This document, containing the outline of my talk at the 2012 ASEEES National Convention (details below) has been deposited into KU ScholarWorks. PowerPoint slides accompanying the presenation are also avaialable on the same record in KU ScholarWorks.

2012 ASEEES National Convention,
Nov 15-18, New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, LA

Session 7-22, "Online Research Guides for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies: Challenges, Opportunities, and Best Practices." Fri., Nov. 16, 3:45-5:30PM, *(Roundtable) – Mardi Gras Ballroom B*

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Abstract: The past several years have witnessed a revival of the research guide or pathfinder, as it has been traditionally known. Fueled by the emergence of web 2.0 content management and publishing systems such as the LibGuide platform created by Springshare, online research guides (and specifically LibGuides) have become a mainstay of academic library services. Libraries use LibGuides to promote resources and services; highlight collections, support subject-specific research; support specific courses, and as a collaborative working space. Librarians for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies have been active in creating online research guides at their various institutions in an effort to help students and faculty navigate the complexity of doing research in the modern research library. This roundtable will explore a range of issues surrounding the creation and use of online research guides for Slavic, East European and Eurasian studies. Three professional academic librarians will discuss their experience designing, creating, using, and evaluating online research guides. They will comment on best practices, collaborative opportunities, and consideration of audience, issues of modularity or repurposeability, assessment of use, and their effectiveness in serving as a research tool.

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Online Research Guides:
Audience, Assessment, and Advice

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SLIDE 1

I am interested in three aspects of research guides, and specifically talking about LibGuides. And I think that these are probably some of the same issues that you have probably thought about and maybe already talked about; but I hope that we can have lively dialogue after I talk about the questions that have been bobbling around in my own mind.

SLIDE 2

AUDIENCE: We all work with different audiences or user groups.
Questions: How do we customize our research guides (LibGuides) in order to optimize them for each audience?

Target audience →undergraduate: enrolled in Russia/Slavic related courses
- *Expectations*: KU student are expected to do research for short research papers (i.e. 5-12 pages); scholarly articles, books, and authoritative websites.
- *Suggestions* on how and where to start their research b/c few student arrive at KU with a sound understanding of the research process. It is not taught formally; no course on how to really write a research papers that emphasizes the research process. Most students learn (or don't learn) by trial and error. A few learn by reading, by working with a faculty member or 2librarian, but most do not.
- *Guides used in research instruction sessions*

Target audience → graduate students (i.e. KU graduate students in SLL, CREES, Geography, Political Science, and History)
- *Expectations*: survey the literature and begin learning to do complex research. Papers and project usually 10-25 pages.
- *Guides used in research instruction sessions*

Target audience →Faculty?
- They are typically aware of the research tools and journals in their field (or should be). Faculty rarely come to me for research help, except for difficult to find items, complex bibliographic questions, for purchase requests, or help with teaching students research skills.

SLIDES 3-6

ASSESSMENT: We all wonder about the effectiveness of our research guides.
Questions: Are they being used? How are they being used, by whom, and for what purposes? How do measure their use?

Usage statistics: LibGuide stats offer a variety of statistical reports
- All Guides: 2012 Fall Semester (daily) → Slav 148 Introduction to Slavic Folklore = No. 7 overall, 884 hits

- Individual Guide: SLAV 148 Introduction to Slavic Folklore: 2012 Calendar Year (monthly) → Two spikes represent library sessions and subsequent assignment due dates

- Individual Guide: SLAV 148 Intro to Slavic Folklore: Sep 27-Oct 26 (daily)
    1. spike Oct 1 → day of the library session;
    2. spike Oct 9 → day before the assignment was due

- Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies: 2012 Fall Semester (daily) → spikes represent my work on the guide, library session (Sep 26).

- But how do we measure the real impact? Do we know to what degree our LibGuides are leading students to the sources that they need? How do we measure this? → Engaging students through survey data.

    1. I have collected basic survey data for 2011-2012. It's not perfect, and doesn't offer much in terms of real outcomes, but it's a start.
    2. Assessment data from REES 110/220, SLAV 140, and SLAV 148.

SLIDES 7-14

Q1. How often did you use the SLAV 140 Research Guide?

Assignments in each course
- REES 110 & 220 → *short research paper*
- SLAV 140 → *annotated bibliography*
- SLAV148 → *research exercise with a series of short answer questions* → consists of three sections: (1) Using the Reference Collection; (2) Using the Library Catalog (2) Using Databases,

- Looking at the data. It makes sense that the two courses which assigned research projects show more frequent use of the research guide. The projects were more involved

- Comment box on the survey form in the 2012 spring semester.
    - 36 mentioned using the guide for the class assignment
    - 6 students mentioned using the guide for assignments in other classes
    - *Next time I need to ask a more direct question* (e.g., Did you use the guide for work in other classes?). Although it's important to know that they used the guide for SLAV 148, it would be even more useful to know whether students are using the guide for other classes. This would show a broader impact of the SLAV 148 library session. Skills were learned b/c they were transferred to other disciplines.

Q2. How did you get into the SLAV 148 Research Guide MOST OFTEN?
- REES 110 & 220 → *nearly identical pattern* → describe
- SLAV 148 → *most student coming from Blackboard*
- *Most student follow links from somewhere*, as opposed to finding them through search.

- It could be the result of how I showed them to find the guide; but in most cases, I try to show them the first three methods (Blackboard, Links on KU Libraries' website; and searching the KU Libraries' website)

Q3. What was the most useful section of the SLAV 148 Research Guides?
- REES 110 & 220 → *fairly consistent across the five categories*. Suggests that students have different strengths and weaknesses, and that the guide helps them with those weaknesses.

- SLAV 140 → *big spike is for Articles*

- SLAV 148 → *the big spike is for Reference Sources*. Why? We teach how to use reference sources for folklore; and it is one of the components on the research exercise. It's not an area that gets much attention in library sessions; so students tend to need more help with it. Plus, they are very useful in the study of folklore.

Q4. Did you contact a librarian for help on your topic?
- *The numbers don't look good,* at least for that semester; but it has been my experience that freshmen are not the most likely to come in for research help. Recently it has been the upper level undergraduates and graduate students (often in seminar courses) that come for help and have the longest and most engaging consultations. I imagine that your experience is similar.

Q5. If you answered YES to Question 4, how did you contact the librarian?
- 11 students from REES 110 & 220 and 11 students from SLAV 140 sought help.
    - *Research paper and annotated bibliography are more complicated and less structured.* → Students need more help.

   o *Research exercise for SLAV 148 is highly structured* and the worksheet in the library session prepares them for exercise.

- With such a low threshold of data it's hard to make any generalizations. I am surprised that the 6 who consulted with staff at the reference desk didn't ask me for help directly, since they knew me from the session → I must have scared them off; must have been close to Halloween or something.

Q6. The SLAV 140 Research Guide was easy to locate. → 75 % AGREE

Q7. The SLAV 140 Research Guide was easy to navigate. → 71% AGREE

Q8. The SLAV 140 Research Guide was useful for preparing my assignments. → 69% AGREE

PURPOSE: The purpose of showing these data are not to highlight how well or how poorly I'm doing. Rather the purpose is to get us thinking about assessment and outcomes. How do students find the guides? How do students use the guides? Are they as useful as we think they are? …because we do put a lot of time into creating them and updating them. And how can we make them better? Easier to find? Easier to navigate? And ultimately more effective in helping researchers find the content they want.

- Next steps? Maybe a more robust assessment survey? Other ideas?

So that leads me in to the final portion of my comments

SLIDES 15-24

ADVICE (Best Practices): We all wonder what the best way is to present our content. And we've all probably run across some list of best practices**.**

Questions: What are the best practices? How do we identify best practices unless we have assessment data on which to base our recommendations?

What LibGuides should NOT be
- *Website parking lot*. We all find great websites that we want to remember, but a LibGuide is not the place to park all the websites that we can find.
  - o Today's researchers really need to be expert or highly proficient web-searchers; as more and more content goes up on the web, especially primary source materials and Open Access journal literature.

- ***Replacement for human research help (librarians).*** You can't just put up LibGuides and expect the majority of students to become skilled researchers. As we all know, research is more about the process than about finding "3 peer-reviewed articles."
  - ***The librarians can help*** students talk through their research interest, flesh out a topic, frame a research questions, and eventually formulate a research problem. I came across Erik Zitser's ICS Capstone Seminar LibGuide which provides a concise overview of the research process using effective visual cues. Here's what it looks like →
    http://guides.library.duke.edu/content.php?pid=362561&sid=2966920

  - ***This semester I have spent more time*** helping students move through the research process (interest→ topic → question → problem). By doing this I have actually spend less time helping them find materials because once they have a clear picture of what they are doing, the process of searching for the material is much easier and requires less help. The problem is that rarely to students get the individual help formulating and refining their research interest.

What Research Guides (LibGuides) should reflect
- faculty-determined course learning objectives (expected outcomes)
- user needs
- departmental mission
- college accreditation agency critical thinking skills

Springshare provides a newsletter about updates and new features. You can subscribe to this in order to keep up with developments (i.e. How to Optimize your LibGuide → to get a high search ranking).
- Content in King → well written, targeted, but not too wordy
- Great page titles and description count
- Page load times count too → images under 100kb
- Don't' forget accessibility principles
- Repair broken links
- Most relevant goes at the top

LibGuides for LibGuides : ***"Working Inside the Box: LibGuide Tips for Librarians by Casey Long and Jason Puckett"*** has informed some of the design of my LibGuides. → SHOW on screen. Articles on best practices – recommended by Long and Puckett. →Talk about the content of articles 2 and 3.
- Hintz, K., Farrar, P., Eshghi, S., Sobol, B., Naslund, J.-A., Lee, T., Stephens, T., et al. (2010). Letting students take the lead: A user-centered approach to evaluating subject guides. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, *5*(4), 39-52.

- **Little, J. J. (2010). Cognitive load theory and library research guides.** *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, *15*(1), 53-63.
- **Reeb, B., & Gibbons, S. (2004). Students, librarians, and subject guides: Improving a poor rate of return.** *Portal : Libraries and the Academy*, *4*(1), 123-130.
- Roberts, S., & Hunter, D. (2011). New library, new librarian, new student: Using LibGuides to reach the virtual student. *Journal of Library & Information Services in Distance Learning*, *5*(1/2), 67-75. doi:10.1080/1533290X.2011.570552

J.J. Little→ Cognitive Load theory (summary)
- **Intrinsic cognitive load** – brain power needed / used to learn new materials
- **Extraneous cognitive load**– information overload (too much info, disorganized info, or irrelevant info)
- **Germane or effective cognitive load** (new material is processed and becomes part of their working knowledge)

Intrinsic cognitive load → How to be efficient?
- *Segment the research process* into
    - topical guides or course guides → for undergraduates
    - broader subject guides →for graduate students
- *Erik Zitser's topical guides* (Gulag, Islam & Orthodoxy in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Post-Socialist Visual Culture, REES Historical Newspapers, Russian Art and Politics, Russian Cinema, Soviet Art After Stalin)
- *Islam & Orthodoxy in Central Asia* → concise and clear
    - 2 content tabs → Islam and Orthodoxy; 3rd tab is for reference; → minimizes cognitive overload
    - 4 boxes on each tab; consistent design/layout → minimized cognitive overload
- *ICS Gateway Course* → Best Image I've ever seen (eyes on the world) → serves as visual marker
- *ICS Capstone Seminar*
    - Only 4 tabs → minimize cognitive overload.
    - Images help students visualize the research process
- *Russia Now! Pussy Riot, Putin, & the Politics of Activist Art* → http://guides.library.duke.edu/aecontent.php?pid=392964
    - Clear, concise tabs → easy to process
    - Images – News (could provide one-line captions)

J. J. Little → W. Hemming suggests that "*guides be designed with the overall learning experience in mind **and that more attention be paid to 'research guides design than resources selection and web page layout.'***" By design, I think they determining learning outcomes and creating the content that will help users meet reach those outcomes.

HANDOUT

10 Practical suggestions for incorporating principles of cognitive load theory into research guide design. (Excerpted from Little, J. J. (2010). Cognitive load theory and library research guides. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, *15*(1), 53-63.

1. Tie guides to the course level whenever possible rather than to the broad subject area. (for UG; but still need broad subject guides for advanced researchers)
2. Use terminology that is clear and consistent across the library website (and think about including a glossary of basic library and research terms)
3. Provide links to core journals
4. Include video clips and other visual components to distribute the cognitive load
5. Provide clear descriptions of each research guide's purpose and for each resources listed in the guide
6. Use conversational style → mind your "I-s" and "You-s"
7. Keep text to a minimum: Break up text b using lists or boxes or add images to prompt users' memory as the develop cognitive schema for research and their topic
8. Increase interactivity using polls, feedback forms, or tutorials
9. Add a human element by including librarian contact information, pictures, and/or live chat.
10. Assist students in developing self-regulated learning strategies by breaking down the research process into smaller parts.

Other institutions using LibGuides
1. How many us here maintain some sort of research guide?
2. How many of you use the LibGuide platform?
3. Universities with the most published guides
   - UIUC = 879, Slavic and East European = 85
   - Michigan State = 865, Russia & EE/Slavic = 5
   - Cornell = 809, Russia & EE/Slavic = 0
   - Duke = 762, Russia & EE/Slavic = 13 (one guide I found to have a Russian language page – Dobro pozhalovat')

Additional Notes for discussion

- Hugh Truslow's survey of research guides published in SEEIR (2009)
- KU implementation of LibGuides → Evolved into two taxonomies: Subject guides & Course guides
- LibGuide mania (at KU)
- IAS librarians were early adopters