Re-envisioning Your Library’s 24/7 Self-Guided Help

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Plan for today

- Our project at a glance
- What was before
- How we got started
- Evolution
- Lessons learned and other timely takeaways
Our project at a glance

Goal when we started:
• Update, improve, & fill gaps in our LibGuides & tutorials

Goal as we progressed:
• Provide 24/7 self-guided help that our users can actually find & understand
Our homepage when we started.
Research Help

Ask a Librarian
Reference assistance is available when you need help in locating, acquiring, and evaluating information.

Video Tutorials
Watch short videos on using essential online library services.

RefWorks | Flow
Manage bibliographies by exporting citations from library databases, and add them to your personal reference list(s).

Academic Honesty and Integrity
Resources for students and faculty about the responsible use of source materials in academic writing.

Topic Guides
These are guides to the top resources in various subjects, created by librarians to help you do research.

Course Guides
These are guides created by librarians for specific courses at UAA and APU.

How-to Guides
These guides will help you accomplish tasks, such as creating a bibliography, finding a textbook, or using QuickSearch.
Welcome, indeed!
Why we took on this project

- Content outdated and hidden or hard to find
- Lack of consistency in organization, appearance, branding, vocabulary, voice/tone...
- Text was long, overly formal, and used jargon
Why we decided to participate

• Began as two groups:
  • tutorials & how-to guides
• Recognized how this could help in reference and instruction
• Realized just how much content needed to be reorganized and improved
How we got started

• Made an inventory of all relevant content
• Our “aha” moment: no one cares about format except librarians
• Decided to treat content as format-neutral
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</table>
Organizing our content

• Looked at other library websites to gather ideas
• Decided main categories based on research process
• Used sticky notes to visualize possibilities of what could go where
We spent one afternoon mapping out possibilities.
We planned how our webpage might look.
First version of our page – from concept to reality!
Visits to our page

In the last 5 months, about 45% of the clicks in this box are for the Get Help page, an upward swing.
Changing the content

• Simple language
• Single topic
• Easy to update
• Reduce external linking
• ADA accessible
What is a Peer Reviewed Journal?

Peer-Reviewed (Refereed) Journals focus on a specific discipline or field and are edited by a jury of experts or scholars in that field. Editorial boards review each article submitted to the journal, publishing only those that abide by professional research standards in the given discipline. Think of articles in peer-reviewed journals as those that have been given the “stamp of approval” by experts in that discipline.

Main Purpose / Intent:
To inform other scholars and researchers about original research and new discoveries.

Characteristics:
- Authors are scholars and researchers in the field, and are typically not paid for publishing the article.
- Always cite their sources / provide references.
- Author’s affiliations are clearly identified, and are usually with academic, research, and non-profit institutions.
- There is almost always an abstract or descriptive summary at the beginning of the article.
- The articles are written in language that assumes the audience has expertise or familiarity with the given subject area.
- There are very few advertisements in the journal, and if there are any, they are for products or equipment specific to the particular field or discipline.

Examples:
- JAMA, Journal of the American Medical Association
- Sociology of Chemical Engineering Communications
- Theoretical and Applied Climatology
- American Economic Review
- Nineteenth-Century Literature
- Educational Research
New and improved!
How the project (and we) evolved

• Hold working meetings with little homework
• Learn from each others’ perspectives & expertise
• Importance of communication with colleagues
• Project is ongoing
Lessons learned

• More thoughtful about creating new guides
• More selective about content and audience
• Accept the fact that not everything is perfect
• Revise best practices as necessary
Practical takeaways

• Be consistent
• Exhaustive is exhausting
• Keep notes of progress, plans, and decisions
• Strategically form your committee (if you have choices)
Big takeaway: Creative Commons license

• We found many library websites with identical, non-attributed content & were frustrated by lack of CC content
• Added a CC license box to our guides when possible
• You can copy & paste our content with attribution if you see this box:

![Creative Commons License](https://i.imgur.com/4p5Q5.png)

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Questions?