

A Proposal to Investigate the Information-Seeking Behaviors of Chinese Students at Canadian Academic Libraries

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Abstract: The goal of this study is to explore the information-seeking behaviors of Chinese students at Canadian academic libraries. In-depth qualitative interviews with 20 Chinese students at the University of Alberta are conducted to investigate Chinese students' information-seeking habits and strategies in using Canadian university libraries. It is hoped that this study will lead to a better understanding of the information needs of international students and help Canadian academic libraries to provide effective information support to multicultural students.

Keywords: Information-seeking behaviors, Chinese students, Canadian academic
Libraries

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1. Research Problem

The goal of this study is to investigate the information-seeking behaviors of Chinese students at Canadian academic libraries. Most existing research examined the information behaviors of Asian students within American libraries, but little accounted for Chinese students at Canadian university libraries. This research focuses on Chinese students' information-seeking habits and strategies in using Canadian academic libraries. This study is part of the general area research problems about information behaviors of diverse students. It is hoped that this study will lead to a better understanding of the information needs of international students and help Canadian academic libraries to provide effective information support to multicultural students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Literature exploring Asian students' information-seeking behaviors in American academic libraries is well-established in library and information science (e.g., Lin, 1994; Griggs and Dunn, 1996; Grant, 1999; Liestman, 2000; Wang and Frank, 2002). Much of the information is found in the professional library literature. The majority of articles focus on the barriers that Asian students encounter when using American academic libraries (see Kumar and Suresh, 2000; Chattoo, 2000; Wang and Frank, 2002).

Trends in the literature focus on cultural differences and communication styles. Some researchers state that the differences in culture and communication styles inhibit Asian students effectively using American academic libraries (see Gudykunst and Kim, 1997; Schein 2001; Lopza, 2001). Another major trend in the literature focuses on the different perceptions of libraries and available information services between Asian students and students from English speaking countries. Researchers (e.g., Griggs and Dunn, 1996; Grant, 1999; Liestman, 2000; Wang and Frank, 2002) believe Asian students may not be fully aware of the readily available library services in American academic libraries; therefore, they usually underutilize the professional assistance.

Some literature particularly examines Chinese students' information behaviors in American university libraries (Liu and Redfern, 1999; Lu, 2001). Yet there is little literature in the field of library science that examines Chinese students' information behaviors within the Canadian academic context.

2.2 Underutilization of Library Services

Data from a series of focus groups indicate that Asian students may not be fully aware of the readily available professional reference assistance and information-related facilities. As a result, Asian students tend to under use available library services (Liestman, 2000; Wang and Frank, 2002; Conner 2003). Several factors contribute to this underutilization.

A focus group research by Wang and Frank (2002) identify that Asian students tend to be unfamiliar with the organization and mission of academic libraries in the United States. Libraries

in their countries are organized differently, with missions and strategic goals that are occasionally dramatically different. Library services are not necessarily available for all students. Access to books and other forms of information may be limited. Databases may or may not be available and accessible. Card catalogs and closed stacks are still used in some libraries or information centers. These are significant differences (208).

American and Asian expectations of the role that a reference librarian plays vary widely. Alison Conner (2003) claims that the level of professionalization in Asian libraries is low. Most Asian librarians do not have a master degree, and they are not specialized in research. Thus Asian students have no sense that librarians are information professionals of status, but instead are just gatekeeper and credential checkers (155). According to Wayman (2003), the concept of library service in Asia is minimal or even non-existent; therefore, students do not expect any help from reference librarians. There are often no reference librarians who teach students how to use the library, rather there are only the library clerks who retrieve duly requested material (52-53). Toshiko Takenaka, a Japanese professor at the University of Washington said: "In Japan, the librarian is really no help at all. They may help a professor, but student do not get any help. Their priority is acquisitions and keeping books in order. Their main function is checking books in and out" (Garner, 2003).

Asian students may not be as skilled with the various information technologies that are understood and used routinely by others. Some feel intimidated by these technologies, but do not ask for professional assistance. Other students are not familiar with some software that is widely used in the library. Even if they have used the software at their home countries, they used different language versions (Griggs and Dunn, 1996; Grant, 1999).

Liestman (2000) notes Asian students may not be information-literate nor skilled in the ability to seek, obtain, and evaluate database resources. They frequently rely on the informal comments and suggestions of other students. While this phenomenon is not limited to Asian students, most second language students have difficulties dealing with database (365-68).

As Sarkodie-Mensah (2002) points out in "In the words of a Foreigner," sometimes it is not easy for an Asian student to realize the readily available services of North American academic libraries, which they have seldom used in their home countries. In addition, they may not be aware that professional librarians are there for help. Therefore, they usually under use library services if they are not taught in orientation class (30).

2.3 Culture Differences

Cultures are complex and diverse. There are individual, organizational, and national cultures. Edgar H. Schein (2001) defines culture as the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (125).

Cultures are also characterized by shared values, including the basic assumptions that influence these values. Additionally, cultures are defined by collective characteristics with both

tangible and intangible attributes. Individuals in the culture or group will occasionally differ or vary on the cultural continuum, but the overall group tends to be harmonious as a collective entity (Lenartowicz and Roth, 2002). Basically, a culture or community shares a set of common experiences and values that shape perceptions of other cultures or communities, including academic libraries. Simply stated, culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves (Dupraw and Axner, 2002).

An individual's culture affects his or her attitudes, behaviors, practices, and values. One's sense of what is ethical, unethical, good, bad, appropriate, or inappropriate is influenced dramatically by one's culture. Attitudes toward life, work, or family will vary from one culture to another. Specific cultures determine or influence physical proximity in conversations with others, the ability to make direct eye contact in conversations, how they express feelings of happiness or frustration, and other basic behaviors (Liu and Redfern, 1999; Lu, 2001).

Asian students are occasionally viewed or perceived as more reserved or non-assertive because Asian cultures place an emphasis on harmony and respect for authorities. Therefore, many of them are reluctant to share their feelings or emotions, express their opinions or oppositions to others, especially to authority figures. Thus instead of emphasizing personal rights and assertive communication, Asian students tend to emphasize the importance of patience, harmony, respect, and deference (Lin and Yi, 1997).

Wayman (2003) describes some differences between Japanese, Chinese and American students in her article, "The Asian Student in the Academic Library," that Chinese and Japanese students are usually passive in class, may respond only to direct questions, and learn by observation and practice. Memorization is common. In contrast, American students are usually assertive, verbal, and learn easily by class discussion and question and answer session. Independent research and original, creative work are encouraged (58). According to Sarkodie-Mensah (2002), Asian passive method is also true in the reference interaction. It is likely that asking questions or asking help will not come as easily to Asian students as it does to American students (34).

As a result of a focus group research, Wang and Frank (2002) conclude that some international students from Asian nations are particularly sensitive to the need to "save face." If one is providing assistance or instruction for an Asian student and asks if the student understands, it is likely that the student will state that he or she does understand, even if the student fails to understand or is unsure. The student does not want to "lose face," and also does not want the instructor or librarian to "lose face." A response indicating that the student does not understand may reflect negatively on the student and on the instructor. In contrast, directness and assertiveness in communications are generally valued by American students and scholars (212).

2.4 Communication Styles

Verbal language is not the only mode of communication. Approximately 70 percent of communication is conveyed via non-verbal techniques (Wang and Frank, 2002). They claim that facial expressions, physical gestures, posture, eye contact, and voice pitch or volume constitute

important elements of nonverbal communication. Because cultures view or use nonverbal signals differently, the chances for cultural miscommunication are great (211).

Many researchers have studied the aspect of body language as it applied to behavior during reference interview (see Brundin, 1989; Axtell, 1991; Lopaz, 1994). Communication in the reference interview is heavily influenced by the physical distance maintained between the librarian and the patron, by their posture, head nods, facial expressions, gestures and whether or not they look at each other, as well as the volumes of their voices, accents and inflectional patterns (Brundin, 1989).

Making eye contact is inviting and friendly in the American culture but can be threatening or disrespectful in other cultures that are lower contact. Research by Gudykunst and Kim (1997) indicate that American students tend to use eye contact in one-to-one conversations, indicating interest and respect. Students from other cultures who look away in conversations with American students or librarians erroneously may be perceived as disrespectful or simply not willing to pay attention. However, the Japanese and Chinese, a low-contact society, consider staring to be rude or even intimidating. Instead of making eye-contact while greeting someone, some common Asian gestures for greeting are handshaking and bowing. Asian women rarely look directly at men's eyes, especially those of strangers (250).

Body languages have different meanings in different cultures. Asian students may nod and appear to indicate understanding, but are non-verbally communicating that they are politely listening. When Asian students nod during a reference interview, it cannot be inferred as assent. Chinese like avoid saying "no." Rather, gestures, such as waving the hand, with palm outward, back and forth in front of one's own face are used to signal the concepts of "I do not know," or "I do not understand" or even "No, I am undeserving" Elements of posture are also considered to be more relevant by some cultures. Chinese students may correlate "correct posture" with respect for others. Being silent while listening is a sign of politeness and of contemplation in Asian cultures. Do not take an Asian student's silence to mean that they are disinterested. In addition, being low-contact cultures, Asian societies are considered non-touching. Touching people on the shoulders and especially on the head is considered disrespectful. Handing books or other materials can be done using two hands because generally using both hands is considered more polite and respectful than using only one. (Gudykunst and Kim,1997).

Different cultures have different concepts of personal space, including the sensations of spaciousness, crowdedness, privacy, and appropriate distances, which can be a major issue during a reference interview. Lopaz (1994) states that people from different cultures use space differently and experience it differently. Culture can determine perception. The amount of physical space required for social distance is much less in Asian societies, and Asian students may stand quite close to a librarian without intending intimacy or uncomfortableness. It is important for librarians to realize that Asian students may unintentionally "invade" the librarian's personal space and that offense should not be taken because none is meant. And vice versa, Asian students may be receiving the wrong message from a librarian who maintains a large distance from the student (100-103).

An important conceptual framework in comparing how people in various cultures think and communicate is Hall's construct of "contexting" and the identifying of cultures on a high-context to low-context scale (Hall, 1997). Cultures differ in how much they rely on context to communicate. Hall defines a high-context communication or message as "one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" and a low-context communication as "just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the message is vested in the explicit code" (42-45).

Hall believes that the United States, like most other western countries is relatively low-context culture. In low-context cultures, the meaning of the message is usually explicitly encoded in the words themselves. Asian cultures are considered high-context cultures, where the meaning of the message should be not only derived from the words themselves, but particularly from the context of the situation, and non-verbal clues. In "Beyond Culture," Hall describes that Asian students with high-context cultures expect more of others than do the participants in low-context systems. When talking about something they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what is bothering him, so he/she does not have to be specific. The result is that the individual will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Placing the keystone properly is the role of the interlocutor. Therefore, in a reference interview with Asian students, cultural context is vital to successful communication (47-49).

2.5 Issues Particular relevant to Chinese Students

Research by Keller (1998), Liu (1999), and Su (2004) indicate that language barriers constitute a significant problem for Chinese students. Although Chinese students are required to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or other equivalent English proficiency examinations before studying abroad, most Chinese students still fear that their English is inferior because they have few opportunities to listen and speak English in China. What Chinese students learned in China is formal standard written English; therefore, most of them have no problem with reading and writing. Yet they have difficulties in listening and speaking English.

Focus group research with Chinese students at Harvard University (Grant, 1999), the Georgia Institute of Technology (Keller, 1998), and Portland State University (Kumar and Suresh, 2000) report that language barriers can create communication problems, which affects students' abilities to communicate effectively with academic librarians and others in academe. Chinese students are occasionally hesitant to approach reference desks and professional librarians for help. Students become frustrated, which affects their ability to fully use reference services.

Language barriers lead to a series of related problems, such as performance anxieties, loneliness and homesickness. Chinese students are challenged constantly to adjust to English academic and social environments. The research of Chinese students' information behavior within American academic libraries by Liu and Redfern, (1999) and Lu (2001) report that exposure to an unfamiliar language environment can create anxiety, confusion, and depression. These conditions can lead to problems such as nervousness, loneliness, insomnia, and physical illness, all of which appear to interfere with their proper communication. Wang and Frank (2002)

believe Chinese students are likely to experience some degree of "culture shock" in their initial year of adjusting to life and studies in an English environment. The psychological and physical stresses arising from cultural differences and from the pressures to adjust to or to conform to an unfamiliar culture can be overwhelming (211).

This research will focus on the use of library services, impact of cultural and communication differences, and influence of language on the information seeking process. It will also compare and contrast the research findings with those discussed in the American literature.

3. Research Questions

The study is qualitative in nature. Two core research questions are posed to help clarify the research problem, and each core question involves two follow up questions

1. What kind of library services do Chinese students feel they need most?
 - a. Do Chinese students attend library instruction sessions? What are their perceptions of the strength and weakness of these sessions?
 - b. How often do Chinese students ask reference librarians for help, and what kind of questions do they often ask?
2. How do Chinese students seek, gather, and evaluate information?
 - a. What resources do Chinese students mainly rely on to search information?
 - b. Do social and cultural background, and previous study experiences affect a student's information-seeking strategies?

4. Definitions

Chinese students are typically defined here as 18 years or older Chinese international students who are studying at University of Alberta.

Information-seeking behavior is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal (Wilson, 2000). Here it particularly refers to the activity that a Chinese student locates, gains and evaluates information for academic study.

Library service refers to an act or a variety of work done by library staff to assist users. (Merriam-Webster Online).

Academic library is a library that is part of an academic institution such as a college or university. An academic library supports the curriculum and research needs of its students, faculty, and staff (ODLIS: Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science).

Reference librarian is a librarian who works in public services, answering questions posed by library patrons at a reference desk, by telephone, or via e-mail. A reference librarian may also be called upon to provide point-of-use instruction on the use of library resources and information technology (ODLIS: Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science).

Library instruction session is a period of time used by library staff to teach or instruct library users how to use library facilities and services (Merriam-Webster Online).

Strategy is a logical series of steps for planning and preparing an efficient way to collect pertinent information on a given topic. (Definitions of Library Vocabulary and Terms)

5. Data Collection

This study uses in-depth qualitative interviews to explore the information-seeking behaviors of 20 Chinese students at the University of Alberta. Restricting the research to one university is helpful for collecting accurate data because the participants share common informational resources and services, and have similar academic requirements.

Presently there are approximately 1,200 Chinese students studying at 21 University of Alberta faculties and schools (statistics from International Students Union). To ensure that there is an even distribution of participants, one representative from each faculty or school will be selected, where applicable. Library School is excluded from the research because library school students have priorities over other students in using library resources. The data derived from library school students is not transferable to other context. Interviewees will be selected using maximum variation sampling to achieve a broad representation of gender, age, academic discipline, employment status, and previous education. Ideally, the 20 participants will include 10 undergraduates and 10 graduates, 10 male students and 10 female students. The Interviewees will also involve married students, mature students, and students with employment experiences. Participants will be contacted through an open invitation at a Chinese Student Union's orientation session, with advertisements (see Appendix D) posted across campus, and using a snowball technique.

The interviews will be conducted in the fall of 2005 and each last approximately one hour. The data collection process is three weeks. The researcher's office is always available for interviews. Participants can also choose places where they feel quite and comfortable. The interviews will be audio taped and the researcher will take field notes. A research assistant and a professional transcriber will work together with the researcher during interview and data transcription process.

Semi-structured interview is chosen for the research because it is more flexible and likely to yield more information than the researcher has expected. Because the purpose of the study is to get some insights into the way Chinese students search, locate and evaluate information resources for their academic studies, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions can stimulate informative conversations and allow participants to recount their past experiences in using universities libraries. Participants are the key of the interviews.

The interview questions (see appendix C) are created by the researcher from the scratch because no current literature accounts for Chinese students' information-seeking behaviors in Canadian academic universities. There is not a similar interview guide to follow. On the other hand, this research aims to examine whether some research findings in American settings are

applicable to Canadian context. Therefore, the researcher designs the interview questions partly based on previous literature review. The interview questions are divided into three categories: use of library services, impact of cultural and communication differences, and the influence of language.

There are four criteria to evaluate a qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To achieve credible data, the researcher recruits representatives from all the departmental affiliations which have Chinese students so as to get multiple and varying perspectives on the issues. Moreover, each interview lasts one hour and the whole research process will last six months. It is a great effort and long engagement. Because the participants are from various backgrounds, the findings of the study may be inconsistent. However, this does not mean the data is undependable. The dependability is not looking for invariance, but for traceable variance. As long as the researcher can track the reason of the difference, the data is dependable. Even though a researcher cannot ensure the data is completely free from the influences of external environments, a researcher should maintain natural and objective, which is the key for confirmability. The research questions should not have bias and the researcher should be regarded as an instrument in the research. In general, the research findings are transferable to other Canadian university context because Canadian universities are public universities and have similar organizations and missions. The academic context is similar. In addition, the participants are selected using maximum variation sampling to achieve a broad representation of Chinese students in Canadian universities.

However, the research still has its limitations. 20 participants all got their high school or university degrees in China before they started to study at the University of Alberta. However, there might be Chinese international students who get their previous education in an English speaking country and continue to study at a Canadian university. These students' information-seeking behaviors may be different from those of the participants. Further research is needed to compare these students' information behaviors with those of the participants.

The research has boundaries. The participants are Chinese international students, not Chinese immigrants, nor Canadian born Chinese because their cultures and language are different. In addition, the study focuses on information-seeking behaviors on academic study, not deals with profession or everyday life related information-seeking behaviors.

6. Ethics Review

A researcher who is conducting human subject research should be aware of the ethical issues. A researcher needs to submit research ethics application for approval before the research. According to Tri-Council Policy Statement, the researcher is ethically bound to respect the participant's human dignity, free and informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and justice and inclusiveness. Before the study, the participants should be informed the nature, purpose and procedures of the study. If the interview process is video taped, participants must be made aware of these tapings. Participants may decline to answer specific questions, and withdraw from this study at any time, for any reason. If the participants are under the age of 18, consents of their parents or guardians is required. In all cases the researcher must not press for answers to questions that may embarrass the participants or make them feel uncomfortable.

For this research, ethics approval is required from the Faculty of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (see appendices A and B). The research ethics application should be submitted six weeks before the beginning of the research. Informed consent form is also needed to be signed by the interviewee (see appendix E) before the interview. A research assistant and a professional transcriber are involved in carrying out specific research tasks in the research. They will be required to read the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants [GFC Policy Manual, Section 66], and sign Research Assistant/Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement (see appendix F) before they join the project. Because there are no participants under the age of 18, the research does not need to gain consent from the participants' parents or guardians.

7. Implementation Plan

This is a master project and the researcher will work full time on it. It will approximately last 22 weeks (see appendix G and H Gantt charts).

If only partial funding is obtained for the project, the professional transcriber will not be involved in the project. The research assistant will transcribe the interview data. If a large amount of the budget is cut, the research assistant may not be hired. The researcher will work on the project individually. In addition, to save transportation fee, interviews will be conducted only at the researcher's office instead of locations chosen by the interviewees. However, the number of interviewees will not be altered because the participants are selected using maximum variation sampling to achieve a broad presentation of academic discipline. Each participant represents a faculty or school where there are Chinese international students.

8. Dissemination Plan

The study examines a user-centered problem in the library and information science field. It is part of the general area research problem about information behaviors of international students. Thus the research findings should be disseminated in professional conferences or scholarly journals in the library science field.

The researcher plans to present the research findings on the Alberta Library Conference (ALC). As a member of the Alberta Library Association, the researcher is familiar with the requirements of ALC proceedings. Moreover, as a novice researcher, he/she will get more chance to present the first research findings on a provincial conference than on a national or international conference. In addition, ALC 2006 has a student chapter and provides a pre-conference workshop, which is useful for novice student researchers.

For publication, the researcher's first choice is "The Journal of Academic Librarianship." It is an international and refereed journal, publishing articles that focus on problems and issues germane to college and university libraries. The research problem of this paper matches the journal's theme. Furthermore, the editors of the journal promised to offer new authors valuable advice and assistance to help them achieve their first publication. It is said in "The Journal of Academic Librarianship," website that around 20% of papers are by first-time authors.

The researcher also has the plan to publish the research paper on “The Reference Librarian.” The journal is well-known in the reference librarian profession for its stimulating, informative, and practical publications. Each issue of this journal focuses on a topic of current concern, interest, or practical value to the reference librarian. It is calling paper on international aspects of reference and information services for 2006 issues. A study on Chinese students’ information behaviors may contribute to the international reference services.

9. Project Budget

Supplies

- 1) STAPLES Business Depot 9-1/2" x 11" Computer Paper X2 @ 8.95=17.9
- 2) Acco 67 pt. Accohide Data Binders X20 @ 12.95=259
- 3) BiC Atlantis Ballpoint Pens X10 @ 4.99=49.9
- 4) 2-Drawer Lateral File Cabinets X1 @ 239.64=239.64
- 5) Panasonic RR-US050 Digital Recorder X1 @ 199=199
- 6) 3M Scotch Transparent Tape X30 @ 2.97=89.1

Subtotal: 854.54

Personnel

- 1) Research assistant 250 hours @ 20= 5000

Services

- 1) Professional transcriber 130 hours @ 30=3900
- 2) Poster X200 @ 1=200

Subtotal: 4100

Travel

- 1) Transportation for data collection 80
- 2) Travel for Alberta Library Conference X1 @ 500=500

Subtotal: 580

Tax: 7%

Total: 11272

10. Reference List

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Appendix A: Application for Ethics Review of Proposed Research

(revised July 15/04)

Name: Aiyang Ma

Student ID (if applicable): 111100

E-mail: ama@ualberta.ca

Complete mailing address (if student):

You must advise the EE REB of changes in email or mailing address.

Project Title: A study of the Information-Seeking Behaviors of Chinese Students at Canadian Academic

Libraries

Project Deadlines:

Starting Date (yy/mm/dd): 2005/09/01

Ending Date (yy/mm/dd): 2006/02/03

If your project is not finished before the Ending Date, you must apply for an extension by submitting the appropriate *Status of Research Study* form.

Annual Reporting

If your project extends beyond one year from the date of EE REB approval, you will be required to submit an *Annual Report for Multi-Year Studies* at the end of each year of the project. Projects are normally subject to a complete re-submission after 3 years.

Status (if student):

Master's Project Master's Thesis Doctoral Dissertation Other (specify):

Funding (if applicable):

Grant Application Contract Research Non-Funded Research Other (specify):

Do you plan to gather data in University of Alberta units other than Education or Extension? Yes () No ()

If yes, name the unit(s): 16 faculties and schools which have Chinese International students.

I, the applicant, agree to notify the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board in writing of any changes in research design, procedures, sample, etc. that arise after the EE REB approval has been granted. A *Request for Change in Methodology* form must receive approval from EE REB before the modified research can proceed.

I also agree to notify the EE REB immediately if any untoward or adverse event occurs during my research, and/or if data analysis or other review reveals undesirable outcomes for the participants.

I have read the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants [GFC Policy Manual, Section 66 <http://www.ualberta.ca/~unisechr/policy/sec66.html>] and agree to comply with these Standards in conducting my research.

Signature of Applicant

Date

As the supervisor/instructor, I have read and approve submission of this application to the EE REB, and ensure that the proposed project is compliant with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants [GFC Policy Manual, Section 66 <http://www.ualberta.ca/~unisechr/policy/sec66.html>].

Printed name of Supervisor/Instructor

Signature of Supervisor/Instructor

Date

ETHICS REVIEW STATUS

Application approved by EE REB member Application approved by EE REB Application not approved

Signature of EE REB Member

Date

Appendix B: Procedures for Compliance with the U of A Standards

Human research conducted under the auspices of the University of Alberta must follow the Standards reflected in the GFC Policy Manual Section 66 entitled “Human Research - University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.” This document is available on the University web site at <http://www.ualberta.ca/~unisecr/policy/sec66.html>

Please attach the following:

- Information letter(s) to participant(s) (e.g. teachers, students, parents/guardians) (see suggested template)
- Consent form(s) for participant(s) (e.g. teachers, students, parent/guardians) (see suggested template)
- In the case of solicitation of participants through advertisement, a copy of the advertisement(s)
- A copy of any data gathering instruments. In the case of published instruments, only the name need be given. In the case of interviews, sample interview questions must be included.
- A copy of the *Confidentiality Agreement* (if required)
- Any additional documentation

Please describe clearly and concisely how you intend to comply with the Standards by answering each of the following questions.

1. How will you explain the purpose and nature of your research to prospective participants?

I will explain to participants in person that the purpose and nature of the research is to examine how Chinese students search, locate and evaluate information in university libraries..

2. (a) What steps will you take to obtain the free and informed consent of the participants? e.g. How will you provide opportunities for potential participants to exercise their right to not participate?

I will have participants read and sign the consent/information form, and ask them if they have any questions before they sign it. I will also inform them that all materials gathered from the interview will be kept anonymous and confidential. They will not be identified in the project. If the participants are under the age of 18, consents of their parents or guardians is required.

(b) Are there limited and/or temporary exceptions to the general requirements for full disclosure of information? If yes, (i) please describe the exception(s) (ii) justify the need for the exception(s), and (iii) explain the provisions for debriefing participants. No.

(c) Are there any circumstances which could compromise the voluntary consent of participants (e.g., incentives, captive populations, second relationship)? If yes, how will these circumstances be dealt with? No.

3. How will you provide opportunities for your participants to exercise the right to opt out without penalty, harm or loss of promised benefit?

Both the advertisement and the consent form will inform them that they may opt out of the study at any time, for any reason. Before they sign the consent form, I will also state this message. Data collected from participants who opt out of the study will be destroyed.

4. (a) How will you address privacy, anonymity and confidentiality issues?

Participants will not be identified in the project and pseudonyms will be used instead. Consent forms with participants' names will not be kept together with other information gathered from the study.

(b) If you plan to record sounds or images in your project, how will you address anonymity and confidentiality of participants and non-participants?

I will inform the participants before recording. The recorded sounds and image will not be open to the public. Only the researcher has access to the information, and they will be locked in a secure place by the researcher.

5. Will there be any risk, threat or harm to the participants or to others? If yes, (a) please elaborate and (b) how will you minimize the risk, threat or harm? No.

6. How will you provide for security of the data during the study and for a minimum of 5 years thereafter?

The data will be kept in a secure locked place during the study and for a minimum of 5 years thereafter, and then be shred. The consent forms with participants' names will kept separately from other materials.

7. If you involve research assistants, transcribers, interpreters and/or other personnel to carry out specific research tasks in your research, how will you ensure that they comply with the Standards?

I will require them to read the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants [GFC Policy Manual, Section 66], and sign Research Assistant/Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement.

8. Please describe any other procedures relevant to complying with the Standards.

No.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

I. Use of Library Services

1. What kind of library services do you feel you need most?
2. Have you attended library instruction sessions?
3. What are your perceptions of instruction sessions?
4. How often do you ask reference librarians for help?
5. What kind of questions do you often ask?
6. Have you asked reference librarians for help with your research?
7. What resources do you mainly rely on to search information for your academic study?

II. Impact of Cultural and communication differences

1. Do you think cultural differences affect the way you seek information in Canadian academic libraries?
2. If so, which part of the cultures influences you most? And how?
3. Do you think Chinese students' communication style is different from Canadian students? If so, can you give an example?

III. Influence of Language

1. As an English as a second language student, what is your opinion of the role of English language in your information-seeking process?
2. What is your opinion of the role of non-verbal communication when you communicate with librarian staff?

Appendix D: Advertisement Soliciting Participants

Participants Needed for a Study of Chinese Students' Information Behaviors

Are you a Chinese international student at University of Alberta? Are you 18 years or older? Would you like to discuss your experiences in using university libraries?

20 participants from a variety of faculties and schools are needed for a study of Chinese students' information-seeking behaviors in Canadian academic libraries. Participants will be interviewed during September 2005 and February 2006 on campus. Interviews will last approximately 1 hour.

The researcher is a master student in School of Library and Information Studies at University of Alberta. The instructor on this project is Dr. Lisa Given, an associate professor in School of Library and Information Studies.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants may opt out of the interview at any time, for any reason, or decline to answer specific questions. Participants will not be identified in any way. There are no known risks associated with the study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

For more information about the study, please contact:

Aiyang Ma (MLIS Student)
School of Library and Information Studies
University of Alberta
Email: ama@ualberta.ca
Ph: 780-888 7388

Dr. Lisa M. Given
School of Library and Information Studies
University of Alberta
Email: lisa.given@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780-492-2033

Appendix E: Consent Form/ Information Letter

A Study of Chinese Students' Information Behaviours at Canadian Academic Libraries

The purpose of this research is to investigate Chinese students' information-seeking behaviours in Canadian academic libraries. The research findings will help University Alberta libraries to improve its services to international students.

The study is being undertaken by Aiyang Ma, a master student in School of Library and Information Studies at University of Alberta. The instructor on this project is Dr. Lisa Given, an associate professor in School of Library and Information Studies.

The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview process will be video taped. A researcher and a research assistant will participate in the interview and take field notes. The tape recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes will only be used for research purposes. The researcher will keep those materials in a secure locked place for a minimum of five years following completion of the research, and then shred them.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants may opt out of the interview at any time, for any reason, or decline to answer specific questions. To ensure the participants' anonymity and confidentiality, the interviewees will not be identified in any way. There will be no way to link the participant's name on this consent form with any of the other information gathered during the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study please contact:

Aiyang Ma (MLIS Student)
School of Library and Information
Studies
University of Alberta
Email: ama@ualberta.ca
Ph: 780-888 7388

Dr. Lisa M. Given
School of Library and Information
Studies
University of Alberta
Email: lisa.given@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780-492-2033

I have read and understand the above information, and agree to participate in this study.

Interviewee's Signature:

Interviewer's Signature:

Date:

Date:

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: A Study of Chinese Students' Information Behaviours at Canadian Academic Libraries

I, _____, _____ (specific job description, e.g., interpreter/translator, research assistant, transcriber) have been hired to

I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
5. other (specify).

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

Researcher(s)

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

