LIBGUIDES/RESEARCH GUIDES BEST PRACTICES

Guides

• Design guides to meet patrons’ information needs.
• State the scope and purpose of guide at the onset so users know what is being covered.
• Add explanations. Consider descriptions that inform users about how to use the guide and what they can expect to accomplish with the tool.
• Display a common look and feel to ease navigation.
• Use consistency to give the users an indication that the guides all serve a common purpose.
• Adhere to a content strategy that focuses on key relevant resources rather than a comprehensive list of all resources available.
• List resources in order of importance or relevance, rather than alphabetically.
• Place guide author contact information (profile) in a consistent location in all guides.
• Keep profile boxes to a minimum. For 2 or more collaborators, use a single, standard box that includes contact information for the entire group.
• Use a conversational writing style, rather than formal or technical language.
• Eliminate jargon where possible.
• Arrange guides by course or course level (to be more in line with how students think about research).
• Create a template guide reflecting best practices to assist in creating a common look and feel.
• Include interactive content, such as assignments and tutorials, to increase the use of that guide.
• Break down general subject research guides into subtopic first, and then by resource, to make them easier to navigate and less overwhelming.
• Appeal to different levels of research experience within a single guide.
• Use a centrally created guide template to establish consistency in labels, content elements and structure, and for easy reuse and copying.

Pages

• Use short pages that do not require scrolling to reduce visual clutter.
• Pages should be simple and clean with clear navigation cues for users.
• Standardize the labelling of pages and content boxes.
• Limit the use of dropdowns for content.
• Provide brief descriptions and definitions of resources.

Tabs

• Include clear and precise headings on guide navigation tabs. Headings must lead to content users were looking
  for.
• Tab names should be consistent throughout the research guides.
• Place valuable resource content in the Home tab. Push instructional components towards the final tabs.
• Minimize the total number of tabs (preferably to six).

Resources

• Best practices for building guides: http://support.springshare.com/libguides/bestpractices/content

• Use of tabs, drop-down menus and scrollbars guidelines (from NN/g Nielsen Norman Group):
  o Tabs, Used Right: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/tabs-used-right/
  o Drop-down menus, use sparingly: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/drop-down-menus-use-sparingly/
  o Scrolling and Scrollbars: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/scrolling-and-scrollbars/

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