## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Evaluating Medical College Lib Guides: A Usability Case Study

GHULAM FARID[1], SADIA ZAHEER[2], AYESHA KHALID[3], ALIA ARSHAD[4], MUHAMMAD KAMRAN[5]
[1]Senior Librarian, Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Lahore PhD Scholar DoIM, University of the Punjab, Lahore
[2]Director Medical Education Sialkot Medical College, Sialkot
[3]PhD Scholar- DoIM, University of the Punjab, Lahore
[4]Assistant Professor, Department of Information Management, PU, Lahore
[5]Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Lahore
Correspondence to: Ghulam Farid, Email: css_bcs@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

Many libraries have adopted usability testing as a standard practise for ensuring that their online presence is user-friendly and accessible. This study attempt to test usability of LibGuides platform at Shalamar Teaching Hospital, Lahore. The purpose of this qualitative research is to examine the usability, user experience (UX), and information architecture (IA) of LibGuides in the institutional context of Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Lahore, The research explored users' views and was then extended to discuss the general utility of the Shalamar LibGuides. In this aspect, the study is remarkable because there is a paucity of literature on the subject.

**Keywords:** user-centered design, subject guides, LibGuides, Pakistan, usability; research guides; Medical libraries

## INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to continually enhance the user experience of library services, usability becomes a proactive phase in libraries website development. First released in written form decades earlier, the library or subject guides became a focus of vital interest in e-format in the mid-1990s (Vileno, 2007). LibGuides are defined as "the industry standard for library subject guides" [1]. Library guide is rather a new e-service and its use is becoming popular with users of higher education settings' libraries. It is an information product and emerging as a common research tool for accessing relevant information among academia. LibGuides are designed by people working at Springshare who understand the library environment as a way for libraries to build their topic guides and to host them. Academic libraries currently offer subject-based research aids as a standard service. According to a 2011 survey of 99 academic library websites in the United States, all of them provided such guidelines [2].

LibGuides is a content management platform which helps librarians to flexibly organize and present library collections to users using Web 2.0 software. The library guides usually take the form of annotated bibliographies [3]. Such tools are often called pathfinders, or "study maps," which are designed by librarians to provide essential information for different subjects or topics. The LibGuides can also be linked to more than 30 social apps including, Facebook, Twitter, and Delicious. Therefore, LibGuides are a new medium in libraries where librarians can interact with teachers, scholars, and staff.

Globally, librarians are developing online guides to curate knowledge and exchange information on any theme, subject, course, method. The information items are structured around books and journal articles, relevant conferences, and online connections for browsing the needed piece of information [4]. Advocated for subject guides with pedagogical designs that guide students through the research process. In 2011, a survey of 99 academic library websites in the United States discovered that they all provided this type of information [5].

Librarians curate subject guides to incorporate relevant resources for specific disciplines or themes. The Libguides are designed to be utilised by users who are expected to undertake work on an unknown topic and serve as beginning points for research in that domain.

Therefore Library guides should be user friendly. As Pickens (2017) noted that students come to certain guides to find tools for their tasks, not learn how to use such guides itself.

Subject guides are meant to be used by students who need to undertake research on a new topic as a starting point for research in a disciplinary field. The preparation of subject guides requires librarians to consciously engage with essential sources in the discipline, which is a secondary benefit. Librarians have been said to gain significantly from guides in terms of their career and professional development [6]. Subject guides in electronic form, which first appeared in printed form decades ago, were a focus of professional interest in the mid-1990s [7]. There are a variety of ways to make subject guides available online, but the Springshare LibGuides platform, which was launched in 2007 as a mechanism for libraries to produce and host their subject guides, has arguably attained universality. SlavenZivkovic, the founder of Springshare, said in 2017 that LibGuides had a user base of over 100,000 librarians [8]. Primary Research Group performed a survey of 57 libraries utilising LibGuides in 2013 and found that nearly 80% of them used LibGuides for subject guides. Following the widespread use of LibGuides as a platform, a number of studies evaluating various elements of their effective design and use have been published [9]. Unlike previous LibGuides-related publications, Ouellette's 2011 study used in-depth interviews with 11 students to learn how they used subject guides published on the LibGuides platform and what aspects they liked and disliked.

Nonetheless, Bowen, Ellis, and Chaparro (2018) point out that, while LibGuide usability testing has been widely discussed in the librarian community, further research is needed. Because LibGuides is used by a wide range of libraries around the world, more data from different types of institutions will aid in the establishment of best practises in subject guide design on this platform [10] .The effectiveness of a guide with a "pedagogical" design (i.e., arranged around the research process) was compared to that of a traditional pathfinder. They discovered that the educational guide obtained significantly higher ratings from the students using an A/B testing methodology. In an assessment of a final assignment (annotated bibliography), students utilising the pedagogical guide beat students using a pathfinder in all five categories examined (source, annotation, evaluation, citation, and mechanics), however the difference was only significant for citation according to Lee and Lowe (2018)[11]. Students had a more positive learning experience while using a pedagogical guide, even though there was no significant change in performance on a given work.

As a result of these issues, Sonsteby and DeJonghe (2013) posed a key question: what is the subject guide's future? [12] Despite evidence that course and assignment guides are being used more effectively, most academic libraries continue to offer subject guides. Is this just inertia or does offering subject-based advice having real value? Answers would be aided by additional proof.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Focal areas of investigation include: To explore the usability of Lib Guides for health care professionals in terms of primary content elements of Lib-guides.

To examine user experience (UX), and information architecture (IA) of SMDC LibGuides

To figure out Lib guide's usefulness for health care practitioners.

To assess the health care professionals' satisfaction in terms of Lib-guides product.

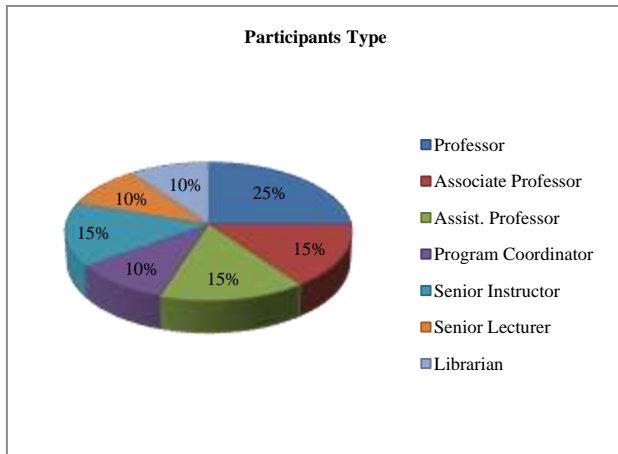to provide recommendations for improvement in the portal of SMDC

## METHODS

The present study utilized qualitative approach and employed interview techniques (refer to Appendix 1) for gathering data. The population was medical and allied health sciences students (MBBS, Nursing, and Allied Health Sciences) and health professionals (Professor, associate & assistant professor, consultants) from various basic health and clinical health science departments working within Shalamar Hospital, Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Shalamar Nursing School and Shalamar Allied Health Science, Lahore. Minor changes were incorporated in interview guide by review of field experts and Institutional Review Board of Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Lahore.

Convenience sampling was used to test the usability of Sub-Guide (Chan et al., 2019); a total of 25 participants including professors, asset professors, consultants, nurses and senior lecturers participated in the study.
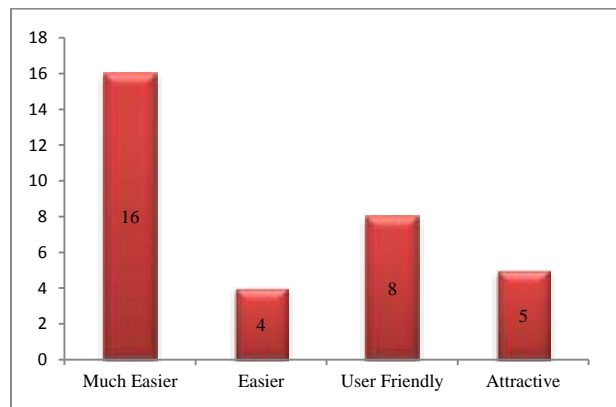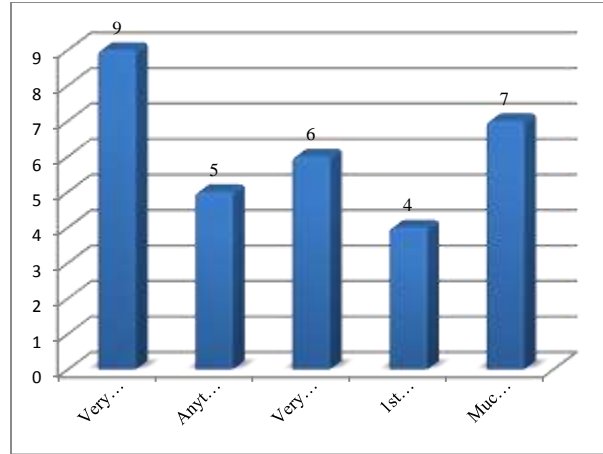
**Data Analysis**

**Demographic Information:** After the data collection from senior faculty of Shalamar Institute of Health Sciences (SIHS), Lahore, SIHS has four institutes i.e. Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Shalamar Hospital, Shalamar Nursing School and Shalamar Allied Health Sciences College. At Shalamar Medical & Dental College and Shalamar Hospital, there were a total of 20 medical and health care professionals, including professors 5, associate professors 3, and assistant professors 3.At Shalamar hospital and SMDC the medical professionals' have MBBS degrees with specialization of FCPS, M. Phil and Ph.D. on the other hand program coordinators 2 senior instructors 3, senior lecturers 2 and librarians 2 participated from nursing college and allied health sciences institute. The most of the participants have working experiences between 10 to 30 years in teaching and clinical side.
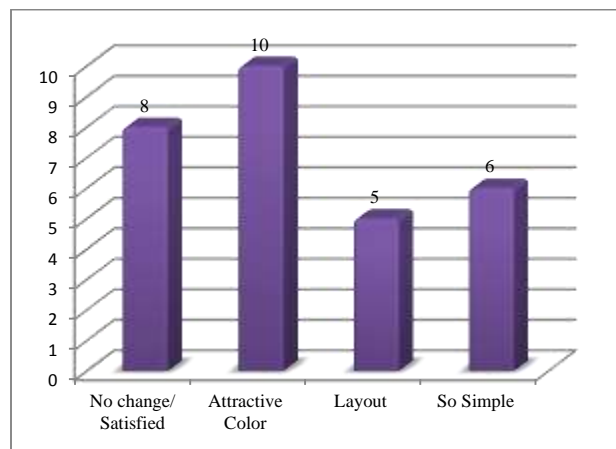
**Participants Type**

**Did you learn anything new/useful from this guide? Do you think that there is too much or too little information on this guide?:** The question asked from to participants about usefulness of library guide and anything new. The response rates were from different medical, nursing and allied professionals answered 9 asked very useful, participants 5 used 1 time at SIHS, very interesting 6, much informative 7 participants response from

**You have now seen subject guide. Do you think Sub-Guide is easier to use**: The response rate of participants majority 16 said library guide is much easier to use, 4 said easier, almost half 8 participants responded user friendly and 5 participants answered library guide is attractive from different medical, nursing and allied faculty

**What do you like from sub- guide? For example, search, color, layout, etc.:** The received responses from the participants'hundred percent 100% participants like search bar of library guide almost 25% also like color and majority of the participants 13 preferred layout of subject guide.
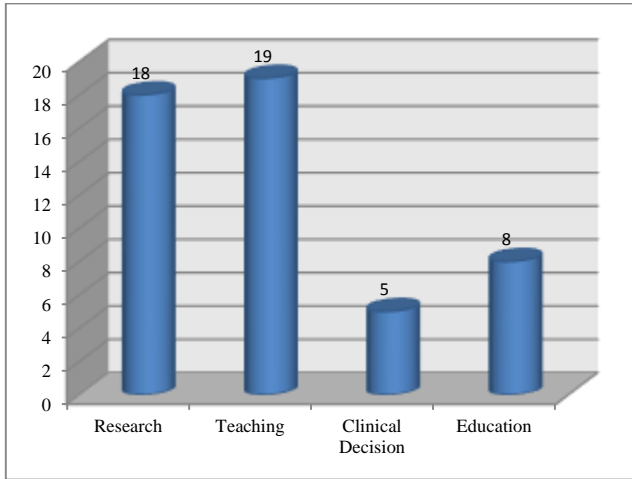
**In this sub-guide, what would you want to change?**: In this question the response rate from different participants, they 50% (10) wants to add more attractive color in library guide, participants 8 (40%) were satisfied and they don't wants to change anything, 5 (25%) participants desired to change the layout and 6 participants asked that this is so simple.
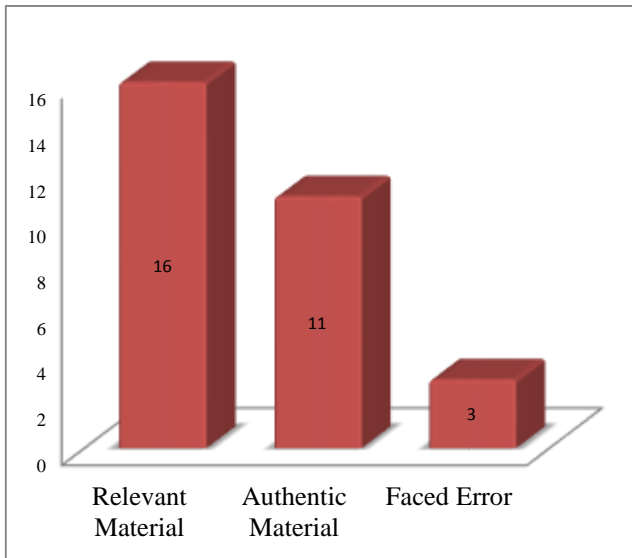
**How do you usually find information, books or articles for education, teaching, research and clinical decisions?:** The

answered about find information, article and books, majority of participants found books (19 participants), more than half12 preferred reference material, 5 participants search engines and 2 participants were found e-resources.

**This sub- subject is effective for you for your education, teaching, research and clinical decisions?:** The majority of the participants were used subject guide for teaching 95% (19), research 90% (18 participants), 5 participants for clinical decisions and 8 participants used for education.
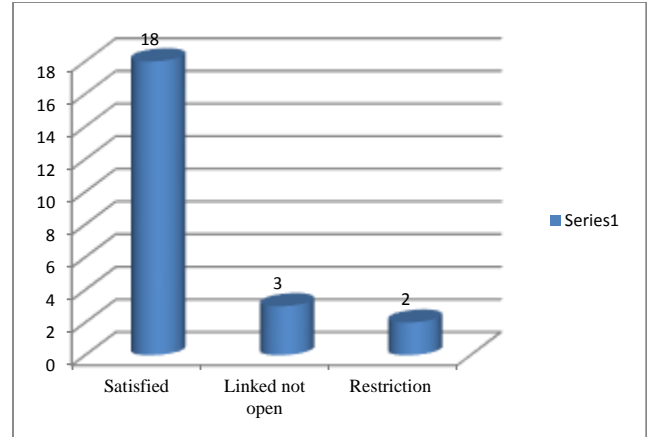


**Are you found the reverent or authentic information that you needed from sub-guide?**: Majority of the participants found relevant material 70% (16 participants); authentic material found 55% (11) and 15% (3) faced error to find the material from library guide.



**Are you satisfied from the usability of sub-guide?**: Majority of participants 90% (18) were satisfied, 3 participants asked lined not open and 2 participants faced error to use the library guide.
**Do you think that you will use the library subject guide in future?**: Majority of the participants90% (18) used library guide in future.4 participants used most probably
**Do you think that the subject guide will be useful to your fellows and students?**: The participants 95% (19) responds that library guide is much useful for us, fellows and students.



**If you have any suggestions regarding sub-guide.**
- Should be attractive but simple
- Make sure links must be open
- Very useful but must market it
- very useful Students and must trained the students
- Very interesting and useful
- Also target to students and inform them
- Error must be removed
- Library offered excellent free service
- There should be proper awareness to all students, faculty
- Students must be used
- Sometime don't found the resources
- Make sure links will open
- Sometime faced restriction error

## DISCUSSIONS

Digitally available library guides are becoming a modern mode of knowledge provision resource services. Often, users are distant and sometimes not the registered library users. Hence, it is always difficult to design and develop an ideal information product without engaging the users in the process of design and development. Because organizations need to involve users to learn about their needs to constantly improve the quality of any digital product and in current case LibGuides. This is a piece of small research that shed light on the usability of LibGuides at SMDC in medical context.

Subject guides have become a common source of user assistance in libraries over several decades 11. Subject guides, unlike bibliographies or more complete aid guides, are intended to be brief, compact, and introductory in nature. Majority of the respondents found LibGuides useful in current study. While, other respondents' experience fall in from very interesting to informative.

Through an end-user standpoint, the use of a structured and reliable interface, such as LibGuides, also has possible benefits. The interface provides for great versatility in terms of material quality and design, along with a fairly consistent and functional look and feel. It can save time specifically very crucial factor for all health professionals. The response rate of participants majority 16 said library guide is much easier to use, 4 said easier, almost half 8 participants responded user friendly and 5 participants answered library guide is attractive from different medical, nursing and allied faculty.

LibGuides' versatility enables interactive learning settings through interconnecting guides for various topics to represent multi- and interdisciplinary relationships. According to majority library guide were much easier to use, almost half participants responded user friendly and 5 participants answered library guide is attractive from different medical, nursing and allied faculty.

Because subject guides are primarily used as a tool for self-directed learning, it is critical that users feel at ease because this

allows information to be digested and traversed more easily. In addition to offering a functional experience, visual characteristics such as fonts, colours, alignment, and images are increasingly required to communicate complex brand attributes such as friendliness, reliability, and innovation in LibGuides. As found in current study from some participants want to add more attractive colour in library guide, some were satisfied and they don't want to change anything. While some with a desire to change the layout.The majority of the participants used subject guide for teaching 95% (19), research 90% (18 participants), 5 participants for clinical decisions and 8 participants used for education.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study provided researchers with a general understanding of user attitudes towards LibGuides. Usability can enhance the perception of the exploration and navigation mechanism of users in the library itself, as well as users can help to adapt Lib Guides in an improved way.

## REFERENCES

1. Chan C, Gu J, Lei C. Redesigning subject guides with usability testing: A case study. Journal of Web Librarianship. 2019 Jul 3;13(3):260-79.
2. Al-Qallaf CL, Ridha A. A comprehensive analysis of academic library websites: design, navigation, content, services, and web 2.0 tools. International Information & Library Review. 2019 Apr 3;51(2):93-106.
3. Emanuel J. A short history of library guides and their usefulness to librarians and patrons. Using LibGuides to enhance library services. Chicago: ALA TechSource. 2013 Jan 4:3-20.
4. Law R. Evaluation of hotel websites: Progress and future developments (invited paper for 'luminaries' special issue of International Journal of Hospitality Management). International Journal of Hospitality Management. 2019 Jan 1;76:2-9.
5. Mahmood K, Richardson JV. Adoption of Web 2.0 in US academic libraries: a survey of ARL library websites. Program. 2011 Sep 27;45(4):365-75.
6. Becker S, Crandall MD, Fisher KE, Kinney B, Landry C, Rocha A. Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at US Libraries. Institute of Museum and Library Services. 2010 Mar.
7. Chan C, Gu J, Lei C. Redesigning subject guides with usability testing: A case study. Journal of Web Librarianship. 2019 Jul 3;13(3):260-79.
8. Whitmer S. An interview with Slaven Zivkovic on the 10th anniversary of LibGuides. Public Services Quarterly. 2017 Sep 12;13(4):281-8.
9. Ghazawneh A, Henfridsson O. Balancing platform control and external contribution in third-party development: the boundary resources model. Information systems journal. 2013 Mar;23(2):173-92.
10. Sacks R, Eastman C, Lee G, Teicholz P. BIM handbook: A guide to building information modeling for owners, designers, engineers, contractors, and facility managers. John Wiley & Sons; 2018 Aug 14.
11. Bandyopadhyay A, Boyd-Byrnes MK. Is the need for mediated reference service in academic libraries fading away in the digital environment?. Reference Services Review. 2016 Nov 14.
12. Kovalenko OV, Yepyk LI, Yeromenko AY, Kashynska OY, Bezruchenkov YV. Training of the future tourist guides for intercultural communicative interaction within professional activity. Linguistics and Culture Review. 2021 Nov 9;5(S4):729-46.