

# Adding Some Pizzazz to Your Guides

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LibGuides provides many options for you to add variety and interest to your guides. Changing a guide from one that is textually oriented to one that is more visually engaging and informative is easy to do if you know how to capitalize on LibGuides' more advanced content boxes.

This chapter will demonstrate three general strategies of which you can take advantage to create more dynamic LibGuides:

**Customizing layout**—LibGuides provides numerous functions that will allow you to enhance the layout of a LibGuide. It is possible to use various colors for title bars and text boxes; column widths can be changed; and pages can be hidden from public view.

**Adding advanced content**—LibGuide boxes can be populated with many types of content other than text and links. This chapter will discuss the addition of RSS feeds, podcasts, video clips, documents and other types of files, links to your library catalog, forms for user feedback, lists of library events, and Google searches.

**Reusing and organizing content**—One of the strengths of LibGuides is that boxes, pages, and guides may be reused in other LibGuides. Subpages can be added as an organizational tool. Pages and boxes can easily be reordered within your guide.

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Using the skills that you acquired from chapter 8, this chapter will give you the knowledge to add components to your guides that will make them visually more appealing and will be more likely to keep the attention of your audience. As you've discovered, LibGuides is a highly customizable and flexible program with many ways to change the look of your guides. This chapter will not address all of the advanced features, but it will address the more commonly used ones. Most of the strategies in this chapter are as easy to perform as the basic steps discussed in chapter 8. If you have not used LibGuides before, you may want to read chapter 8 before you read this chapter. Springshare also has an excellent introduction to LibGuides in general and adding content to LibGuides in particular. The end of chapter 8 delineated a number of places on Springshare's website to receive introductory help (<http://help.springshare.com>).

## CUSTOMIZING THE GUIDE LAYOUT

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This section will cover some of the ways in which you can customize the look and feel of your guides. Everything from the background color to the shape of your content boxes can be changed. However, your local LibGuides administrator has the power to lock down the look and feel for the entire system. Often this is done to ensure that your library's guides have a consistent format for your users. Consult your local LibGuides administrator and find out what customizations are available at your library.

To make any adjustments or customizations to your guides, you need to use the Command Bar located at the top of the screen of the guide that you are editing. (See chapter 8 for a more detailed explanation.) The Command Bar features

**Dashboard**—The home page for the LibGuide editing system.

**Guide Settings**—This choice allows you to change numerous characteristics of the LibGuide on which you are working.

**Guide Look & Feel**—When enabled at your library you may change colors of guide title bars, background, and so on.

**Add / Edit Pages**—This choice allows you to change numerous characteristics of the page on which you are working.

**Preview**—This link opens a window where you can see how your guide will look to your users when it is published

**Help**—Choosing this link sends you to Springshare’s extensive knowledge base of FAQs.

## Change Color and Shapes

Assuming your local LibGuides administrator has not locked down the colors or box shapes options, click on Guide Look & Feel from the Command bar and select Change Layout / Colors to change the colors or shapes of the content boxes on your guides. The upper bar controls the color of the page background using predefined colors, the shape of the tabs, the color of the tabs using predefined colors, and the font of the tabs and titles of your content boxes.

The second bar of options controls the shape of your content boxes and the color of the headers or titles of your content boxes using predefined colors. Changing the shape of the content boxes is controlled using the Boxes option. LibGuides allows the content boxes to be squared, rounded, or striped. The third bar of options allows you to save your customizations with Save Settings, Cancel any changes made, or Revert to the default design and return to editing your LibGuide. If your Change Layout / Colors menu choice is greyed out, your system has been locked down by your LibGuides administrator.

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## Columns

Often LibGuides administrators or teams may have set up templates or default guides which provide a common column width among an author’s creations. Chapter 6 of this book discusses why various column layouts are better than others. However, there will inevitably come a time when you need to deviate from the standard. Chapter 8 goes into more detail discussing how to easily change columns. This section will discuss a bailout strategy if you happen to make a mistake and “lose” the content of a particular column.

If you choose a column layout that removes a column of content, don’t panic. Be aware that what you are doing here is simply hiding columns and not deleting the content that was created or placed in those columns. If you’ve accidentally hidden a column that you didn’t want hidden, just revert to the default settings and choose



a different layout option. If you have created content in any of the columns that you hide, that content will not be visible to your users. This is a good reason for keeping your guides Unpublished or Private while you are editing. Otherwise, any changes made to a Published guide will be viewable immediately to your users. Later on in this chapter we will go over how to add a new page of content to a Published guide that is hidden from the user until you decide to switch the page from being invisible to visible. Reverting to the default layout is a simple three-step process: (1) Add / Edit Pages, (2) Resize Columns, then (3) click Default.

## Page Visibility

Changing page visibility allows you to add or create additional pages of content to a preexisting, published guide without that new page of information being visible to the public until you decide to switch the visibility of that page. This feature is extremely useful when you want to create boxes in a sandbox environment—an area where you are prepping content and polishing the page for inclusion in the published guide.

Adding a page that can be edited without your users seeing it until you are ready is done through a two-step process. At the top of your guide, click on Add / Edit pages and select the Add / Reuse page link. At the bottom left of the Change Page Info screen you will find a check box next to “Hide this page.” (See figure 9.1.) When selected, the page will not be displayed on the public version of the guide, but the page will be available to you so it can be edited while hidden. When this box is checked, notice that the title of your page is in italics and at the top of your content is the wording “This page has been flagged as ‘hidden’ and will not be visible from the public interface.” It is also possible to hide an existing page by choosing Add / Edit Pages and then Edit Page Info. You will find the same option that you can check to hide a previously existing page. To make the page visible, uncheck this option.

## ADDING ADVANCED CONTENT

Chapter 8 discussed the three most useful types of content that can be added to LibGuides—Rich Text / Dynamic Content / Scripts, Simple Web Links, and Links & Lists. This section covers how to add some of the more advanced content boxes that can give your guide an interactive and Web 2.0 feel. When adding a new box, your choices are on the Content Box Type Menu. (See figure 9.2.)

FIGURE 9.1  
Change Page Info screen

TINGS ▾

GUIDE LOOK & FEEL ▾

ADD / EDIT PAGES ▾

PREVIEW

HELP

Change Page Info

Select the page you would like to edit, and then enter new information in the box provided.

Page to Change:

Make a Research Appointment

Page Name:

Make a Research Appointment

Description:

Redirect URL:

\* Only specify a Redirect URL when you wish to create a page that does not contain any content, but simply links to another location. Entering a URL into this field will not set a Friendly URL for your page.

☒ Hide this page. When selected, the page will not be displayed on the public version of the guide but the page will be available in admin/edit mode so it can be edited while hidden.

Save Changes

Close

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FIGURE 9.2  
Drop-down list of content box types

Create New Box

Reuse Existing Box

When creating a new box, carefully select the b  
box is best for your purposes please use the B

Select the Content Box Type ▾

Rich Text / Dynamic Content / Scripts

Links Boxes

Multimedia Boxes

User Input Boxes

Miscellaneous Boxes

Google Boxes

System Content Boxes

LibAnswers

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## RSS Feeds

RSS is a standardized web feed format that you can use to automatically publish updated works, such as blogs, news headlines, and so on. RSS boxes can be added by choosing Multimedia Boxes and then RSS Feeds. (See figure 9.2.) There are many places on the Web to find RSS feeds. RSS feeds can be created in online article databases. When you have found a feed that you want to include in your guide, click on the link to the feed. This will generate a stripped-down web page with just the title of the new content, the date that the content was added to the website, and perhaps a brief abstract of the item. Copy the URL from your browser address bar. This will be used to add the feed to your guide. (See figure 9.3.)

RSS feeds are also generated from within many article databases. RSS feeds can retrieve articles based on a subject search or a journal's table of contents. Many libraries use a proxy server to authenticate licensed content and these proxy servers can modify the format of a URL, rendering the URL invalid. Ask your LibGuides administrator about the format of the RSS URL and how to adjust the URL for use.

One of the strengths of LibGuides is the built-in ability for repurposing preexisting information. Within the function of adding an RSS feed to your guide, you can search for other RSS feeds that have been implemented on other LibGuides

FIGURE 9.3  
Add RSS Feed URL

Feed URL:

Number of Items to Display:

Description:

☒ Display in a popup - recommended for most cases

☐ Display underneath the item title

☐ This RSS feed is restricted and must be read via the proxy server

☐ Add proxy URL to the front of the links within this feed

Save

Cancel

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across the system (your library's guides and other libraries using LibGuides) and import those feeds into your guides. When adding an RSS feed to your guide, you will have the opportunity to type in the name of a feed and LibGuides will match your words with preexisting feeds. When you choose one of the existing feeds, LibGuides will pre-populate the URL of the RSS feed for you. Each RSS content box holds only one RSS feed. However, you can have many RSS feed content boxes on your LibGuide.

Some suggestions for the use of RSS feeds are

Current Awareness Alerts—Thompson Rivers University Library—

<http://libguides.tru.ca/currentawarenessalerts>

Making Information Come to You—Popular Feeds—Polytechnic

Institute of New York University—Bern Dibner Library—<http://poly.libguides.com/content.php?pid=37279&sid=275466>

RSS Feed—Springshare—<http://help.springshare.com/content.php?pid=101296&sid=761161>

## Podcasts

Podcasts add multimedia elements that will enhance your LibGuide. Podcasts are recordings, either audio or video, which are normally issued on a regular basis and are made available for downloading and viewing on portable devices or on your computer. Much like RSS feeds where the content is delivered to you, the same applies for podcasts. Podcasts can be found by searching the Web. Like RSS feeds, they are identifiable with the RSS feed symbol and usually are listed as “podcasts.” Once you have located a podcast that you want to add to your guide, you will need to copy the podcast URL from your browser address bar. As you would with an RSS Feed, begin by adding a new content box to your page. Choose Multimedia Boxes and then Podcast.

Examples are:

Finding Podcasts by Discipline—St. John's University—Libraries—

<http://stjohns.campusguides.com/content.php?pid=36760&sid=277454>

Podcast Feed—Springshare—<http://help.springshare.com/content.php?pid=101296&sid=761161>



## Video

The Embedded Media & Widgets box makes it simple to include a video in your guide. Many instructional video clips exist on the Internet which can be added. Numerous libraries have created short videos on many aspects of information literacy. YouTube is another source of instructional videos which can be added. To add a video, choose the Embedded Media & Widgets box type and click on Add Media / Widget Code and paste in the embed code. Most video sites provide embed code.

Examples include:

Library Video Tutorials—Antelope Valley College Library—<http://avc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=112560&sid=847828>

Quick Tips—GateWay Library Video Tutorials—GateWay  
Community College—[http://libguides.gatewaycc.edu/  
Quick\\_Tips](http://libguides.gatewaycc.edu/Quick_Tips)

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## Documents and Files

The Documents and Files content box enables you to upload files (Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, PDF files, and so on) to make them available for your users to download. Just as with the other content boxes discussed, begin by adding a box to a page. Choose Select the Box Type; then Multimedia Boxes and then Documents & Files.

Some examples are:

ASA for Users of APA—Printable Handouts—Thompson Rivers  
University Library—<http://libguides.tru.ca/asastyleguide>

Quick Guides—Organizing and Citing Your Research—  
Shippensburg University Library—[http://library.ship.edu/  
content.php?pid=282866&sid=2330046](http://library.ship.edu/content.php?pid=282866&sid=2330046)

## Books from the Catalog

Book content boxes enable you to enter a list of books and provide links to the book records in your library catalog (or in Amazon). You can display the book title, author, ISBN, URL, and even display the book cover for the item. One of the



very useful features of this particular advanced content box is that it allows you to create links directly into your library's catalog, allowing your user to see more detailed information about the item—its circulation status, location, and so on. However, some library catalogs make this direct linking easier than others. Some library catalogs generate a persistent link, while other integrated library systems create a session link to a catalog record. There is a significant difference between these two types of links. A persistent link is a link that remains constant. If your integrated catalog system generates URLs based on sessions or if you are unsure, talk to your vendor or systems librarian for support.

If your catalog uses persistent links, adding a book from your catalog to your guide is as simple as pressing the Add Box link and choosing Books from the catalog from the Multimedia Boxes drop-down list. Pressing the Add New Book link opens a dialogue box which prompts you to add the book title, author/editor, ISBN (this field of information is used to pull cover art from Syndetics or Amazon), URL, cover art URL, cover art size, call number, and description. You will need to decide which of these fields provide you with the display that best suits your needs.

After adding a number of books to the Books from the Catalog content box, you have the ability to sort the books in any order that you deem necessary by clicking and dragging items to different positions. You also have the option to sort books on three predetermined sorting options: by title, by author, or by call number.

You can imagine some of the ways that you could use this box type. In this digital age, we librarians often want to direct users' attention from the website to our paper collections. In many cases the best source of information owned by your library is in paper. Some other examples of this are:

Books on Environmental History—Thompson Rivers University  
Library—<http://libguides.tru.ca/content.php?pid=4561&sid=508634>

Nursing—Books to Get You Started—Thompson Rivers University  
Library—<http://libguides.tru.ca/nursing>

## User Input Boxes

The Interactive Poll, User Feedback, and User Link Submission content boxes can encourage user engagement. These content boxes give your users a venue for communicating with your library. Your users will have the opportunity to answer simple poll questions, give you feedback on your guide with predefined questions,

or submit their favorite links to you. LibGuides allows only one user input box per content box, but you can have as many user input content boxes as you wish on your LibGuide. Each box type that requests user feedback will send an e-mail including the feedback to the owner of the LibGuide on which they appear.

Interactive Poll, User Feedback, and User Link Submission boxes can be chosen from the drop-down Select the Content Box Type. Choose User Input Boxes. Each box type has a unique usage in LibGuides.

### ***Interactive Poll***

The Interactive Poll box allows you to create quick, simple polls to add to your guides. By choosing a User Input box and then by indicating Interactive Poll you can add a box to your page that will allow you to receive audience feedback to one question per box. Choose Add Poll Question and key in the question to which you are seeking a reaction. You can then add up to ten poll prompts which may also have accompanying web pages.

An example is

Interactive Poll—LibGuides—Ashland University—Library—<http://libguides.ashland.edu/content.php?pid=33717&sid=256387>

### ***User Feedback***

The User Feedback box is similar to the Interactive Poll box, but the response prompts are predetermined by LibGuides. The prompts include (1) “Was this information helpful?” (2) “How useful is this content?” (3) “Please provide comments to help improve this page,” and (4) “Your e-mail address, so we can get back to you.” These prompts are predetermined.

An example is:

Collaborative Project Resources—EH-300: Business Writing—  
University of Alabama Huntsville Library—<http://libguides.uah.edu/content.php?pid=31136&sid=1900509>

### ***User Link Submission***

If you are interested in gathering links of web pages that are used by your audience, the User Link Submission box will allow you to do so. Choosing this type of User Input box gives you an area to explain the purpose of the link request, plus a Submit a Link choice for users. When your guide has been published and users Submit a Link, LibGuides presents them with a form asking for the user's



name, e-mail, link title, URL, and a short description. Choosing Submit a Link immediately places the information on the LibGuide. The guide owner is also notified by e-mail when the new link is added.

An example is:

Star LibGuides – Starting Out—A LibGuides Guide to LibGuides—  
Ivy Tech Community College Libraries—[http://libguides  
.ivytech.edu/guide](http://libguides.ivytech.edu/guide)

## Dates & Events

LibGuides' Dates & Events box allows you to easily create a list of upcoming events in your library. The Dates & Events box is found under the Miscellaneous drop-down category. When creating a box of this type, you are presented with a place to type introductory information, plus an Add New Event link. Choosing this link presents you with an Add Event form, which when filled in formats the information into an agenda layout. The box asks for information including the date and title of the event, plus a description. You can add a URL linking to more information about the event.

An example is

NLU Library Events—National-Louis University Library—[http://  
libguides.nl.edu/libraryevents](http://libguides.nl.edu/libraryevents)

## Google Boxes

Instead of losing your users to Google, why not keep them at your website, but harvest the power of Google on your LibGuide? The Google Book Search, Google Scholar Search, and Google Web Search boxes are extremely easy content boxes to add to your LibGuide. These content boxes facilitate predefined and open Google searches within your LibGuide. Keep in mind that only one Google box can be added to a content box at a time, but you may add several Google content boxes to your guide.

Each of these boxes will allow users to perform searches from inside a LibGuide. The results of the Google Books, the Google Scholar, and the Google Web searches are displayed underneath the Search box on the LibGuide page. As an alternative you can input an initial sample search for each box type as a demonstration. Google Scholar will also allow you to include an initial sample search. Scholar results, however, open up in a new window.

## ADVANCED REUSING AND ORGANIZING CONTENT

The ability to reuse content is another strength of LibGuides. After all, why reinvent the wheel? There are two options for reusing content: (1) copying the content into your guide, or (2) linking to the content in another system guide. Each option has its appropriate uses. If linking to other content in LibGuides, any changes made to the original content would be reflected in the content you just added. On the other hand, if you choose to copy content, you can use it as a template. If the original changes, your added copy will remain as you have changed it. It is possible to reuse a LibGuide, a page, or a box.

### Linking to a Guide

Sometimes when creating a guide it is useful to create links to other guides within your LibGuides system. For example, if you are making a guide about Lesson Planning, you may want to have that guide also appear on your broader Education subject guide. LibGuides provides you with a content box type called “Link to Guides.” Choose Add New Box and then select the Content Box Type. On the drop-down menu choose System Content Boxes and then Link to Guides. A Link to Guides box gives you numerous ways to display related boxes including, among others, (1) Browse by Subject, (2) Most Popular Guides, (3) Guides from a Subject, or (4) Manually Selected Guides.

### Linking to a Box

Creating a link to another content box is simple. Choose Add New Box and then Reuse Existing Box. You will be prompted to choose the guide that contains the box you would like to link to. Next you can choose the box you want from a drop-down menu. As usual you have the opportunity to copy it or link to the original.

Boxes are the building blocks of a LibGuide. You will find that the longer your library makes use of LibGuides, the more boxes you will have created that you can use over again. Chapter 3 suggests that it may behoove you to gather these often-used boxes together on a private “Grab” page available to your institution’s LibGuide authors.

### Linking to a Page

When you link to a page from within a content box, careful attention must be paid to select the correct URL for the link, as LibGuides adds characters to the URL



while the page is being edited. After creating a link content box, create a new link by copying and pasting the URL from the browser bar while viewing the page to which you want to link. When you paste the URL from the browser address bar of a page being edited, delete the “ae” from the beginning of the word “content” in the URL. For example, if the URL copied is: “http://libguides.tru.ca/aecontent.php?pid=144949&sid=1232553” remove the “ae” so that the actual link in the URL box is “http://libguides.tru.ca/content.php?pid=144949&sid=1232553.” Fortunately, the current version of LibGuides reminds you to remove the “ae” from the link.

To create a tab (representing a LibGuides page) that will link out to an existing LibGuide page, click on Add / Reuse Page from the command bar and select Reuse Existing Page. On the pull-down menu, choose the guide that you wish to link to and you will be prompted to select the page on the desired guide.

If you choose to leave the reused page as a Top Level page, its tab will display beside the tabs you had previously included. However, it is possible when linking another page to a guide to create a “subpage” to an existing page. Instead of leaving the default Add as a Top Level Page, choose the Add Under drop-down menu to add the subpage to the guide. (See figure 9.4.) When the patron views the guide,

FIGURE 9.4  
Add/Reuse page and position drop-down menu

Create New PageReuse Existing Page

This screen will allow you to reuse a page that already exists in your system. By default you will have the same content as the original page and editing for the new page will be disabled. To create a page independently of the original page please check the box found at the bottom of the form.

Page to Reuse:

-Common Content Boxes by Reference Librarian

Citations

Position:

--- Add under Citation Styles

Add as a top level page

--- Add under Start Here

--- Add under Citation Styles

--- Add under Citation Creation Software

--- Add under EBSCOhost Folders - Setup

--- Add under EBSCOhost Folders - Share

--- Add under Zotero

--- Add under Mendeley

Reuse Page

Close

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FIGURE 9.5  
Tab with “Citations” subpage indicated



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the tab to which the subpage has been appended shows an upside-down triangle next to its name. Hovering over the triangle will display the subpages that can be chosen. (See figure 9.5.)

### Moving Content

After creating a LibGuide it is possible to move content around on that guide. To reorder the tabs at the top of your guide, choose Add / Edit Pages and scroll down the drop-down menu and choose Reorder / Move Pages. The order of the tabs can be changed. Choosing Reorder Boxes allows you to move boxes around the page. Chapter 6 discussed the importance of creating a pleasing page layout, by moving boxes.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter overviewed many of the advanced options that LibGuides provides with which to add some pizzazz to your guides. Most of these techniques are as easy to use as the more common suggestions in chapter 8. This chapter discussed the following options:

- Customizing layout**—LibGuides provides various functions that will allow you to enhance the layout of a LibGuide, including colors, column width, and hiding pages.
- Adding advanced content**—LibGuide provides many types of content boxes—many more than were discussed in this chapter. Boxes can include RSS feeds, podcasts, video clips, files, links to your library catalog, user feedback forms, lists of events, and Google searches.
- Reusing and organizing content**—One of the strengths of LibGuides is that boxes, pages, and guides may be reused in other LibGuides. Subpages



can be added as an organizational tool. Reordering guide content is possible, as well.

By adding a few of these advanced features, your LibGuide is transformed into a guide that is rich not only in content, but rich in features that may entice your users to explore, engage, and participate with the library in ways that haven't been done before. If you have not yet read chapter 6 of this book which discusses the attractive design of web pages, you may want to do so next, as it will provide you with many ideas for adding and moving content that will enhance your page. Also read chapter 7, which will give you instructional strategies for using the various components of LibGuides discussed in chapter 8 and in the current chapter.