Amy Hartson Davis. An Analysis of the Impact of Nomenclature on Corporate Library Utilization Rates. A Master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2004. 38 pages. Advisor: Evelyn H. Daniel

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of nomenclature on corporate library utilization rates. A telephone survey was conducted focusing on a group of prospective respondents that have been identified as members of the Special Libraries Association and as employees of Fortune 250 corporations. The survey sought general information about the participant's company, such as industry affiliation and number of employees, as well as specific information about the participant's library/information center including name of library/information center and number of annual requests processed. The study sought to discover which organizations, those with names employing the term "library" or those with contemporary non-library names, have higher utilization rates. The findings of the study demonstrate higher utilization rates amongst the group of organizations whose name do not incorporate the term "library".

Headings:

    Corporate Libraries

    Surveys – Corporate Libraries

    Corporate Libraries – Branding

    Corporate Libraries – Utilization

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF NOMENCLATURE ON CORPORATE
LIBRARY UTILIZATION RATES

by
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INTRODUCTION

Corporate libraries are in the midst of a widespread identity crisis. These organizational stalwarts have a long and distinguished history of providing critical information to commercial enterprises of all sorts. Recently, there seems to be reticence about the identity and value of corporate libraries. Surprisingly enough, the sentiment does not originate from the halls of senior management but rather from the diligent information professionals or, dare I call them librarians, themselves,

When did the word "library" metamorphose into the dreaded "L-word"? Recent professional literature has expounded the virtues of moving away from the use of the terms "library" and "librarian" towards more contemporary labels such as Knowledge Center and Information Analyst. Even the Special Libraries Association, a bastion of pride for corporate librarians, considered updating its image with a name change that would have removed the term "libraries" in favor of something more reflective of the nature of the modern profession it represents. The movement was halted in late 2003 as the organization voted against the change realizing the intrinsic worth of their brand, and perhaps in some small way, the value and esteem of the tradition behind the controversial word.

When I joined the research staff of the large public company with which I am currently employed, I worked out of a facility called the "Information Resource Center". The Center's leader explained to me that the name had been chosen, in lieu of corporate library, to communicate the technological advances that had been embraced in terms of

available resources and services. She also explained that it was the consensus of the group that the name Information Resource Center would provide protection from devastating budget cuts in that the term "library" too easily translates to "unnecessary overhead" in the hearts and minds of executives. In time, I took over leadership of the group and likewise the facility. I was particularly dedicated to meeting internal customers at remote locations and working to better market our services, as our recent utilization rates had been lackluster. In my journeys and discussions, there was a single question that I could count on receiving no matter the nature of my audience: "What exactly is the Information Resource Center?" The simplest reply I could provide was that the Information Resource Center was the company's internal library. After a figurative light bulb of realization appeared in my customer's head, I was very often presented with a standard follow-up question: "Why don't you just call it a library?" It was a good question indeed.

I began to wonder about the extent to which the current name was hampering the success of the group. Indeed, it could be argued that "Information Resource Center" better encapsulated the modern nature of the resources and services we offered. However, if the name in question was not clearly communicating to customers, how much value did it offer? My manager, staff, and I wrestled with this question for some time before deciding to take definitive action. After receiving substantial customer feedback, we decided to move forward with rebranding our group and its home facility. In 2002, the Information Resource Center became the Corporate Library and the staff name changed from Research Services to Corporate Library staff. The changes that followed exceeded our wildest expectations.

Since 1999, the library staff has kept a record of all requests received and processed in order to track utilization of services and resources. Requests in our organization are classified as follows:

- Document Delivery

- Circulated Items (i.e. books, videos, audios etc. from special collections)

- Research and Analysis

In the period between 2001 and 2002, the volume of requests fulfilled by library staff increased by an astounding 130%. Naturally, we could not attribute the entirety of the growth to the name change alone. Other changes occurred during this time, such as the introduction of an online catalog and an expanded Intranet page. Additionally, our prospective customer base expanded through the completion of an acquisition. However, the impact of the name change could not be denied. In the case of my company, taking a step back and using a less contemporary name boosted our brand recognition within the organization and, in turn, led to dramatically higher library utilization rates.

The purpose of this study is to discover if the phenomenon experienced in this case is an isolated incident or one that is mirrored in other such organizations. The research and analysis to follow will seek to determine if the use of more traditional nomenclature contributes to higher utilization rates in peer organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In preparation for this study, literature covering various aspects of corporate libraries was reviewed. Three areas of particular interest emerged including: history and evolution

of corporate libraries; corporate libraries in the twenty-first century; the debate over nomenclature.

I.   History and Evolution of Corporate Libraries

A review of various managerial guides and textbooks, many produced by the Special Libraries Association (SLA), demonstrated areas of both change and constancy within the Corporate Library world. The earliest guidance document found was a collection of articles published by the S.L.A between 1934 and 1936 titled The Special Library Profession and What It Offers. Included is an article that specifically addressed the nature of work in "Commercial Libraries". The article stated that as of January 1935, "More than 500 business corporations have developed their own information departments in charge of trained librarians"(Article 5, pg. 2). In describing the scope of duties of a commercial library, the author provided a summary that is still relevant today, despite the vast advances in technology of the past seventy years:

> The business library stresses information rather than print; service rather than method; analysis of printed information rather than organization; current information and practice rather than history and theory (Article 5, pg. 3).

Even in this early stage of professional evolution, the battle lines over nomenclature were being drawn as practitioners assiduously worked to differentiate their trade from that of librarians working in more traditional environments.

By 1975, the qualities of special libraries were further refined in the SLA publication Special Libraries: A Guide for Management. In this text, authors Augdenkamp, Budington, Harper and Nielander outlined the following guidance regarding distinguishing characteristics of Special Libraries:

> They are differentiated by where they are found…by limitations in subject scope…by the kinds or groups of people who use them or are served by them…by

a predominant characteristic of smallness…by their emphasis on the information function (Augdenkamp et. al., 1975, pgs. 1-3).

As was the case with the 1935 text, the later guide reiterated the value of the information role in special librarianship. This text is also the first among those reviewed to treat specifically the issue of using of the name "information center" in lieu of "library":

> Although the terms 'special library' and 'information center' are often used interchangeably, most current discussions of information centers agree that a distinction does exist. Certain additional broader characteristics are generally attributed to information centers. They usually boil down to these: the information center has a wider variety of nonstandard, information-containing materials… it undertakes greater depth of analysis and control of the subject field and provides more advanced informational services… center personnel include subject specialists to provide some of these more advanced information services… it has greater involvement in report writing… the facility assumes the central responsibility for all information services of the organization and typically combines both technical and business information in one center, rather than having them separated." (Augdenkamp et. al., 1975, pg. 5).

The chapter progressed further to describe information centers as "the result of metamorphoses (from special libraries… [Providing] a higher level of service…" (Augdenkamp et. al., 1975, pg. 5). This description is of interest because it suggests that an information center is of higher status than a mere special library. This perspective is at the heart of the debate over naming conventions.

By 1984, the year in which <u>Managing the Special Library: Strategies for Success within the Larger Organization </u>was published, the view of the information center as a higher order organization was beginning to be questioned. In this work, authored by Herbert S. White, the value of the introduction of the term information center was questioned:

> Even further confusion is caused by the introduction of the term 'information center'…it was assumed…that information centers differ from libraries in dealing

more extensively with 'nontraditional' materials…as opposed to books and periodicals…it was also suggested that information centers would take a greater responsibility in the subject analysis of the collection and in the use of computers and other advanced technologies…These assumptions are at best generalizations; there is no philosophical difference between what an information center always does and what a library can or should be allowed to do" (White, 1984, pg. 4).

White went on to clarify further the increasing use of alternative non-library names:

Nomenclature changes…have been most prevalent in industrial, business and governmental settings, but assumptions of what the name implies must be approached with considerable caution. As some cynics have stated, the clearest difference between a library manager and the manager of an information center may be about $5000 in annual salary (White, 1984, pg. 4).

It is interesting to note that White's text differs from others in this review in that it is not a publication of the SLA, but rather of Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc. This book is also the first to delve into the impact of personal computing on the world of special libraries:

Initially, computers purchased by the parent organization for accounting, personnel and inventory functions were not fully used. It was therefore natural that managers of computer facilities would search for additional applications. Special libraries provided a very logical extension and thus became early users of automated equipment (White, 1984, pg. 68).

White continued his section on technology by describing recent trends in online searching as well as specific applications for microcomputers in special libraries. He asserted that special libraries, particularly corporate libraries, were among the earliest adopters of technology in their respective organizations. It is this role as navigator of technology trends that special librarians came to embrace even more ardently in the late nineties as the dawn of the Internet revolution took place.

The final textbook reviewed was <u>Special Libraries and Information Centers: An Introductory Text</u> (fourth edition) by Ellis Mount and Renee Massoud. This title,

published in 1999 by the SLA, embraced White's notion of there being little disparity

between special libraries and information centers:

> Originally information centers were defined as those organizations in which user services invariably involved a deeper understanding of the subject areas of the sponsoring agency than would be the case in the average special library. The complexity of inquiries at the traditional information center was apt to be more challenging than in a special library…Today it is generally agreed that modern special libraries routinely perform all the tasks and provide all the services that were formerly perceived as belonging to information centers (Mount and Massoud, 1999, pg. 4).

> Thus, the line between special library and information center was further blurred.

As society began its infatuation with the World Wide Web, corporate librarians

responded by seeking ways to remain current and embrace new technologies. This was a

period of immense change in both the content and character of corporate libraries.

II.   Corporate libraries in the Twenty-First Century

Several trends of the late 1990s and early 2000s acted to further fuel the debate

regarding naming conventions for corporate libraries. The first of these was a general

realignment of the typical competencies for corporate librarians. In addition to this shift

was a movement towards establishment of the occupational designation "information

professional".

For the sake of simplicity, this paper will continue to refer to all applicable

facilities and professionals as libraries and librarians. In an October 2003 article in

Information Outlook, Rebecca Jones presented a working definition for this title:

> An Information Professional ('IP') strategically uses information in his/her job to advance the mission of the organization. The IP accomplishes this through the development, deployment, and management of information resources and services. The IP harnesses technology as a critical tool to accomplish goals. IPs include, but are not limited to librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, web developers, information brokers and consultants (Jones, 2003, pg. 11).

Jones's article also provided a set of professional competencies for the twenty-

first century on behalf of the SLA She outlined four major areas:

1. Managing Information Organizations: This competency has played a central role in

the daily responsibilities of corporate librarianship since the dawn of the profession.

Today, however, the organization has evolved as a result of technological change among

other influences. The Information Organization of the twenty-first century is described by

Jones as:

> [An organization] whose offerings are intangible, whose markets are constantly changing and in which both high-tech and high-touch are vitally important in achieving organizational success… (Jones, 2003, pg. 14).

Many of the core responsibilities associated with management of the information

organization are consistent with those of the past. The language used to represent them

has changed, however the substance is relatively similar. Such duties include:

> Aligns the information organization with, and is supportive of, the strategic directions of the parent organization or of key client groups through partnerships with key stakeholders and suppliers…Assesses and communicates the value of the information organization…Establishes effective management, operational and financial management processes and exercises sound business and financial judgments in making decisions that balance operational and strategic considerations…Contributes effectively to senior management strategies and decisions regarding information applications, tools and technologies…Builds and leads an effective information services team and champions the professional and personal development of people working within the information organization…Markets information services and products…Gathers the best available evidence to support decisions about the development of new service and products…Advises the organization on copyright and intellectual property issues and compliance (Jones, 2003, pg. 14).

One major competency in this area has grown tremendously in importance in light

of a trend of recent closures of corporate libraries and information centers: accountability.

A 2003 benchmarking report published by the American Productivity and Quality Center

(APQC) addressed this issue:

Many corporate information centers will be called upon to demonstrate their value to their parent organizations. Those who are successful in this endeavor will prove that they're not only cost-effective, but also that they are better than other potential solutions. The best favor corporate information managers can do for themselves in the current environment is to be prepared in advance for the likelihood that they will need to demonstrate positive ROI…Two questions must be answered successfully to demonstrate information center value: How much do we save in direct costs and staff time by supporting our professional information function? Why is the in-house information center the best option? (APQC, 2003, pg. 4).

Despite decades of change, much about the job of managing libraries has remained the same. The literature surveyed does demonstrate an increased emphasis on survival thinking as issues such as accountability, return on investment and value-added services remain at the forefront of the minds of corporate librarians.

2. Managing Information Resources: This competency has been heavily influenced by technological advancement as the definition of "information resource" has steadily evolved. Catherine Wilkins outlined a fundamental shift in the relationship between librarians and the resources they manage in the 1996 paper "The Changing Library Environment: A Planning Tool" presented at the 87th Annual Conference of the Special Libraries Association and published in the collective proceedings titled Professional Papers from the 87th Annual Conference of the Special Libraries Association, June 8-13, Boston, Massachusetts. In it she provided descriptions for the past, present and future scenarios of library work:

In the past, as a 'custodian of books'…In the present library environment, as a 'guardian of collections and pathway to information…In the future, as an 'architect of information sources'…(Wilkins, 1996, pgs. 4-5).

More specifically, Rebecca Jones, in the aforementioned Information Outlook article, provided a modern definition of this competency:

Manages the full life cycle of information from its creation or acquisition through its destruction…Builds a dynamic collection of information resources based on a deep understanding of clients' information needs…Demonstrates expert knowledge of the content and format of information resources…Provides access to the best available externally published and internally created information resources…Negotiates the purchase and licensing of needed information products and services…Develops information policies for the organization regarding externally published and internally created information resources…(Jones, 2003, pg. 17).

In the past decade, this competency has further developed the role of librarian as content broker as the interaction between library staff and information content vendors has continued to increase. In the article "The Changing Roles of Information Professionals Excerpts from an Outsell, Inc. Study" published in the March 2000 issue of Online Magazine, the authors Mary Corcoran, Lynn Dagar and Anthea Stratigos defined the modern state of this relationship:

Ninety percent of the corporate information professionals we surveyed are involved in both selection of content for the library, and consolidating the purchase of content throughout the organization. Of the information professionals we surveyed whose primary roles are evaluating, selecting, and acquiring content sources, nine out of ten frequently communicate with prospective vendors, negotiate contracts, and consolidate content purchases (Corcoran et. al., 2000, pgs. 30-31).

The article went on to illustrate the potential benefits of this role for those librarians who engage heavily in this competency:

This is a strategic opportunity for information professionals to play a more explicit role, saving money for their companies and improving the quality of content purchases (Corcoran et. al., 2000, pg. 31).

Along with opportunities, issues within this area also present significant threats to librarians as well. Included in any discussion of content is the user perception that most necessary information is available on the free Internet. As managers of information resources and content, librarians must work diligently to dispel this myth:

> Just as commercial vendors struggle…to compete with free content on the Internet, so information professionals compete with the end-use perception that 'everything is free on the Internet.' High-visibility corporate library closings are concrete examples that in the eyes of executive management, the ability to access external information is still in place, so they perceive the move as a cost-saving measure, not a loss (Corcoran et. al., 2000, pg. 28).

Denise M. Watkins addressed this issue in her paper "If we can deliver it (information) to the desktop, why do we need the library?" presented at the 88th Annual Conference of the Special Libraries Association in 1997 and published in the collective proceedings titled Change as Opportunity: Information Professionals at the Crossroads. In this work, Watkins wrote about not only the threats posed by the perception of free Internet resources, but also the attitudes developed by customers when librarians work to provide premium online services to the desktops of the enterprise workers:

> …Many end users think that we are now off loading much of the work we used to do on them. The fact that many library users voice this sentiment is due to the failure of librarians to market themselves and their skills and services (Watkins, 1997, pg. 1).

This statement demonstrates the extent to which it is imperative that librarians promote not only information resources, but also the information-based services that they provide.

3. Managing Information Services: Corporate librarians have for years attested to their wish to be regarded as more than guardians of books. Much time and effort has been spent demonstrating the value added by the services that corporate libraries provide. Today, this continues to be a primary competency for the profession. Rebecca Jones provided a detailed definition:

> Develops and maintains a portfolio of cost-effective, client-valued information services that are aligned with the strategic directions of the organization and client groups…Conducts market research of the information behaviors and problems of

current and potential client groups to identify concepts for new or enhanced information solutions for these groups…Researches, analyzes and synthesizes information into accurate answers or actionable information for clients…Develops and applies appropriate metrics to continually measure the quality and value of information offerings…Employs evidence-based management to demonstrate the value of and continually improve information sources and services (Jones, 2003, pg. 18).

One of the most widely recognized services provided by corporate libraries is response to reference and research requests. According to the aforementioned article by Corcoran et. al. "The Changing Roles of Information Professionals…", "Information research is still Library Reference 101, but the course is harder now." She went on to explain the increasing complexity of this offering:

It's [the need] been transformed. There's a tension between the desktop environment where users do it themselves and the need for educated staff to do research. The demand, in numbers of requests, has gone down, but the complexity rises, and the level of service people expect has also risen (Corcoran et. al., 2000, pg. 30).

The increasing pervasiveness of the Internet in corporate culture has contributed to the heightened emphasis on the librarian's role as analyst in addition to researcher. Internal customers are now empowered to find much of their own information. They now look to corporate librarians not only to help analyze the wealth of information available on a topic, but also to assist them in becoming able searchers themselves. In Denise Watkins's aforementioned paper she described the new role of "Librarian as Navigator and Tour Guide":

This role has multiple implications. With regard to the Internet, because of the unrestricted nature that allows anyone to post information, we must caution users to verify the authenticity of information provided by sources via the Internet…Information that isn't applied knowledge isn't good enough for major corporate decisions… (Watkins, 1997, pg. 4).

More and more, corporate librarians began to assume the role of Internet guide and worked to evaluate the quality of free information sources. However, their role as evaluators of premium content sources continued to evolve as well, particularly as the corporate public began to realize that a great deal of business-critical information was not, in fact, available on the Internet for free.

4. Applying Information Tools & Technologies: The last of the four modern competencies identified by the SLA and Jones is arguably the most increasing. As the number of information resources and services continues to experience exponential growth, the corporate librarian will increasingly assume the role of information broker and content manager. Jones provided this definition for the competency:

> Assesses, selects and applies current and emerging information tools and creates information access and delivery solutions…applies expertise in databases, indexing, metadata, and information analysis and synthesis to improve information retrieval and use in the organization…protects the information privacy of clients and maintains awareness of, and responses to, new challenges to privacy…maintains current awareness of emerging technologies that may not be currently relevant but may become relevant tools of future information resources, services or applications (Jones, 2003, pg. 19).

The activity of content evaluation is a crucial part of the modern corporate librarian's duties. The landscape of information solution providers is rapidly expanding. In Mary Corcoran et al.'s article, "The Changing Roles…", the following findings were revealed:

> Of the information professionals we surveyed whose primary roles are evaluating, selecting, and acquiring content sources, nine out of ten frequently communicate with prospective vendors, negotiate contracts, and consolidate content purchases. Forty-two percent frequently communicate with current vendors…Ninety percent of the corporate information professionals we surveyed are involved in both selection of content for the library and consolidating the purchase of content throughout the organization (Corcoran et. al., 2000, pgs. 30-31).

This competency introduced the need for new skill sets within the profession. Of

particular importance is the ability on the part of corporate librarians to negotiate

successfully. In Watkins's paper, she addressed the need for librarians to embrace this

new, more business-oriented skill:

> …Librarians must hone their business acumen and skills as negotiators in order to
> secure the best services at the lowest cost from vendors…What is the best value
> we can provide with the resources we have? What could we do with more or less?
> What potential valuable services are customers doing without at present levels of
> resources? (Watkins, 1997, pg. 4).

The modern competencies outlined by the SLA provided both new directions for

the profession as well as logical evolutions of services that have always been offered. The

literature reviewed demonstrates that the nature of the corporate library profession has

experienced significant change over the years, so too has the corporate library itself. In

the nineties, a modern concept took hold of the corporate library world and continues to

influence the direction of many centers today. The concept was that of the virtual library.

The idea of the virtual library was conceived decades ago within the realms of both

library and computer science. Sylvia Piggott, in a paper titled "The Virtual Library:

Almost There…" and published in the 1994 SLA Guide The Virtual Library: An SLA

Information Kit, provided a definition for the virtual library:

> The concept of remote access to the contents and services of libraries and other
> information resources, combining an on-site collection of current and heavily
> used materials in both print and electronic form, with an electronic network which
> provides access to and delivery from, external worldwide library and commercial
> information knowledge sources (SLA, Virtual Library, pgs. 13-14).

Advancements in technology of the last ten years have greatly facilitated the

movement towards such a library. In the American Productivity and Quality Center's

2003 report on Corporate Library Practices, several specific product and service

components of virtual libraries were illustrated:

> A single-user interface at the site, which makes available external and internal information…digital information content resources…competency in the procurement and licensing of external, electronic content…professional training for users of the digital library…competency in user needs assessment, marketing and product selection…web site directories…online access to internal directories, documents and knowledge…(APQC, 2003, pg. 2).

The virtual library concept influenced many corporate librarians to rethink their

roles. In the article "Cyberspace Virtualisation, And The Role of Cybrarians" published

in The Virtual Library: An SLA Information Kit, author Michael Bauwens introduced a

new title for librarians to consider: The Cybrarian. He provided the following insight:

> Our own experience, reports of similar endeavors, and reflection, has inspired an attempt to redefine our professional role. The concept of library and librarian is clearly linked to a physical building storing material objects (books). The term is not appropriate for an information professional who no longer works in such a building and who does not handle books, but uses cyberspatial tools for retrieving and disseminating information. Such a librarian, who navigates cyberspace, we prefer to call a cybrarian… (SLA, Virtual Library, pg.29).

Clearly, the introduction of the virtual library concept caused corporate librarians

to reassess their professional image. Both the technology for disseminating information,

along with the competencies of the profession had changed to adapt to modern times.

This simultaneous evolution led to widespread questioning of appropriate names and

titles in professional literature.

III.   The Debate over Nomenclature

Many questions have been raised in recent years over the most appropriate

naming conventions for corporate libraries and their staffs. Changes in the nature of the

profession led to introspection about the direction it should take. George Plosker

summarized the state of corporate libraries in his article "The Information Industry

Revolution: Implications for Librarians" published in the November 2003 issue of <u>Online</u>

<u>magazine:</u>

> With the coming of the Web, change moved at a dramatic pace, as patrons and
> corporate users began to use online services on their own. Changing user
> expectations and needs have resulted in new models of library services – use of
> print and actual visits to the reference desk are down; remote usage of library
> services is up; and instruction models have gone through major revisions both in
> approach and curriculum. The roles of users, librarians, publishers, and vendors
> have all been impacted (Plosker, 2003, pg. 16).

> In a November 2000 article published in <u>Online magazine</u> titled "What's In a

Name?" Anthea Stratigos addressed the importance of branding for corporate libraries:

> Your function's name sets the energy for who your group or function is, what it
> stands for and how it is perceived….research continues to point to extremely
> strong stereotypes and tight affiliations for corporate end-users who equate
> libraries with books and journals, not with the rich resources and services being
> offered by today's information service functions. Name changes can often begin
> to bust up these paradigms, smoothing the new way for strategies to root and take
> effect (Stratigos, 2000, pgs. 67-69).

> Indeed, the issue of stereotype is one that is a point of concern for many in the

profession. The traditional image of librarians as older, myopic women on a crusade for

simple peace and quiet continues even into the modern age. The article "Building a

Brand: Got a Librarian?" published in the July 2002 issue of <u>Searcher</u> magazine explored

the impact of negative stereotypes on the modern profession:

> At a very early age, members of the public have the stereotypical image of the
> librarian ingrained in their consciousness…The perception of who we are and
> what we do is often based upon what public service library workers look like,
> what they say, and what they do…Customers see library staff shelving books,
> checking books in and out, reading the paper, and occasionally chatting with a
> library customer…According to a survey she [Margaret Slater] conducted of 484
> professional workers in industry and commerce, the negative image of actual
> librarians includes passivity, incompetence, bureaucratic tendencies, un-
> worldliness, and insufficient education or subject knowledge for the job…in
> general, people do not know what librarians do and are capable of doing. Among

customers and prospects, the general understanding of library services is hazy at best ("Building a Brand", 2002, pgs. 62-69).

The article recommended that librarians "adopt the generic title of information manager, with an unambiguous job title such as research analyst or director of information services" ("Building a Brand", 2002, pg. 71). Others have echoed this advice as well. In "Follow the Information and You'll Find a Librarian" published in the November 2001 issue of <u>Computers in Libraries</u>, Kim Guenther explored the issue of titles:

> Computer systems allow us to house information many places and make it accessible through a variety of modalities. It's no surprise that librarians are migrating to those information stores in organizations and assuming titles other than 'librarian'…Librarians now hold titles such as knowledge manager, information architect, usability engineer, content analysis… to name just a few (Guenther, 2001, pg. 54)

In "What's in a Name?" Anthea Stratigos considered not only the titles employed in recent years by librarians, but also the functional names of their organization. She provided a sampling of names discovered in a study that was conducted prior to the publication of the article:

> Here are names at play in a recent study of market intelligence professionals: Business & Marketing Information…Business Intelligence…Consumer Insights…Consumer Market and Knowledge…Corporate Business Intelligence Office…Corporate Intelligence…Information Management…Integrated Information Solutions…Marketing Decision Support…Market Intelligence…Research and Information Services…Strategic Intelligence… (Stratigos, 2000, pgs. 70-71).

Stratigos not only addressed the issue of names as they pertain to the functional organization, but she also provided recommendations regarding the name used to describe the librarian's essential product offering:

> There is much confusion in end-users' minds about information, which is often assumed to be information technology (IT) that we're finding the words

information content creating a lot more clarity, as it defines what aspect of 'information' you're dealing with (Stratigos, 2000, pg. 68).

In this article, Stratigos expressed concern over confusion on the part of the end user. Another study summarized in the 2000 article "The Vocabulary of Library Home Page" published in Information Technology & Librarians addressed this issue as well. In it, author Mark Spivey contended that librarians should consider the knowledge and comprehension level of their patrons when choosing the language by which they communicate their resources and services.

The survey focused on the choice of vocabulary employed on library home pages. The findings may be relevant to the issue of nomenclature choice for corporate libraries as well.

When librarians talk to colleagues, ambiguous uses of professional jargon are resolved immediately. Technical communication utilizes with justification a level of jargon when an audience of specialists uses a similar vocabulary. The present concern is how professional librarians communicate…with persons outside the profession…librarians can become sensitive to the degree that their professional and vendors' vocabularies impede comprehension by an educated public, who are not professional librarians…Professional idioms, ambiguous and inaccurate vocabulary, and acronyms affect the efficiency and access to information sources (Spivey, 2000, pgs. 151-153).

This study suggested that librarians should exhibit caution when choosing names and other vocabulary to define their services and resource offerings. Many of the newer nomenclature choices may communicate to fellow librarians clearly; however those outside of the profession may misinterpret them.

The debate over appropriate names and titles is waged not only in the halls of corporate America, but also within the most hallowed institution of the profession itself: The Special Libraries Association. In a September 2002, Searcher Magazine article that

summarized the happenings of the SLA's 2002 conference, Jill Ann Hurst chronicled the

events surrounding an issue at the heart of the organization in recent years: re-branding.

The association began an investigation into the merit of a potential re-branding

campaign wherein the organization would perhaps adopt a new name, logo and tagline.

Hurst recounted a series of inquiries that association members considered in the process

of determining the best course of action:

> Why does the SLA need a new direction or image? What impression should SLA project? What words describe the desired SLA image? What are the stumbling blocks for the desired image? To date, what research has been compiled on SLA's brand or image? What is the image of SLA's membership? (Hurst, 2002, pg. 23).

In order to make an informed decision, the association held a town meeting to

gauge the opinions of its constituency. Several themes seasoned the feedback received,

however one key piece was particularly telling:

> …many members continue to see themselves as 'librarians', even though that word may not be part of their job titles. People use the word 'librarian' to define their professional identity and are comfortable in doing so (Hurst, 2002, pg. 24).

By June 2003, a decision was reached whereby the association would retain its

nearly century-old name. At the SLA's 94th annual conference in New York City,

President Cynthia Hill made the following comments in support of the decision:

> The name Special Libraries Association is a highly recognized and respected brand name in the information industry. It stands for professional excellence, ethics, and best practices in the management of knowledge-based organizations. Our members have always been on the cutting edge, applying information tools and technologies to advance the missions of our organizations. Keeping our name allows us to build on our heritage over the past century while keeping our focus on the expanding information economy of the 21[st.] (Information Outlook, 2003, pg. 7).

This decision had the potential to reverse the trend of adopting non-library names

and branding strategies in the corporate environment. To date, however, the trend

continues. The research presented in this paper will provide a sense of the degree to which this strategy has proven successful.

METHODOLOGY

An email-based survey was developed with the intent of gathering information from corporate librarians about their choices in nomenclature. Participants were selected based on two primary criteria: first, they must currently work in a corporate library or information center based in a Fortune 250 company, (industry affiliation was not considered as part of the selection process); second, they must be current members of the Special Libraries Association. Email addresses were gathered using the online membership directory of the SLA. Many of the companies ranked within the Fortune 250 did not have professionals listed in the directory. A number of companies had several names listed. In constructing the participant list, names of professionals with supervisory-level titles were selected over those whose titles indicated staff-level status. This selection method was employed in order to improve the probability of including participants who would be best prepared to respond to all questions on the survey. In the case of companies with only one name listed, the single entry was added to the participant list without consideration of rank or title.

The email survey, along with a cover letter, was sent to 114 information professionals (See Appendix A). They were asked to complete the survey and return it within two weeks. The first question asked the participant to identify the formal name of the library or information center. When asked to better qualify the question, participants were told that the question sought the name by which the organization is marketed internally. The second question asked for the formal name of the organization's staff.

Next, participants were asked to identify the primary industry in which his or her company is affiliated. They were then asked to provide the approximate number of employees their organization serves. As clarification, this number was intended to identify the number of potential customers versus the number of actual customers. In most cases, the number provided was that of the entire corporation. The fifth question asked the participant if their organization had a system in place for tracking the number of requests received and processed by the staff.

The final question asked the participant to provide an estimate of the average annual number of requests received and processed by staff. For the last two questions, the following operational definition for the term "requests" was provided: for the purposes of this study, the term "request" includes response to needs for resources and services, such as research and analysis, circulated materials and document delivery activities.

By the time the deadline arrived, no responses had been received. It is important to note that a survey launched via email carries some unique risks in respect to response rates. First, in recent years email users worldwide have been inundated with unwanted emails, many of which solicit a product. In response to this phenomenon, many people have developed a tendency to ignore emails from unknown senders. It is possible that this behavior may have contributed to the unresponsiveness of the potential participants. Additionally, personal experience suggests that email users tend to exhibit less patience in reading block text than they might if provided a hard copy of a correspondence. According to the guidelines of the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board, certain messages must be conveyed to prospective survey participants to ensure informed consent. It is possible that the lengthy survey introduction may have led many

participants to abandon the email before reading its content completely. These observations are, of course, the result of complete conjecture.

In order to improve the response rate of the study, the research methodology was revised and the survey conducted via telephone (See Appendix B for revised survey and script). Returning to the SLA membership directory, phone numbers for all but eight of the original 114 participants were retrieved. An attempt was made to contact each professional with the intent of asking him or her a series of questions about their library or information center.

Of the 106 potential participants, 53 completed the survey in full; three completed it partially. Those who were contacted and were willing to participate were, in many cases, employed in supervisory or managerial roles that afforded them access to the information necessary for completion of the survey. Those considered within the group of 50 non-respondents included both those who were unwilling to participate as well as those who could not reached via telephone during the period in which the survey was conducted. Many of the prospective participants that refused to participate did so because they did not have access to needed data and/or did not feel as though they had the authority to release it, even under the condition of anonymity.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

An Excel spreadsheet was used to analyze the data received. All specific identifiers, including participant name, telephone number and company were discarded. Responses were entered into the spreadsheet and a formula was devised to provide a general utilization rate for each respondent's organization. The formula involved dividing

the estimated number of annual requests by the estimated number of employees served to determine an approximate number of requests per customer.

Survey responses were first analyzed to determine which of two general naming classifications was most prominent among the group of responders. Formal names were simply classified according to those that employ the term "library" and those that do not. This study found that a greater number of organizations chose not to use the term "library" as part of their formal name:

Table 1: Summary of Formal Names

Name Classification	Number of organizations	Percentage of total responses
Library	25	45%
Not Library	31	55%

The responses to the second question, which asked for the formal name of the staff, were homogenous. All respondents indicated that the collective name of the staff was consistent with the name of the information organization.

The next step in the analysis phase was to separate the responses according to the two name classifications. Within each group, the above-mentioned formula was employed to determine a utilization rate for each organization. Once these rates were established, the mean rate for each group was determined. The results are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2: Mean Utilization Rates According to Name Classification Group

Name Classification	Mean Utilization Rate
Library	.98
Not Library	1.08

These numbers suggest that the Not Library group achieved somewhat higher utilization rates than the Library group. It's important to note that an initial round of calculations provided a considerably different finding as a result of a drastic outlier in the data collected for the Library group. In order to address the impact of this outlier, the corresponding data was omitted from further analysis so that more general results would be achieved by the calculation.

Once the aggregate utilization scores were determined, results within industry groupings were examined to determine which nomenclature choices were more prominent within specific industries and whether or not those choices had proven successful in terms of utilization rates. Chart 1 summarizes the naming classification distribution by industry. It's important to note that only industries for which multiple responses were received were included in this portion of the analysis.

Chart 1: Naming Classification by Industry

Nomenclature by Industry
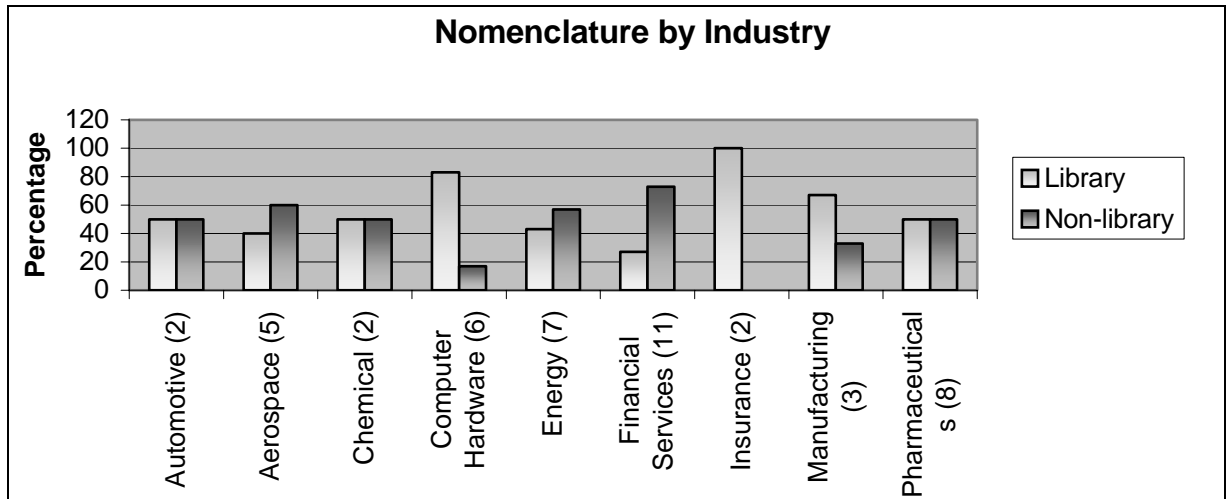
Per Chart 1, it can be observed that industries favoring the use of the term 'Library' included Computer Hardware, Insurance and Manufacturing. The Chemical, Energy, and Financial Services industries were more inclined to choose names within the Not Library classification. These results were somewhat surprising. It was expected that the use of contemporary non-library names would be prevalent within the Computer Hardware industry. This sector's focus on innovation and forward-thinking would seemingly lend itself to the use of names that place greater emphasis on information offerings and represent a departure from the use of traditional library-based brands. Also surprising was the prevalence of non-library names within the Chemical and Energy industries. It was expected that older, more established industries such as these may favor use of the term library as their information organizations may have existed within the companies for longer periods of time than in newer industries. The industries that demonstrated prominence of use of one classification over the other were further analyzed according to mean utilization rates. The data is summarized in Table 3:

Table 3: Mean Utilization Rates by Industry and Naming Classification

Industry	Utilization Rate
Libraries	
Computer Hardware	.22
Insurance	.25
Manufacturing	.47
Not Libraries	
Aerospace	.56
Energy	.61
Financial Services	.59

A graphical representation of the trends outlined by this data is presented in Chart 2:

Chart 2: Utilization Rates by Industry and Naming Classification
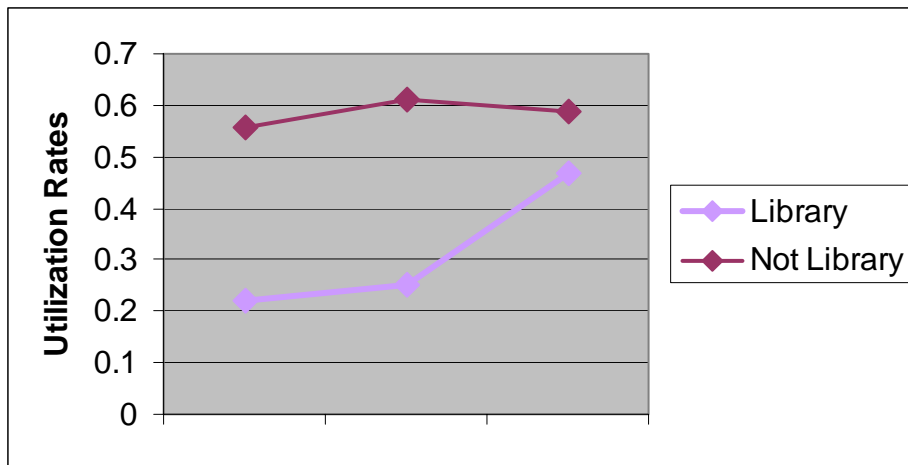
Clearly when analyzed according to specific industry groupings, the trend of higher utilization scores for the Non-library group perseveres. The analysis of survey responses consistently demonstrated the extent to which these names garner positive utilization of services and resources.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The final question posed one of the primary limitations of the study. Because the question seeks an "estimated" number for its response, it may be questionable to make generalizations based on this data. In certain cases, the respondent was able to provide a precise figure using an automated request tracking system. A number of respondents prefaced their response by stating that the number provided was truly an "estimate". Therefore, this paper will not attempt to generalize beyond the sample of individuals interviewed to a larger population. The study is limited to conclusions reached from responses of those surveyed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The debate over nomenclature choices for corporate libraries is likely to continue in years to come. In the course of this research I was afforded the opportunity to have candid discussions with professionals regarding their personal preferences. Some communicated to me their pride in the title of Librarian. They noted the profession's esteemed history and their long-held desire to belong to its noble tradition. Others took great pride in the new traditions that they felt their modern names conveyed. They explained that their organization's mission is to provide actionable *business* intelligence and that the non-library name by which they are branded better communicates this corporate-specific goal.

Perhaps the most critical factor in making nomenclature decisions is not the simple consideration of the librarian's professional competencies, but rather those of the customers. The vocabulary by which we choose to identify ourselves will communicate highly varied messages to the diverse body of corporate employees who we are charged

to serve. While the name Corporate Library may appropriately convey an organization's

purpose to an engineering audience for example, the name Business Intelligence Center

may generate greater interest amongst a group of financial professionals.

The extent to which our chosen names adequately communicate the scope and

mission of our organization is largely related to the effectiveness of our internal branding

and marketing programs. Decisions regarding branding must result from careful

consideration of larger organizational factors and introspection about the true character of

the library or information center in question. Branding choices must present a

comfortable fit; they must be representative of the organization and the direction that it is

taking. For example, in my aforementioned corporate library, the re-branding effort that

began with the change of name coincided with a policy of partnering with various

departments to manage their hard copy collections. This activity supported the

appropriateness of a branding strategy that was more aligned with traditional library

imagery.

Our essential mission is to serve our unique population of customers and ensure

that their information needs are met. If there exists confusion on the part of the customer

regarding what exactly the terms "Corporate Library" or "Information Resource Center"

mean, then it is the librarian's responsibility to provide the appropriate definition through

well-planned marketing initiatives and long-term communication strategies. Librarians

must make responsible choices and implement branding strategies that both communicate

our value and encourage our customers to seek our help in attaining critical information.

At the outset of this paper, I explained that my interest in the subject was based on

my own personal experience of the impact of a nomenclature change in my corporate

library. The findings of the research did not support a generalization for my own case.

However, they did illustrate the extent to which this profession embraces diversity of

thought and the values of both progress and tradition.

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APPENDIX A – EMAIL SURVEY

Greetings SLA members!

I am an MSLS student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am currently conducting primary research in support of my final Master's paper and would very much like to learn more about you and your organization. Specifically, I am seeking information about the various names used to describe corporate libraries/information centers to determine if a correlation exists between the naming conventions used and the volume of annual requests handled by individual organizations.

The survey below will ask a few basic questions about your library/information center. The 114 prospective participants were selected according to their membership in SLA and their organization's status as a Fortune 250 company. Neither you nor your company will be identified in any way. All information provided by you will be kept confidential and only reported in aggregated form.

Your completion of the survey will constitute a confirmation of your consent to participate. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any specific question for any reason. You may choose to withdraw at any time. The completed survey should not take more than ten minutes of your time. Your participation is very much appreciated.
In exchange for your contribution, you will be sent an abbreviated version of the final paper which will address the impact of naming conventions on corporate libraries.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact me at ahdavis@email.unc.edu. You may also contact Evelyn Daniel who is the faculty advisor on this research project at daniel@ils.unc.edu.

The Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board (AA-IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the AA-IRB at (919) 962-7761 or at aa-irb@unc.edu.
Thank you for your consideration. Your contribution is of great value to the success of this study!

To complete the survey:

- Click reply
- Type in your answers over the blank lines

Again, thank you for your consideration. I look forward to learning more about your organization.

Name:

_____

Job Title:

_____

Company:

_____

Number of employees (Company total):

_____

E-mail:

_____

Name of your library (Please provide the full name of your library and staff services group (if different)

Name of Library/Resource Center: _____
(ex. Corporate Knowledge Center)

Name of staff service group: _____
(ex. Research Services team)

Primary Industry:

- ❑ Aerospace/Defense
- ❑ Automotive
- ❑ Banking/Financial
- ❑ Chemicals/Petroleum
- ❑ Consumer Goods
- ❑ Consulting
- ❑ Electronics
- ❑ Food & Beverage
- ❑ Government /Public Sector
- ❑ Healthcare/Pharmaceutical
- ❑ Information Technology
- ❑ Insurance
- ❑ Manufacturing
- ❑ Oil & Gas
- ❑ Services/Hotel/Retail
- ❑ Telecom/Utilities
- ❑ Transportation
- ❑ Other: _____

Do you track and report usage statistics for your library/resource center?

Yes   ____

No   ____

o   If yes, please provide an estimate of the total number of requests you received in 2003
     (please provide 2002 data if 2003 numbers are not yet available)*:

Estimated Annual Requests: _____

*Note: Requests include activity association with research/analysis, document delivery
and circulated items.

Comments:

APPENDIX B – TELEPHONE SURVEY SCRIPT

Researcher: Good afternoon, my name is Amy Davis. I'm a graduate student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am wondering if you could spare a few moments of your time today to complete a brief survey in support of research for my master's paper. I'll be happy to set an appointment if now is not a good time.

Before we get started, there are just a few things that I would like to make you aware of. First, your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any specific question for any reason. Neither you nor your company will be identified in any way. All information provided by you will be kept confidential and only reported in aggregated form. I retrieved your name and contact information using the online membership directory of the Special Libraries Association.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at UNC Chapel Hill. Can I offer you my contact information, or that of my faculty advisor, in case you have any questions about this study?

What is the formal name of your library or information center?

_____

What is the collective name for your staff?

_____

What is the primary industry for your company?

_____

Approximately how many employees does your library serve?

_____

Do you track and report usage statistics for your library/resource center?

Yes   ____

No   ____

○   If yes, please provide an estimate of the total number of requests you received in 2003 (please provide 2002 data if 2003 numbers are not yet available)*:

Estimated Annual Requests: _____

*Note: Requests include activity association with research/analysis, document delivery and circulated items.

Comments: