

A Los Angeles Dodgers LibGuide

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A Los Angeles Dodgers LibGuide

The purpose of the LibGuide is to serve as an informational resource for Los Angeles Public Library patrons who are fans of the Los Angeles Dodgers professional baseball team or who are interested in researching the team's history.

Dodgers fans (which I will henceforth use as shorthand for both fans and people who want to research or learn more about the organization) make up a segment of the larger sports fan population, which constitutes an information-seeking community. Otto, Metz, and Ensmenger (2011) wrote, "In many ways, sports remain the primary venue in which many Americans consume information, or at least sophisticated statistical information" (p. 186). They claimed that thanks to the internet, sports fans have gone from being "passive users of information" to gaining "an increasing amount of control over the information they want to consume and allowing them at the same time to produce their own information for other fans to utilize" (p. 195). This guide aims to help Dodgers fans gain that control by serving as a portal for learning about and researching their favorite team and for engaging with the Dodger fan community.

The Audience

Dodgers fans have many outlets for finding the most basic information about the team such as the latest game score. While the LibGuide does contain some obvious resources that might seem conspicuous if they were excluded, such as the official Dodgers website, the guide is targeted less at mere spectators or casual fans and more at the more engaged fan who wants to go beyond that basic information and discover more about the Dodgers, from its history to deeper stats to different media and resources dedicated to the team. However, the site is set up not to alienate casual fans but to help them on their journey to becoming more knowledgeable

followers. This is in keeping with Quintel's (2016) LibGuide guidance to "Appeal to different levels of research experience within a single guide" (p. 8).

Dodgers fans belong to what Fisher and Bishop (2015) described as an information community based on "affinity" (p. 21)—that is, members of this information-seeking community are united by a common interest. Many Dodgers fans also live in the greater Los Angeles area, and so would be considered a "proximate" (p. 21) information community. Their motivations for seeking out the information this LibGuide holds might be, as Otto, Metz, and Ensmenger (2011) suggested, related to geography, as "a form of social currency, a basis for conversation between friends and coworkers" (p. 187), or it might be a product of curiosity aroused through outlets such as video games and fantasy sports leagues. Another motivation might be for research purposes, perhaps for a school report. This LibGuide aims to provide an entry point for satisfying all of these information-seeking needs and behaviors.

The Content

The key words in that last sentence are "entry point." The LibGuide does not strive to be comprehensive. This is in keeping with Goodsett, Miles, and Nawalaniec's (2020) LibGuide best practice to "Include less content/fewer pages to avoid cognitive overload and encourage more usage" and to "Avoid long lists; if lists are used, create them such that users can skip to sections/content of interest" (p. 223).

The greatest challenge in coming up with content for the LibGuide was thus narrowing down from the wealth of resources available on the topic and deciding which would be most useful to the target audience. I had to resist the temptation to include everything I thought might be useful. Instead I weeded out resources that were redundant with other resources, and limited

selections to ones that I felt could move users along on a journey from more basic information to in-depth engagement.

Books

The Los Angeles Public Library has numerous print and ebooks about the Dodgers. I chose a couple general histories covering both the entire franchise history (starting in Brooklyn) and just the team's time in Los Angeles, a couple insider accounts of the team, plus more-specific histories about, for example, the evictions of Mexican-American families leading up to the building of Dodger Stadium and the rebuilding of the team following the 2012 season. I also included some selections for younger readers to serve those patrons directly if they might be searching on their own, or to serve target audience members who might want to share their love of the team with the children in their lives.

DVDs & Audiobooks

The Los Angeles Public Library has far fewer movies and audiobooks about the Dodgers than print and ebooks, which made the selection process easier. To avoid resources that would be too redundant with those found on the Books & eBooks page, I opted for DVD and audiobook titles that focused on certain aspects of or time periods in Dodgers history, such as the team's days in Brooklyn or a profile of former president and general manager Branch Rickey.

Websites & Newsletters

With both websites and newsletters, my goal was to give users a variety of resources that could provide both statistics and current news and even rumors through fan and media outlets. I included one static article providing background on the Dodger logo due to its uniqueness, relating an interesting piece of Dodger history that users might not encounter elsewhere. Besides

this exception, the rest of the websites (and newsletters) are ones that users can revisit or read regularly for updated information on the team.

Twitter

I had originally intended the Twitter page to be a social media page that incorporated accounts from other social media channels such as Snapchat and Instagram. However, after looking into these channels, I did not see the type of engagement with Dodgers or related accounts relevant to information-seeking behavior that I saw on Twitter. The posts on other channels, especially Snapchat, were more of the rumor-mongering and fan-to-fan interaction variety. Billings, Qiao, Conlin, and Tie (2017) confirmed this when they wrote, “Despite finding other platforms better for sport information seeking, relaxation, and interaction, respondents still reported using Snapchat as a main platform for facilitating sport fandom” (p. 10). It ended up being more practical to fill the page with active and relevant Twitter accounts than to mix in accounts from other social channels, and I did not wish to send users to entertaining but uninformative accounts just for the sake of variety.

Jackie Robinson

For the Jackie Robinson section, choosing DVDs was easy due to the relatively small number of resources in the library holdings. There are many books about Jackie Robinson for both kids and adults, covering not only his baseball career and his breaking of Major League Baseball’s color barrier in 1947 but his life beyond baseball, so narrowing down the choices here proved more difficult. For the books for younger readers, I opted for a mix of titles aimed at different reading levels, from picture books to books for young adults. For the older readers, I

referred to lists on GoodReads.com as well as reader reviews to find highly regarded titles, and provided a mix of print and ebooks.

Minor Leagues

The Dodgers have seven affiliated teams across all levels of Minor League Baseball. There are not many resources dedicated to these teams. I included this page and the relevant websites I could find, however, because these teams are of interest to Dodgers fans and researchers as they represent the future of the Dodgers organization.

The Platform

After evaluating several options, I chose LibGuides as the platform for the library guide. The internet offers multiple options for designing an online pathfinder or library guide. Many of them offer the same benefits as LibGuides, such as being free (for me) to use, the ability to customize the site with no knowledge of programming or markup languages, and the availability of starter guides or tutorials. Website builders such as WordPress and Weebly are powerful tools, but are so robust as to be a bit overkill for this task. In comparing static web pages vs. LibGuides for creating online learning content, Bowen (2014) wrote, “Web pages can be customized to fit a librarian’s preferences with enough work, but LibGuides greatly reduces the technical and temporal barriers to completing that work” (p. 166). I ultimately chose LibGuides both for this ease of use as well as for its wide acceptance: According to LibGuides producer Springshare (n.d.), more than 20 million people have used LibGuides at 6,100 libraries in 82 countries. Bergstrom-Lynch (2019) pointed out that “LibGuides is perhaps the most frequently used tool for authoring online library guides” (p. 206). This extensive use makes it likely that users will be familiar and comfortable with the concept and the layout.

Furthermore, and related to that idea, German (2017) wrote that “LibGuides is specialized software intended to create a learning experience for a student; in other words, an e-learning authoring tool.” Librarians can use tools such as WordPress or Weebly to create learning experiences such as library guides, but they create other types of sites with those tools as well, such as the main library site. This is relevant because when a user encounters a LibGuide and they are familiar with the platform, they will automatically recognize its purpose in a way they likely would not with a guide built on a more general tool like WordPress and Weebly.

Another factor in choosing LibGuides was the abundance of resources dedicated to providing designers with help and best practices, especially compared to alternatives such as Library a la Carte and SubjectPlus. A simple search for “LibGuide AND ‘best practices’” on OneSearch via San José State University’s King Library turned up many handy articles. Given my lack of access to real-life Los Angeles Public Library target audience members and the ability to, for example, perform usability tests with them, these articles were especially valuable in making determinations about guide layout, organization, etc.

The Design

Besides choosing the actual content, the other difficult task was deciding how to categorize resources. I initially considered organizing all pages by topic, such as team history, statistics, etc., but I found myself confused as to how to classify certain resources, and I also found unequal numbers of resources for different topics that would have resulted in unbalanced pages. The two exceptions where it worked better to have pages based on topic rather than resource type were Jackie Robinson and the Minor League teams. It made sense to give Jackie Robinson his own page not only because of the number of resources dedicated specifically to

him but because of his significance to the Dodgers organization and baseball and even beyond. Including websites about the Minor League teams on other pages would have made those pages too unwieldy and would have been a missed opportunity in terms of highlighting and increasing the discoverability of these special cases (information not directly related to the Major League team) by giving them their own page. Overall, however, organizing by resource type was a more natural fit and allowed me to come up with logical and clear page names that would, I hoped, result in a user experience that was easier to quickly understand and navigate.

In laying out the LibGuide pages, I strove to follow Quintel's (2016) guidance to "Design with relevancy. A strong visual hierarchy can communicate relevancy to the user, simply by where you choose to place your guide content" (p. 8). The hierarchy I employed for the tabs is based on both uniqueness and usefulness. As this LibGuide is designed for Los Angeles Public Library users, I dedicated the first two pages after the home page to Dodgers resources within the library holdings.

The general flow from page to page takes the user on a journey from more general and thorough information about the club on the first three pages (the home page plus books and videos), to more timely updates on the next two pages (websites, newsletters, and Twitter), to more specific aspects of the organization on the last two pages (Jackie Robinson and Minor League teams).

Within the pages, I arranged resources depending on the content. For each section of the Books & eBooks page and the audiobooks on the third page, I listed the books alphabetically by author to mimic the library's organization of titles. The DVDs are arranged alphabetically by

title. The primary audience for this LibGuide is an adult rather than a young person, so I listed books for younger readers last on both the Books & eBooks page and the Jackie Robinson page.

For the webpages, newsletters, and Twitter accounts, the first criterion I used was most authoritative to least (e.g., the official Dodgers site is more authoritative than the True Blue LA fan site), and in cases of a tie in terms of authoritativeness, I went for popularity or general interest (e.g., Justin Turner is more active on Twitter than is Orel Hershiser).

As far as color is concerned, the default blue of the page tabs matched the team color (Pantone 294, which one fan group adopted as their club name) very closely, so I did not have to alter that to make the site more familiar and inviting for Dodger fans.

Final Reflections

One lesson I learned very quickly when creating this LibGuide was that I could read all the articles on LibGuide best practices in the world, and I would still fret over decisions that were by and large subjective in nature. While I feel I know the target audience well and did research on their information-seeking behavior, it is impossible to design a site that will make complete sense and be engaging and useful for all intended users. Once I came to terms with that, I made peace with designing a LibGuide that inevitably fell short of perfection but that followed research-based guidance while taking into consideration the wants and needs of the specific audience as well as the features and limitations of the platform.

Core Competencies

Researching, designing, and building this LibGuide supports core Competencies F, H, and J. Competency F covers using “the basic concepts and principles related to the selection, evaluation, organization, and preservation of physical and digital information items” (SJSU

School of Information, n.d.). I exercised this competency by thoroughly researching, evaluating, and comparing relevant resources within the Los Angeles Public Library's holdings, and I performed the same type of assessment on external sources including websites and social media accounts. I used criteria such as content, reader/website recommendations, reputation, and currency, and then organized the content for discoverability and ease of use according to research-based best practices and my research-backed understanding of the target audience. This last item also demonstrates Competency J, which says to "Describe the fundamental concepts of information-seeking behaviors and how they should be considered when connecting individuals or groups with accurate, relevant and appropriate information." My research into the larger information-seeking community of sports fans informed my decisions about which content to select and how to create a flow from page to page in the LibGuide to promote research and information discovery.

Competency H calls for students to "Demonstrate proficiency in identifying, using, and evaluating current and emerging information and communication technologies." I employed this competency in comparing and contrasting LibGuides to other website building tools and pathfinder options such as Library a la Carte, SubjectPlus, WordPress, and Weebly. I based my decision on tool feature set, ease of use (in building a guide), available tutorials and best practices, and end-user-friendliness, and then used the tool to build a guide that is intended to be logical in layout, clean in appearance, and simple in navigation.

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