

Clientele recognition of library terms and concepts used by librarians: a case of an academic library in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT. Using a 30-item multiple choice type test, this investigation dwelt on the ability of college students to recognize terms and concepts used by librarians. A total of 447 respondents representing the fields of education, nutrition, food technology, tourism and hotel and restaurant management took part in this investigation. Data were gathered through *robotfotos* and an inventory of commonly used library jargons, duly identified and validated by academic librarians in one of the biggest multi-disciplinary universities in the Philippines. Data were treated indepth through percentage, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-test, and Spearman's rank correlation. Interestingly, results of this study showed that clientele's ability to recognize library terms and concepts posted the highest and lowest ratings of 84% and 33%, respectively. Further, among the respondents' profiles, gender and type of catalog used (OPAC vs. card catalog) were found to have significant relationship with their ability to recognize library terms and concepts. Finally, a moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.58$) exists between the clientele's recognition ability and the librarian's ranking of frequently asked and used terms by the former.

Key Words: Recognition ability, Library jargon

Introduction

As the internet gained prominence and the support of distant users became more prevalent, some authors expressed their concern regarding how library jargon impedes the user's effective and efficient access to information. Library jargon, as a technical language used by librarians to describe library resources and services, has long been recognized as an impediment to internal communication, public service, and user access to information (Hutcherson, 2004). It is difficult to appreciate and understand things presented in a language that one is not familiar with. Every occupation has a jargon, and parents, teachers, students and others who avail of library services are expected to encounter terminologies that would leave them confused. For people with library training, the jargon of subject headings, selection tools, and weeding plans is common place. To an outsider, the jargon and the related-activities are impossible to understand, let alone evaluate. Library jargon creates barriers for clientele who are unfamiliar with it (Dowling, 2003). It is interesting to note that specialized library terms have developed to express specific meanings not directly captured by more general wording (Dowling, 2003).

The issue of technological terminology in librarianship lies between the academic fields of linguistics and rhetoric / communication (Coffey & Lawson, 2002). Professionals in academe, today, are faced with an ever-increasing number of technological advancements, and a few feel the effects of these changes more than the library professionals. With each change comes a new vocabulary that has the potential to cause communication rifts between departments in academic libraries (Coffey & Lawson, 2002). As advised by Intner in 1990, (as cited in Coffey & Lawson, 2002:151) the main

problem the academics experience in dealing with techies is the inability to communicate intelligibly. Techies speak a language that can be quite difficult for non-cohorts to understand, which is also true of people in any academic discipline. The disparate backgrounds of the techies and the academics result in different perspectives. For effective communication, all parties involved must be ready to make effort to make themselves understood. Mutual respect between parties involved in discussions are critical of any meaningful communication to take place.

Elgin (as cited by Coffey & Lawson, 2002,) commented “The fact that people in traditional organizations hear and understand terms with their traditional instead of new meaning is going to create major communication breakdowns and misunderstanding” (p152).

A paper read by Prudenciana C. Cruz, Director of the National Library of the Philippines, in the Congress of Southeast Asian Libraries (CONSAL XII) convention in 2003, reported that there are now a total of 997 public libraries in the Philippines. In the Philippine Association of Academic Research Libraries (PAARL) tertiary level membership list, 1,300 academic schools exist in the country whose librarians are PAARL members. Considering this number of libraries vis-à-vis the number of users, it is interesting to probe how library users stand relative to their recognition level.

To the library clientele, it is the librarian who must translate the jargon used for information the clientele needs, ensure that both librarian and clientele have a common frame of reference for terms and concepts used, and see which terms and concepts the clientele understand or not. This study, thus aims to ascertain the clientele’s recognition of terms and concepts used in an academic library in the Philippines.

Review of Related Literature

Technical language or jargon has a shorthand means of labeling frequently used concepts. In their discussions with peers, librarians cannot redefine common terms repeatedly. A label is affixed to a more complex idea, and this label takes on an everyday, well-understood meaning. Problems come up when that label is used to communicate with an audience unfamiliar with the specialized use of a term (Naismith & Stein, 1989).

In 1958, John B. Nicholson Jr., after completing a study of librarian communications patterns, noticed that abbreviations or initials were often used when librarians or the library staff discussed the tools associations, and the places where they worked. He also found out that the jargon level used by a librarian or library staff member was based on either what he or she was doing and why.

In 1989, before the incaption of computer terminology and internet-based slang complicated the matter, Rachel Naismith and Joan Stein used a twenty-item multiple-choice test and protocol analysis to measure student recognition of terms used in reference interviews and library handouts. In their summary, they revealed that a large number of the questions they asked the students were missed. A communication gap undoubtedly existed between librarians and patrons. Recommended were a number of options for closing the gap.

Chaudry and Choo (2001) specifically focused on the client’s recognition of jargon used by librarians during reference interviews. Showing more positive results than Naismith and Stein, recommended specific measures, including that of responding to the needs of the audience, librarians provide a glossary of technical terms, minimize the extent of technical language use, and ensure that both sides have a common frame of reference for the use of terms and concepts.

In 2002, Daniel Coffey and Karen Lawson observed that meaning change associated with the increasing use of library terminology often resulted in communication breakdown and misunderstanding. This made them question whether librarians could be held responsible for ensuring that others, including fellow librarians, understood the jargon being used.

Hutcherson (2004) used a pair of fifteen-item multiple-choice survey to measure first and second year university student recognition of a selected group of commonly used terms. After getting the results, he posited that librarians focus on the increasing transparency of library resources and services by reducing the extent of technical language and jargon used to describe those.

Table 1
Case Studies of Clientele Recognition of Library Terms

Researchers	Major Objectives	Delineated Factors	Methodology
Nicholson (1958)	Determine the jargons used by librarians.	Communication patterns.	Survey
Naismith and Stein (1989)	Examine clientele recognition of terms.	Communication problems among clients and librarians.	Protocol analysis. Multiple-choice.
Chaudhry and Choo (2001)	Assess the impact of technological terminology.	Information technology. Public and technical service.	Protocol analysis. Multiple-choice.
Coffey and Lawson (2002)	Assess the impact of technological terminology.	Information technology. Public and technical service.	Mailed survey
Hutcherson (2004)	Measure clientele recognition of the library terms	Levels of recognition in commonly used terms.	Multiple-choice testing
Duncan and Fichter (2004)	Assess clientele's recognition of the labels for use of reference service.	Unawareness of library jargon.	Preference for the use of hands-on usability testing.

Duncan and Fichter (2004) employed two techniques to gather data to identify the live reference service and to ensure that library users recognized and understood the label and described the services, namely: preference testing and task-based testing. On the one hand, preference testing gave a sample of library users a chance to consider and select text and graphic labels for the site. In this technique, participants were given the opportunity to suggest other wording, and to elaborate on the reason for their selection. Task-based testing, on the other hand, involves the use of usability testing of the Health Services Website with the links and labels in place to identify usability problems. Each participant was counseled and the purpose of the exercise was to find out how well the website was working and alert to the librarians' problem in layout, design, and terminology. Consequently, users were not familiar with library jargon such as "database" or "interlibrary loan". Users were not also familiar with abbreviations in the E-journals for electronic use.

Method

Subjects

Descriptive in methodology, this study assessed the level of recognition of 447 college students of the terms and concepts used in library service and use. From an approximate total of 2244 students enrolled in the college, 447, representing the twenty percent (20%) of the six fields: Secondary Education (BSE), Elementary Education (BEED), Nutrition and Dietetics (BSND), Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM), Food Technology (BSFT), Tourism (BST) were chosen as respondents and distributed as follows: Secondary Education (75), Elementary Education (27), Nutrition and Dietetics (49), Food Technology (49), Hotel and Restaurant Management (123), Tourism (124). It should be understood, however, that respondents in this study came from one of the most thickly populated colleges in a comprehensive university in the Philippines. Moreover, graduating students from the Nutrition and Hotel Restaurant and Management were not represented because of their field practicum at the time of study.

Research Instrumentation and Data Collection

To gather data and information needed in the study, a two-part researcher-made instrument was developed. The first part called the *robotfoto* —(in Dutch, the photo-like picture drawn by police from a witness's description of a suspect in a criminal investigation; i.e. a preliminary identity sketch) (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002), was fielded to the target group of respondents for purposes of establishing the baseline characteristics of the library clientele under study. Specifically, data and information relative to the respondents' age, gender, educational attainment, frequency of visit, frequency of assistance asked, types of library visited, sections in the library frequently visited, purpose of visiting the library, kinds of materials used, catalog used in locating the materials, from whom they learned the use of the card catalog, and on whom they use the terms used in the library.

Part II of the instrument was primarily designed to assess clientele recognition ability. This objective type of test covers frequently asked terms in the library. Initially, fifty-eight (58) jargons were identified and gathered through reference desks. These words were trimmed down to 30 after a series of reference desk interview as to frequency of use. A total of 5 academic librarians who have been in the service for a considerable length of time were asked to rate the terms as to frequency of use, following this scale: 4=always, 3=sometimes, 2=rare and 1=never. Weighted means were computed and served as basis in determining the top 30 terms in the list. The identified terms were then translated into a multiple-choice test with four possible options. Options were made parallel in construction for purposes of discrimination. The developed test items were further subjected to expert validation to overcome the problem of ambiguity. Stems and options needing improvement were revised and restated comprehensibly to the test takers.

The researchers personally administered the *robotfoto* and the 30-item test to the different classes with the permission of the dean of the college and the support of faculty members in charge of each section. A separate answer sheet was provided for the easy checking and scoring of the test. Answer sheets were independently checked and scored by the researchers.

Table 2
Sample Questions

1. This provides online access to materials in the library.
a. Internet b. Networking c. OPAC d. Online Database
2. The number given to a volume in the order of its acquisition.
a. ISSN b. invoice number c. accession number d. accession record
3. Which of the following refers to legal provision granting exclusive rights to reproduce and distribute a work?
a. certification b. license c. copyright d. patent
4. A transaction involving the lending of library materials by one library to another.
a. referral b. library cooperation c. interlibrary loan d. none of these
5. It is a single film about the size of a postcard.
a. microfiche b. microfilm c. aperture card d. microcards
6. It is a reference that directs the user from terms or names to other related terms or names used.
a. see reference b. explanatory reference c. cross reference d. both a & c
7. It is the section in the library where one returns and borrows books.
a. reference section b. circulation c. cataloguing service d. acquisition service
8. When you borrow books you will see this combination of classification number and letters, number code representing the author which enable you to locate the needed material.
a. call number b. accession number c. invoice number d. ISBN
9. It is the part of a book where you find the list of all topics, names, and terms used which are arranged alphabetically.
a. index b. appendix c. glossary d. body or text
10. What if the professor asks you to include the sources of your research work, what do you call this list of references?
a. biography b. bibliography c. autobiography d. none of these

Data Analysis

Data yielded by the 30-item multiple type test were checked, scored, tallied and tabulated for purposes of analysis and interpretation. For indepth treatment of data, statistical tools used were the: one-way analysis of variance (multiple variables), t-test (two variables), mean percentage, and Spearman's rank correlation.

Results and Discussion

Description of Study Respondents

The following table presents the demographic characteristics of the study respondents.

Table 3
Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile	Number of Respondents	%	Profile	Number of Respondents	%
Age			Purpose of visits*		
16 - 19	328	81%	Research	246	61%
20 – 40	77	19%	Study	159	39%
41 – 60	0		Leisure	63	16%
61 - above	0		Others	187	46%
Gender			Kinds of materials used*		
Male	116	29%	Books	360	89%
Female	289	71%	Journals	108	27%
Highest Educational Attainment			AV Materials	8	2%
College	397	98%	Microfilm	17	4%
BS / AB Degree	8	2%	Electronic Journals	17	4%
Often visited the Library			Others	23	6%
Everyday	26	6%	Used in locating materials		
2 – 3 times a week	114	28%	Card Catalog	56	14%
Once a week	131	32%	OPAC	361	89%
Once a month	123	30%	How the use of card Catalog was learned*		
Often asked Assistance			Observation	99	24%
Always	25	6%	Librarian’s help	104	26%
Often times	59	6%	Classroom Lecture	210	52%
Sometimes	123	30%	Through reading	34	8%
Rare	155	38%	Others	12	3%
Never	43	11%	How respondents came to know terms Used in the library*		
Types of Library Visited			Teacher	78	44%
Special Library	25	6%	Librarian	130	32%
Academic Library	223	44%	Classmates / Friends	114	28%
School Library	25	6%	Through reading	85	21%
Public Library	177	15%	Others	10	2%
Sections often Visited					
Social Science	184	45%			
Humanities	66	16%			
Reference	26	6%			
Serials	16	4%			
Science	41	10%			
Religion	8	2%			
Filipiniana	38	9%			

* (multiple responses)

Recognition of library terms and concepts

Four hundred forty-seven questionnaires were collected, four (4) were removed from the sample because of incomplete answers, and 38 were disregarded. In sum, 405 questionnaires were usable. As indicated in Table 3, majority of the respondents were females (71%) who belonged to the 16-19 age group (81%). Among the library types, the academic library is the most popular among the students, who avail of the library services once a week (32%). The most frequently part of the library is that of

the social sciences (45%). As to purpose of their visit, 246 or 61% of the respondents were working on their research, and rarely 38% seek the assistance of the librarians. Two hundred ten or 32% of the respondents learned the use of the On-line Public Access Catalog (OPAC) (89%) through lectures in class. As to materials available in the library, respondents preferred books most (89%). Generally, the respondents learned terms used in the library from their teachers (49%), librarians (32%) and classmates / friends (28%).

Table 4
Ranking of Terms and Concepts

Most Recognized Terms / Concepts	Mean Percentage	Rank	Least Recognized Terms / Concepts	Mean Percentage	Rank
OPAC	84%	1	Microfiche	10%	1
Copyright	81%	2.5	Gazetteers	11%	2
Revised edition	81%	2.5	Collection	12%	3
			Development		
Bibliography	80%	4	Reserve	20%	4
Circulation	69%	5	Citation	25%	5
Reference service	66%	6	Document Delivery	26%	6
Call number	59%	7.5	Interlibrary loan	27%	7
Microfilm	59%	7.5	Cross reference	28%	8
Table of contents	52%	9	Library holdings	31%	9
Biography	49%	10	Abstract	33%	10

Table 4 shows the ranking of the most and least recognized terms and concepts by the respondents. Identified as the most recognized terms were OPAC (84%), copyright (81%), revised edition (81%) and bibliography (80%). Microfiche (10%), gazetteers (11%), collection development (12%), reserve (20%) and citation (25%) were the least recognized terms.

The extent to which the respondents recognized terms used in the library may be attributed to the law of exercise which is concerned with the practice of a learning skill. Further, the more frequently new learning is repeated, the better the learning (Torres, 1994). In library use and patronage, when students are not exposed to the use of available materials and other services offered by the library, familiarity with terms is likely to be affected. According to the law of disuse, a skill that is not practiced and knowledge that is not used, are forgotten (Torres, 1994). This observation is very much evidenced in the respondents' low recognition level as indicated in Table 4.

Table 5
Mean Percentage of Respondents' Recognition of Library Terms and Concepts

Field of Study	Mean percentage	Variance
Secondary Education	50%	0.07
Food Technology	43%	0.06
Elementary Education	48%	0.05
Nutrition and Dietetics	45%	0.06
Hotel and Restaurant Management	39%	0.04
Tourism	38%	0.03

F-ratio= 1.37 P-value=0.24 Decision: Not Significant

Table 5 shows the mean percentage results of the respondents' recognition of library terms and concepts. Among the respondents, the secondary education students posted the highest mean percentage (50%), and the tourism students, the lowest (38%).

Further, results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 significant level, (F-ratio = 1.37, p-value = 0.24) indicates that there is no significant difference in the respondents' ability to recognize terms and concepts, when they are grouped according to their fields of study.

Respondents are more particular in using the layman's term, compared to library terms. Their only main concern is access and retrieval of materials rather than knowing the terms used in the library.

Table 6

T-test on Relationship between Respondent's, Demographic Profile and Recognition of Terms and Concepts Used in the Library

Variables	Mean Percentage	Variance	t-value	p-value	Decision
A. Gender vs. Recognition					
F	43%	0.04	2.23	0.03	<i>Significant</i>
M	41%	0.03			
B. Catalog vs. Recognition					
Card catalog	38%	0.02	3.07	0.0046	<i>Significant</i>
OPAC	43%	0.04			

In Table 6, it is interesting to note significant relationship between recognition ability and the respondents' gender, with the female group performing better (43%), compared to their male counterparts (41%). Moreover, relationship between the type of catalog used (OPAC, 43% vs. card catalog, 38%) and the ability to recognize terms was found to be significant, since the computed p-value (0.0046) is less than the 0.05 significance level.

Gender differences infer that the female group performed better in recognizing library terms and concepts compared to the male group. Females, in general, have stronger neural connectors in their temporal lobes than males. These connectors lead to more sensually detailed memory storage, better listening skills, and better discrimination of voice tones. Among other things this leads to greater use of detail in writing assignments (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). These "girl" brain qualities are the tip of the iceberg, yet they can immediately help teachers and parents understand why girls generally outperform boys in reading and writing from early childhood throughout life (Conlin, 2003, as cited in Gurian & Stevens, 2004:22). Statistically significant relationship between the type of catalog used and ability to recognize terms and concepts is affected by the introduction of the computerized catalog, the OPAC, which started electronic revolution in libraries. Within two decades, available resources in the library have evolved from just point-based to networked CD-ROMs and dial-up access to online information services, to Web – based OPACs and databases. Libraries can, therefore, offer access information in an array of resources in both electronic resources and in print form (Darries, 2004). Tenopir and Neufang (as cited in Darries, 2004:74) found that these electronic resources are the first resort for patrons and staff, and their use has become integral to reference work.

Table 7

One - way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in the Relationship between Respondents' Demographic Profile and Recognition of Terms and Concepts used in the Library

Variables	Mean Percentage	Variance	F-ratio	P-value	Decision
A. Purpose vs. Recognition					
Research	38%	0.03	0.78	0.51	<i>Not significant</i>
Study	43%	0.04			
Leisure	44%	0.04			
Others	45%	0.05			
B. Frequency of Visitation vs. Recognition					
Every day or daily	41%	0.06	0.94	0.72	<i>Not significant</i>
2 - 3 times a week	37%	0.03			
Once a week	41%	0.04			
Once a month	46%	0.05			
C. Asking Assistance vs. Recognition					
Never	41%	0.04	0.05	1	<i>Not significant</i>
Rarely	43%	0.04			
Sometimes	43%	0.04			
Often times	42%	0.04			
Always	41%	0.04			
D. Learning of Terms vs. Recognition					
Teacher	42%	0.04	0.41	0.8	<i>Not significant</i>
Librarian	42%	0.04			
Classmates / Friends	42%	0.04			
Reading	44%	0.04			
Others	48%	0.04			
E. Materials Used vs. Recognition					
Books	43%	0.04	0.18	0.97	<i>Not significant</i>
Journals	43%	0.04			
AV - Materials	47%	0.06			
Microfilm	46%	0.09			
Electronic Resources	45%	0.05			
Others	47%	0.07			
F. Use of the Card Catalog vs. Recognition					
Observation	44%	0.04	0.14	0.97	<i>Not significant</i>
Librarian	41%	0.04			
Classroom Lecture	43%	0.04			
Reading	40%	0.04			
Others	43%	0.05			

Results of the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicate that, on the whole, the respondents' ability to recognize library terms and concepts does not, in any way, relate to the purpose and frequency of their visits, the need to ask assistance from the library staff, the sources of learning the terms, types of materials used and the way the respondents learn the use of the card catalog, since the computed values of 0.42 to 1.0 are greater than the 0.05 significance level. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

The way library users recognize important terms and concepts is very much facilitated by an information technology – driven milieu, which, according to Darries (2004) is dubbed as the information society. Further, the European Commission (as cited in Darries, 2004:72), for its part, avers that this is a society in which service by information and communication technologies underpass human activities. Individuals tend to rely on the internet because it is very convenient, compared to going to the library and asking assistance. Even Wilson (as cited in Darries, 2004:73) argues that with the emergence of electronic reference and the ask a librarian technique, information that was once available at the reference desk is now offered on the library home-page. Rockman, for his part, (as cited in Darries, 2004:73) states that the role of the reference librarian has shifted from search intermediaries to being information competent information teachers. Users tend to rely on the internet

because they can take advantage of built in browsing ability to keep control of font size and color in their own hands instead of the authors (Dowling, 2003).

It should be noted, however, that while it is true that on-line query systems are made available to library users, there is still need to make oneself familiar with basic library terminologies for greater search efficiency. Ellis Mount (as cited in Naismith & Stein, 1989:545) posited that one obstacle to successful reference transaction is the lack of knowledge of library terminology among users. Students seem to have the most trouble with language on the site that is vague or confusing (Brown, 2002).

As indicated in Table 8, moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.58$) exists between the respondents' recognition of library terms and concepts and the librarians' ranking of the frequently asked jargons by the clientele. Such result implies the need to strenghten the information dissemination system used by academic libraries on the use of library services and materials. Besides the basic understanding of the terms as taught in basic English courses, there is need to disseminate information materials in brochures, pamphlets and leaflets, along with orientation seminars. Collectively institutionalized, these can expectedly lead to a well-informed library clientele.

Table 8

Ranks of Librarians' Perception on Frequently used Terms and Concepts by the Clientele and the Students' Recognition of these terms

Terms/Concepts	Ranking by the Librarians	Ranking by the Students	Terms/Concepts	Ranking by the Librarians	Ranking by the Students
1. OPAC	3	1	16. Reserve	8	27
2. Accession number	16	15	17. Serial	2	18
3. Copyright	6	2	18. Technical Service	15	12
4. Interlibrary loan	23	24	19. Document Delivery	21	25
5. Microfiche	24	30	20. Electronic Resources	22	20
6. Cross Reference	28	23	21. Vertical File	26	19
7. Circulation	5	5	22. Biography	10	10
8. Call number	4	7	23. Table of Contents	11	9
9. Index	7	14	24. Library holdings	12	22
10. Bibliography	9	4	25. Boolean Search	18	17
11. Reference Service	1	6	26. Microfilm	25	8
12. Collection Development	20	28	27. Abstract	27	21
13. Edition	13	13	28. Citation	19	26
14. Revised Edition	14	3	29. Annotation	29	11
15. Acquisition	17	16	30. Gazetteers	30	29

Spearman rho (0.583)

p-value = 0.001 at 0.01

Moderate positive correlation

Conclusion

This study is an attempt to ascertain the ability of a select group of college students to recognize library terms and concepts. Surprisingly, two independent variables were found to be contributory to the respondents' recognition ability level. These consist of gender and the type of catalog used.

Today, more than ever, information technology is identified as a facilitative means in managing both individual and organizational knowledge. While it is true that efforts to organize data and information in meaningful packages and databases have made access and retrieval of library resources more time efficient and user-friendly, the respondents concern for information access and retrieval rather than knowing the terms used in the library should not be overlooked. The need to empower library users in terms of information dissemination and library orientation seminars is a continuing imperative.

Considering the dearth of literature on the clientele's recognition of library terms and concepts, this study has successfully accounted for the phenomenon of how students in a comprehensive university, particularly in a developing country such as the Philippines, use an objective-based assessment instrument such as the tool used in this exploratory study. Although this study had limited students respondents from the soft sciences group, with a preponderance of female students, future researchers may pursue on the same study, measuring the same construct but with the participation of respondents representing both the hard and soft sciences. Moreover, investigation on efforts to educate clientele on the effective and efficient use of library services and its success stories may be conducted. Finally, studies such as the emerging concept of *technopedagogy* or information sharing and collaboration in university settings can expectedly generate interesting results for improved policy structure and library services.

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