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Problem Statement

Each year librarians invest considerable time and energy into creating and maintaining web-based subject guides. But how effective are these guides in connecting users to library resources and services?

Methods/Approach

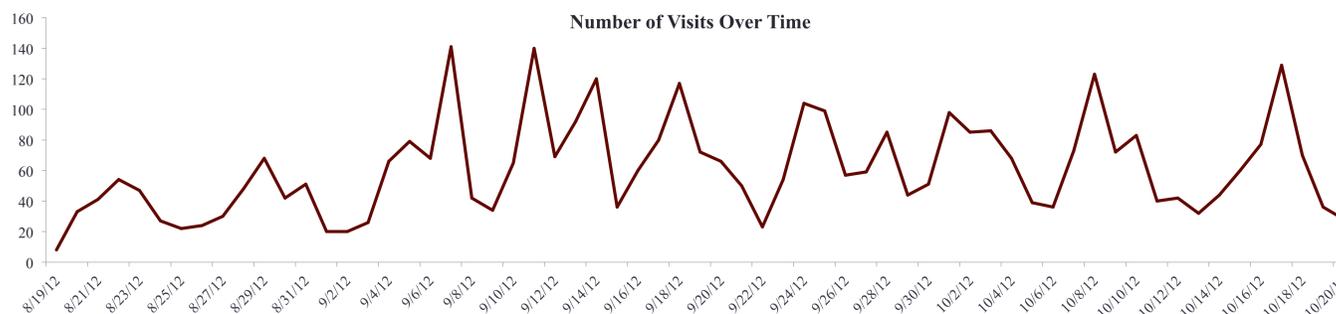
This study uses **Google Analytics** to track how often visitors engage in certain actions on library subject guides:

- click on electronic resources
- use instructional materials
- request help

A sample size of eight subject guides that represent degree programs in the humanities, social sciences, and professional programs was selected. The **event tracking** feature in Google Analytics was implemented to record when visitors clicked on outbound links, downloaded files, or viewed multimedia materials. These events were assigned to one of three categories: **electronic resources**, **instructional materials**, or **contact**.

This study analyzed the percentage of visits in which at least one event was triggered. This is known as the **goal conversion rate**, or how often visitors used guides to accomplish a specific task, such as access an electronic resource, learn about library services, or contact a librarian for help, as opposed to simply leave. When a visitor exited a subject guide without engaging with the content, this was considered a potential failure. For some reason, the content was not relevant to their information needs.

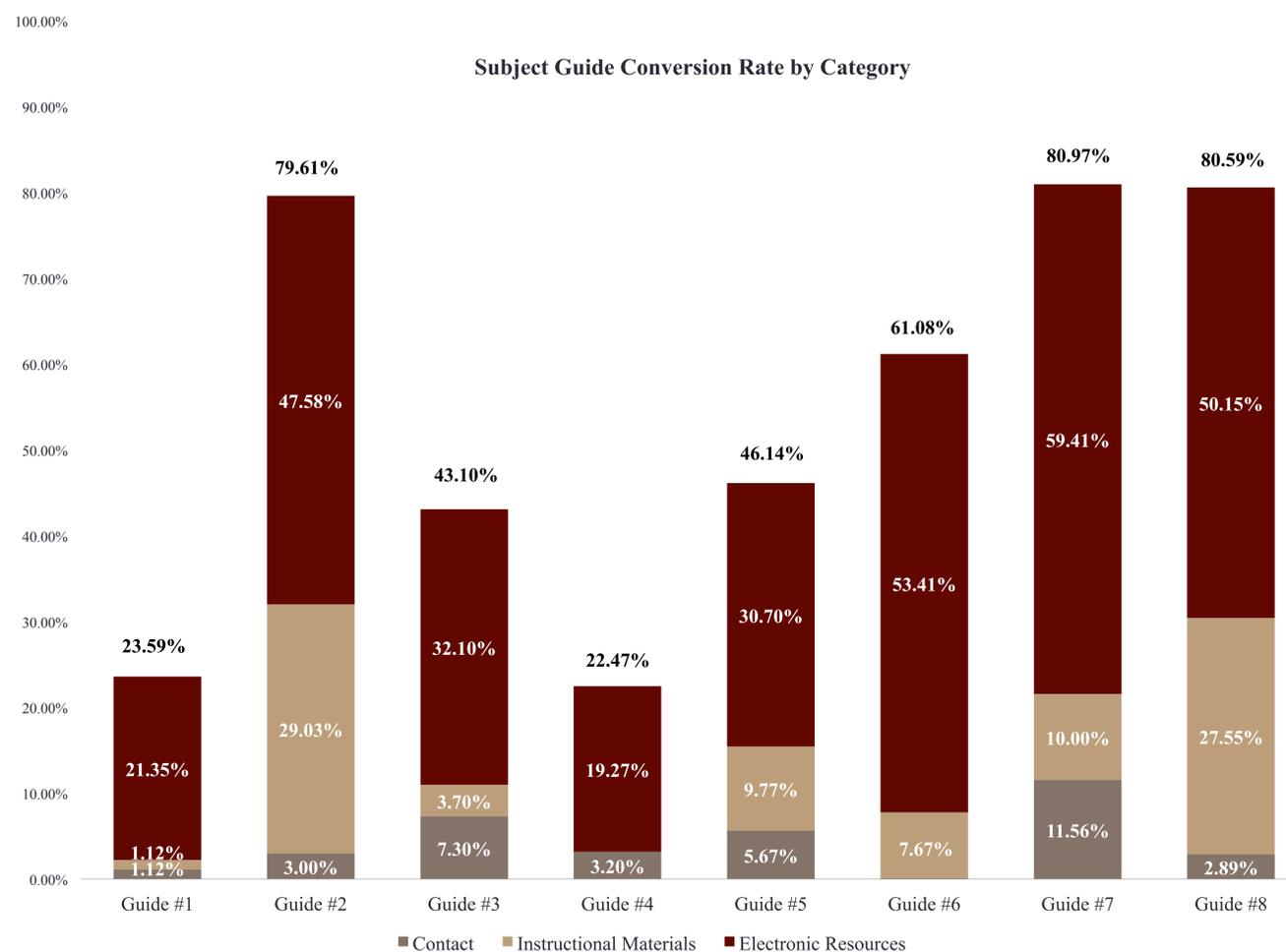
Overview of Subject Guide Usage



Visits: 3,855 Unique Visitors: 2,112 Pageviews: 9,912 Pages/Visit: 2.57 Events/Visit: 2.29

Subject Guide Goal Conversion Rate

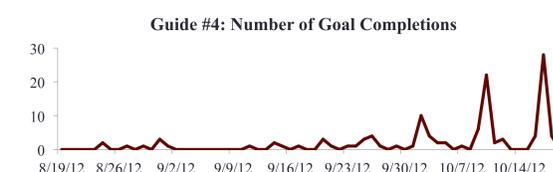
Preliminary results show a wide range in the goal conversion rate among subject guides. The highest was Guide #7 with 80.97% and the lowest was Guide #4 with 22.47%. The average goal conversion rate was 54.69%. The median was 53.61%.



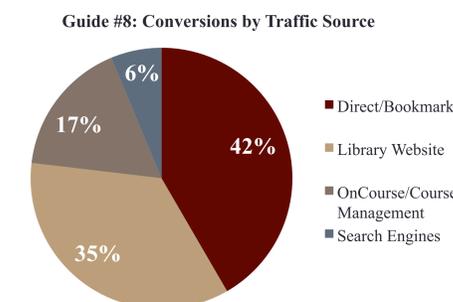
Improving Goal Conversion Rate

A low goal conversion rate could mean that the guide content does not match user information needs.

One approach is to use the Site Search Report in Google Analytics to help identify what users are looking for. This strategy was successful for Guide #4. Once it was discovered that visitors were looking for statistical information, this new content was added and the conversion rate began to improve.



Another approach is to use the Conversions by Traffic Source Report to market subject guides to targeted audiences. This helped Guide #8 when it was integrated into relevant classes in OnCourse.



Practical Value/Implications

This study moves beyond assessing library subject guides based on the number of pageviews or guide hits. Rather, it focuses on measuring impact by examining how often users complete tasks. In doing so, it encourages librarians to develop goals and make data-driven decisions regarding subject guide content and design.