WRLC LibGuides Research Project

PURPOSE
Four libraries in the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) conducted a project to assess the usability of LibGuides across the consortium. We wanted to gather information that would help us understand how students perceive and use our guides.

OUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS
• What makes some guides work better than others for students?
• How do different approaches used by libraries in the consortium affect student use and understanding of guides?
• What is the best way for students to get to the guides?
• How do we foster awareness and understanding of the purpose of our guides among students?

METHOD
The research consisted of a usability test and an assessment of guides using a rubric. Eleven students were recruited to test multiple guides in two different subject areas, Psychology and Biology. Testing occurred at American University and Georgetown University.

RESULTS
Results of the rubric assessment showed that the purpose of the guides was not fully clear to 25 percent of students tested and that 50 percent had issues with guide navigation and content.

GUIDE PURPOSE
- I understand part of the purpose of this guide, but portions are still unclear to me. 25%
- It is clear to me what I am going to get out of this guide. 75%

GUIDE NAVIGATION
- I can’t tell where to go on this guide to do what I want to do. 6%
- I can see how to get where I want to go, but there are too many clicks to get there. 44%
- I can easily get to what I want to do on this guide. 50%

GUIDE CONTENT
- This guide doesn’t have what I need in order to do research in this subject area. 13%
- Some of the content would be useful to me, but there are things missing or extra content that is not useful. 37%
- This guide has what I would need to do research in this subject area. 50%

When asked whether they would use the guide for a research project, less than half the students said they were likely or somewhat likely to use it. A quarter of them were neutral.

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