

*TRANSLATING THE LIBRARIES:  
A MULTILINGUAL INFORMATION PAGE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS*

**Library Information for International Students**

**面向国际学生的图书馆信息**

**Información de la biblioteca para estudiantes extranjeros**

(http://www.lib.ua.edu/international/)

The difficulties that international students face in American academic libraries are often compounded by language barriers. In 2003, the University of Alabama Libraries mounted an information page for international students. With financial support from a UA Libraries Innovation Grant, this page has now been translated into Chinese and Spanish.

*The Project:*

The goal of the project was to provide library information in students' native languages to ease the transition to the American library system. The use of international students as translators guaranteed accurate translations and provided employment opportunities within the international community. The two translators met with the project directors for a series of library orientation sessions prior to the translation phase of the project. The final translations were reviewed for clarity and accuracy by a faculty contact in each of the target languages. These contacts will serve as ongoing consultants for updates of the translated pages.

*Benefits of the Project:*

- Library literature has repeatedly documented the difficulties of international students in American libraries. This project has helped to create a more welcoming environment for Chinese- and Spanish-speaking students. In addition, reference desk staff can now use the written explanations to supplement oral communication with international students.
- The orientation phase of the project permitted the project directors to use the student translators as a focus group to evaluate and improve the current content of the page.
- The project has increased awareness among library staff of the challenges facing the international community.
- The pages will contribute to the university's ongoing efforts to recruit international students.

## **Facts and Figures**

### *International Students at UA:*

- UA has more than 900 international students—almost 5% of the student body.
- More than 90 countries are represented on the UA campus.
- Chinese and Spanish are the two languages most commonly spoken among UA's international graduate students.

### *Library Challenges for International Students:*

- Language
- Open stacks
- Unfamiliar classification system
- Self-service
- Electronic resources

### *Information Resources for Library Instruction for International Students:*

- ALA/ACRL Instruction Section. Library Instruction for Diverse Populations Bibliography (Last Updated: April 6, 2004).  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/is/publicationsacrl/diversebib.htm>
- ALA/ACRL Instruction Section. Multilingual Glossary: Language Table.  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/is/publicationsacrl/multilingual.htm>

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