Forget the Kitchen Sink!: Designing Focused, Student-Centered, and Mobile Friendly Research Guides

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Forget the Kitchen Sink!

Designing Focused, Student-Centered, and Mobile Friendly Research Guides
Some Background

- LibGuides created to support students and academic programs.
- One for every program; Specific classes; Topics such as RefWorks & APA.
- Guides inherited from former librarians.
- Traditionally, librarians are not trained in web design.
Research Guides Evaluation

- 130 guides; Not all of these were necessary
- Too much information; often non-relevant
- Confusing navigation
- Cluttered layout
- Mobile devices not considered for layout
- Developed Best Practices Guide for librarians
- Re-Design schedule established for this academic year
  - Currently focused on high use guides
Designing Guides

➢ Elements to consider when creating online content:

➢ Writing for the Web
➢ Structure & Layout
➢ Responsive Design
➢ Content
Writing For The Web

➢ Users will skim and select content on web pages in an F-Shaped Pattern.
  ➢ Users first read in horizontal movement, usually across the upper part of the content area. Forms the F’s top bar.
  ➢ Next, users move down the page a bit and read across in a second horizontal line. F’s lower bar.
  ➢ Finally, users scan the content’s left side vertically. Forms the F’s stem.

➢ The implications of this are:
  ➢ Users won’t read your text word-by-word.
  ➢ The first two paragraphs must state the most important information.
  ➢ Start subheading, paragraphs and bullet points with information carrying words.

Writing For The Web

➢ Write clearly and simply.
➢ Put the most important information at the top.
➢ Avoid long paragraphs of content. Use lists.
➢ Break up long lists. Avoid lists with more than 7 items.
➢ Less is more! Aim for action content and avoid prose.
➢ Link to denser material deeper in the page.
➢ Use Italics or Bold for emphasis. Only hyperlinked text should be underlined.
Writing For The Web

➢ Other things to consider:
  ➢ Tone
    ➢ Use a personal tone
      ➢ Pronouns: User = YOU, Library = WE
    ➢ Active voice: "The library provides study spaces."
  ➢ Avoid Jargon:
    ➢ **Bad:** "The link resolver..."
    ➢ **Good:** "Click Find It to get full-text articles."

➢ Naming Guide Pages and Boxes
  ➢ Action Words
  ➢ Short Titles
  ➢ Specific Titles
  ➢ Avoid Vagueness: Ex. "Other" or "Additional Resources"
  ➢ Instead of "Home Page" try "Getting Started," "Overview," or "Start Here"
Structure and Layout

- Keep as much info at the top.
- Avoid more than one row of page tabs.
- Avoid subpages.
- Use images to break up text and catch the user’s eye; may help to clarify content.
- Avoid long pages, if possible.
- Links should make sense if the linked text is read by itself. Reader may only read links.

**Example:**

- **Good:** The U.S. Government provides comprehensive homeowner data.
- **Bad:** Go to this U.S. Government source for comprehensive homeowner data by clicking here.
Responsive Design

- Allows websites to easily transition from desktop to mobile devices.
  - Eliminates resizing and scrolling.
- Content is in a flexible grid that changes based on screen size.
- Content must be arranged with responsive design in mind.
Adding Content

➢ Break it Up
  ➢ Use images and smaller chunks of information.

➢ Be Clear
  ➢ A brief description may be necessary.

➢ Easy to Understand Descriptions
  ➢ Avoid default descriptions for databases from vendor.

➢ Sort lists: Place in order of importance rather than alphabetically.

➢ Use Editorial Guidelines.
Examples

➢ APA Guide: guides.franklin.edu/APA

➢ RefWorks Guide: guides.franklin.edu/RefWorks

➢ MBA Guide: guides.franklin.edu/MBA
Additional Resources

➢ LibGuides Standards and Best Practices Guide: http://guides.franklin.edu/guides_standards

➢ Writing for the Web: https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/writing-for-the-web.html
Questions?

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