

# ameliorate

Improving the Alkek Library experience in a way that is  
enlightening, entertaining, and most importantly – *effortless*.

**HERE'S WHAT'S INSIDE...**

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**SO, HERE'S THE PROBLEM...**

## A STUDENT'S COLD & DISMAL LAST RESORT FOR SILENCE



One of the most common complaints about the library is it's cold and dreary atmosphere. This makes it both an unwelcoming and unstimulating place to work. Despite this, students see the Alkek Library as a personal sanctuary from the noise and distractions of the home.



In an effort to alter this negative perception, this proposal aims to make a library experience that is much more gratifying for present and future visitors. Employing environmental elements that stimulate the mind and visually warm the cold atmosphere is the heart of this solution.



Views of the 3rd floor  
of the Alkek Library  
during peak hours

From the ground up, this project was designed to work around the existing sub-culture of the library regulars and is intended to benefit not only them, but future regulars as well.

**HERE'S WHAT WE SAW...**

**THE REALITY IS  
THAT STUDENTS  
SEE THE ALKEK  
AS NOTHING  
MORE THAN A  
SEVEN-FLOOR  
STUDY HALL**



The Alkek Library is home to over 1.4 million volumes and is the most significant knowledge center on campus. Although the students have access to the library's vast collection at almost all hours of the day, the reality is that the students see the Alkek as nothing more than a seven-floor study hall.



If you take a walk through the Alkek on a typical afternoon, you would probably start to see a few behavioral patterns. First, there is not a lot of foot traffic (second floor excluded). Everyone seems to either be sitting down or looking for a place to sit down. Second, when the library is not



crowded, students prefer to sit alone at their own table, but will sacrifice privacy for a visually stimulating view of a window seat. The problem is that window seating is very limited, forcing a lot of students to work elsewhere. Why can't the rest of the library be as interesting in its own way?

**BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS**

- » Everyone seemed to be studying or using a laptop
- » If a student was reading a book, it was a textbook
- » Chairs and sofas used for napping
- » No one seemed to be searching for any books
- » Students tend to distance themselves from other students
- » Window seating is preferred for the view and proximity to electrical outlets

The photos on these two pages are of actual students in the library. Everyone appeared to be either studying, using their laptop, or sleeping. What you don't see are people walking around. Floor after floor everyone seemed very much situated, giving the impression that wayfinding is not really a problem.

Observing the library entrance, students either headed straight for the computers or the elevators. Not one student looked at the library directory during this observation time. The students that went straight for the elevators all appeared to know exactly where they needed to go. Following students exiting the elevator repeatedly yielded the same result of seeking a place to sit and work.



*Top Left*

A common sight in a study area located on the second floor

*Bottom Left*

Student napping on a sofa located on one of the quiet floors

*Top Right*

Pillows being stored in the cabinets of a private study room

*Bottom Right*

Student taking a study break





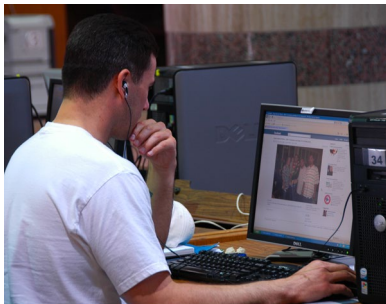
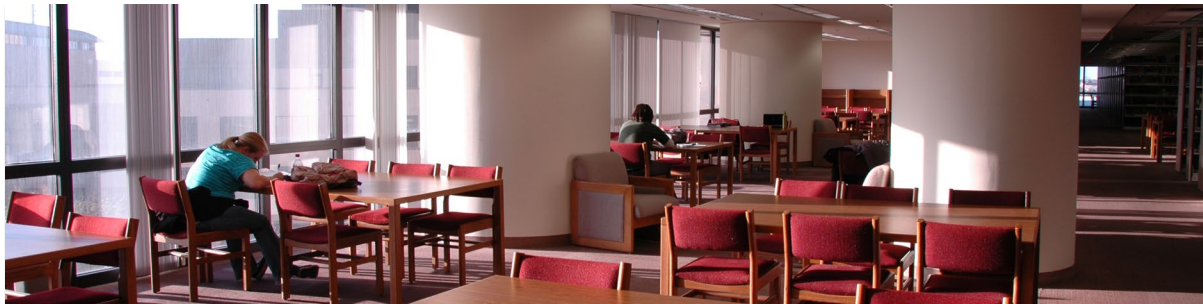
*Top*  
View of the  
Periodicals floor

*Center*  
A sunny afternoon  
view of a study  
area located near  
a large window

*Bottom Left*  
Social networking  
sites are very popular  
with library patrons

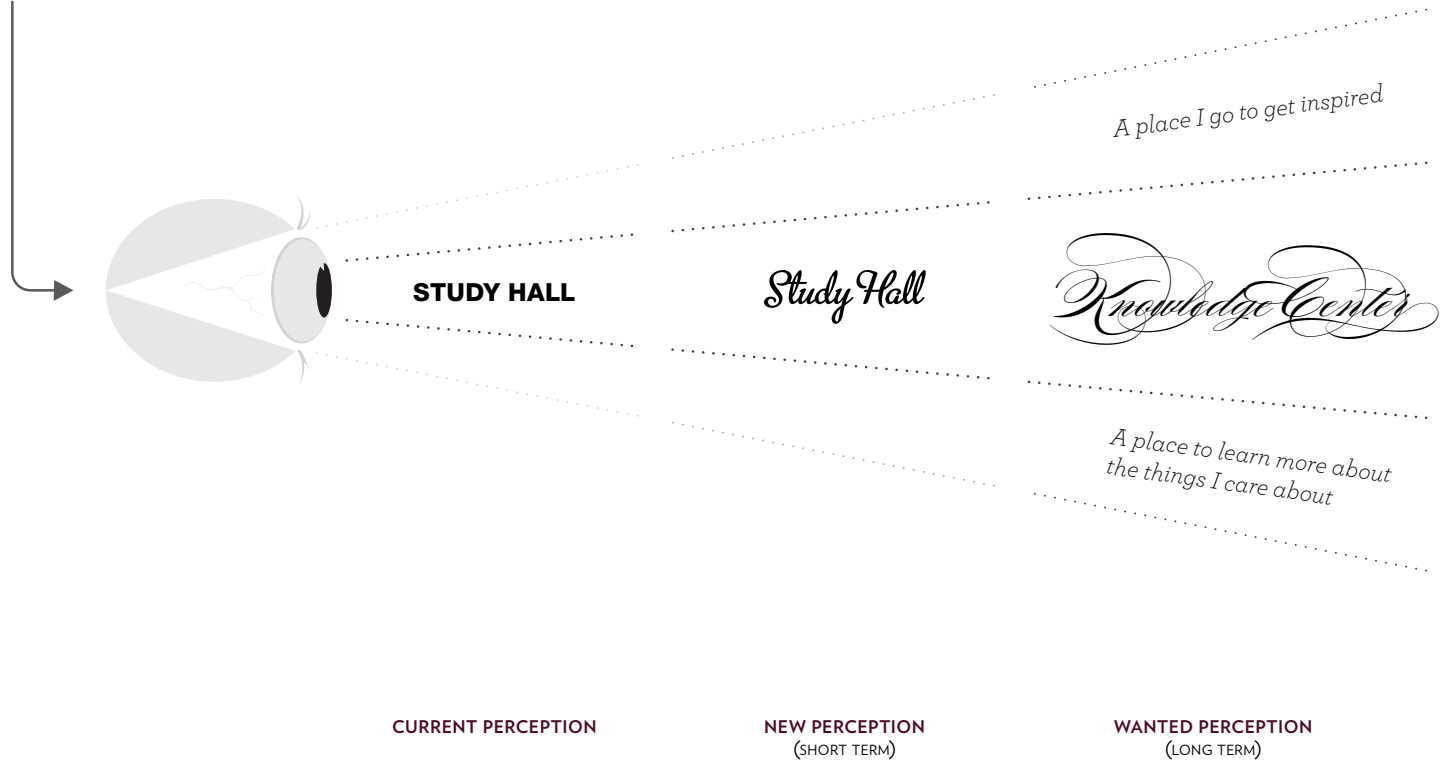
*Bottom Center*  
Peering into a  
group study room

*Bottom Right*  
A heavily accessed  
computer area located  
on the 4th floor



**WE THOUGHT ABOUT IT...**

**HOW DO WE WANT STUDENTS  
TO PERCEIVE THE LIBRARY?**



**...AND THIS HAPPENED!**





# collaborate

*"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."*

SIR ISAAC NEWTON  
GC6.2 OS 2002



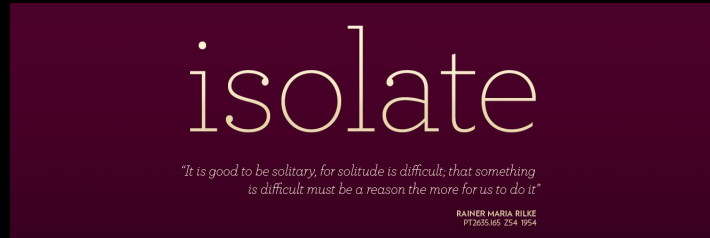
# disseminate

*"The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth."*

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
EK42 F34 1964













# propagate

*"Just as fire destroys darkness, in the same manner propagation of knowledge helps in destroying ignorance among masses."*

244 SAMAYEDA  
BL1114.66 V43 2000 V1



# rejuvenate

*"Men tire themselves in the pursuit of sleep."*

LAURENCE STERNE  
PRT314TT3 P47 19G



**A FRIENDLY SPACE  
NEEDS A FRIENDLY FACE.**

# SPEAK DON'T SCREAM

Type choice was of the utmost concern for this project. The signage required for this undertaking had to come across as being warm and friendly, but not to the point of being difficult to take seriously. The type had to be very legible and look great at large and extra large sizes.

Archer is without a doubt the right face for this project. This typeface projects a notion of approachability and friendliness, both of which are traits the Alkek could benefit from. When reading a sign typeset with Archer, it does not come off as commanding, but more as a friendly suggestion.

archer extra light

*"Archer extra light italic"*  
VERLAG BOLD  
VERLAG BOOK

naviga

*"When you have completed 95  
you*

*at of your journey,  
ly halfway there."*

**JAPANESE PROVERB**  
PN6511 .Y6

**COLORS THAT WORK  
RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX.**

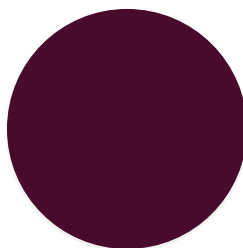
# FROM COLD TO COZY

One of the objectives for this project was that the solution be effortless, meaning the end product could seamlessly integrate into the surrounding environment with little to no extra effort. Because of this, a color scheme had to be created that fit into the existing Alkek Library interior.

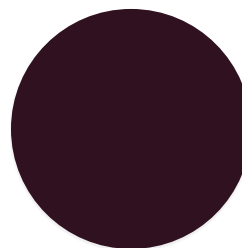
All of the new signage uses subtle gradients based on these four swatches.

In addition to clear vinyl signs stuck on walls, windows, and mirrors, individual signs will also come into play. Made from beautiful and extremely durable anodized aluminum, these stand-alone signs can be suspended above areas where no extra wall space is available.

## PANTONE® COLORS



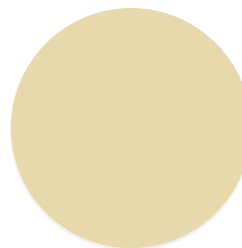
504 PC



BLACK 5 PC



7499 PC

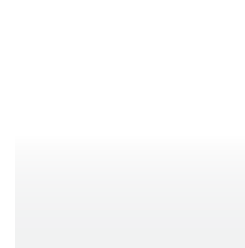


7502 PC

## MATERIALS



ANODIZED ALUMINUM



CLEAR VINYL

**JUST IN CASE  
YOU WERE WONDERING...**



## IMPROVING THE ALKEK EXPERIENCE ONE WORD AT A TIME

This project started off with a simple task — write about our personal perceptions of the Alkek Library. Many wrote about their dislike of the fluorescent atmosphere, or how difficult it is to find what they needed. My perception was nothing like this.

Personally, I have never had a problem finding my way around the Alkek, nor have I ever had any difficulty tracking down a book. My issue with the library was that it is under-utilized by students who see it simply as a place that exists for doing homework, napping between classes, and free WiFi.

This proposal was the direct result of these reoccurring observations.

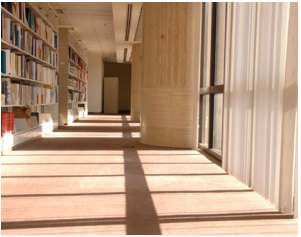
Being that the library is a knowledge center, it is only fitting that any EGD solution address that. The design would need to be accomplished in a way that communicates with young adults, who typically have extremely short attention spans. A design catered to them would have to be *instant gratification friendly* by being concise and captivating in way that is intellectually stimulating in addition to being functional. In short, signage that informs in multiple ways.

thoughts on the library	Michael N Perez
The times I've been to public libraries I always see people walking around, for whatever it is that they need. However, when you walk into the Alkek everyone seems to be either sitting and if they are not sitting they are headed for the elevator to find a place where they can sit. Almost every time I've gone there it was to look for something, not study, so I'm always surprised to see how few people are actually walking around looking for books when compared to the students staring at laptops, reading magazines, and taking notes from textbooks. Is our library really just seen by students as a giant study hall rather than a center of knowledge? Do they perceive the library as a sanctuary to get away from noisy roommates or the plentiful amount of distractions found at home?	
Re: thoughts on the library	Matthew McCord Lindley
I would have to agree, I think the library is seen more as a study hall than anything else.	
My roommates only use it to study and get away from their room as opposed to me who uses it for nothing.	

Re: CM_Library Thoughts	Caleb B Horn	Jan 1 201 12:08
maybe the solution is to designate an obvious "talk zone" since libraries should be a quiet zone by default.		
Re: CM_Library Thoughts	Matthew McCord Lindley	Jan 1 201 12:11
From what I've learned from my roommates, there are certain floors you can talk on and other "quiet floors" which doesn't really matter because people are going to talk where ever they like. And who polices this policy anyway? Other people?		
Re: CM_Library Thoughts	Crystal L Brown	Jan 1 201 12:12
Isn't the 4th floor the designated quiet floor? The fact that I'm not sure is probably a problem.		
Re: CM_Library Thoughts	Christopher M Saign	Jan 1 201 12:12
I like the idea of a talk zone. It lets me know I can be as loud and distracting as I want so I can have no hesitation talking about the latest viral video. Conversing with friends makes it the library more fun.		
Re: CM_Library Thoughts	Mitchell R Munkres	Jan 1 201 12:16
I agree with the talk zone for talking and quiet zone for studying. I too love a good Charlie the unicorn or Old Gregg video.		

Alkek Library	Crystal L Brown
The library is large and largely boring. Perhaps this inspires coveted silence within? The interior seems outdated, dark, and unfriendly. The architecture confuses me -- why is there a staircase that only leads partway up the building? The stacks are ominous and poorly labeled. This is a shame, considering the wealth of information within. Anyone who can get past the cliché ugliness and confusing nature of the Alkek Library will be rewarded with all the great things the building has to offer. I'm sure that many people don't know that there is something in there for them. In addition to helping people find their way to the library, I'd suggest some creative marketing to get people in there at all.	

Screen captures taken from a message board where colleagues shared their library perceptions. Comments were then posted, triggering further questioning. The forum was a very useful launching pad for expeditiously consolidating data about the issues plaguing the Alkek Library.



*Above*  
Natural lighting conditions

*Top Right*  
The Directory

*Right*  
View when walking  
into the library



Experiencing the library as a group was the next step of our research. Cameras and note pads in-hand, we performed a walkthrough of the entire Alkek, capturing anything that came to mind or caught our eyes.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

One of the first things encountered in the library is the Directory, which is not only easy to miss due to its height, but is also poorly designed and difficult to read. The directory requires the reader to be above it, yet is too high to be wheelchair accessible.

#### ATMOSPHERE

Many colleagues complained about the poor lighting conditions in their perceptions, particularly on the second floor. This is very true and does not help improve the unwelcoming feeling some get as they enter the Alkek. Floors 3-7 are a different story depending on the weather. The natural lighting is quite soothing on a sunny day, particularly in areas receiving indirect sunlight. However, once the sun goes down the cloudy feel of the library is intensified by the fluorescent lighting.

#### COMPLAINTS

According to the staff, one of the biggest complaints from students is noise. This is one area that sets the Alkek Library apart from the typical perception of a public library. The problem is that although there are floors designated as Quiet floors and Group Study floors, noisy students forget which floors allow what.

Lack of electrical outlets is a common complaint from the laptop users. Outlets are more plentiful near the window seats,

but these seats are the first to go on a busy day. Power can be found elsewhere, but lack of adequate signage makes tracking down a free outlet very difficult.

## INTERACTION

The evidence of a heavily used space is scattered throughout the Alkek in the form of random doodles and messages. Sitting inside one of the more elaborately marked-up private study rooms is quite an experience, comparable to walking into the middle of a conversation. All things considered, the writings are very amusing and are probably a welcomed escape from the monotony of a rigorous study session.

## SIGNAGE

Prior perceptions alone could not fully justify the Alkek's need for a signage overhaul. There is a lack of uniformity in places where new signage is mounted next to old signage containing identical information. Closely analyzing the permanent signage throughout the building shows that the Alkek has gone through at least three partial signage revisions. Temporary signs are seemingly everywhere with no clear intent to ever be replaced by something more permanent judging by the amount of dust collected on them.

Contrary to the initial perceptions, no one appeared to be lost in our observations. This indicates that the existing signage is either working or students already know their way around. Rather than creating a new wayfinding system to things students do not use, why not create a signage system that subtly informs them about the interesting things that can be found in the library?

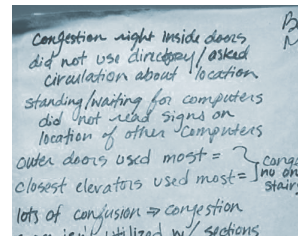
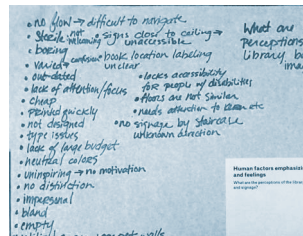
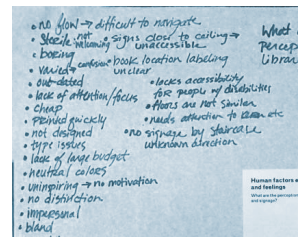
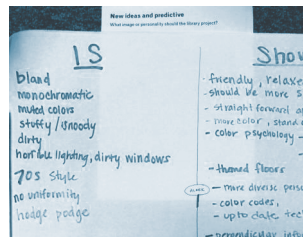
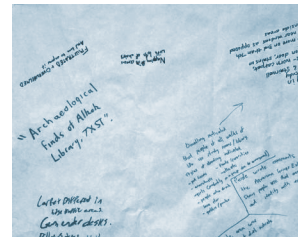
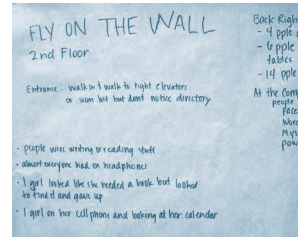
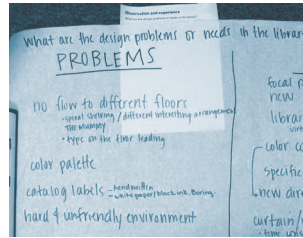


Top  
Examples of the current signage found throughout the library

Left  
Scribbles on the wall of a private study room



Photos of the group research exercises conducted during the library visit.



When our group library walkthrough was completed, it was time to share our observations. The class was split up into groups and were each assigned a certain aspect of the library to elaborate on.

The questions asked are as follows:

- » What are the design problems or needs of the library?
- » Who uses the library?
- » What image or personality should the library project?
- » What are the perceptions of the library based on the overall image or signage?

The next and final part of our group research required us to venture out again to accomplish one of the following tasks:

- » Fly on the Wall: Observe people near the entrance of the library.
- » Behavioral Mapping: How do people use the library?
- » Questionnaire: What do library patrons feel the library could improve.
- » Archeological Findings: Look for evidence of what people do at the library.

The next challenge was to take the group research findings and apply the *IDEO Human-Centered Design (HCD)* process to conceive a design solution that targets the people it is designed for. An HCD solution must be desired by the target audience, be technically and organizationally possible, and must work as intended.

There were three initial human-centered approaches taken with the Alkek Library. Each concept was devised to fit in with the existing Alkek interior.

#### ZONES

The first concept involved the zoning of areas frequently utilized by students, such as the Group and Private Study areas. Floor and ceiling graphics would be used to inform students about not only what an area was for, but what it *could* be used for.

#### QUOTES

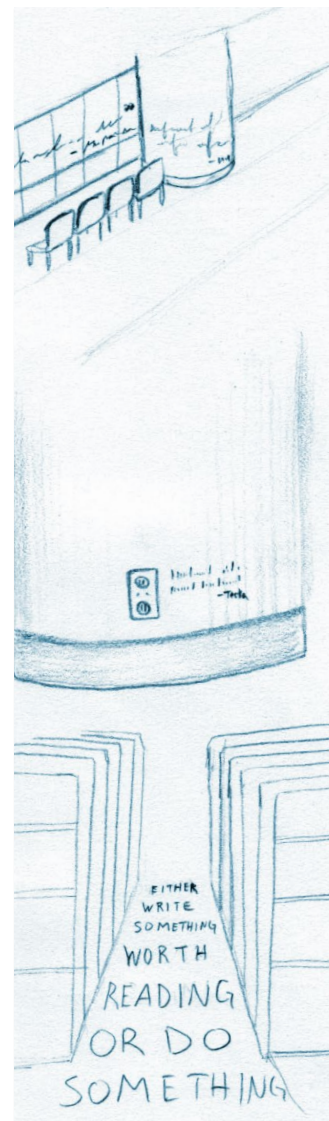
This direction incorporates the use of humorous yet thought-provoking quotes. The quotations would be placed in very specific areas around the Alkek. For instance, a quotation placed on a window would be connected to energy, enlightenment, or illumination.

#### ONE WORD

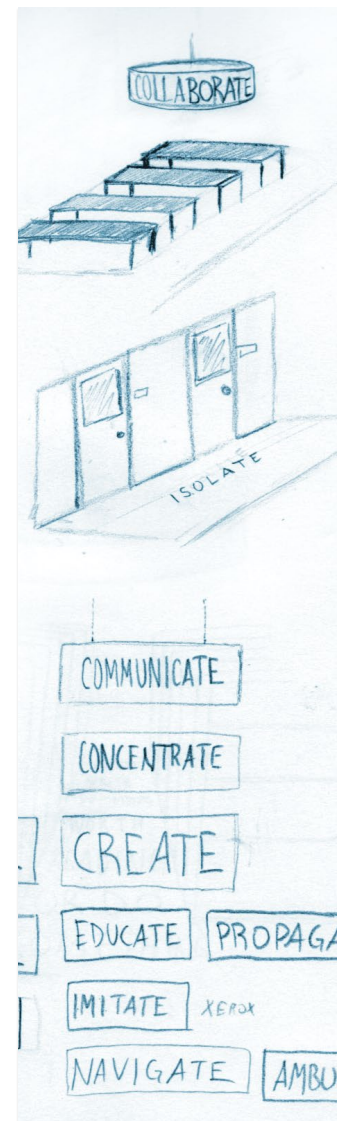
The final design solution was primarily based on this third and final approach, named *One Word*. The idea was signage that communicated through the use of only one word. For the sake of uniformity, all words were to end in “ate”. The signs would be hung from the ceiling in areas typically used for studying or are in some way associated with common behaviors of library users.



»ZONES



»QUOTES



»ONE WORD

A small excerpt from the collection of words ending in “ate” from *morewords.com*

ABATE	ALITERATE	ASSEVERATE	BUNKMATE	CIRCUMNAVIGATE
ABBREVIATE	ALKYLATE	ASSIMILATE	BURSATE	CIRCUMSTANTIATE
ABDICATE	ALLEViate	ASSOCIATE	BUTYLATE	CIRCUMVALLATE
ABLATE	ALLITERATE	ATE	BUTYRATE	CIRRATE
ABLEGATE	ALLOCATE	ATTENUATE	CACHINNATE	CITRATE
ABNEGATE	ALTERCATE	AURATE	CALCEATE	CLASSMATE
ABOMINATE	ALTERNATE	AUREATE	CALCULATE	CLATHRATE
ABROGATE	ALUMINATE	AURICULATE	CALIBRATE	CLAVATE
ABSQUATULATE	ALUMINOSILICATE	AUSCULTATE	CALIFATE	CLIMATE
ACAUDATE	ALVEOLATE	AUTHENTICATE	CALIPHATE	CLODPATE
ACCELERATE	AMALGAMATE	AUTOLYSATE	CALUMNIATE	CLOFIBRATE
ACCENTUATE	AMBULATE	AUTOLYZATE	CALVCATE	CLYPEATE
ACCLIMATE	AMEERATE	AUTOMATE	CAMPANULATE	COACERVATE
ACCOMMODATE	AMELIORATE	AUTOROTATE	CAMPHORATE	COAGULATE
ACCULTURATE	AMIRATE	AVIATE	CANDIDATE	COCREATE
ACCUMULATE	AMMONIATE	BACCAULAUREATE	CANTILLATE	COCULTIVATE
ACCURATE	AMPUTATE	BACCATE	CANULATE	COELENERATE
ACERATE	ANGULATE	BACKDATE	CAPACITATE	COELOMATE
ACERBATE	ANIMATE	BALDPATE	CAPITATE	COEQUATE
ACERVATE	ANNIHILATE	BARBATE	CAPITULATE	COGITATE
ACETATE	ANNOTATE	BARBITURATE	CAPTIVATE	COGNATE
ACETYLATE	ANNULATE	BATE	CARATE	COHOBBATE
ACETYLSALICYLATE	ANNUNCIATE	BEDMATE	CARBAMATE	COINMATE
ACIDULATE	ANSATE	BEDPLATE	CARBOHYDRATE	COLLABORATE
ACIERATE	ANTEDATE	BENEFICIATE	CARBONATE	COLLATE
ACOELOMATE	ANTEPENULTIMATE	BENZOATE	CARBOXYLATE	COLLEGIATE
ACRYLATE	ANTHRANILATE	BERATE	CARDINALATE	COLLIGATE
ACTIVATE	ANTICIPATE	BICARBONATE	CARINATE	COLLIMATE
ACTUATE	ANTICONGLOM-	BICHROMATE	CARPELLATE	COLLOCATE
ACUATE	ERATE	BIFLAGELLATE	CASEATE	COLOCATE
ACULEATE	ANTICORPORATE	BIFORATE	CASEINATE	COMATE
ACUMINATE	ANTILITERATE	BIFURCATE	CASEMATE	COMMEMORATE
ACVYATE	ANTIQUATE	BIJUGATE	CASTIGATE	COMMENSURATE
ADEQUATE	ANTISTATE	BILABiate	CASTRATE	COMMENTATE
ADJUDICATE	APHOLATE	BILLINGSGATE	CATE	COMMISERATE
ADMINISTRATE	APICULATE	BILOBATE	CATENATE	COMMUNICATE
ADNATE	APOSTATE	BINATE	CATHOLICATE	COMMUTATE
ADSORBATE	APOSTOLATE	BINUCLEATE	CAUDATE	COMPANIONATE
ADULATE	APPELLATE	BIPINNATE	CAVITATE	COMPASSIONATE
ADULTERATE	APPRECIATE	BIRTHDATE	CELEBRATE	COMPENSATE
ADUMBRATE	APPROBATE	BIRTHRATE	CELIBATE	COMPLICATE
ADUNCATE	APPROPRIATE	BISTATE	CELLMATE	CONCATENATE
ADVOCATE	APPROXIMATE	BISULFATE	CERATE	CONCELEBRATE
AERATE	ARBITRATE	BITARTRATE	CEREBRATE	CONCENTRATE
AESTIVATE	ARCHEGONIATE	BIVARIATE	CERTIFICATE	CONCILIATE
AFFECTIONATE	ARCHIEPISCOPATE	BLATE	CHALYBEATE	CONDENSATE
AFFILIATE	ARCUATE	BLOVIATE	CHEAPSKATE	CONDUPLICATE
AFFRICATE	AREOLATE	BOILERPLATE	CHECKMATE	CONEPATE
AGATE	ARILLATE	BOMBINATE	CHELATE	CONFABULATE
AGGLOMERATE	ARISTATE	BOOKPLATE	CHLORATE	CONFEDERATE
AGGLUTINATE	ARPEGGIATE	BORATE	CHLORINATE	CONFISCATE
AGGRAVATE	ARROGATE	BOROSILICATE	CHOCOLATE	CONFLATE
AGGREGATE	ARSENATE	BRACHIATE	CHOLATE	CONGLOBATE
AGITATE	ARTICULATE	BRACTEATE	CHORDATE	CONGLOMERATE
AGMINATE	ASCORBATE	BREASTPLATE	CHROMATE	CONGLUTINATE
AGNATE	ASPARTATE	BRECCIATE	CILIATE	CONGRATULATE
AIRDATE	ASPERATE	BREGMATE	CINGULATE	CONGREGATE
ALATE	ASPHYXIATE	BROMATE	CIRCINATE	CONJUGATE
ALGINATE	ASPIRATE	BROMINATE	CIRCULATE	CONNATE
ALIENATE	ASSASSINATE	BULLATE	CIRCUMAMBULATE	CONSECRATE

Upon further development of the *One Word* approach, the realization surfaced that the *Zones* and *Quotes* concepts could possibly be integrated. Merging these concepts would involve including a quote that corresponds with the word on the sign. This would then be installed in a specific zone relevant to the word on the sign. Handling the design in this manner would produce a solution that is functional and educational.

Before any *One Word* signage concepts could be constructed, some research was required in order to find words appropriate for the library. A *Google* search for “*words ending in ate*” yielded an extensive list of terms. After reading through the list numerous times, a much shorter list was compiled of the following terms:

AMBULATE	HIBERNATE
AMELIORATE	HYDRATE
ANIMATE	ILLUMINATE
ATTENUATE	IMITATE
CAFFEINATE	INVIGORATE
COLLABORATE	ISOLATE
COMMUNICATE	NAVIGATE
CONCENTRATE	OSCILLATE
CONGREGATE	PROPAGATE
CONTEMPLATE	RADIATE
CONSUMMATE	RECIRCULATE
CREATE	REGENERATE
EDUCATE	REJUVENATE
GRAVITATE	SALIVATE

These terms were all potential candidates for use in the library in some form. The next task was the lengthy process of scouring the Internet for quotes about each term. An attempt was made to focus the quotes on knowledge and life.

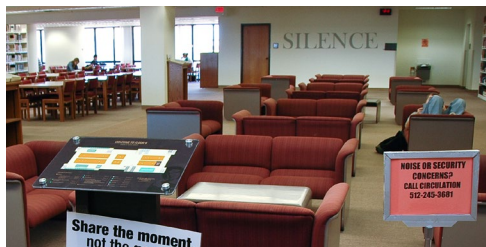
Initially, the signs were all set to take on a uniform size. However, after many visits to the library to take photographs and measurements, the project evolved.

One of the traits discovered about the interior of the library was the over-abundance of empty wall space. The feasibility of using the walls to create oversized signage became apparent. The only place in the library that takes advantage of wall space for signage is the “SILENCE” wallscape on the fifth floor. This is the very first thing someone sees as they exit the elevator area. Not only does it speak with exponentially more authority than a temporary sign, but it also gives the space a bit of charm.

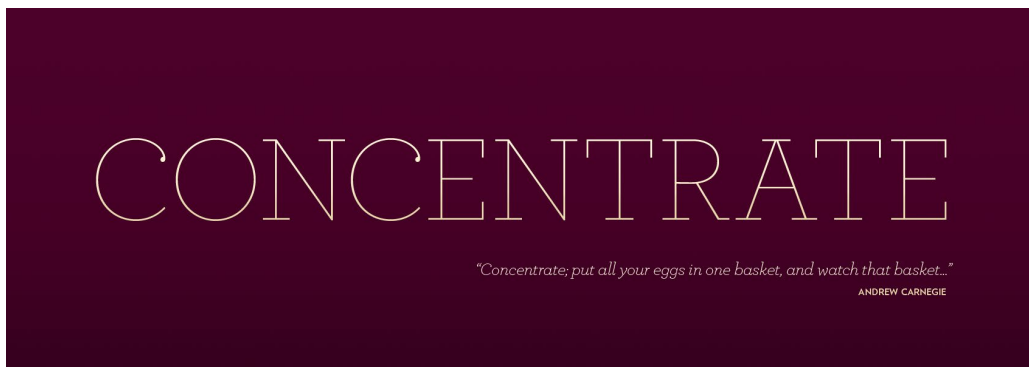
A few mock-ups of the wallscape signs were created and the results from every test were very pleasing. The colors and emotional tone of the signs made the surroundings appear much more warm and inviting. What was really surprising to see was how well the signs fit into the existing environment by just painting a wall.

During the process of creating final mock-ups for this book, the stroke weight of the large words and quotations were increased. This improved legibility and softened the tone of the signage more so. Call numbers were also added to pique the interest of curious patrons. These will lead the viewer to a book (always located on the floor the sign resides on) relevant to either the word, quote, or quoted person.

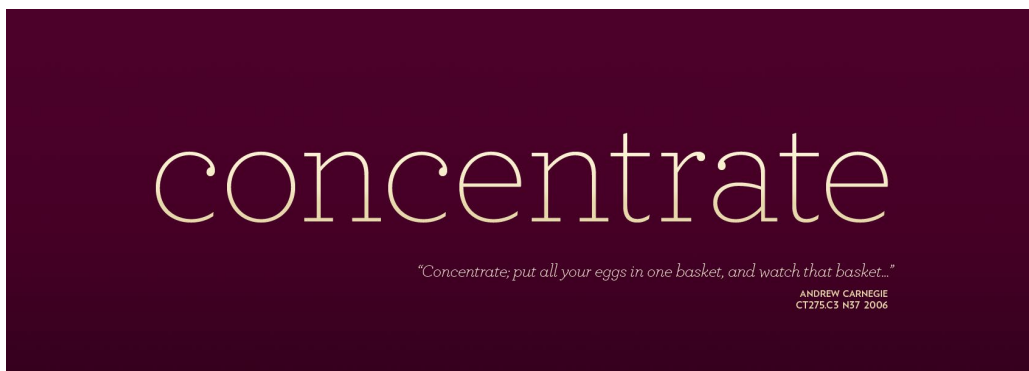
One major benefit of this solution is the ease of updatability. Signage could be swapped out to coincide with school events, famous birthdays and holidays to keep things fresh.



» SILENCE WALLSCAPE | FIFTH FLOOR



» INITIAL VERSION



» FINAL VERSION

PROJECT INFORMATION

TYPOGRAPHIC DESIGN

ARTC 4305

SPRING 2010

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY—SAN MARCOS

*PROFESSOR MICHELLE HAYS*