

WRLC LIBGUIDES Research Project

PURPOSE

Four libraries in the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) conducted a project to assess the usability of LibGuides across the consortium. We wanted to gather information that would help us understand how students perceive and use our guides.

OUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *What makes some guides work better than others for students?*
- *How do different approaches used by libraries in the consortium affect student use and understanding of guides?*
- *What is the best way for students to get to the guides?*
- *How do we foster awareness and understanding of the purpose of our guides among students?*

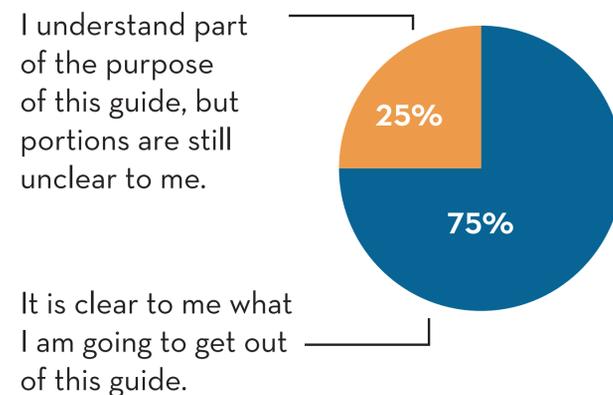
METHOD

The research consisted of a usability test and an assessment of guides using a rubric. Eleven students were recruited to test multiple guides in two different subject areas, Psychology and Biology. Testing occurred at American University and Georgetown University.

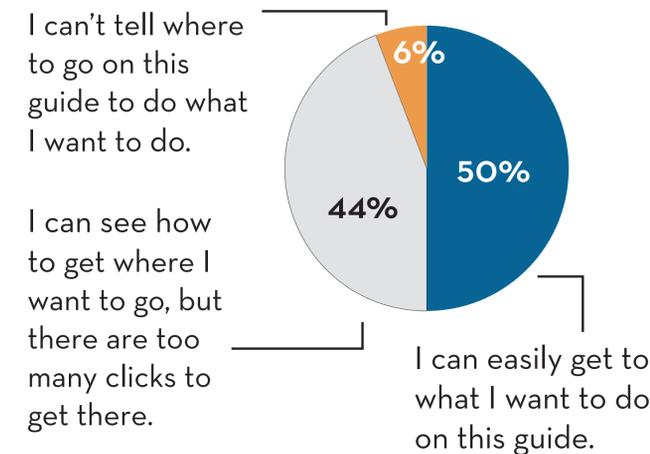
RESULTS

Results of the rubric assessment showed that the purpose of the guides was not fully clear to 25 percent of students tested and that 50 percent had issues with guide navigation and content.

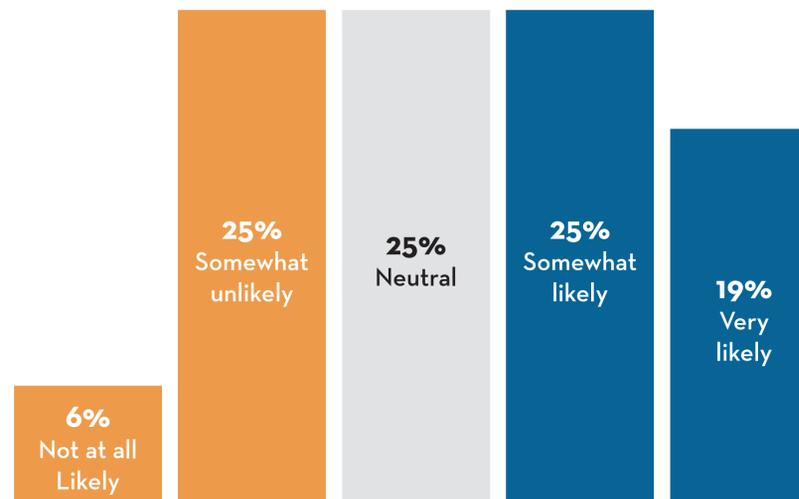
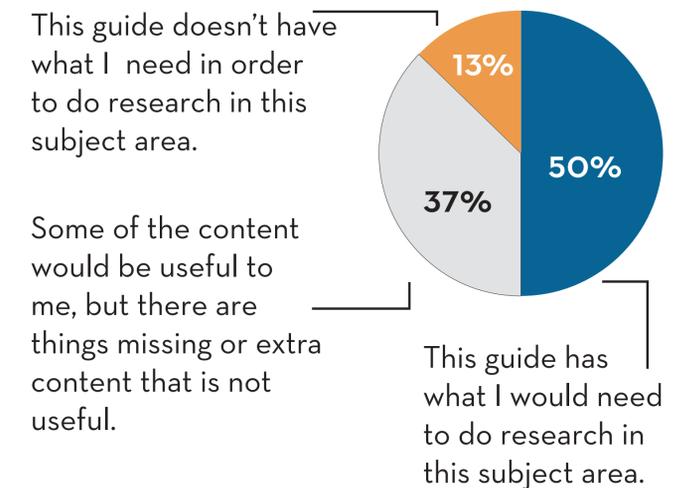
GUIDE PURPOSE



GUIDE NAVIGATION



GUIDE CONTENT



When asked whether they would use the guide for a research project, less than half the students said they were likely or somewhat likely to use it. A quarter of them were neutral.

USABILITY PROBLEM AREAS

- LibGuides search
- Expectation that search terms would appear in database names and guide text.
- A separate "Get Started" page
- Book boxes with lots of cover images
- General chat v. Individual Librarian Contact Information

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: MELISSA BECHER, MBECHER@AMERICAN.EDU