

# DUL Usability Test: UAB's LibGuides Navigation

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## Recommendations to Consider

1. Continue using top level navigation for all LibGuides.
2. Create a standard for web-banner size that will prevent the page from resizing itself as the banner images rotate.
3. Embed a search box that will allow users to navigate through the entire guide using only their search terms.
4. Add a "Chat with a Librarian" window to each LibGuide, along with the text "The person you're chatting with in this box may not be the person you see on this page, but we can still help you!"
5. Reduce "wordiness" through LibGuides by enforcing a standard on the number of resources listed on the "Getting Started" page, as well as how much description librarians give to each resource they provide.
6. Remove as much jargon as possible from LibGuides (such as "disciplinary database") to keep them as user-friendly as possible.

## Background

Emily Daly and Hannah Hiles, field experience student 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 11th, 2016 at approximately 7:00PM. Due to the nature of the testing environment with test participants being members of the Undergraduate Advisory Board (UAB), testing time was limited and the original LibGuides test from April 6th was heavily modified to accommodate the change in time and environment. The test consisted of a short set of optional background questions, three tasks, and optional post-test questions. The test lasted approximately 5 minutes.

See Appendix A for screenshots of the side navigation and top navigation mentioned throughout the report; 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. Two additional tests of LibGuides navigation have been performed in addition to this test – the first in November 2015, and the second during April 2016. Both test reports are linked in Appendix D.

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

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

1. Are students familiar with using the library's LibGuides?
2. How difficult did students find guide navigation and task completion to be?
3. Do users know how to make an appointment/contact subject specialists?
4. What are the final user preferences between the top versus side navigation in LibGuides?
5. Are there features of the LibGuides that users universally like and dislike?

## Participants

The test consisted of 11 members of the Undergraduate Advisory Board (UAB), all undergraduates of varying year and program. School demographics were not acquired during the test. Participants were encouraged to focus on only one of the tasks, and told to proceed to the remaining tasks if time allowed.

## Key Findings

**1. Are students familiar with using the library's LibGuides?**

- 9 of the 11 students (81%) had used the libraries LibGuides before
- 4 students reported using LibGuides "once a semester"
- 2 students reported using LibGuides "less often"

**2. How difficult did students find guide navigation and task completion to be?**

Students were asked to rate their task difficulty on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "not at all easy" and 5 being "very easy."

- For task one, students averaged an ease of 4.4 out of 5
- For task two, students averaged an ease of 3 out of 5
- For task three, students averaged an ease of 3 out of 5
- For all tasks combined, students averaged an ease of 3.5 out of 5

**3. Do users know how to make an appointment/contact subject specialists?**

7 students attempted the "contact a specialist" task. Of those 7,

- 4 (57%) used the "Schedule Appointment" button under the subject specialists picture
- 3 (43%) did not provide feedback about how they accomplished this task
- 6 of the 7 students rated the task as a 5 (very easy) task to complete; 1 student rated it as a 1 (not at all easy) task to complete

**4. What are the final user preferences between the top versus side navigation in LibGuides?**

- 9 (81%) of students preferred the sidebar navigation

- There was no connection between the 2 students who preferred top level navigation and which testing page they had used -- one student had used the top level for testing, the other student had used sidebar for testing

5 students provided feedback for their preferences, with the 2 who preferred the top level stating that they liked having access to the embedded chat window on the main page. Students who preferred the sidebar cited that it was because the overall look of the guide was “cleaner” and easier to navigate.

**5. Are there features of the LibGuides that users universally like and dislike?**

- 4 (36%) of students favored having access to the embedded chat window
- 6 (55%) used words like “wordy” or “difficult to navigate” to describe the libguide, with 5 of these students being from the top level testing group

## Conflicting Reports

The testing completed within this report found that 82% of testers preferring the side navigation. The November 2015 study conducted by Emily Daly and Emma Boettcher found the same results, and made recommendations that the transition begin from top navigation to side navigation. However, the study conducted by Hannah Pope and Hannah Hiles on April 6th was in direct opposition to this, with the majority of their test participants favoring the top level navigation.

It is currently unclear what method of navigation is ultimately the most efficient for users to navigate. Further testing may be required to determine what the best possible layout is for LibGuides; however, research from both Harvard<sup>2</sup> and Boston University<sup>3</sup> have shown that users overall tend to prefer sidebar navigation. This research should be kept in mind when considering the future of LibGuides at DUL.

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<sup>2</sup> Harvard Library. *Harvard Library LibGuides Best Practices*.  
<http://guides.library.harvard.edu/friendly.php?s=hl/best-practices>

<sup>3</sup> Boston College University Libraries. *LibGuides Standards and Best Practices: Getting Started*.  
<http://libguides.bc.edu/guidestandards>

## 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, user account links, a search bar, and a main navigation menu with items like Search & Find, Using the Library, Research Support, Course Support, Libraries, and About. Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Research Support > Research Guides > Global Health > Getting Started. The main heading is "Global Health: Getting Started". A secondary navigation bar contains tabs for Getting Started, Finding Articles, Finding Data, Finding Books, Finding Background, Citation & Research Tools, and Research Areas. A "Need help?" section provides instructions on how to get assistance. The page is divided into three columns: "Library Access Button" with a link to add a browser app; "Welcome!" featuring a banner for "Global Health Librarian Office Hours Mondays, 1:30-3:30pm, Trent 131"; and "Your Librarian" with a photo of Hannah Rozear and a "Schedule Appointment" button. A "Global Health Search Tips" section is also visible, along with "Essential Resources for Global Health" listing PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science.

## Top Navigation and Side Navigation

This screenshot shows the same website but with side navigation. The top navigation bar is identical to the previous screenshot. The breadcrumb trail is: Home > Research Support > Research Guides > Global Health (Side Nav) > Getting Started. The main heading is "Global Health (Side Nav)". On the left, a vertical sidebar contains a "Getting Started" tab and a list of navigation options: Finding Articles, Finding Data, Finding Books, Finding Background, Citation & Research Tools, and Research Areas. The "Welcome!" banner and "Your Librarian" section are present. The "Essential Resources for Global Health" section provides detailed descriptions for PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science.

## Appendix B: LibGuides Usability Test Script

Take a look at this page -- [[http://bit.ly/global\\_A](http://bit.ly/global_A)] OR [[http://bit.ly/global\\_B](http://bit.ly/global_B)]

Have you ever used a research guide like this one to find information about library books, articles, and other research materials? Circle yes or no.

**YES    NO**

If yes, how often would you say you use a guide like this? Circle whichever applies.

**ONCE A DAY    ONCE A WEEK    ONCE A SEMESTER LESS OFTEN**

Now we'd like for you to complete three short tasks using a research guide.

### **TASK ONE**

You need more information for your Global Health project, but are having trouble finding the best sources. How would you make an appointment/contact the subject specialist for this specific LibGuide?

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all easy and 5 being very easy) how easy would you rate this task to complete? **1 2 3 4 5**

If you'd like to share any additional notes about this task, please feel free to do so here:

### **TASK TWO**

Now, you are interested in finding research articles about a Global Health topic. Again, use this research guide to determine where you could find articles on Global Health.

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all easy and 5 being very easy) how easy would you rate this task to complete? **1 2 3 4 5**

If you'd like to share any additional notes about this task, please feel free to do so here:

### **TASK THREE**

You would like to find information on health statistics in North Carolina. Use this research guide to find a place where you can find North Carolina specific health data.

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all easy and 5 being very easy) how easy would you rate this task to complete? **1 2 3 4 5**

If you'd like to share any additional notes about this task, please feel free to do so here:

Now we have a few questions we'd like to ask you about your experience using this research guide.

### **POST-TEST INTERVIEW**

1. What two things about this guide did you like best?
2. What two things about this guide did you like least?

Now we'd like you to visit this page -- [[http://bit.ly/global\\_B](http://bit.ly/global_B)] OR [[http://bit.ly/global\\_A](http://bit.ly/global_A)]

3. What are your thoughts about the structure of the two guides?
4. What is your preference and why?
5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience with these guides?

## **Appendix C: User Feedback**

### **On Top Level Navigation**

- "The top nav looks too modular and boxy; side nav is easier to navigate."
- "Way too wordy. No patience or time to browse through everything. Could be more visually appealing/easy on readers."
- "Make it easier for people to get through all the info, or people will lose patience and walk away still confused."
- "There are so many links, I don't know which to use. I would rather Google it. I'm not sure which database is best or which to use or how to use them."

### **On SideBar Navigation**

- "It's unclear to me that the "getting started" page is only the "getting started" page. It took me a while to understand what I was looking at."
- "The guide was very intuitive and easy to use."
- "It reads like a text wall and difficult to navigate; the "welcome" bar keeps changing [banner sizing issue]."
- "The categories are easier to find; on the top nav it's harder to notice the tabs."

- “The tasks suggested here were very easy to complete. However, in the past I've had some difficulty with research guides just because I've been overwhelmed (I guess I haven't gone to a research guide with a discrete task in mind - it's more like I don't know what i even need yet).”

## Appendix D: Links to Additional LibGuides Reports

- [November 2016 Usability Test](#) (Daly and Boettcher)
- [April 2016 Usability Test](#) (Pope and Hiles)