May 19, 2007

**Academic Subject Guides: A Case Study of Use at San Jose State University**

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Academic Subject Guides:

A Case Study of Use at San José State University

Published in March 2007 issue of College and Research Libraries
Subject Guides in Academic Libraries

- Academic librarians ascribe great importance to the creation and maintenance of subject guides as research tools for students and faculty.

- Subject guides offer introductory explorations of different topics, relieving users of additional research legwork.

- They also assist librarians with reference, instruction and collection development work.
Literature Review

Much of the literature on subject guides is concerned with establishing:

- formatting standards (layout, labeling) to increase usability
- guidelines for resource selection
- streamlining and cost-cutting measures for their creation
The Need for More Rigorous Investigation

- Very few studies examine how campus communities actually make use of subject guides, which is key to informing how they should be created.

- Usability studies of subject page use often yield inconclusive results because the test sample is not representative of the actual campus population.

- Very few—if any—authors draw from statistically significant data in backing their conclusions.
This study examines the use of subject guides at SJSU among undergraduate students in three different areas of study:

- Nursing
- Organization & Management
- Journalism & Mass Communications
Objectives

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How frequently do students in different academic programs at SJSU use subject guides? Are there unique trends in use among different groups?
- What factors, if any, positively impact the use of subject guides among students?
- Do students perceive subject guides as useful?
- How can librarians make subject guides more useful for different academic communities at SJSU?
Methodology: Exploratory Case Study

- Exploratory case studies involve data collection on a research problem where little is known or empirically established.

- The idea is to maximize what can be learned in a limited timeframe. In such studies formal hypotheses are generally formulated after more is learned.

- The author interviewed study participants through the distribution and collection of surveys. The choice to survey, rather than conduct in person interviews, better supported the need for broad input.
Methodology: Student Survey Design

- Each questionnaire was developed to gather as much information as possible within a 5 to 10 minute timeframe.

- For simplicity and ease of use, survey questions contained standard answers for participants to choose from as well as an opportunity to provide further comments.

- The survey questionnaire was formatted so that each page contained a single screen grab of a subject guide page with related questions.

- As an additional tactic of effort reduction, the same set of questions were asked in reference to each screen grab, minimizing the amount of new information and mind-shifting required to read, comprehend, and answer the survey questions.
Methodology: Student Survey Questions

- Some questions focused on students’ background information such as their major, gender, where they started undergraduate work, and whether or not they had received library instruction at SJSU.

- Behavioral questions focused on how often students used each page in an associated subject guide during the past year: never, 1-5 times, 6-10 times, and more than 10 times.

- If they had used a particular page, they were further asked to rate its usefulness on a five-point Likert scale: very useful, somewhat useful, undecided, not so useful, not useful at all.

- Students were also asked to identify different resources they used for research purposes which allowed the author to further determine the comprehensiveness of existing subject guides.
Methodology:
Background Survey Questions

1. Please indicate your academic level in school:
   a. Freshman - Undergraduate
   b. Sophomore - Undergraduate
   c. Junior - Undergraduate
   d. Senior - Undergraduate
   e. Graduate
   f. Unclassified
   g. Other

2. Please indicate your major: ____________________________________________

3. Please circle your gender: Male    Female

4. Did you begin college at SJSU or elsewhere? SJSU    Elsewhere

5. Have you received library instruction before at SJSU Library?  no    yes    not sure
Methodology: 
Behavioral Survey Questions

6. Please indicate how often you have used the following subject guide on the King Library web site within the past year. See the illustration below.

[Image: Screen Grab of Subject Guide Home Page]

Note: Image should be large and clear enough for students to read page content

(6. contd.) Please circle the best option that describes how frequently you have used this library web page within the past year.
   a. Never
   b. 1 – 5 times
   c. 6 – 10 times
   d. more than 10 times

Comments (Optional):
Methodology:
Behavioral Survey Questions

7A. How frequently have you used the Articles & Databases section of the guide in the past year (please see illustration below).

Screen Grab of Articles & Databases Subject Page

Note: Image should be large and clear enough for students to read page content

(7A. contd.) Please circle the best option that describes how frequently you have used this library web page within the past year.
   a. Never
   b. 1 – 5 times
   c. 6 – 10 times
   d. more than 10 times

Comments (optional):

7B. If you chose “never” as your choice in Question 7A, go to Question 8A. Otherwise, please indicate how useful you found this page.
   a. Very Useful
   b. Somewhat Useful
   c. Undecided
   d. Not so useful
   e. Not useful at all

Comments (Optional):
Methodology:
Behavioral Survey Questions

8A. How frequently have you used the Articles & Databases section of the guide in the past year (please see illustration below).

Screen Grab of Subject Guide Page A

Note: Image should be large and clear enough for students to read page content

(8A. contd.) Please circle the best option that describes how frequently you have used this library web page within the past year.
   a. Never
   b. 1 – 5 times
   c. 6 – 10 times
   d. more than 10 times

Comments (optional):

8B. If you chose “never” as your choice in Question 7A, go to Question 8A. Otherwise, please indicate how useful you found this page.
   a. Very Useful
   b. Somewhat Useful
   c. Undecided
   d. Not so useful
   e. Not useful at all

Comments (Optional):
Methodology: Sampling of Research Populations

- Three separate, random lists of courses offered during the Spring 2005 semester were generated from the SJSU registration database: one for the School of Nursing, another for the School of Journalism & Mass Communications, and a third for the Department of Organization & Management.

- The number of courses surveyed in each discipline was determined based on:
  - the size of the student research population
  - the size of each class
  - overall student attendance rates in a given class at the time the survey was distributed.
Methodology:
Sampling of Research Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Total # of Students Surveyed</th>
<th>Total # of Declared Majors</th>
<th>% of Research Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>1216*</td>
<td>21.0%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism &amp; MC</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>691*</td>
<td>35.7%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization &amp; Mgmt</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1539*</td>
<td>34.3%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology:  
Survey Administration & Data Coding

- Instructors of randomly selected courses were contacted and asked to allocate 5 to 10 minutes at the beginning or end of one class session so that survey questionnaires could be distributed to and then collected from students in attendance.

- Students were specifically asked in each course setting whether or not they had already taken the survey in another class. Only those that had not taken the survey were included in the current data gathering process.

- Once all survey responses were collected from students, they were coded and entered into the SPSS program. Descriptive statistics were generated and chi-square tests for statistical significance were conducted to reveal potential correlations.
Data Analysis:
Student Demographics

- Nearly all student responses are from undergraduate juniors and seniors taking Nursing, Journalism & Mass Communications and Organization & Management courses.
- While all Nursing students reported their major as “Nursing,” both Journalism & Mass Communications and Organization & Management students reported a range of specializations and majors not formally recognized by their respective departments.
## Data Analysis: Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>Nursing</th>
<th>Journalism MC</th>
<th>Organization Mgmt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Data Analysis:
**Student Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Reported Major</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalism &amp; MC</td>
<td>Advertiser</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photojournalism</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcasting / RTVF</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Design Studies</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Magazine &amp; Print Journalism</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mass Communications</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting &amp; Editing</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undeclared or Unrelated Field</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Data Analysis: Student Demographics

#### Reported Majors from Students by Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Reported Major</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Information Systems</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation Management</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Finance Management</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting Information Systems</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Operation Management</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeclared or Unrelated Field</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Data Analysis:
**Articles & Databases Page Gets High Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>At Least 1 time / year</th>
<th>More than 5 times / year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism &amp; MC</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Mgmt.</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Articles & Databases Page Gets High Use

High use of the Articles & Databases pages is further confirmed by students’ level of familiarity with accessing databases through their subject guides and as standalone online resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Points for Database Use</th>
<th>From Subject Guide</th>
<th>From Databases Section of web site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
<td><strong>From Subject Guide</strong></td>
<td><strong>From Databases Section of web site</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism MC</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Mgmt.</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Students’ Perceptions of Usefulness

Students generally find the Articles & Databases page of their subject guide to be “very useful” or “somewhat useful,” with most favorable rankings coming from Nursing students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Guide Page</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Not So Useful / Not Useful at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Articles &amp; Databases Page</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism Articles &amp; Databases Page</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization &amp; Mgmt Articles &amp; Databases Page</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Recognition of Subject Guide Home Page

Nursing students appear to recognize the home page of their subject guide as a starting point for research more frequently than students in the other two disciplines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Subject Guide Home Page</th>
<th>Nursing</th>
<th>Journalism &amp; MC</th>
<th>Organization &amp; Mgmt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Less Frequently Used Subject Guide Pages

Aside from the Articles & Databases page, students across the three disciplines appear to be using other pages within their guide less frequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Guide Page</th>
<th>At Least 1 Time / Year</th>
<th>More Than 5 Times / Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Subject Guides</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Govt Sources</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Less Frequently Used Subject Guide Pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Guide Page</th>
<th>At Least 1 Time / Year</th>
<th>More Than 5 Times / Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly vs Popular</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing &amp; Writing</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Tips</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Information</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Data Analysis:
### Less Frequently Used Subject Guide Pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Guide Page</th>
<th>At Least 1 Time / Year</th>
<th>More Than 5 Times / Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Links</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly vs Popular</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing &amp; Writing</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Information</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Tips</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Less Frequently Used Subject Guide Pages

- Aside from the Articles & Databases page, most pages within the different subject guides were also rated “very useful” or “somewhat useful” despite less overall use.

- In general, Journalism & Mass Communications and Organization & Management students are more likely to rate pages as “undecided,” “not so useful,” or “not useful at all.”
### Data Analysis:
Use of Different Research Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Tool</th>
<th>Nursing Student Use</th>
<th>Journalism &amp; MC Student Use</th>
<th>Organization &amp; Mgmt. Student Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor’s Course Page</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-journals Lists</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed Newspaper</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Newspaper</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bound Scholarly Article Sources</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Library Instruction and Subject Guide Use

- Students who received library instruction at San José State University tended to use subject guide pages more frequently.

- A statistically significant correlation was found between attendance at library instruction sessions and the reported frequency of using the Articles & Databases page ($\chi^2 = 179.631, p < .0005$) among students across the three disciplines ($n = 965$).

- Of those who received library instruction, 44.5% reported using the Articles & Database page more than 5 times a year in comparison to those who did not receive library instruction (15.9%).
Data Analysis: Library Instruction and Subject Guide Use

- Students who received library instruction also made more use of the subject guide home page than those who did not ($\chi^2 = 99.466, p < .0005$).

- Of those who had library instruction, 21.1% reported they had used the subject guide home page more than 5 times a year compared to 7.3% of those who had no library instruction.

- Moreover, 73.7% of students who did not have library instruction reported having never used the subject guide home page, while only 37.4% of students who received library instruction reported the same behavior.
These trends are further reflected in the data collected within each discipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Rec’d Library Instruction</th>
<th>Use of Articles &amp; Databases Page</th>
<th>Use of Subject Guide Home Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism &amp; MC</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization &amp; Mgmt.</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:
Library Instruction and Subject Guide Use

- Additionally, library instruction attendance seems to be correlated with students’ academic levels.

- It was found that seniors used subject guide pages more frequently than juniors ($\chi^2 = 25.436, p < .0005$).

- Seniors (56.0%) were more likely to have had library instruction than juniors (44.0%). Similarly, 64.3% of juniors reported not having library instruction, while only 35.7% of seniors indicated so.
Data Analysis:
Library Instruction and Subject Guide Use

- Seniors were also found more likely to make frequent use of the Articles & Databases page than juniors ($\chi^2 = 16.649$, $p < .0005$).

- Fewer (15.2%) seniors reported having never used the Articles & Databases page of their subject guide compared to juniors (31.3%).

- On the other hand, 47.9% of seniors indicated having used the Articles & Databases page more than 5 times a year, whereas only 27.6% of juniors indicated use at such frequency.
Data Analysis: Library Instruction and Subject Guide Use

- Unsurprisingly, seniors were also more likely to have used the subject guide home page as a starting point for their research than juniors ($\chi^2 = 49.962, p < .0005$).

- Only 12.6% of juniors reported having used their subject guide home page, while 22.9% of seniors indicated use of their subject guide home page.
Recommendations: Enriching Current Subject Guides

Based on student survey responses, the Nursing, Journalism & Mass Communications, and Organization & Management subject guides at San José State University can be improved upon in several ways:

- Nursing students reported using the e-journals list twice as much as those in Journalism & Mass Communications and Organization & Management.

- Adding a direct link to this subject-specific information would create a more comprehensive research guide for students who regularly use the tool and raise more awareness of its availability to others.
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

E-Journals List

215 journals found in Health Sciences: Nursing
Search results 1 - 100 of 215
A.A - Jou Jou - RN Sca - Wes Next (101-200)

A.A.N.A. journal (0094-6354) Title details from ulrichsweb.com™
from 2001 to present in CINAHL Plus with Full Text
from 02/01/2001 to present in Academic Search Premier

AACN clinical issues (1079-0713) Title details from ulrichsweb.com™
from 02/01/1996 to present in Journals@Ovid Ovid Full Text

AAOHN journal (0891-0162) Title details from ulrichsweb.com™
from 2003 to present in CINAHL Plus with Full Text

ABNF journal (1046-7041) Title details from ulrichsweb.com™
from 01/01/2002 to 11/01/2004 in Expanded Academic ASAP
from 2002 to present in CINAHL Plus with Full Text
from 11/01/2002 to present in Academic Search Premier

Accident and emergency nursing (0965-2302) Title details from ulrichsweb.com™
from 01/01/2005 to present in Expanded Academic ASAP
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

- In general, librarians can link to department pages that contain teaching faculty’s course web pages.

- This is particularly important for the Journalism & Mass Communications and Organization & Management subject guides since these students reported higher use of those pages.
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

Faculty

Baldwin, Cecelia
Professor and Chair, Advertising Program
Office: DBH 125 | Phone: 924-3266 | E-mail: cbaldwin@casa.sjsu.edu

Braunstein, Robert
Lecturer, Journalism (Radio-TV)
Office: DBH 219 | Phone: 924-3289 | E-mail: robert@studentsports.com

Briggs, William
Director, School of Journalism & Mass Communications
Professor, Public Relations and Mass Communications
Office: DBH 103 | Phone: 924-3249 | E-mail: bbriggs@casa.sjsu.edu

Ceppos, Jerry
Editor in Residence, Spring '06
Hearst Foundation Endowment

http://jmcweb.sjsu.edu/faculty.html
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

http://www.cob.sjsu.edu/dept/org&mgt/

Organization and Management
College Of Business, SJSU

Faculty and Staff Directory - Spring 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Department Chair</th>
<th>Marlene Turner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BT 659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>408-924-3585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:turner_m@cob.sjsu.edu">turner_m@cob.sjsu.edu</a></td>
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<th>Executive Assistant to the Dept. Chair</th>
<th>Barbara Somers</th>
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<td>BT 650 G</td>
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<td>408-924-3552</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:somers_b@ccb.sjsu.edu">somers_b@ccb.sjsu.edu</a></td>
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<th>Administrative Support Assistant</th>
<th>Kathryn Hetzner</th>
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Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

Campus Links

- College of Business
- Organization and Management Department
- Organization & Management Faculty Home Pages

This page last updated March 23, 2006 by Toby Matoush
Recommendations: Enriching Current Subject Guides

Nursing students noted a number of web sites they visit regularly, which could be included as part of their subject guide. Among them are:

- The U.S. National Library of Medicine
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- The U.S. Census Bureau
- The American Cancer Society
- The American Medical Association
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- National Institutes of Health
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

Web Sites

- The U.S. National Library of Medicine
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- The U.S. Census Bureau
- The American Cancer Society
- The American Medical Association
- The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
- National Institutes of Health
Recommendations: Enriching Current Subject Guides

- Journalism & Mass Communications students reported high use of print and online newspaper resources.
- Creating a separate page of news sources in this subject guide might prove useful.
- Since these students described their major area of study in different ways, the librarian in this subject area may want to explore categorizing resources under these headings or even creating a separate subject guide for some of them.
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

News Sources

Lexis/Nexis Academic
This is a full-text database. Lexis/Nexis is huge, and very up-to-date. Complete text of newspapers, magazines, newswires, transcripts of TV and radio news, trade publications, laws and court cases.
More details

America's Newspapers: California (SJ SU)
Full text of many California newspapers, including the San Jose Mercury News, Los Angeles Times, Sacramento Bee, and the San Francisco Chronicle.
More details

ProQuest Newsstand
Full text of U.S. and international news sources in newspaper and periodical formats, other news sources and newswires.
More details

San Jose Mercury News - Today's Issues
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides
Recommendations: Enriching Current Subject Guides

These same general recommendations can be applied to the Organization & Management subject guide since students taking these courses also described their majors in multiple ways.

- Descriptions such as “Human Resource Management,” “Corporate Finance Management,” and “Engineering & Operation Management” could be subtitles for categorizing resources within the subject guide.

- Additionally, a page of related subjects could be added with links to existing subject areas that students identified.

- Also, change “Web Sites” page to “Course Web Sites.” The change in labeling is more specific to the purpose of the page. Ask OM instructors to link to course web sites from their faculty pages.
Recommendations: Enriching Current Subject Guides

Related Subjects & Guides

- Accounting & Finance
- Business
- Communication Studies
- Finance
- Financial & Operating Ratios
- Hospitality Management
- International Business
- Management Information Systems
- Marketing, Decision Sciences & Business Communication
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

Web Sites

Sisu Course Websites

Sisu Course Websites

Business 146 Project Management
Webpage for Project Management class.

Business 160 Fundamentals of Management and Organizational Behavior
Webpage for Fundamentals of Management and Organizational Behavior class

Business 187 Global Dimensions of Business
Website for Global Dimensions of Business class.

Business 189 Strategic Management
Website for Strategic Management class.

Business 286 Nursing Management
Website for Nursing Management class.
Recommendations:
Enriching Current Subject Guides

Course Web Sites

Business 146 Project Management
Webpage for Project Management class.

Business 160 Fundamentals of Management and Organizational Behavior
Webpage for Fundamentals of Management and Organizational Behavior class

Business 187 Global Dimensions of Business
Website for Global Dimensions of Business class.

Business 189 Strategic Management
Website for Strategic Management class.

Business 286 Nursing Management
Website for Nursing Management class.
Recommendations:
Optimize Use of Subject Guide Builder

Subject guides at King Library are managed by a database-driven content management system using ColdFusion and Microsoft SQL.

- The system was deliberately set up to offer librarians flexibility in customizing guides to particular subject areas while retaining the same interface and navigational elements from one guide to the next.

- Librarians are able to create new subject guides and update the content of existing ones independently of the King Library Web Team.

- Library faculty can make an appointment with the web team to explore how to use the subject guide builder to better customize pages for particular subject areas.
Discussion and Implications:
Subject Guides Can Streamline Access

- By their nature, academic libraries are information rich, and so are their websites. Librarians are challenged with presenting the many tools available to students without overwhelming them:
  - index resources
  - reference and background sources
  - a wide array of online databases
  - the library catalog
  - e-journals lists

- Given this predicament, it is not surprising that academic librarians have adopted the subject guide as a means of pulling together relevant resources into a single portal for student research on particular topics.
Discussion and Implications:
Subject Guides ≠ Information Proficiency

- Findings from this study indicate that the mere existence of these guides does not ensure students will use them or be confident users.

- Students across three disciplines who received library instruction tended to use subject guide pages more frequently than those who did not receive instruction.

- Aside from providing students with guidance in the use of different library tools, library instruction sessions emphasize critical thinking to uncover the most relevant materials and incorporate them into a comprehensible form.

- Students must have the skills to extract and synthesize information from the various resources provided in subject guides for them to be useful.
Discussion and Implications: Strengthen Library and Teaching Faculty Collaboration

- Academic librarians need to become more proactive in extolling the virtues of library instruction to teaching faculty despite communication challenges in this area.

- With statistically significant data in hand, academic librarians are in a better position to persuade teaching faculty of the importance and complimentary role of library instruction in students’ effective use of the library’s research tools.

- This data can also educate university administrators on the benefits of library instruction, in turn strengthening university policies on library and teaching faculty collaboration, further optimizing student learning outcomes.
Discussion and Implications:
Partners for Information Literacy

Library and teaching faculty should partner on the following:

- Fine-tuning individual course assignments that are appropriate to information competency initiatives and resources available at King Library
- Developing corresponding requirements on the types of tools and sources that are acceptable for research in a particular field and course assignment
- Determining how best to support individual course assignments with instructional resources such as subject guides
Future Research:

- While the author broadly concludes that students make less use of subject guide pages overall (aside from the Articles & Databases page), a closer examination of how they are using individual pages at the departmental and course level would provide more context in which to assess the data.

- For example, if students in one Nursing class make use of a particular subject guide page, and this page is otherwise not used by other Nursing students, can the author conclude that overall use is low if the page is specifically created for and valued by this small group?
Future Research:

- How do students in different types of courses (research-based, practicum, skills-based) make use of subject guides?
- How do other factors such as academic performance and departmental-specific standards impact the use of subject guides in particular courses?
- How effective are subject guides in assisting students to complete assignments and research projects?
- How can information literacy principles such as “Evaluating Information” and “Citing and Writing” be incorporated into subject guide content in a way that makes sense and is useful to students?
- What steps are of particular concern to a student getting started with a course research project, and are these steps discernible when the student is using the subject guide?
Future Research:

A better understanding of how subject guides help or hinder students’ completion of course assignments will further inform librarians:

- how students go about the information search process (ISP) within different academic programs

- how subject guides can present tools in a way that more closely parallels students’ mental model