Users’ Perceptions of Research Guides: Feedback from a Student Focus Group

Purpose
Bibliographer wanted feedback on two new guides
LibGuides Team wanted general feedback on Research Guides
• usefulness
• content
• usability
• discoverability
• marketing

Key findings
• No participants familiar with research guides
• Useful starting point for beginning graduate students
• Especially useful: search boxes, electronic resources, reading lists, reference works
• Additional content suggested: academic career information, other subject areas
• Generally easy to navigate; logically organized, clear headings
• Expect to find on library & Graduate Studies homepages
• Market through faculty (syllabi, course sites), use posters & social media, introduce in library sessions

Outcomes
• Introduced research guides as a resource
• Made changes to specific guides
• Developed a stronger relationship with the Department
• Gathered recommendations for best practices
• Developed a model for future user studies

Recommendations

Content
• Novices to the subject area: search boxes, electronic resources, program reading lists, and reference works
• Advanced graduate students: writing and career advice

Usability
• Limit the number of resources included
• Minimize the explanatory text

Organization
• Use tab and section headings that clearly and accurately reflect content

Discovery
• Include a tab for research guides to the Libraries’ homepage and department Web site

Marketing
• Advertise through faculty, e.g. syllabi and course sites
• Use existing library marketing resources, e.g. social media and posters in the library.

Recruitment
8 graduate students
Department email
Interest survey
Compensation: $15 iTunes card

Online questionnaire
Rank three other institutions’ guides and explain rankings

Focus group
Examine research guides and provide feedback as a group

Preparation
• Consulted Assessment Librarian
• Develop rapport
• Paraphrase
• Practice run

Roles
• Facilitator
• Two notetakers

Tools
• iPad and iPhone
• Voice Record software
• Shared notes in Google Drive

Analysis
• Transcribed audio and compared notes
• Identified emerging themes
• Developed codes from themes
• Independently coded, then compared and came to consensus