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Designing LibGuides as Instructional Tools for Critical Thinking and Effective Online Learning

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Designing LibGuides as Instructional Tools for Critical Thinking and Effective Online Learning

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“…the goal of an online program should be to provide an environment which actively engages students in the learning process and promotes independent learning where students take ownership of their work.”

(Junk, Derider, and Junk, 2011)
What’s the Problem?

Information Literacy (IL) Instruction:

• is often delivered as a ‘one-shot’ session with no specific assignment
• may be too broad—a general orientation or introduction to library resources
• provides limited opportunities for students to practice or demonstrate research skills
• SLOs are difficult to assess --AND--

• what about fully online learners? Do they get the same instruction and services? Is access enough?
IL for Online Learners

LibGuides can be the solution—they are easy-to-maintain platforms to:

• address assignment-level instruction at the point of need
• create scaffolded stand-alone tutorials designed according to key learning theory principles
• meet course goals and objectives
• improve learning outcomes
• promote lifelong habits of critical thinking and deeper learning
What are LibGuides?

“LibGuides is a software application that creates a way to collect knowledge and present information in an organized manner. LibGuides has a tab based structure…boxes and columns ….content in many different formats. Web 2.0 technologies such as RSS feeds, instant messaging widgets, and social networking …creating a more participatory setting than traditional online guides. ” (Gonzalez & Westbrock, 2010).
Literature Review

Some key themes have emerged around LibGuides and Information Literacy (IL):

- rapid development of subject and course guides
- use of interactive web 2.0 features (video, chat, interactive forms)
- (in)effectiveness of one-shot Information IL instruction in the absence of an assignment or lesson
- questions about how students locate and use guides

[Sources: Watson et al., 2013; Mery et al, 2012; Bryan and Karshmer, 2012; McMullin and Hutton, 2010; Robinson and Kim, 2010; Strutin, 2008; Staley, 2007; Reeb and Gibbons, 2004]
● the need to synchronize IL outcomes with course goals and objectives

● students show a preference for course level guides...particularly at their point of need to know

● need for experiential and collaborative learning

● how LibGuides can promote IL instruction in the online learning environment (this area needs more research)

[Sources: Watson et al., 2013; Mann et al., 2012; Roberts and Hunter, 2011; Robinson and Kim, 2011; McMullin and Hutton, 2010; Bryan and Karshmer, 2010; Gonzalez and Westbrock, 2010; Morris and Del Bosque, 2010]
## LibGuides as Instructional Tools

### Pro
- easy to maintain
- no specialized knowledge of HTML or programming
- agile, responsive to change
- interactive, social learning
- Web 2.0 features
- easily embedded or linked to a course management system (CMS)
- cross-platform functionality
- easily adapted with “reusable objects” and templates

### Con
- pathfinder roots
- virtually unlimited space
- “kitchen sink” approach-too many tabs and boxes
- too broad or complex
- difficult to locate
- not designed for instruction

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Robinson and Kim, 2011; Roberts & Hunter, 2011; Morris and Del Bosque, 2010; Gonzalez and Westbrock, 2010; Dahl, 2001]
Millennial Students (born between 1980 and 2000):

- are unlike generations who used pathfinders (60s & 70s) or web-based guides (90s)
- “plugged in” to technology
- multi-taskers
- expect to find answers
- want to avoid wasting time
- have ‘research needs’ rather than research ‘questions’
- show a marked preference for course guides

[Sources: Latham and Gross, 2013; Asher et al., 2013;; Nielsen and Webb, 2011; Foster et al., 2010; Bauerline, 2009]
One Solution

Pilot Project: First-Year Experience Course (FYE 1410)

• Comparison of learning outcomes using
  o pathfinder-type guide
  o tutorial-type (assignment) guide

• Flipped lesson
  o video tutorial and reading outside of class
  o linked to assignment in CMS
  o assignment completed in class directly in the guide

• Follow-up perception survey
Here is a typical pathfinder-type guide but *without* specific guidance for completing an assignment:
To compare learning outcomes, we also tested an assignment (tutorial) guide, based on these 5 learning principles:

- Scaffolding
- Chunking
- Cognitive Load
- Working memory
- Metacognition

Results

Students responded that they:

- preferred the tutorial guide
- had a more positive learning experience
- were able to complete the assignment more quickly
- achieved better results
- they asked for even more guidance and examples

[for more details, see: Baker and Fernekes, 2013 virtual poster at: http://goo.gl/6YKKe]
Next Steps

Here is another example of an assignment guide developed for a current FYE 1220: Horror Cinema course at Georgia Southern:

### Introduction

In our 2nd Library Research session, we will take the next step in building your skills to successfully complete your class project. You may recall from our first session that we looked at finding information available on the public web.

Now we want to move on to the types of publications you will find in college and university libraries, first in print and later online.

First, we'll review the criteria you covered in the "Evaluating Information" module in Folio. Specifically we will look at scholarly journals, trade journals and popular magazines--and how they differ.

Here's what you need to do BEFORE CLASS:

- Review the materials in this guide:
  - watch the slide show
  - view the comparison chart
  - complete the worksheet and BRING IT TO CLASS

Mainly, we want you to think about what makes a source appropriate for a college paper or presentation.
Conclusions

Assignment guides, designed as stand-alone online tutorials, overcome the inherent weaknesses in one-shot instruction sessions by:

- focusing on a specific assignment with measurable outcomes
- addressing key learning theories
- helping students become more engaged and aware of their own learning
- helping students to build research and critical thinking skills at their point of need
- providing measurable outcomes for the assessment of teaching and learning, mapped to course goals and objectives
- promoting collaboration between library and discipline faculty
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