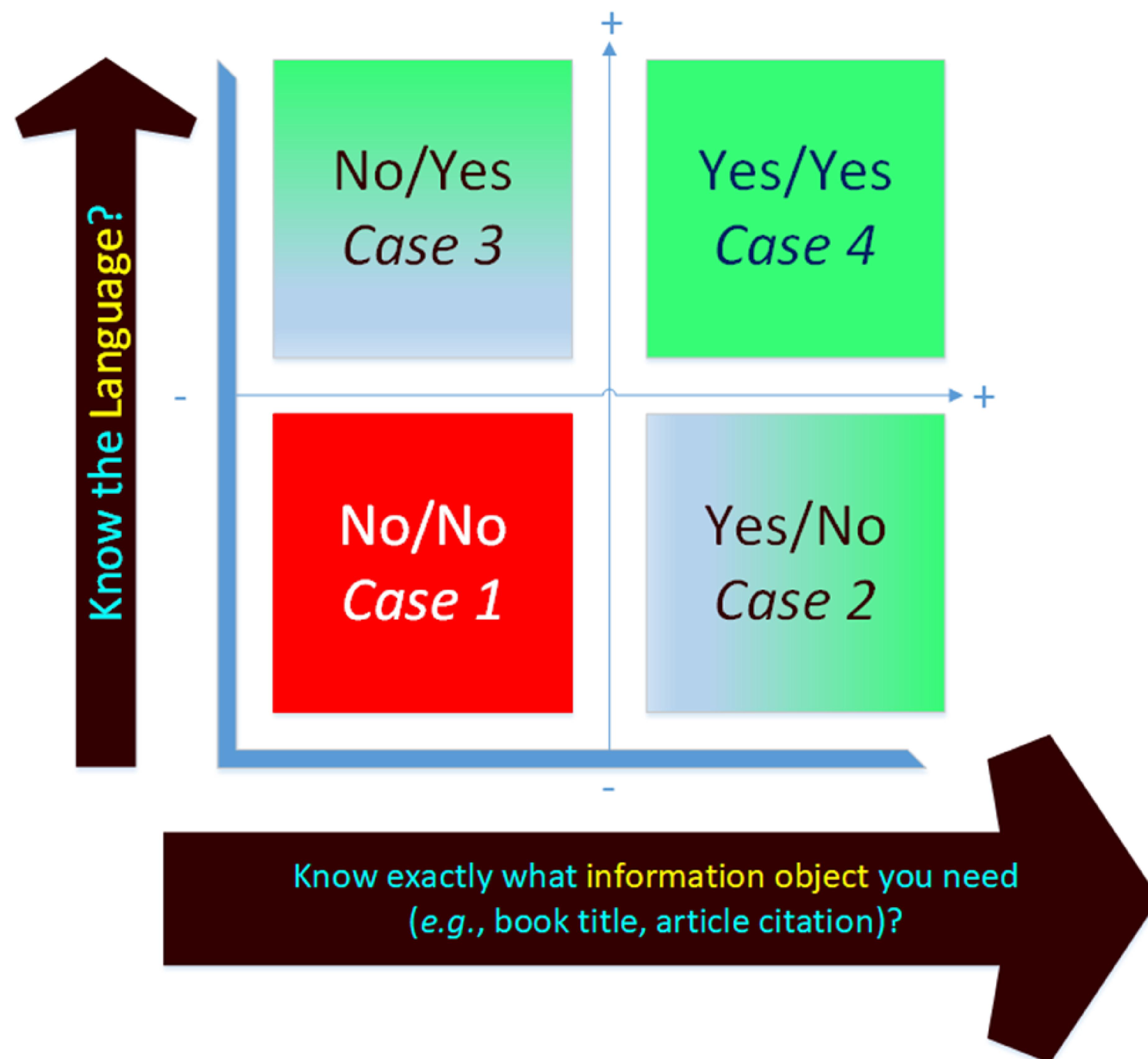


The ABCs of Alphabets and Scripts in Academic Library Research

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Having trouble with a library information need that involves a language other than English? From the matrix at left, determine which case fits your situation and follow the instructions per case.

Case 3

If you do not know the exact item you need, but you do know the language, you might start with our “discovery tool” (EDS), via the search box in the middle of the library home page: <https://library.tamu.edu/> Note that if you choose “Advanced Search,” then scroll down, you will see that you can limit your search by language.

If the language you are working with uses a different script from that of English (that is, “non-Roman” AKA “non-Latin”), one thing to keep in mind is that, to convert uniformly from non-Roman scripts, US libraries generally try to follow the Library of Congress transliteration tables: <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html> (See example handouts.)

If you are looking for:

- a book, you might try
OCLC’s Worldcat: <https://www.worldcat.org/>
- articles, you might try:
 - Web of Science: <http://apps.webofknowledge.com/>
(can restrict by language under advanced search)
 - Dimensions: <https://www.dimensions.ai/>
 - Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/>
 - Microsoft Academic: <https://academic.microsoft.com/>

Example: A Russian scholar is searching for a copy of the play *The Seagull* in the original language. He discovers that libraries use a different transliteration system from those advocated by professional organizations in Slavistics. After trying the title and author’s name as he had been taught to transliterate in his field, he turned to the Library of Congress Romanization tables, used the forms there, and found several suitable copies of the work in the original.

	Original, “vernacular”	AATSEEL transliteration	Library (ALA/LC) transliteration
Author:	Чехов	Čехов	Chekhov
Title:	Чайка	Čajka	Chaika

Case 4

If you know both the item you are looking for as well as the language it is in, yet still cannot find it, you may need to reconsider **where** you are looking and how you are searching for it.

If you are looking for:

- a book, you might try
OCLC’s Worldcat: <https://www.worldcat.org/>
- articles, you might try:
 - Web of Science: <http://apps.webofknowledge.com/> (restrict by language under advanced search)
 - Dimensions: <https://www.dimensions.ai/>
 - Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/>
 - Microsoft Academic: <https://academic.microsoft.com/>

In addition, there may be local or national databases that a subject librarian can help you find. Here are our subject specialists at Texas A&M University Libraries: <https://library.tamu.edu/directory/findmylibrarian>

Example: A scholar is interested in locating a work cited in a non-English paper, but cannot find it in any of the bibliographic resources she has tried, despite double-checking that the transliterated spelling for the author, title, and place of publication is correct according to the LC transliteration tables mentioned above. None of the comprehensive book or article databases listed above yields any leads. She enlists the aid of her subject librarian, who locates the paper in a not-widely-held collection of graduate student papers from a small regional university. The Libraries’ Get It For Me (ILL) service is able to help from there.

Case 1

If you know you need some sort of subject-specific information resource, but do not know the language and do not know exactly what title you are looking for, you might start by contacting a librarian who specializes in the subject. Here are our subject specialists at Texas A&M University Libraries: <https://library.tamu.edu/directory/findmylibrarian>

Example: An ornithologist whose research specialty is sub-Saharan shore birds would like to reference South American species, but much of the relevant material is in Spanish or Portuguese, which he does not speak. He turns to a librarian who finds several appropriate books.

Case 2

If you do know the exact item you need but not the language it is in, you will need to consider both translation and transliteration. Translation is concerned with conveying the meaning of words from one language to another, while transliteration involves representing one alphabet or writing system in another. In order to find materials in libraries, sometimes transliteration is about as important as translation.

First, for transliteration, if the language you are working with uses a different script from that of English (that is, “non-Roman” AKA “non-Latin”), one thing to keep in mind is that, to convert uniformly from non-Roman scripts, US libraries generally try to follow the Library of Congress transliteration tables: <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html>

Next, for translation, automated tools (online and apps) include:

- Babel Fish: <https://www.babelfish.com/>
- Google Translate: <https://translate.google.com/>
- Microsoft Bing Translator: <https://www.bing.com/translator>
- PONS: <https://en.pons.com/text-translation>

Translation services performed by humans are ranked here:

- <https://pickwriters.com/top-10-translation-services>
- <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/business/translation-services/>

Example: A soils scientist is studying methods of removing heavy metals from soils with certain plant species, known as phytoremediation. She has a bibliography, but many of the earlier titles are in Japanese and Russian, and she is having trouble locating the texts. After consulting transliteration tables and adjusting the spelling of her searches for monographs in WorldCat, she is able to locate and order the titles from the Libraries’ Get It For Me (ILL) service. Once the needed books arrive, she tackles translation by automating some of the work with software tools, while tougher cases must be sent to human translation services.