
The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the online library jargon glossary published by UNC Libraries. The glossary, developed by UNC Libraries Staff, is a resource that provides definitions for library terminology. Glossaries are becoming an increasingly common element of library websites, however, little research has been done on their effectiveness as a resource for their intended audience. This quantitative and qualitative study illustrates that users who access a glossary do not understand library jargon better than user who do not. Suggestions for enhancing glossaries and library jargon teaching methods are provided.

Headings:

Surveys/Internet resources;

Terminology/Internet resources;

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill/Web sites
AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ONLINE LIBRARY JARGON GLOSSARY.

by

Elizabeth H. Foster

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
April 2010

Approved by

______________________________
Dr. Robert Losee
Introduction:

Every discipline has its own vocabulary; library science is no different. However, library science vocabulary is present in both academic literature and in libraries. To effectively navigate a library, a patron must be comfortable with library jargon. This is a pressing issue in academic libraries because patrons are often overwhelmed by their size and scope. The purpose of this study is to determine if online library glossaries are effective at improving patron knowledge of library jargon terms and their comfort level with said terms.

Literature Review:

In his article on the history of library terminology, Fred Shapiro states that librarians have a legacy of repurposing common words to give them a professional meaning. The invention of new terms to describe concepts is rare. Library terminology can be separated into two categories: “words of common meaning slightly adapted to a specialized library usage” or “word combinations of obvious signification.”

John Nicholson asserts that “jargon” is perhaps not the best descriptor for library terminology. Jargon “is not a dialect” and it does not consist of “words spoken solely by […] librarian[s].” Library terminology is better described as “a large number of common words and phrases, with only slight adaptations to professional use.” For three months, Nicholson took notes on the professional vocabularies of librarians working in public,

school, and university settings. The final sample consisted of forty librarians and a few library school students. By dividing the most common words used by the sample into categories of librarianship, such as reference, cataloging, circulation, and so on, Nicholson found that there was a “great deal of overlapping of the terms used.” However, circulation librarians had the most specific and unique work vocabulary. Administrators were found to have a more general vocabulary. Overall trends included a propensity to use abbreviations and initials when discussing tools, associations, and departments.

Nicholson also analyzed terms listed in the ALA Glossary of Library Terms, published in 1943, and placed them into four different categories: words that are unique to librarianship, words adapted from the book industry for use in librarianship, words that enter librarians’ vocabularies due to their association with an area of scholarship, and words that are too general to classify and should not be considered library words.

637 words in the glossary were checked against the criteria. Only 51% of the words were found to be unique to librarianship. 30% of words consisted of terms repurposed from the book industry. 13% of the words were related to scholarship fields that librarians commonly encounter. 6% of the terms were too general to classify. A random sampling of thirty pages of the glossary found that the percentages were “relatively consistent” across the glossary.

---

3 Nicholson, 2.
4 Nicholson, 2.
5 Nicholson, 17.
6 Nicholson, 17.
7 Nicholson, 2-3.
8 Nicholson, 3.
Gaby Haddow and Jane Klobas argue that the connection, or lack thereof, between research and practice has contributed to a variety of knowledge gaps between researchers and librarians.  Specifically, they reference Maguire’s observation, made in 1975, that the “diffusion and application of the results of research” has not taken place on a large scale. After conducting an extensive literature review, Haddow and Klobas identified eleven separate knowledge gaps, one of which was the terminology gap. The authors state that the potential for the terminology gap exists when “each group uses terminology that is not understood by the other.” This lack of understanding has encouraged librarians to ignore research about their profession that they do not understand. Ronald Powell, Lynda Baker, and Joseph Mika argue that the prevalence of jargon in library research literature “discourages practitioners” from actively reading the literature. Respondents to their survey frequently stated that a less formal and more user-friendly writing style would encourage them to read library research. Respondents found library jargon and research jargon to be slightly overwhelming.

Anne Marie Candido argues that disturbing jargon related trends are making libraries less user-friendly. Clarity, she argues, is the most important aspect of communication. However, libraries have adopted more academic or specialized terms

---

10 Haddow and Klobas, 30.
13 Powell, Baker, and Mika 68.
in order to describe services to the public. Candido finds this trend as troubling because it encourages unnatural writing styles and is not appealing to patrons.  

However, Candido readily admits that some jargon is “necessary to communicate exact meanings.” Samples of terms that are necessary include “holds,” “recalls,” “keyword searching,” and “smart barcodes.” The author argues that some jargon is “useful for its brevity” but could be expressed more accurately and clearly; a sample term would be “subject-specific.” Jargon describing activities, such as “information-gathering behavior,” can be inexact and unnecessarily wordy. As libraries become more specialized, they will continue to adopt jargon in order to establish a technical language, however, Candido still greatly prefers the plain language equivalent.

Rachael Naismith and Joan Stein’s study on library jargon comprehension in undergraduates produced interesting findings. Out of all of the questions asked, 48.7% were answered incorrectly, indicating that subjects could only identify terms almost half of the time. The study consisted of twenty multiple-choice questions; the mean number of incorrect answers was 10.290. In another portion of the study, participants’ reasoning behind their answers was recorded and the researchers analyzed the audio recordings. Subjects admitted to guessing or using standard test-taking techniques, such as determining the correct answer based on the specificity of the choices provided. At the same time, subjects stated that sometimes they knew the correct answer. Other times, they knew the word in another context and attempted to apply it to a library context.

---

15 Candido, 434.
16 Candido, 435.
17 Candido, 436.
19 Naismith and Stein, 549.
Based on their quantitative and qualitative findings, Naismith and Stein put forward several potential options for closing the terminology gap. These suggestions included asking a patron if they understood a term during the reference interview, using visual aids, defining terms the first time they are used in a discussion, using formal library instruction methods to teach library jargon, and attaching printed glossaries of terms to written publications. These suggestions were ranked from most to least accommodating to the patron; glossaries were ranked as a particularly accommodating solution. While some options appeared to be better than others, the authors argued, “Neither end of the continuum is ideal.” The authors argued that while it is unnecessary and time-consuming for the librarian to define term every time they are used in a particular setting, it does not behoove the patron to ignore jargon altogether. 20

Abdus Sattar Chaudhry and Meng Choo found in their study that subjects were able to correctly identify terms 75% of the time. Despite this initial success, 65% of subjects had greater difficulty identifying at least one technical term. 21 The study, modeled after the Naismith and Stein study, consisted of a questionnaire of 20 multiple-choice library terminology questions. The terms used were taken from a content analysis of librarians’ e-mail replies to patrons. 22 The researchers found that for some terms, participants overwhelmingly selected the same incorrect answer. This could be attributed to commonly held misunderstandings amongst patrons. 23 Participants used similar techniques as those in the Naismith and Stein study such as multiword unpacking,

20 Naismith and Stein, 551.
22 Chaudhry and Choo, 344.
23 Chaudhry and Choo, 345-46.
guessing, and knowing, in order to answer questions. Overall, the sample had a very good understanding of library technical terms. However, jargon still had the potential to obfuscate the true meaning of a term. The researchers also recommended a balanced approach to ensuring patrons fully understand library terminology.

Norman Hutcherson adapted these oft-cited studies into one appropriate for the Internet age. Two fifteen-term surveys were adapted from the literature, reference interviews, and library instruction sessions. Students were asked to select the correct answer from four possible choices. The response pool consisted of 300 first and second year university students who had taken a seven-week library skills lab. Out of the 297 completed surveys, only 3 (1.01%) were correct. The students provided the correct answer to 62.31% of the questions. Hutcherson found that commonly used terms such as plagiarism, research, and copyright, had higher levels of recognition that library specific terms, such as Boolean logic, controlled vocabulary, and truncation. Hutcherson identified a third group of terms, such as abstract, authority, citation, and precision, in which the library meaning directly conflicted with the typically understood meaning, creating confusion.

Kimberly Parker and Daniel Dollar issue a call for balance with regards to library jargon. The authors argue that the “profession needs to strike a balance between what we know versus what readers need to know—the goal being to provide just what is

24 Chaudhry and Choo, 348.
25 Chaudhry and Choo, 348.
27 Hutcherson, 352.
28 Hutcherson, 353.
absolutely necessary for readers to navigate successfully.” 29 The authors also state that terminology should be consistent, in order to minimize the potential for complexity, in this case with regard to understanding electronic resources. 30

Mark Spivey states that librarians should carefully examine library jargon on websites in order to ensure the potential for successful navigation. Spivey notes that experienced users can even be caught off guard by the names of new databases and platforms; the librarian is necessary in order to ensure that the patron is able access the wealth of information that is available to them. 31 Web designers of library homepages should be aware that not all users are sophisticated or adept at understanding new vocabulary in context. 32

Spivey states that a possible solution is to embed explanations for unclear vocabulary on the homepage or next to the resource in question. Glossaries are also identified as a potential solution. The elimination of acronyms also brings clarity to a library homepage. 33 The author argues that the prevalence of unclear vocabulary “on increasingly minimalist library [homepages] warrants elucidation.” 34 In order clearly convey academic concepts to remote-end users, libraries and librarians must make vocabulary clear and easily definable, or at least make it easy to find the meaning of a troublesome term. 35

Catherine Ayre, Inese Smith, and Marigold Cleeve conducted an analysis of

---

30 Parker and Dollar 421.
32 Spivey, 152.
33 Spivey, 153.
34 Spivey, 155.
35 Spivey, 155.
existing online glossaries of library jargon. 50 glossaries were selected from an initial pool of 230 glossaries for detailed analysis. All of the glossaries were published by university or college libraries. The glossaries were evaluated for currency, location within library websites, design, use of links, content, and definitions.

The researchers found that 11 of the 50 glossaries contained no date. 4 glossaries contained the date of creation. 6 contained the date of copyright. 9 contained unexplained dates. 25 glossaries contained the date last updated. Based on this data, the researchers concluded that the number of online glossaries has been increasing over time. Over two thirds of the glossaries had been updated within the past three years, implying that libraries are actively maintaining these resources.

Most of the glossaries were located or linked on instruction pages, guides, research resources, or in a help section. Only three glossaries were not incorporated into the library site in this way; instead, they were found in sections containing other information. Glossaries were most likely displayed on a standard web page; only three consisted of PDF files. The majority of glossaries contained terms listed in alphabetical order; however, some contained the option to divide terms by category or subject area.

Links were frequently used to link a user to a section of the glossary starting with a particular letter. Only a few glossaries used links to connect similar terms or concepts. Links were also used to direct users to more detailed information outside of the confines of the glossary.

The content and length of glossaries varied. Five glossaries in the sample

---

37 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 127.
38 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 127.
39 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 128.
contained more than 100 terms. A term analysis was conducted on the 20 shortest glossaries. These glossaries culled together terms from three different categories: terms pertaining to circulation, terms pertaining to journals, and terms pertaining to certain types of materials. Other common occurrences included terms defining citations and bibliographies, terms identifying and describing catalogues, terms identifying different locations in the library where materials could be found, explanations of library processes, additional library locations, acronyms, terms defining the different components of books, and terms explaining the concept of copyright. The researched noticed that while the majority of terms were directly related to librarianship, some described concepts more closely identified with the Internet and information technology.  

Definitions of terms varied greatly across the sample. For example, 12 of the glossaries in the subset of twenty shorter glossaries, defined periodicals as works that are published “regularly” or “at regular intervals.” In contrast, two glossaries used the phrase “on a continuous and predictable schedule,” while one emphasized that periodicals can be published irregularly. Other aspects that were discussed in the sample included the frequency of publishing rates, types of periodicals, the difference between serials and periodicals, and subject matter. This analysis indicates that definitions are arbitrary and crafted to fit the needs of a particular library or institution.

Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve also conducted a survey of librarians who created or maintained glossaries. The most popular reason for having a glossary was to explain terms in context. Two respondents indicated that their glossaries were attempts to follow the trend. Glossaries were often intended for use by users, not staff, and for an audience.

---

40 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 128.
41 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 129.
that spoke English as a first language. Audiences who librarians hoped would benefit from a glossary included new students, younger students, international students, and distance learners.\textsuperscript{42} Glossaries are seen as a way to reach students who may not have the opportunity to participate in face-to-face library instruction. They are also used in the reference interview as a resource librarians can point out.\textsuperscript{43}

The statistics on actual usage of glossaries was the main inspiration for this research paper. 73\% of librarians stated that they did not know who normally viewed their glossaries. 84.3\% did not know how often patrons were consulting a glossary. Only a few librarians admitted to having first hand knowledge of a glossary being used, mainly because they were emphasized in library instruction classes or colleagues had pointed patrons to the resource.\textsuperscript{44}

Moreover, librarians were divided over the actual usefulness of glossaries. Some respondents stated that glossaries had the potential to be useful but may not actually be useful in practice. Another respondent stated that the hoped patrons found the resource to be useful, but they lacked the necessary feedback or data to justify its existence. The majority of respondents stated that glossaries were probably not useful. Many stated that their patrons were unaware that the glossary existed. Marketing the glossary was viewed as necessary in order to sufficiently get the word out. One librarian argued in favor of discontinuing the use of library jargon and glossaries as a way to close the terminology gap.\textsuperscript{45}

The survey found that glossaries are usually created by a single librarian or a

\textsuperscript{42} Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 129-30.
\textsuperscript{43} Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 130.
\textsuperscript{44} Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 130.
\textsuperscript{45} Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 130.
small group of staff. Few libraries consult their users when creating and maintaining their glossaries. The majority of librarians do not believe that their glossaries are used or are useful. The researchers state that more research needs to be done in order to determine the “extent to which glossaries are actually used, whether marketing of glossaries would increase their usage or whether better ways of solving the jargon problem” exist.

Several studies have been conducted that touch on the subject of user preferences regarding library jargon. Laura Cobus, Valeda Frances Dent, and Anita Ondrusek observed users having vocabulary limitations and problems interpreting library jargon while using the Hunter College Libraries website. The authors came to the conclusion that using new terminology in “activity-related contexts,” such as placing the OPAC under a heading saying “find a book,” might help close the terminology gap. The authors also recognized that some jargon problems can not be easily solved. For example, they state that untrained users will enter terms into the first search box in an OPAC or database, ignoring jargon that clarifies search strategies (such as keyword, browse, or combine terms).

Carol Wright’s study of 114 ARL libraries’ websites found that 32% of sites required users to guess the meaning of jargon in context, “a successful path to Internet-searching pages.” 25% of websites used vague terms, such as “help,” “find,” “quick search,” or “facts and guides,” which offered no context to users and linked to a variety

---

46 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 132.
47 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 133.
49 Cobus, Dent, and Ondrusek 241.
of pages on the site. Only 28% of sites used “sufficiently descriptive terms” to ensure that users would access Internet search engines on their first click. Wright argues that vague terms and jargon terms complicate library websites. These terms have multiple meanings and are not descriptive enough in context.

The UNC Libraries Glossary is linked in the footer of the Introduction to Library Research Tutorial. However, it is not a prominent link. The glossary is not linked on the Library Website A-Z Index. If a user conducts a site search for “glossary,” the first result is the Manuscripts Research Tutorial Glossary. The fifth link on the page is the International Students Library Tutorial Glossary, which is identical to the one linked on the Introduction to Library Research Tutorial. The glossary used in this study is the 9th link on the page of search results.

Figure 1: UNC Libraries Introduction To Library Research Tutorial

---

51 Wright, 282.
52 Wright, 283.
53 Wright, 284.
The UNC Libraries Glossary follows the traditional format featuring terms listed alphabetically, with links at the top to each letter section. The glossary consists of 47 terms, each with UNC Libraries specific definitions (such as references to Davis Library, the Media Resources Center in the Undergraduate Library, etc.).
Methodology:

This survey tested the effectiveness of the UNC Libraries Glossary. The purpose was to determine the effectiveness of the glossary, student knowledge of library jargon, and if online glossaries are a valuable resource for students and if they are worth maintaining. In general, the study provided data that can assist librarians in their efforts to delineate jargon to undergraduate populations, regardless of if library glossaries are the most effective way to obtain this objective.

Following the model used in the Naismith and Stein study, twenty-eight library jargon terms were selected for the survey (found in Appendix A). Each vocabulary question was constructed to include the correct answer (a modified version of the definition in the online glossary) and three incorrect answers. The incorrect responses were gleaned from reference interviews and instruction sessions. The survey featured the opportunity to consent or decline to testing, a basic demographic information section
(used to determine eligibility), a library jargon multiple-choice section, and a concluding section for thoughts and opinions about the glossary.

Participants were recruited via a message sent out using the UNC Mass E-mail System. The opportunity to win one of two $25 iTunes gift cards was offered as an incentive to complete the survey. Originally, several messages were planned, however, the initial response produced enough data to accurately study the correlation between responses. Freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors were all invited to participate. Participants were instructed that they could opt out of the survey at any time by closing their browser window. Potentially sensitive information, including IP addresses and e-mail addresses (necessary for participants who wished to enter the incentive drawing) were promptly removed from the main data set. The e-mail addresses were stored in an Excel worksheet prior to the incentive drawing, and then were deleted. The entire survey was designed to last no more than 15 to 20 minutes.

A typical usability test format of observing and recording user interactions was not used because the glossary is currently a simple list of definitions. An online survey allowed students to use the glossary as they would in a non-testing environment, without a librarian to assist them. The main objective of the study design was to determine the quality of the online glossary and if it actually improved results or increased comfort level with library jargon. The online survey software Qualtrics was configured to separate students randomly into a control group, which did not access the glossary, and a test group, which did access the glossary and were instructed to view it for no more than 10 minutes.
71 participants accessed the glossary and 33 participants were in the control group. In order to comply with IRB regulations, no forced entry validation was used on the survey. This resulted in a slight skew of the number of participants in each group. 24 surveys were deleted from the results because they were incomplete. These participants usually entered the demographic information, were sorted into a group by the software, and clicked through to the end in an attempt to enter themselves in the incentive drawing. These results were deleted from the survey in order to get a complete and accurate picture of the students who fully participated. The survey did reach its target of 100 complete responses.

The data was then run through the JMP 8 statistics package. The responses were analyzed for comfort level, comprehension, glossary effectiveness, and attitudes towards the resource. Quantitative and qualitative data were both collected.

**Results:**

The survey received responses from 128 consenting participants; 104 of these were complete surveys. 15 of the respondents were male and 89 were female. Subjects ranged in age from 18 to 40 years of age; the majority of participants fell in the 18 to 23 year old age group. 12 freshman, 16 sophomores, 25 juniors, and 36 seniors participated. 15 participants identified their class rank as “other.” None of the participants were international students. 8 participants identified themselves as being past or current employees of UNC Libraries. 38 participants stated that they had attended a library instruction session at some point. 58 stated that they had never attended a library instruction session. 8 of the respondents were not sure if they had attended a library
instruction session. 71 participants viewed the glossary and 33 participants were in the control group.

The control group correctly answered 576 questions. The test group correctly answered 1236 questions. The total number of correct answers was 1812. These totals were then divided by the number of individuals in each group multiplied by twenty-eight. These results are listed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Test Groups</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct Answers</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>1236</td>
<td>1812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Attempts</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percent Correct</td>
<td>62.34%</td>
<td>62.17%</td>
<td>62.22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results indicate that both test groups had nearly equivalent success at answering the questions. Based on these percentages, one can conclude that library glossaries in their current format are not effective.

The following table consists of a more specific breakdown of the data for each vocabulary term. Since the groups contained unequal amounts of participants, the results are represented in terms of the percent of correct answers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folio</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monograph</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacks</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call Number</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Document</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microform</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sources</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodical</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly Journal</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Headings</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boolean Searching</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled Vocabulary</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Catalog</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serials</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truncation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Journal</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Sources</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results by term are particularly illuminating. The test group had more success defining the terms citation, folio, monograph, stacks, index, online catalog, truncation, and E-Journal. In contrast, the control group had more success defining the terms microform, primary sources, periodical, scholarly journal, subject headings, abstract, controlled vocabulary, field, circulation, and secondary sources. The difference between
groups was negligible for the terms record, government document, keyword, Boolean searching, peer review, serials, and reference.

In addition to defining terms, both test groups were asked several follow up questions. With regard to their experience defining terms, the most popular result in both groups was “somewhat difficult.” A greater percentage of the control group identified the task as being “difficult.” 18% of both samples identified the task as “somewhat easy” or “easy.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Defining Terms</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Difficult</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Easy</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subjects in the control group were more likely to visit the library “frequently.” The most popular result in both test groups was “sometimes.” Around a quarter of each test group stated that they visited the library “not often” or “never.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Library Patronage</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Often</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subjects in the control group were ten percent more open to using an online glossary when conducting research than individuals in the test group. The test group was
almost equally split amongst the three possible responses. 21% of the control group stated that they would not use an online glossary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would You Use A Glossary</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test group was asked about their experience using the glossary. The group was overwhelmingly “neutral” about their experience. However, 48% of the test group stated that the glossary was “helpful” or “somewhat helpful.” Only 3% of the test group stated that glossary in its current form was “somewhat unhelpful.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Using Glossary</th>
<th>Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Helpful</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unhelpful</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhelpful</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most subjects in both test groups stated that they found library jargon to be “intuitive.” 12% of the control group stated that they found jargon counter intuitive, compared to 4% of the test group. 44% of the test group and 33% of the control group were unsure when it came to defining jargon as “intuitive” or “counter intuitive.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology Is</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter Intuitive</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several subjects used an optional comments section to further clarify their opinions. One subject stated, “a glossary is definitely needed.” Another subject questioned the value of an online glossary, stating, “defining library jargon around the
library itself would be useful. I don't necessarily think that an online glossary would be very helpful as I think students would be more inclined to read terminology that's physically posted as they're searching for books.”

Another subject pointed out the possibility for confusion when the same terms are used in classroom and library contexts, stating, “some terms in library use are also used in classes, such as citation and I'm not sure if they mean the same thing.” One subject summarized their views by stating “This language is somewhat strange to me, though not completely foreign, and I believe that I am competent at navigating in the library without fully knowing the definitions of these terms.”

One subject suggested that the library website should have “drop-down boxes” so “students could learn the meanings of words right on the page while they are researching.” Another argued in favor of a print glossary handout that could be distributed at all library sessions.

**Discussion and Conclusions:**

In order to better measure jargon comprehension, the results for each term were sorted into four different groups. The first group consisted of well-understood terms, correctly defined by 75 to 100 percent of the sample. The second group consisted of generally understood terms, correctly defined by 50 to 75 percent of the sample. The third group consisted of poorly understood terms, correctly defined by 25 to 50 percent of the sample. The final group consisted of misunderstood terms, correctly defined by 0 to 25 percent of the sample. The terms in each group for both groups are listed in the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term Group</th>
<th>Test Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-Understood Terms</strong></td>
<td>Boolean Searching, Call Number, Database, Folio, Government Document, Microform, Primary Sources, Scholarly Journal, Stacks</td>
<td>Abstract, Boolean Searching, Call Number, Field, Government Document, Microform, Primary Sources, Scholarly Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generally Understood Terms</strong></td>
<td>Abstract, Circulation, Citation, E-Journal, Field, Monograph, Online Catalog, Peer Review, Periodical, Record, Secondary Sources, Serials, Subject Headings, Thesis</td>
<td>Circulation, Database, Folio, Monograph, Online Catalog, Peer Review, Record, Secondary Sources, Serials, Stacks, Subject Headings, Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poorly Understood Terms</strong></td>
<td>Truncation</td>
<td>Citation, Controlled Vocabulary, E-Journal, Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Misunderstood Terms</strong></td>
<td>Controlled Vocabulary, Index, Keyword, Reference</td>
<td>Index, Keyword, Truncation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By sorting the terms into categories, it is easier to determine which groups understood certain terms better. As stated earlier, the difference between several terms was negligible. All of these terms ended up in the same category except for reference.

Using this data, the librarians responsible for maintaining the UNC Libraries Glossary could edit the terms in order to more clearly define the concepts they want to impart to patrons. For example, the terms index and keyword were both misunderstood by both groups. The terms truncation, controlled vocabulary, and reference were also frequent causes of confusion.

Index is defined as “list of citations to journal articles and/or books arranged by subject, author, or title. Indexes may be in print format, electronic format, or both.” 56 By linking to examples of prominent print indexes in the catalog, librarians could better illustrate that they are not referring to the type of index found at the back of a reference book. Contextual examples of what index means in a library research context could help lessen confusion amongst patrons.

Keyword is defined as “any word in an item's record. In an electronic index or database, keywords can be combined together using the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT.” The term is further explained in the definition for keyword searching as being “more flexible than subject searching because it allows the searcher to select his or her own words or phrases for the search.” 57 In this particular instance, it would be beneficial to explain the differences and similarities between Internet search engines, such as Google, and database search engines. By explaining the concept in the context of

the familiar activity of Internet searching, librarians can differentiate keyword searches from subject searches.

The definition for reference is problematic because it discusses the services of the department as well as the materials provided. Both samples overwhelmingly connected the term reference with their understanding of reference materials. However, in the glossary definition, the first aspect listed is the reference staff. \(^{58}\) Two separate definitions for reference desk and reference stacks/resources could help break the definition into more easily digestible sections. In this case, the connotation most heavily associated with the term is not the desired one; therefore, increased specificity can help increase clarity.

Truncation and controlled vocabulary are both technical terms that do not necessarily have relevancy in everyday life. The definitions listed on the glossary are clear and specific. \(^{59}\) These terms may be better explained in face-to-face interactions with patrons since there is high potential for confusion.

Terms falling into the first two categories are either well understood by patrons or well defined on the glossary. The terms citation and E-Journal fell into the poorly understood category for the control group. However, the test group understood these terms better after accessing the glossary.

However, the fact that both groups achieved an average of 62% correct answers reinforces previous findings regarding library jargon. The results from both of Hutcherson’s surveys combined found that patrons answered 62.31% of questions

---


The results from Naismith and Stein’s study indicate that 51.3% of questions were answered correctly. 61 The results from Chaudhry and Choo’s study indicate that 76.9% of questions were answered correctly. This discrepancy can be explained by emphasizing that they had a small sample of 40 subjects. Furthermore, the subjects consisted of patrons of the National Reference Library of Singapore and acquaintances of the staff from the Library Support Services of the National Library Board of Singapore, increasing the potential for familiarity with research library terms and services. 62

A caveat to this information is that the terms used in these studies were not necessarily found on the UNC Libraries Glossary, the source for the terms used in this study. For example, Hutcherson’s study used the term Boolean logic instead of Boolean Searching. Hutcherson also used only five terms that were identical to the ones used in this study. 63 Naismith and Stein only used four terms that were used in this study. 64 Chaudhry and Choo used three terms that were used in this study. 65 There was also a great deal of variation in terms used when the Hutcherson, Naismith and Stein, and Chaudhry and Choo studies were compared. This can be attributed to the assumption that each library has its own vocabulary and those terms are more likely to be stressed in a survey. In order to accurately test a glossary used at UNC Chapel Hill, the terms needed to come from a local glossary, not from previous studies.

This data supports the findings of Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve. Librarians who were responsible for maintaining glossaries expressed a variety of diverging opinions. One

---

60 Hutcherson, 352.
61 Naismith and Stein, 548.
62 Chaudhry and Choo, 347, 343.
63 Hutcherson, 352.
64 Naismith and Stein, 549.
65 Chaudhry and Choo, 346.
argued that glossaries are a “staple library guide” and should therefore be available online. Two argued that glossaries should be useful but may not necessarily be useful in practice. One stated that they hoped patrons found the tool useful, but they had not data to support its usefulness. The majority of respondents stated that they felt glossaries were not useful because they “seemed rarely if ever consulted.” 73% did not know who used their glossaries and 84.3% did not know if their glossaries were used regularly. 66

The data found in this study indicates that glossaries may not be useful in practice. Each subject group had relatively equal success defining the terms whether they accessed the glossary or not. Moreover, the distribution of terms across comprehension categories indicates that the same terms frequently appeared for both subject groups, with only a few differences.

What should be done in a professional setting if there are no major differences? There are three possible options: leave the glossaries as they currently are, increase the potential for learning in context when using a glossary, or eliminate the glossary as a staple of the library website.

Several respondents to the Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve survey argued that glossaries have the potential to benefit several user populations, such as younger students, new students, international students, and distance learners. Anyone who lacks the opportunity to interact with a librarian could have something to gain by looking at an online glossary. Other groups with the potential to benefit include academic staff, individuals doing “serious research,” and library staff. 67

66 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 130.
67 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 130.
These respondents also noted that glossaries could be used in a variety of ways. They can be used to augment instruction and training. Glossaries can also be used to encourage independent learning. Moreover, librarians can direct patrons who need additional information about a concept to a glossary. 68

In order to increase the usefulness of glossaries, librarians could focus on increasing opportunities for learning terms in context. For example, the subjects in this survey suggested increased signage around the library so students could learn terms while actively seeking information. Handouts in instruction sessions would allow students to have easy access to a print resource, which would not force them to access another part of the library website in order to find the definition they need. Drop down menus or rollover definitions on the library website could increase the potential for active learning while information seeking. Emphasizing the difference between library and classroom contexts for terms in instruction sessions and on the library website could allow for better understanding in each educational setting.

The final option would be to eliminate the glossary as an online resource. The majority of respondents to the Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve study were convinced that patrons were not learning from glossaries or using them. 69 After examining the data collected for this study, it is apparent that there may be some truth to their suspicions.

The data collected for this study indicates that online library jargon glossaries are not currently effective as a learning tool. No significant improvement in jargon comprehension occurred in the test group that accessed the UNC Libraries Glossary. However, there are patrons that would us an online glossary as a resource; 35% of the test

---

68 Ayre, Smith, and Cleeve, 130.
69 Ayre, Smith and Cleeve, 130.
group and 45% of the control group expressed interest in using a glossary. Therefore, the most compelling reason to continue to publish and maintain online glossaries is that patrons like having the ability to access them.

What can librarians do to increase patron knowledge of library jargon in addition to their knowledge of who uses their glossaries? The amount of glossary use can be easily determined by installing a hit count on the page; librarians could opt to make this information invisible to the public for aesthetic purposes. At the same time, they can collect the information they need in order to get a real picture of how many patrons are using a glossary.

In order to increase patron knowledge of library jargon, librarians need to provide more opportunities to learn vocabulary in context. Increased signage and adjustments to the library website can provide chances for patrons to learn terms while they are seeking information, providing them with a context for their new knowledge. It is clear that online lists of terms are not the best way of presenting this information. It is up to librarians to come up with creative, new ways of using their websites and libraries to ensure patrons learn library jargon in context.
Works Cited


Appendix A – Survey

Part I: Demographic Information
Please select your gender:   Male   Female 
Age: ___ years 
Please select your academic year:   Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior   Other 
Are you an international student:   Yes   No 
Have you ever held a job in the University Libraries:   Yes   No 
Have you ever attended a library instruction session:   Yes   No   Not Sure 
If you have chosen a major, please write it here: ___________

*Note: Prior to answering Part II, participants were randomly sorted by Qualtrics into the control group or the test group. The control group did not get to view the glossary. The test group was linked to the UNC Libraries glossary and instructed to view it for no more than ten minutes.

Part II: Multiple Choice Term Identification
Please identify the correct definition of each term in a library related context.

Citation
A. Information about a publication that allows someone to identify and locate it.
B. A reference to a publication found in another publication.
C. Footnotes found in an academic article.
D. A list put together by an author of a publication.

Folio
A. A sheet of paper folded once to form two leaves (four pages) of a book.
B. Oversized publications that have their own shelving areas.
C. A sheet of paper that only has information on one side of the page.
D. A type of paper only found in rare books.

Monograph
A. A term used to describe any of the books in the library.
B. A book that focuses on a particular subject
C. A scholarly book or essay that focuses on a particular subject.
D. A term used to describe unique rare books.

Record
A. A vinyl LP that can be checked out from the library.
B. An article or account of something that occurred in the past.
C. A unit of information arranged in fields that is used to describe an item in the library’s collection.
D. An official document.

Stacks
A. The part of the library where circulating books and bound periodicals are kept.
B. The area of the library where patrons leave books for staff members to put back on the shelves.
C. The part of the library where new bestsellers are kept.
D. The part of the library where non-circulating reference materials are kept.

Call Number
A. A number used to indicate a book’s topic.
B. A unique alphanumeric code assigned to each item in the library in order to indicate its location.
C. A number assigned to all books that have the same title and author.
D. A number assigned to indicate a book’s author.

Database
A. A structured set of data held in a computer or hard drive.
B. A tool used to keep track of all of the publications in the library.
C. A collection of related electronic records in a standardized format that can be searched in a variety of ways in order to find articles, books, dissertations, and other content.
D. A searchable set of data stored on a computer or hard drive.

Government Document
A. Publications that are only stored in government libraries, such as the Library of Congress.
B. Any publication produced by a federal, state, or local government agency.
C. A document that a user must ask permission due to use to its classified status.
D. Documents that are directly related to the founding of the United States, such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Microform
A. A small publication.
B. A fragile document.
C. A publication stored on a microchip.
D. A document that is reduced in size and available in either microfiche or microfilm and can be read using a special machine.

Primary Sources
A. Any record of an event.
B. Original records of events recorded or described by someone who participated or by someone who got their information from a participant.
C. The main resources on which an argument is founded.
D. Any record of an event written by an expert on the event.

Keyword
A. Any word in a publication’s record.
B. A list of terms that a user types into Google or another search engine to get results.
C. A key concept used to describe aspects of a publication.
D. Any word in an electronically available publication’s record.

Periodical
A. A magazine or journal produced on a regular basis.
B. A newsletter produced on a regular basis.
C. A newspaper produced on a regular basis.
D. Any publication that is produced on a regular basis.

Scholarly Journal
A. A journal that can be obtained from an online database.
B. A journal that can be obtained by using the E-Journal Finder.
C. A journal that is published by experts in the field.
D. A journal that publishes original research by experts in the field that is reviewed by other experts for content, standards, and validity.

Subject Headings
A. The setting used to sort online database results by subject.
B. Terms used to describe the contents of a publication.
C. Terms used to describe the contents of a publication that are only used in academic libraries.
D. A standardized set of terms used to describe the contents of a publication and consistently used to group materials together.

Abstract:
A. A summary of a larger work.
B. A summary of an article.
C. A summary of a book.
D. A summary of a theoretical concept.

Boolean Searching
A. To search a database using more than one search box.
B. A method of doing an unrestricted search.
C. A method of searching in electronic databases by combining search terms together using the operators AND, OR, and NOT.
D. A method of doing a restricted search.

Controlled Vocabulary
A. A set of official descriptors to be used when searching the library catalog.
B. To avoid mixing unrelated concepts in a search.
C. A set of official descriptors to be used when searching the library catalog and library databases.
D. A set of official descriptors assigned to a particular entry in a database.

Thesis
A. The main argument of a publication.
B. A written paper.
C. A written paper elaborating on original research usually completed in order to obtain an academic degree.
D. A long essay.

Index
A. A list of topics in the back of a book, organized in alphabetical order.
B. The indicator on a book that tells library staff where it should be shelved.
C. A list of citations to articles and/or books published in print or electronic format.
D. The resulting list of citations that a database gives a user when they search for a topic.

Peer Review
A. The process by which experts evaluate and choose authoritative articles to include in an academic journal.
B. To have your peers review your work before you turn it in to your professor.
C. The process used to prepared and edit articles for publication in magazines, such as Time or Newsweek.
D. The process by which experts in a field evaluate academic articles after they are published.

Online Catalog
A. An online listing of books.
B. An online listing of materials.
C. An online database containing records of most of the materials owned by the libraries. Some records must be accessed using the card catalog.
D. An online database containing records of the materials owned by the libraries.

Field
A. To send out an inquiry.
B. The area of the library where books are stored.
C. To search a particular subject area.
D. A part of a record used for a particular category of data, such as the title.

Serials
A. A series of books.
B. A publication that is issued in parts over time.
C. A story or play that is published in sections in a newspaper over time.
D. Publications that are more academic in nature than periodicals.

Truncation
A. A symbol included in the middle or at the end of a word to include possible variations in spelling.
B. To cut off the end of a search term in order to obtain more results.
C. To cut a search for information short.
D. To spell terms differently in order to get a larger variety of results.

E-Journal
A. Online, full-text journals to which the library subscribes.
B. Any journal that is published in an electronic format, regardless of if it is published in print.
C. Any place where a user can find electronic articles.
D. Journals that can be published by any individual with an internet connection, making them untrustworthy sources of information.
Circulation
A. The public availability of something in the library.
B. The library department responsible for checking out and reshelving books and dealing with fines.
C. The process of reshelving books.
D. The popularity level of a publication in the library.

Secondary Sources
A. A source that a user cites in their work that is useful but does not make up the primary core of their argument.
B. A source that records an event written by someone who was not present.
C. A source that records an event written by someone who was not present but investigated primary source materials.
D. Any book or journal article that does not first person references to an event.

Reference
A. The library department that aids patrons in using the library and helps them locate information.
B. A mention or citation of a source of information in a book or article.
C. To save search results in an online database to look at later.
D. The section of the library that houses encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, thesauruses, and atlases.

Part III: Follow Up Questions
Describe your experience defining the terms listed above:
1 Difficult
2 Somewhat Difficult
3 Neutral
4 Somewhat Easy
5 Easy

How often do you use the library?
1 Never
2 Not Often
3 Neutral
4 Sometimes
5 Frequently

Would you use an online glossary of library terminology in order to help you in your research?
Yes
No
Unsure
If you were in the study group that accessed the UNC Chapel Hill University Libraries Glossary, describe your experience using it:
1 Unhelpful
2 Somewhat Unhelpful
3 Neutral
4 Somewhat Helpful
5 Helpful

Do you find library terminology to be intuitive or counter intuitive?
Intuitive
Counter Intuitive
Unsure

If you have suggestions on how the UNC Chapel Hill University Libraries could improve with regards to terminology and jargon, please write them below.
**Appendix B – Answer Key**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Folio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Monograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Stacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Call Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Government Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Microform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Primary Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Keyword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Periodical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Scholarly Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Subject Headings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Boolean Searching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Controlled Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Peer Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Online Catalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Serials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Truncation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>E-Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Circulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Secondary Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>