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From Fan Blogs to Fruits Basket: Documenting the Resources of Anime and Manga Studies LibGuides

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From Fan Blogs to Fruits Basket: Documenting the Resources of Anime and Manga Studies LibGuides

Cover Page Footnote

Thank you to the Indiana University Indianapolis 1RIP program for funding this research.

From Fan Blogs to *Fruits Basket*:

Documenting the Resources of Anime and Manga Studies LibGuides

By: Billy Tringali, Vibu Logendran

LibGuides, a product by Springshare, remain a common tool in a librarian's arsenal of information literacy instruction. And while researchers like Sterner and Glasby argue LibGuides can be used for outreach,ⁱ LibGuides can often find themselves reaching an audience far beyond the institution and community they are designed to serve. In tandem with this, as anime and manga studies continues to expand and evolve as an academic discipline, spawning data-focused papersⁱⁱ, academic journals, and academic conferences solely focused on this interdisciplinary area of study,ⁱⁱⁱ more and more fans are becoming interested in the scholarly side of this art form.

An initial research proposal was submitted to the Indiana University Indianapolis 1st Year Research Immersion Program (1RIP). The aim of this project was to record the recommended resources of anime and manga studies. This project was accepted, and funded, through this program, giving myself, the primary researcher, a researcher assistant in First-Year Neuroscience student, Vibu Logendran.

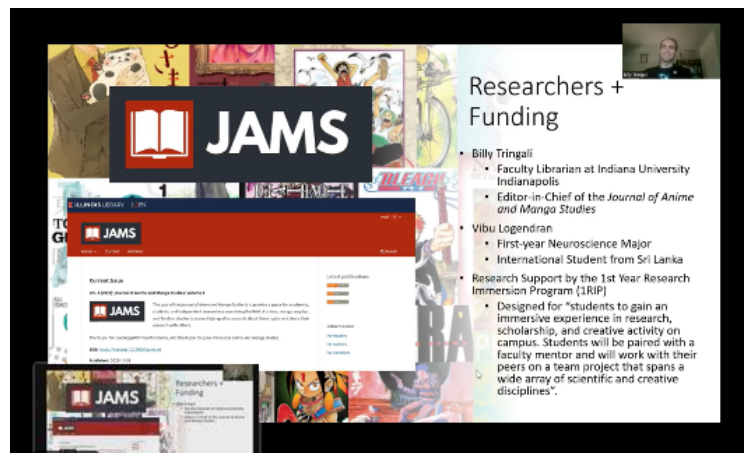
Our initial intention was to consider where information was placed within each guide, expecting that there would be much overlap between guides in the resources listed. Because this paper's primary researcher examines anime and manga, and is a librarian, this project began with an explicit understanding of what resources are frequently used within this interdisciplinary area of scholarship. Our research expected to see frequent overlap between guides, and our methodology was prepped with the anticipation that data analysis would examine how librarians listed resources explicitly focused on popular culture scholarship. For example, would anime academic journals like *Mechademia* and *The Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* be listed as "Online Resources" and paired with fan blogs or anime news resources, or would they be paired with more traditional, literary journals under "Academic Resources" like JSTOR. And while some guides listed *Mechademia* as an "Online Resource" as opposed to a peer reviewed, academic journal, what emerged as more interesting to this research was that librarians recommended different resources across these 25 guides. This paper will document and share the beginnings of this research project, an overview of which is provided below.

RESEARCH GOALS

- Find a minimum of 25, English-language LibGuides focused on anime and manga studies
- Record what libraries/universities these LibGuides belonged to
- Discover how many of these guides are standalone guides focused on anime, compared to how many are pages on larger, popular culture guides
- Collect information on what resources librarians recommend in these guides
 - Additionally: Discover how these resources are described, whether as “Online Resources”, “Journals”, etc.
- See if these LibGuides recommended any anime or manga
 - If so, what anime/manga they recommended

INTRODUCTION – Anime Research OP

The data finding process for this project attempted to mimic the behavior of a fan of anime interested in researching the academic side of anime and manga. Because of this, our first point in our guiding documentation was “1. Perform a Google Search for “Anime LibGuide” or “Manga LibGuide” or “Anime Studies Guide””. This project also included guides that were recommending academic resources, not solely recommending anime or manga, so it was additionally noted “2. Focus on LibGuides that highlight researching anime, not finding anime or manga in specific libraries”. From these two guiding principles, myself and my research student, Vibu Logendran, were able to locate 25 LibGuides, with 24 belonging to academic libraries in the United States, and 1 belonging to an academic library in Canada.



Libraries included on this list came from these universities:

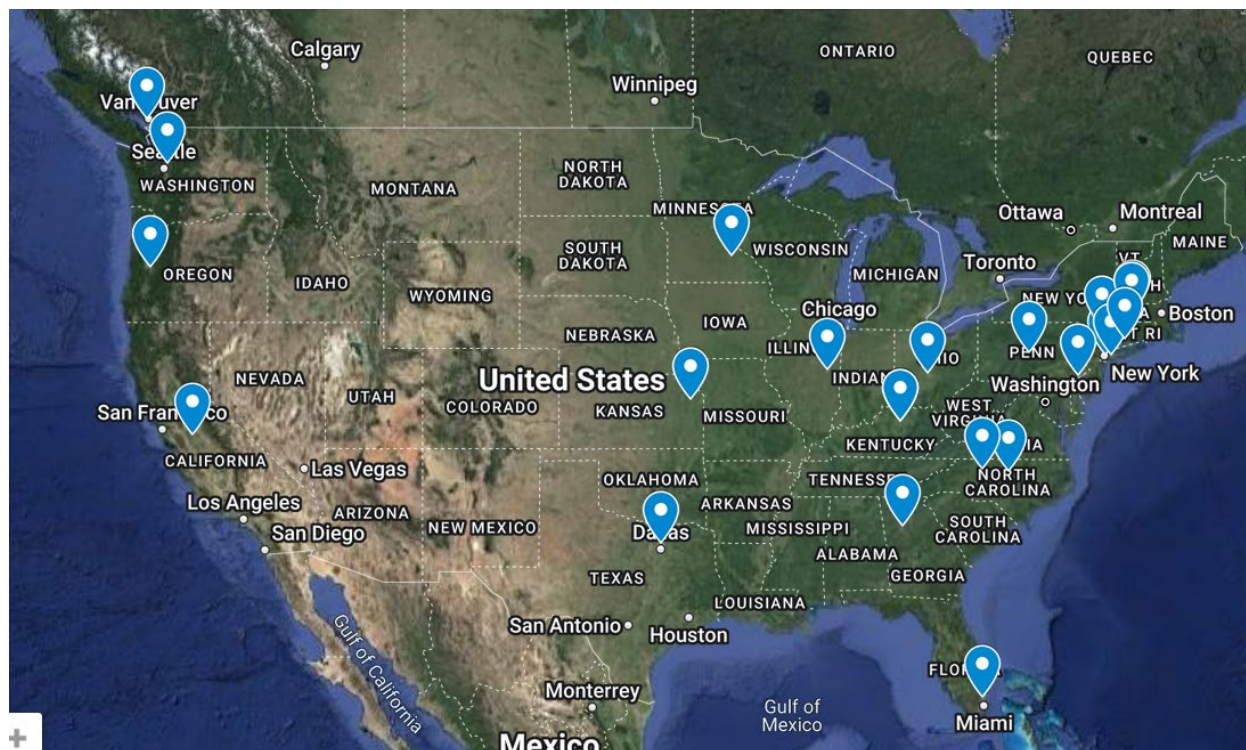


Figure 1 - Map of Libraries with Anime LibGuides

- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- LaGuardia Community College
- Atlanta University Center
- The University of British Columbia
- The Ohio State University
- Stanislaus State
- Penn State
- University of Kansas
- New Paltz SUNY
- UT Dallas
- UMass Amherst
- UCLA
- Adelphi University
- Smith College
- Yale University
- Nova Southeastern University
- University of Oregon
- University of Washington Bothell & Cascadia College
- Duke University
- St. Olaf College
- Salem College
- University of Kentucky
- Transylvania University
- Elizabethtown College
- Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore College

This project also sought to discover if the majority of anime studies LibGuides were standalone guides, or if they were pages on larger guides about popular culture. The expectation was that these guides would be likely housed

within other guides, perhaps a page on a Japanese Studies LibGuide or tabbed into a Popular Culture LibGuide, instead most anime studies LibGuides are made solely for anime and manga studies research. 64 percent of anime studies guides were full guides, with the 36 percent of guides mostly being pages on the expected Japanese Studies or Popular Guide research guides.

METHODOLOGY – Researching Anime Research

Between a large number of easily findable anime studies LibGuides created by libraries all across the country, and the vast amount of these anime studies LibGuides being full guides, I anticipated that most, if not all, of these guides would recommend the same resources. Thus, the goal of this project was initially focused on *how* resources were listed within these guides. Because, information from each guide was located and recorded manually, I anticipated Vibu and I recording the same information across various categories. These categories included:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| • Title of Guide | • Subject Terms | • Pages on Guide |
| • Affiliation | • Resources: Online | • Resources on |
| • Specific Library | • Resources: Journals | Additional Pages |
| • Link to Guide | • Resources: Databases | • Anime Recommended |
| • Full Guide or Page | • Resources: Books | • Manga Recommended |

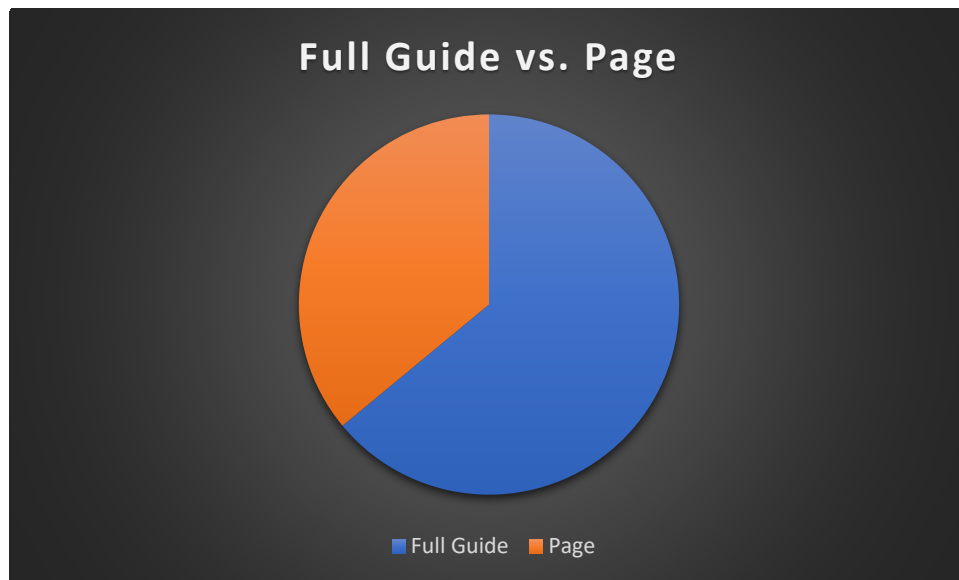


Figure 2 - Full Guides vs. Pages

These categories were derived based on the primary researchers experience as a librarian and anime studies researcher, crafted with the expectation that the resources recommended by librarians would all overlap. This was quickly proven not to be the case.

Many pieces of information collected from these guides could be easily placed within the categories in the Excel document. Our data collection quickly ran into trouble, however, when it came to organizing resources. As noted by researchers Del Bosque and Morris, there are no overlapping standards in LibGuides between academic libraries, so my initial research proposal was optimistic at best.^{iv} As opposed to simple category boxes within LibGuides like “Databases” or “Journals”, anime and manga studies LibGuides often listed out sections like “Sports & Youth” or “Otaku Culture”. This made my initial intention-impossible to carry out as originally stated, as most of these guides did not explicitly recommend resources in categories as simply as “Online” or “Books”.

Because of this, analysis of the data collected became more focused on trying to identify what overlaps there were in the recommendation of anime studies resources, which broadened out into discovering what information overlapped between all these guides. The strangest divergence between guides emerged in what subject tags librarians assigned to their LibGuides.

DEFINING ANIME – LibGuide Tags

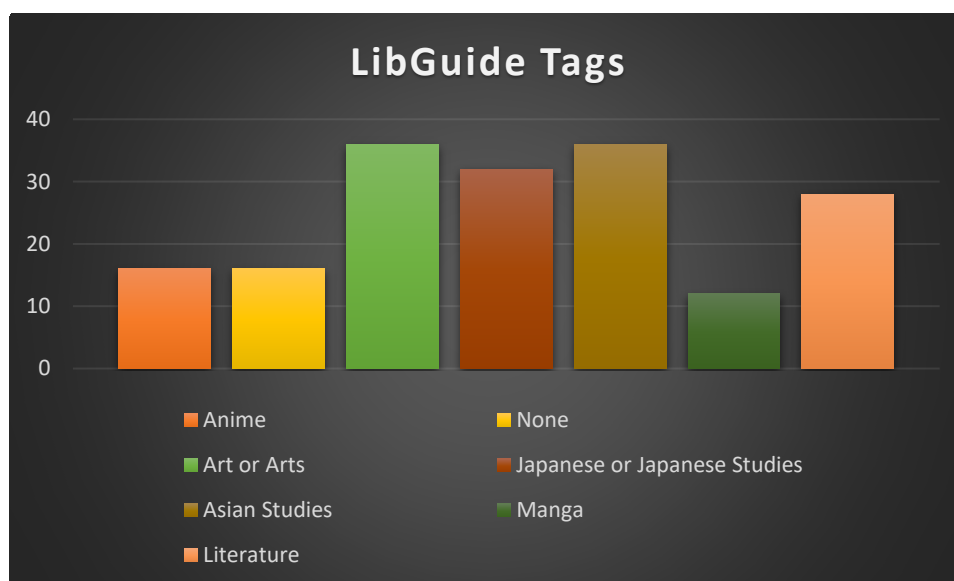


Figure 3 - Tags on LibGuides

In recording the Subject Terms with which these research guides were tagged, there was limited overlap. The most commonly ascribed subject terms that librarians added to these guides was “Asian Studies”, this was tied with the combined use of “Art” or “Arts” as a subject term. But even at the top of the list it was only used as a tag in 36% of guides. “Japanese” or “Japanese Studies” followed after it, being used in 32% of guides. “Literature” was used as a tag in 28% of guides. “Anime” was present as a tag in 16% of these guides, which matched the percentage of guides that had no visible tags. Finally, “Manga” was used as a tag in 12% of guides.

Other terms were used as tags, including one professor’s full name. Some of the subject terms used include:

- Art & Architecture
- Communication & Media
- East Asian Studies
- Film Studies
- Japanese Studies
- Literature & Language
- Anime
- Architecture
- Art
- Art history
- Artists
- Ceramics
- Chinese art
- Japanese animation
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Comics Studies
- Japan

ANIME STUDIES RESOURCES – JAMS to JSTOR

This project began with the expectation that every guide would recommend the same resources, or at least resources that would overlap enough to easily compare. What truly disproved this expectation was the extreme diversity of recommended anime and manga studies resources, examined in tandem with how little these recommended resources overlapped between guides.

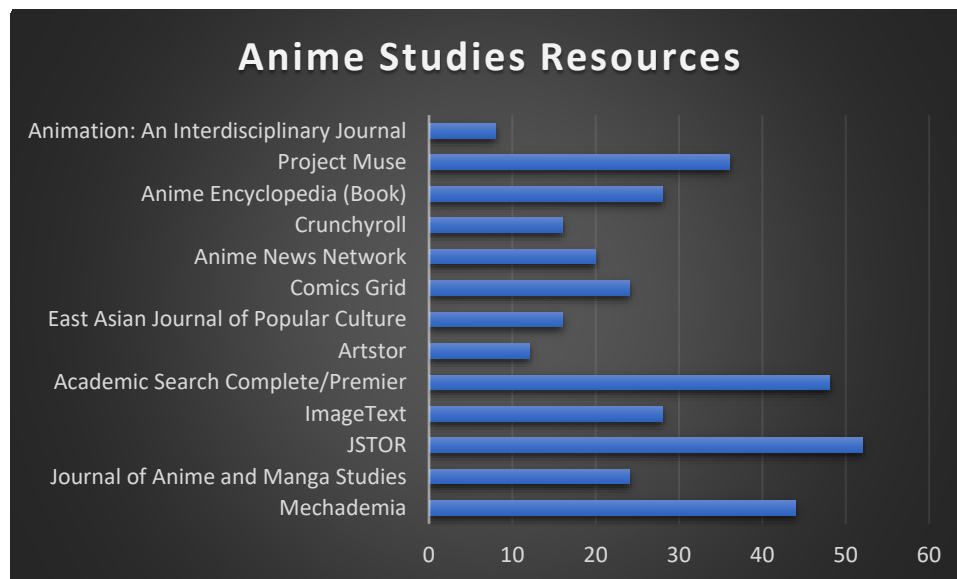


Figure 4 - Anime Studies Resources

The most recommended resource, across all guides, only just edged above 50 percent. JSTOR was recommended by 52 percent of the 25 LibGuides, followed by Academic Search Premier/Academic Search Complete at 48 percent. Next came a purely anime-focused research journal, *Mechademia*, which was recommended by 44 percent of guides. This was followed by a sharp drop in overlap, with *ImageText* at 28 percent, and *the Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* and *Comics Grid* at 24 percent. Anime journalism site *Anime News Network* closed out the highest recommended resources at 20 percent. Interesting, books by Helen McCarthy, were recommended by 28 percent of LibGuides. This researcher believes this can be heavily contributed to many libraries owning her 2001 book *The Anime Encyclopedia*, published with Jonathan Clements.

LIBRARIAN'S FAVORITE ANIME – *Fruits Basket*

One final portion of this project sought to see if any anime or manga were recommended by librarians within these LibGuides.

This raised this question – what counts as a “recommendation”? Does a link to the library catalog with a search for “Anime” count as a recommendation? Or should only anime and manga that are listed in boxes count as a “recommendation” from the librarian?

Ultimately, it was decided that anime and manga recommendations include:

- Anime or manga included within text boxes, with or without images
- Anime or manga placed within rotating slide shows on research guide pages, so long as this slide shows were finite

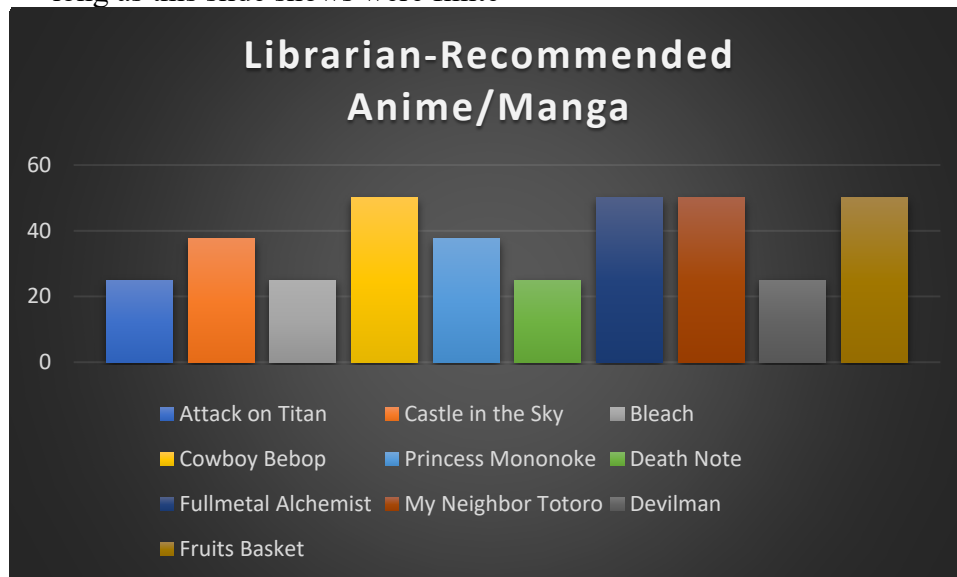


Figure 5 - Librarian-Recommended Anime/Manga

From the 25 guides from which information was collected, 8 recommended anime and/or manga to students. The most highly recommended anime/manga were mostly classic titles, with half of the research guides (50%) recommending *Fruits Basket*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *Fullmetal Alchemist*, and *My Neighbor Totoro*. Other recommended anime included *Attack on Titan* (25%), *Castle in the Sky* (38%), *Bleach* (25%), *Death Note* (25%), *Princess Mononoke* (38%), and *Devilman* (25%).

CONCLUSION + FUTURE RESEARCH

As anime and manga continues to grow in popularity, librarians will have to engage further and further with the diverse resources of this interdisciplinary, academic research area. As this project continues to evolve, it is this researcher's hope that a baseline will begin to form as to the best, or most easily recommended, resources of anime and manga studies. For now, it is this researcher's hope that the information discovered by this small study are useful in the drafting and publishing of LibGuides concerning anime, manga, cosplay, and their fandoms.

In the final drafts of this paper, the primary researcher was selected to once-again participate in the 1RIP Program again in Fall of 2024. This means this research will be able to continue with the goal of finding and recording the resources of anime and manga studies, though tragically without the assistance of Vibu, as she will no longer be a first-year student. The final portion of this project will be combing over the data collected, and creating an anime and manga studies LibGuide for Indiana University Indianapolis.

54. Anime as Information - Recording the Resources of Anime and Manga Studies

Love anime and manga, and curious about how it's studied? Join our project to explore and document recommended resources in anime and manga studies! We'll dive into academic courses, library collections, fan conventions, and scholars' websites to map out the essential resources for scholars in this field. As an undergraduate researcher, you'll have the opportunity to gain valuable insight into the landscape of popular culture scholarship, especially if you're majoring in the Humanities or Social Sciences. Selected students will work with Billy Tringali, Faculty Librarian, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*, and the conference runner for the JAMS@AX Conference at Anime Expo in LA. You'll help compile and analyze data to create a comprehensive resource guide while immersing yourself in the vibrant world of anime and manga scholarship. Don't miss this opportunity to be part of an exciting project that bridges academia and fandom!

This will be a hybrid project conducted on campus.

Note –Thank you to the Indiana University Indianapolis 1RIP program for funding this research.

ⁱ Sterner, J., & Glasby, H. (2023). Libguides as Outreach. *Pennsylvania Libraries: Research & Practice*, 11(2), 6–16. <https://doi.org/10.5195/palrap.2023.285>

ⁱⁱ Alberto, M & Tringali, B 2022, 'Anime Convention Attendance in Response to Covid-19', *The Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*, vol. 3, pp. 227–239.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tringali, B. (2023). Academic collaboration JAMS-boree: JAMS, Anime Expo, and fan connections. *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*, vol. 4.

^{iv} Del Bosque, D., & Morris, S. E. (2021). LibGuide standards: Loose regulations and lax enforcement. *The Reference Librarian*, 62(1), 1-22.

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