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
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Findings from a User Study
ACRL 2015 Annual Conference

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

Undergraduate: 75%
Graduate: 15%
Law: 10%
Research Guides @ DePaul

- 148 guides
- Subject, How To & Course guides
- Template
Fall 2013 User Study

- Qualitative
- Subject-guides only
- Student-focused
Methodology
Methodology

1. Research Habits
2. Unguided research task
3. Guided research task
4. Exit interview
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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recording</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Finding #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_1_part2</td>
<td>Books &amp; Ebooks Page</td>
<td>F (TREND 1)</td>
<td>Expected some direction or search box that was subject specific. Something other than the regular catalog search. Note: I thought they were referring to the book page, not just the WCL part.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_1_part2</td>
<td>Books &amp; Ebooks Page</td>
<td>Q (TREND 9)</td>
<td>Emphasis on more subject specific resources-thinks that there are some of the more valuable resources in the library—like the Bloomberg terminals.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_1_part2</td>
<td>Exit Survey</td>
<td>W (May Use)</td>
<td>Would never use it here, I would just go to the library webpage to search for books and ebooks.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_11</td>
<td>Overview - Books &amp; Ebooks</td>
<td>F (TREND 1)</td>
<td>World Cat Local draws from too much and it's too broad. would the WCL draw different things if I used it from this page?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_11</td>
<td>Overview - Books &amp; Ebooks</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Student notes that he's unsure if WorldCat Local search box on the Books &amp; Ebooks page would draw different search results from the WorldCat Local box on the home page.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_11</td>
<td>Overview - Articles</td>
<td>F (TREND 1)</td>
<td>Student notes that he doesn't use WorldCat Local because it isn't useful. Searches too much.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_14</td>
<td>Overview - Articles</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Would expect to find a guide to finding articles on exercise and depression.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_15</td>
<td>Overview - Articles</td>
<td>F (TREND 1)</td>
<td>Articles tab would contain terms to help you search (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...</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_15</td>
<td>Articles Page</td>
<td>F (TREND 1)</td>
<td>(on the articles page) maybe a list of major ideas of psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_16</td>
<td>Overview Page</td>
<td>F (TREND 1)</td>
<td>Students notes that she expected if she clicked on the Books &amp; 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.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_2</td>
<td>Books &amp; Ebooks Page</td>
<td>L (Doesn't Meet Expectation)</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSG2014_2</td>
<td>Exit Survey</td>
<td>P (Confusion/Disconnect)</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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?
“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.”
“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....
After...
Before....
After...
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
kalverso@depaul.edu