

## DUL Usability Test: LibGuides Navigation

---

### Recommendations to Consider

1. Add a search bar within the LibGuide. Students indicated a proclivity for typing in keywords instead of searching through the tabs/lists themselves.
2. Continue keeping the LibGuides as top navigation, but investigate resource requirements to transition from top navigation to side navigation.
3. Users preferred having lots of information on the “Getting Started” page, so locate key resources there
4. Rename “Guides”, however it is difficult to find a good alternative - “Research Pages”
5. Rename “Subject Specialists” to something like “Subject Librarians” instead. Students don’t always understand the branding, instead believing “specialists” to mean a scholar in an academic department rather than the library.
6. Include the “Ask a Librarian” gray bar on each page. Multiple users utilized it.
7. Promote the guides and how to navigate them a bit more.

### Background

Hannah Pope and Hannah Hiles, field experience students in the Assessment & User Experience Department, conducted a usability test on the Duke University Libraries “Global Health” top navigation LibGuide and on the side navigation draft version of the same page on April 6th, 2016, from 1:00pm-2:40pm. The test consisted of a short set of background questions, three tasks, and six post-test questions. The test lasted approximately 10 minutes. See Appendix B for the full test script; see Appendix C for user’s feedback on the top and side navigation versions of the LibGuides.

Questions that we hoped to answer through the test included the following:

1. Do users know how to make an appointment/contact subject specialists?
2. Are there tasks/features that users seem confused by?
3. Are there features that users seem to prefer (or seem to understand better than others)?
4. Are there behaviors that both user groups seem to exhibit?
5. What are the final user preferences between the top versus side navigation in LibGuides?

### Participants

Eight individuals (excluding the pilot participant) completed the test. Participants included two undergraduate students, four graduate students, and two lecturers/faculty. The six students with

---

<sup>1</sup>For more information, please contact [emily.daly@duke.edu](mailto:emily.daly@duke.edu)

declared majors represented Neuroscience; Divinity; History; Romance Studies and Public Policy. One of the students was not affiliated with any program, and another lecturer did not make clear which department he represented. The faculty member was in the Romance Studies department. When asked if they had used a LibGuide before, 6 (75%) responded that they had. Of those students, 1 (12.5%) didn't specify, 2 (25%) used the LibGuides at least once a week, 2 (25%) used the LibGuides one or two times a month, and 1 (12.5%) used LibGuides once a semester.

## Key Findings

### 1. Do users know how to make an appointment/contact subject specialists?

Of the users tested, seven of the eight found out how to contact the library, however, only five of those found the subject specialist "Schedule an Appointment" button. One participant used the general chat/email to contact the library. The other two participants who were unable to locate the button either opted to contact the Global Health department to speak with a professor. This confusion could have been because of the use of the wording "subject specialist". One individual interpreted that as a scholar specialized in Global Health. The participants also had issues with finding the "Schedule an Appointment" button, but a couple mentioned that this is because they would rather email. Three participants also mentioned that they liked the gray bar with the "Ask a Librarian" hyperlink. Even though that box is small, many of the users noticed it.

### 2. Are there any tasks/features that users seem confused by?

- 25% of users (2 people) seemed unsure about what a subject specialist was, how to find it, and where to make an appointment.
- 50% of users (4 people) were unable to locate the "Finding Articles" tab. 25% (2 people) deferred to the "Getting Started" page of the LibGuide, while one participant navigated to the Duke University Libraries search bar away from the LibGuide, and another went to the departmental website for information, not the library.
- Only 37.5% of users (3 people) were able to find the North Carolina specific data tab on the "Finding Data" page within the LibGuide. 25% of users (2 people) clicked on the WHO link for statistics located on the homepage. 25% (2 people) used a general library search to find statistics, navigating away from the LibGuide. One user (12.5%) looked at the "Research Areas" of the LibGuide instead of the "Data" tab.
- Users in general attempted to find a search bar within the LibGuide, with 50% (4 people) commenting on their instinct to type something in order to find information.
- Some users exhibited "banner blindness" towards the tabs, with 25% of users (2 people) not noticing the options. Both of those users were using the side

navigation page. 100% of the (4) users who saw the top navigation LibGuide used the tabs to find the information for the tasks.

**3. Are there features that users seem to prefer (or seem to understand better than others)?**

- 75% of users (6 people) didn't want to leave the homepage. They preferred to find all of the information up front instead of deferring to tabs.
- 87.5% of users (7 people) knew how to contact the library, even if it wasn't a subject specialist.
- The users who preferred the Top Navigation generally liked seeing more information, while those who liked the Side Navigation preferred a simpler, more spaced out look to the LibGuide.
- 75% of users (6 people) attempted to use a search bar, or wanted to use one.

**4. Are there behaviors that both user groups seem to exhibit?**

- Both user groups exhibited a desire for a search bar in order to find information within the LibGuide, with 25% of users (2 people) from the side navigation group requesting it, and 37.5% of the top navigation group (3 people) requesting it.

**5. What are the final user preferences between the live page and the draft page?**

- 75% of users (6 people) preferred the top navigation LibGuide while 25% of users (2 people) preferred the side navigation LibGuide.
- While this test showed that the top navigation LibGuide is heavily preferred, one earlier test as well as an Undergraduate Advisory Board test showed that those participants preferred the side navigation.

## Additional Research

In addition to a pilot test which was completed the previous week by Hannah Pope and Hannah Hiles, two tests of LibGuides navigation have been performed in addition to this study – the first in November 2015, and the second in a more informal setting with the Undergraduate Advisory Board meeting of April 2016. For more information, these studies have been detailed in separate reports. The November 2015 study conducted by Emily Daly and Emma Boettcher recommended that the transition begin from top navigation to side navigation, which is in direct opposition to what Pope and Hiles found during this study. Additionally, the testing done during the April 2016 Undergraduate Advisory Board meeting found similar results, with 82% of testers preferring the side navigation. Research states that users prefer to read in an “F” pattern on the web, which would support the change to side navigation, although this was not reflected by the users who participated in this study.<sup>2</sup> The existing literature also suggests that users should

---

<sup>2</sup> Boston College University Libraries. *LibGuides Standards and Best Practices: Getting Started*. <http://libguides.bc.edu/guidestandards> and Jakob Nielsen. *F-Shaped Pattern For Reading Web Content*. (2006). <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/>

have the option to search within the guide, which closely reflected the findings of this study.<sup>3</sup> It is recommended based on a combination of all three studies that steps be taken to minimize content, reduce jargon and wordiness, add in a search bar and improve the overall layout of the existing LibGuides to make them as user-friendly as possible (see recommendations within this report, as well as the November 2015 report for further details).

---

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Library. *Harvard Library LibGuides Best Practices*.  
<http://guides.library.harvard.edu/friendly.php?s=hl/best-practices>

## Appendix A: Screenshot Top v. Side Navigation

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Duke University Libraries website. The header includes the Duke University Libraries logo, a search bar, and links for 'My Accounts' and 'Ask a Librarian'. Below the header is a main navigation menu with items: Search & Find, Using the Library, Research Support, Course Support, Libraries, and About. The breadcrumb trail reads: Home > Research Support > Research Guides > Global Health > Getting Started. The page title is 'Global Health: Getting Started'. A secondary navigation bar contains: Getting Started (active), Finding Articles, Finding Data, Finding Books, Finding Background, Citation & Research Tools, and Research Areas. A 'Need help?' section contains the text: 'Need help? For immediate help, use Ask a Librarian. Or schedule an appointment with your global health librarian!'. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column has a 'Library Access Button' section with a bullet point: 'Library Access Button' and text: 'Add this app to your browser to gain access to subscription publications with one click!'. Below it is a 'Global Health Search Tips' section with a graphic that says 'Global Health Research' and '10 Tips for Advanced Search'. The middle column has a 'Welcome!' section with a banner for 'Global Health Librarian Office Hours Mondays, 1:30-3:30pm, Trent 131'. Below that is an 'Essential Resources for Global Health' section with a list: PubMed (Premier search engine for biomedical literature. Excellent source for global health topics.), Scopus (A large interdisciplinary abstract and citation database. Searches contents of MEDLINE (basis of Pubmed) and EMBASE, as well as key journals in health sciences and social sciences. Similar to Web of Science, but more comprehensive international journal coverage), and Web of Science. The right column has a 'Your Librarian' section with a photo of Hannah Rozear and a 'Schedule Appointment' button.

## Top Navigation and Side Navigation

The screenshot shows the side navigation version of the Duke University Libraries website. The header and main navigation menu are identical to the top navigation version. The breadcrumb trail reads: Home > Research Support > Research Guides > Global Health (Side Nav) > Getting Started. The page title is 'Global Health (Side Nav)'. The secondary navigation bar is a vertical list on the left: Getting Started (active), Finding Articles, Finding Data, Finding Books, Finding Background, Citation & Research Tools, and Research Areas. The 'Need help?' section is absent. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a 'Your Librarian' section with a photo of Hannah Rozear. The right column has a 'Welcome!' section with a banner for 'Global Health Librarian Office Hours Mondays, 1:30-3:30pm, Trent 131'. Below that is an 'Essential Resources for Global Health' section with a list: PubMed (Provides access to over 16 million citations from MEDLINE and other life science journals for biomedical articles back to the 1950s.), Scopus (Scopus is an abstract and citation database covering: Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Engineering; Life and Health Sciences; Social Sciences, Psychology and Economics; Biological, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.), and Web of Science (Covers journals from all major scientific disciplines including back to 1898. Tracks citations so users can see which papers are having an impact on the literature).

## Appendix B: LibGuides Usability Test Script

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

We are trying to understand more fully how students, faculty and staff interact with research guides to find and use library books, articles, and other materials. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers and that we're testing a tool – not you.

Okay, first some general questions:

Are you an undergrad, grad student, faculty member, staff member, or visitor to Duke?

- A. If you are an undergrad, what year are you?
- B. For undergrads: What is your major?
- C. For grads, faculty, staff: What department are you in?

Have you ever used a guide like this one, [Page A / Page B], to find information about library books, articles, and other research materials?

- A. If yes, would you say you use these types of guides once a day, once a week, once a month, once a semester, or less often?

Now I'd like you to complete three short tasks using research guides. It would be really helpful if you would share your thoughts and observations as you are completing the tasks, so try to think aloud as much as you can. Like I said, there are no right or wrong answers.

### TASK ONE

You need more information for your project, but are having trouble finding the best sources. How would you make an appointment/contact the subject specialist for this LibGuide [Page A / Page B]?

### TASK TWO

Now, you are interested in finding research articles about a Global Health topic. Again, use this page, [Page A / Page B], to determine where you could find articles on Global Health.

### TASK THREE

You would like to find information on health statistics in North Carolina. Use this guide, [Page A / Page B], to find a place where you can find North Carolina specific health data.

Okay, that concludes our tasks. I have a couple of questions I'd like to ask you about your experience – feel free to leave this page open if you like.

### POST-TEST INTERVIEW

- 1) What two things about this guide, [Page A / Page B], did you like best?

- 2) What two things about this guide, [Page A / Page B], did you like least?
- 3) Now take a look at this guide [ Show user inverse of Page A / Page B].
  - a) What are your thoughts about the structure of the two guides?
  - b) What is your preference?
  - c) Why?
- 4) Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience with this guide?

Thank you for your participation in our study.

## Appendix C: Feedback on Top and Side Navigation LibGuides

### Top Navigation LibGuide

- “Can still choose [different tabs]. I liked the “Need Help” bar across the top and the search tips.”
- “The guide is wordy.”
- “I like that the top page has more info above the break.”
- “It felt accessible and easy to use.”
- “This page has more info and is more visible”
- “Top navigation is what you see right away.”

### Side Navigation LibGuide

- “I don’t like having to scroll down.”
- “I liked that it is more spread out.”
- “Side navigation isn’t as prominent - it could include icons.”
- “Side navigation feels sparse.”
- “The side navigation is too spread out. It could be daunting, aesthetically.”
- “This seems too basic.”
- “It’s not aesthetically great, but it does look like a Library page.”

### General Feedback

- “Sometimes the guides are hard to find, so increase visibility.”
- “It’s just my personal style to use a search bar.”
- “I don’t like the bullet points on the guides. I also think that if the guide is going to be about a certain subject, it should have links to relevant course guides.”
- “The guide looked clear from the beginning and the blocks [LibGuide boxes] seemed user friendly.”
- “They read like a big list - could it have logos?”
- “I like the link descriptors.”
- “I am inspired to use them more.”
- “The word “Guide” is misleading. Guide sounds like what I would think of as a “study guide”.”