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Libraries in Dialogue for Transformation and Innovation

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CREATING, COLLABORATING AND CONTRIBUTING THROUGH LIBGUIDES AT CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (CPUT)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The library’s role has changed from being confined to a physical place where information resources are located to include online resources. In the case of academic libraries, librarians were expected to design a website within which library resources can be accessed from the online catalogue to the subscription databases. However, these websites were one dimensional without any form of interaction between the user and the librarian. These platforms allowed for the transfer of print to online even without any input from the user. They were platforms created for the user and not with the user.

With the explosion of Web 2.0 applications and tools in the past 10 years and the popularization of the concept of collaboration, academic libraries were forced to rethink the one dimensional nature of their websites and embrace some applications or tools that would complement their sites while also offering features of Web 2.0 sites. Thus, the LibGuides, described as content management systems, were identified by CPUT Libraries as a solution to enhance library services and resources.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

LibGuides are defined as content management tools that allow librarians to organize and present library collections to users in a customizable fashion using Web 2.0 applications (Bushhousen, 2009). Creating a LibGuide is so simple that one does not need any special html coding knowledge. It can be created using existing LibGuides templates or by developing a new template from scratch. LibGuides can be customized to match your institution’s colours and brand (Brandon, Sattler & Tobias, 2011). At CPUT, our mission challenges us to endeavour towards being the apex university of technology in Africa by amongst other things increasing the research output of the institution. For its part, CPUT Libraries aims to be at the centre of all the initiatives taken by CPUT as it moves towards that eventuality. LibGuides are known for their self-help web-based resources that make it easier to support high degree research that CPUT in some instances is engaged in as it moves towards fulfilling its mission (Richardson, Nolan-
Brown, Loria & Bradbury, 2012:270). Like most Web 2.0 sites, LibGuides provide for embedding RSS feeds, audio/video links, links and cloud tags. As if to support Springshare’s claim that LibGuides are built specifically for libraries, LibGuides further allow for linking books from the library catalog. LibGuides also provide built-in support for user polls, surveys, and comments. They are the best tools for creating subject guides for general circulating and reference collections or research pathfinders for specific courses (Griffin & Lewis, 2011:5). The fact that LibGuides are simple to create, have Web 2.0 features, with no special html coding requirements, and tailored to support high degree research were some of the reasons why CPUT decided to create them.

3. THE CPUT LIBRARIES’ LIBGUIDES INITIATIVE

The LibGuides initiative at CPUT started as a multi-campus project. Each librarians’ faculty cluster was represented in a committee referred to as the LibGuides Committee. The Committee representation was composed as follows: one representative from Informatics & Design Faculty (who was the first coordinator), one representative from Business, two representatives from Education & Social Sciences, three from Engineering, one from the Applied Sciences and two from Health & Wellness Sciences.

The brief given to the committee by the CPUT Libraries management was:

- Explore various ways of responding to the research agenda of the institution.
- To explore LibGuides of other institutions and decide on how CPUT Libraries can use LibGuides to enhance its services.
- Learn how to design LibGuides for use by the CPUT community.
- Decide on a standard template to be used by CPUT Libraries to develop its LibGuides.
- Develop “model LibGuides” and report to management
- Report back to librarian faculty clusters and coordinate the development of LibGuides by other librarians.

The Committee met for the first time on 08 June 2012. The Committee looked at LibGuides of other institutions in South Africa and worldwide. A lot of benefits from LibGuides were identified especially for a multi-campus like ourselves. It was decided that we will choose a template from the existing templates of LibGuides. The coordinator, who had prior experience of creating LibGuides, then took other committee members through the steps on how to create LibGuides. From there librarians were all able to develop “model LibGuides” for faculties but before the LibGuides could be published, the coordinator had to present our observations and examples of model guides to the library executive committee for comment and ratification. It
was the executive committee that then decided that we could publish our first LibGuides after a few corrections.

Currently (as of August 2013), CPUT Libraries has fifty-two published LibGuides created by nineteen librarians. Below is a table showing a breakdown of published CPUT LibGuides by faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Published LibGuides</th>
<th>Number of Published LibGuides</th>
<th>Number of Departments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Social Sciences</td>
<td>Education &amp; Social Sciences LibGuide, Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Engineering LibGuide, Built Environment, Chemical Engineering,</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tabulated breakdown of LibGuides at CPUT reflect that CPUT LibGuides fall into four categories: Faculty specific, Department specific, and General LibGuides. As indicated earlier, the LibGuides Committee was requested to develop “model LibGuides”. In response to that, faculty “model LibGuides” were developed. The Business Faculty librarians, and Informatics & Design librarians have so far published most LibGuides followed by Engineering. The least number of published LibGuides is in Education & Social Sciences. The percentage total of published LibGuides is best presented by the following chart:
This confirms the earlier statement that the majority of our LibGuides are in Business followed by Informatics & Design.

However, based on the number of departments who have published LibGuides, Education and Engineering register hundred percent departmental penetration levels. More still needs to be done in Applied Sciences with forty-six percent penetration levels, fifty-six percent for Health & Wellness, and sixty-five percent for the Business Faculty. Informatics & Design will still need to publish the Multimedia LibGuide to reach hundred percent penetration levels.
The penetration levels, are reflected by the following graph:

![Penetration in Faculties](image)

The picture above will change once the unpublished LibGuides in Applied Sciences and Business are published. At the moment, just more than half of departments in Applied Sciences and Engineering have published LibGuides. Business has published sixty-five percent.

Using the percentage total of hits in the most popular top ten guides, Education & Social Sciences has by far the most hits which account for forty-five percent of hits of all the most popular top ten LibGuides. Interestingly, the General LibGuides follow Education with twenty-nine percent of all the hits of the top ten most popular LibGuides.

When we breakdown our LibGuides according to the top ten popular LibGuides, the following picture emerges:
Confirmed, Education has the most popular LibGuides followed by the General LibGuides. This may indicate the fact that the branch in Wellington (which has an Education Faculty) is the only computer laboratory that did not have firewall problems with LibGuides access for students at CPUT. In this campus, information literacy training was conducted using the LibGuide. The Education LibGuide became the starting point for students to search for books in the library Catalogue and to access other online resources. In the case of the General LibGuides, these LibGuides are also linked to all the other LibGuides. Despite Business having most LibGuides, they fall third in the most popular top ten LibGuides list. None of the Engineering LibGuides appear in the top ten LibGuides. This means that librarians in that Faculty will need to engage in more marketing.

Given the spread of CPUT across campuses, there is potential for growth of LibGuides that would deal with the needs of a specific local user clientele at branch level. This growth potential will be realized in time. The other areas of potential growth would be on LibGuides that are assignment based dealing with a certain topic or aspect.

4. USING LIBGUIDES TO ENHANCE OUR SERVICES
LibGuides are useful for the librarians and users. Our view is that, these websites complement the general CPUT Libraries website well. At CPUT Libraries we use LibGuides for the following activities:

**4.1 Collaboration and communication**

Over the year we have been using LibGuides, they have proved to be a powerful tool for librarian-librarian collaboration and librarian-lecturer collaboration. CPUT still has a high degree of duplication of courses across campuses. In the case of Nursing, for example, it is offered across four branches. In order for a librarian to create a proper CPUT nursing guide, there has to be an on-going collaboration between librarians in all those branches. Hence the LibGuide for Nursing has four librarians as owners who co-operate and collaborate in their efforts. LibGuides allow for up to four people to be owners of a single LibGuide as is the case with our Nursing LibGuide.

The LibGuides have also enhanced the lecturer-librarian collaboration efforts. Before the LibGuides project, CPUT had a project wherein librarians were embedded on Blackboard classes of lecturers to ensure that they are kept abreast of developments in the departments – by bringing the library to the Blackboard class (Shapiro, 2012:10).

As a way of strengthening that relationship, LibGuides are also linked to the Blackboard classes as shown in figure four below.
CPUT LibGuides presence on Blackboard had an impact in increasing visibility and usage of library resources. Database usage statistics reflects the high usage impact rates of major subject databases that CPUT subscribes to.

4.2 Marketing and promotion

Previously, with only the general CPUT Libraries website used to market the services of the library, it was almost impossible to use the website for small target users. The website is mainly used to market resources and services for CPUT in general. LibGuides are a good platform to market our resources and services to specific target users. Through LibGuides we have been able to provide links to print and e-resources such as eBooks, e-Journals, Databases, Referencing, Information literacy etc. for specific courses.

They allow for the promotion of specific events or days or months. The LibGuides for Health & Wellness Science Faculty, for example, are also used to promote health campaign events on specific days/months.

4.3 Announcements to library users
At CPUT Libraries we also use LibGuides to make announcements to specific users. The opening and closing times of our branches, especially during vacation, are not similar. Vacation times are not even applicable in other branches. It is usually a challenge when you ask users to check this piece of information for themselves as they have to navigate through the information to check their specific branches. LibGuides allow us to provide this information without many hassles to the user. We also send reminder notes in the LibGuides to inform them about impending holidays and other events like orientation details, Information Literacy training and library training calendar.

4.4 Linking to Web 2.0 sites, post photos and videos

We use our LibGuides to link our branch library Facebook pages to them and vice-versa. The library website, LibGuides and Facebook pages are used to complement each other with each linked to another’s front page.

One of the most important features of LibGuides is that they are flexible and versatile. They allow for the posting of librarians photographs, podcasts, and videos. Widgets that allow for embedding the search boxes from the library online Catalogue, Google Scholar, databases and internet sites are also embedded in our LibGuides. Another important feature is the ability of LibGuides to allow for RSS Feeds from databases.

All CPUT LibGuides have a photo of a librarian which means when a user communicates with the librarian they can recognize and relate to the face they see on the LibGuide. LibGuides also allow for posting of videos to promote library activities. The videos are embedded from YouTube or from other websites on the web.

4.5 Statistics collection

By simple clicking on statistics in the LibGuides, one can be able to view the users’ viewing patterns. In other words, you can be able to identify the preferred topics that users view most in your LibGuide during specific periods. Old statistics are archived in the LibGuide so that one can be able to do comparative analysis between different years. Reports can be manipulated whichever way you want, in days, months or years. The report can also be exported to excel spreadsheet and is printer friendly.

Figure 5 below shows an example of Education LibGuides’ monthly link clicks as extracted from the Education LibGuide statistics. The five links are selected for the purpose of demonstration.
In the case of Education LibGuide, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) is by far the most accessed link. It has been accessed by 51% of LibGuide users followed by Proquest.

In this era where librarians are expected to show return on investment to the institution, these statistics help us to motivate for subscription to e-resources as part of collection management process. The statistics are used for evidence when we conduct our performance management reviews. They also assist us to improve our LibGuides by arranging our links menu accordingly based on users preferences. We sometimes market the areas of the guides that users struggle to view or even change menu names to accommodate the users.

4.6 Web-presence

LibGuides have also enhanced CPUT Libraries web presence especially given that CPUT Libraries does not have an official Facebook, blog and Twitter page at the moment. This means that LibGuides are our only websites with Web 2.0 features.

Since the creation of LibGuides, general questions from CPUT off-campus users and external users have also increased so much that some CPUT LibGuides now have a link to how to apply
to study at CPUT, application forms, brochures and other general information. This means that, potential students are accessing our LibGuides when they look for information about various faculties of CPUT.

5. DEALING WITH CHALLENGES

Creating LibGuides at CPUT Libraries however has not been without its challenges. Among the challenges that we experienced were the following:

5.1 Time consuming

Like all Web 2.0 sites, LibGuides are dynamic sites that require constant updating. This has proved challenging for most CPUT Librarians especially at the beginning of the year where they do orientation and most Information Literacy sessions. Thus, it was decided by a forum of librarians that each LibGuide will have to be updated at least once a month. The LibGuides co-ordinator, sends an e-mail to everybody reminding them to update their guides while a way of automated communication is being investigated.

5.2 IP connection problems and breaking links

IP problems have also been experienced which in turn hamper our marketing efforts. The firewall on the computers in all library and student computer laboratories kept blocking users to access LibGuides on campus while they are accessible remotely. This has proved particularly challenging for librarians who must then explain to students and staff why they are unable to access the LibGuides.

The requirement to update at least once a month has led to another challenge. Many subscription databases provide transient links that become dead a few minutes after they have been linked. This was particularly true for all Ebsco-Host databases. To counter this, our e-resources librarian requested permanent links from Ebsco-Host. This however cannot obviate the fact that these sites require active updating by librarians. The requirement to update once a month therefore cannot be a permanent solution.

5.3 Marketing

In order to deal with the challenge of marketing, we worked with the library marketing unit to create a uniquely CPUT slogan for LibGuides so that they can be easily understood by the users and for institutional branding. The slogan “LibGuides: your starting point for your assignments and research” was coined. It was agreed that featured LibGuides will rotate in the Library’s
home page. To that end, the LibGuides are posted on the front page of the library website according to faculties. We use a “what is a LibGuide” feature of the banner to provide a brief explanation to the users. LibGuide owners agreed to send bulk e-mail messages containing URL links of LibGuides to the university community with an explanatory description. Librarian’s e-mail signatures are now expected to include a link to their LibGuide/s. Librarians were also requested to clarify the concept of LibGuides to academics during departmental meetings and visits. When conducting Information Literacy training, librarians used this as an opportunity to market LibGuides. LibGuide presence within Blackboard environment added usage value for these portals.

Our marketing efforts at the moment are focused internally but as the LibGuides develop, we envisage that we will have to market more aggressively on international websites.

5.4 Use of chat features

One other challenge that we are faced with is how we can use the chat features of LibGuides. This has probably been the least used feature of all our LibGuides. When we created the LibGuides we were concerned that we will be overwhelmed with user activity to the extent that chat is disabled in most LibGuides. If we want our LibGuides to improve the interaction between ourselves and the users, then we will have to enable them to use the chat platform. We will have to find a way of controlling and steering their contributions more to the academic topics, like we do on Facebook.

6. CONCLUSION

At CPUT Libraries, LibGuides have enhanced our communication and collaboration efforts. They provide online space for subject specific information resources and content. They have increased our web visibility and offered us an opportunity to keep up with trends. They provide us with some Web 2.0 features but they do not replace the library website - they complement it.

REFERENCES


