INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- In early 2018 we convened a task force to overhaul the layout and structure of Welch Medical Library’s suite of LibGuides. In a departure from more traditional usage of LibGuides we decided to approach our guides through a critical lens, taking into account design principles and usability heuristics.
- In February 2019, this same approach and the lessons learned from the previous year were applied to a suite of LibGuides at NEOMED Library.
- During the course of both redesigns an effort was made to create content that is unique (or "value-added content") and atypical of common library guides. At Welch, this came in the form of information visualization and bibliometric data visualizations within discipline specific guides as a way to better engage with a niche research community.

OBJECTIVE & DRIVING QUESTION

Why not approach LibGuides with the same attention to design and information architecture as other web content? This approach has the potential to add value and increase use. Guide authors considered design principles and used HTML/CSS within LibGuides to achieve these aims.

METHODS

- Created custom HTML and CSS to stylize the LibGuides at both universities, applied usability heuristics, and used analytics to inform decisions.
- Usage of these guides was measured with analytics data pulled from both sets of LibGuides and compared against previous usage of guides.
- Informally gathered feedback through presentations; meetings with key stakeholders, library staff, and students; and through analysis of web analytics.
- Value-added content in the form of bibliometrics were added to guides when possible and involved using information visualization and data cleaning tools such as OpenRefine and VOSviewer.

KEEPING DESIGN PRINCIPLES & USABILITY HEURISTICS IN MIND

- Top navigation guides became side navigation, "horizontal attention leaves left.")
- Rounded corners implemented within one set of guides.
- One concept, one page.
- Images/icons should all have alt-text for screen readers.
- Site and document accessibility reviewed using WCAG 2.1, section 508, ADA compliance kit.
- All standard text is 14 pt Arial, headers are consistent within guides, and guide authors have flexibility to use headers as design warrants.
- To reduce confusion for users who navigate from the home page, landing pages with browsing options, search boxes, and a sub-page listing all guides in hierarchical categories were created at both libraries.

WHAT WE STARTED WITH . . .

RESULTS: UNIVERSAL CHANGES FOR BOTH SETS OF GUIDES

- Custom CSS for universal header and footer to fit library/university branding.
- Library/University logo in tab/favicon icon.
- Landing page for all guides—to replace generic LibGuide landing page—mostly coded within the page’s HTML editor and guide style sheets.
- Consistent CSS coding to improve look of box headings and font sizes.
- Improved use of tags and subjects for increased discoverability by users.
- Creative Commons licenses added to content and pages.

RESULTS: WELCH MEDICAL LIBRARY BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

- Landing page for all guides—to replace generic LibGuide landing page. Includes the categorization of guides.
- Custom CSS for universal header and footer to fit library & university branding.
- Favicon for familiarity.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS & ASSESSMENT DATA

- Next steps:
  o Continue to document best practices.
  o Solicit feedback from user groups and explore longitudinal data year over-year.
  o Keep current on UX work design practices.
  o Landing guides can contain other library resources (databases, classes, etc.).
- Assessment & Conclusions:
  o Improving established library guides using design principles and value-added relevant content can improve their usage among key stakeholders and the research community at large. Our Google Analytics data reflected this with over 1,200 page views in a 12-month period for the early mobility guide, and both sets of guides saw increased usage on behalf of tens of thousands of users around the world after changes were implemented.
  o These lessons should be taken into consideration by the librarian community, especially the medical librarian community, when creating LibGuide content for their users.

REFERENCES

6. https://www.nngroup.com/articles/values-added-content/
11. https://www.nngroup.com/articles/results/