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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.
- Source: Nielsen Norman Group <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/>

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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