

## **ALA Annual Conference 2009**

Sunday, 7/12/2009

### **1:30 pm - 5:30 pm: Catalog Use and Usability Studies: What Do They Show and How Should This Evidence Affect Our Decision-Making? (MCP W-196c 120a) ALCTS CCS**

>> Karen Calhoun, OCLC

Objectives:

Identify/compare metadata expectations.

Compare across user groups/librarian groups.

Market research: Focus groups, pop-up survey (11K responses, 40% non-U.S.), librarian web survey (by invitation, 4K responses, 36% non-U.S.)

- Focus groups: Delivery as or more important than finding; summaries expected; improve relevancy ranking.

\* Casual users: don't show it if it's not easily deliverable

\* Undergrads: Like user-created lists, summaries

\* Scholars: Want recommendations only from 'valid' sources

- Pop-up survey: more links to full text (delivery), more subject headings, more summaries/abstracts. TOC, etc., on details tab.

\* End-user recommendations: Improve relevance, emphasize full text/delivery options

- Librarian survey: de-dup records, add TOC to record, add summaries, fix typos, expand/upgrade records -- improve delivery/access

\* Librarians get users' wants in much the same order users report, but their own priorities are different.

\* Recs: fix dupes/errors, introduce 'social cataloging' tools (wiki, lists, user-summaries), enrich records (TOC, cover art, etc), communication about what users want.

Hilder & Tan: "Evidence-based cataloging" Data quality measured by external user standards rather than expert ~guess~ \_\_opinion\_\_. Acknowledge functions other than find, incl. delivery. Important fields, in order (public lib. setting): Title, Author, Target Audience, Contents & Summary, Cover Image, Edition, Review, Subjects, Uniform/variant titles, Rating.

Public libs buying more A/v in 2007 than 2004, but still mostly books. Acad. libs. bought twice as

much E-Reference stuff in 2007 than 2004, but still mostly journals.

U. Wis. Digital Collections: Exponential increase in use 2001-2008. Once the focus of in-depth scholars, now vastly more important to gen. public, undergrads, more lay users. Howard Besser: searching across collections is a dream seldom realized; interoperability is the key.

Recs: Adopt evidence-based cataloging (perfect is the enemy of the good), keep efforts focused on what users want -- esp. digital resources. Study workflow and remove needless/duplicate efforts, don't futz with data manually that can be updated in an automated way from various sources, limit or eliminate special-purpose/exceptions. Start small, but start.

>>Nora Dimmock, U. Rochester: User Research at U. Rochester's River Campus Libraries -- Using an anthropological approach to build a better catalog

\*\* Find out what we DON'T know about our users. \*\*

Each user group has its own culture.

Log issues can't be dealt with in 'parking lot' for cumulative picture of what's needed.

Website Usability study (2001): Tasks -- users coming to work. Can they perform those tasks? Test with novice users. Subject: "It's not as good as . . . the broader search." Broader result set = Better result set? Small-scale, low-budget testing gives great value.

Findings: Users don't know what they're looking for -- just googling. Not sure of result set -- trial & error.

ILS UI was unusable & unchangeable: Black Box. Built simple, flexible search from data extracted from catalog. Added Lib search box to school site front page. Started with title & subject keyword; should have been just subject keyword, per evidence.

User Groups as Separate Cultures: Collab designers/developers/end users to complete 'Work practice' studies -- document & observe, question, survey. Rather than list tasks and document progress, ask users what they do to define central tasks. Moved usability to the end of the process, after task questioning.

Faculty study (2003, IMLS grant): Narrow interests focused on only individual work. Developed individual researcher pages for each faculty member.

Student study (2004): Backpack contents, what they use, what they want (facebook). Ideas into parking lot.

Grad student study (2006): 7 hours a day on PC. Bridging from undergrad culture to faculty culture. Tidy & organized. Wanted x-ref to theses with the same advisor.

Format: elec. or print? Avail. now? Relevant? More like it? Can cite it?

Needed Extensible Catalog: Layer on top of catalog -- open-source tools, resource discovery and metadata mgmt, Mellon Fdn. funding, release supposed to be 3/2009 but delayed. Features: Availability, Did you mean? (recommender), authority control, call no. browse, customize fields, cover. Facets: Pub, Journal, Length, pub date, hist period, keywords, version, ability to limit to electronic resources.

>> Beth Thomsett-Scott, U. North Texas: Competitive Usability

Pick loves/hates from multiple sites and create composite of the best. Continue testing & retesting.

Survey: Catalog is the hardest resource to use. One-stop shopping for patrons & mktg resources. Adding formats, web links, TOCs, covers, etc. to increase complexity. Users prefer websites -- Amazon, esp. Need to improve UX.

Usability improvements: Goal is patron self-service; design based on expectations; most omit new technologies (fed. search, full-text search, covers TOCs).

UNT compared 3 using the same ILS (Innovative Interfaces) chosen for differences in page design and func components. Washington State, Oregon, Miami.

Eight tasks (search by title, by keyword, item location) plus focus groups on what they liked/disliked/wanted. Paid participants.

Analyze data for each tested site -- same thing times 3. Isolate elements liked about each site.

- Typing skills affected participation, maybe also use
- Terminology of catalog labels was unfamiliar and intimidating. Need for simple, familiar look.
- Lost interest in study tasks as study progressed. Task times decreased as they got familiar with functions.
- Users felt \*they\* were being tested.