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This paper analyzes the content of electronic subject guides in Literary Studies on academic library webservers, identifying standard features and establishing an overview of their design and content. It then examines these guides against the practice of Literary Studies. The sample for this study consists of subject guides from the top 30 academic libraries in the U.S., as ranked by the Association of Research Libraries. Twenty-seven libraries offer such guides, organized by departmental boundaries and traditional categories. These guides vary greatly in scope. Their arrangement of materials follows traditional, non-electronic organizing schemes. Overall, academic libraries have not integrated recent changes in Literary Studies into electronic subject guides.

Headings:

      Academic disciplines

      College and university libraries

      Library pathfinders/Evaluation

      Literature – English language

      Subject guides

      Web portals

ELECTRONIC SUBJECT GUIDES IN LITERARY STUDIES:
A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

by
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Introduction

This paper analyzes the content of electronic subject guides in Literary Studies on academic library webservers. Electronic subject guides have become commonplace in academic libraries; all of the top 30 libraries, as ranked by the Association of Research Libraries, for instance, offer such guides. Although academic librarians spend much time creating these, little has been written about them generally, and nothing about Literary Studies subject guides specifically. This paper sketches out these guides' standard features, establishing an overview of existing practices in their design, organization and content. It also juxtaposes these guides against the practice of Literary Studies to determine whether they cohere with contemporary disciplinary practices. The purpose of this paper is to understand electronic subject guides by examining relevant academic literature, by analyzing a large and representative sampling of electronic subject guides, and by investigating current practice within Literary Studies.

Theoretical Perspective

This paper presumes that academic disciplines differ in what questions are asked and how answers are pursued; that is, the notion of what constitutes research is shaped by disciplinary identity. It presumes as well that an academic discipline—in this case Literary Studies—is roughly homogenous in its research practices. Therefore, this study depends on theories of the sociology of knowledge, the assumption that individuals' definitions of knowledge and inquiry are shaped by institutions and the structures within

institutions. Many scholars, going back to Karl Mannheim (in *Ideology and Utopia*, 1929), have made similar arguments. C. Wright Mills, the prominent American sociologist of the 1950s, explains that "an individual, caught in the limited segments of great, rational organizations, comes systematically to regulate his impulses and his aspirations, his manner of life and his ways of thought, in rather strict accordance with [in Mannheim's words] 'the rules and regulations of the organization'" (170). Recent research has reaffirmed the knowledge-shaping power of academic institutions, settings, and disciplines. Michael Paulsen and Charles Wells, for instance, argue that "students' epistemological beliefs differ according to the domains of study that constitute their major fields of study" (375). Stanley Fish, examining the determination of meaning within Literary Studies, speaks of the power of "interpretive communities":

> as actors within an institution [individuals] automatically fall heir to the institution's way of making sense, its systems of intelligibility. That is why it is so hard for someone whose very being is defined by his position within an institution . . . to explain to someone outside it a practice or a meaning that seems to him to require no explanation, because he regards it as natural. (320-1)

This perception about the social construction of knowledge, especially its connection to class and power and ideology, has been an especial concern of contemporary scholars within Literary Studies.

The practice of Literary Studies has undergone wholesale change in the last 30 years due to scholars' recognition that what counts as knowledge within academic disciplines is, to a large extent, socially and linguistically constructed. This perception has been shaped by the likes of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, with its argument that institutional/disciplinary knowledge sometimes perpetuates false theories and hinders truer theories and that there exists "no supra-institutional framework

for the adjudication of revolutionary difference" (93); by Michel Foucault's view, first, that a "total set of relations . . . unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems" (191) and, second, that we are ensnared in a network of power relations that shape even our understanding of self; by Louis Althusser's notion that we are always already subjects of ideology, the "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (162), and by the views of other structuralist, post-structuralist, and postmodern theorists. Language, institutions, culture, and the general socio-historical moment create the framework through which we perceive the world and construct knowledge. In addition, many critics assert that schools and universities play a central role in creating frameworks of knowledge that perpetuate existing, unequal power relations and maintain the hegemony of the ruling class (or some other privileged and dominant group or belief). To Althusser, "what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ideological State apparatus, the Church." Likewise, Pierre Bourdieu argues that "the patterns informing the thought of a given period can be fully understood only by reference to the school system, which is alone capable of establishing them and developing them, through practice, as the habits of thought common to a whole generation" (192).

Belief in the social construction of knowledge and the ideological function of education grew with the liberation movements of the 1960s and the perception that the academy had systematically under- and mis-represented whole groups of people: racial and ethnic minorities, the colonized, women, and gays; that a literary canon which

offered itself as a transcendent compilation of truth and beauty was socially constructed; and that, as John Guillory writes, "the school . . . function[s] as a social institution which reproduces the stratified structure of the social order. And within this institutional structure the literary curriculum performs this function in a very major way by producing distinctive forms of linguistic knowledge" (243). The result in Literary Studies has been an overhaul of the literary canon and a reshaping of academic courses and research. A further result has been an interrogation of the very nature of Literary Studies as a discipline and a radical questioning of disciplinarity itself.

Even the terms "discipline" and "canon" are troubling for many scholars. "Discipline," for Foucault, "'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. . . . The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (170). Canon, of course, was used to describe an accepted group of Biblical texts; as such it is bound up with the process of exclusion and power, of, writes Guillory, "distinguishing the orthodox from the heretical" (233).

For many literary scholars, their subject of study, the nature of their scholarship, the concept of knowledge that has defined their discipline, and the boundaries that have marked this discipline from others have been viewed as social constructs, as historically contingent practices that were shaped by and that reinforce dominant beliefs and power relations. For instance, Gerald Graff points out that

> The boundaries that mark literary study off from creative writing, composition, rhetoric, communications, linguistics, and film, or those that divide art history from studio practice, or history from philosophy, literature, and sociology, each bespeak a history of conflict that was critical to creating and defining these

disciplines yet has never become a central part of their contexts of studies. The same is true of the very division between the sciences and the humanities. (258)

Disciplinary boundaries in Literary Studies have long been uncertain. With its examination of human behavior and society, literature cuts across and brings together many heterogeneous disciplines. As Annabel Patterson explains, "literary texts have always been, more or less, products of their historical, social, political, and economic environments and . . . they cannot be understood unless one attempts to reinstitute them within those conditions" (185). The changes that occurred within Literary Studies during the last two decades perhaps were inevitable, were a breaking apart of an already fractured discipline. In their introduction to *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*, Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn delineate the fractured state of contemporary Literary Studies: "What confronts us at the present time in . . . literary studies is not a unified field but diverse historical projects and critical idioms that are not organized around a single center but originate from a variety of sources, some of which lie outside the realm of literary study altogether and intersect one another often at strange angles" (3). The practice of Literary Studies has become so varied and its borders so ill-defined that it seems almost unable to sustain itself as a discipline (hence the development of the more loosely defined and more consciously ideological and historicized quasi-discipline of Cultural Studies). Stanley Fish warns literary scholars that "If distinctiveness is a requirement for effectivity and even for the security of existence, then many of the agendas [of those challenging the boundaries of literary studies], if they were put into action, [would] weaken or destroy that distinctiveness and put us out of business" ("Them" 163). Predictably, a counter-tendency has developed in response to this recognition of the discipline's seeming self-

destruction and ongoing marginalization: a return to literature itself. But as a discipline and a practice, Literary Studies remains destabilized, with no consensual understanding of its object or methods of study, making it a particularly difficult field to contain within the parameters of a subject guide.

Research Questions

This analysis of library subject guides, resting on the belief that academic disciplines significantly shape the nature of research, create perceptual frameworks, and construct avenues of inquiry, asks six specific research questions:

1. How common are electronic subject guides in Literary Studies?

2. How are these subject guides labeled?

3. How is information within these subject guides arranged?

4. What is the scope of these subject guides?

5. Are these subject guides designed to be course specific?

6. How closely do the features offered by these guides match conventional research practices within Literary Studies?

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, an "electronic subject guide" is a list of sources grouped by topic residing on a library webserver. (I use the phrase "subject guide," but many other terms have been used: pathfinder, portal, gateway, user guide, bibliographic guide, research guide). "Features" of electronic subject guides include the number and type of sources, as well as their organization and labeling. "Literary Studies" refers to the

academic discipline which studies poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction—in English.

And an academic "discipline" is, in the words of Timothy Stephen and Teresa Harrison,

"a collective of professional scholars and students sharing interest in a set of intellectual

problems and utilizing a common set of procedures for their resolution. Members of

disciplines are frequently associated with various university departments and their

curricula." This last point, that disciplines are not necessarily synonymous with

departments, is true for Literary Studies, which exists within English departments, in

conjunction with an assortment of related fields: linguistics, film studies, creative writing,

technical writing, and rhetoric.

Literature Review

Library Pathfinders began in 1969 as part of the Model Library Project at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [Canfield 287]). MIT defined a library pathfinder

as

> an organized introductory checklist of various types of English language sources
> of information on a specific topic. Each one is designed to help the library user
> during the early stages of a literature search. Pathfinders are structured to save
> users time by aiding them in systematically locating materials with which they
> have little or only general familiarity. They are not intended as exhaustive guides
> to subject literatures or outlines for complete bibliographies. (qtd. in Canfield
> 292)

As the Internet developed, librarians quickly saw its potential for research and instruction

and began to build electronic subject guides. To do so, they relied on their experiences

constructing pathfinders. "Electronic library guides," wrote Eric Cooper in 1997, "share

many similarities with print guides, and so should follow the same basic design" (52). In

applying the pathfinder model to the electronic world, librarians often failed to take into

account the unique qualities of this new world. In other words, they did not adequately recognize that a new world might require a new map. As Candice Dahl notes, "there is a need to update the guidelines so as to benefit the large number of university libraries that present their pathfinders electronically." Electronic subject guides have been built more to library science tradition than to users' needs. The limited scholarship on this issue focuses on rethinking and reconfiguring electronic subject guides to make them more user-centered.

One simple problem with subject guides, which has been identified by several authors, is the use of jargon, of terminology familiar to librarians but unfamiliar to users (This concern predated the development of electronic subject guides; Lorna Peterson and Jamie Coniglio pointed to the problem of readability in paper library pathfinders: "The use of library and/or professional jargon may be so natural that communication with laypersons simply becomes far more complex than intended" [235]). This concern with difficult and unfamiliar vocabulary persists in examinations of electronic subject guides. Dahl warns of "jargon such as 'bibliographic monographs.'" Charles Dean asserts, "Terminology common to libraries and experienced researches (such as 'reference' or 'collections') and other general terms (i.e., 'source, 'research,' and 'tools') often were misinterpreted" (85). Not just the narrow terms within these guides but generic headings such as "Subject Guides" can alienate users. According to Brenda Reeb and Susan Gibbons, "Several studies have demonstrated that labels such as 'subject guides' and 'pathfinders' do not adequately convey their purpose and scope to students" (127). Drawing on research in human cognition, Peter Hook goes further, arguing that the web's multimedia environment offers a unique opportunity to design pathfinders which appeal

to users' various learning styles—and should be designed with these in mind. Clearly, the conception of pathfinders has begun to move away from the static imitation of paper versions and toward reconsideration according to the nature of electronic media and the needs of contemporary, computer-conditioned users.

However, identification of the users of subject guides in academic libraries is itself problematic. Are these guides intended for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty? Reeb and Gibbons suggest that, although designed primarily for library users, subject guides are valuable tools for librarians themselves (hence the continued use of library jargon). Dean looks at a biology subject guide constructed "so that anyone from any discipline could quickly find pertinent information" (82), while Reeb and Gibbons focus on the design of subject guides for undergraduates. The latter seems to be most commonly acknowledged as the intended audience for subject guides, in keeping with the initial goal of library pathfinders to be "aids for the first three to five hours of literature searching" (Canfield 287). It is this group of novice users, of undergraduate students, that scholars have most often focused on when considering the nature of electronic subject guides.

Another problem with subject guides is that they simply do not match students' experiences with the Web. Students, used to more easeful and comprehensive searching, are sometimes alienated by such guides. In her study, Dahl found very few electronic pathfinders that could "be viewed in their totality from a single location." Their complexity of structure "move[d] pathfinders away from their role of being a nonconfusing introduction to research and resources." Reeb and Gibbons go further, suggesting that students arrive at a website expecting something personalized and

customized but "when they do not find resources that appear to be tailored specifically for their information needs, they move on to other information resources" (126).

Subject guides are alienating as well because they appear too disconnected from the academic tasks of undergraduates. Students see their work in terms of classes, but subject guides are categorized by discipline. As a result, subject guides are woefully underused by students. Reeb and Gibbons cite a survey conducted by Duke University in which 53 percent of library users had never used the library's subject guides and another 24 percent had rarely used them (124). They cite usage statistics at several large universities which persuasively suggest these guides' underuse:

> At the University of Rochester . . . only five of the 43 subject guides recorded more than 300 hits [a month]. . . . Similarly, at Wright State University . . . 55 of 65 subject guides logged less than 300 hits in [a] month. At a large state college . . . . the most popular subject guide received only 289 hits. . . . At Australia's University of New South Wales . . . only 7.5 percent of 160 subject guides received more than 300 hits. (124)

Simply put, "students are unable to match their information needs with the appropriate guide(s)" (Reeb and Gibbons 124). Therefore, scholars have begun to rethink the nature of these guides. Hook argues that pathfinders should be combined with tutorials (he even uses these terms interchangeably). Similarly, Dahl argues for pathfinders "that include instructions in the library catalog, LOC subject headings, the purpose of journal indexes." Instruction on how to search, these writers suggest, should be an integral part of any subject guide.

But even if users are correctly identified and instruction effectively incorporated into these sites, electronic subject guides face the problem of scope. How broad should they be? What amount of information should a subject guide contain? In her examination of subject guides in nine Canadian university libraries, Dahl found several whose focus

was remarkably broad, one covering all of history, another all of English literature. The problem of too broad a focus stems in part from organizing subject guides by discipline. To Reeb and Gibbons, this organizational scheme is a central factor in students' failure to use subject guides. "The concept of disciplines," they write, "is not usually part of a student's mental model." Indeed, Judy Thompson Klein argues that a broad disciplinary knowledge is impossible, even for practitioners: "Unidisciplinary competence is a myth, because the degree of specialization and the volume of information that fall within the boundaries of a named academic discipline are larger than any single individual can master" (188). If disciplinary boundaries are becoming increasingly porous and the very notion of disciplinarity is being questioned, is it any wonder that undergraduates are confused when they encounter discipline-defined subject guides? Reeb and Gibbons point to still another problem with these traditionally organized guides: "The university curriculum is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. . . . This blending of disciplines is not usually reflected in the categorization of subject guides" (125). Or as Klein explains, "knowledge is growing increasingly convergent and specific at the same time its global scope expands and permeations multiply. This paradoxical development is beginning to have considerable impact on the structures and conduct of research, education and training" (Klein 206).

Scholars have offered suggestions for improving electronic subject guides, some of which have been mentioned above. Dean emphasizes the importance of careful planning and testing with users. Hook suggests subject guides should be designed according to the principles of and insights derived from information architecture and information visualization. Dahl focuses on four main areas that should be considered in

designing a subject guide: consistency, scope, readability, and usability. She concludes by suggesting that "Further research on the use students actually make of pathfinders would be helpful." Reeb and Gibson conduct such research, offering several practical solutions to the problem of the underuse of subject guides: 1) these should be tailored to individual courses since "Undergraduate students' mental model is one focused on courses and coursework, rather than disciplines" (126); 2) these should be labeled clearly with trigger words that match students' goals; and 3) these should, even if discipline-centered, be linked to course webpages to make them more accessible, more visible, and more relevant to students.

For their near ubiquity on academic webservers, little has been written about what constitutes an effective electronic subject guide. Scholars have noted their roots in paper pathfinders; have encouraged a move away from these roots toward something better suited to an electronic environment; have pointed to faulty, jargon-heavy labeling; have discovered a fundamental mismatch between student expectations and subject guides, particularly when focused on an academic discipline; and have charted a consistent pattern of underuse of these guides. In short, scholarship has pointed to the failings of subject guides but has rarely looked in detail at existing guides and has rarely examined how well or how poorly these guides map their subjects.

Methodology

The sample for this study consists of subject guides from the top 30 academic libraries in the U.S., according to the most recent rankings of the Association of Research Libraries. To ascertain the features of these subject guides, this paper follows a

qualitative content analysis methodology. The latter offers the best method for examining

and evaluating the shape and substance of web pages. However, given the fluid,

hypertextual nature of Internet resources, defining what precisely constitutes a subject

guide is not easy. The University of Toronto's subject guide is a case in point. Its *Library*

Research Guide for Literature offers only three links: two restricted access databases and

a restricted access bibliography produced by the Department of English. The library

webserver also offers the option of finding articles by subject, which, in the case of

literature, returns a page with 29 links to databases. In addition, the library hosts UTEL

(the University of Toronto English Library), which contains over 500 literary texts.

(Since this page is not easily reached from the library homepage—I have yet to find a

link—I have not included it in my calculation of the scope of the library's subject guide.)

Other problems include an uncertainty as to what should be counted as a resource

within a subject guide. For the purposes of this paper, I have not counted materials

related to non-English language literatures and to film, nor have I counted resources

listed within course-specific guides. Periodicals, if listed within subject guides, have been

counted. Finally, it should be noted that several of these subject guides have hundreds of

sources. Numbers for these guides should be understood as close approximations.

Results

Frequency

To begin to construct an overview of the practice and design of subject guides, this paper

investigates how frequently academic library webservers offer electronic subject guides

for Literary Studies.

Table One: Subject Guide Headings

ARL rank	University	Main Headings
1	Harvard	Library Resources for History and Literature Concentrators
2	Yale	English Language & Literature
3	UC Berkeley	Literature—19th &20th Century; Literature—Medieval & Early Modern
4	Toronto	Literature
5	Michigan	English Language & Literature
6	Illinois	Literature
7	UCLA	English
8	Cornell	English Literature; American Fiction and Poetry Journals
9	Columbia	American and English Literature
10	Texas	Literatures in English; Resources for English, American and Commonwealth Literatures
11	Wisconsin	N/A
12	Indiana	English & American Literature
13	Penn State	English Language & Literature
14	Washington	English
15	North Carolina	English
16	Princeton	N/A
17	NYU	English and American Lit; Literary Theory
18	Chicago	English Literature; American Literature
19	Minnesota	Literature, American; Literature, English; English Language & Literature; American Literature
20	Duke	Literature and Film
21	Pennsylvania	English
22	Alberta	English Language and Literature
23	Ohio State	Literature
24	British Columbia	English
25	Virginia	English
26	Iowa	English and American Literature
27	Arizona	English Language Literature
28	Pittsburgh	Languages and Literatures
29	Rutgers	Literatures in English
30	Northwestern	N/A

Of the 30 top academic libraries, three—Princeton, Wisconsin, and Northwestern—offer no electronic subject guides devoted to literature. Princeton lists 28 categories under *Research Guides*, ranging from broad categories such as *History* and *Sociology* to narrow ones such as *British Parliamentary Papers* and *Treaty Research*. Some categories, *Linguistics* and *Film Studies*, often fall within the purview of English departments. Other categories, *African-American Studies* and *Women's Studies*, cross into Literary Studies. But Princeton has no category devoted exclusively to Literary Studies or English.

Wisconsin offers a subject guide for *Arts & Humanities* with links to 27 disparate databases and websites, ranging from *The Ancient World Web* and *Electronic Resources for Classicists* to *Television: An Undergraduate Research Guide* and *Interior Design Resources on the Net*. As in the Princeton site, some links may have relevance for the study of literature (i.e., *HUMBUL Humanities Hub* and *Full Text Humanities Resources on the Internet*), but nothing is devoted primarily to Literary Studies. Northwestern, on the other hand, offers something approximating a subject guide—an "electronic handout," that is, a PDF file entitled *Selected Checklists of Literary Criticism*. This file is reached through the heading "How to Find Literary Criticism." But with no annotations, no explanations, and only one hyperlink (to the *MLA Bibliography*) this handout, besides offering no advice on how to find literary criticism, is merely a traditional bibliography digitized. Nonetheless, with 90% of the top 30 academic libraries offering them, Literary Studies subject guides seem to have become a standard feature of academic library websites.

Labeling

Little consistency was found in the labeling of electronic subject guides for Literary Studies. Six libraries present literature subject guides under the departmental heading *English*. Four libraries use the heading *Literature*. Seven libraries use some combination of "English," "Language," and "Literature" (*English Language and Literature*, *English Language Literature*, *Literatures in English*, *Languages and Literatures*). Seven libraries use a combination of "English Literature" and "American Literature." Duke, alone among the top 30 academic libraries, heads its subject guide *Literature and Film*, with a

subheading for *English Literatures*. UC Berkeley divides its subject guide by historical

period, *Literature—19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ Century* and *Literature—Medieval & Early Modern*,

although these links connect to the same page. It also offers a separate subject guide,

under the heading *English Literature*, that likewise is divided by historical periods.

Columbia offers multiple headings, *American Fiction and Poetry Journals*, *Comparative

Literature*, *English Literature*, *Medieval Studies*, *Multicultural Literature*, and *Theater*.

(Although Columbia has a detailed subject guide for English Literature, it offers no such

guide for American Literature).

In sum, these 27 academic libraries depend on departmental boundaries and on

traditional national categories (English and American) to identify subject guides in

Literary Studies. (Although 27 of the top 30 academic libraries offer Literary Studies

subject guides, the remainder of this study examines 26 guides since access to the

University of Pennsylvania's guide is restricted to Penn students and faculty.) Overall,

the labeling of these guides does not recognize the unsettled variety of domains and

theories and frameworks that exists within English departments and that shapes the

current study of literature in the academy.

Arrangement

The arrangement and organization of resources in Literary Studies subject guides follows

four basic formats: 1) standard bibliographic categorization; 2) intra-disciplinary

categorization (especially nationality and time period); 3) electronic/non-electronic and

library/non-library categorization; and 4) other more idiosyncratic categorizations. But

these often are not discrete categories—a subject guide may combine these formats: Yale,

for instance, offers *Bibliographies* as well as *Old English*, *Archival & Manuscript Materials* as well as *Contemporary Irish Literature*. Determinations as to which format a subject guide follows thus involves a degree of subjectivity: I chose what seemed a guide's central organizing scheme. Sixty-five percent of these guides follow traditional research/bibliographical categories (Arizona, British Columbia, Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Duke, Harvard, Iowa, Michigan, NYU, Ohio State, Penn State, Rutgers, Texas, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Washington). For instance, Harvard breaks its guide into five main categories: *Guides and Dictionaries*, *Indexes to Journal Articles*, *Full Text Resources*, *Bibliographical Sources*, *General Research Aids*. Similarly, Michigan divides its guide into six categories: *Basics*, *Indexes to Articles*, *Libraries and Archives*, *Reference Works*, *Guides to Web Resources*, *Full-Text Literary Collections*.

An alternative strategy for classifying these subject guides is to do so not by reference sources but by disciplinary subcategories, most commonly by focusing on time periods and national literatures. Four schools do so, with Yale offering the subject guide most thoroughly organized according to these principles. While presenting familiar categories such as *General References* and *Indexes and Abstracts*, Yale also divides its guide into intra-disciplinary areas: *Literary Theory*, *The Bible As Literature*, *Old English*, *Middle English*, *Contemporary Irish Literature*, *19th Century American Literature*, *American Literature*, *Renaissance*, *Restoration & 18th Century*, *19th Century English*, *20th Century English*, *Postcolonial Literatures*, *Genre Fiction*, and *Children's Literature*. British Columbia, Indiana, and Virginia also offer considerable categorization by time period and nationality but do so only for web resources.

Three schools divide their categories primarily according to location of materials—the library, other university sites, and the Internet. Pittsburgh offers an alphabetical list of databases and links to *Relevant University of Pittsburgh Libraries and Collections*, *Selected Internet Sites*, and *CD-ROM Databases*. Minnesota offers a similar breakdown: *Resources in the University of Minnesota Libraries*, *Related University of Minnesota Sites*, and *Internet Resources*. (Minnesota offers another and more comprehensive Literary Studies subject guide under the heading "ENGL Library Resources for Graduate Students." But since this guide is difficult to find—I discovered it through a Google search—and far less prominent than the above mentioned guide, it has been excluded from this study.) North Carolina likewise organizes its subject guide according to format: *Article Databases & More*, *Journals in Electronic Format*, and *Research Guides*.

Toronto, listing only electronic resources, divides its subject guide into two broad categories: *Major Indexes* and *Other Indexes*. Similarly, Alberta splits its subject guide in two: *Try These First* and *Databases*. Illinois and Iowa do not offer a specific subject guide to Literary Studies but provide a database that returns subject-related materials (217 hits at Illinois, 64 at Iowa). California offers both a subject guide and a search engine. Its Literary Studies subject guide, though, is designed for a specific course: *English 200: Problems in the Study of Literature*, the English Department's introduction to Literary Studies for graduate students.

The arrangement of materials in these subject guides suggests librarians have continued to follow standard organizing schemes, schemes that predate both the development of web resources and the transformation of Literary Studies. In addition,

several schools use library and non-library resources as a central organizing principle, a distinction that bespeaks of librarians' uncertainty about the scholarly reliability of web resources, a distinction, research and experience suggest, not commonly made by students. Only four libraries substantially organize their subject guides according to fields within Literary Studies, suggesting, perhaps, a disconnection between scholarly practice and the creation of subject guides. The lack of consensus here may be read as a sign of libraries' confusion and need to develop proper models through additional research. But it may also be read as a sign of libraries' creative responses to a new and ever-changing resource environment.

Scope

Literary Studies subject guides vary greatly in scope, in how many sources are listed, in how deeply these guides interrogate their subject. The number of sources ranges from a low of 32 (Toronto) to a high of more than 1700 (Yale). Eight libraries offer subject guides with fewer than 100 named sources, seven between 100 and 200, nine between 200 and 500, and two greater than 1000. (The University of California at Berkeley's *Literature Subject Guide* lists 50 sources. But it also links to Infomine, a search engine of over 100,000 sites chosen by librarians. Or as the site describes itself: "Infomine is librarian built. Librarians from the University of California, Wake Forest University, California State University, the University of Detroit-Mercy, and other universities and colleges have contributed to building Infomine." Since it is not exclusive to the University of California and since it does not organize material except in broad categories [i.e., "Social Science & Humanities"], I have not included its result when calculating

sources. Had I done so, California's numbers would be much greater: a search of the term "literature" returned 848 hits from Infomine.) The average subject guide has 293 entries. With outlying figures from Yale and Chicago removed, this average drops to 187.

No consensus practice exists in the number of sources provided by a subject guide. Likewise, no consensus exists about the inclusion of freely accessible, electronic sources: whereas no such sources are listed in Toronto and Illinois's guides, 72 percent of Virginia's guide consists of freely accessible, electronic sources. On average, electronic sources make up 21.9 percent of total sources (25 percent when dropping Virginia's outlying numbers).

Based on these results, there appears little connection between a university's elite status and the comprehensiveness of its subject guides. Ivy League schools are at the top and bottom of this list (Yale 1700+, Harvard 47). On the other hand, that the most comprehensive lists are offered by Yale and Chicago might suggest some correspondence between a school's status and the scope of its subject guides. However, there appears no correspondence at all between the status of a university's graduate program in English and the comprehensiveness of its subject guide in Literary Studies. The top four English graduate programs, with identical scores, according to the 2000 *US News & World Reports* rankings, were Harvard, Yale, California, and Stanford; however, when ranked by number of sources on their Literary Studies subject guides, only Yale maintains its top position, whereas California drops to 24th and Harvard 25th out of 26 libraries (Stanford University, having withdrawn membership in the Association of Research Libraries, is not considered here.)

Table Two: Ranking by Comprehensiveness

University	# sources	# web sources	% web sources
Yale	1761	714	41
Chicago	1387	274	20
North Carolina	460	31	6.7
Cornell	398	2	0.5
Duke	363	41	11
Rutgers	348	135	39
Washington	323	123	38
Indiana	320	111	35
Alberta	294	10	3.4
UCLA	287	80	28
Illinois*	217	0	0
Virginia	196	142	72
Penn State	190	14	7.3
NYU	186	11	6
Columbia	123	2	1.6
Ohio State	112	23	20.5
British Columbia	108	49	45
Texas	107	50	48
Minnesota	69	18	26
Pittsburgh	67	7	7.5
Iowa*	64	9	41
Michigan	64	26	14
Arizona	54	8	15
UC Berkeley	50	16	32
Harvard	47	5	11
Toronto	32	0	0
AVERAGE	294	---	21.9

*Results of search by subject.

These numbers also suggest that the scope of most libraries' subject guides in Literary

Studies is modest, with fewer than 200 sources. Only two universities could be said to

attempt anything approximating a comprehensive listing of subject-specific reference

sources. It is safe to assume most libraries perceive subject guides as a selective overview

of a discipline. These subject guides seem to follow the aim of pathfinders: "to save users

time by aiding them in systematically locating materials with which they have little or

only general familiarity. They are not intended as exhaustive guides to subject literatures

or outlines for complete bibliographies" (qtd. in Canfield 292). The larger of these

subject guides, though, seem to overturn the limited goals of pathfinders and do aim for something like an exhaustive guide. That a quarter of the sources offered by these guides consists of websites and e-journals suggests, perhaps, the growing availability of scholarly resources on the Internet. However, in nine of these guides, freely accessible, electronic sources make up less than 10 percent of total sources, suggesting a continuing reluctance to conceive of Internet resources as scholarly reliable and important.

Course Specific

Reeb and Gibbons argue that the mental model of undergraduate students is focused on courses and coursework, not disciplines. Yet the subject guides examined here are universally designed according to the concept of discipline. If Reeb and Gibbons are correct, these subject guides do not fit the perceptual framework of students. Only eight libraries offer guides, devoted to specific English courses, that may better suit students' needs. And half of these consist of but one or two courses: Yale offers guides to the university's two freshman composition courses; UCLA to *English Composition: Information and Literacy Skills* and *Specialized Writing: Media and Communications*; California to a graduate introduction to Literary Studies; and Arizona to a Special Topics graduate seminar. The most thorough offering of Literary Studies course guides are found at Minnesota (9), Harvard (19), British Columbia (23), and Virginia (26).

There are likely several reasons so few libraries have created guides for specific courses in Literary Studies. For one thing, such guides must be developed in conjunction with faculty. Many faculty may resist developing course-specific subject guides because they do not believe in the usefulness of such guides, they want students to develop

research skills without such help, they are reluctant to take advantage of computer technologies, they fear burdening themselves with extra work, or they are not aware of this service. Additionally, Librarians may be reluctant to promote this service because it will increase their work load. And Literary Studies in particular might be overlooked because of preconceptions about Humanities faculty being resistant to new technologies; a belief that electronic subject guides are best suited to scientific, quantitative, and technical disciplines; and an institutional marginalization of the Humanities for the sake of more revenue-generating disciplines.

Whatever the cause, subject guides in Literary Studies are rarely devoted to individual courses. This neglect is unfortunate because, as Reeb and Gibbons note, it goes against students' perception of knowledge. It is doubly unfortunate in the case of Literary Studies. This discipline's shifting self-definition and multifarious ways of knowing may be best suited to more narrowly focused, course-specific subject guides. Rather than throwing students into the maze of Literary Studies, such a subject guide might help them map out a particular instance of this discipline; in so doing, it might also help them begin to understand the larger disciplinary picture. Before gaining an overview of Literary Studies, in other words, one need perceive its particulars.

Literary Studies

The study of literature has, if not moved away from nationalisms and periodization, opened considerable space for new ways of categorizing and analyzing literature, particularly through racial and gender identity. (Although class is the standard third element in the triumvirate race/class/gender, it does not exist as a prominent means of

categorization within Literary Studies. Class is more a tool of inquiry than a category of

identity. In the study of literature, class, as an analytical tool, is frequently subsumed

under the rubric Cultural Studies.)

Table Three: Categories in Literary Studies Subject Guides

Schools	African-American	Asian-American	Critical Theory	Cultural Studies	Film	History	Latino/a	Postcolonialism	Queer Studies	Women's Studies	By course
Alberta											
Arizona											X
Brit Col											X
Chicago	X				X	X					
Columbia						X					
Cornell	X	X*				X	X			X**	
Duke					X	X					
Harvard											X
Illinois	X					X				X	
Indiana											
Iowa											
Mich											
Minn	X			X	X	X	X				X
NYU			X			X					
Ohio St											
Penn St											
Pittsburgh			X	X							
Rutgers											
Texas											
Toronto											
UC Berk.											X
UCLA											X
UNC	X				X	X			X	X	
Virginia			X								X
Wash											
Yale			X						X		X
TOTAL	5	1	4	2	4	8	2	1	1	3	8

*Listed under *Multicultural Literature*.
**Listed under *Feminist, Gender & Sexuality Studies*.

The most productive new categories within Literary Studies, then, look to racial

identity: African-American, Asian-American, Native-American, and Latino/a Literatures;

and to gender identity: Women's Studies and Queer Studies. (I use the term "Queer

Studies" as shorthand for a category that is variously identified: Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/

Transgender/Gender Studies). Literary Studies has also focused on post-colonial literature, English language literature from formerly colonized nations and regions.

Undergirding and undermining the practice of Literary Studies has been a grouping of philosophical discourses labeled Critical Theory, Literary Theory, or sometimes simply Theory. This field differs in important ways from Literary Criticism. The latter analyzes the workings of literary texts; the former questions the very enterprise of textual analysis and raises fundamental questions of epistemology, language, culture, ideology, and identity. Critical Theory touches on a wide body of knowledge including but not limited to philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and historiography.

How closely, then, do the features of subject guides as currently conceived match conventional research practices within Literary Studies? Five libraries offer a separate category for African-American literature, three for Women/Queer/Gender Studies, two for Latino/a Literature, one each for Asian-American and Postcolonial Literature, and none for Native-American Literature. Four libraries offer a separate category for Critical Theory and two for Cultural Studies.

Instead of incorporating these categories into Literary Studies subject guides, many libraries offer these as separate subject guides. Twenty-two libraries offer a subject guide for Women's Studies, 18 for African-American Studies, 11 for Queer Studies, 10 for both Latino\a and Native American Studies, and 8 for Asian-American Studies. Three libraries offer a Cultural Studies subject guide and one a subject guide for Critical Theory.

Table Four: Related Subject Guides

University	African American	Asian American	Critical Theory	Cultural Studies	Latino/a Studies	Queer Studies	Native American	Women's Studies
Alberta							X	X
Arizona	X						X	X
Brit.Columbia		X						X
Chicago	X					X		X
Columbia	X							
Cornell					X	X	X	X
Duke	X	X			X	X	X	X
Harvard								
Illinois	X					X*		X*
Indiana	X				X			X
Iowa	X							X
Michigan	X**	X**			X**	X	X**	X
Minnesota	X			X			X	X
N. Carolina	X			X	X***	X	X***	X
NYU	X		X	X	X	X		X
Ohio State	X	X+			X+			X
Penn State	X					X		X
Pittsburgh	X							X
Rutgers							X	
Texas	X	X				X		X
Toronto								X
UC Berkeley								X
UCLA	X	X			X	X	X	X
Virginia								
Washington	X***	X***			X***	X		X
Yale	X	X			X		X	X
TOTAL|	18	8	1	3	10	11	10	22

*Listed under *Women & Gender Studies*.

**Listed under *Multicultural Studies*.

***Listed under *Ethnic Studies.*

+Listed under *Ethnic Groups.*

From these results some modest conclusions can be drawn. First, libraries have

recognized the popularity of identity-specific fields of study, particularly African-

American and Women's Studies, as reflected in the frequency of their appearance as

separate subject guides.

Second, libraries have not integrated the recent changes in Literary Studies into

subject guides themselves. Literature is rarely considered in terms of identity within these

guides. And related guides, such as those devoted to African-American and Women's

Studies, are not linked to from within Literary Studies guides. Generally, subject guides

in Literary Studies do not contain links to related guides, a considerable oversight given

the multi-disciplinary nature of contemporary scholarship in Literature. This oversight is

particularly glaring in the case of History guides, since Literary Studies has become

increasingly concerned with historical and social context. According to Louis Montrose:

> In the 1980s, literary studies in the American academy came to be centrally
> concerned with the historical, social, and political conditions and consequences of
> literary production and interpretation. From a multiplicity of sometimes
> convergent and sometimes incompatible perspectives, the writing and reading of
> texts, as well as the processes by which they are circulated and categorized,
> analyzed and taught, are now being construed as historically determined and
> determining modes of cultural work. (392)

With their emphases on standard bibliographical categorization and their discrete

separation by discipline, electronic subject guides seem somewhat anachronistic; they do

not adequately consider the transformation of Literary Studies, especially its new

emphasis on history. And these subject guides often do not take advantage of the web's

ability to link across disciplines, to electronically enable the cross-disciplinary practice of

Literary Studies.

    Third, libraries have neglected to include Critical Theory as a category within

Literary Studies subject guides or as a separate subject guide. Only five libraries identify

it as a separate category or guide. This neglect may be due to the abstruse nature of

Critical Theory and to its far from easy categorization. But as the font for an assortment

of critical approaches, the driving force behind the refashioning of Literary Studies, and

the target of much criticism within and without the academy, Critical Theory would seem

worthy of far more notice than it has received in subject guides.

Fourth, libraries have given little attention to Cultural Studies. This anti-disciplinary discipline seeks to cross boundaries and analyze cultural products. An extension of Literary Studies' focus on historical and social analysis, Cultural Studies looks at "a larger cultural text, which is the matrix or master code that the literary text both depends on and modifies" (Scholes 33). In so doing, the exponents and practitioners of Cultural Studies argue for an overtly political practice that will enable them to, in Jonathan Arac's words, "carry on a significant political activity by relating the concerns once enclosed within 'literature' to a broader cultural sphere that is itself related to . . . the larger concerns of the state and economy" (xxx). This ambitious and important field has been overlooked by librarians when designing subject guides perhaps because of its novelty and perhaps because of its difficult categorization. If subject guides are designed according to disciplines, what is one to do with a field that consciously sets out to attack disciplines and make connections between disparate areas of knowledge? As with Critical Theory, though, the multi- and anti-disciplinary nature of Cultural Studies would seem well-suited to the web's hypertextual blurring of boundaries. Since much of the practice within contemporary Literary Studies, from Freshman Composition to graduate seminars, is shaped by Cultural Studies, and since it is the primary space within which literary scholars address issues of class, it would seem to call for considerably more attention from academic libraries.

The interrogation of literary texts demands a multivalent approach, a consideration not just of literary criticism but of psychology, history, philosophy, sociology, biology, even anthropology and theology. This cross-disciplinary approach has become the norm in contemporary Literary Studies. To put it another way, the discipline

of literary studies is multi-disciplinary. Or as James Raymond argues: "there is no discipline in the English department. It is a collection of disparate activities with multiple objects of inquiry, vaguely articulated methodologies, and diverse notions of proof" (1). Likewise, David Bathrick writes, "developments in theoretical practice and curricular organization have called into question the very notion of 'literariness' as a discrete discursive or institutional system. This has led to a reinterpretation of cultural texts to include a wide range of subjects from disciplines and even life experiences previously considered foreign to belles lettres" (321).

Given the fractured and unstable nature of Literary Studies, it is no surprise that students struggle to find their way through this maze of plentitude, a maze replicated by conventionally labeled and organized subject guides. Perhaps this problem of multiplicity and specialization can be addressed by remaking subject guides to more accurately mirror students' tasks. Rather than an introduction to a body of knowledge, a subject guide might be better construed as an introduction to a way of knowing. A subject guide in "Literature," then, need not fall prey to standard categorizing but might be designed more according to the ways literary scholars think about literature, to the kinds of questions they seek to answer. Literary Studies subject guides, in other words, should be designed to foreground and facilitate the process of literary and cultural analysis.

Summary

Employing a qualitative content analysis methodology and relying upon a theory of the knowledge-structuring force of academic disciplines (what Fish labels "systems of intelligibility"), this paper draws conclusions about the nature of electronic subject guides

as they are currently configured on academic library websites. Analyzing electronic

subject guides in Literary Studies at 26 academic libraries, this paper generalizes about

their most common features—organization, scope, labeling, and sources. And it compares

these features, with their implicit understanding of research, to the actual practice of

research in Literary Studies. The goal of this paper is to sketch an overview of electronic

subject guides in Literary Studies. The creation of these guides has occurred with little

direction from library science research and with, it seems, no detailed understanding of

what other libraries have created, organized, labeled, and designed. In her study of

pathfinders created by academic business libraries, Carla Dunsmore points to just this

"lack of information on pathfinders and especially on Web-mounted pathfinders" (142)

within information science scholarship. This paper then serves as a preliminary map of a

substantial digital Terra Incognita. It offers a tentative outline of what librarians have

already created in order to suggest ways that subject guides in Literary Studies may be

refashioned to better adhere to disciplinary practices and thus to better serve students,

faculty, and librarians themselves.

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