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LibGuides Guerrilla Testing

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Usability Report Cover Sheet

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Usability Report

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Introduction

A. LibGuides is a commercial, web-based content management system used to present the library's various course, subject, and technology-based resource guides and services. This system supports libraries in quickly and easily creating guides that provide selected resources in a simple, modular format. Specifically, LibGuides provides "boxes" in different content format types, designed to better display certain types of information (for example: links to web resources, RSS feeds, or delicious tags).

The MLibrary implementation of LibGuides includes over 300 pages created by librarians across the UM library system. These range from information about basic disciplinary resources (e.g., film and video studies resources), to technology guides (e.g., RefWorks), to course-related guides (e.g., American Culture 405). As of now, few guidelines have been provided to librarians about creating guides, and in the absence of a required template, guides vary widely.

B. This guerrilla test built on previous focus group findings which demonstrated that the language currently used to describe our LibGuides (e.g., "research guides") is confusing and misleading regarding the actual content found on LibGuides pages. In addition, participants in the LibGuides focus groups offered terminology suggestions that varied widely. Thus, the goal for this test was to identify meaningful language that can be used consistently to refer and/or link to LibGuides pages. We also hoped to clarify the terminology used to describe different types of guides (course, subject, technology) and determine if consistent language emerged. Please see <http://www.lib.umich.edu/usability-library/usability-library-libguides-reports> for the Usability Task Force's focus group report on LibGuides.

Test Description & Methodology

Test Description

Guerrilla test participants were presented with printouts of three existing guides (see Figure 1 below and Appendix A), slightly edited to remove language that might have biased the results. These included a course guide (English 125), a subject guide (Communication Studies), and a technology guide (Refworks). Participants were asked to answer four questions regarding the naming of LibGuide pages and one question regarding the terminology used in the tabs within each guide. Task force members administered the tests in groups of two and chose a variety of locations across campus to increase the potential for a diversity of perspectives.

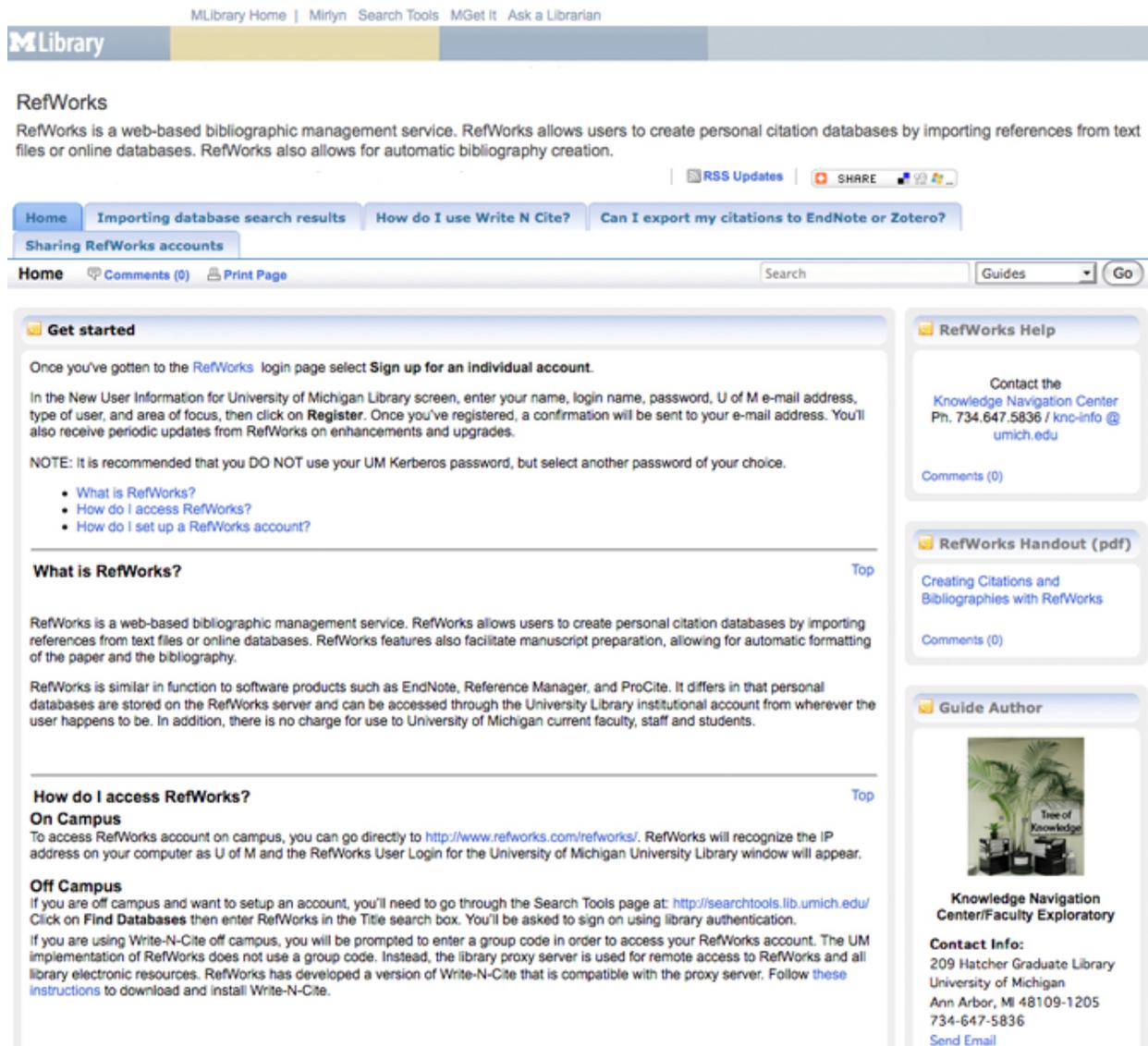


Figure 1: One of three screenshots used in guerrilla tests

Methodology

Test method: Guerrilla tests.

Number of participants: 16 total, including 5 freshmen, 2 sophomores, 1 junior, 1 senior, 4 graduate students, 1 UM faculty member, 1 non-UM faculty member, and 1 recent law school graduate.

Method(s) of participant recruitment: Participants were approached on the Diag, in the Michigan League, outside the computing center at Angell Hall, and at the Michigan Union. They were offered candy and \$2 in Munchie Money (redeemable at campus eateries) as incentives to participate.

Notes were taken on paper copies of the questionnaire and transcribed for use by task force members.

Summary Results

1. Participants find it very difficult to group different types of guides together.

Even when clearly stating that the three guides presented to them were representative of a larger group, participants were hard-pressed to find any succinct way to describe the content.

In answer to the question, "How would you describe what they [the three representative guides] are?" some participants answered:

"Web pages to find databases to find articles"

"Resources to direct students to different resources; how to research topics"

In answer to the question, "What do you call these?" some participants answered:

"Resources to guide you somewhere else"

"... central parts of the website - place to start at or go back to"

"How to look up stuff about the topic"

"Reference sites"

2. No consensus on a label.

While there was no clear preference for one label out of the many presented to participants, some options were more popular than others.

Preferred by the largest number of people (ranked in their top three):

- Recommended Resources (8 of 16)
- Research Resources (7 of 16)
- Research Guides (6 of 16)

Disliked by the largest number of participants:

- Cheat Sheets (7 of 16)
- MGuides (7 of 16)

- MLibrary 411 (4 of 7)

Keep in mind, however, that the most preferred option was still only preferred by just half of the total number of participants. See Appendix C for full list of options and results.

Because a significant portion of our participants were freshmen, whom we felt may have a different perspective due to being completely new to the university, we also analyzed our test results according to grade level (in four groups: freshmen and sophomores, juniors and seniors, graduate students, and faculty). However, no discernible patterns emerged.

3. Tabs are recognizable and meaningful.

Participants recognized the tabs on the LibGuides pages as tabs (which if clicked on would then result in a different web page), and seemed to have a general understanding that each tab would lead to additional resources related to the label on the tab.



Figure 2: Tabs from Communication Studies guide

Recommendations

While these data fail to identify a label for LibGuides that participants found acceptable and sufficiently descriptive, there are nonetheless actionable findings that can be pulled from the results.

1. Consistently label all existing links to LibGuides.

While none of the proposed or elicited labels are clearly preferred, *Recommended Resources* was the highest-scoring label tested and had low negatives. Based on these findings, we suggest using this label. Regardless of the particular label chosen, effort should be made to immediately make these links consistent across the entire library online presence, no matter what future actions are being considered.

2. Consider grouping LibGuides by content type, and identifying appropriate labels for each type.

Participants consistently struggled to find a common term for all three of our examples (most often singling out the technology guide as being a different class of document), indicating a risk that the most-liked terms were simply the most generic. More useful results may emerge if the participants need not find terms that encompass the full breadth of the LibGuides content. A follow-up test looking at a two- or three-category partition of LibGuides by topic type (e.g., technology and how-to guides, discipline-specific guides, and course-specific guides) should be considered.

3. Explore the possibility of "branding" LibGuides.

Given that users did not strongly prefer any of the tested terms, the Library may see this as an opportunity to brand LibGuides with an MLibrary-specific term and/or wordmark without

attempting to choose something with inherent meaning. There is evidence that the library has successfully implemented this strategy in the past. Data from the undergraduate focus group indicate that *Mirlyn*, despite the word itself having no obvious connection to the catalog, is very well associated with the library (although there are some indications that "Mirlyn" is used generically to refer to the OPAC, library website, SearchTools, etc.). More recently, the library successfully developed and implemented a marketing campaign for MTagger, a term only loosely associated with the service it names. Any strategy the Library pursues to increase awareness of LibGuides could additionally be used to similarly promote an MLibrary-specific brand for the LibGuides content.

It should be noted, however, that of the two tested labels that might fit in with existing MLibrary branding activities, *MLibrary 411* had only negative responses (and at least one voiced concern that non-US students wouldn't understand the reference) and *MGuides* was the most polarizing term (with both strong positives and negatives). Any term chosen should receive at least minimal testing to root out any strong negatives.

Ideas for future testing

1. Conduct a follow-up test of the implemented label.

Conduct a test of the implemented label to evaluate it within the context of the Library website.

2. Gather user input on separate labels for each guide content type.

As noted above, a follow-up test might evaluate a two- or three-category partition of LibGuides labels by content type (e.g., technology and how-to guides, discipline-specific guides, and course-specific guides).

3. Assess how tab labels affect guide usability.

The task force began its assessment of LibGuides with an informal heuristic evaluation, through which our group identified numerous potential problem areas, one of which was the inconsistent use of tab labels by different guide authors. Through the guerrilla tests, we found that most users recognize tabs in guides and understand tabs' functions. Future testing might explore whether users would benefit from consistent naming of certain recurring tabs, such as the left-most tabs ("Getting Started" or "Home," for example), tabs listing databases, etc.



Figure 3: Left-most tab labeled 'Home'



Figure 4: Left-most tab labeled 'Getting Started'

4. Test users' recognition and understanding of contact information in guides.

The heuristic evaluation revealed that different guides present contact information in a variety of ways. Future testing is needed to know whether users are able to find contact information in guides and whether the contact information available in guides meets users' expectations. Should the placement of contact information be consistent across all guides? In which cases do users expect contact information for a specialist, the Ask a Librarian service, and/or both?

5. Assess how header design affects guide usability.

Another problem area identified through the informal heuristic evaluation described above is the

guide header. The layout of the guide header is configured centrally for all MLibrary LibGuides. Future testing might explore how to improve the usability of guides through the header, by rearranging and/or eliminating some information from the header.



Figure 5: RefWorks guide header

6. Assess whether guide content meets user needs.

The focus groups we conducted on LibGuides examined how undergraduates begin their course-related research. Future tests might examine in greater specificity what users expect to find or learn about from library-provided resources related to their coursework and whether LibGuides meet those expectations.

7. Assess usability of the LibGuides portal page.

Our group's testing did not address the LibGuides portal page (<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/>). Future testing might assess whether the portal page serves users' needs.

Lessons Learned

What went well

1. Target Populations

We were able to obtain a good sample of undergraduate and graduate students, the most likely target audiences of LibGuides.

2. Pilot Testing

A pilot test provided us with valuable feedback that enabled us to fine-tune the questions and the sample labels before conducting the actual tests. After pilot testing, we rewrote questions to more clearly indicate that the sample guides shown were meant to be representative of a larger group.

3. Label Ranking

Providing a list of potential labels for the guides and the associated questions (why did you select the ones you like; what do you dislike about the ones you ranked less favorably) was, in most cases, very informative. While participants in this test rarely expressed strong preferences for the labels they ranked, their process of ranking and describing preferences allowed us to learn what specifically participants preferred or did not prefer about various labels.

4. Varying Locations of Testing

Conducting testing at a variety of campus sites contributed to the diversity of the tested population. Outside of the Angell Hall computing site worked very well as we were able to encounter people who had completed their tasks at the site and were willing to contribute a few minutes to the guerrilla test.

5. Partnered Interviewers

For each test, one interviewer served as the note-taker, which allowed both testers to focus on their respective tasks (the interviewer could present follow-up questions or clarifications as needed and the note-taker could focus entirely on capturing the comments).

What didn't go well

Locations

We were unable to schedule any tests on North Campus or on the Health Sciences campus. We found that some campus locations seemed to be far more conducive to engaging participants. For example, enticing students on the Diag was more challenging than we imagined, perhaps due to the ubiquity of solicitations of various sorts that occur on the Diag every day.

Appendix A Additional Screenshots

The screenshot shows a LibGuide page for 'Communication Studies'. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'MLibrary Home', 'Mirllyn', 'Search Tools', 'MGet It', and 'Ask a Librarian'. Below this is a header for 'Communication Studies' with a brief description. A secondary navigation bar contains tabs for 'Getting Started', 'Mass Media/Advertising/Pop Culture', 'News Sources', 'Citing Your Sources', 'What's Current', and 'Course'. A search bar is located below the tabs. The main content area is organized into three columns:

- Left Column:** 'Quick Links' (Ask a Librarian for help!, Mirllyn, Search Tools, Refworks, Already have a citation?) and 'Web Resources' (My Delicious Tags: ann Arbor, ala, archives, art, blogs, books, citation_styles, communication_studies, copyright, culture, design, digital, diversity, econ, education, facebook, faculty, fiction, film, food, free, friends, gifts, govdocs, government, guides, health, history, humor, information, instruction, intellectual_property, interesting, international, journalism, law, ldc, librarians, libraries, literature, maps, media, michigan, mlibrary2.0, movies, news, people, photography, photos, politics, popculture, public_policy, radio, recipes, reference, research, resources, search, si, social_networking, social_sciences, society, sociology, statistics, students, technology, tv, um, video, web, web2.0, webdesign, wiki, academic, wordpress). It also includes 'I am shevoo on Delicious' and 'Add me to your network'.
- Middle Column:** 'Looking for Comm Studies Articles? Start here!' with a heading 'Check out these databases for articles both scholarly and popular. Need help deciding what's scholarly and what's not? Get help here.' followed by a list of databases: 'Communication and Mass Media Complete', 'ProQuest Research Library', 'PsycINFO', 'Google Scholar', 'MLA International Bibliography', 'FIAC Film Archive Database', 'Gale Database of Publications and Broadcast Media', and 'Communication Abstracts'. Below this is 'Other useful databases' including 'International Encyclopedia of Communication', 'JSTOR', 'Social Science Citation Index (ISI Web of Science)', 'Sociological Abstracts', 'Search Tools: Communications Databases', and 'World Press Encyclopedia'.
- Right Column:** 'Shevon's Profile' with a photo, 'Ask a Librarian' chat box (umlibraryaskus is online), 'Contact Info' (209 Hatcher North, 734-764-1313, Send Email), 'Links' (Profile), 'Subjects' (Communication Studies), and 'Find me on...' (Facebook link).

At the bottom, there is a footer: 'Powered by Springshare; All rights reserved. Report a tech support issue. View this page in a format suitable for printers, mobile devices and screen-readers.'

Figure 6 Subject-based guide: Communication Studies

MLibrary Home | Mirlyn Search Tools MGet It Ask a Librarian

MLibrary

English 125
Help and research ideas for students taking English 125.

English 125 - Home Find Books Find Articles Top Ten Databases Search Strategies Evaluating Web Sites Citing Your Resources

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

English 125 - Home Comments (0) Print Page Search Go

About



This is designed introduce the library to undergraduate students at The University of Michigan and to act as a basic guide for undergraduate research.

Comments (0)

About the Library

- Undergraduate Library Hours
- Computers and Printing
- Library Services
- Research Help
- MLibrary Gateway
- Other University of Michigan Libraries

Comments (0)

Library Tools

- Mirlyn Library Catalog
- Find a Database
- Search Tools Quick Search
- RefWorks

Comments (0)

Welcome to the Library

*"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."
- Zora Neale Hurston, American writer, 1903 - 1960*

Finding Both Sides of the Argument

Think of controversial topics in today's headlines

- The Federal Stimulus Package
- Bailing Out the Big-Three Automakers
- Global Warming
- Pulling Out of Iraq
- Closing Guantanamo
- Stem Cell Research in Michigan and Proposal 2
- Gay Marriage and the Defeat of Proposition 8 in California

The library has several series of books which summarize both sides of an issue. These may help you develop a topic and help you start your research. To find these books go to the library catalog, [Mirlyn](#), click on the browse button along the top, yellow banner. Under the dropdown menu "select index to browse" choose "Series Title begins with..." then enter any of the series titles listed below for a list of books in that series.

"opposing viewpoints"

"contemporary world issues"

"social issues primary resources"

"current controversies"

Comments (0)

Try These Databases

CQ Researcher is noted for its in-depth, unbiased coverage of health, social trends, criminal justice, international affairs, education, the environment, technology, and the economy. You can browse CQ Researcher by topic, track specific controversial topics by date or look up topics in their Pro/Con section. Pro/Con offers succinct articles by experts arguing for and against given topics. Click on the image below to go to this database.



Issues and Controversies offers accurate discussions of over 250 controversial topics in the news supplemented with chronologies, illustrations, maps, tables, sidebars, contact information, and bibliographies including primary source documents and news editorials. It has a subject index and a section featuring pro/con articles on a number of topics.



Comments (0)

Reference Staff



Shapiro Undergraduate Library Reference Staff
Have a question? Ask a librarian! If the bubble below is green a librarian is available for your question.

Ask a Librarian

umlibraryaskus is online

Type here and hit enter to send a private message.

edit nickname: meeboguest12345

get meebop

Contact Info:
Shapiro Undergraduate Library
919 S. University
Ann Arbor MI 48109-1185
(734) 764-7490
[Send Email](#)

Links:
[Profile & Guides](#)

Chat with a Librarian

Use Meebo to text a librarian and get help. If a librarian is not online feel free to leave a message but you will need to include contact information if you would like someone to get back with you.

Ask a Librarian

umlibraryaskus is online

Type here and hit enter to send a private message.

edit nickname: meeboguest12345

get meebop

Comments (0)

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View this page in a format suitable for printers, mobile devices and screen-readers.

Figure 7 Course-related guide: English 125

Appendix B Test Script

Greet the participant

Hi, my name is [name]. Would you be willing to participate in a brief study about the library's website? It will only take 5 minutes of your time. (Yes or No)

Pre-test procedure

I'd like to ask you a preliminary question: What is your affiliation with the University? (If this is a student, ask what his/her year in school is.)

Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

Begin Test

1. Show the user the three print-outs. "I am going to show you three print-outs of library web pages. Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with what's on these pages." Then, "If you had to describe them (as a group) to someone else, how would you describe what they are?"
2. Then ask, "What do you call these?"
3. "We need to put a link to these on the library website. Is [your answer to Question 1] what you would want the link text to read or do you have a different suggestion?"

Show the participant a list of labels and ask:

- 4a. "Of these labels, please rank your top three. Why did you choose these?"
- 4b. "Are there any labels in the list that you don't like, and why?"
5. "Do you see the tabs on these pages?" and then "What would you expect to see if you clicked on them?"

Test Ends

Thank you very much for your time and input. Have a great day!

Appendix C Label Options and Ranking Results

Preferred Labels	Participant Preferences																Number of Times Preferred
	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	P 15	P 16	
Cheat Sheets	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Course Guides	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Library Guides	0	0	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
MGuides	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	5
Recommended Resources	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	2	2	0	8
Research Guides	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	6
Research Resources	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	7
Resources Selected by a Lib	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
Shortcuts	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Study Materials	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Subject Guides	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subject Help	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Suggested Resources	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	3	0	5
Guides and Tutorials	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	2
MLibrary 411	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disliked Labels	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	P 15	P 16	Number of Times Disliked
Cheat Sheets				1		1				1	1		1	1	1		7
Course Guides	1				1		1			1	1	1					6
Library Guides		1			1		1										3
MGuides	1	1			1	1			1			1			1		7
Recommended Resources					1		1	1									3
Research Guides					1												1
Research Resources					1			1									2
Resources Selected by a Lib					1			1						1		1	4
Shortcuts	1		1	1		1							1				5
Study Materials											1						1
Subject Guides					1												1
Subject Help						1											1
Suggested Resources					1		1	1								1	4
Guides and Tutorials																	0
MLibrary 411													1	1	1	1	4

Appendix D Resources Consulted

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