LibGuides Usability, Spring 2015

Summary & Goals

- The Libguides 2.0 Migration project group identified a need for performing usability testing on Libguides 1 in order to understand how users interact with guides and if any design preferences exist.
- The study had 13 students (graduate and undergraduate) from across Harvard as participants.
- Following sites were used for testing.
  - Subject/Course Guides for Testing
    - Language & Literacy (HGSE) http://guides.library.harvard.edu/languageandliteracy
    - People’s Republic of China Legal Research (Law) http://guides.library.harvard.edu/ChineseLegalResearch
    - 1000 Years of Listening (FAS) http://guides.library.harvard.edu/music1
    - Campaigns & Elections (HKS) http://guides.library.harvard.edu/hks/campaigns_elections
    - Anthropology (FAS) http://guides.library.harvard.edu/anthropology

Research Questions

- What is the optimal way to design the guides and organize content?
- Do the guides cause information overload?
- Are there language/jargon issues on the guides?
- Can users easily find related information that is hosted outside the guides?

Project Team

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Outcomes

The findings from this study will inform the development of best practices and guide templates for Libguides 2.0.

Main observations and themes from the testing include:

- **Content** The amount of content is overwhelming and perceived as complicated. Content on the left side of the page is favored. Most participants scan, instead of read, and exhibit the “F” pattern of web reading.
- **Search** Searching is preferred to browsing/reading a guide. Hollis+ is widely used and popular with the participants. Users don’t recognize the search box is only for research guides.
- **Design** Font-size is too small and is problematic. Larger font size and white space on Anthropology & Law guides were appreciated.
- **Contact Information** Librarian profiles are important. Calls to action like ‘get help’ or ‘ask me’ are enticing.
- **Overall** Many users are unfamiliar with guides (70% had never seen one before) and don’t recognize the term guides.

Supporting Documents

View Supporting Documents (HarvardKey Required)