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# FRAMING THE GUIDES Transforming LibGuides Creation through Conceptual Integration with the ACRL Framework

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Chapter 2

# FRAMING THE GUIDES

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the use of LibGuides in academic libraries, these online-based resource pages have been used for a variety of purposes. The reason for this multitude of uses comes from a complex history and intersection of definitive moments within librarianship. It is important to recognize that Springshare was founded in 2007, only a year after Elmborg's seminal work on critical librarianship in which he clearly defines the climate of librarianship at the time as a pervasive shift in the identity of librarians from on-demand reference service providers to educators and instructors, with ongoing conversations of what that meant in terms of developing our teaching practices.[1]

Throughout all of this, the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* had yet to be developed, and instead librarians were utilizing the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (which were developed in 2000 and would

be rescinded in 2016).[2] The Standards were seemingly more concerned with defining the burgeoning term *information literacy* and offering concrete examples of what students should do to prove their capabilities, effectively mapping to a banking model of education rather than building critical evaluation and questioning into their work.[3] To make matters even more complex, around this time the term *information overload* took on an entirely new meaning in the profession with the influx of digital and online resources. The discussion began to center around how

> Information guides and library Websites serve as road maps to the resources in the library and assist in decreasing the amount of time individuals spend searching for materials. Users accessing resources that support their coursework and research interests are also less apt to experience information overload during information search.[4]

In fact, Blummer and Kenton even went as far as to state, "Foremost, it remains essential that these guides include all relevant resources available to users such as databases, journals, e-books, reference materials, digital collections and Websites, and other open source materials."[5] With increased complexity, it is not surprising to see why LibGuides began their existence as the "evolutionary descendants of library pathfinders" and how one of the most common iterations of LibGuides became an online version of a "pathfinder," or a proto-LibGuide.[6] Pathfinders are defined as paper-based lists of resources for embarking on research in a particular subject or for a specific assignment. While there have been valid criticisms of utilizing the Springshare software to create guides, that is a conversation different from whether guides can be integral to information literacy instruction.[7]

When Sarah Lawrence College (SLC) adopted LibGuides in the Fall 2015–Spring 2016 academic year, LibGuide use was already widespread across higher education institutions, but due to the circumstances listed above, a lack of focus persisted as to how these tools could be used and how they could be built into instructional philosophies. The established practices for creating LibGuides and other institutions' guides were examined by SLC librarians. Concurrently, the Framework was being published and disseminated to academic institutions. The SLC librarians knew that they wanted to make sure guides were contextual and related to students' point of need, but with the introduction of the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, they were able to map to more robust learning objectives.[8]

The Framework was developed in order to move away from a linear and inflexible standards-based approach to teaching information literacy concepts and toward a critical thinking and threshold concepts–based model of instruction and learning. In light of this sea change in information literacy instruction theory, the SLC librarians adopted a critical mindset in their creation and establishment of best practices and templates for developing engaging and effective research guides for their student population. In addition to this, the librarians also wanted to create a model for producing research guides that lessened the cognitive load on students, which will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.[9]

# PERSPECTIVES ON LIBGUIDES AND THE FRAMEWORK

There are many benefits to creating and using LibGuides to support student learning in an academic library setting. One important benefit is having an openly accessible, unmediated collection of discipline-specific research skills and tools that students can peruse at their convenience and at a distance. Even among librarians, sharing knowledge about the best resources and research techniques in a given discipline is important for efficient time management and to minimize knowledge-silo-ing. For example, an English subject specialist librarian may not be familiar with the intricacies of conducting business research. Another strength of guides can be that they are time-saving didactic tools that can unlock potent information sources and invaluable research methodologies for conducting searches in unfamiliar subjects.

Along these lines, guides can be informal repositories for the expertise of subject librarians, ensuring that information will not be gone when and if a librarian moves on to another institution. Guides can also be valuable tools for embedding in online course modules and syllabi and for use in face-to-face teaching to help students visualize information and concepts being shared, follow along, and revisit later. As Smith explains, when Springshare first introduced the LibGuides software, part of the appeal was the ease with which librarians could curate information without having extensive web design and creation skills, and that ease of use and ability to insert expertise is still present.[10]

In order to maximize the efficacy of LibGuides for student learning, however, it is of utmost importance to develop them as instructional tools with instructional design best practices in mind and not simply as lists of resources devoid of important contextual information and metacognitive cues. If we are to take to heart what Booth states, that "intentional instructors do more than communicate well or design strong assignments; they methodically consider the impact their actions have on learners, understand the knowledge they possess, use evidence to support the strategies they select, and strive to improve their effectiveness over time,"[11] then we must be careful to not build just our lesson plans in this manner, but also our instructional tools. In this vein, Little outlines practical guidelines for creating LibGuides that minimize cognitive load in students. These include using simple, clear language; interspersing short blocks of text with visual components such as graphics or videos; outlining research skills and concepts in concise components; and utilizing active learning elements to drive student comprehension of content.[12] Baker further reviews how to create guides to be used specifically as resources for teaching and engaging students in critical thinking beyond the "'kitchen sink' approach" of including every possible resource a student might need and ignoring the fact that what they might need most is context.[13] These techniques were all used by SLC librarians when designing subject guides that could be used for student learning in synchronous and asynchronous settings.

The threshold concepts of the Framework further laid the groundwork for re-envisioning what a LibGuide could or should be. The origin of threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge and their entree into information literacy instruction is well documented in the library literature.[14] The introduction of the Framework also lays out the conceptual

underpinnings of threshold knowledge and its intersection with "backwards design" for effective instruction.[15] In order to transform the model of LibGuides from lists of resources into instructional tools, the guides were created as visual and instructional aids to help students begin to engage with and eventually grasp Framework threshold concepts. This was essentially intended as a form of instructional scaffolding —an initial introduction to a "troublesome concept" in the classroom, and then an online platform for students to revisit the concepts later. Walton and Archer discuss the use of web resources in this way: "In this sense, scaffolding identifies elements of a task that are initially beyond a learner's capacity and allows learners to focus on aspects of the task that they can manage."[16]

Broadly speaking, the threshold concept Searching as Strategic Exploration was the theoretical underpinning for many of the research guides, with the librarians at SLC creating content that dissected the iterative nature of research and the need for evaluating resources. With this frame in mind, the overall purpose of each individual guide, whether designed to cover research in a specific discipline or for a specific class assignment, would be built around the "strategies" or research methodologies appropriate to the subject. Each guide provided a set of resources, ranging from the usual academic databases and books to librarian-vetted websites of organizations and tips for strategically searching the open web, that would allow exploration of a discipline or research area to satisfy the needs of researchers ranging from the novice through the graduate student.[17] The guide content would then be designed as a strategic, engaging, question-provoking terrain for students to interact with when embarking on a research project. Visually speaking, even the tabs of each guide were designed to help students navigate content strategically. Each tab was designed toward an action a student might need to take, such as "Evaluating Sources" or "Keeping Track of & Citing Sources." Other frames were utilized to build specific content on different guides. Table 2.1 is a chart mapping the frames to frequently used content boxes created by the SLC librarians.

**Table 2.1**
Mapping Content Boxes and Frames

| SLC Guide or Box Content | Framework Concepts | Content Demonstrating Framework Concepts |
|---|---|---|
| Academic Integrity & Avoiding Plagiarism guide | Information Has Value, Authority Is Constructed and Contextual, Scholarship as Conversation | • Definition of Academic Integrity from the SLC Student Handbook<br>• Video breaking down 10 lesser known types of plagiarism<br>• Box explaining what plagiarism is and why it's important to cite<br>• Content explaining what open access is and the development of it<br>• Resources for learning more about the changing landscape of information and scholarship<br>• Content explaining what a scholarly community is and stating that SLC students are part of such a community<br>• Page devoted to explaining copyright and fair use |

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Mapping Content Boxes and Frames

| SLC Guide or Box Content | Framework Concepts | Content Demonstrating Framework Concepts |
|---|---|---|
| Boolean Operators box | Searching as Strategic Exploration, Research as Inquiry | • Showing students how to transition from a self-selected research topic or question into a Boolean search statement, step by step<br>• Visual aid to demonstrate "The act of searching often begins with a question that directs the act of finding needed information" and how to "use different types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary, keywords, natural language) appropriately"<br>• Visual aid to demonstrate that students should "deal with complex research by breaking complex questions into simple ones"* |
| Subject vs. Keyword box | Searching as Strategic Exploration, Research as Inquiry | • Visual aid to illustrate the difference between these search strategies and how to "match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools"† |
| Topic Development box | Searching as Strategic Exploration, Research as Inquiry | • Questions to consider, with steps on starting research to assist in the discovery process that outline how to "utilize divergent (e.g., brainstorming) and convergent (e.g., selecting the best source) thinking when searching"‡ |
| Evaluating Sources pages and boxes (often customized for research guides of specific disciplines) | Authority Is Constructed and Contextual, Information Creation as a Process | • "Questions to Consider" box posing questions for students about who created and published the information and for what purposes<br>• NCSU's "Peer Review in 3 Minutes" video demystifying the peer review creation process. This video was shown often in library instruction and reused often on evaluating pages on the guides<br>• "Quick Tips to Help You Judge Hard" prompting students to look beneath the traditional "author, audience, purpose" to think about bias and to scrutinize the "facts" and evidence given<br>• "Learn about Scholarly Articles" box setting forward information about why the information's final format as varying forms of scholarly publications conveys special meaning to help understand the content and intent of the author |

* Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.

† Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework*.

‡ Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework*.

Since the Framework was created to be fluid, moving away from the practice of utilizing set standards, the librarians were able to embed the frames in ever-evolving and creative ways, oftentimes merging multiple frames in one guide or box. LibGuides are a natural fit for building instructional tools that engage with a versatile structure, like the Framework, because of the fact that they are intended to be living and malleable resources. The LibGuide software allowed the SLC librarians to build resources that can be quickly edited to match evolving patron needs and be expanded to build more robust content for any given guide. For example, returning again to the Academic Integrity guide and Information Has Value mentioned in table 2.1, the librarians were able to copy and adapt that content for other guides that would make sure that they in turn reviewed different concepts of Information Has Value but also might expand on a frame such as Authority Is Constructed and Contextual.

Collaboration, open communication, and creating best practice documents were a significant part of the work to create these adaptive and instructional guides. Building these practices into the workflow allowed for a more efficient and cognitive approach to be established in order to create more robust content, but it also allowed the librarians to build in sustainability for the maintenance of guides for years to come.

# HOW WE GOT STARTED

In starting the project of implementing guides into the research services landscape at the college, it was important to communicate to the administration the needs of the community and the positive outcomes guides would have. In order to make the case that the library should purchase a LibGuides subscription to support student research, the librarians reviewed literature and scanned other campus guides, then drafted a report on how to implement LibGuides at the institution while also supporting the development of scaffolded instruction. While the Framework was not directly incorporated into this document due to the intended audience, librarians had robust conversations of how the Framework would play a role in establishing a more comprehensive instruction program that these guides could support. Much of the conversations revolved around Searching as Strategic Exploration and how the librarians needed to better engage our students with the knowledge that "searching for information is often nonlinear and iterative, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops."[18] Therefore, the purpose of the guides was not to just list resources, but to further teach students about necessary Framework concepts that the librarians were able to identify as lacking in the current research narrative on campus.

With the audience of the report being administrators who were not involved in the daily activities of instruction and reference, the report included information on usability, necessities of maintenance and sustainability, benefits of the product, and specific applications for the institution. It was made clear that guides could be utilized not only for instruction but also for outreach to the institution (including faculty and administrators) and the library's outside partners. The direct goals of allowing librarians to "be with

students as they learn by doing, where one-shot classes and a single consultation cannot be enough" and make all our community feel supported in their work were outlined to convey both the needs of the institution and the pedagogical approach to adopting guides.[19] Once the team decided to move ahead with the adoption of guides, they worked on disseminating the message about the benefits of these resources and structuring the rollout to meet institutional needs.

In order to ensure that the guides would be adopted and relevant to the college community, particularly its students, it was important to communicate about the guides in a variety of ways. Though most guides were primarily created by individual librarians, robust communication and collaboration in the research services department were built into the process of creating guides in order to enhance concepts through multiple perspectives and make sure they projected a cohesive voice and mission. Library staff and faculty from disciplines related to the guide topic were notified and encouraged to provide feedback after the creation of a new guide. One avenue through which the librarians invited this collaboration was via a Google form placed on all guides asking users to suggest a resource. All of this was done to help promote the use of guides but also to build "a community of contributors, with no one person as the gatekeeper" with content being included "based on conversations and activities meant to empower all learners and educators."[20]

Systematic use of the LibGuides in library instruction and research consultation was easy to implement due to the nature of the small research services staff at the library and the fact that the resources were being built to meet instructional needs for specific courses or Framework concepts. This meant that students were exposed to the content of the guides at point of need and instructed on how to navigate them. Another important aspect is that threshold concepts, by nature, are troublesome and require multiple interactions with the concepts in order for students to begin to understand them. Because the guides were used at multiple points during instruction and during individual research consultations, and by encouraging students to use them later during their own research process when they forgot class content, the guides began to operate as visualizations of Framework concepts. This intended purpose of the guides offered

> us the opportunity to engage our students throughout their entire research process, at any time or any place that they might be working. The knowledge and guidance from librarians that we know our students utilize through formats such as Research Consultations will be accessible on a more comprehensive scale.[21]

Because we built our guides holistically and collaboratively, they became all the more robust because we were able to discuss what concepts students were having a hard time grasping in classes and consultations and then build those Framework concepts into the guides. For example, our emphasis on embedding information literacy concepts into our visual content enabled our work to be both a point of reference and a reference tool.

Furthermore, the librarians made a point of creating content from varying perspectives, and that allowed students to question the common narrative in any given field. This was specifically done to incorporate the concept of Authority Is Constructed and Contextual with emphasis on how "experts understand the need to determine the validity of the information created by different authorities and to acknowledge biases that privilege some sources of authority over others, especially in terms of others' worldviews, gender, sexual orientation, and cultural orientations."[22]

Once buy-in was established from administration, the librarians isolated both specific guides and critical thinking exercises that the students could benefit from. These included the Boolean Operators box, Evaluating Sources boxes and pages, and Avoiding and Defining Plagiarism boxes, pages, and guide. As demonstrated in table 2.1, these were all inspired by or mapped to Framework threshold concepts. The mechanics of developing and implementing a cohesive approach for designing and developing LibGuides involved several areas of preparation. An important initial task was prioritizing which guides to create first by assessing areas of need. The librarians developed a list of in-demand research subject areas by reaching out to academic faculty for feedback. Librarians also asked themselves what kinds of consultations they were seeing and what subject areas students were researching more than others. Posing these questions allowed the librarians to approach the creation of new guides with care and intention centered around student voices and success.

From this it was decided that non-subject-specific guides, such as Finding Resources and Interlibrary Loan, should be created in addition to subject guides like Health Sciences, Psychology, and Sociology, and that additional program-specific guides should follow for the graduate programs in women's studies and health advocacy. Next, the librarians created a style guide to ensure the research guides would have visually cohesive design elements, such as fonts and color choices. A LibGuides template with standardized boxes for reusing and mapping across guides was also developed. These standardized boxes were created for various Framework concepts and knowledge practices that librarians found themselves frequently revisiting in research consultations and in library instruction. The creation of the boxes allowed librarians to use these visual aids for teaching students the concepts, and then this content could be accessed by students again later. These boxes consisted of instructional text accompanied by graphics, infographics, and visual tutorials. Graphics were designed in house by the librarians while tutorials were both gathered from outside sources and created at the institution to match specific needs.

An example of one of these boxes is the Boolean search statement visual tutorial, shown in figure 2.1, created to be reused on all subject guides to reinforce the process of moving from a research topic to search statements. This was created as a visual aid to demonstrate that "the act of searching often begins with a question that directs the act of finding needed information" and how to "use different types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary, keywords, natural language) appropriately." It also visually assisted students in "deal[ing] with complex research by breaking complex questions into simple ones"[23]

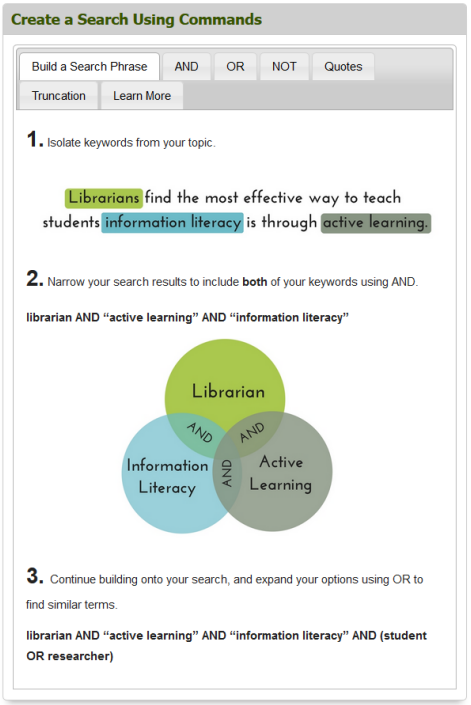


**Figure 2.1**
"Create a Search Using Commands" box, created with Searching as Strategic Exploration and Research as Inquiry in mind, with several tabs so that students can learn how different Boolean operators function, how they can translate to them from their research question, and how to use them without being overwhelmed by too much text or information at first viewing.

In creating this content, the librarians used as inspiration guides and best practices created by other institutions. The Boolean search box was adapted from the AND/OR/NOT box on Butler University's guides.[24] It was important that the content utilized from other institutions included acknowledgement but also options for other LibGuide creators to take advantage of the adapted content through a Creative Commons license.

Another example of using Framework concepts in standardized materials or templates was the Evaluating Your Resources page, shown in figure 2.2, which was mapped, reused, and customized on all subject guides and tutorial guides. This content was inspired by Authority Is Constructed and Contextual and Information Creation as a Process. The Questions to Consider box poses questions for students about who created and published the information and for what purposes, calling upon the knowledge practice, "define different types of authority, such as subject expertise (e.g., scholarship), societal position (e.g., public office or title), or special experience (e.g., participating in a historic event)."[25] The use of the NCSU "Peer Review in 3 Minutes" video demystifies the peer review creation process, setting the stage for students to understand "the traditional and emerging processes of information creation and dissemination in a particular discipline."[26] This video was shown often in library instruction and reused often on evaluating pages on the guides. In concert with that video, the "Learn About Scholarly Articles" box set forth information about why the information's final format as varying forms of scholarly publications conveys special meaning to help understand the content and intent of the author. The content in "Quick Tips to Help You Judge Hard" counters and complicates that knowledge and prompts students to look beneath the traditional "author, audience, purpose" to think about bias and to scrutinize the facts and evidence given. The following dispositions of Authority Is Constructed and Contextual were the catalyst here: "develop awareness of the importance of assessing content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of their own biases and worldview," and "question traditional notions of granting authority and recognize the value of diverse ideas and worldviews."[27]


**Figure 2.2**
Evaluating Sources Page was mapped on all SLC subject guides and customized for different academic disciplines.

Again, these resources combined in house created content and materials sourced from other academic institutions. Box content included the following:

- "How Do You Evaluate Sources?" which posed critical questions for students to consider when selecting sources and included a video, "Evaluating Sources for Credibility," from NCSU Libraries;[28]
- information on differentiating between primary and secondary sources (see figure 2.3);
- content on how to identify scholarly articles and the basics of the different types of research in various disciplines; and
- information about how to evaluate websites of organizations (see figure 2.4).


**Figure 2.3**
Primary and Secondary Sources box from Evaluating Sources page that the librarians utilized on humanities and some social science guides while making sure to not include on science-specific guides due to the difference in definitions


**Figure 2.4**
Evaluating Websites of Organizations

The librarians reused this Evaluating Sources page and boxes on many different subject and tutorial guides, including on a guide called "Evaluating Information: Vetting Your Sources: Evaluating Academic Sources." On this guide, the librarians expanded the concept of evaluating sources to reflect evaluating both academic and nonacademic sources, including journalism. An example of an additional box created for that purpose, shown in figure 2.5, is "Quick Tips" for evaluating journalism.

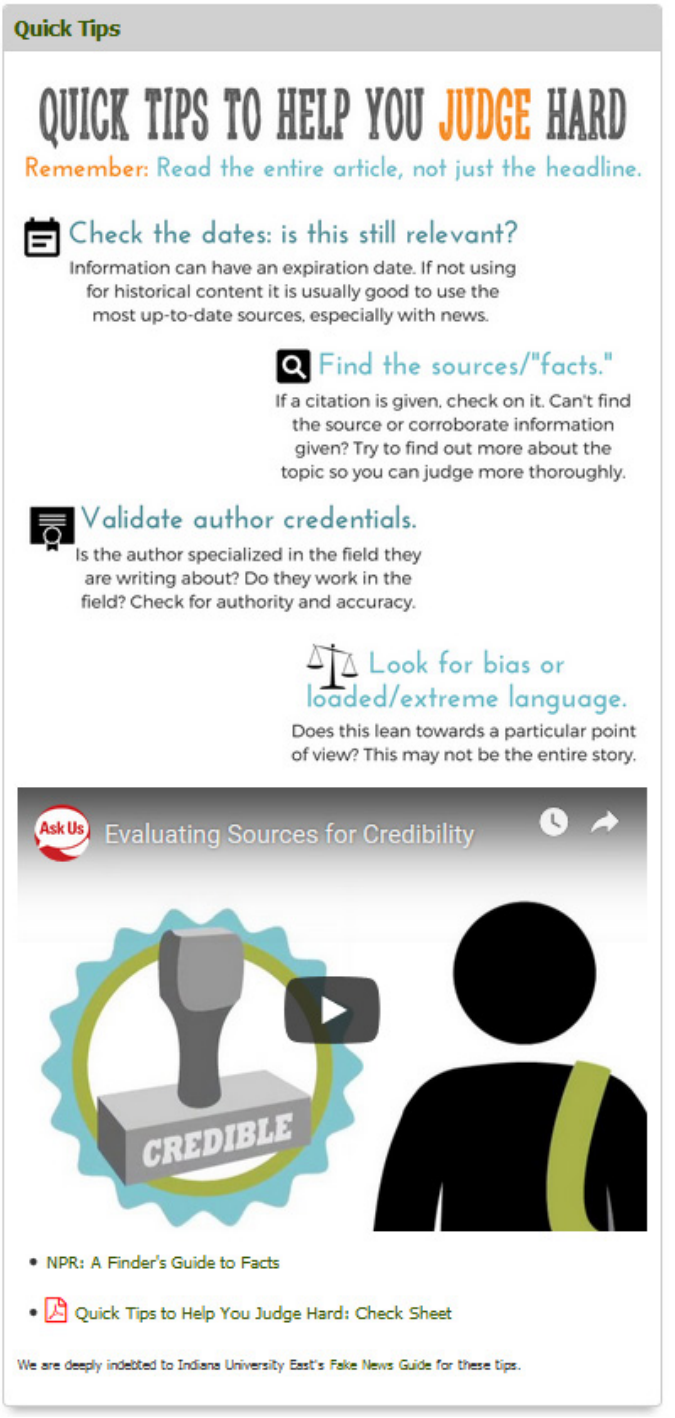


**Figure 2.5**
"Quick Tips to Help You Judge Hard" was created to help students evaluate journalism.

Being the first to introduce LibGuides to the SLC library discourse meant that the librarians were in the unique situation of being able to build from the ground up. Building LibGuide content from scratch brought with it some major benefits, such as being able to structure the content as outlined above. The librarians were able to work on creating robust material that acknowledged the complex nature of research and worked to avoid

> creating LibGuides that define research through its resources… unconsciously reinforc[ing] academic power dynamics, limit[ing] dialog and marginaliz[ing] the student voice from the very academic conversations that surround them …center[ing] the professional librarian's existence on an assumption of student ignorance, a particularly insulting observation.[29]

However, trying to create guides that offered a contextual review of research and resources with only two librarians working as the primary content creators also became a challenge due to time constraints. This meant that even though librarians never published guides that they thought would not be useful and offer at least some recognition of student needs and Framework concepts, there were times that guides were published that did not project this pedagogical approach as completely as the librarians would have liked. However, with guides being living and dynamic platforms, the hope was always that these could be advanced and expanded upon in years to come and that laying the groundwork would be a substantial move forward toward creating resources that "emphasize dynamism, flexibility, individual growth, and community learning."[30]

# LESSONS LEARNED

Though much was done to create guides that built on the Framework and utilized instructional pedagogy to improve student learning, mistakes were made in the process as is common for any large-scale project with many different moving parts. For instance, one area for further development would be to enhance certain features of the guides to align them with current accessibility guidelines. Charts and infographics, for example, which were custom-made by librarians for the purpose of chunking difficult concepts into more visually appealing layouts, are not readable by screen readers. It was an unfortunate fact that with such a small team and with a large quantity of work to be done—in addition to the fact that the librarians had internalized biases of being able-bodied—this step was overlooked in the beginning stages of creating the content. While it might seem easy to say you are too busy or aren't an expert on accessibility, to not think about it first and foremost in your design strategies is a mistake. As Booth states,

> You might think that learning about accessibility will be too time-consuming to fit into an already busy schedule, or too esoteric to benefit many patrons. Not so. Considered from any angle—from public service and instructional excellence to sound information

> design to legal compliance—encouraging accessibility in libraries is always good practice.[31]

It would be important for SLC to re-evaluate the workflow for creating this type of content.

The librarians involved in this project continue to work at their current institutions to create accessible content and have identified key resources to assist with this endeavor, such as Colorable, SiteImprove, WebAIM, and of course the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). There are also many institutions that have created guidelines for accessibility that they have placed on LibGuides, such as Butler University and Seton Hall. Techniques for making infographics accessible include providing alternative text or CSS code in addition to separating purely decorative images from text, entering any text directly into the LibGuides boxes, and providing alternative text for the decorative images. Along these lines, it could be beneficial to work with online instructional designers to further enhance the guides to conform to Universal Design standards.

Another area of improvement would be to embed more active learning directly into the guides. Springshare has a product called LibWizard that allows for the creation of surveys, quizzes, and forms that can be embedded into LibGuides. There are also free online tools for creating similar interactive content, but an advantage to the LibWizard tools is that data can be collected within Springshare. Surveys and forms can be used to solicit feedback from students about the degree of usefulness of the guides and to ask in what ways the guides may be lacking or incomplete. Quizzes can be used to further incorporate scaffolding of the Framework more completely and conduct knowledge checks. In including these tools, the objective should not be to merely test the knowledge of students and create a passive learning environment, but rather to "reduce cognitive load and stress on working memory; engage students through metacognition for deeper learning; and provide a scaffolded structure so students can build skills and competencies gradually towards mastery."[32]

# REIMAGINING YOUR OWN GUIDES

Librarians interested in taking a holistic approach to conceptually revamping their institution's guides may consider a few different strategies. One such approach could be to both look at current usage statistics and to interview all library employees, including student workers, to best understand how the guides are currently being used and how they might best be used going forward.[33] In conducting this analysis, we suggest that one build an environment centered on an ethics of care in order to understand not just how to edit guides but also how to maintain them in a sustainable way that creates community and supports all involved.[34] This is important for constructing a working environment where all voices are heard and respect is given to the amount of work that must be done in order to build such comprehensive learning tools. It is vital to keep in mind that while

mapping to frames in LibGuides might be a best practice, it is also inevitably going to be more work than the kitchen sink approach and that

> including multiple people in the guide creation can foster more egalitarian LibGuide practices and applications across subject, course, and topic guides. Guide maintenance should be an iterative process with frequent reevaluation so that librarians can ensure that the guides reflect multiple perspectives and ideas as they emerge and evolve.[35]

Conducting an informal SWOT analysis could be a similar approach. Alternatively, or in addition to these methods, a LibGuides workshop, or a series of workshops, in which librarians come together to identify which threshold concepts make sense to explore in the context of re-envisioning the guides at one's institution, could also prove fruitful. Continuing to support the work and maintenance of the guides could also entail hosting labs where library staff LibGuide experts float around the room while creators have time to work on their individual guides. This space can also act as an informal platform for people to ask questions and raise concerns about guide work or building in pedagogical approaches to their content, which will in turn lead to ongoing discussions on how to adapt the resources to meet the needs of the community. Ultimately, it is important to understand that every institution will be different, both in the types of patrons it serves and the organizational and work culture represented, and therefore a thorough needs assessment for staff and learners alike needs to be performed. However, in that work it is essential that standards be created and that work be done to inform all LibGuide creators on the best practices and ways to implement them into their daily work. As Fritch and Pitts state, "Creation and implementation of LibGuides standards is a complicated and lengthy process…. It is important to approach the process strategically but remain nimble to address unforeseen challenges and deviations in your plans."[36] Adding to that, you must also be nimble to address the various needs and learning styles of the staff working on the guides.

# CONCLUSION

By not recognizing LibGuides as powerful instructional tools and therefore building in the Framework and other pedagogical resources, we have been doing a disservice to our learners.

> In short, while librarians have started to think about the nature of critical pedagogy in the classroom, a failure to subject instructional materials to the same processes of reflective, critical thinking serves to dehumanize both our students and the nature of research and inquiry.[37]

The work that was conducted at SLC demonstrates that despite many voices in our field stating that LibGuides are not effective tools and are not used by patrons, the real

reason for this is not the software but rather our approach to utilizing it. By building LibGuides with the express intention of incorporating the Framework and *instructing* learners, not just pointing them toward resources, the SLC librarians were able to build valuable resources for their instruction sessions (including consultations) and for point-of-need information literacy instruction.

The Framework has changed the way librarians approach instruction—moving away from a one-size-fits-all competency-based approach to a research concepts–based, critical thinking approach. Our learning tools, including LibGuides, should be included in this shift. Understanding that the Framework was designed to allow librarians to design learning outcomes to meet the needs of their communities, LibGuides can and should also be treated as an extension of face-to-face and virtual classroom instruction and mirror and map to these localized, Framework-based learning outcomes.

Incorporating the voices of students and faculty within the community helped to establish LibGuides as a part of their research toolkit as opposed to a one-time use resource. Conducting outreach, such as social media posts like "Review a Research Guide," and incorporating the guides into instruction sessions (many times utilizing the graphics and explicitly stating how to find the guides and that they could be a useful tool for lessening cognitive load) also helped to promote them as resources for the entire research process. In seeing the LibGuides as a research service and approaching them as such, the SLC librarians were able to offer assistance on a much larger scale than was previously possible and also have access to each other's subject and class expertise. The LibGuides usage statistics over a period of a little over two years, shown in figure 2.6, reflects this adoption and growing usage by the SLC community. In addition to the content of the LibGuides being created to reflect the needs of the community, promotion and the solicitation of feedback by SLC faculty and students were key to this usage growing over time.


**Figure 2.6**
LibGuides usage statistics over a two-year period show steady growth over time, with lull periods during points in the academic calendar when students were not conducting research as frequently and with the months of October and November being the most research-intensive at SLC. October 2016 had 606 views and November had 524. By 2018, October had 977 and November had 484. December also increased from 111 views in 2016 to 280 in 2018. With an FTE of around 1,400 students, this represents quite a substantial amount of use.

Another key component to the success of guides and the incorporation of Framework concepts into them was collaboration. Collaboration is the key to creating a more intentional and thoughtful LibGuide presence. A lot of the work that happens in creating, maintaining, implementing, and promoting LibGuides requires a lot of invisible and collaborative labor. It is impossible to be successful in these efforts without the support network of colleagues and peers. From brainstorming activities for instruction to putting the final touches on a specific design, it is only by doing this work collectively that we can succeed in transforming LibGuides from a software tool with limited capabilities to a truly effective and enriching pedagogical resource.

Further, no guide is created for a singular universal purpose; there will never be one guide to rule them all. Though resources can be created for reuse (or mapping and copying, as it is known in LibGuides), in order to help build in sustainable maintenance practices and avoid multiple re-creations of the same content, LibGuides as a pedagogical tool for information literacy should be created for their specific learning community. There are myriad variables to consider when thinking about how we as librarians can best serve our communities, and this point is crucial to keep in mind when we create and maintain guides. Even though, as mentioned already in this chapter, LibGuides as a software tool has limitations, the potential for this particular tool to reach each and every member of a learning community, no matter the size, is immeasurably potent.

It is our hope that after reading this chapter, our fellow librarians will be inspired to reimagine their own guides, not only with the Framework in mind, but perhaps with an intentionality that had otherwise not been present and with tangible ideas and strategies for moving forward. In what ways can this tool work better for your patrons, your colleagues, and your workflows? In what ways are you already doing that work with this tool, and how could you expand upon that?

# NOTES

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33. One librarian involved in this project has already begun the process of revamping guides at her current institution and has employed the interview approach in order to create a report of common themes, concerns, and ideas that the entire library staff feel are important.
34. Maria T. Accardi, ed., *The Feminist Reference Desk*, Series on Gender and Sexuality in Information Studies, no. 8 (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice, 2017). This book was hugely influential for the authors in building feminist ethics of care into their daily practices. Of particular interest for this work are the chapters by Howard and by Hoppe and Jung.
35. Meeks, "Feminist LibGuides," 306.
36. Fritch and Pitts, "Adding Bite to the Bark," 166.
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