

USER STUDIES FOR DIGITAL LIBRARIES EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

The modern digital libraries have to address multiple diverging requirements and expectations of the users and at the same time to accommodate the rapidly changing technological novelties. User needs are always mentioned amongst the priorities in the multitude of policy documents which shape the scope and characteristics of digitisation and accessibility online. However, in reality, users seem not to be consulted in detail. One particularly underexplored area is how the use of social media could provide insights into the user interests and how the engagement with users can be enhanced in these environments.

This tutorial introduces a range of methods which can be applied to understand better user needs and expectations (surveys, questionnaires, interviews, deep log analysis, personas, eye tracking, ethnographic studies) and to give a practical feel how they work in real practice through a series of recent studies. It includes real life international case study which will help the participants to get a better understanding what studies could be particularly helpful according to the products and services they develop, how to involve users in digital library evaluation, and how to engage better with users.

Participants in the tutorial will gain better understanding of:

- Basic models on users in the digital library domain;
- Key user study methods;
- Recent best practices of case studies.

It will also help participants to get initial knowledge how to plan and implement a user study, and will facilitate transfer of experience between specialists engaged in specific types of studies.

Description of topical outline

1. Users in the digital library models (DELOS DLRM, 5S) and relevant ISO standards.
2. User studies and evaluation of digital libraries. Models for evaluation (work of T. Saracevic, T. Wilson, Interaction Triptych Model).
3. User study methods
 - Classifications of methods: qualitative and quantitative; front-end, formative and summative.
 - Basic methods explained: surveys, questionnaires, interviews, deep log analysis, personas, eye tracking, ethnographic studies
4. Planning and implementing user studies. Design of mixed methods methodologies.
5. User studies and memory institutions - some examples from libraries, museums and archives.
6. Case studies
 - Study of a large digital library (Europeana) – surveys, focus groups, eye tracking, deep log analysis, personas.
 - Redesigning University of Houston digital library front end based on usability studies and user testing.
 - Study of a large archival multimedia portal prototype (Una Città per gli Archivi) – internal users, experts, different focus groups
 - Harnessing Wikipedia to Increase the Discoverability of Library Resources.
7. How social media can help us understand better the users (examples from the Library of Congress, the National Libraries of Scotland and Australia).
8. Summary: planning and executing a user study.

Duration

Full day, with space sufficient to break in 3 smaller groups.

Expected number of participants

up to 25

Target audience

Practitioners working in the domain of digital libraries who are interested in the methods to find more about user needs. Researchers interested in digital library evaluation.

Level of experience

Introductory.

Biographical sketches:

Dr. Milena Dobрева is a senior lecturer in Library, Information and Archival studies at the University of Malta; in 2007-2011 she worked in the UK. In 2008-2009 she managed the DiSCmap project on user priorities in digitisation of special collections funded by JISC and recently coordinated the Europeana user and functionality study. Since 1990 she has worked at IMI-BAS where she earned her PhD degree in Informatics and Applied Mathematics. In 2002-2005 she collaborated with HATII at the University of Glasgow on three technology watch reports on the application of new/core/emerging technologies in the cultural and scientific heritage sector for the DigiCULT project funded by the EC, and in 2007-2008 she contributed in the work on the Policy and Quality domains within the DELOS DLRM (Digital Libraries Reference Model). A member of WG3 (object model) of Europeana v1.0, a former chair of the Bulgarian national committee of the Memory of the World programme of UNESCO. She regularly serves as an evaluator for the European Commission on projects in the digital library domain. Milena and Pierluigi coedited an international collection on user studies for digital libraries development, to be published by Facet publishing in May 2012.

Pierluigi Feliciati is currently the ICT coordinator and Senior Researcher on Information Science at the University of Macerata, previously coordinating the National Archives information system for the Italian Ministry of Culture. Assistant Professor of Information science applied to Cultural Heritage and Digital Humanities at the University of Macerata, in the Digital Archives Management and Preservation Master and in the Digital Libraries Learning International Master. His research interests, since its involvement in the MINERVA European working groups on cultural web quality, are focused on web applications quality, cultural heritage digital repositories management, evaluation methods on DL users behaviour and satisfaction. He was technical coordinator of the Europeana local project for Italy, of the National Archives, the Marche and Umbria regional workspaces of MICHAEL project, he is member of the direction board 2010-2013 of AIDA – Associazione Italiana Documentazione Avanzata and of the Scientific direction board of Italian Central Institute for Archives.

R. Niccole Westbrook works in Digital Services at the University of Houston Libraries as part of a team that creates and manages content for the UH Digital Library and provides digital imaging services to the UH community and beyond. She holds master's degrees in Art History from Washington University in Saint Louis and in Library and Information Science from the University of North Texas where she earned a Graduate Academic Certificate in Advanced Management of Information Agencies. Additionally, she was honoured as an ALA Spectrum Scholar and is a member of the Beta Phi Mu Honor Society. Her research interests include online management techniques, digital library best practices and diversity in libraries.

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