More than Sources

Shifting from LibGuide Practice to LibGuide Praxis

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Introduction
So many LibGuides!

LibGuides are used by approximately:

- 4,800 libraries
- 78,000 librarians
- 78 countries
- 5.9 million users

Most librarians know this practice.

- Familiarity with LibGuides often mentioned in job listings/position descriptions.
- Many LibGuides look quite similar.
- According to Springshare, roughly 92% of guides are tabbed navigation with 47% of pages in those guides set to 3 columns (2 cols @ 37%).

SOURCE: http://libux.co/libguides-use-same-template/
Practice needs to become praxis.

- Critical theory, user experience, and design principles can inform our practice.
- LibGuides are a tool that ought to support our instructional goals.

“The real task for libraries in treating information literacy seriously lies not in defining it or describing it, but in developing a critical practice of librarianship—a theoretically informed praxis.” (Elmborg 2006, 198)
Activity pt. 1

#LGPraxis
Critiques of LibGuides
Common critiques

- Lists of “approved” resources without context
- Process (and messiness of research) often ignored
- May not align with instructional goals
- Librarians build LibGuides from an expert perspective
- Design may interfere with access

Alison Hicks: “by failing to consider LibGuides within the context of broader pedagogical practices, librarians run the risk of misrepresenting both the nature and the scope of research and inquiry.”
Goals of Critical Information Literacy
Selected tenets relevant to LibGuides

- Acknowledge that students have experiences of their own
- Knowledge is not neutral
- Information users are more than consumers
- Information can connect and disconnect, or include and exclude
- Students should be active participants in their own learning
Implications of critical information literacy

Support active learning rather than "guide" students to resources

Critical information literacy writings directly address the critiques of LibGuides

- Context matters
- Research is a "messy" and complex process
- Need to encourage and model critical inquiry

"Being a literacy worker...involves putting ourselves on the level of students as co-questioners, co-doubters, even co-dreamers. In short, it involves an entire rethinking of the relationship between librarian and student." (Elmborg 2012, 94)
Critical Information Literacy + LibGuides
Points to consider

- Instructional goals/outcomes
- Intended audience
- Purpose of guide
- Methods for:
  - encouraging inquiry
  - acknowledging context
  - prioritizing process over sources
Activity pt. 2
Search Strategies

Unlike using Google, library research relies heavily on the use of "keywords" - the words that you will enter into a search box to begin your research. Since one author may use different words than another to discuss the same topic, you will want to brainstorm synonyms for important words, and conduct multiple searches.

Keep in mind that the words you use will influence the search results. For example, each of the following searches will yield different results:

1. undocumented immigrant  
2. illegal immigrant  
3. illegal alien

When exploring resources, then, trying different phrases can help you see different perspectives on the same topic.

Additionally, conducting multiple searches with synonyms can help you find additional sources that one search alone might not reveal. For example, with a topic like laws, you might want to try words like regulations, statutes, or legislation. You can then conduct multiple searches, such as:

1. "immigration regulations"  
2. "immigration statutes"  
3. "immigration legislation"

Using keywords in this manner will help you explore a wide variety of sources related to your topic.

Questions to Consider

1. For your topic, what words or phrases might represent different viewpoints (for example, "anti-abortion" and "pro-choice")?
Design Considerations
Two-column layout

- The right side is a blind spot
- Students ignore un-actionable content
Side navigation (if possible)

- Banner blindness
- Not available in LibGuides 1.0
Limit number of boxes & tabs

- Decision fatigue
- LibGuide is a tool, not a service
- Mobile use trends
Responsive Design

- Left moves to top, right moves to bottom
- Bootstrap
- All 3 layouts behave similarly
Other content (media)

- Relevant graphics
- Videos no longer than 3 minutes
- Actionable links

Source: Wikimedia Commons
Naming conventions

Typical LibGuide headings focus on format:

- Reference Sources
- Books and Articles
- Background information
- Keywords

LibGuide headings should focus on process:

- Getting started
- Gathering sources
- Evaluating sources
- Developing search terms
LibGuide Practice
+ Critical information literacy
+ Design principles

LibGuide Praxis
Questions?

Selected Bibliography


Full Bibliography

INFORMATION SEEKING PROCESS

- Task initiation -- Determine the need
- Topic selection -- Select a topic
- Prefocus exploration -- Background information
- Focus formulation -- Use background information to narrow topic
- Information Collection -- Gather information pertaining to focussed topic
- Search closure -- Determine “sufficiency” of information gathered
- Starting writing
SECTIONS ON THE GUIDE

● Getting Started (Searching as Exploration)
  ○ Search Strategies (words matter)
  ○ Concept Mapping (knowledge is interconnected)

● Gathering Sources (Research as Inquiry, Information as Process, Scholarship as Conversation)
  ○ Conduit Metaphor (AVOID!!)
  ○ What type of information is needed
  ○ Critique of certain systems & privilege of certain sources (commodification)

● Evaluating Sources (Authority is Contextual)
  ○ Purpose and Limits of certain types of information
    ■ Enforcing certain power structures
  ○ Authority, Perspectives, Assumptions
    ■ Which “voices” are left out and which are included