all the relevant sections on the library web site.

PRODUCING 'LIBRARY LANGUAGE: WORDS AND DEFINITIONS' BOOKLET

The university had sent out an invitation to departments to apply internally for small-scale

funding, and we decided this would be the ideal opportunity to try to turn the web-based content of the glossary into a little booklet to give out to our students at the international students' induction. The bid had to be endorsed by the head of the library service and the director of learner support services. We also had to get some initial feedback from international students. Here is the response from one of our students from Greece:

Having read through the 'Words and definitions' document, I must say you have done an incredible job. Everything is explained in plain language that would be easily understood by overseas students. You have definitely covered everything that could possibly come across my mind and have also resolved many of my personal questions on library terms and resources... Overall I believe it is very concise work and will definitely help especially freshers find their way around the library and through its resources. (A female 2nd-year medical engineering student from Greece)

The bid for funding had to fit the university's strategic aims as well as meet all the accessibility criteria. We were delighted to find that we had been successful, and we received the whole amount we had requested.

EDITING, EDITING, EDITING!

To complete the work we adopted the same approach as when compiling the original web-based glossary. Two members of the group took on the role of editors and arranged to meet on a weekly basis. We had to adapt all the content so that it worked in printed format, and it quickly became apparent that this presented a different set of challenges. The content for the web version could be updated very quickly to respond to changes in the library but this was not possible with the printed version. For example, as we were working on the booklet the library was awarded some funding for an extensive refurbishment which involved relocating all the stock. We had to remove all references in the glossary to a physical location. Following this we also discovered that our website was to be redesigned and fitted into a content management system, so we had to remove all references to our web addresses. Furthermore, the library decided it was worth reclassifying some of the collections, so that the majority of books would be classified according to Dewey, so we also had to change these references too! We began to question the value and usefulness

of the printed version. However, after making all these changes we decided that the booklet would still be a helpful resource because it focused on specific word definitions. Moreover, the editing done at this stage would ensure that it would still be accurate and relevant for the foreseeable future. It was a time-consuming task, taking four months to complete.

We had listed words and definitions that were often very specific to the culture of the J.B. Priestley Library at Bradford, for example 'study carrel' and 'fine ceiling'. For a word to be considered we decided that it should appear exactly as the students would encounter it on the library web pages or when a member of staff was talking to them. We tried to define terms using clear language, without any jargon. We only defined specific IT words if they were frequently used in the library. For example, we included 'Digital Object Identifiers' (DOI) because they are often found in information databases. We questioned whether we should include words such as 'email' and decided they should stay because it was a useful way of reminding students it was important to check their university account regularly. We included words such as 'record' which are in frequent use in common parlance yet have a totally different meaning in the library context. Some words we included came specifically from experience of teaching international students, such as an explanation of 'alphabetical order'. One student had been accused of plagiarism because he didn't understand it, therefore we felt it was important to include an explanation in the booklet.

When we were finally ready to print we met the university graphic designers. The publication had to be in line with university branding, so we based the design of our booklet on the new undergraduate prospectus. We decided to use recycled paper, and surprisingly the photos were printed at no extra charge. The matt finish made the booklet look more modern, and using A5 meant we used less paper and the booklet was easier to carry around.

COLLABORATION WITH YHULISS AND MAKING 'LIBRARY LANGUAGE' AVAILABLE ON A MOBILE

We joined YHULISS (Yorkshire and Humber-side University Librarians International Student Support) and received a warm welcome. We found it invaluable to share good practice with other librarians in the region and learn from each other's developments and initiatives. We showed them a copy of the booklet and they suggested

we turned it into an app for a smart phone. We approached the Mobile Technology Adviser, and he made all the content available on the About UoB App. Now that we had 'Library language' available in print, on the website and the mobile application, we had a useful opportunity to compare the content using different formats.

GATHERING FEEDBACK AND PROMOTION

We now give the booklet out to the pre-sessional students and at the main international induction, with a short feedback questionnaire slip which we shall insert into every booklet. (We have some book tokens as a prize for completing the form.) We shall ask students which they find most useful: web, printed booklet or app, and aim to incorporate the content into our information skills teaching. The new main library web pages have been developed and the link to 'Library language' has been included on the international support page, library home page and subject pages. This demonstrates that initiatives such as these, which are developed for specific cohorts of students, are often of benefit to all. We are planning a new workshop, 'librarians' question time' for the first semester and shall encourage international students to attend. We shall use this opportunity to embed the different formats of 'Library language' into our information skills teaching in the new interactive workshop. To promote the booklet and raise awareness of issues faced by international students and the work done across the university, we have arranged a training hour for all staff in Learner Support Services. Working together we hope to ease the transition for international students using the university library at Bradford.

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REFERENCES

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