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# LibGuides Usability Testing

*Customizing a Product to Work for Your Users*

Rachel Hungerford – University of Washington Libraries  
Lauren Ray – University of Washington Libraries

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# Background

- University of Washington Libraries moved to LibGuides in Summer 2009
    - Easier authoring and dynamic content
  - Replaced subject guides list with LibGuides Home Page
    - Created basic guidelines and templates for UW subject guides
    - Few requirements led to lots of variation
  - UW LibGuides “live” in September 2009
-

## Education

This page offers the top recommended resources for this subject.

### Finding Articles [help]

- ERIC (EBSCO) or ERIC (CSA)**- ERIC indexes journal articles, documents and books
- PsycINFO** - Covers academic, research, and practice literature in psychology and related disciplines; 1872 to the present.
- Education Fulltext** - Despite the name not all articles are available fulltext

More ...

### Finding Books and Dissertations [help]

- UW Libraries Catalog** - Books, journals, videos and more
- WorldCat Local** -  
Searches materials at UW, Summit, and libraries worldwide
- Dissertations and Theses Full Text**



### Librarians

Seattle Campus  
Laura Lillard (info)  
lill@u.washington.edu

UW Bothell Campus  
Venta Silins  
ventas@u.washington.edu

## Lauren's Test Guide

This is my 4th test guide.

Last update: Apr 28th, 2010 | URL: <http://guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=55507> | [Print Guide](#)

[Home](#) [Find Articles](#) [Find Books](#) [Find e-Journals](#) [Website Resources](#)

Home [Comments \(0\)](#) [Print Page](#)

### New Books at Odegaard Library

- Innocence (DVD IEF 226) By Lucile Hadzihalilovic
- HALF JAPANESE: THE BAND THAT WOULD BE KING (DVD VANF 001)
- Are you "Building Social Skills in the Preschool Child"?
- Bastille Day VHS Party
- New Media - July 2009

[View RSS Feed](#)  
[Comments \(0\)](#)

### Libraries Spotlight/News

See more [Libraries news and feeds](#)

- ALL LIBRARIES will open LATE at 10am PDT Thurs, Sept 16 due to our annual all-staff meeting.
- All Libraries websites and off-campus proxy access will

### Welcome

Welcome to the Subject Guide for *[Your subject area here]* These pages provide access to resources - article databases, catalogs, reference books, web sites for *[your subject area here]*. These pages were created by the librarian responsible for *[your subject area here]*.

Choose a tab above for information about specific research types.

For subject guides in other areas of study, see the complete list [here](#).

[Comments \(0\)](#)

### Have Questions about the Library? (Documents/files box ex.)

- [Get to Know the UW Engineering Library](#)
- [The 3rd floor after the Nisqually Earthquake](#)

[Comments \(0\)](#)

### New Books



**The Brooklyn Bridge: The story of the world's most famous bridge and the remarkable family that built it.** - Elizabeth Mann;

### Reference Librarian



Alyssa Deutschler

Online Chat / Networks:



Contact Info:

UWB/CCC Campus Library,  
LB1-210e  
425-352-3160  
[Send Email](#)

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# Usability Testing

- ▣ Usability Testing Started in December 2009
  - ▣ Study Goals
    - ▣ Identify problem areas of the newly implemented system
    - ▣ Determine and improve guides' usefulness
    - ▣ Identify users' needs and adapt a vendor solution to meet them
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# Method

- 10 Students – 7 Undergrad, 3 Grad
  - Test format
    - Pre and Post-Test and Post-Task Questionnaires
    - Six Tasks
    - X's & O's Exercise
  - Varied Tasks by Subject and Format
  - Lab & Equipment
    - Morae
-

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# Findings

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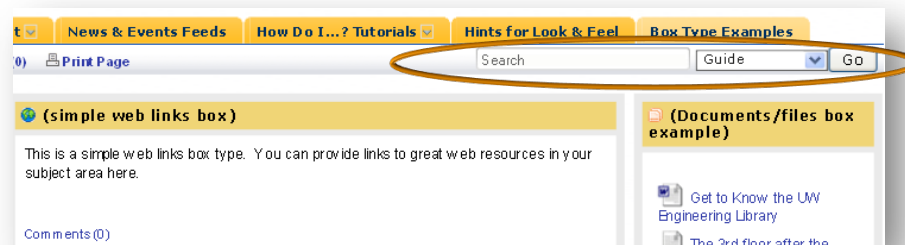
# Overview

- Main Issues:
    - Homepage layout
    - Navigation from general to specific guides
    - Search functions
  
  - Findings Groupings:
    - Provide guidance and context
    - Provide a more consistent layout
    - Improve navigation
    - Follow best practices for the web
-

# Guides Should Provide Context and Guidance

## □ Issues

- Perceived scope of the library catalogs
  - Users often thought the search boxes were scoped to the subject they were currently on
  - Questioned the difference between the catalog on the library homepage and within the guides
- Misuse of the top search box
  - People used the search boxes without noticing or changing the drop down search options



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# Guides Should Provide Context and Guidance

- ▣ Students were confused about resources that lacked descriptions (research databases and search boxes)



- ▣ Users had trouble finding format specific information
    - ▣ Users expected format options within the subjects' pages
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# Guides Should Provide Context and Guidance

- User Requests
  - More subject-specific information on the guides – less general research help

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# Guides Should Provide a More Consistent Layout

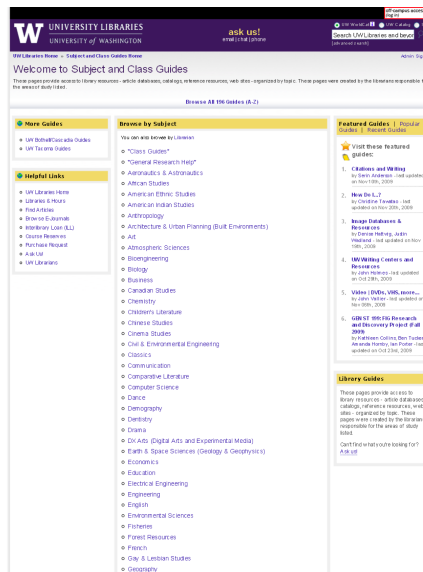
## ▣ Issues

- ▣ Users frequently didn't notice the tabs located on top of the guides
  - ▣ Inconsistent layouts among guides confused users and made it harder to find resources
  - ▣ Users felt many guides' homepages lacked a focal point and weren't sure of their next steps
-

# Guides Should Have Better Navigation

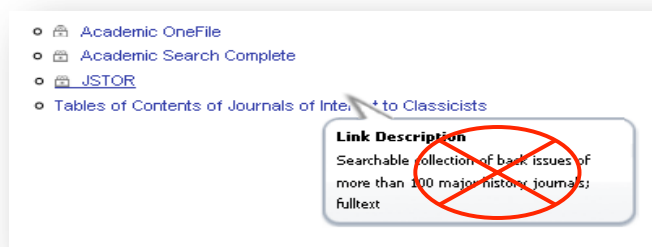
## ■ Issues

- The path from main guide to sub-guide was inconsistent and not fully apparent
- The list of guides on the homepage was too long for users to read



# Guides Should Follow Best Practices for the Web

- Issues
  - Users didn't read long tabs
  - Database acronyms were confusing to students (such as JSTOR)
  - Students missed rollover database descriptions
    - One user mentioned she preferred static text because rollovers forced her to remember information when comparing resources



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# Next Steps after Usability Testing



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# Remodeling Data into New Guidelines

- Challenge of Flexibility: 100+ Subject Guides
  - Listed and prioritized changes
  - Patron Personas helped inform changes to guidelines
  - Staff Forum: Presented results and asked for feedback
  - Checklist for Librarians eased transition to new template
-

Recommendations	Issues	Supporting Evidence
<b>Provide static descriptions under each database for users to scan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Users didn't want to remember what a rollover description contained.</li> <li>- Users wanted descriptions of the databases they were presented.</li> </ul>	<p>Users have a general preference for static text/information -- upfront, not buried, so they don't have to mouse-over in order to access.</p> <p>P2 wrote "Too little info" next to the database links on the History guide during the Xs &amp; Os activity.</p>
<b>Supply short descriptions of what search boxes include</b>	<p>Users wanted short descriptions of the search boxes they were presented.</p>	<p>P5 wrote "blurb" next to the search boxes on the Dance guide.</p> <p>P3, "[would like to see] explanations on functions of the search engines."</p>
<b>Place the most important information in the top center of the page</b>	<p>The center of the page is often used for boilerplate information leaving users confused, and unsure of what to do next.</p>	<p>Time after time, user's eyes were drawn to the center of the page, as seen through observation and the Xs &amp; Os activity.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To increase visibility, tabs should be a contrasting color from the background and other colors used on the page</b></li> <li>• <b>Reinforce the structure of the page by using similar colors for the headings</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Users didn't always notice the tabs right away.</li> <li>- Lack of coherence with the color schemes of the guides.</li> <li>- Users felt the tabs were part of the UW site not the guide</li> </ul>	<p>In guides where the tabs were a more saturated color, participants seemed to notice the tabs quicker.</p> <p>Users expressed a preference for tab content to be repeated in the body of the page, with explanations</p>

Excerpt from Recommendations Matrix

Steps	How To	Rationale
<p>1: Your guide must have a Home page with the look shown above. The easiest way to do this is to copy the Home page found on 2 ADMIN-Subject Guide Template and then fill in your own information. The Home page must have a 2 column layout with box titled "What's in the Guide" filling the left column (with nothing above it) and the Profile box at the top of the right column.</p>	<p>See how to create the new Home page: <a href="http://bit.ly/Homepg">http://bit.ly/Homepg</a></p>	<p>Students felt disoriented when landing on a guide without a Home page.</p> <p>Making the Home pages have the same distinct layout (2 columns: profile on right, What's in the Guide on left) across all the guides help make it more recognizable and orienting as users move around the site and across guides.</p>
<p>2: The "What's in the Guide" box will start with a description of the subject area and what is contained in the guide. This description should be no more than 80 words in length. An example description is provided on the 2 ADMIN-Subject Guide Template.</p> <p>After this description you will list, in bold, each of the titles of the tabs on your guide and describe what the user will find when they click on it. These descriptions should be short (limited to a few words). Note that you may have to come back and change this later, as you may be adding or changing tabs that are on your guide.</p> <p>The template will give you space for adding an image to the "What's in the Guide" box. An image is required in this space. The image you add should be no more than 250 pixels wide. Vertical images work best.</p>	<p>See suggestions for wording here: <a href="http://bit.ly/d5qD9g">http://bit.ly/d5qD9g</a> and here: <a href="http://bit.ly/cHdmjZ">http://bit.ly/cHdmjZ</a></p> <p>Tips on adding an image to this box: <a href="http://bit.ly/ImageSz">http://bit.ly/ImageSz</a></p>	<p>Students were ignoring the librarian "welcome" introduction on the page, content that occupies prime real estate.</p> <p>The introductory box should let users see first and foremost what the guides are for. A short bulleted list is much easier to scan than a paragraph of text. Many students claimed they were unsure what the tabs meant. Providing descriptions of them will help solve this problem.</p>
<p>3: Your profile box should only exist on the Home page of your guide.</p>		<p>The profile box provides useful content but uses too much screen</p>

## Excerpt from LibGuides Checklist for Librarians

# Required Changes: First Priority

The top priority for changing the UW LibGuides is that each guide have a Home page with the same, basic 2-column layout and content. Steps 1-5 will show you how to create that layout. You can complete these steps in any order, or you may prefer to start your Home page from scratch.

The screenshot shows a LibGuide page for 'Example Guide' on the University of Washington website. The page has a two-column layout. On the left, there is a 'What's in the Guide' box containing a list of tabs: Home, Find Articles, Books, Images, Encyclopedias, Example Tab, and Example Sources by Type. Below this is a 'Class Guides and Related Guides' section listing several related guides. On the right, there is a 'Reference Librarian' profile for Lauren Ray, contact information for the Suzzallo Library, and a section for 'Example Subject News' with several news items. Annotations with dashed boxes and arrows point to the 'What's in the Guide' box and the 'Class Guides and Related Guides' section, explaining their requirements.

**What's in the Guide**

Your guide must have a two column layout with a "What's in the Guide" box at the top of the left column. This box lists the tabs found in the guide, with a description of what the user will find there.

**Class Guides and Related Guides**

Any additional content (see requirements in Step 4 & 5) must appear below the "What's in the Guide" box & Profile.

**Example Guide**

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON | email | chat | phone | [Advanced Search]

UW Libraries Home > Subject and Class Guides Home > Example Guide | Admin Sign In

Last update: Mar 03rd, 2010 | URL: http://guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=101292 | Print/Mobile Guide | RSS Updates | SHARE

Home | Find Articles | Books | Images | Encyclopedias | Example Tab | Example Sources by Type

Home | Comments (0) | Print/Mobile Page

**Welcome to the Example Guide.** This guide provides links to the most useful databases and resources for researching example. Use the tabs to navigate through the pages of this guide.

- Find Articles** - search through online databases to find articles on example subject
- Books** - search online catalogs to find books on example subject
- Images** - find online and print image collections related to this subject
- Encyclopedias** - major example encyclopedias
- Example Tab** - description description
- Example Sources by Type** - example sources by format (example 1, example 2, example 3)

Image: image attribution here

**Reference Librarian**

  
Lauren Ray  
Click to Chat with a UW librarian

**Online Chat / Networks:**



**Contact Info:**  
University of Washington  
Suzzallo Library  
Send Email

**Links:**  
Profile & Guides

**Example Subject News**

- How Twitter in the Classroom is Boosting Student Engagement
- 3 Tips for Managing a Social Media Community
- 9 Free, Open Source Tools for Video and Media

**Class Guides and Related Guides**

Listed here are other guides that may be useful to doing research in Example subject area.

- Example Course 121
- Example Course 233
- Example Course 492
- Example Related Guide
- Example Related Guide

Comments (0)

Excerpt from LibGuides Checklist for Librarians

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# New Home page/tab Template

- ▣ Orients users to the guide
- ▣ Provides consistency across guides
- ▣ Shifted extraneous content

## Civil & Environmental Engineering

Tags: engineering civil\_engineering environmental\_engineering research\_help citations technical\_reports asce

This is a guide for doing research in Civil and Environmental Engineering. You will find links to recommended databases to help you find articles, books and websites in this subject area.

Last update: Aug 19th, 2010 URL: [http://guides.lib.washington.edu/civilengineering\\_old](http://guides.lib.washington.edu/civilengineering_old) Print Guide

- Home
- Find Articles & Conference Papers
- Find Books & Conference Proceedings
- Find e-Journals
- Find Technical Reports
- Find Dissertations & Theses
- Website Resources

Home Comments (0) Print Page

### Helpful Links

- Citation & Writing Guides
- Student Consultation with Librarian
- Interlibrary Loan (ILL)
- Course Reserves
- Purchase Request
- Libraries & Hours
- UW Libraries Home
- Class Instruction Request Form

Comments (0)

### Related Subjects

- Applied Mathematics
- Architecture & Urban Planning
- Chemistry
- Engineering (general)
- Environmental Sciences

### Welcome to Resources for Civil and Environmental Engineering

Welcome to the Subject Guide for Civil and Environmental Engineering. These pages provide access to recommended research resources - article databases, catalogs, reference books and web sites for CEE. These pages were created by Julie Cook, the librarian responsible for managing the resources and instruction in CEE.

Choose a tab above for information about specific research types.

For more resources in Engineering, Science and Technology please see the [Engineering Library homepage](#).

Comments (0)

### Questions or Comments about this Guide?

Was this information helpful?

- Yes  No  Don't know

How useful is this content?  
(1 = Not so much, 5 = Extremely!)

- 1  2  3  4  5

Please provide comments to help improve this page:

### Civil & Environmental Engineering Librarian



Julie Cook

### Online Chat / Networks:



### Contact Info:

Engineering Library  
Box 352170  
Seattle, WA 98195-2170

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON ASK US!  
email | chat | phone | text Search UW Libraries and beyond  
[advanced search]

Subject and Class Guides olray@u.washington.edu « Guide Admin « My Admin « Sign Out

## Civil and Environmental Engineering

Tags: engineering engineering\_education sciences

Last update: Sep 22nd, 2010 | URL: <http://guides.lib.washington.edu/civilengineering> | [Print Guide](#) | [RSS Updates](#) | [SHARE](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [...](#)

[Home](#) [Find Articles](#) [E-Journals](#) [Books & E-Books](#) [Conference Proceedings](#) [Technical Reports](#) [Standards](#)  
[Dissertations & Theses](#) [Staying Current](#)

[Home](#) [Comments \(0\)](#) [Print Page](#)

### What's in this Guide




Image: [Millaut Viaduct](#)


**Civil and Environmental Engineers** plan, design, construct, and manage the essential facilities and structures that are all around us.

This guide provides links and advice for using **article databases, journals, catalogs, reference books, and web sites for doing research in Civil and Environmental Engineering.**

**Click on a link below for more information about finding:**

- **Articles** - search for articles and conference papers in Civil and Environmental Engineering.
- **E-Journals**- read online journals in Civil and Environmental Engineering.
- **Books & E-Books**- how to find books & e-books in Civil and Environmental Engineering.
- **Conference Proceedings**- help finding conference proceedings.
- **Technical Reports**- about technical reports and help finding them.
- **Standards**- about industry standards or specifications and help finding them

**Civil & Environmental Engineering Librarian**



**Julie Cook**

[Click to Chat with a UW librarian](#)

**Online Chat / Networks:**

[talk](#) [t](#) [e](#)

LibGuide utilizing post-Usability Testing Recommendations

# Music Guide

Quick access to the top music resources

Last update: Oct 5th, 2010 | URL: <http://guides.lib.washington.edu/music> | [Print Guide](#) | [RSS Updates](#) | [SHARE](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) ...

- Home
- Find Books & Scores
- Articles
- Media
- Reference Sources
- Dissertations
- Primary Sources
- Cite It
- Help?

Home [Comments \(0\)](#) [Print Page](#)

## What's in the Guide



This guide provides links to the most useful databases and resources for researching Music. Use the tabs to navigate through the pages of this guide.

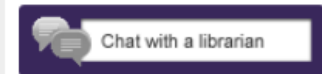
- **Find Books & Scores** - search for books on Music, musical scores and recordings
- **Articles** - search for articles and e-journals related to Music
- **Media** - stream media to your computer or search for UW-owned media materials
- **Reference Sources** - search online Music encyclopedias
- **Dissertations** - search for dissertations and theses
- **Primary Sources** - search tips for locating music manuscripts; information on UW-owned music special collections
- **Cite It** - links to RefWorks and books on music citation
- **Need Help?** - contact us via email, phone or view our online tutorials

Image: *Music Library Upstairs study space, Room 113*

## Music Library Info



[Music Library Website](#)  
[Music Library Hours](#)  
Located in Room 113,  
School of Music Building



**Music Librarians**  
[Judy Tsou](#)  
[Verletta Kern](#)  
[John Gibbs](#)

[Comments \(0\)](#)

## Related Links & Guides

### Related Subjects

- [Audio Preservation/Restoration](#)
- [Ethnomusicology/World Music](#)
- [Art](#)

### Class Guides

- [Music 162](#)
- [Muhst 212](#)
- [Muhst 497](#)

### Useful Links

- [Music Library Homepage](#)
- [Music Library Hours](#)
- [Course Reserves](#)

LibGuide utilizing post-Usability Testing Recommendations

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# More Description Provides Guidance and Scope

- ▣ Search Term Suggestions
  - ▣ Database and Catalog Descriptions
  - ▣ Template prompts librarians to create short descriptions and search strategies
-

## Search UW Catalog for Books

### UW Libraries Catalog

Keyword

Entire Collection

[\[Advanced search\]](#)



The UW Libraries Catalog is especially useful when searching for a known item (a specific title or author's work). It is also useful when you would like to limit your search just to items in a specific location such as Suzzallo/Allen Stacks.

### Tips for Searching the UW Catalog for Books on Fisheries:

- Try these subject headings: "Pacific salmon fisheries," "fishery management," and "longlining (fisheries)-bycatches;" or related subject headings such as "Chinook salmon fisheries," "escapement, fisheries," and "sustainable fisheries."
- Use the Advanced Search to limit your search to words in the title or subject, to items at a specific UW library, or by other criteria.
- Getting too few results? Try searching [UW WorldCat](#) for items available through the Summit consortium.

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# Improved Layout and Navigation

- Pre-LibGuides list of subject guides worked better for users
  - Eliminated confusion with secondary pages or “sub-guides”
  - Related content remains in same location throughout guides
-

## Welcome to Subject and Class Guides

These pages provide access to library resources - article databases, catalogs, reference resources, web sites - organized by topic. These pages were created by the librarians responsible for the areas of study listed.

[Browse All 196 Guides \(A-Z\)](#)

### More Guides

- UW Bothell/Cascadia Guides
- UW Tacoma Guides

### Helpful Links

- UW Libraries Home
- Libraries & Hours
- Find Articles
- Browse E-Journals
- Interlibrary Loan (ILL)
- Course Reserves
- Purchase Request
- Ask Us!
- UW Librarians

### Browse by Subject

You can also browse by Librarian

- \*Class Guides\*
- \*General Research Help\*
- Aeronautics & Astronautics
- African Studies
- American Ethnic Studies
- American Indian Studies
- Anthropology
- Architecture & Urban Planning (Built Environments)
- Art
- Atmospheric Sciences
- Bioengineering
- Biology
- Business
- Canadian Studies
- Chemistry
- Children's Literature
- Chinese Studies
- Cinema Studies
- Civil & Environmental Engineering
- Classics
- Communication
- Comparative Literature
- Computer Science
- Dance
- Demography
- Dentistry
- Drama
- DX Arts (Digital Arts and Experimental Media)
- Earth & Space Sciences (Geology & Geophysics)
- Economics
- Education
- Electrical Engineering
- Engineering
- Environmental Studies
- Forest Resources

### Featured Guides | Popular Guides | Recent Guides

★ Visit these featured guides:

- Citations and Writing**  
by Serin Anderson - last updated on Nov 10th, 2009
- How Do I...?**  
by Christine Tawetao - last updated on Nov 20th, 2009
- Image Databases & Resources**  
by Denise Hattwig, Justin Wadland - last updated on Nov 19th, 2009
- UW Writing Centers and Resources**  
by John Holmes - last updated on Oct 29th, 2009
- Video | DVDs, VHS, more...**  
by John Vallier - last updated on Nov 06th, 2009
- GEN ST 199: FIG Research and Discovery Project (Fall 2009)**  
by Kathleen Collins, Ben Tucker, Amanda Hornby, Ian Potter - last updated on Oct 23rd, 2009

### Library Guides

These pages provide access to library resources - article databases, catalogs, reference resources, web sites - organized by topic. These pages were created by the librarians responsible for the areas of study listed.

Can't find what you're looking for?  
[Ask us!](#)

Find It

**Subject Guides**

Class Guides

Course Reserves

A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | R | S | W | Browse All

**A**

- ▶ Aeronautics & Astronautics
- ▶ African Studies
- ▶ American Ethnic Studies
- ▶ American Indian Studies
- ▶ Anthropology
- ▶ Architecture & Urban Planning
- ▶ Art
- ▶ Astronomy
- ▶ Atmospheric Sciences

**B**

- ▶ Bioengineering
- ▶ Biology
- ▶ Business

**C**

- ▶ Canadian Studies
- ▶ Chemical Engineering
- ▶ Chemistry
- ▶ Children's Literature
- ▶ Chinese Studies
- ▶ Cinema Studies
- ▶ Civil & Environmental Engineering
- ▶ Classics
- ▶ Communication

**F**

- ▶ Fisheries
- ▶ Forest Resources
- ▶ French

**G**

- ▶ Gay & Lesbian Studies
- ▶ Geography
- ▶ Germanics
- ▶ Government Publications
- ▶ Grants & Non-Profits

**H**

- ▶ Health Sciences
- ▶ Hellenic Studies
- ▶ History
- ▶ History of Science
- ▶ Human Centered Design & Engineering
- ▶ Human Rights

**I**

- ▶ Industrial and Systems Engineering
- ▶ Information Management
- ▶ Information Science
- ▶ International Studies

**M**

- ▶ Marine Studies
- ▶ Materials Science
- ▶ Mathematics & Applied Mathematics
- ▶ Mechanical Engineering
- ▶ Medicine
- ▶ Military Science
- ▶ Museology
- ▶ Music

**N**

- ▶ Near East Studies
- ▶ News
- ▶ Nursing

**O**

- ▶ Oceanography

**P**

- ▶ Pharmacy
- ▶ Philosophy
- ▶ Physics
- ▶ Political Science & Public Affairs
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Public Health

These pages provide access to resources (article databases, catalogs, background information, web sites, and more) organized by topic. These pages were created by the librarians responsible for the areas of study listed.

**More Guides**

- [Find It \(by format\)](#)
- [Class Guides](#)
- [UW Bothell/Cascadia Guides](#)
- [UW Tacoma Guides](#)

**Need more help?**

- [Chat with a librarian 24/7](#)
- [Meet your subject librarian](#)
- [How Do I... Tutorials](#)

New Subject Guides List post-Usability Testing

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# New Guideline Implementation

- ▣ Checklist provided step-by-step guidance
  - ▣ Librarians given specific time frame to make changes
  - ▣ Drop-in workshops for in-person assistance
  - ▣ BRDG Team reviewed guides for compliance
    - ▣ Personal follow-up with librarians well received
-

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# Usability Limitations and Further Study

- Testing environment is different than the users' natural work space
  - Future questions to explore:
    - How users access the guides and if that can be improved
    - How often guides are used for research
    - How the guides compare with other help content provided by the Libraries
-

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# Wrap Up

- ▣ Usability study allowed us to examine a vendor's product to better understand how to adapt it to our users
  - ▣ We were able to make changes to LibGuides *based on data*, not our opinions
  - ▣ Continued study will further help us understand our users' needs to best serve their research requirements
-

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# Thank You

## Questions?

Contact: Rachel Hungerford -- [rhunger@uw.edu](mailto:rhunger@uw.edu)  
Lauren Ray -- [olray@uw.edu](mailto:olray@uw.edu)

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