

SLIDES/POWERPOINT/HANDOUT HERE:

<http://www.krauselabs.net/dump/VisualizedCritique.zip>

## **Introduction**

For this project we examined three library's collections by means of a visual critique and found a unifying theme behind most of the issues we uncovered: a lack of a consistent, coherent, administrative response in the form of standards for operation.

Many of the following libraries would benefit from some sort of decisive response or routine, structured attention. However we found anecdotal cases in which library staffers admitted having no real contingency or awareness of their institutional failings. Simple measures such as routine monitoring, rethinking institutional concepts and task organization would be able to alleviate many of the following criticisms. In other words, a great influx of money was not necessarily needed to alleviate the issues to follow, but rather an influx of creativity, attention to detail and administrative oversight. As we shall see, a little funding can go a long way in assuaging rather blatant faults.

[state three libraries]

## **Patchogue Medford Library, Patchogue, New York**

Patchogue Medford Library is a public circulation library situated in Patchogue, New York. A major design failure of the physical plant is the placement of its doors and position, which negatively effects access to the collections in a major way.

### **1. Traffic potentially obstructs access to collections**

<http://www.krauselabs.net/dump/traffic.png>

Located directly on top of main street the library is sandwiched between a chaotic and busy town center and the backstreets which lead to it. The result is a high traffic of non-patrons through the physical plant, often people who are passing through to main or away from main street. The entrances are situated in such a way that the entire first floor of the library, which is a reading room, audio-visual collections, children's collections and reference, are perpetually disrupted by the heavy traffic and thus impact access.

Solution:

A survey analysis of patrons to determine if the high traffic is negatively impacting circulation rates. If so, one of the entrances could be closed. The entrance facing main street would be the most logical, as parking and handicap access is to the south.

"Strategically, how does that improvement help the library and its collections?"

Access to the collection is a critical component of collection management. If a collection is great but its access is disrupted by heavy traffic, its only good is that of ornamentation.

"How does the improvement also improve the perception that the collection manager is 'on top of things'?"

Looking beyond traditional collection management and considering plant design and traffic analysis.

"What do you suppose that would cost?"

Nothing. An internal, optional survey of patrons could be conducted at the circulation desk or by handing out a questionnaire. The only foreseeable price would be printing out materials.

"Have other libraries made similar improvements?"

Yes by virtue of the fact that most libraries do not allow or are designed in such a fashion to avoid a heavy traffic of non-patrons through their physical plants.

## 2. Lack of distinct signage on exhibits

<http://www.krauselabs.net/dump/patmed1.jpg>

<http://www.krauselabs.net/dump/patmed2.jpg>

The library is home to various exhibits and specialized sections which lack distinct signage. While these sections are eye catching, they are also ambiguous - a shelf dedicated to spring-related records has a flowery decoration about it, but no text to define it. The same applies to a section on recycling and green topics. There was also a section on travel which lacked any signage whatsoever, although it was clear from close range that the records were dedicated to the topic. These factors may degrade access to collections.

Solution:

Uniform signage across all exhibits and collections. The rest of the library has clearly posted plain text boards to signify subject area collections, the same standard should be upheld with more fanciful collections.

"Strategically, how does that improvement help the library and its collections?"

It would reduce the amount of time librarians and pages must intervene to help patrons locate and discern library materials. Collections should always be clearly labeled to optimize plant access rates, patron satisfaction and information retrieval success.

"How does the improvement also improve the perception that the collection manager is 'on top of things'?"

People can't find what they are looking for, clearly the manager has the needs of the patrons, and thus the greater institution, first and foremost.

"What do you suppose that would cost?"

The most economical approach would be to buy some good quality paper for ten bucks or so, then print out and fashion your own signs. For something more eye catching and professional, custom oversized prints and posters could be created from a service like Zazzle for \$30-50. Professionally designed signage is extremely expensive, even for small signs. eMedco offers industrial quality custom signs starting at about \$70 each. A quote from TheSignChef was as follows:

[http://www.thesignchef.com/view\\_quote.php?id=MTExNzI6ZWJhODImZDFkM2UzOTEzYTEwNDNmOGVIZGY0YmNhMjM=](http://www.thesignchef.com/view_quote.php?id=MTExNzI6ZWJhODImZDFkM2UzOTEzYTEwNDNmOGVIZGY0YmNhMjM=)

Material: Aluminum

Height: 2"

Width: 8"

Sides: 1-Sided

Thickness: .040 inch

Colors: Full-Color

Mounting Accessories: None

Cutting Options: Square Corners

Holes: None

Durability Selected: Economy Grade Uncoated (Rated to last up to 3 years outdoors)

Design: As per your final color selections and design approval via email

Description: Quoted by Amanda Oriley

Price: \$9.00 each

Quantity: 12

Item total: \$108.00

"Have other libraries made similar improvements"

Clearly most libraries have signage, even if it's cheap stuff.

**3. Lack of appeal to foreign language speakers**

<http://www.krauselabs.net/dump/homeworkcentral.jpg>

The library is accessed by a notable minority of Hispanics, and yet the most prominent area of the library, which has constant access by the public is without Spanish signage or other instructions in Espanol. Also note that the librarian sitting there is not identified and his desk, a reference desk, is not signified. Clearly these factors will impact the access of collections.

Solution: Standardized multi-lingual signage across the board.

"Strategically, how does that improvement help the library and its collections?"

Hispanic patrons make up a huge portion of the patron base and must be supported. If we don't at least try to include their language in collections and in plant design, we aren't properly accommodating the future.

"How does the improvement also improve the perception that the collection manager is 'on top of things'?"

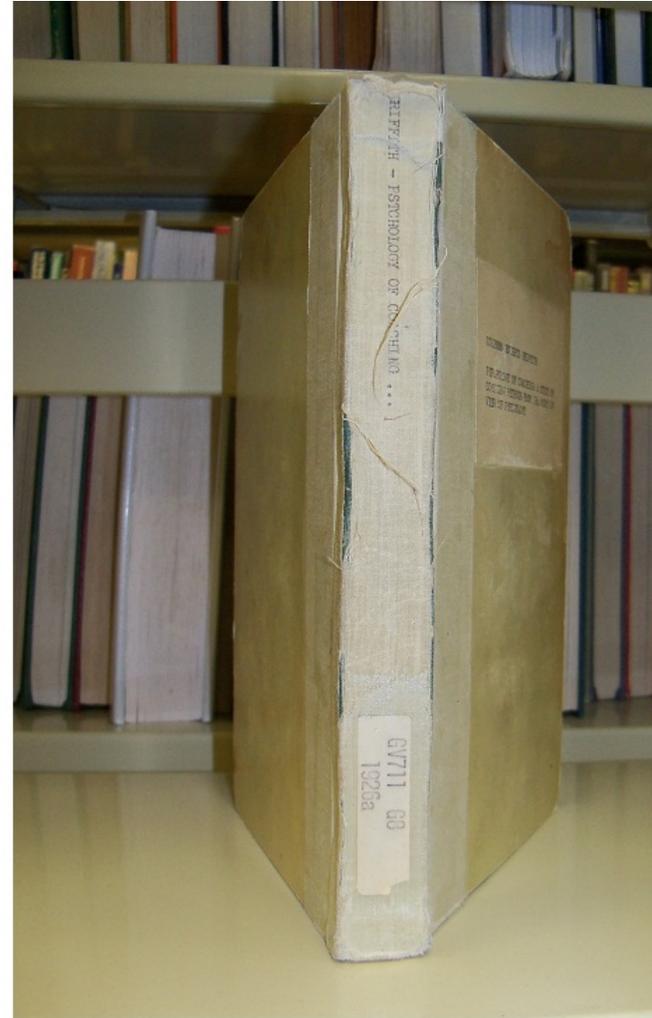
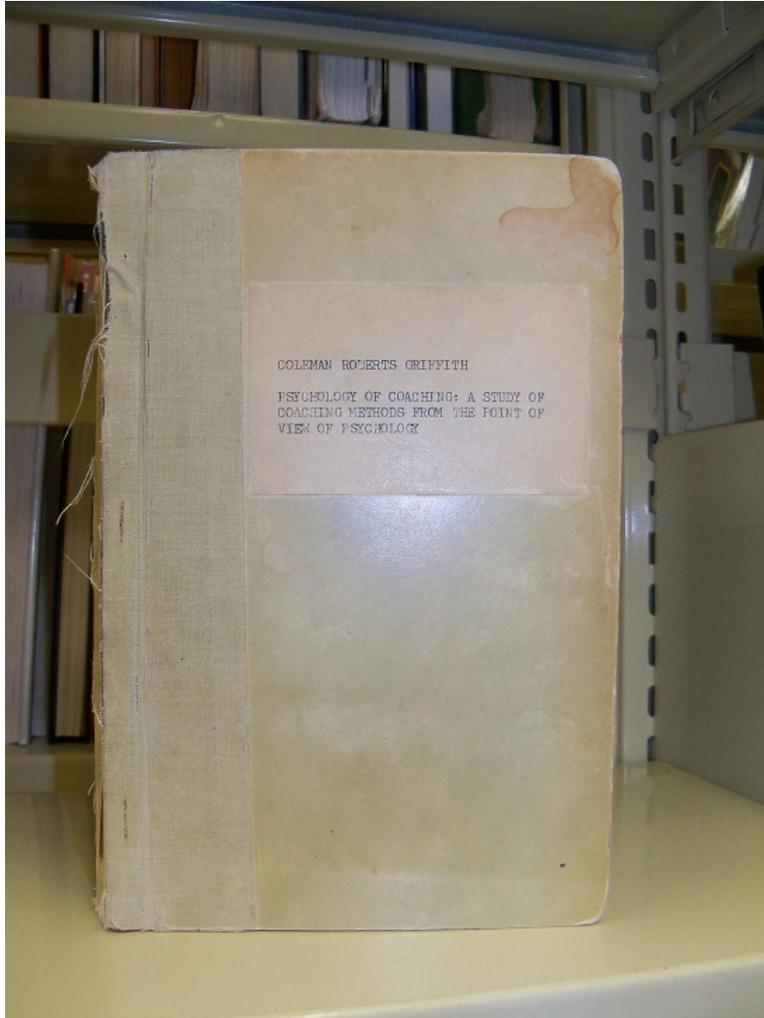
This is perhaps the most "on top" thing you can do nowadays - fully supporting non-English speakers is the quick track to being considered hot shit. It involves the manager with community building, education, cultural empathy and future projection of services.

"What do you suppose that would cost?"

Similar costs to the one above.

"Have other libraries made similar improvements"

All flourishing libraries have multi-lingual signage and staff. Stagnating libraries tend to not accommodate the greater needs of the community.



#### 4. Book Condition

- This is a common example of many of the books within the Kinesiology collection.
- “Studies do show that, when faced with a choice between two identical copies of a book, a person will take the copy that is in the best condition. No one wants to use an item that looks dirty, is covered in dust, has ripped pages, or is covered with stains. If you have time to do absolutely no weeding other than looking over your collection to remove any item that looks “ugly” or that you personally wouldn't handle, then this would be the most recommended tactic” (Disher, 2007, pg 124).
- Many of the books in the collection look or are quite disgusting. Some are even molding.
- This is the result of a lack of weeding, and results in a lack of circulation.
- Please see photos regarding size of collection, and circulation.

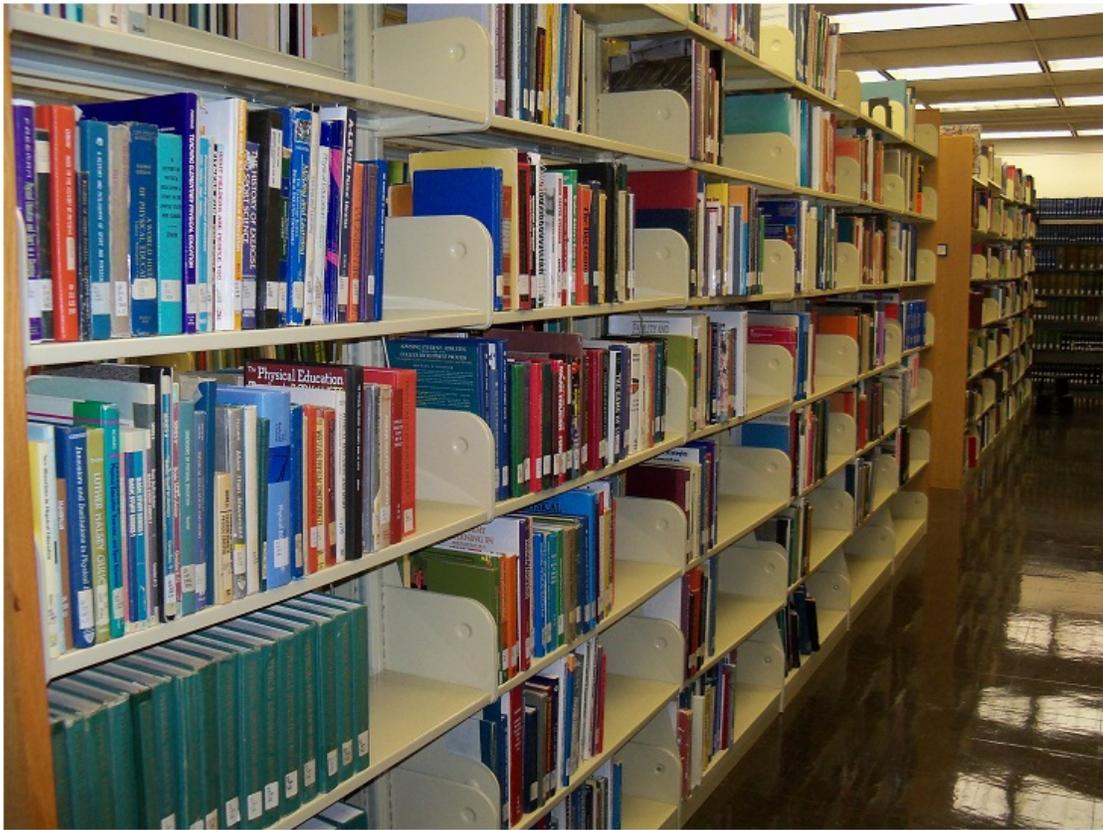
Solution:



\*In this photo volunteers are repairing books. Repairing items may be more cost effective than replace items entirely.

- To solve this problem, I am recommending that a sizable amount of money be put toward either repairing items, or replacing them entirely. Note that I am not suggesting this be done to all items. Weeding needs to be conducted in order to verify which materials would even be worth it. Repairs can be done by student circulation staff.
- Doing this would help improve the impression that the “collection manager” is on top of things because it would result in a good looking collection. A good looking collection really is half the battle when it comes to getting users to actually utilize the library. As much as I hate to say it, users will always judge a book by its cover.
- Given the size of this collection, I would say that a minimum of \$2-3,000 would need to be allocated for repairs or replacement.

## 5. Quantity vs.



Quality

- The kinesiology collection needs to be downsized, weeded, and updated.
- Quantity is not always best. Quality is.
- Cutting back on what is currently available is not as bad as it sounds for 2 reasons: 1) a large automated storage system is available, 2) the collection is collaborative (uses a consortium).

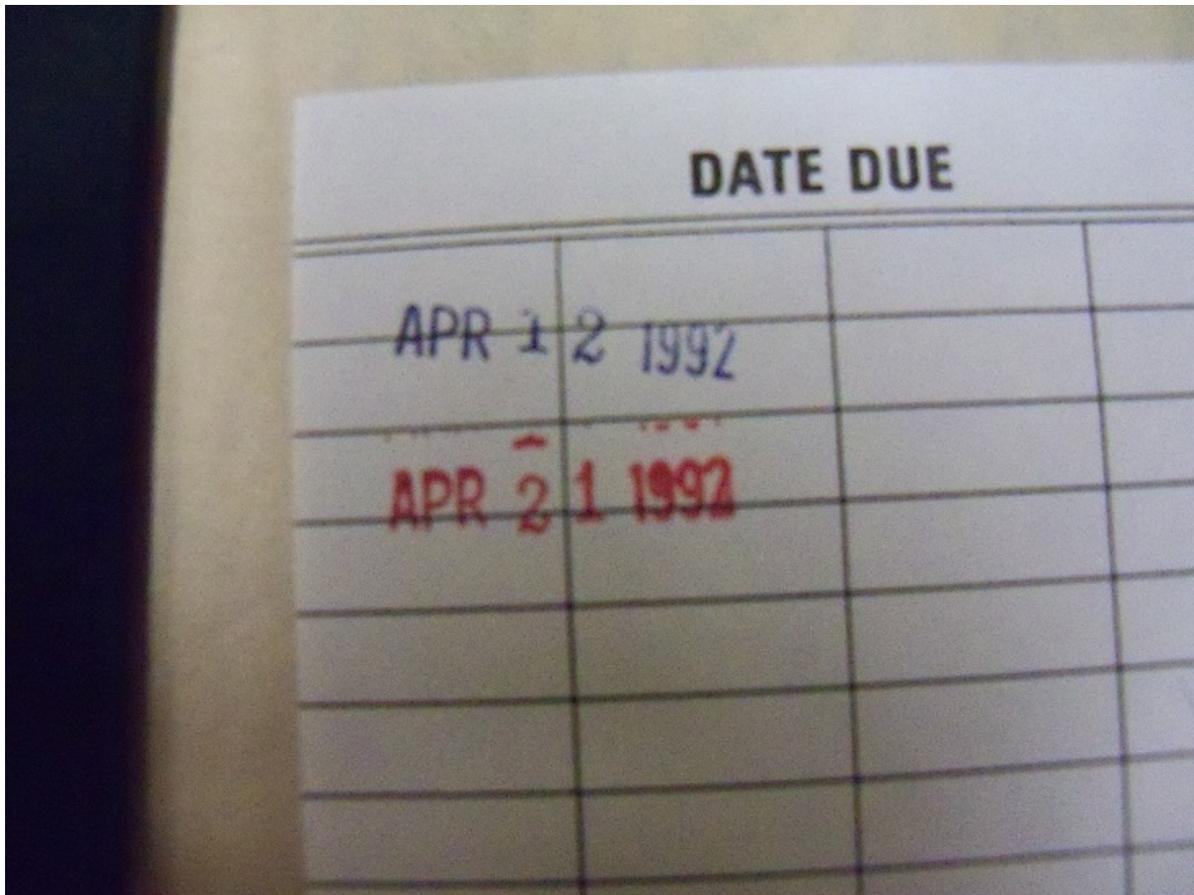
Solution:



\*This is a photo of the Sheldon Margen Public Health Library located at UC Berkeley. The collection itself looks smaller, but also more manageable, and more up to date.

- It is important for a collection to be weeded often to ensure relevancy. Kinesiology, being a type of health science really, especially needs to be kept current as new medical reports are released. If users are aware that the collection has been updated they will be more likely to see it as a good source of information.
- Having a smaller, but ultimately more relevant collection would reflect favorably upon the collection manager because it would show that the manager has paid attention to the collection recently. A collection that hasn't been weeded in over 10 years really gives off the impression that whoever is taking care of that collection has not made it a priority.
- In order to fix this problem, I propose that either library staff such as library assistants, student assistants, or pages be trained to conduct the weeding process. The ultimate say in which books actually go will be up to the librarian. I propose this because it will cost less for the library to have other staff do it rather than librarians. An even more cost effective method would be to have library interns conduct this.

## 6. Circulation

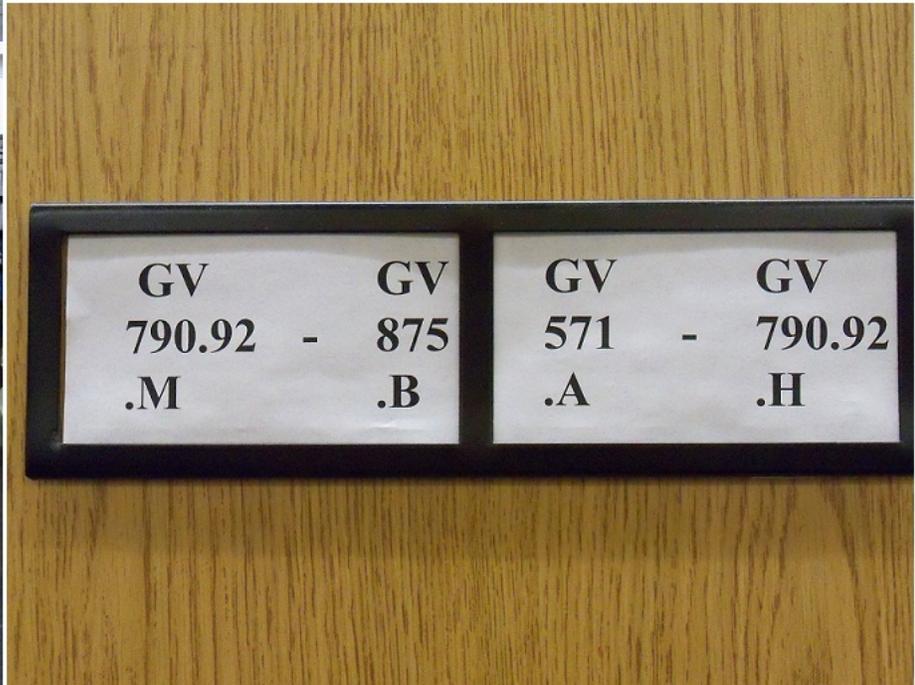


- Many of the materials have not been checked out in OVER 10 years. That's pretty bad.
- This may be a result of book condition, or size of collection, or seeming lack of relevancy.
- "Identifying material that hasn't been used as a candidate for removal from the library is, technically,

Solution:

\* A definite time frame needs to be decided upon. I suggest books not used within the past 10 years be removed from the collection. Non-circulating items that seem old, or unused may be placed into the automated storage system.

## 7. Unrealistic Info Retrieval Skills



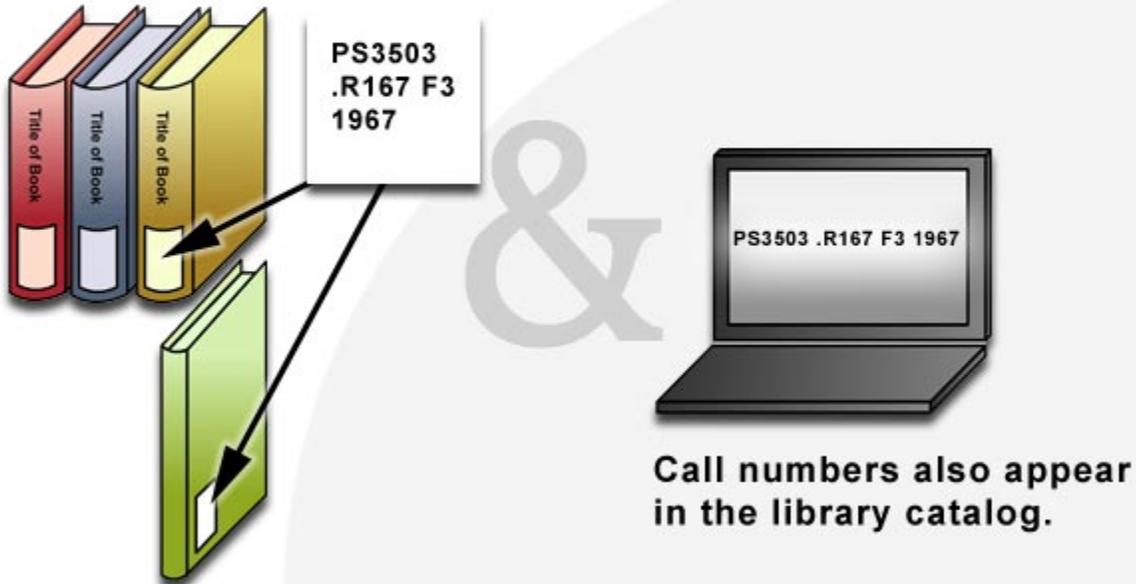
- This is actually a photo of one of the better signs at the library. Something like this can be found at the end of each stack. This one happens to be fairly readable when you get up close. For the most part they are completely faded.
- Many students complain about not being able to find the books they want. I try to explain how the signs will guide them, but many seem unable to grasp the concept.
- For library staff, using the LC system is second nature. It is often hard for us to imagine that people can't figure it out on their own. We can't just assume that people will figure it out. We have to guide them.
- I feel that making the signs at least large will help things. If larger they will be harder to pass up.

Solution:

\* We need to post signs like the photo below in visible areas.

# What is a Call Number?

Call numbers are letters and numbers that appear on the spine or bottom left of the cover of books in the library.

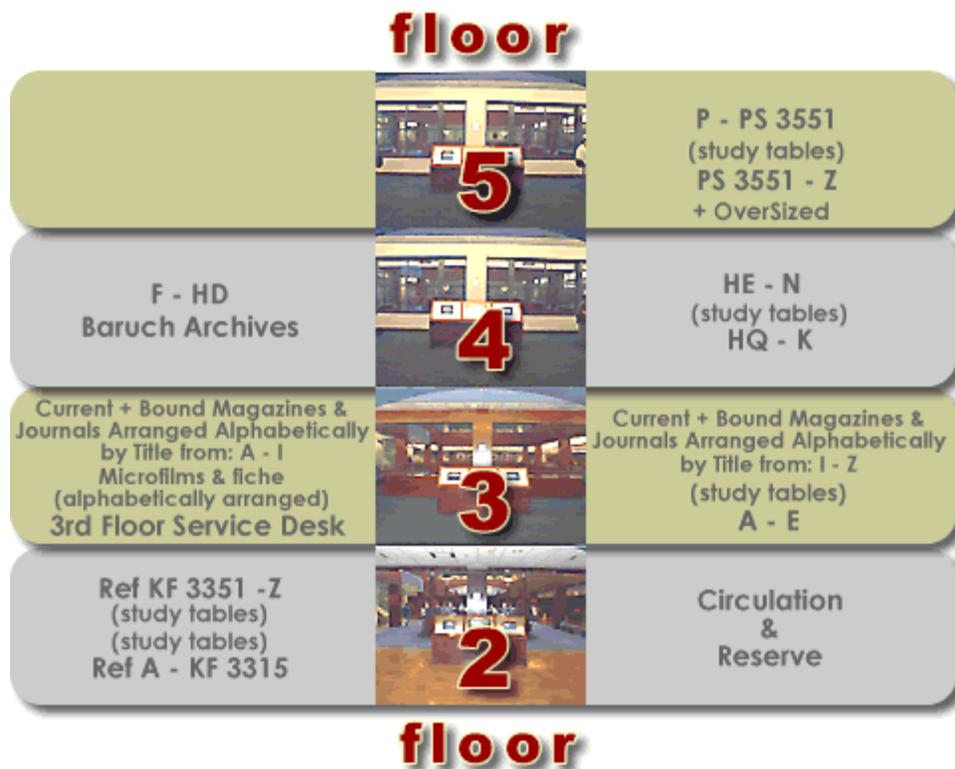


Call numbers also appear in the library catalog.

**Each book in the library has a unique call number.  
The call number is like an address; it tells where the book is located in the library.  
Use the first letters to determine on which floor of the library the book is located.**

Adapted from Honolulu Community College Library's "Understanding Call Numbers".  
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/legacylib>

\* This photo was found on a LibGuide at Georgia State University, and it was in turn adapted from Honolulu CC Library's "Understanding Call Numbers"



\* Also, a poster/sign like this would be useful so students can see what the call number range is on each floor. Graphic taken from Baruch College's Newman Library website.

\* If we use the same Company that created signs in Chris's issue then we are looking at about \$100/doz. We would need a minimum of 3 doz for the floor that the Kinesiology collection is on bringing the total to \$300.

Material: Aluminum

Height: 2"

Width: 8"

Sides: 1-Sided

Thickness: .040 inch

Colors: Full-Color

Mounting Accessories: None

Cutting Options: Square Corners

Holes: None

Durability Selected: Economy Grade Uncoated (Rated to last up to 3 years outdoors)

Design: As per your final color selections and design approval via email

Description: Quoted by Amanda Oriley

Price: \$9.00 each

Quantity: 12

Item total: \$108.00

\*This photo was found on a LibGuide at Georgia State University, and it was in turn adapted from Honolulu CC Library's "Understanding Call Numbers"

\*The fact that this exists reinforces the fact that many students haven't got a clue how to locate books using the LC system.

Laguna Beach Public Library serves a local community of 24,000, 86% of the population is white, and the median yearly income is \$ 95,000. The average user comprises two distinctive subsets: those within the median income range and those without any income, i.e. the local homeless population. As a result, the collection and context of the physical space faces a challenge, something akin to a marriage of opposites stemming "from conflicting values among different users. This is not new. What is new is that in some libraries, the traditional prerogatives of one community, have been supplanted by another" (2002, p. 111). From my recent observations, the physical space of the library is occupied for long periods each day by the local homeless population while other patrons generally spend under an hour, usually substantially less as most of the designated reading & study areas, computer workstations, and public restrooms are monopolized by the homeless, who essentially have no place to go. (Laguna Beach does not currently have a local shelter.)

"Does a library still need to be a place? In the era of the electronic library, we have to ask this question. Like any community, they need a physical setting to give themselves identity and to support their activities and services. The electronic revolution makes human encounters, which are the real basis of community, even more valuable and necessary, not less so. There is still a need for libraries to be real and tangible places"  
(p. 112)

## **8. Misallocation of Space**

The Teen Section is presently located adjacent to the computer workstations. After a recent generous donation, the teen section was cleared out of the Children's Section to accommodate a modern reading couch, which currently looks out the smoking area.



Several library clerks and librarians have confirmed that they receive the bulk of their teen visitors weekdays, after school. However, they are generally confined to one or two designated study tables, as many of the homeless patrons monopolize the reading and study areas for long periods. In addition, the teen section has felt a slight decline in circulation based on poor signage – many don't think to ask where the teen section was moved to, says the Children's Librarian. But, the Librarian also suspects that some of the teens, girls in particular, are reluctant to browse freely near some of the homeless patrons sitting nearby.



**Solution:**

Relocate the teen books back to the Children's Section. Or, rearrange the section so the shelving runs lengthwise, providing the teen patrons with some more privacy and clearly delineating a space where teens are afforded a "hang out." Also, clearly indicate – with a large sign in the Children's Section- that the teen section has moved and advise all staff to assist the teens with locating their materials.

- This will help the library and its collections by boosting circulation in the teen section and

also demonstrate that the collection manager is committed to ensuring that all library patrons have comfortable access to their desired materials.

- Ellie Anderson, Youth Services Librarian at Belmont Public Library, believes its essential to clearly delineate a space for the youth: "There's a third space that is created: not home and not school, it is something within the community. The library can be that for the child and for the teen."





## **9. Homeless Patrons**

The Laguna Beach Public Library has several choice reading areas and work-stations, some with ocean views. However, the homeless line up outside the library entrance right before 10 AM each day, with the intent on snagging one. Because there are no public shelters available, this subset of patron is often escaping either the harsh summer sun or infrequent winter rains & fog, bringing with them the bulk of their belongings.



When they are not surfing the web, they may find a quieter corner to sleep.



**Solution:**

Implement better training measures for the library staff to reinforce a code of acceptable conduct within the library, i.e. communicate that sleeping is not permitted and that the computer time is limited to one hour per session, etc. Include role-playing exercises and the clarification of rights in the case of both staff members and library users. Workshops and formal discussions will also, in effect, reinforce effective & immediate measures to control problem patrons.

- This will help the library and collection by increasing access to the already limited

reading & study areas and computer work stations, so that all patrons will have the same rights, not just the homeless patrons who most often frequent these areas for the better part of each day.

- With that said, when the library staff is able to maintain a sense of order over the space, by ensuring equal rights and access to all patrons and further demonstrating the scope of our tolerance and understanding for the potentially “problem patron” by not assigning this classification to all homeless patrons because “as citizens and former taxpayers, there is no reason why they should be treated differently from other library users” (Redfern, 2002, p. 109).
- Bernice Redfern, a Reference Librarian at Clark Library at SJSU, recommends something akin to the establishment of a code of conducts that “outlines acceptable behavior in libraries but will not limit the civil rights of the users.” Redfern also says “Rudeness, anger, and violence are on the rise in society as a whole and that public places such as libraries are experiencing an increase in this type of behavior as a consequence” (2002, p. 110). If angry societies make angry libraries than the library staff would need to be educated and trained to operate during times of social dysfunction because it is not just the homeless who are creating a stir in the library.
- Mary Kelleher, Public Services Librarian at University of St. Thomas-Houston, encounters teens from a halfway house that use the academic library resources, alongside the university community, without the weighty tuition and sometimes without the respect that comes along with it. Kelleher resolves to:  
Treat them exactly as you would your students.
  - a. Greet them with hospitality.
  - b. Don’t guard or watch them any more than you might your other patrons.
  - c. Answer all seemingly menial requests for help promptly and with the same openness and enthusiasm you’d give to a complex research question.
  - d. Wisdom is not the prerogative of any one class or social group.
 (2009, p. 44)





## **10. Empty Shelves**

Several sizable areas in the Fiction and Nonfiction sections appear to be thinning.





While this may be an example of a recent weeding of outdated materials, the reconfiguration of the shelves has not experienced an equal replenishment of the collection and has thusly reflected a state of neglect. It is important for the collection to reflect the most up to date and accurate information, with materials that the patron wants to read. However, there has been some contention, judging by the comments of most of the librarians, that the recent weeding process has let go of several, arguably, important books on Laguna Beach history, most of which end up on one of several carts, advertising books for .25 cents. (These carts rotate from in front of the self-checkout desk, to the front of the copier, and to the ash/ cigarette receptacle near the library entrance.) In addition, another librarian pointed out that some Nonfiction materials still had a consistent circulation rate.

**Solution:**

Weed the materials more as an ongoing process vs. a large, infrequent project so that the decrease of shelved materials is less noticeable to the patron. Also, establish a better criteria for the letting go of materials which may be of local historical significance or have demonstrated a sound circulation statistic. Finally, situate the carts, selling the discarded books, so that they do not obscure the self-checkout desk nor, set them up outside near the ashtray/ cigarette receptacle where the nonsmoking patrons would be less-inclined to look.

This improvement helps the library and its collections by making empty shelves less noticeable to the patrons, thereby lending some credibility to the collection manager in that he/she is

actively monitoring the collection and routinely weeding materials instead of doing it on an infrequent basis. Most libraries employ the standard practice of regular weeding based on a set criteria. For each subject, the specialist evaluates their materials to determine the relevancy of a particular item based on guidelines such condition, circulation, special interests, etc.



## References

Kelleher, M. (2009). We must all serve the disconnected. *Library Journal*, 134(17), 44

Redfern, B. (2002). Difficult library patron. *Reference Librarian*, 36(75), 105-113.