



La Trobe University Library

Online Subject Resources Pages

Dinosaur or Phoenix?

Linda Sheridan

Library website revamped 2005: 'One Library' focus



Result of an extensive web usability survey which examined how clients searched the website.

Move away from campus homepages to a single homepage.

Most popular sections of the website were listed prominently on the homepage - including Catalogue, Databases and **Subject Resources.**

A screenshot of the La Trobe University Library website homepage. The header features the La Trobe University logo and navigation links: About the Library, Campus Libraries, Catalogue, Databases, LibXplore, and HELP! Below the header is a main navigation bar with 'Library' in the center and 'FIND >' on the left. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Services for...' with links for Students, Staff, and Community; 'Useful Information' with links for Opening Hours, Phone Numbers, Training, Request Forms, Document Delivery, Subject Guides, and Ask Us, Tell Us / View Replies; 'Catalogue for Books and more...' with a search box, a dropdown menu set to 'Albury-Wodonga', and a 'GO' button; 'What's New' with a 'Print Journals to Electronic' section; and 'University Links' and 'Other Libraries' sections. A 'Hint' box is visible on the right side, and a 'Did you find it?' survey link is at the bottom right. The footer contains copyright and maintenance information.

Background

Subject Resources Pages reviewed 2005.

New pages released 2006 - one library focus

115+ pages

Designed by individual

Campus specific

Listed by campus

Different content and layout on each page

78+ pages

Designed by group

Library wide relevance

Listed by subject

Template with core headings

Process July – Dec. 2005

- Reference Conference – issues paper distributed, **discussion on key issues**
- Created list of all pages and authors
- Identified relevant cross-campus groups
- Sub-committee developed 3 templates
- Subject Librarians voted on preferred one
- Groups collaborated to create new pages

Key issues arising

- Purpose – why do we create Subject Resources pages?
- Content – what kind of information should be included?
- Maintenance – how do we maintain useful pages within current workloads?

Purpose

Librarians agreed that Subject Resources Pages are;

- A place to find expert advice in locating relevant resources from anywhere, anytime, when the subject expert is not around
- A means of defining a librarian's role in the academic process; to establish and promote a Library presence
- As a tool to support teaching and enhance the learning process

Content

Agreed on the following core headings;

- Key Resources
- Databases
- Other
- Internet Resources
- Student Materials
- Writing and Style Guides
- Further Assistance

Content: example

[Library home](#) » [Subject Guides](#) » Australian History

Australian History

Key Resources

- [Keyword searching](#)
- [Reference material](#)

Databases

- [Australian History Databases](#)
- [Government Publications & Statistics](#)
- [Newspaper & Newspaper Indexes](#)

Internet Resources

- [Archive and Library Collections](#)
- [Gateways](#)
- [Specific Topic Resources](#)

Writing & Style Guides

- [Style guides and manuals](#)
- [Student Assignment Manual](#)
- [Guide to Grammar and Style](#)

Further Assistance

- [Borrowing from other libraries](#)
- [Library Skills Online](#)
- [Subject Librarian:](#)
Albury-Wodonga: [Heather Hulett](#)
Bendigo: [Bess Secomb](#)
Bundoora: [Ann Copeland](#)
Mildura: [Maureen Speed](#)

Related Subject Guides:

[History](#)
[Politics](#)
[Sociology](#)

Content: example

[Library home](#) » [Subject Guides](#) » Psychology

Psychology

Key Resources

- [Reference Materials](#)

Databases

- [Psychology Databases](#)

Internet Resources

- [Gateways](#)
- [Societies](#)
- [Statistics](#)

Writing & Style Guides

- [Citing References Learning Objects](#)
(University of Cardiff APA Referencing online tutorial)
- [Style guides and manuals](#)

Student Materials

- [Bendigo: printable version \(PDF 61Kb\)](#)
- [Reliable hints and tips for researching your essays \(PDF 116Kb\)](#)
- [How good are you at identifying references? \(PDF 101Kb\)](#)
- [Training Evaluation Form](#)

Further Assistance

- [Library Skills Online](#)
- [Subject Librarian:](#)
Albury-Wodonga: [Donna Outtrim](#)
Bendigo: [Bess Secomb](#)
Bundoora: [Lorraine Chapman](#)

Related School

- [School of Psychological Science](#)

Content: Diversity of approach

Include call numbers?

Yes...

- If they are core resources held in our collections, we want the students to be able to find them easily, without having to click to other sections of the website.

No...

- Requires regular updating
- Does not encourage the students to search the catalogue independently.

Content: Include unit specific material?

Yes...

- These documents are created by the Librarians in direct response to students' specific needs, often in collaboration with academic staff.
- They are popular because the content links directly to the curriculum and academics refer students to them.

No...

- Time consuming to create and maintain.
- Potential inequity of service as not all Subject Librarians create them and not all units have specific materials created for them.
- Encourages students to expect lists of resources for each unit rather than develop information seeking behaviours.

Maintenance

Subject Librarians agreed at the Reference Conference that they wanted the facility to update and add information to their pages in a timely manner.



User feedback

Survey to Subject Librarians
distributed August 2006

- Have you had any feedback on your Subject Resources pages from users?
 - If yes, please note the positives and negatives.
 - Does the current format satisfy your needs?
 - If not, what improvements would you suggest?
 - Other Comments?
- 21 Subject Librarians surveyed – 16 responded
 - 87.5% (14/16) had received feedback, with only two reporting any negative responses.
 - 68.8% (11/16) were satisfied with the current format.
- 3 of the 5 who expressed some dissatisfaction identified the opening menu as the cause –amended in response to this feedback

Feedback from librarians

- *[Students] Find it a useful **springboard** to start their research*
- *They are pleased that there is **one location** that provides so much information on specific topics.*
- *Lots of enthusiasm for pages which were produced in collaboration with the lecturer's suggestions.*
- *The standardised look ensures **ease of use** across all disciplines. The cross-campus presentation has reduced my workload and the unnecessary duplication of pages.*
- *The most relevant parts are those related to teaching - that's what the students will use - if it helps with their assignments. It helps to have them generally in a similar format.*
- *The development of the pages has also been important to strengthen links with subject librarians.*

Some comments from staff...

“Your subject resources are great!! As an academic skills advisor I am often dealing with students who are unsure about subject requirements and style guides. Now I can direct them to the Subject Resources area.”

“I know I will use this page and will certainly make links to it from pages I work with – and suggest to others they do the same. Thanks again for making life much easier.”

2007 and beyond

- Cross-campus coordinating group monitors ongoing maintenance
- Link checker produces regular reports on broken links
- Weblogs – from 0 to 6,000 per month
- 46 of 78 pages updated this year
- 70 updated since the end of 2006.

Library help guides: useful?

- Provides a platform from which the Librarian can offer help to students trying to find information in a specific subject area.
- An area of the website that can respond directly to student and staff needs as they arise
- Evidence that pages are well used
- A template provides consistency of layout and promise of core information on each subject.
- Pages can be used by all students studying in this subject area regardless of location.

If we did not have these pages, what alternate online venue do we have to connect with our students?



La Trobe University Library

www.latrobe.edu.au

Linda Sheridan
Campus Librarian (Albury-Wodonga)

l.sheridan@latrobe.edu.au