Web Style Guide

A style guide for use for writing on Tufts Library Websites and LibGuides.

Contents:

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2. LibGuides 2-specific style guide
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All Content: Guidelines

We speak as the Library

All of the content on our site should reflect the friendly, helpful tone of our library, all while being clear. We should also respect the medium where are conveying our information in: it's the web, and people expect they can finish any task quickly. Respect our audience's time by getting the information across as quickly as possible while still be friendly and knowledgeable.

We should assume the following about our content:

- It reflects Tisch's mission to connect people with ideas, regardless of previous knowledge.

- It is written in plain language: no jargon, nor formality. Information gets across faster when it's written in words that our users actually use.

- It is written for a diverse and global audience. While we want to use plain language, we also need to remember that not all of our audience knows English as their primary language. Be careful of local slang and idioms.

Inclusion: Usability and Accessibility

All content should be composed with a view to providing access to all users regardless of their demographic or cultural background or physical condition. The Tisch Library website is designed to promote inclusion; this guide provides guidelines for making page content usable and accessible.

Editorial Style

General Website Writing Principles

Writing for webpages differs from writing for print. Readers of websites are assumed to be scanning and searching. Brief content is best for users. Best practices include:

- Use short sentences and short paragraphs
- Bullet points to display lists of ideas
- Front-load your content (make the info that's most important to your readers the first content they see). If you have complex information, link to the details.

- When you add a link, make sure the text of the link conveys what the link's about (this is for accessibility). For example, "see <u>more information about hours</u>" instead of "<u>click here</u>"

A few strategies for writing

As you are writing, it's helpful to imagine your audience is scanning over your page on a phone, waiting in line. What is the quickest way for you to convey information to them?

If you're having difficulty finding the words to write in a friendly tone, imagine that you are verbally telling someone the information. Use the same words you use when you're talking to a user in person: We don't need to be overly formal when we write.

Examples

Less Like	More like
The customer should login to their Illiad account to request a document delivery.	Sign in now to request an article.
Library staff will respond to user complaints by enforcing the code of conduct.	We want you to feel safe in the library. Please notify desk staff if you have any concerns.
The University of Arizona Fine Arts Library (formerly the UA Music Library) houses the UA Libraries' music holdings and, along with the Main Library, a small portion of the Libraries' architecture holdings, most of which are kept in the Science Library.	The Fine Arts Library includes all of our music collection as well as a small selection of architecture materia

(*borrowed from University of Arizona Libraries*)

For more examples, see [MIT's guidelines for writing for the web](#).

For Creating Content in LibGuides 2

Libguides are webpages. Users react to them that way, so all the suggestions for how to write for the web above apply. Here are some specifics for writing Libguides, borne out by five years of usability testing in lots of libraries.

Be brief.

- Do not write long explanations of resources or, especially in lists, elaborate directions.

- If you need a really detailed description (and you may), a separate box or even a separate guide may be a better way to handle that.

Be focused.

- Libguides are essentially an unlimited resource, so use as many pages and guides as you need

- One massive, comprehensive guide is less useful than several which answer particular questions

Make the home page useful.

- Usage stats show most users will only look at the top page. Include key resources there so everyone has something to start with, and resist the temptation to include "welcome" text. Cut to the chase.

Use sub-tabs sparingly.

- They are not as visible as main tabs and can be missed. Think instead of using a new LibGuide for a sub page or put it in a box on the main page (or related page).

Don't reinvent the wheel.

- Link to related guides where that makes sense. Use a box in the left-hand column (or a tab) called "Related Guides"

- Re-use (with permission, of course) other authors' guide material if it fits.

Don't go wild with text formatting.

- Let the style sheet for the site do its job. It has been carefully chosen to meet Tufts and Tisch style guidelines. Consistent formatting for guide to guide helps users orient themselves.

- Use headers (heading 1, heading 2, etc.) instead of setting font size/type yourself. This sets the structure of what you're writing and lets the style sheet decide how to make it look.

- More than two or three font sizes or shapes on a page starts to look unprofessional quickly. More than five starts to look like a ransom note. Each LibGuide starts with six.

- ***Use bold and italics sparingly. Highlighting** everything **makes it** hard to **identify** what's really **important.***

- Do not copy from existing web pages, as that will carry over the formatting from that page. Instead, paste into Notepad and copy from there.

- When copying from a Microsoft Word document, from the Rich Text Editor, select "Paste from Word" and insert the relevant text.

Resizing Images

When you add or re-use an image in LibGuides2, you'll be given options to resize your image:
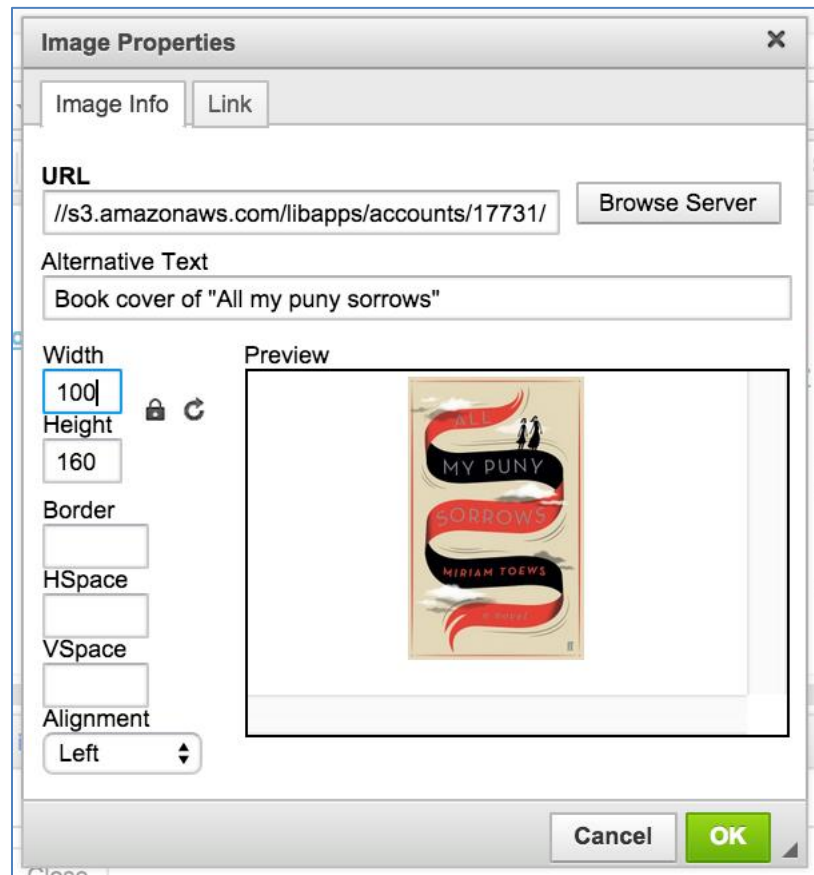
- You can set width and height - never make these numbers bigger than what they are originally set as, because the image will warp.
- For best practice, don't change the lock setting (see the lock image by the width and height inputs). By default, the picture ratio is locked, so the width:height ratio, and this image quality, won't change.
    - If you do unlock the ratio, make sure to both preview and view the published guide to gauge whether the image still looks sharp for the user.

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- Make sure your image size is not larger than the container you're placing it in (for example, a sidebar or the main content area). If the image is too big, it will appear warped for the user.
  - The exact size of the containers (main content, etc) depends on your screen.
  - Images in the sidebar should be under 200-300px
  - If the image looks good on your desktop, it should still look good on a phone, but you might want to test it out to make sure the page still looks like you'd like it to
  - You can estimate what your page will look like on a phone by making your browser less wide:
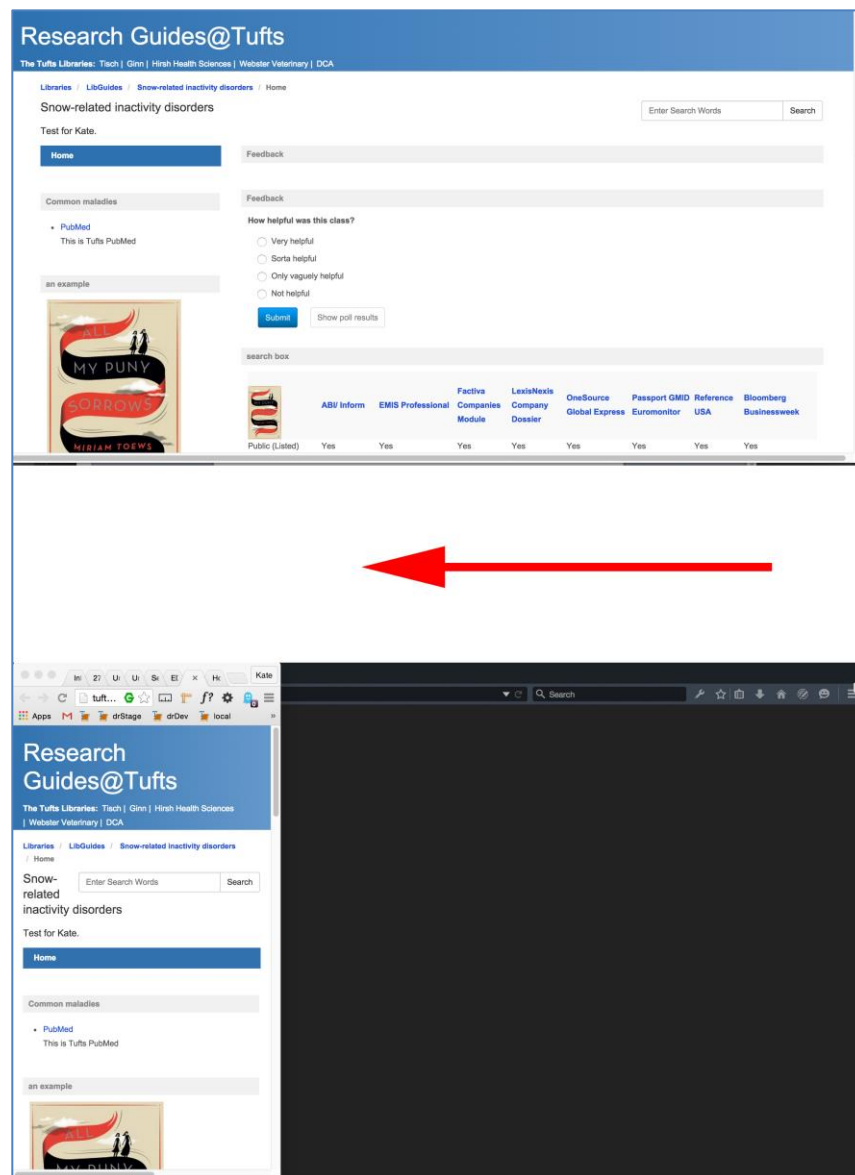
- Hspace sets the whitespace you want between the image and the text (or other image) on either side of it.

- Vspace sets the amount of white space you want on top and below the image.

For Creating Content in Tisch's Drupal Site

Formatting

Use the formatting tools in Drupal to help users understand the meaning of your content. Proper use of these elements also assists readers using screen readers and other special reading devices.
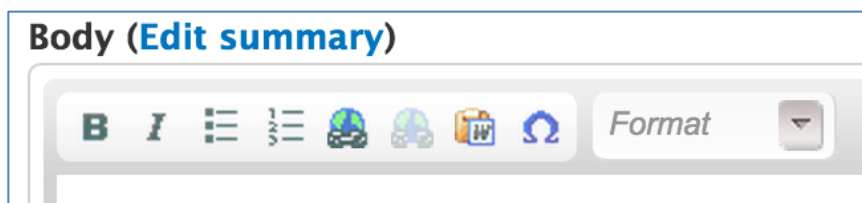
Options for formatting text in the Tisch website editor

About Editing in Drupal

Drupal currently allows you to:
- bold and italicize text; put in ordered (numbered) and unordered lists, insert links, and break links.
  - Note: there is no "underline" feature – since users expect underlines to be links, it's too confusing to use.
- Paste content from Word (this is the safe way to do it, that will not transfer over unneeded Microsoft mark-up),
- Insert special characters (this is the button that looks like a horseshoe).
- Add headings. Headings are under the "Format" pull-down menu.
  - Headings are great for users.
  - They provide meaning to the layout of your content and make it easier to skim, especially to users accessing our content with screen readers.
  - Heading 1: this is reserved for Page titles. These will be created for you automatically – don't use these within your content.
  - Heading 2 and Heading 3 are used for subheadings on a page.
  - Heading 4, etc are for sub-subheadings.
  - See images on next page for examples.

Ideal Order of Headings:

This is also OK:

HTML versus Acrobat PDFs and Other File Formats

The use of other file formats, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, should be avoided unless the expectation is that the user needs to print out and write on or refer to the document while not looking at a screen.

Appendix 1: Writing for the Web

http://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/writing-for-the-web.html