DePaul University

From the SelectedWorks of Jessica Alverson

Spring March, 2015

Creating Audience and Environment-Friendly Research Guides: Findings from a User Study

Jessica Alverson, *DePaul University*
James LeFager, *DePaul University*
Jennifer Schwartz, *DePaul University*
Amelia Brunskill, *DePaul University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jessica_alverson/6/

Creating Audience and Environment-Friendly Research Guides:

Findings from a User Study

ACRL 2015 Annual Conference

Jessica Alverson, Jennifer Schwartz,
Jim Lefager & Amelia Brunskill
DePaul University

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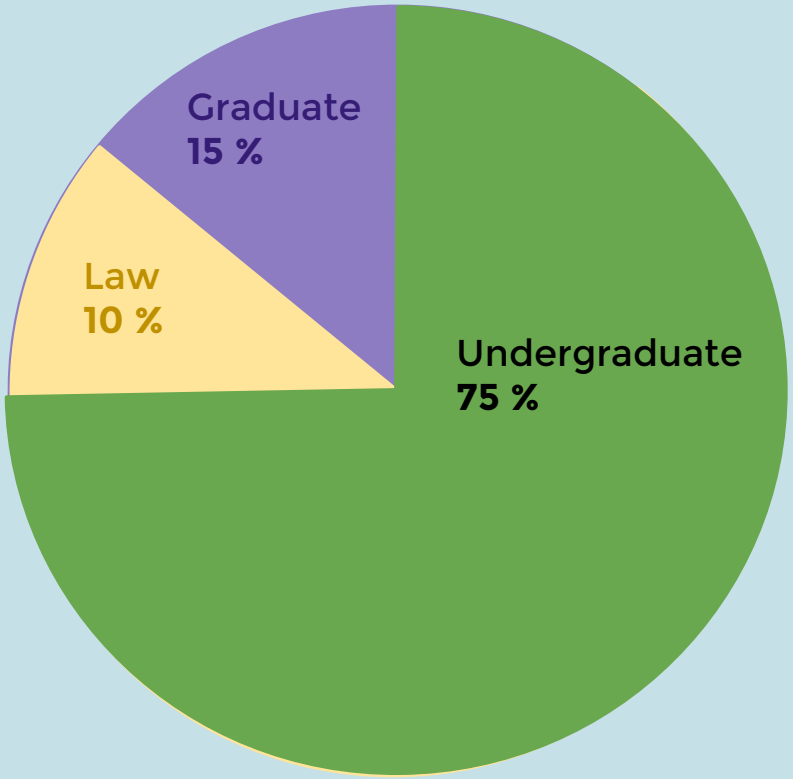
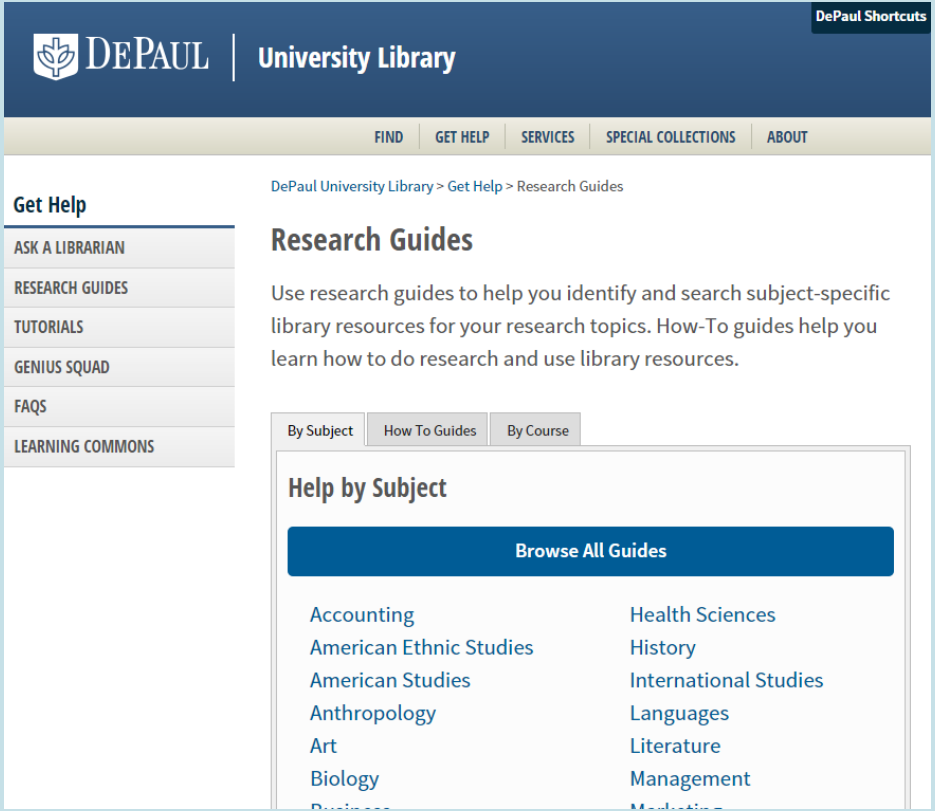
University Libraries

DePaul University



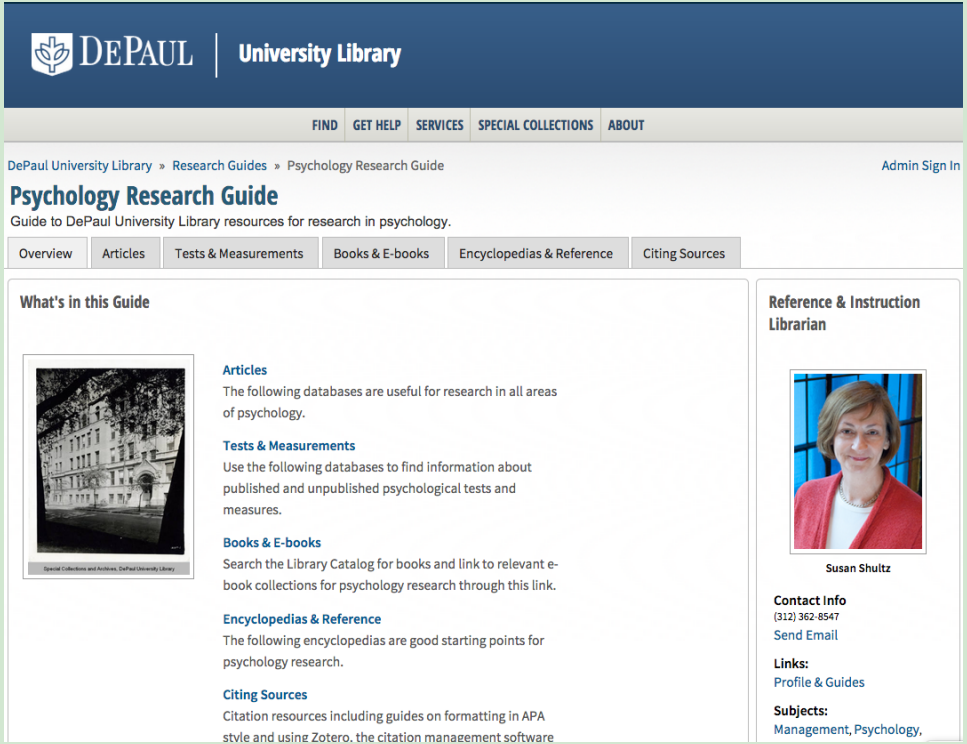
Research Guides @ DePaul

- 148 guides
- Subject, How To & Course guides
- Template

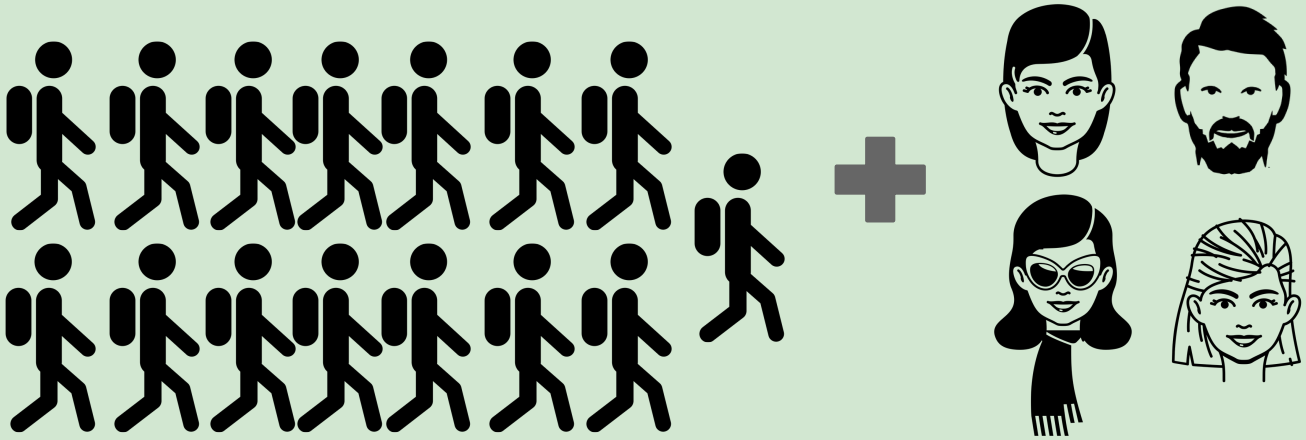


Fall 2013 User Study

- Qualitative
- Subject-guides only
- Student-focused

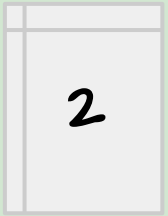


Methodology



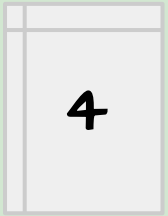
Methodology

Research Habits



Unguided research task

Guided research task



Exit interview

TechSmith®

Morae®

Data Analysis

- Inductive coding techniques were utilized to analyze the data.
- The markers feature in Morae was used to highlight common themes
- Recordings were separated by Task using Morae to identify sections of the study
- Recordings were divided up among the group and reviewed and coded by two group members

B	C	D	F	
Recording	Task	Marker	Notes	Finding #
RSG2014_1_part2	Books & Ebooks Page	F (TREND 1)	Expected some direction or search box that was subject specific..Somthing other than the regular catalog search	1
RSG2014_1_part2	Books & Ebooks Page	Q (TREND 9)	Doesn't think this (WCL) should take up a whole 'spot' or page Note: I thought they were referring to the book page, not just the WCL part.	1
RSG2014_1_part2	Exit Survey	Q (TREND 9)	Emphasis on more subject specific resources-thinks that those are some of the more valuable resources in the library--like the Bloomberg terminals.	1
RSG2014_1_part2	Exit Survey	W (May Use)	Would never use it here, I would just go to the library webpage to search for books and ebooks	1
RSG2014_11	Overview - Books & Ebooks	F (TREND 1)	World Cat Local draws from too much and it's too broad	1
RSG2014_11	Overview - Books & Ebooks	F (TREND 1)	would the wcl draw different things if I used it from this page?	1
RSG2014_11	Overview - Books & Ebooks	P (Confusion/Disconnect)	Student notes that he's unsure if WorldCat Local search box on the Books & Ebooks page would draw different search results from the WorldCat Local box on the home page.	1
RSG2014_11	Overview - Books & Ebooks	X (Would not use (participa	Student indicates that he would not use the WCL search box from this page. If he were to use it, he would use it from the library home page.	1
RSG2014_11	Overview - Books & Ebooks	Z (TREND 10)	Student notes that he doesn't use WorldCat Local because it isn't useful. Searches too much.	1
RSG2014_13	Overview - Articles	F (TREND 1)	Would expect to find a guide to finding articles on exercise and depression	1
RSG2014_14	Overview - Articles	I (Student expectations)	Articles tab would contain terms to help you search	1
RSG2014_15	Overview - Articles	F (TREND 1)	(on the articles page) maybe some major topics. Maybe a link for , if you are researching Freud, or something like that ... Or a mental disorders page...	1
RSG2014_15	Articles Page	F (TREND 1)	(on the articles page) maybe a list of major ideas of psychology	1
RSG2014_16	Overview Page	F (TREND 1)	I would expect to find (articles) topics, that you could click through for articles	1
RSG2014_16	Books & Ebooks Page	L (Doesn't Meet Expectatio	Students notes that she expected if she clicked on the Books & Ebooks tab, it would know what she is looking for (obv: I think that she means the topic, or at least context sensitive), but then she changes her mind and says that of course it wouldn't know what she was looking for.	1
RSG2014_2	Books & Ebooks Page	L (Doesn't Meet Expectatio	Student notes that the Books page kind of reminds her of the library home page. She says that she 'isn't sure if she would expect more help finding a book instead of just typing in the title'	1
RSG2014_2	Exit Survey	P (Confusion/Disconnect)	Student notes that she doesn't really get the 'first things first' box. She comments that she would wonder/think she needed to do those things (get an illiad account, etc.) in order to use the research guide page.	1

Findings

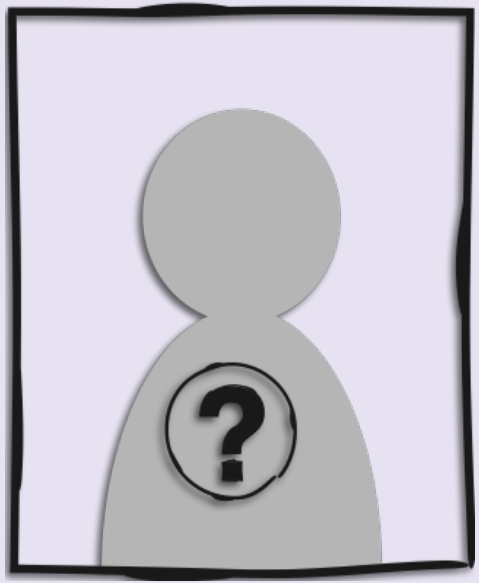
DePaul's original subject research guide template was not optimal for any particular user group, and was instead confusing for many.

Findings

1) What is the **overall purpose** of the guides?

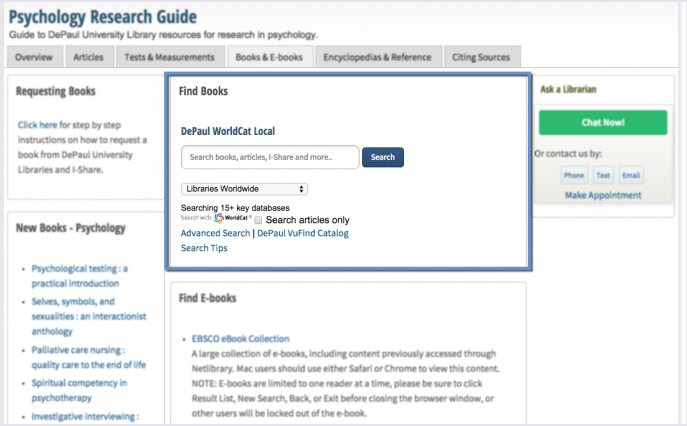
2) Who is the **primary audience** for the guides?

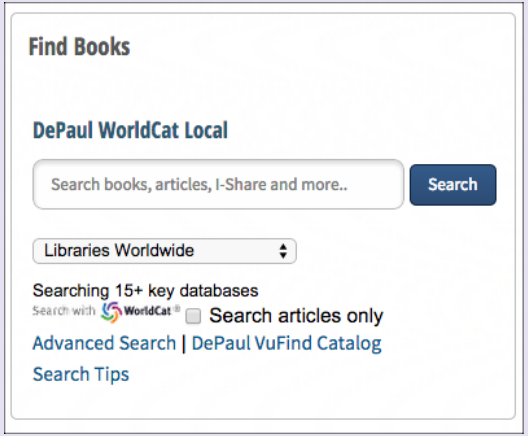
3) What is the **intended context** for guide discovery?



Trends: Subject Focused

“I think maybe either a list of books that DePaul has, or something that makes going to this research guide a little bit more specifically focused on psychology…just because here it really is just a search bar to search all of the books that DePaul has access to which isn't necessarily needed to go into this research guide to do…”

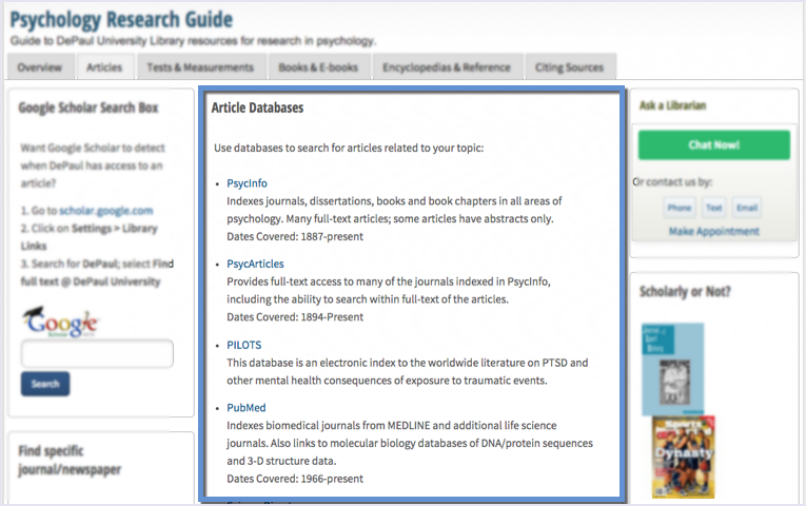


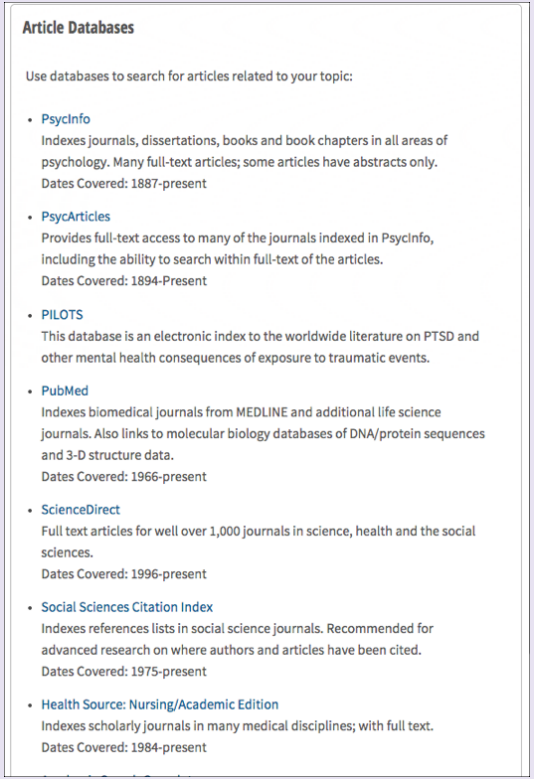


Trends: Too Many Choices

“Sometimes I feel like there's a little too much going on.”

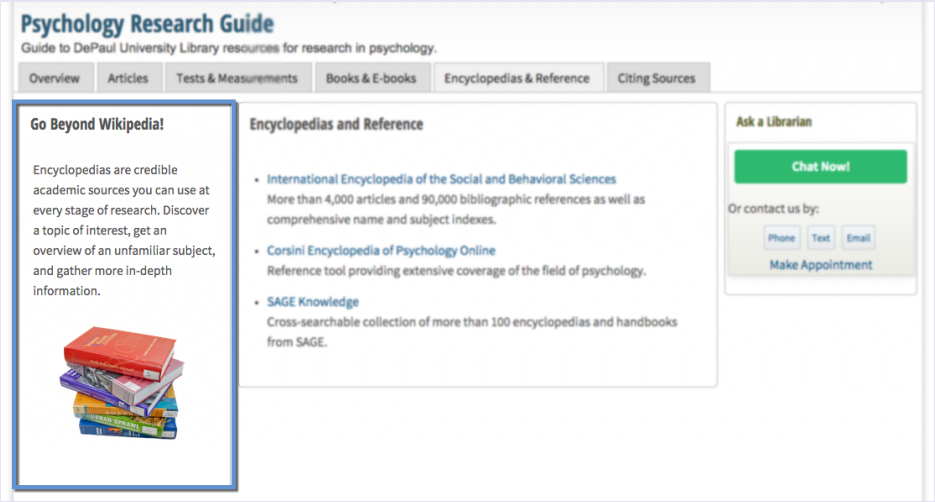
“I feel like there's so many [article databases] I wouldn't know what to choose.”

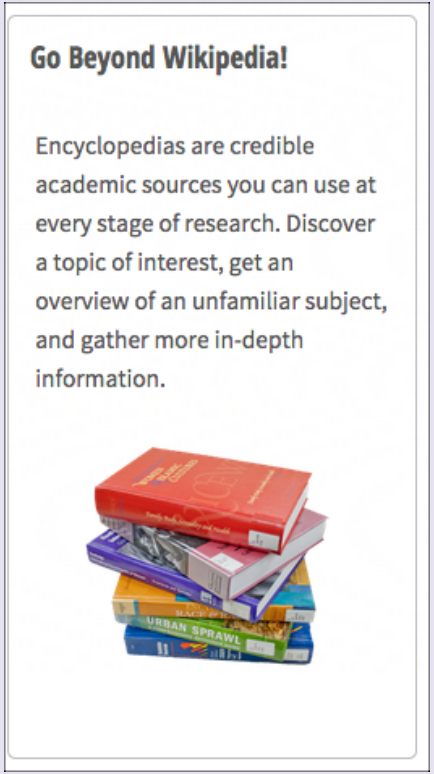




Trends: Side Box Content?

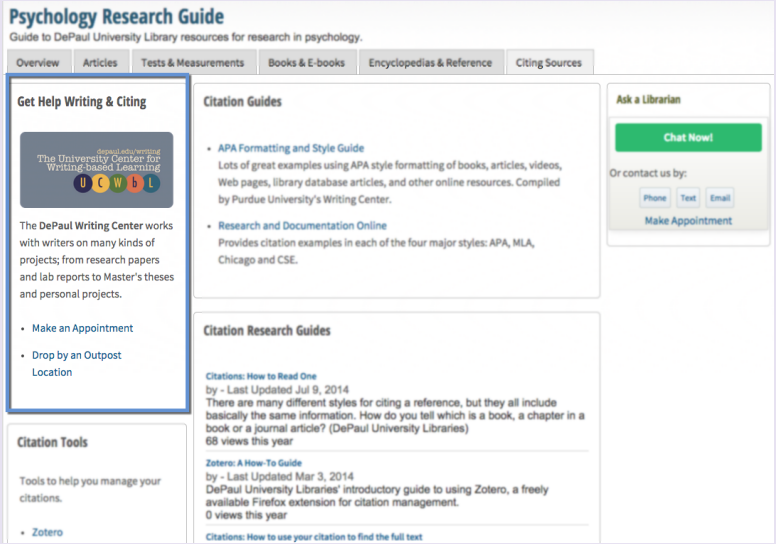
“It's just sort of an informational box that doesn't serve much purpose.”





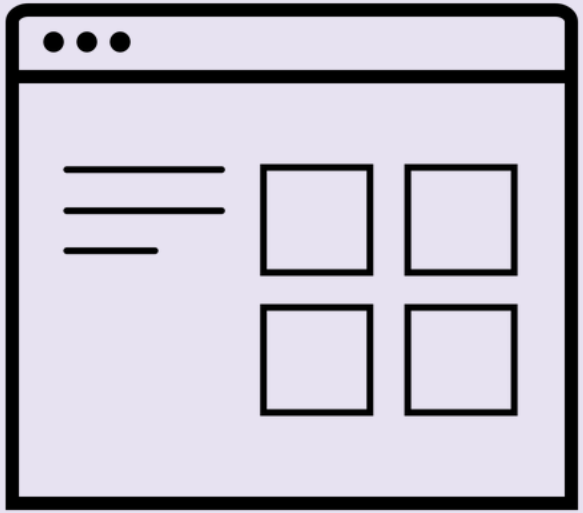
Trends: Actionable Content Preferred

"It's useful to have the Writing Center link and how to make an appointment, right there."



Recommendation

Define audience, purpose, and context for subject guides.



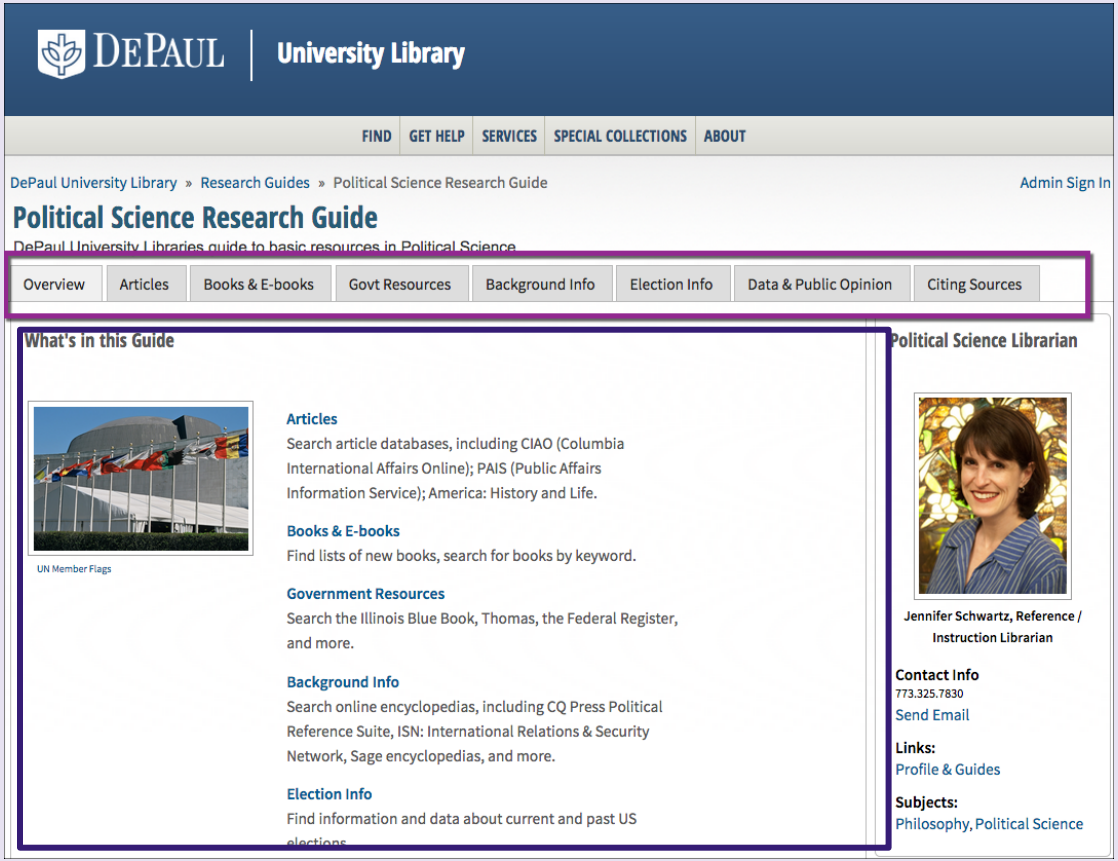
Recommendation

1. **Audience**
   Undergraduates/Beginners

2. **Purpose**
   Instructional; simple introduction to subject resources

3. **Context**
   Library website

Before….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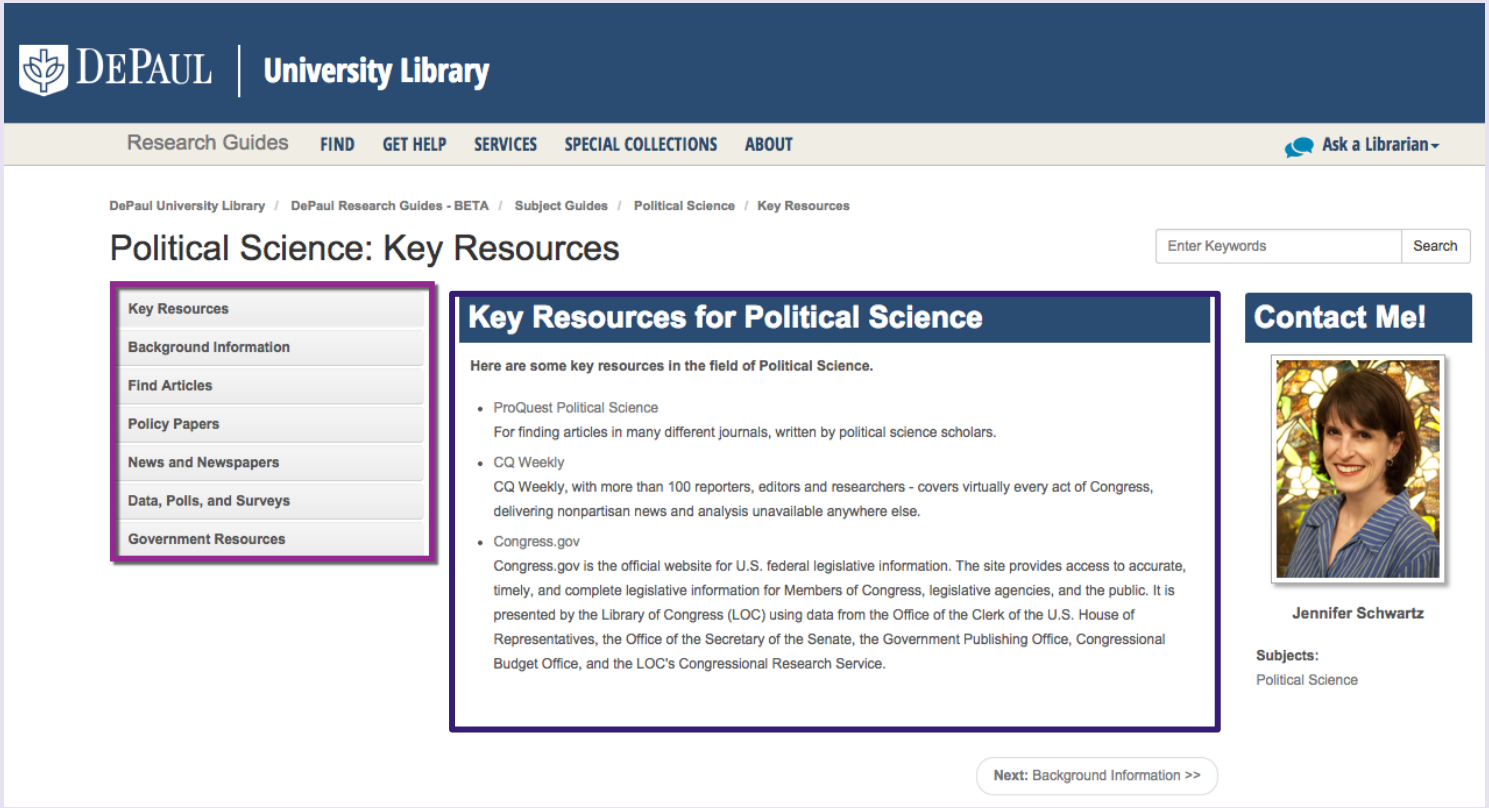
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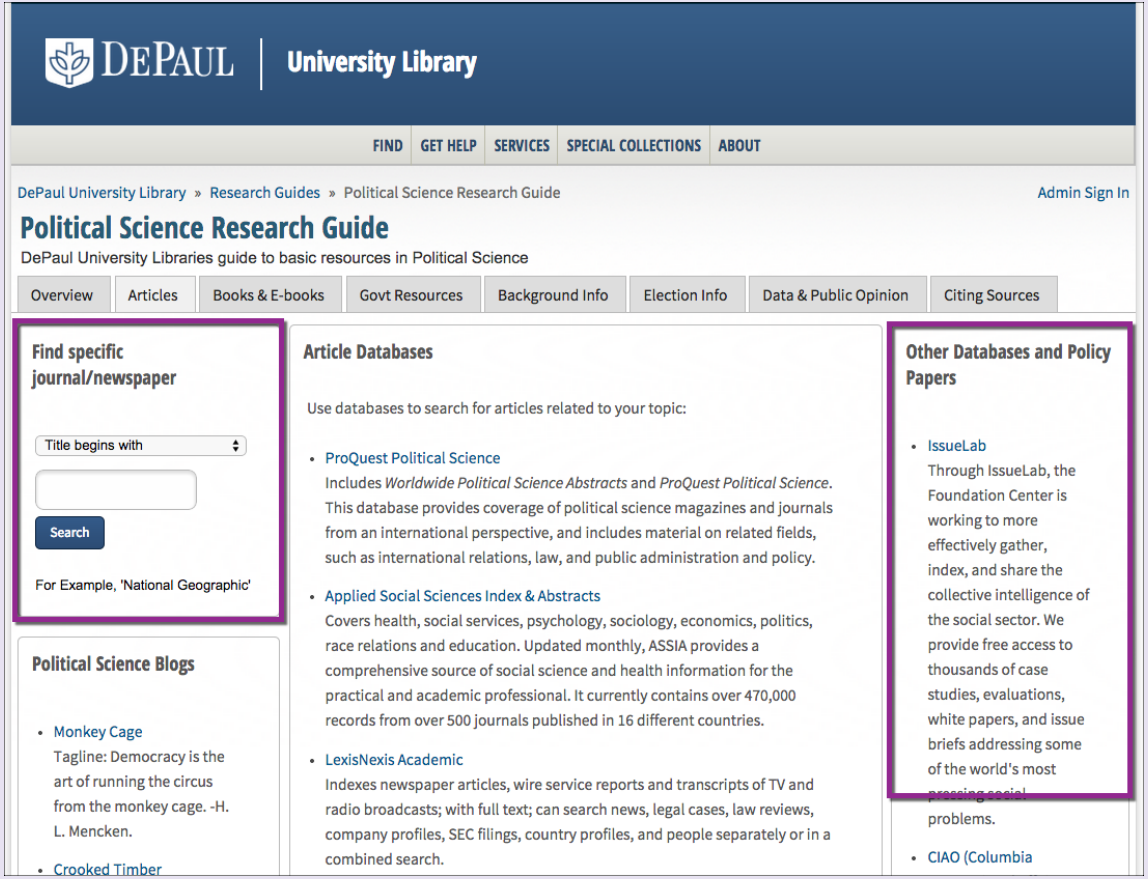

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Political Science Research Guide

DePaul University Libraries guide to basic resources in Political Science

Overview | Articles | Books & E-books | Govt Resources | Background Info | Election Info | Data & Public Opinion | Citing Sources

Find specific journal/newspaper

Title begins with

Search

For Example, 'National Geographic'

Political Science Blogs

- Monkey Cage
  Tagline: Democracy is the art of running the circus from the monkey cage. -H. L. Mencken.
- Crooked Timber

Article Databases

Use databases to search for articles related to your topic:

- ProQuest Political Science
  Includes *Worldwide Political Science Abstracts* and *ProQuest Political Science*. This database provides coverage of political science magazines and journals from an international perspective, and includes material on related fields, such as international relations, law, and public administration and policy.
- Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts
  Covers health, social services, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, race relations and education. Updated monthly, ASSIA provides a comprehensive source of social science and health information for the practical and academic professional. It currently contains over 470,000 records from over 500 journals published in 16 different countries.
- LexisNexis Academic
  Indexes newspaper articles, wire service reports and transcripts of TV and radio broadcasts; with full text; can search news, legal cases, law reviews, company profiles, SEC filings, country profiles, and people separately or in a combined search.

Other Databases and Policy Papers

- IssueLab
  Through IssueLab, the Foundation Center is working to more effectively gather, index, and share the collective intelligence of the social sector. We provide free access to thousands of case studies, evaluations, white papers, and issue briefs addressing some of the world's most pressing social problems.
- CIAO (Columbia

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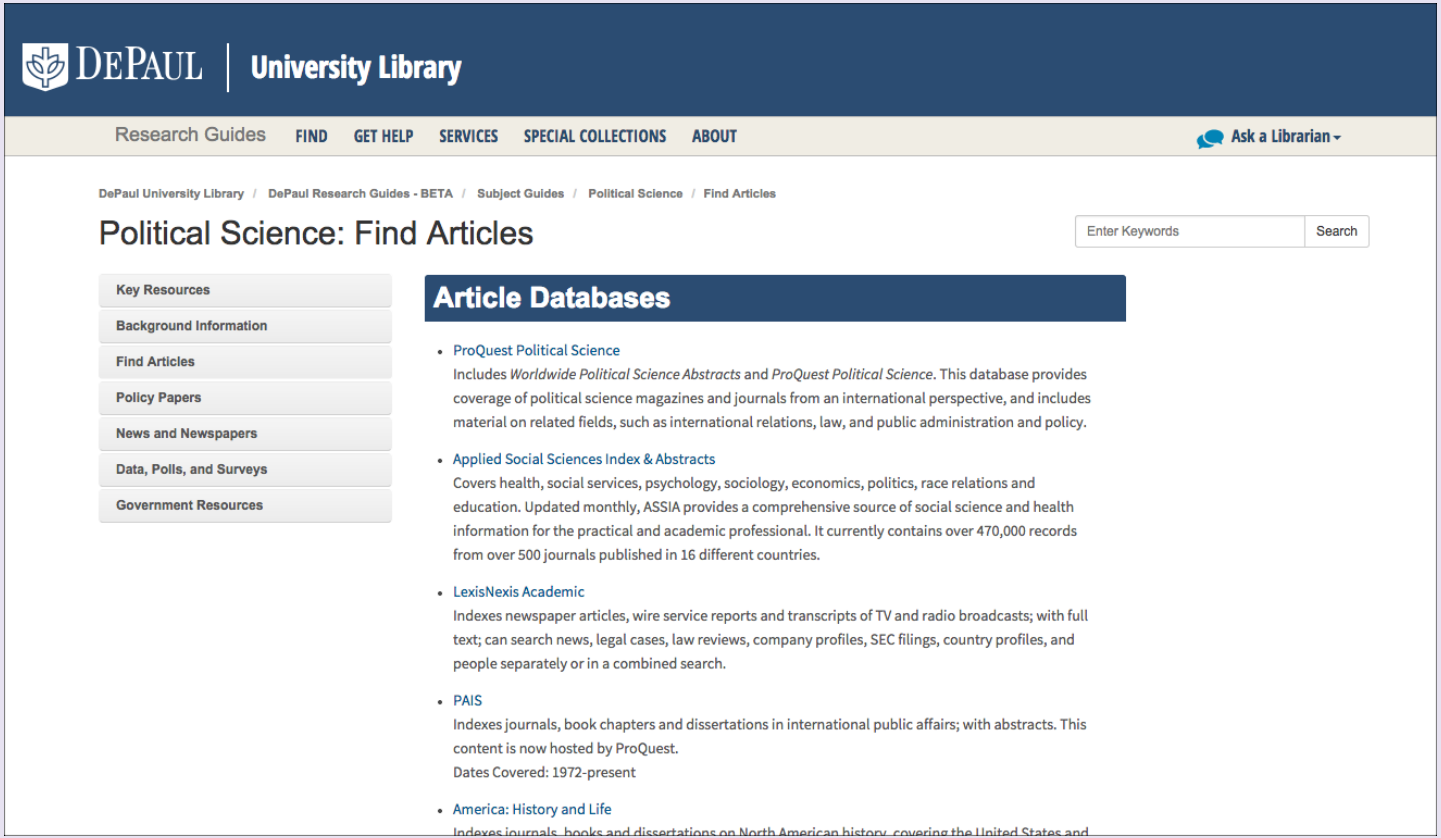
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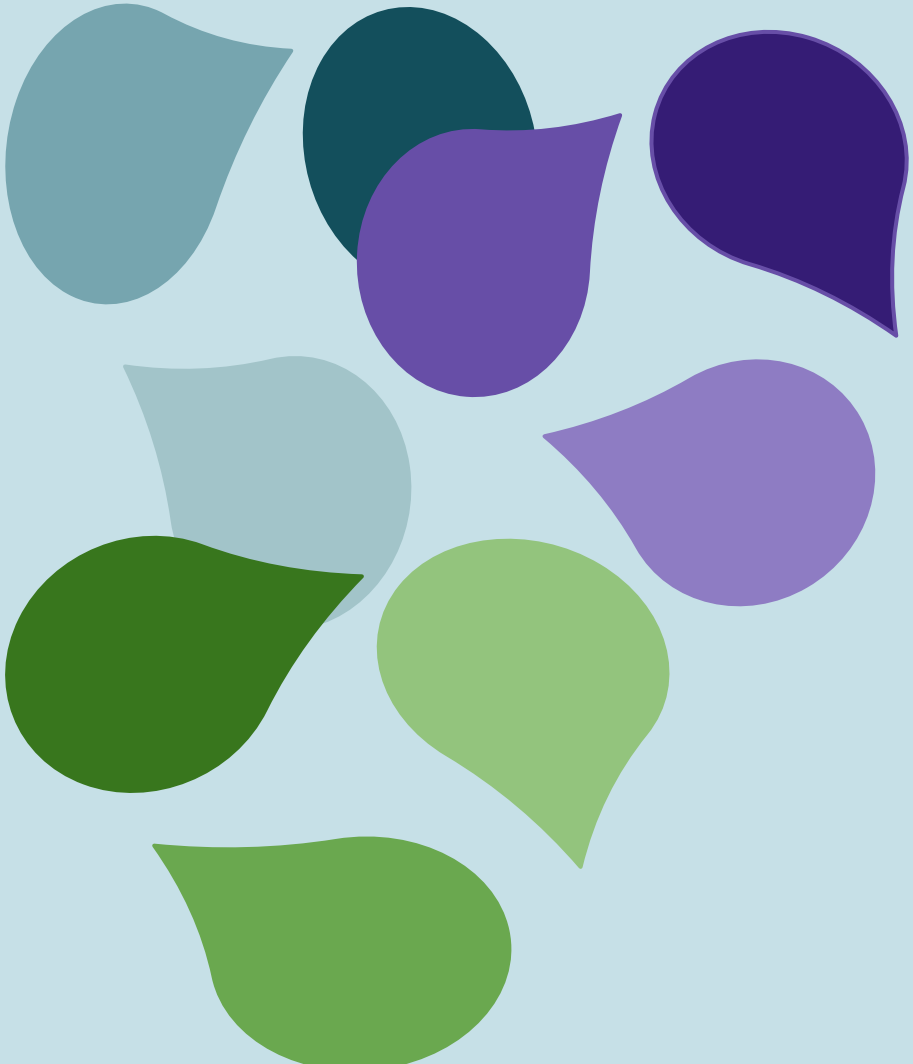
Includes Worldwide Political Science Abstracts and ProQuest Political Science. This database provides coverage of political science magazines and journals from an international perspective, and includes material on related fields, such as international relations, law, and public administration and policy.
Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts
Covers health, social services, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, race relations and education. Updated monthly, ASSIA provides a comprehensive source of social science and health information for the practical and academic professional. It currently contains over 470,000 records from over 500 journals published in 16 different countries.
LexisNexis Academic
Indexes newspaper articles, wire service reports and transcripts of TV and radio broadcasts; with full text; can search news, legal cases, law reviews, company profiles, SEC filings, country profiles, and people separately or in a combined search.
PAIS
Indexes journals, book chapters and dissertations in international public affairs; with abstracts. This content is now hosted by ProQuest.
Dates Covered: 1972-present
America: History and Life

Moving forward...

Summer 2015: Migrating to LibGuides 2

Fall 2015 and beyond: Seeing how users react to the new guides, consider additional round of user testing



Questions?

jlefager@depaul.edu
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