

# Academic BRASS

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## **Are My LibGuides Useful? Usability Testing on Business LibGuides**

Business librarians worldwide are creating and publishing business LibGuides at the subject, course, database, and event level. A search for the keyword “business” in Springshare’s LibGuides Community website (<https://community.libguides.com>) results in over 264,000 pages. With the ubiquity and abundance of LibGuide pages in academic libraries, how are librarians assessing the usefulness of their subject-specific (business) LibGuides in helping students with basic business reference? This short article will provide an overview of the *Business LibGuide Usability Study* and describe the procedures for conducting an intercept usability study.

The purpose of the *Business LibGuide Usability Study* (conducted in Spring 2018) was to determine how useful Loyola Marymount University’s (LMU) Business LibGuide is for answering basic research questions in business, specifically basic company and industry research. The responses were used to improve the content and design of the Business LibGuide.

### **Methodology & Procedures**

*Methodology:* Intercept task-based usability & survey

- Intercept task-based usability studies consist of recruiting participants to complete the designated task(s) as they pass by (e.g., library or any university location).
- The survey was created in Google Forms and deployed at the end of the usability session.

*Procedures:* Observed by researcher and note-taker

- Participants were asked to “think aloud” as they completed each task. Participants filled out a Participant Consent Form granting permission to capture their screen and audio using Camtasia and to share the study results in aggregate form.

*Tasks:* Task 1 and Task 2

- Participants completed two tasks using the Business LibGuide. Task 1 required participants to locate two databases for company information and Task 2 required participants to locate two databases for industry information. Time on task and success rate were recorded for each participant. Success was measured by participants finding two databases for each task. See Appendix I for the Task 1 and Task 2 task cards.

Survey: Google Forms

- Students were given a two-question survey that measured the difficulty of completing the tasks and the level of helpfulness of the Business LibGuide.

Location: Business School Lobby

- Participants were recruited in the business school in lieu of the LMU Library to: 1) strategically reach business students and 2) reach students that may not frequently use the library.

Participants: Five business students

- Of the five participants, three were Entrepreneurship majors, one was a double major in Finance and Film, and one was an MBA student. Three were juniors, one was a first-year, and one was a graduate student.

## Results

The majority of the participants remained on the LibGuide landing page and only used the *Most Useful Places to Search: Business* box to locate library databases. The two primary reasons students selected the databases were:

- Based on the database description (i.e., students had never used and/or were not aware of the database) and
- Previous use or knowledge of the database.

Table 1. Task summary results

Task	# of Participants	Average Time on Task	Overall Success Rate	Total # of Wrong Paths
Locate company information	5	00:48	80%	1
Locate industry information	5	00:32	100%	0

Table 2. Frequency of databases selected

TASK 1		TASK 2	
Database	# of Times Selected	Database	# of Times Selected
LexisNexis Company Dossier	5	IBISWorld	3
Business Insights: Global	1	Business Insights: Global	2
Business Source Complete	1	Business Source Complete	2
Morningstar	1	Passport	2
IBISWorld	1	ABI/INFORM	1
Forbes Private Companies	1		

For the survey, students were asked to rate the level of difficulty in completing the task using the Business LibGuide. Three students said it was *Very Easy*, one student said it was *Easy*, and one student selected *Neutral*. When asked how useful the Business LibGuide was for finding resources, two students said the Business LibGuide was *Very Useful*, two students were *Neutral*, and one student said the Business LibGuide was *Not Useful*.

### **Conclusion**

The *Business LibGuide Usability Study* confirmed some findings with previous LMU usability studies:<sup>1</sup>

- Students tend to quickly scan the LibGuides.
- Databases are selected based on familiarity or based on the database description.
- Students typically begin their research in other places.

Recommendations for the Business LibGuide:

- Set LibGuide settings to allow database descriptions to be fully displayed since students rely heavily on the descriptions when selecting business databases.
- Re-evaluate databases on the LibGuide landing/home page to prioritize most relevant and useful business databases.
- Reorder LibGuide pages to highlight the most important concepts.
- Remove sub-pages to decrease navigation confusion.
- Consider LibGuide layout to ensure both easy navigation and visually appealing pages.

LibGuide usability studies allow librarians to evaluate LibGuides, identify potential issues, and make improvements to meet their usability objectives. The intercept-task usability study was a low-cost (only cupcakes and granola bars were used as incentives) and low-time (in comparison to a larger or more in-depth) assessment tool that provided a better understanding of how business students use LibGuides.

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<sup>1</sup>Previous LMU studies included usability on our Theology LibGuides and analyzing database descriptions.

**Appendix I**  
*Business LibGuide Usability Study: Task Cards*

**TASK 1:**

Locate company information using the Business LibGuide  
*libguides.lmu.edu/business*

You are completing a company analysis on Netflix. The assignment requires two library sources that provide information on Netflix. Use the Business LibGuide to help you find two databases with company information. Name the two databases you found.

*Figure 1.*

**TASK 2:**

Locate industry information using the Business LibGuide  
*libguides.lmu.edu/business*

You are writing a report on the hotel industry. The assignment requires two library sources that provide information on the hotel industry. Use the Business LibGuide to help you find two databases with industry information. Name the two databases you found.

*Figure 2.*