

Keith J. Stanger, Coordinator, Access Services, Eastern Michigan University Library, Ypsilanti, MI 48197. Dan Bricklin's Demo Program is available at a list price of \$74.95 from Software Garden, Inc., P.O. Box 238, West Newton, MA 02165; (617) 332-2240.

For additional information, consult these sources:

Aarons, Richard, "Bricklin's Demo Program Breaks Original Ground," *PC Magazine* 5 (April 29, 1986):54.

Bonner, Paul, "Dan Bricklin's Demo Program: A Gem of a Tool for PC Managers," *PC Week* 3

(March 18, 1986):87, 100.

Duntemann, Jeff, "Prototypes in Motion," *PC Tech Journal* 4 (March 1986):29.

Edlin, Jim, "Human Interface Design: From the Outside In," *Dr. Dobb's Journal of Software Tools* 11 (May 1986):24-31.

Hamilton, Rosemary, "Dan Bricklin Demo Speeds Prototyping Via Simulation," *Computerworld* 20 (April 7, 1986):33, 36.

Walkenbach, John, "Dan Bricklin Crafts a Demo Program," *Infoworld* 8 (March 31, 1986):41-43. ■■

---

## Ignorance was our excuse

By Wendy Moorhead

*Head of Reference  
Roosevelt University*

---

*BI for foreign students requires a shift in cultural perspective.*

---

Part of our job each year is giving library orientation talks to newly enrolled foreign students at Roosevelt University. This is almost the same as the usual bibliographic instruction that the reference staff does for the rest of the student body; however, a few seemingly minor differences are critical.

The English Language Program (ELP) classes could be beguiling: small classes, attentive, polite students, few or no questions about the lecture—what more could a BI librarian ask for? One answer might be, "Is anyone out there learning anything?"

On the other hand, we might certainly be forgiven if we were failing to reach our 200 foreign students in the English Language Program. We were experienced in library instruction. The foreign students were only a small percentage of the 1,700 students we instruct in library use each year.

Yet we all have a need to be useful and not waste anyone's time.

Roosevelt University is a Chicago-based urban university and has always drawn a sizable contingent of foreign students from the Far East, South Asia, Africa, and Europe. Each ELP class contains an unpredictable mix of these students, each one arriving with different English skills and unique perceptions about America, Americans, and—most importantly—university life.

Sarkodie-Mensah, a foreign student writing about foreign students, notes: "While not every American is an expert in the use of the library, the average American student has an idea of what happens in a library. To many foreign students, the library is only for silent reading.... In some foreign countries the librarian at the reference desk still possesses the power to claim monopoly of all

knowledge, and thus is not to be disturbed... Sometimes it is not easy for foreign students to realize that certain types of ignorance are acceptable, and that librarians are there to help.”<sup>1</sup>

Growing up in any academic environment, even in a society as multinational and diverse as the United States, we emerge with a set of perceptions that are strikingly similar and largely unrecognized by ourselves as peculiar to us. Our shared commonalities are seen best when they are not shared, or when they become uncommon. For us, foreign student orientation lectures provided the necessary shift in perspective.

It was a hard school and we were not always the most apt of pupils. We learned that plagiarism was a strange notion to many foreign students. We learned that words, even simple ones, can signal more than we once thought: “yes” may mean “yes,” but it may also mean “no,” or “see how agreeable I am,” or “I don’t have the least idea of what you’re talking about.” Almost never does it mean “I understand what you are saying,” which is what we all wanted it to mean. When we realized this it was both surprising and disappointing.

We learned that students from certain cultures will not compete for the honor of showing they know a certain thing; that when they talk among themselves, ignoring your attempts to teach, they may simply be being polite and responsive to one another, not rude to you; that there are a lot of reasons to go to college and very few of them have anything to do with the Protestant work ethic, the notion of human perfectability, or even with getting an education. Some foreign students hold that primary and secondary education is the time for hard work and hard lessons, and college is the time to form associations that will be important to them for the rest of their lives. Given this viewpoint, a library orientation lecture may become an exercise in politeness.

We also learned that suppressing witty or idiomatic expressions during our lectures could seriously cramp our style. We remembered, as some of us had known all along, that card catalogs and periodical indexes are not easy.

In short, we found that our foreign students didn’t get the point. Our efforts at communicating library skills were largely unsuccessful, so reluctantly we confronted the problem and began seeking solutions.

Presenting the library in broad strokes or abstract conceptual terms was not working. We decided to simplify our approach. Perhaps the only way to get the big picture across was to start out small and talk about mixing pigment and choosing brushes. The student would be gently walked through each mechanical step involved in finding a book or getting a journal article.

---

<sup>1</sup>Kwasi Sarkodie-Mensah, “In the Words of a Foreigner,” *Research Strategies* 4 (Winter (1986): 30, 31.

For the first time we abandoned caring about the level of understanding that the foreign student achieved, just as long as he could find a book or article. Our new test for success became: can he lay his hands on the material he needs?

The program we developed was evolutionary in that we chose to concentrate on details taken from our prior talks—on what might be called the critical elements—and to do this as intensely as possible. We hoped to make students comfortable with us by working individually with them, thereby encouraging their questions in future library visits. Essentially we were out to build two foundations, one based on useful information and the other based on trust.

This approach works for us. The ELP faculty have also become a part of the process. Their participation validates what we do. We insist on small groups, certainly no more than ten and preferably less. The cornerstone is a brief discussion or description of a point, following almost immediately by the students working through the point on their own. If they get into difficulty, a librarian or ELP teacher is near enough to help but not too close to stifle their efforts. The idea is to guide and direct the students, letting them make any discoveries there are to be made.

The discovery or “eureka” process happens a fair amount because we encourage it to happen. For example, when we discuss the card catalog we hand a slip of paper to each student. Some slips ask them to look for a book with a certain title, others for a particular author, and still others for a certain subject. (By way of a brief explanation, we usually compare the subject side of our divided catalog to the yellow pages.) Working at the card catalog in groups of three, the students eventually realize that all three slips of paper are different ways to find the same book. It’s a little surprising to see how much pleasure they get from this moment of discovery. We’re betting that the students who learn this way will remember.

Finally, with the same slips of paper the students go to the stacks to find and check out the book.

In the same fifty-minute session as that devoted to the card catalog, we also cover the way the library is organized. We make one stab at this broad topic—that libraries use the same organizing principles as we do at home, and that librarians make things available and more useful by putting similar things together. Spare tires and garden rakes are kept in one place, oranges and lettuce in another, and blouses, skirts and belts in still another.

Another fifty-minute session is devoted to periodical indexes and periodicals. We begin with a pile of magazines, asking their ideas on what each is about, its audience, who publishes it, and where the volume and issue numbers can be found. We turn quickly to pages of the *Reader’s Guide* and show them how to read a bibliographic citation. Each student reads and explains a citation, which then becomes “his.” Then when we go into the pe-

riodicals room, their task is to find the articles they have read aloud.

At every point in this process the emphasis is on the human side—on creating a comfortable atmosphere and establishing some rapport. We feel that whether or not they understand a certain aspect of the lecture is not critical, but that how they perceive us and the library is critical. If we turn them off, that may be the last day their shadows darken our halls. Probably no scholarly point, no matter how cherished, is worth that price.

In one situation described by Mellon, American students reported their feelings about libraries in such terms as “scary, overpowering, lost, helpless, and fearing the unknown.” Findings such as this led the investigating library to include a “warmth seminar” in its library orientation program: “Although search strategy and tool use were still emphasized, the redesign provided maximum interaction between student and librarian.”<sup>2</sup>

If this is true of American students, think how we and our libraries must seem to students who are already in culture shock to one degree or another. An associate has told me of a public library director who began spending more and more time in the public service area. “What I’m doing is taking a look at this place,” he said. “What I see is almost an armed camp; little kids trying to find stuff, a system that will let you borrow a book only if you have a close relative in circulation, public service employees who are into icy intimidation. It scares me, and God knows what it does to the patrons.” He paused. “The Board has asked me to find out why circulation is down.”

If we achieve nothing else in our ELP lecture except helping students discover something for themselves and giving them a comfortable sense of the library and librarians, maybe that is enough.

### Suggested reading

Council of Graduate Students in the United States. *The Foreign Student in American Graduate Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools, 1980.

Daniel, Norman. *Cultural Barrier: Problems in the Exchange of Ideas*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975.

Hull, Frank. *Foreign Students in the United States of America: Coping Behavior within the Educational Environment*. New York: Praeger, 1978.

Lewis, Mary Genevieve. “Library Orientation for Asian College Students,” *College & Research Libraries* 30 (May 1969):267–72.

Lopez, Manuel D. “Chinese Spoken Here: Foreign Language Library Orientation Tours,” *C&RL News* 44 (September 1983):265, 268–69.

Mood, Terry Ann. “Foreign Students in the Academic Library,” *RQ* 22 (Winter 1982):175–80. ■■

<sup>2</sup>Constance A. Mellon, “Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and Its Development,” *College & Research Libraries* 47 (March 1986):160, 164.

---

## How to publish in ACRL: Non-serial publications

Are you working on a survey, directory, pamphlet, bibliography, or any other project with publication potential? Then you need to be aware of these new publication procedures for *non-serial* publications that the ACRL Publications Committee adopted at ALA Annual Conference in New York last July.

Your publication proposal will go through the following steps on the way to becoming an ACRL or ALA publication.

**Step One.** Fill out a “Preliminary Publication Information Form,” available from ACRL Headquarters, early in the planning stages of your project. This form asks for basic information about the scope and content of the proposed publication and the individual(s) responsible for developing it. Send the completed form to Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL’s publications officer, at ACRL Headquarters.

**Step Two.** The ACRL publications officer reviews the proposal and offers ALA Publishing Services the first chance of accepting the project as an ALA publication. This “right of first refusal” is specified in the operating agreement between ALA and its divisions.

**Step Three.** ACRL’s Publications Subcommittee on Non-Serial Proposals and the ACRL publications officer review the content and viability of the proposal and make a recommendation as to its feasibility. (In some cases, an outside reader with expertise in the subject area will be asked to review the publication for editorial content. This review will next be considered by the Subcommittee and the program officer.) The Subcommittee will review and act upon publication proposals throughout the year, as well as at ALA annual conferences and midwinter meetings.

**Step Four.** After reviewing the recommendations of the Subcommittee (and any outside reviewers) the ACRL publications officer then accepts, rejects, refers back to ALA Publishing Services, or asks for further development of each proposal from the author or sponsoring body.

**Step Five.** If your proposal is accepted, submit your completed manuscript to ACRL Headquarters for further review by the Subcommittee and the ACRL publications officer.

For further information, contact Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL Publications Officer, ACRL/ALA, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611-2795; (312) 944-6780, x287. ■■

