



11/15/2018

# Research Guides

USABILITY FINDINGS &  
RECOMMENDATIONS



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UX COORDINATOR

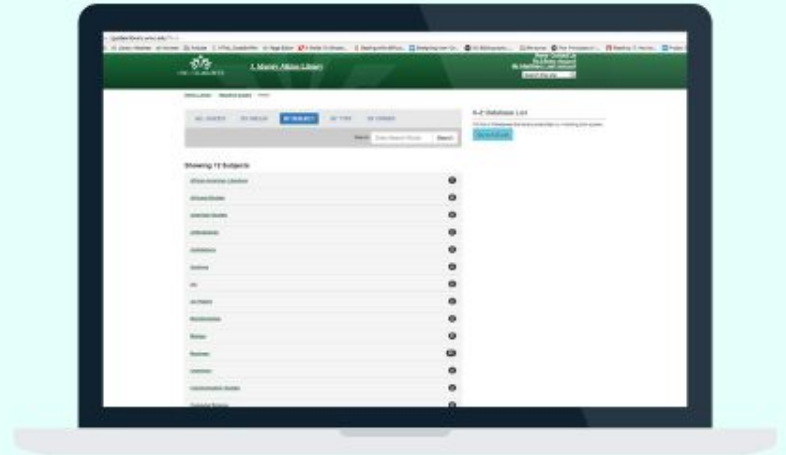
>>> 1. Problems identified during usability testing

>>> 2. Tasks and success rates

>>> 3. Recommendations

# | agenda

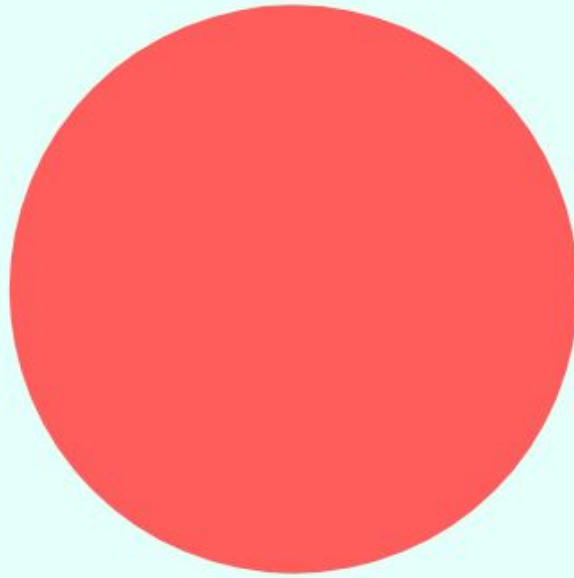
# the problems



- >>> Users were not immediately sure what they could do with research guides, or why they might be more helpful than a basic search.
- >>> The built-in search feature caused users to make critical mistakes.
- >>> The amount of content on some guides was overwhelming.
- >>> Guide formatting caused users to miss content.

# task 1:

[From the research guides homepage]  
Looking at this website, what do you expect to be able to do here? What kind of information do you expect to find?



**Success**

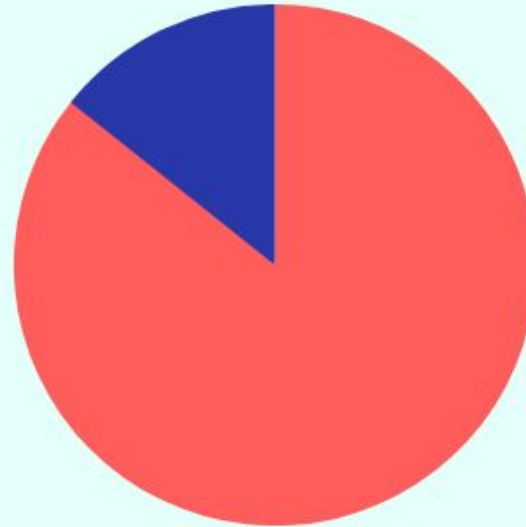
100%

## **task 2a:**

[From the main library website] You are a history major and you are writing a paper for your class HIST 2600: Roman Empire. Your instructor said the library has a research guide specifically for this class where you can find sources for your paper. See if you can find the research guide for this class.

**Did not complete**

14%

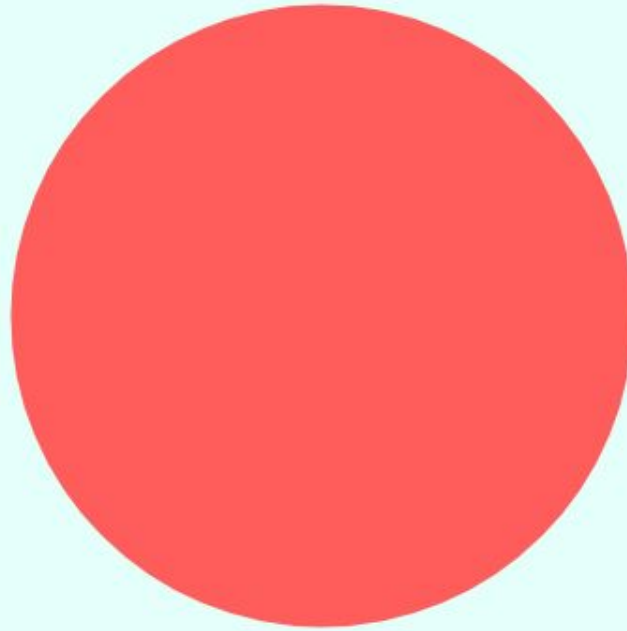


**Success**

86%

## **task 2b:**

[From the HIST 2600: Roman Empire guide] Using this guide, please locate an encyclopedia on the Roman Empire.

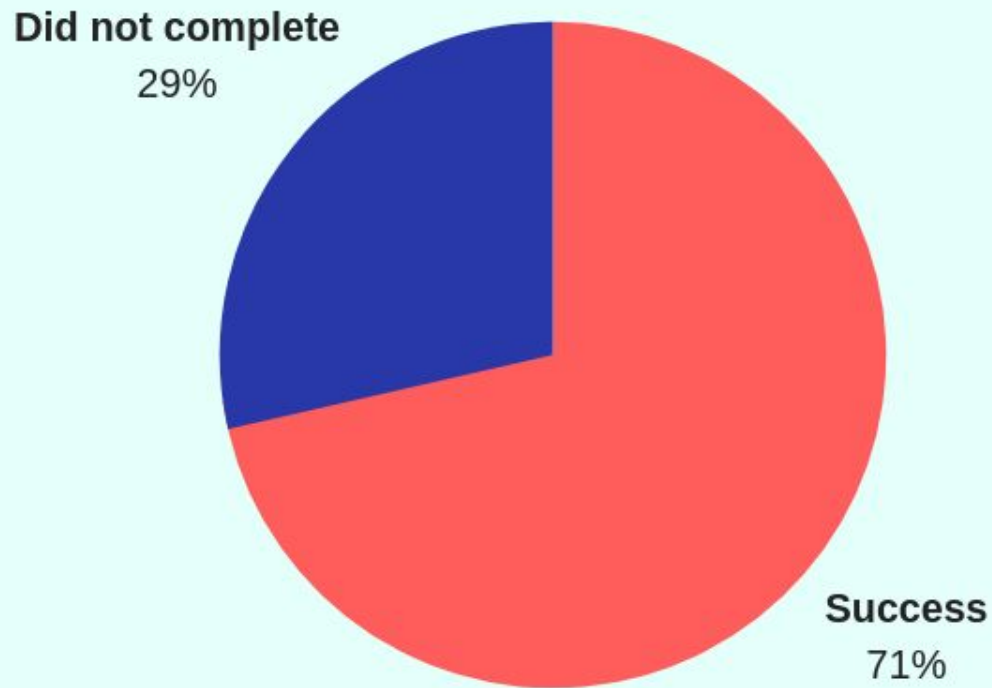


**Success**  
100%

## **task 3a:**

[From the research guides homepage] For your film studies class, you are writing a paper on the movie Blade Runner. Using a research guide, please locate a database you can use to find an article for your film studies class.

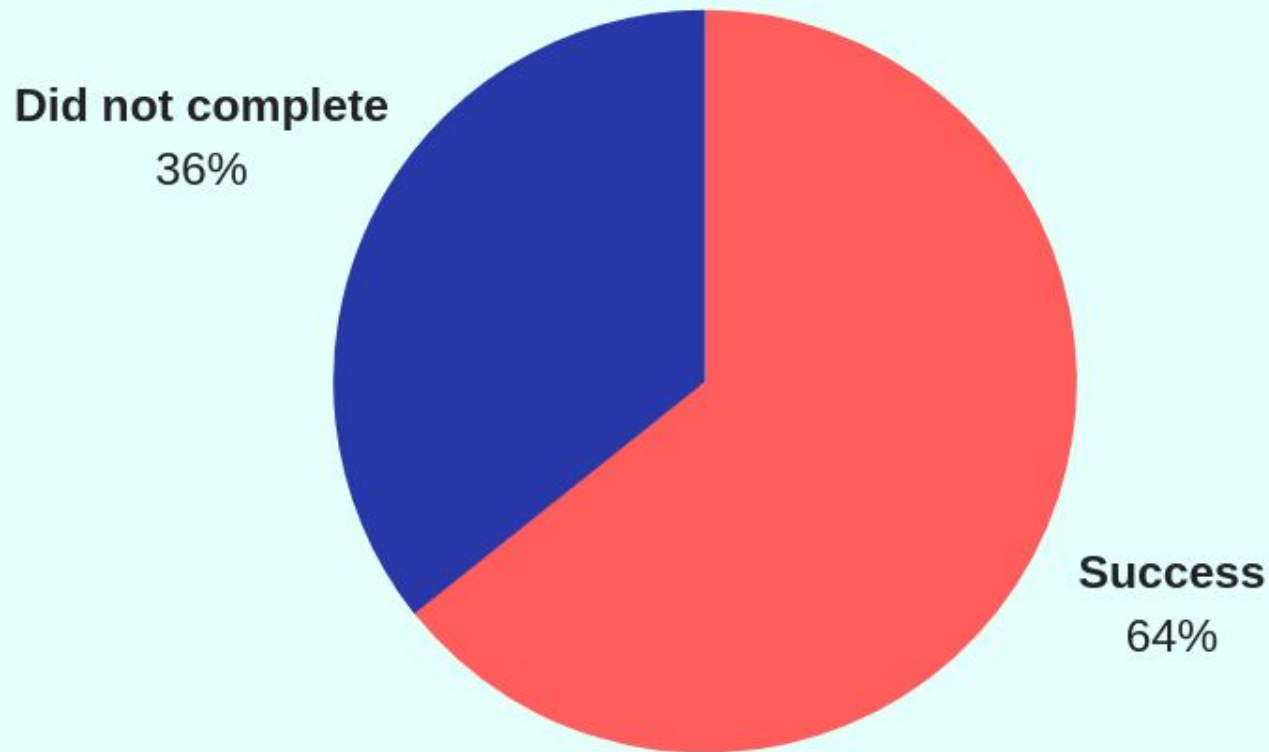
Highlight Reel: [Choosing a database](#)



## task 3b:

[From the database] Starting here, please locate the article "Moviegoing and Golem-Making: The Case of Blade Runner," by Eric G. Wilson.

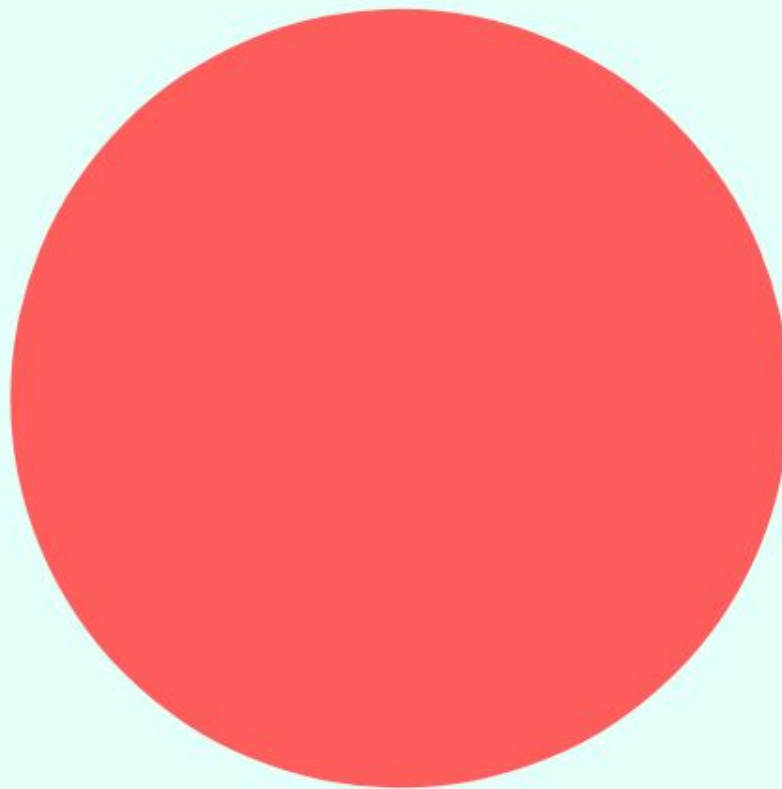




## task 4:

[From the research guides homepage] You are taking an elective class on Modern Dance and you're not sure how to find sources for an assignment. Please locate the contact information of someone who can help you with your research. When you are finished, please return to the Research Guides homepage.

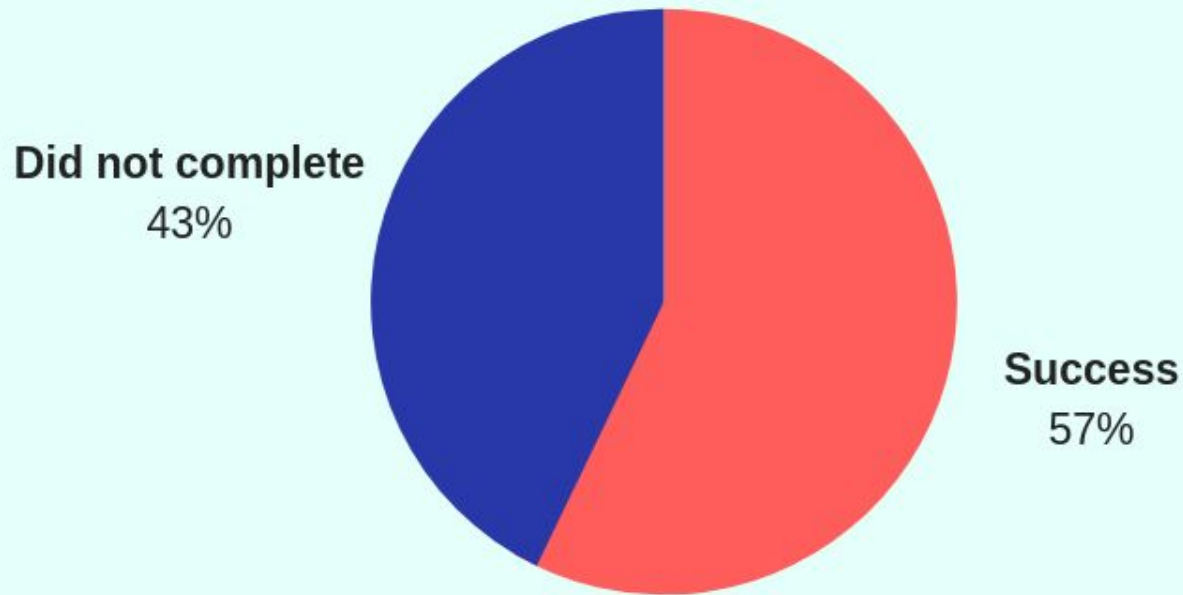
Highlight reel: [Subject librarians page](#)



**Success**  
100%

## **task 5a:**

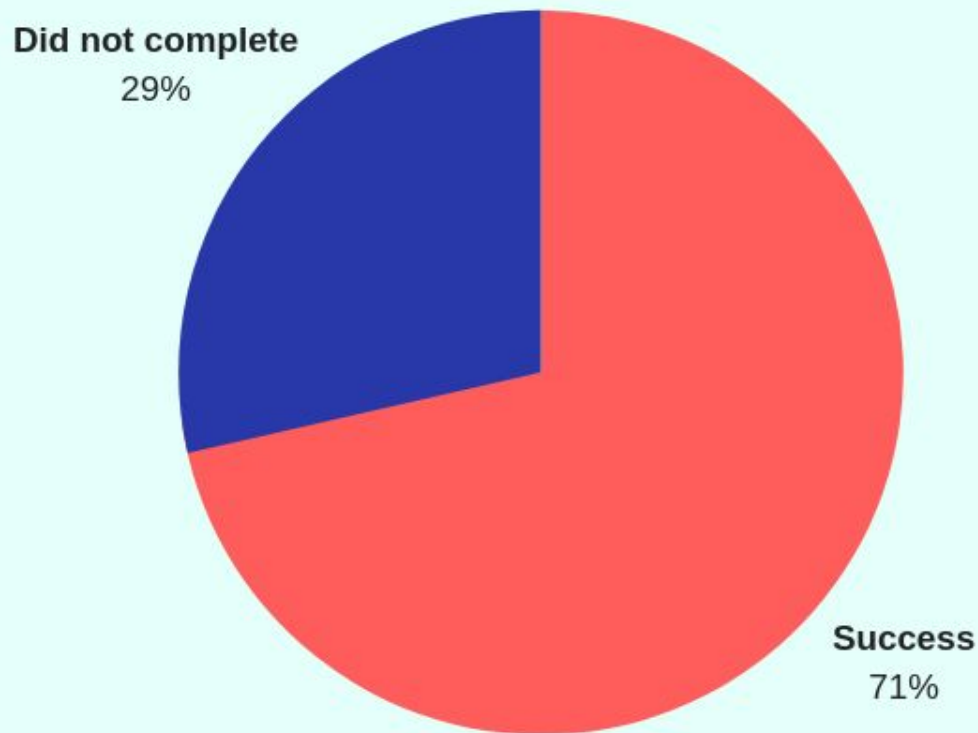
[From the research guides homepage] You are taking an introductory Chemistry class. You have a paper due soon but you haven't done research in Chemistry before and you're not sure where to begin looking for sources. See if you can find a general research guide for Chemistry.



## task 5b:

[Starting on Chemistry Research Guide] For your Chemistry paper, you decided to write about toxic chemicals in North Carolina. Starting here, see if you can find a source that will show you where toxic chemicals are located on an interactive map.

Highlight Reel: [Three Column Content Layout](#)



## task 6:

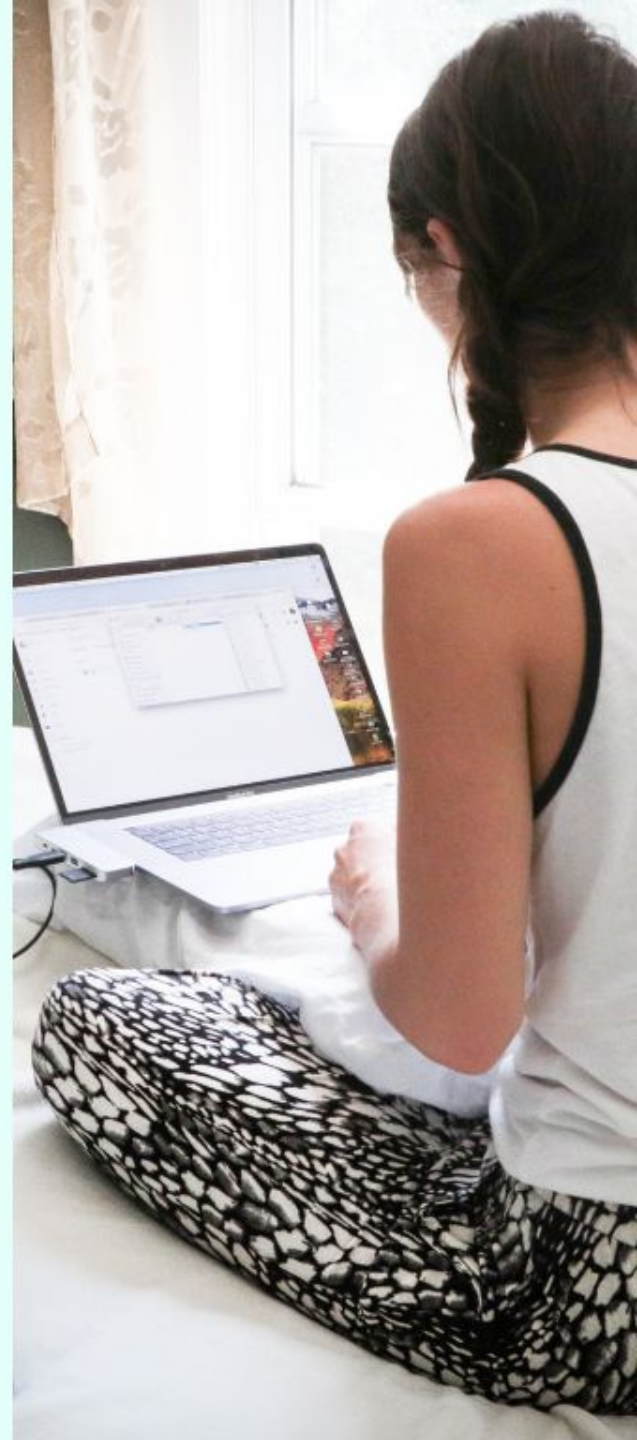
[From the research guides homepage] For your public health class, you are writing a paper on women and heart attacks. Using a research guide, please locate a resource for your paper. When you are finished, please return to the Research Guides homepage.

Highlight reel: [The Saga of Participant 2](#)

# critical recommendations

- ››› Create a new homepage for the research guides that **shows** users what guides are, what they can do with them, and how they might be helpful.
- ››› Remove the search box within guides. It is misleading and causes users to make critical errors. Search from the homepage should remain, because it helps users locate guides.

Highlight reel: [Search](#)





# highly recommended

## 1. Prioritize writing for the web. People don't read websites, they scan.

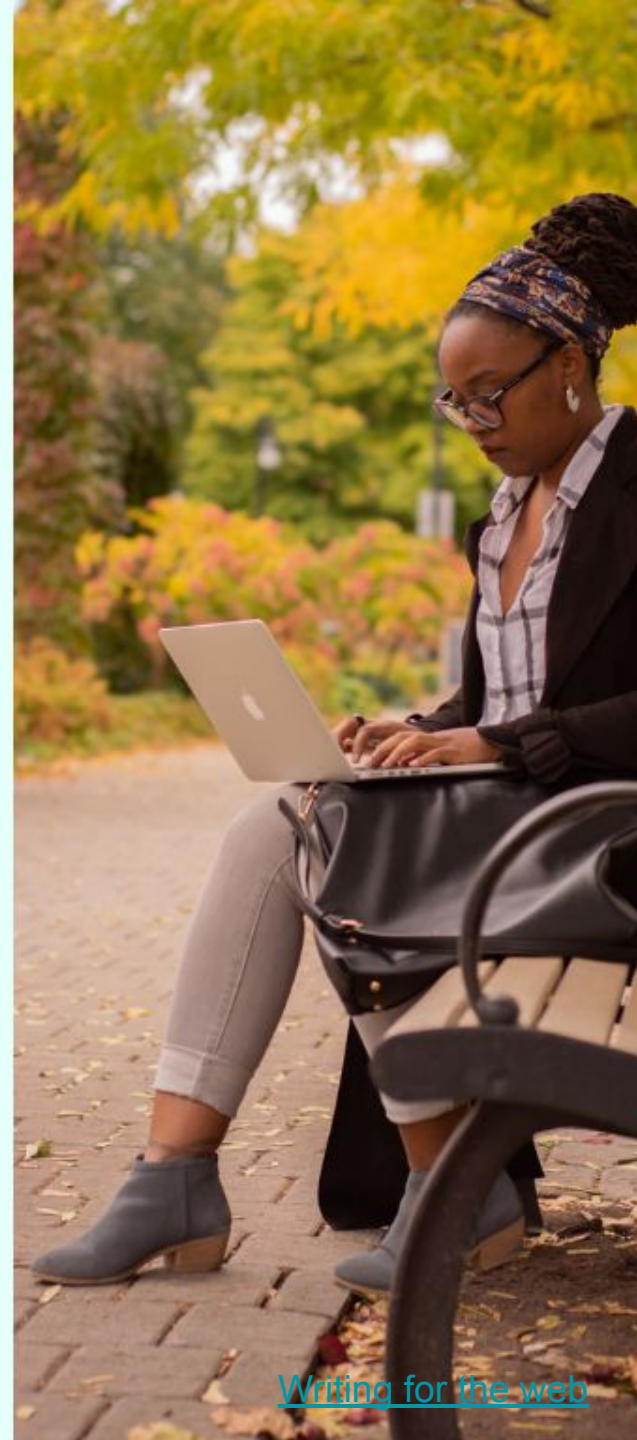
"Users typically see about 2 words for most list items; they'll see a little more if the lead words are short, and only the first word if they're long." (Nielsen and Norman)

## 2. Convey visual hierarchy

Users are confused by too many text-oriented boxes. Consider visual hierarchy: if your guide looks like a wall of text, think of how you can break it up with images, heading styles, or boxes to show users what is important.

## 3. Develop a consistent look across guide types.

Consider creating reusable, ready-to-use templates for Subject guides and templates for Course guides.



# highly recommended

## 4. Adopt a two-column layout for general subject guides

Recommendation: 75% main page content, 25% side bar for help content. Users scanned the middle column first, and looked at side columns after they did not find what they needed. Use the side column as the designated location for "Help" information.

## 5. Keep tabs to one row

You want users to be able to understand your guide's tabs at a glance. It causes cognitive strain when users have to distinguish between choices that appear similar. Use tab labels that are meaningful to students. Around 7 tabs or one row is a good rule.





# highly recommended

## 6. Add email contact for all librarians on Research Guides

Most students said they would use email or chat, one student said they would call.

## 7. Professional-looking headshots for the librarian photo

Surprisingly, students were not fans of the librarian selfie. They wanted to see more professional headshots on research guides.

## 8. Reformat the subject librarians page on the library website to include specific subjects/majors

Students who used the subject librarians page were unable to find the right librarian for their specific subject.





## >>> PILOT TEST

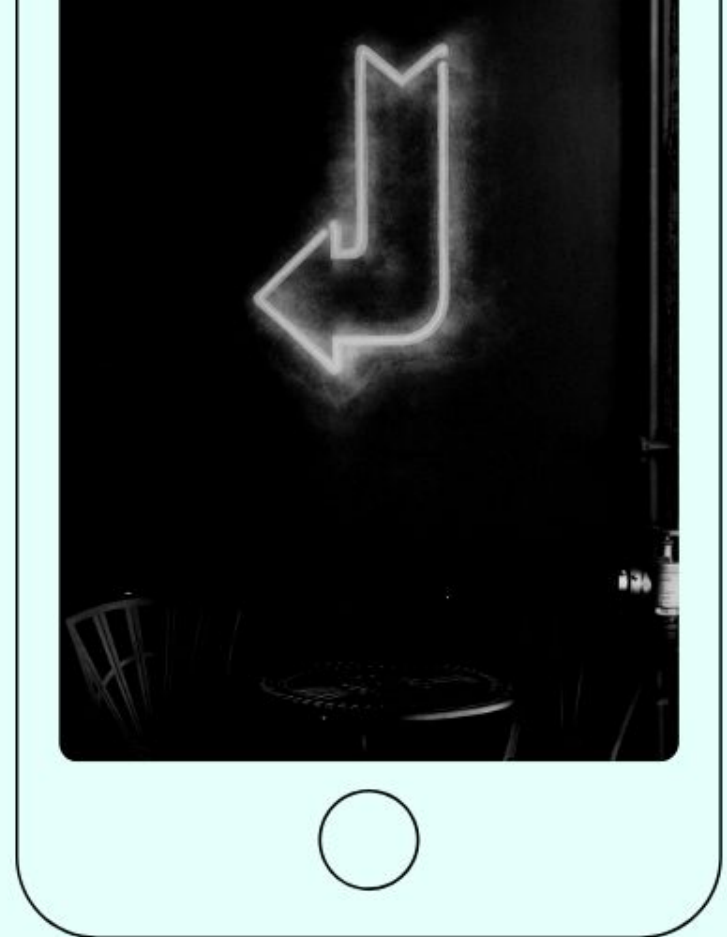
Create templates based on recommendations and get student feedback

## >>> WORKSHOPS

Host workshops on best practices for guides (writing for the web, layout conventions, other topics)

## >>> WORK PARTIES

Set more frequent designated times to update aspects of guides together (i.e. a party for consolidating tabs 🎉)



# ideas for implementation