Best Practices for Building LibGuides

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Caveat:
I am not an Expert!

- 5.5 years @Johnson & Wales University
- LibGuides / LibAnswers Admin
- 12 Years at Springshare

These Best Practices are just suggestions. You know your users better than anyone, so please keep any tips that work for your community and discard the ones that don't. As always, your feedback is most welcome!

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What we're going to chat about

- Big Picture Ideas
- Guide-Specific Best Practices
- Writing for the Web
- Primary Source LibGuides + COVID-19 Stories

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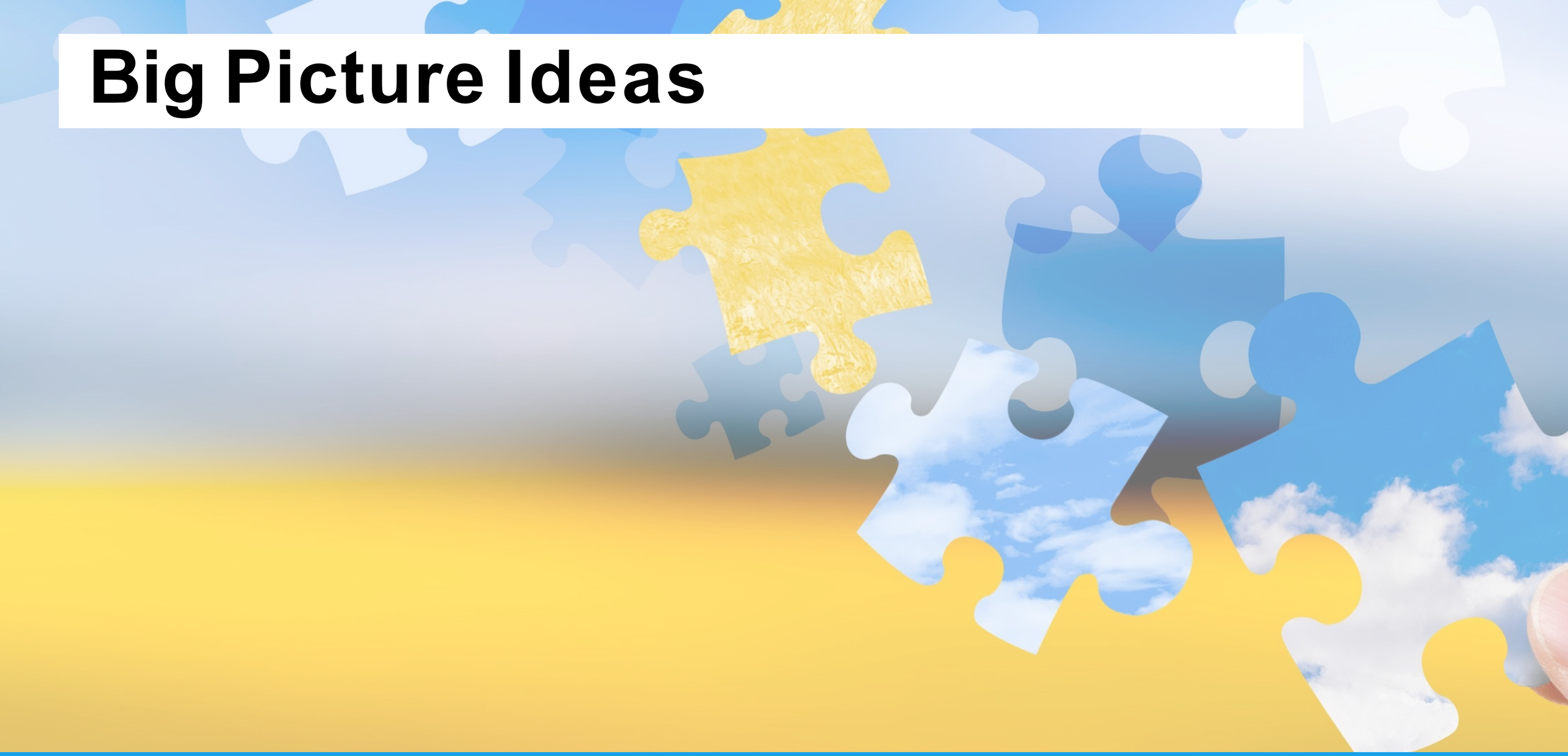
Big Picture Ideas



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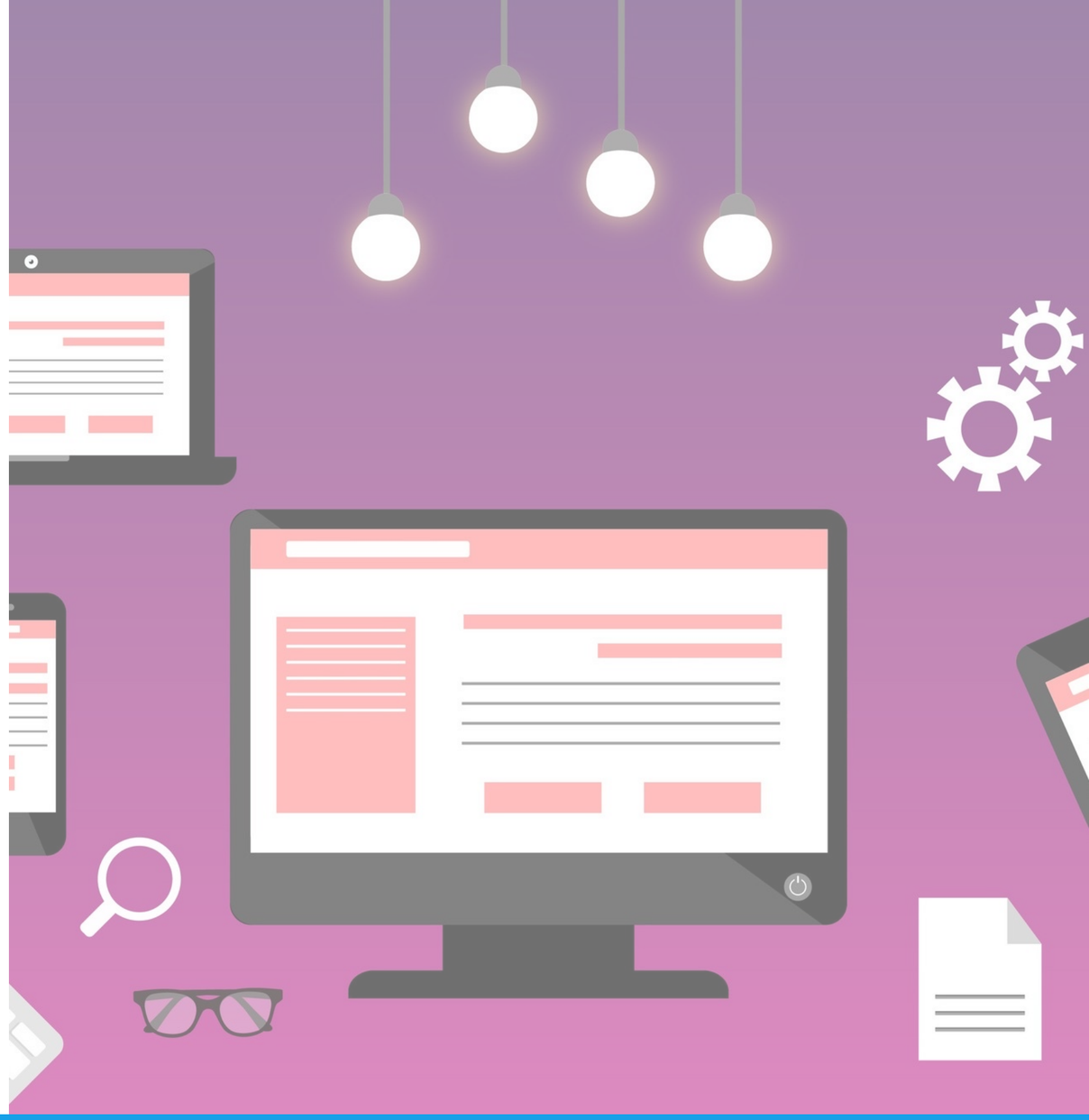
#1. Guides are Webpages

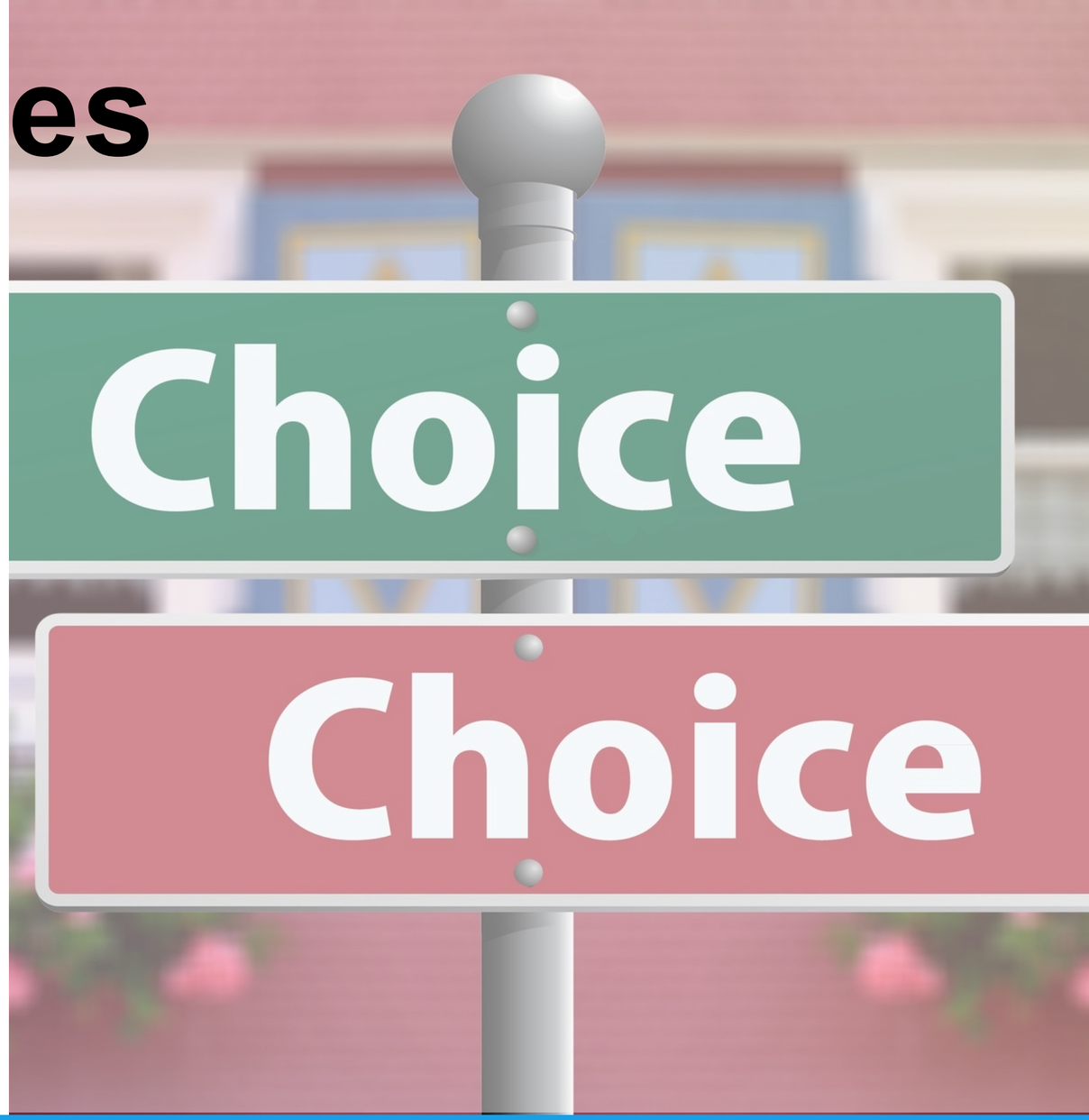
- Design them as you would any webpage...

  thoughtfully.



#2. Types of Guides

- Subject Guides vs. Course Guides



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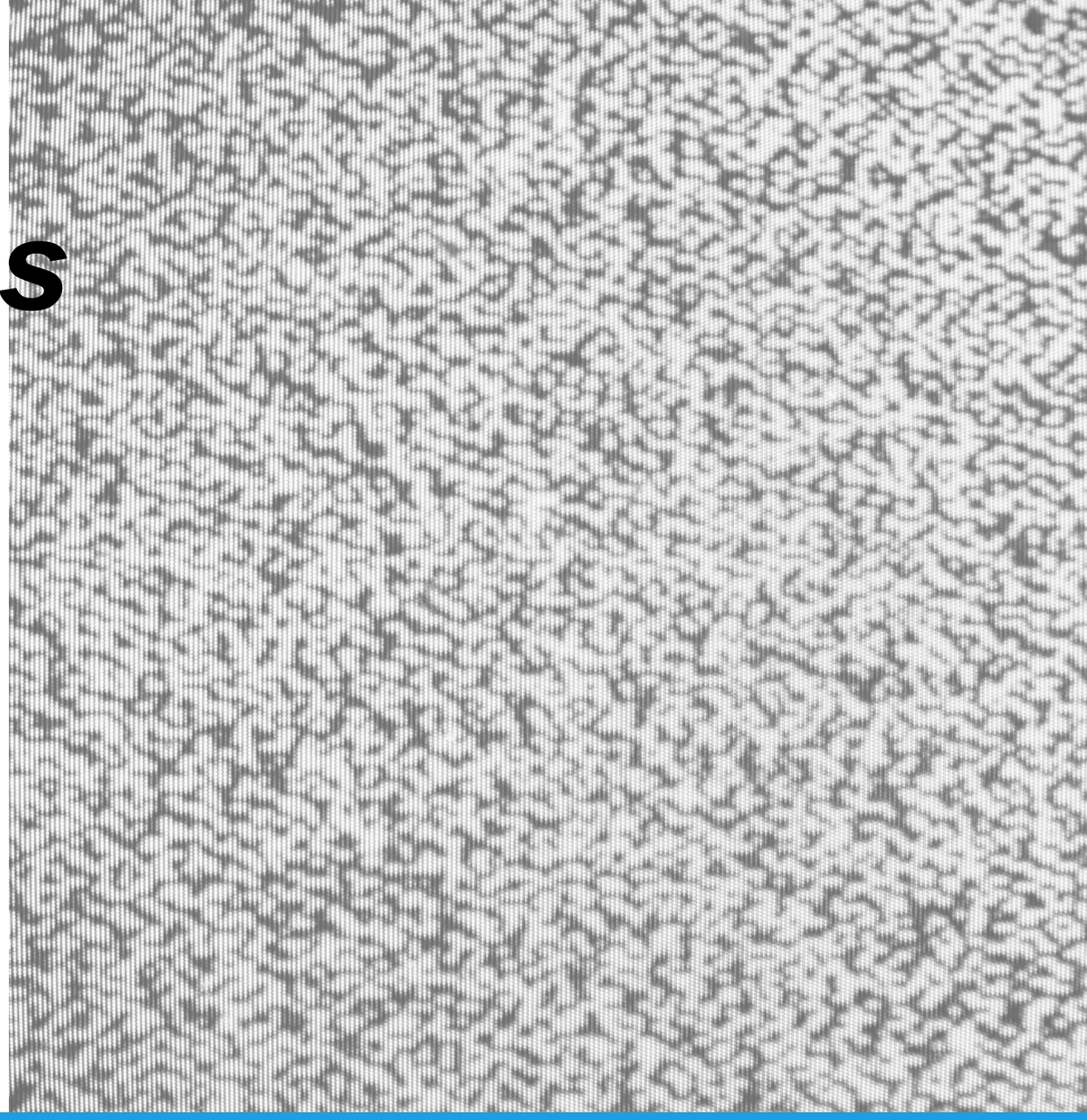
#3. Works in Progress... *Always*

- LibGuides aren't static



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#4. Reduce Cognitive Overload

- Overwhelmed with information that needs to be processed before learning can occur.

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#4. Three Types of Cognitive Load

1. Intrinsic Load:

Amount of processing required to learn the basics of the material.

Manage

2. Extraneous Load:

Occurs when cognitive processing is overtaxed or the information is disorganized or irrelevant.

Reduce

3. Germane Load:

When verbal/nonverbal materials are used and learners interact with them to create 'personalized guidance'.

Promote

#5. Foundational Elements

- Key strategies/ideas for Admin-Level users.

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#5. Foundational Elements

1. Consistency is King: Use Templates
2. Create a Style Guide
3. Create a Storage Guide
4. Think about Publishing Workflows (*LibGuides CMS Only)*

Guide-Specific Best Practices

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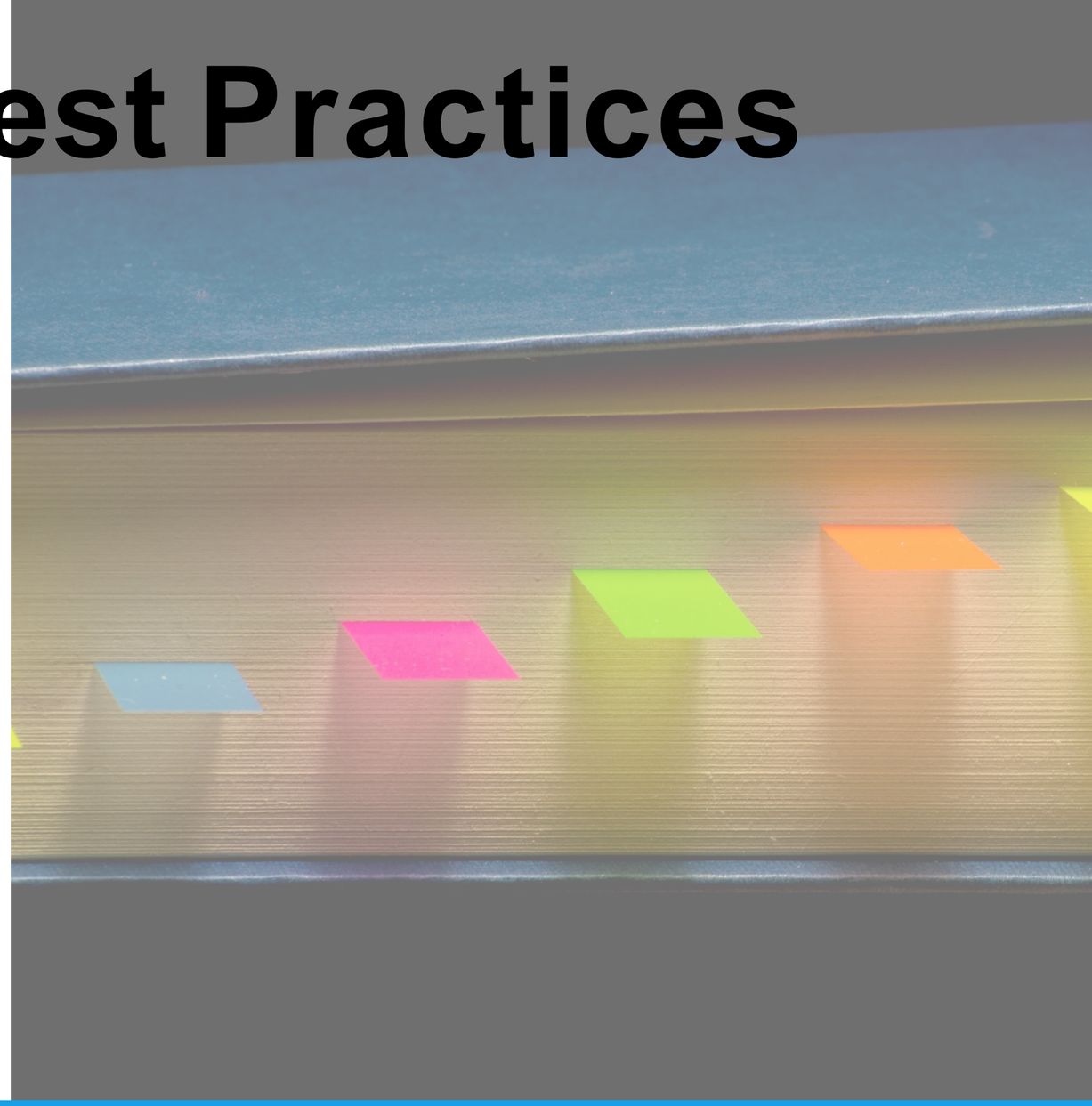
1. Tabbed Boxes Best Practices

- Avoid unnecessary clicks.
- Not to be used for storing disparate content.



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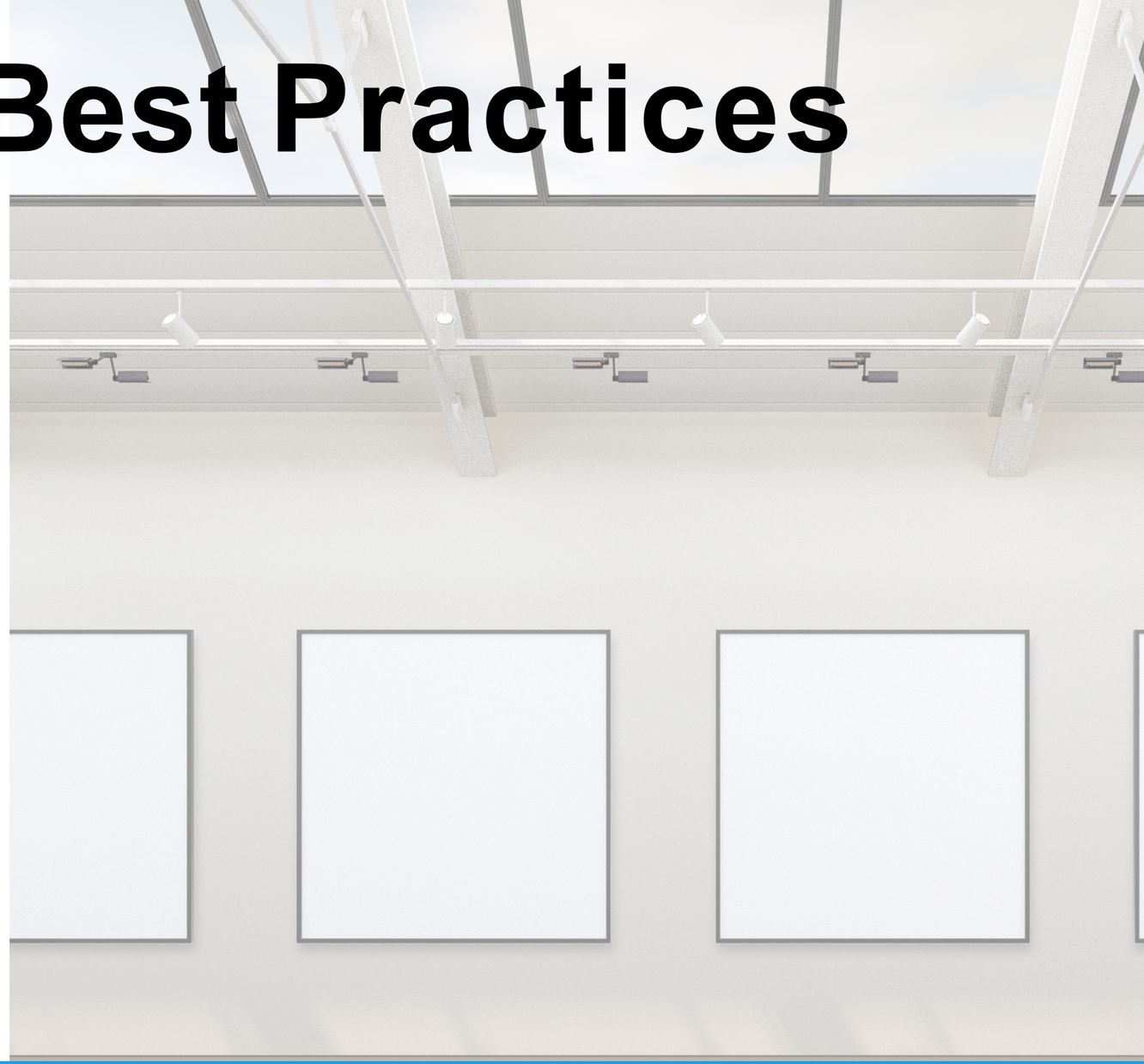
2. Gallery Boxes Best Practices

- Use sparingly.



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3. Using the Right Asset Type

- Can't hammer a nail with a screwdriver.

(*I mean, you could, but it wouldn't be pretty*)

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4. Tables for Tabular Content

- Not for layout or design.

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5. Side Nav vs. Tabbed Nav

- Common web design.
- Better for mobile.
  - Easier to select with touchscreens.
- Use Browser developer tools to emulate mobile display.

6. Building-In Positive UX

- How do you build-in positive library experiences... *virtually*?

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7. What to do with your Guide Homepage?

- Ideas & Tips

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8. Reduce the # of Resources

- They're not going to click everything, but remember your user demographic.

9. One Row of Tabs

- Subpages are pages too.
  - Tabbed - Not great on mobile
- Break-out a large LibGuide into other smaller LibGuides.

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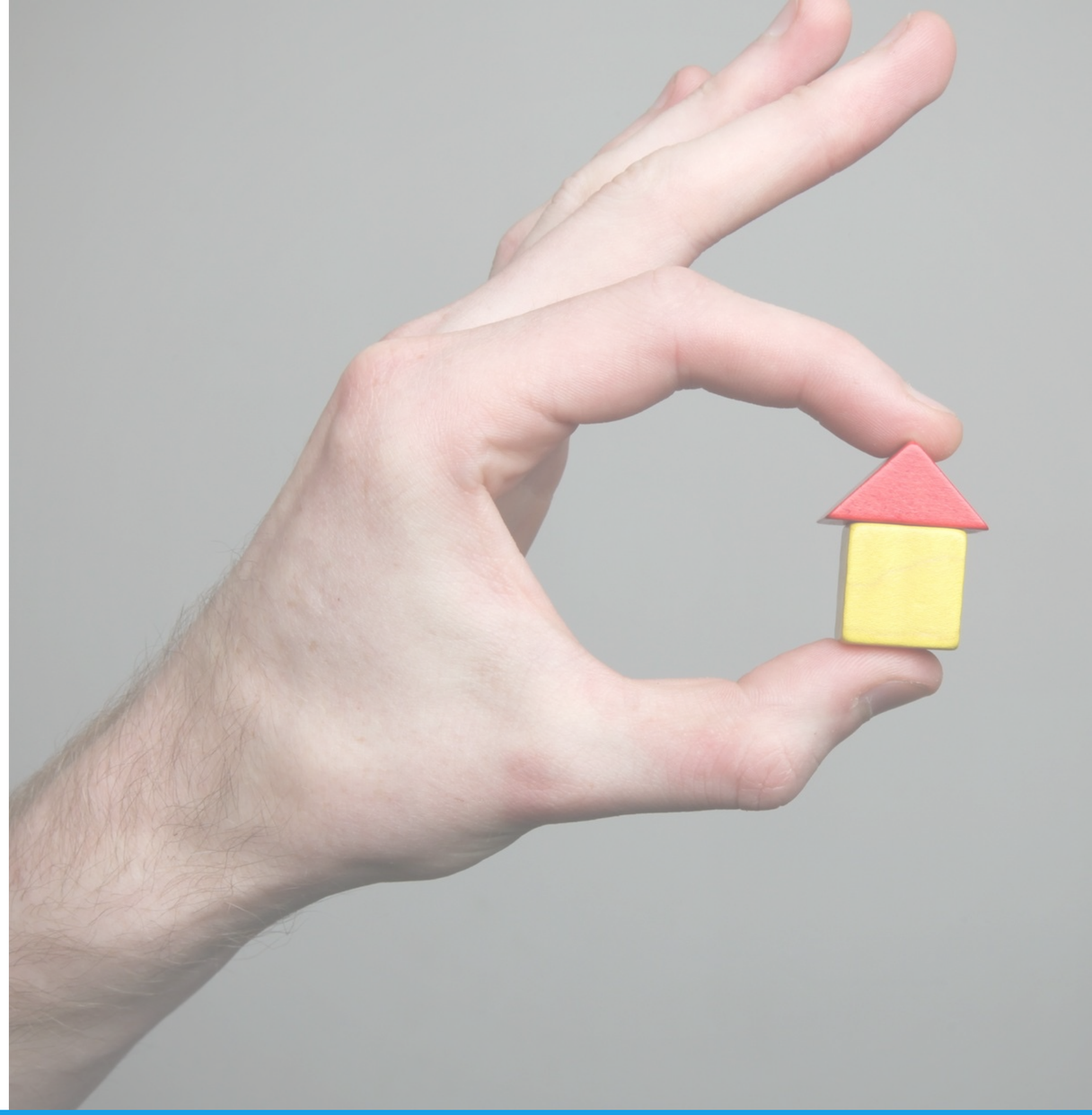
10. Short & Unique Page Names

- Avoid pages with long titles.
- 2-3 words max.
- People only see 2-3 words in a list.
  - Page titles are lists.
- Pages (aka menu) should be unique.
  - Don't confuse users where one page is called resources and another page is called web resources. What's the difference?



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11. Avoid opening links in a new window

- Controversial subject.
- W3C Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 > Guide 3.2 Predictable

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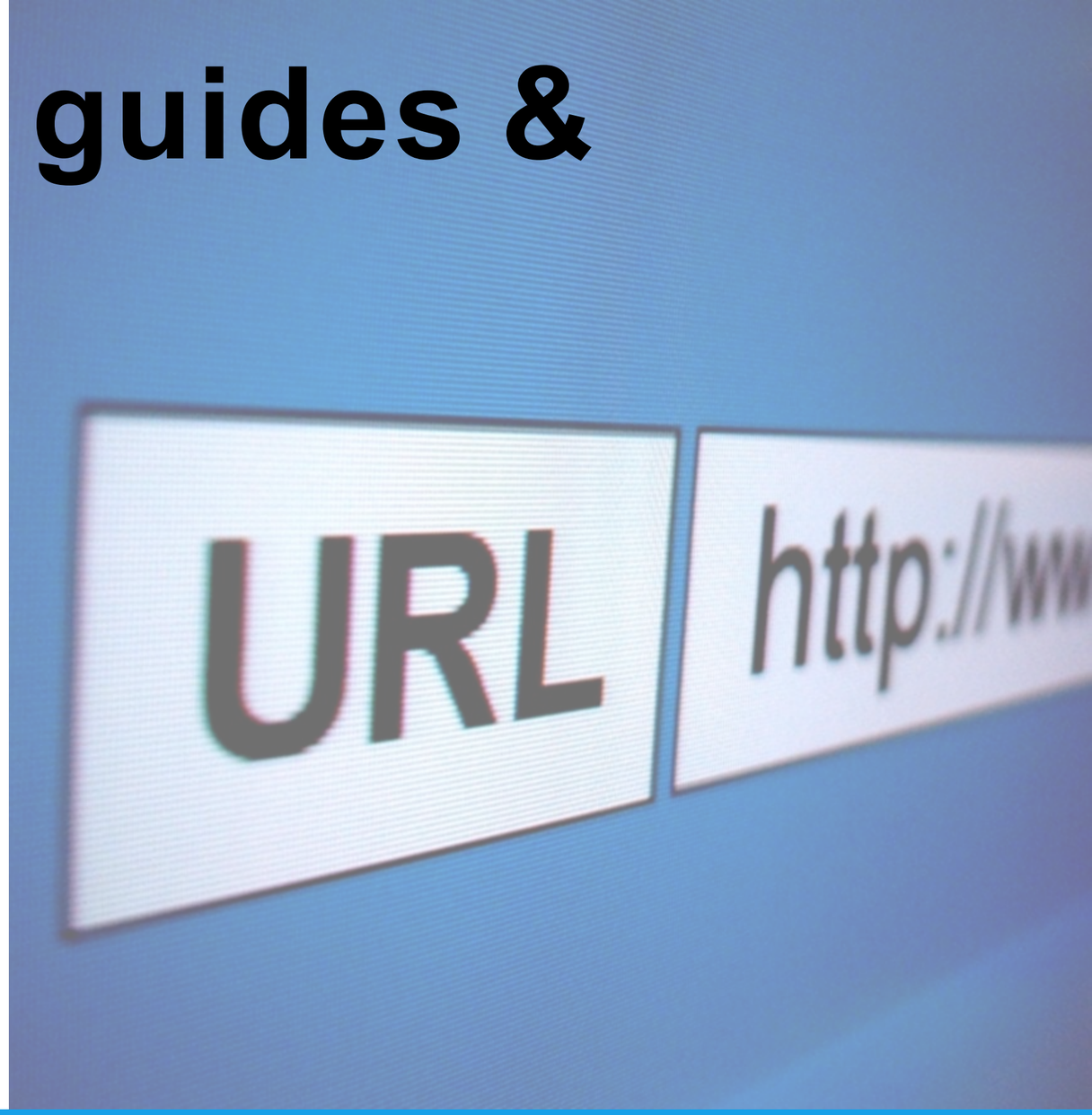
12. Friendly urls for guides & pages

- Use proper URL nesting

Guide > Page > Subpage

libguides.com/english/research/mla



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13. 1-2 Profile Boxes

- Is it for contact? Or giving credit?
  - Or both?
- Multiple profile boxes make confuse users.

  Who to contact?
  - So they don't contact anyone!

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Writing for the Web

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1.People don't read... they skim

- Create scannable text
- Use copy chunking - make use of headers, bullets, etc.

2. Be strategic about copy

- Front-load important content
- Reduce the amount of copy

3. Use action-carrying verbs

- Let's see examples

4. Avoid jargon

- "Don't use the OPAC to access the Bibliographic databases. Instead, search indices for periodical abstracts."

5. Use natural language

- Be informal.
- Use I/We/You

6. Avoid 'click here'

- Users know what a link looks like.
- Avoid using underlining which confuses web users.

7. Serif fonts are difficult to read

- Use serif fonts for headers/box titles.
- Use sans-serif for 'body' copy.

8. Use color with purpose

- Think about accessibility.
- Appropriate color contrast.

9. Avoid using caps

- Why so angry?
- Bolding / Italics

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10. Annotated images

- Include descriptive text / alt for accessibility

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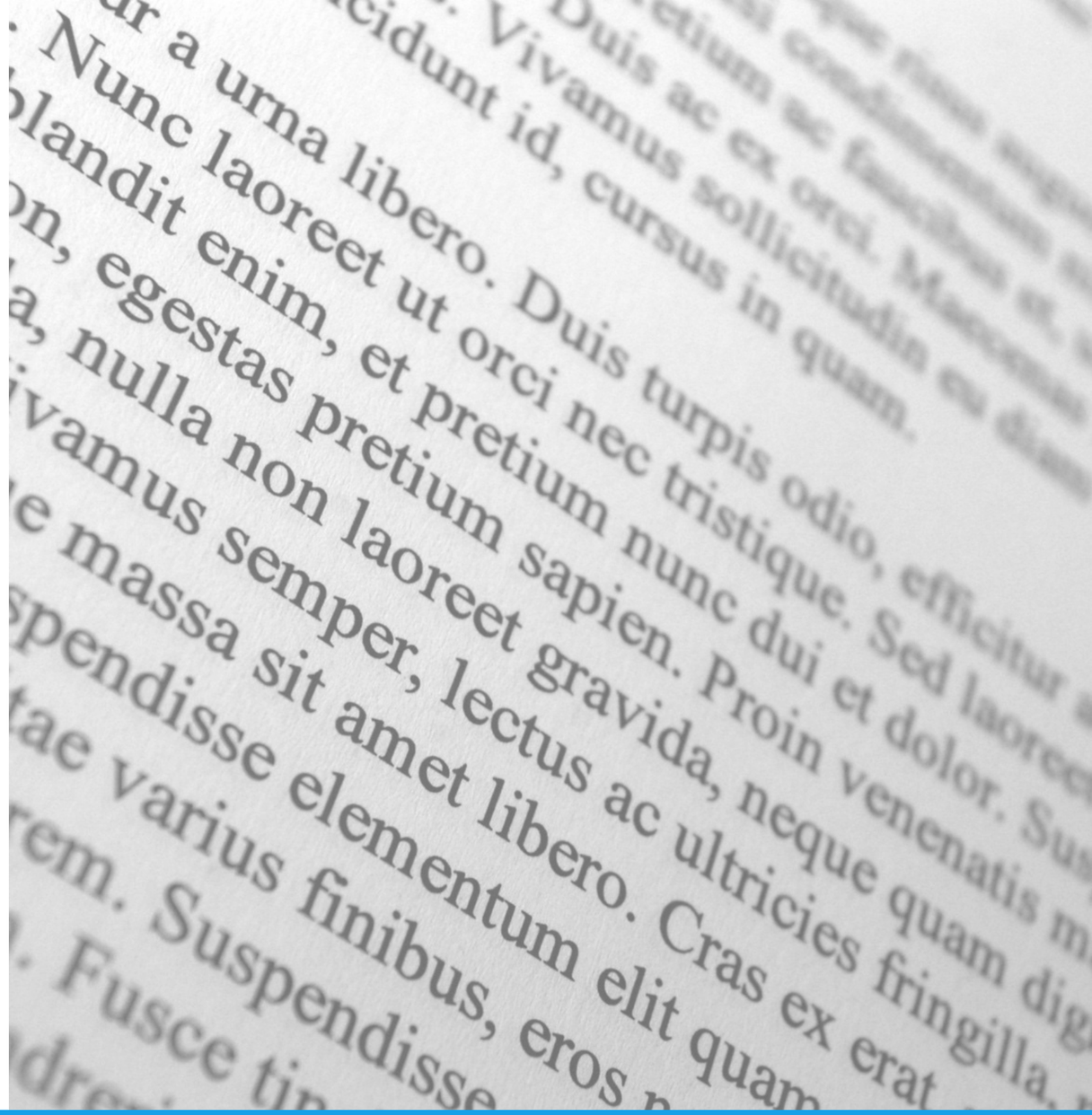
11. Centered copy is hard to read

- Left-aligned is better



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11. Primary Sources

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Writing for the Web - Websites

- University of Wisconsin, Writing Clear & Concise Sentences
- Plain Language.Gov, Hidden Verbs
- Center for Plain Language, Write Better
- F-Shaped Reading Pattern (Jakob Nielsen)
- How Users Read on the Web (Jakob Nielsen)
- Top 10 Mistakes in Web Design (Jakob Nielsen)
- Tabs, Used Right (Jakob Nielsen)
- Web Style Guide, Online (3rd Edition
- W3C Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 > Guide 3.2 Predictable
- Library terms that users understand: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3qq499w7#page-2

Tools

- CSS Font Stack: A complete collection of web safe fonts
- Font Awesome: Scalable vector icons that are customizable
- Adobe Kuler: Create color schemes and palates
- Colorzilla Browser Plugin: Browser extension that helps you identify colors
- WebAIM: Color Contrast Tool: Checks readability of text color on background
- Creating Annotated Screenshots:
  - SnagIt
  - FastStone