Results

When students understand the purpose of the guides, they’re more likely to return and use them.

When the guides fail or overwhelm, students are just as likely to abandon them for safe, familiar harbors.

Student Comments

Were the guides useful? Would you come back to use them again?

“Definitely, yes! This makes life much easier knowing that I can use it online. Because so often you don’t have time to come down to the library, and you want stuff immediately, so you can find stuff here.”

“Yeah... I know some resources such as the books and magazines that I always go to, but I’ll come back to this one.”

“Honestly, it’s a bit confusing for me [...] there are so many tabs and so many buttons on it.”

“The website, is really... it has lots of resources for sure, but it requires a lot of work, to read stuff. [...] A lot of stuff is on one page, and [students] are too impatient to look at all that stuff.”

“I just think there’s a lot of noise... you know, when you try to find one thing, and there’s, like, different things and you’re just like ‘whoa!’ [...] so you’re quickly trying to push what’s needed and what’s not out.”

Opportunity

The Savannah College of Art and Design has over 12,000 students across 5 locations and offers 40 majors. During the Winter of 2015, the SCAD Libraries transitioned to Libguides 2.0 and saw an opportunity to conduct usability tests so we could see how students were using our guides. Our goal: Can we develop a template that can be applied across course and subject guides?

Procedure

Planning:

Permissions
• No IRB, but did require leadership approval
• Resource requirements
• Minimal budget for student incentives
• Used existing equipment for audio & visual recording

Call for participants
Writing the script
• Modified from Steve Krug’s “Don’t Make Me Think” script
• Specific to common tasks and processes
• Consider question order - it can have an impact!

Testing:

Student disclosure & agreement
• Usability.gov
Technology setup
• Capturing student’s screen and audio via Adobe Connect
• Projected screen overhead for librarians to observe student’s navigation (without hanging over their shoulders)

Asking the questions, taking notes
• Had at least 2 librarians in the room for all test sessions
• Note-taker observed student’s navigation and verbal/facial reactions to the questions and guide experience

Iterative testing

• Prioritize research over resource format or offer varying paths to information
• Perform informal testing with students on-site
• Input from student groups & faculty
• Avoid “design by committee” by focusing on their bigger needs and issues

Next Steps

Consider the student’s studio/research processes and ways of thinking vs. librarian/faculty-endorsed list of resources
• Work with one or two courses to rework their guides and monitor guide use
• Perform informal testing with students on-site

With help from Stephanie Grimm and Katy Parker
Download presentation, usability script, and student tasks:
http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/gaintlit/2015/2015/37/