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Snakes or Ladders? Evaluating a LibGuides pilot at University College Dublin Library

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Abstract

Online subject guides are commonly used by libraries to provide information support to students. LibGuides (a cloud-based commercial product launched in 2007) represent one of the latest incarnations of the traditional subject guide or portal, and are widely used across American academic libraries. In Ireland however, library subject guides of entirely local design and hosted on a local web server still dominate.

This paper outlines the project management process involved in implementing a LibGuides pilot at University College Dublin Library, including the planning, design and implementation of a new range of subject-related guides. The pilot nature of the project necessitated a strong focus on evaluation, particularly in assessing the effectiveness and suitability of LibGuides as a platform for delivering information literacy support, both from an administrative and end-user perspective. A two-stranded approach was used in this review process, incorporating quantitative web statistics and analytics alongside qualitative feedback from students, academic staff and Library staff.

Feedback that was gathered suggested that the LibGuides subject guides were generally viewed very positively by both staff and students. Notwithstanding this, awareness (as indicated through usage statistics) remained moderate during the pilot, pointing to the importance of the visibility, positioning and promotion of guides.

Introduction

The use of library subject guides or pathfinders can be traced as far back as the traditional recommended reading "booklist" format of the 1950s (Vileno, 2007). Since then, they have evolved in consonance with the changing information environment – most notably to accompany the emergent transition from print to electronic and online resources in the 1990s.

LibGuides is a cloud-based Springshare product first launched in 2007, with a major new revision LibGuides v2 going live in 2014 (LibGuides for academic libraries, 2010). The platform represents one of the latest incarnations of the traditional subject or help guide, and is now used in many academic libraries across the globe. In Ireland, LibGuides are currently actively used by only three third level institutes at present: Athlone Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, and University College Dublin (UCD).

Although the use of LibGuides is relatively well documented in the literature, particularly the North American experience, many of the existing studies primarily focus on technical aspects, implementation and design, or content (Stankus & Parker, 2012; Judd and Montgomery 2009; Mokia & Rolen, 2012; Adebonojo, 2010). In contrast, whilst this case study outlines the overall project management process involved in implementing LibGuides at UCD Library, the emphasis is placed on evaluating the initiative using a two stranded (quantitative and qualitative) approach. The pilot

nature of the project necessitated this overarching focus on appraisal, particularly with respect to assessing the effectiveness and suitability of LibGuides as a platform for delivering information literacy support, both from an administrative and end-user perspective. The paper also elucidates the experience of using the platform in an Irish setting, where the use of in-house or home-grown guides very much remains the norm (Kouker, 2014).

Why subject guides?

Subject guides have been a traditional channel of user support in libraries for several decades (Vileno, 2007). In contrast to bibliographies or more comprehensive help guides, subject guides are designed to be brief, compact and introductory in nature;

"They are not designed to serve either the experienced scholar or the reference librarian. They are for beginners who seek instruction in gathering the fundamental literature of a field new to them in every respect". (Stevens et al., 1973, p. 41)

In this respect, the intrinsic purpose of subject guides has not changed dramatically over time, even if both their appearance and format may have. For instance, many libraries are now incorporating Web 2.0, social media and other interactive elements within guides in an attempt to engage and attract users (Morris and Bosque, 2010). In this respect, LibGuides (LibGuides for academic libraries, 2010) represent one of the newest and most popular (Ghaphery & White, 2012) flavours of the traditional guide[1]. In contrast to some of the more static forms of guide, the LibGuides Content Management System allows content to be dynamically pulled in from other sources, shared across multiple guides, and also supports interactivity through chat and discussion forums. The nature of the platform also supports standardised workflows, policies and processes within an organisation, generating a consistent look and feel, and layout across all guides and authors. The LibGuides model is also based around the concepts of reuse and sharing, not just of in-house material, but also guides created by other institutions, supporting a culture of best practice and minimising duplicated effort in 'reinventing the wheel'.

However, to date subject guides have received a mixed response in terms of both usage levels and user feedback. Given the "challenging and time-consuming" effort involved in creating and maintaining guides (Jackson & Pellack, 2004, p. 320), it is not unreasonable to expect some evidence of their efficacy. Based on a sample of over one thousand students, Duke Library found that 53% of those surveyed had never used one of the Library's web guides, with a further 24% reporting that they rarely used them (Jackson Sanburn cited in Reeb and Gibbons, 2004, p. 124). From in-depth interviews with a sample of 11 students, Ouellelte (2011) finds three primary explanations as to why students may not use subject guides: a lack of awareness of their existence; a preference for using the open web to find information; and a perception that they do not need to use them, instead relying on other techniques such as citation chaining to locate material. Even when users are aware of guides, feedback often remains tepid. Courtois et al. (2005) found that 40% of respondents rated a suite of 80 web-based guides as either "not helpful" or "a little helpful". This kind of reaction may

[1] For a detailed discussion of the features of LibGuides see Glassman, N. R., & Sorensen, K. (2010).

suggest that a significant proportion of students do not typically engage with this form of support. However, it is possible that underlying problems or issues may partly contribute to poor feedback, such as broken links, omitted resources, or content that is not up to date (Courtois et al., 2005).

Notwithstanding the mixed success levels reported, the advantage of "one stop shopping"(Little et al., 2010, p. 439) is still a recurring motif. This appears to indicate that one of the principal aims of subject guides still addresses users' needs, to some extent at least. Indeed, this aspect is likely to be particularly helpful for first year undergraduates transitioning from second level education, who often report feeling overwhelmed by the volume of resources and information available (Head, 2013).

Why LibGuides?

Given that the cost-benefit ratio of subject guides is far from compelling based on the evidence presented to date, how might LibGuides offer a more efficient and effective solution to subject guide provision? Firstly, Markgraf (2009, p. 270) notes that one of the most basic advantages of the platform is that it allows "all librarians—regardless of their levels of technological savvy or library Web site access—to do what they do best, that is, create, organize, and share content". The ease of use and lower learning curve attached to using the product when compared to editing a website via a CMS interface or tool such as Dreamweaver, may lessen both training and implementation time for staff considerably, compared with having to learn HTML or these more complex interfaces. Moreover, a built-in link checker, the ability to embed dynamic widgets of constantly 'fresh' content, and to share and duplicate content, reduces some of the potential pitfalls associated with more basic guides, which may require manual checking and constant updating at the level of each individual guide. Whilst the recommendation that librarians should share and adapt other libraries' guides to maximise efficiency is not a new one (Stevens et al., 1973), the potential for this kind of sharing has never been fully realised or formalised. In contrast, LibGuides actually promote this as one of the selling points of the product, and also maintain both a directory of other libraries that are using the product and a 'best of' listing for staff to explore.

From an end-user's perspective, there are also potential benefits from using a standardised and consistent format such as LibGuides. The platform allows for significant flexibility in terms of the volume and nature of content, alongside a broadly consistent and standard look and feel. In looking at the more traditional forms of guides that are used in Canadian University libraries, Dahl finds that "recommendations regarding the consistency, scope, readability, and usability of pathfinders are not uniformly followed by the creators of electronic pathfinders" (2001, P. 237). This can ultimately result in confusion for the user, and therefore potentially a reluctance to engage with the guides. With LibGuides, the ability to reuse common templates that follow best practice in terms of usability and mirror content across guides, may help to dampen the potential for variation and inconsistency across different guides and authors.

There is however a further aspect that is particularly relevant to the design and delivery of self-directed supports for today's students, who are "working increasingly in a world of customization and personalization"(Reeb & Gibbons, 2004, p. 125). Guides that address a broad subject area may

hold little meaning to a student confronted with a highly unique and personal information need, such as a specific essay or research question. In this respect, Reeb and Gibbons recommend designing guides at the course level rather than attaching broad discipline- or subject-headings which have little meaning to a student's personal need. Alternatively, they suggest that the existing nature of subject guides could be adapted to make them "more contextual to students" (2004, p. 125). The flexibility of LibGuides potentially allows for this kind of contextuality by embedding guides into virtual learning environments, interconnecting guides for different subjects to reflect multi- and inter-disciplinary relationships, and the potential to develop an extensive range of highly customised guides with relative efficiency (potentially even at course level) through the use of templates, mirroring and the sharing of similar content across different instances.

As subject guides primarily represent a support for self-directed learning, it is important that students also feel comfortable with using them. Some students report that the way in which content is presented, and not just the volume of information, can determine if it is manageable or overwhelming (Ouellelte, 2011). In this context, the ability to separate and organize information into separate tabs, drop-down menus, index card displays, galleries and boxes using LibGuides, may help to present information in a more accessible, cleaner and logical way, allowing information to be drip-fed and more easily navigated, compared to an unstructured basic HTML webpage which may require extensive scrolling.

However, even with these potential advantages, it remains far from clear whether LibGuides ultimately represent snakes or ladders for students faced with information needs, gaps and challenges.

Background to the LibGuides Pilot Project in UCD Library

In 2013, UCD Library redeveloped its Learning Support Strategy (UCD Library, 2013) around three core strands of finding, evaluating and managing information in line with the ANZIIL Standards for Information Literacy (Bundy, 2004). In delivering this strategy, the Library aims to provide a range of solutions to support the specific needs of different user groups using a blended approach, including online, librarian-facilitated, academic-led and self-directed supports. An increasing focus on online and self-directed resources that will allow students to learn how to find and use information at their own pace, saw the development of an online Learning Support Menu of reusable learning objects and an accompanying suite of online tutorials. The introduction of a range of subject-specific guides was seen as a further addition that would complement this strategy. With no existing dedicated subject support or subject portal area on the Library webpages, this having been discontinued when a new website was implemented in 2011, LibGuides were seen as a flexible way to create such a space. The ability to link to other LibGuides (both within, and outside of, UCD Library) meant that any duplication of work across subjects could be minimised, as well as opening up the potential to provide a much wider range of guides than could be created alone. As LibGuides represented new territory for the Library, it was decided to pilot the project with a limited range of subjects covered by the Arts programme at UCD (alongside another range of research-focused topic guides and general information guides) for an initial one year period, to assess the suitability of the product

from a technical and managerial perspective, as well as the effectiveness of the platform for meeting UCD Library users' needs.

Structure and Schedule of Project Management

The management of the LibGuides pilot was explicitly broken into six work packages to be delivered, broadly mirroring the approach used by Gonzalez and Westbrook (2010), with an added emphasis on the final work package: review and evaluation. These are briefly outlined below.

Work package 1: Preparation

This phase involved setting objectives, choosing an appropriate product, establishing ownership and leadership of the project, and overall planning. An annual subscription to the product was purchased in February 2013 and a project team was set up, with a guide range, timeline and project plan agreed. As collaboration was seen as a key success factor for the pilot, the project group was led by the Head of Outreach and included other representatives from across three different Library units: Client Services, Research Services and Outreach[2]. It was decided to purchase the more expensive CMS version of LibGuides, as this provided extra functionality such as file storage and the ability to create separate groups of guides, each with their own visual identity and home page.

Three types of LibGuides were selected for the pilot:

General Guides (4) – These guides were aimed at providing information on how to use selected library services, such as admission to the Library and laptop-lending service

Research Support Guides (3) – These guides were aimed at providing information to support three key, high-demand areas of research support: bibliometrics, maps and theses.

Subject Guides (18) – A limited range of subject guides across two Colleges, Arts and Human Sciences, were produced during the pilot, which aimed to collate key resources for each School in one single place.

Initially, the three types of guides were viewed as relatively separate supports and listed on separate LibGuides home pages in order to differentiate between them.

Work package 2: Full investigation of LibGuides options and finalisation of format

For the purposes of the pilot, a very modest level of customisation was selected, including changing the colour scheme to match the Library website, and creating separate headers to differentiate each group of guides. The mobile and printed versions were checked, as was the ability to share content on social media. All functions of the system were fully assessed and all content styles explored. It should be noted that with suitable technical expertise, it is possible to customise the LibGuides product more extensively to match an existing website design, an option we chose not to pursue.

[2] The project team comprised Ros Pan and Josh Clark of Outreach, Julia Barrett, Jane Nolan and Michael Ladisch of Research Services, Lorna Dodd, Jennifer Collery and Michelle Dalton of Client Services

Work package 3: Building the pilot sets of LibGuides

Building the content for the guides was the major task involved in the pilot. This was greatly facilitated by having a detailed management system and agreed policies in place before any guides were created. Elements of this included:

- A policy on standard elements to be used on all guides and essential elements that could not be removed
- A policy on colour schemes, headings, and the use of various styles of boxes for different purposes
- A standardised template for all subject guides
- A policy on how to provide links to subscription databases for on- and off-campus access
- Maintaining a hidden administration page on each LibGuide to record work done, revisions and updates, and details of images used in the guides
- A policy on making backups to a shared local drive
- A full understanding and implementation of templates and use of mirroring. This is probably the most complex aspect of the system and is necessary to ensure future-proofing and easier updating of guides: in a nutshell, this means that any widgets or assets that are going to be used repeatedly across a range of LibGuides are stored in a central library and referenced by other LibGuide pages, so that if an update is required to any code or URL, this only needs to be effected once on the master record

Work package 4: Management system

Thinking beyond the pilot, the exit strategy included formulating the best management system, in order to manage LibGuides effectively on a longer term basis. It was agreed to incorporate strategic management within a Steering Group, shared with eLearning and other web-based library supports, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivering all online supports across the Library. This was complemented by an operational level Working Group, with a leader in each Library unit responsible for training, development and quality control of all guides in their area to ensure consistency of content and approach. Technical management is to be placed with the same unit that manages the website as these complement each other well.

Work package 5: Promotional strategy to support live roll-out of pilot pages

The pilot LibGuides went live at the end of May 2013 (http://libguides.ucd.ie). As this also marked the start of the summer break, it was agreed to do some limited promotion at the time of launch, but to concentrate most of the promotional efforts from the start of the new academic semester in September 2013. Some barriers were initially experienced in relation to marketing and promotion. Firstly, the limited subject coverage of guides made it difficult to promote them on a Library-wide basis, as guides were not available for all subjects and users. Secondly, it was felt that 'LibGuides' as a term was not meaningful to users. Instead, LibGuides were branded as 'subject guides', 'research guides' and 'general guides' to avoid any confusion for users as to what they were.

A range of different media and channels were used to raise awareness of the LibGuides. Webslides were used on the Library home page and in social media, and College Liaison Librarians promoted the subject guides to relevant academic staff and students through College and School meetings and information literacy sessions. In October, promotional efforts escalated further to include heavy

promotion via the website and plasma screens located in the Library building, the production of printed flyers to hand out to students at the information desk, and more prominent links were added to the website to give the guides a more visible presence on the Library home page.

Work package 6: Evaluation and review of pilot

As already discussed, an overarching focus on evaluation was a natural by-product of the pilot nature of the initiative. A two stranded approach was used in the review process, and incorporated both the analysis of quantitative usage statistics and analytics, alongside qualitative feedback from students, academic staff and Library staff.

Oulette (2011, p. 437) notes that despite the prevalence of subject guides, user-centred research in the area remains limited, and that "the little research that has been done suggests that students are not using subject guides". In this context, evaluation represented a key phase in the pilot, as the decision to mainstream the product and guides across all subject areas would be based on the success of the initial trial.

Quantitative usage data

The ability to monitor and evaluate quantitative usage of the guides was a key requirement during the pilot. The built-in statistics available with the product were tracked on a monthly basis, and in late 2013 it was decided to supplement these using Google Analytics, in order to track where users were coming from – UCD, Ireland or beyond. The use of a number of guides was extremely strong particularly the research guides on bibliometrics, theses and maps (see Table 1). In contrast usage of some of the subject guides remained relatively low, although it must be acknowledged that these guides are by definition aimed at smaller sub-groups of the student population, unlike the general and research guides which may be of interest to a much greater number of potential users. However when examining the data for individual subjects, there appeared to be no consistent pattern between the number of students in a particular School and the use of guides so it is likely that the size of the relevant student population is not the key factor affecting usage levels. Adebonojo's study, based on a suite of module or class level guides, finds a similar variance between different LibGuides, ranging from 64 to 1572 over a two-semester period. Without access to the relevant student population data it is difficult to compare usage, but relative to Adebonojo's satisfaction benchmark of 150-200 hits per class over two semesters (2010, p. 410), monthly usage of subject guides in UCD appeared promising, particularly in some subject areas.

However, because of the barriers experienced in promoting the guides alluded to above, it was decided to gather exploratory qualitative feedback to provide a fuller picture of the potential popularity of and demand for subject guides, particularly among those who may not have been aware of their existence.

Table 1: Top ten guides by usage during the first six months of 2013/14 academic year, Sept 9 2013-March 8 2014

Guide	Total views
Map Collections	9260
Theses Information	2815

Bibliometrics	1681
English, Drama & Film	1269
Economics	750
Sociology	708
Languages, Literatures & Linguistics	648
History & Archives	484
Applied Social Science	451
Politics & International Relations	445

Qualitative feedback from students, academics and library staff

Informal feedback was gathered from communications with academic staff and through school meetings. The subject guides received an overwhelmingly positive response from teaching staff, with a number emphasising their value for first year undergraduates transitioning to higher education in particular. Several also highlighted their ease of use, with guides collating everything in a single place for students. A number of requests were also received from academic staff in schools outside the pilot range, requesting that LibGuides be made available in the future.

Library staff also welcomed the guides. A lot of support material had been previously packaged in PDF guides which presented information in lengthy lists and documents. In LibGuides, the same information could be presented in a flatter and more accessible format using tabs. This was viewed as being particularly useful for some guides with a high volume and density of information, such as Maps and Bibliometrics. LibGuides were also seen as a useful way to improve the visibility, usability and discovery of support information for users, by bringing it together in a single location. In addition, general and up-to-date library information such as opening hours, news or links to related guides could be 'pushed' or displayed within guides using mirrored boxes.

However, student feedback was viewed as one of the key elements in terms of assessing whether the pilot should be rolled out on a library-wide basis or not. A feedback stand was set up in the main Arts building during a busy mid-morning period, and two liaison librarians presented passing students with a short three question survey. Students were asked to provide feedback on the following three aspects:

- whether they had heard of or used the guides
- how they would rate the idea of subject guides on a scale of 1-10
- which feature they found most helpful or would like to see added to the guides

The results of the student feedback exercise indicated that awareness of the guides was extremely low, with only 16 out of 58 students (18%) in the piloted subjects reporting that they had heard of or used the subject guides. However, the majority of students who were not aware of the guides said that they would potentially find such a resource helpful and of interest. This mirrors Oulette's (2011) conclusion that students often report that they do not not use subject guides because they don't know that they even exist. This suggests that further marketing and promotion could help significantly in increasing the usage of guides by students.

The comments provided by students also provided additional insight, with one stating the concept of "having everything in one place" as a key benefit, and another responding that it "looks very helpful" when presented with a live demonstration of the guide for their subject area. Another mentioned that they "had not used it but friends have and it works very well". These comments resonate with

Little et al.'s (2010) finding that accessibility and usefulness were two of the key themes apparent in user feedback.

For those students who had heard of and used the guides, the response was also generally positive: Comments included: "It all seemed to be there"; "It covers everything you need"; "Useful, pretty inclusive". The aspect most frequently highlighted as being of help was referencing and citation information, so this could potentially be used as a 'carrot' to help drive traffic to the subject guides going forward. This finding was somewhat surprising, compared to other studies which find that databases are often the most utilised and popular content (Oulette, 2011; Staley, 2007).

Eight students studying subjects outside the pilot, such as Science and Law, were also surveyed and were generally very receptive to the idea of subject guides being available, noting "If we did have such a resource it would be excellent" and "If this was available in my subject it would be great". Such evidence provided further support for the idea of mainstreaming and continuing with the guides upon completion of the pilot.

Discussion & Recommendations

As part of the pilot review process, a full project report was produced including recommendations for submission to the Library Senior Management Team, and a decision was made to mainstream and expand the use of LibGuides on a Library-wide basis at the end of 2013.

The positive qualitative feedback gathered suggested that the subject guides were generally viewed favorably by both staff and students. It was viewed that the aforementioned difficulties surrounding promotion arising from the limited subject coverage of guides, largely precluded the possibility of drawing any meaningful inferences from usage data alone, as it would be impossible to ascertain the true value and popularity of the guides until a full subject range was introduced alongside a comprehensive Library- and University-wide promotional campaign. Therefore, based on the generally positive response, the decision was made to continue with LibGuides and extend the product to all subject areas. However, the pilot group recommended that the LibGuides format may not be as appropriate for general library guides that address very frequently asked questions, as such information needs to be highly visible and 'up front' on the Library website. As previously mentioned, a new version of LibGuides is going live in 2014. This is significant in that it will offer a number of new navigational options when creating guides, and a more attractive interface to our users, both of which could further aid in increasing usage of the guides.

A number of key factors helped to ensure the success of the pilot, but it was also very much a learning experience. These elements are discussed below in the context of taking the project from a pilot to a mainstream library support.

Key Success Factors

Laying a foundation through active collaboration

Collaboration across a number of Library units made sure that a diverse range of input was received as well as a unified strategic approach. This was essential to ensure that all guides delivered a consistent message to users, and were pitched at the right level with the same overarching aims and objectives. The common policies and in-house guidelines that were developed represented a key

part of this, and a standardised template was created for all subject guides. Having a common core and 'look and feel' for each guide, increased the ease of navigation for students across different guides, whilst also helping to reinforce branding. Similarly, a common approach to the content and level of the guides was important in order to avoid the problem of "clutter" (Oulette, 2011, p. 444). Excessive tabs, long lists of links and pages that require excessive scrolling are typically off-putting to students, so a minimal, 'just the essentials' approach was taken when developing all of the UCD LibGuides. Whilst the ability to layer detailed and granular content in LibGuides may be tempting for their creators, it is valuable to return to first principles regarding subject guides, and their raison d'etre – that is, highlighting "fundamental" information and resources, rather than everything (Stevens et al. 1973). Moving beyond the pilot, intra-Library collaboration will be extended further to include Collections staff and those managing e-resources, in order to optimise the discoverability and visibility of library resources through LibGuides, enhancing their usage.

However, collaboration with academic staff was also fundamental to the success of the project, in terms of creating and tailoring relevant content for the guides, as well as promoting their use. In some cases, academic staff actively recommended the guides to their students and this directly resulted in increased usage figures. This aligns with Oulette's (2011, p. 443) finding that students will tend to use subject guides if their "instructor specifically suggests" it. Ongoing suggestions and feedback from teaching and research staff remain crucial in order to ensure content is directly relevant to student needs and curricula, and that guides continue to support desired learning objectives and outcomes. As the LibGuides platform allows for multiple collaborators to contribute to any one guide, it presents an opportunity for valuable content generation partnerships and relationships that extend outside the library or even across disciplines (Little et al. 2010). There is also significant potential to develop closer links with staff involved in managing the institution's virtual learning environment, Blackboard, in order to embed and integrate the subject guides directly alongside course material.

Promotional and Outreach Strategy

Reeb and Gibbons contend that the visibility and positioning of subject guides is crucial to any potential success, and consequently access points "need to be located in areas of the web site that have high research and coursework context to students" (2004, p. 127). Indeed, when promotion was stepped up in late October through printed flyers and increased visibility of the Library homepage, usage of the subject guides did increase somewhat. This, alongside the qualitative feedback, suggests that raising awareness is key to the potential success of the product. Moreover, regular outreach and evaluation activities should be undertaken to ensure the content of LibGuides keeps pace with changing student needs and preferences, and that offerings remain relevant. In this context, having a dedicated Outreach unit within UCD Library will likely prove to be a significant advantage in helping to generate awareness and usage of guides.

Lessons learned and future considerations

Dahl's advice provides some fundamental yet invaluable guidance to those implementing subject guides: "Because so much work is put into producing helpful and readily usable pathfinders, libraries should be careful not to hide them deeply within their Web sites" (2001, p. 237). Moreover, both the location and language used to describe guides should be obvious and intuitive for users to minimise access barriers (Dahl, 2010). This was one of the reasons for primarily branding UCD LibGuides as "subject guides", a term that would perhaps be more immediately recognisable to students, and also for remedying the poor visibility of guides during the pilot by placing a direct link to them on the

Library homepage. Over such a short period, it is difficult to conclude with certainty that usage increased directly as a result of this change, however usage statistics do offer some incipient evidence in this respect. In the future, it is likely that guides will continue to be incorporated on the home page as part of any website design revisions, further aiding visibility. Subsequent to the pilot, potential changes to the UCD Library website are currently being scoped out, and these would include a panel of prominent user-action options on the home page, one of which would be an invitation to avail of our subject guide range.

More generally, the relationship of LibGuides to other online efforts such as the Library website, eLearning content, and resource discovery tools and databases, is also important. Although in many ways LibGuides can function as a standalone resource, they work most effectively when embedded within an overall support framework and strategy. Ultimately guides represent just one of many support tools available to our users, and ideally they should complement rather than duplicate other formats and resources, such as tutorials and other learning objects.

Discussions subsequently mean that it is likely that the Library, having decided to retain the Libguides product and mainstream it alongside its website, will also transition the Learning Support Menu (which currently collates and presents the full range of information skills materials available to teaching staff) into a LibGuides framework, along with an integrated presentation of all of our guides, tutorials, presentations and pdf guides directly to end-users. If this takes place, it will greatly enhance the visibility and use of the subject range, which will then form part of a larger UCD Library online learning framework within LibGuides.

Finally, in terms of the practicalities involved in implementing LibGuides, the pilot highlighted four important lessons to take forward into the mainstreaming of the product:

- A standardised policy on content, design and layout is crucial to ensure a better experience for users.
- Some authority over style and maintenance is important in this respect and establishing a leader in each authoring unit to take charge locally is our recommendation. In our case, they will review all new guides and edits prior to their going live, through the workflow control feature of LibGuides. These leaders will also sit on the operational group.
- For families of similar guides (such as subject guides), a clear policy on shared elements is essential and the use of a standard template minimises the training needs of new guide authors and administrators. It is also helpful to agree on the scope and level of content e.g. introductory vs advanced, level of detail provided etc., to make sure guides are consistent across different subjects and authors.
- It is useful to have a holistic approach to the full range of elearning Library supports including pdf guides, LibGuides, interactive tutorials, videos, presentations, web informational pages and all other items, and to develop a clear view of what is suitable to develop as a LibGuide and what works better in other formats.

Conclusion

LibGuides still remain a relatively new platform, and so to date their typical usage has not strayed overly far from the core aims of the familiar guides and pathfinders we have seen evolve over time. However, as the user community continues to grow, it is likely that more innovative and creative

uses may emerge, as indeed some have already (Miller, 2014; Arvin & Blevins, 2012), alongside new opportunities for greater interactivity and engagement. However, striking an appropriate balance between brevity and breadth in order to dilute the threat of 'information overload' remains a challenge for all forms of subject guide, and LibGuides are no different in this respect. It is likely, this aspect will always require ongoing fine-tuning, as students' information needs, behaviours and preferences develop into the future.

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