LibGuide + Relections

Reflections

The purpose of this assignment was to create a LibGuide for senior school students (ages 11 to 18) at [a private] International School in Switzerland. Having had varying configurations of my three children attend this school for the past ten years (first my oldest, then my two oldest, then my two youngest, now my youngest), I am intimately familiar with the complex and specific information needs of this community. The student body of roughly 300 is composed of children of up to 55 different nationalities. They speak a range of native tongues, but the learning language is English. All students also study French, the language of the region, but not all are proficient. Finding English language resources in Switzerland is challenging. The situation is complicated by the fact that most families are new to the region and are struggling to integrate into the Swiss community. Senior school students are also navigating adolescence and the university application process, like all other children their age. Being very familiar with the information needs of foreign teenagers in Switzerland and the difficulty they face in accessing relevant resources, I dug into this assignment with a passion.

I chose to focus on free internet information sources for several reasons. Modern teenagers expect their information needs to be met immediately on the internet with mobile devices. Other factors include the scarcity of school library print materials and the scarcity of any English language print materials in Switzerland. I chose the LibGuide format because it is intuitive, accessible, mobile, convenient, and links to other internet

sources. I organized the information needs of the International School's students into relevant categories: Homework Resources, Books and Reading, University Guidance, Activities, and Wellness and Safety. These categories are conveniently arranged by LibGuides into separate pages.

The resources included in my LibGuide correspond to the principles of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) described by Cassell and Hiremath (2013, pp. 307-310). Whereas resources recommended in the textbook are geared toward US users, the resources included in the [private] International School Resource Guide are adapted to multinational English-speaking students who are residents of Switzerland. Being in Europe, it is important to strike a balance between UK and American English language resources, especially for the sections dealing with health, safety and wellness, universities, reading, and reference materials. Some essential local information, however, is only available in French.

The [private] International School Resource Guide is useful, varied, and personal, reflecting the design preferences and information needs of this age group. Studies indicate that younger internet users prefer web pages that are perceived as fun, personalized, contain little text, and have a search feature (Cyr, 2014. p. 10). I feel that I successfully utilized the LibGuide technology. I was able to include text, links, images, and videos. I also used a Google Scholar search and a questionnaire for feedback. Several images and a video in my LibGuide are of and by current and former students of the school, with whom users have a personal connection.

Research by Tractinsky "suggests that esthetics and visual design may be especially important to users in this age group" (Cyr, 2014, p. 10). According to SJSU

professor Raymond Dean (2016), current web design is trending toward a minimalist approach that highlights the content of the web page: muted colors with sparse bolder colors for emphasis, thin borders, sparse graphics, and plenty of white space. These trends are apparent on many of today's most popular websites: Wikipedia, Google, YouTube, and Apple. Although design choices available with the LibGuide software are very limited, I opted for simplicity wherever possible. I chose square corners, white backgrounds, and unobtrusive borders to achieve a modern look that does not distract from the content. I was confined to a three-column layout, to the sort of content allowed in the different types of boxes, and to the placement of images and text. However, I feel that the end result effectively incorporates current design trends, user design preferences, and user information needs to the extent possible.

I would have liked to include school library materials in 'Books and Reading' and 'Homework Resources.' However, the school librarian was very unhelpful and refused to meet with me. If I were to continue this project in the future, I would like to add Subject Guides, with specific resources recommended by teachers at the school. I would also like to find a way to incorporate resources form more countries if possible, while still focusing on English language content. I would also like to add information pertaining to multiculturalism, which is a central theme at the school.

My project demonstrates my proficiency in Core Competency I: "Use service concepts, principles, and techniques to connect individuals or groups with accurate, relevant, and appropriate information." In completing this assignment, I identified the information needs of a specific community, selected appropriate information resources to suit these needs, and utilized the best technology with which to provide access to these

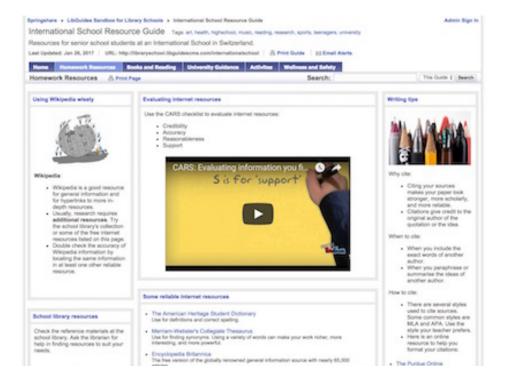
resources. I am extremely satisfied with the [private] International School Resource Guide, and feel that this is an excellent culmination of the concepts, principles, and techniques I have learned about reference services. Having been personally involved with this community for a number of years, I feel that I have created for them a useful and much needed information resource. My daughter and her friends have reviewed and approved my LibGuide, and have requested access. I plan to approach the school principal to explore ways to expand the [private] International School Resource Guide and to incorporate it into the school website.

Screenshots

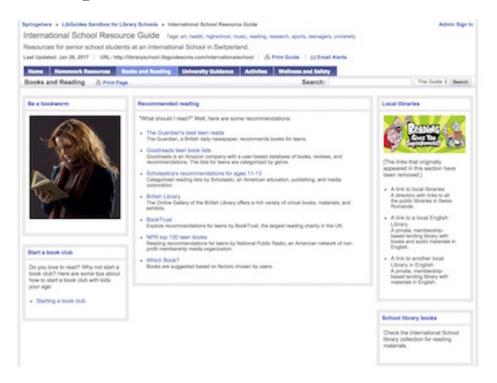
Home Page



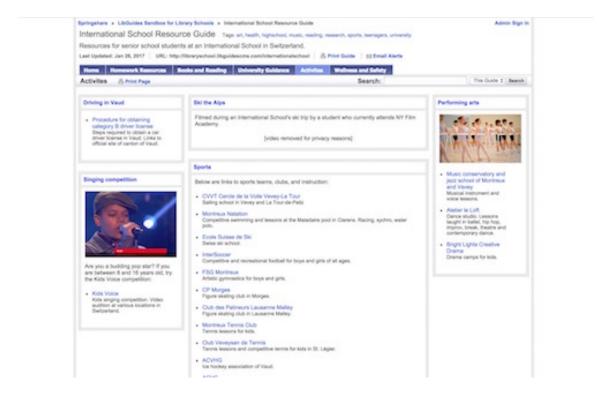
Homework Resources



Books and Reading



Activities



University Guidance



Wellness and Safety



References

- Cassell, K. A., & Hiremath, U. (2013). *Reference and information services: An introduction* (Third ed.). Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman.
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