Quest for Improved Discovery and Access for Shared Collections

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Deborah Holmes-Wong
Librarian/Project Manager
University of Southern California Libraries
dhwong@usc.edu
Background

- Funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
  - Aggregated content
  - Built a portal site
  - Assessment activities
Institutions Contributing Collections

- California Digital Library
- Columbia University
- Cornell
- Emory University
- Harvard University
- University of Illinois
- University of Indiana
- Library of Congress
- University of Michigan
- New York University
- Northwestern University
- Stanford
- University of Southern California
- University of Tennessee
- Yale
american social history online

http://www.dlfaquifer.org
Access Scenarios

- American Social History Online Portal
- Commercial search service (Google)
- Federated search (Embedded in Portal)
- Citation management (Zotero)
- Course management (Sakai)
Overarching Questions

- Does aggregating content improve access for scholars?
- Does it stimulate new research questions?
- Does it foster interdisciplinary research?
- Does it enable cross-regional research of questions that have been explored only at a local level?
- Does it increase the usage of digital resources?
- Does the MODS-Level of Adoption of a record have an impact on its selection?
Difficulties

- Not enough time to use citation analysis
  - Two years to create portal and do assessment
  - Site recently “finished”
- Defining user community
- Publicizing site
  - Topic maps
  - Term search
Methodologies Discussed

- Data analysis (logs, *Google Analytics*)
- User interaction
  - Interviews
  - Participant observation
  - Focus groups
  - Surveys
## Decisions

**Methodology that interacts with users**
- Does aggregating content improve access for scholars?
- Does it stimulate new research questions?
- Does it foster interdisciplinary research?
- Does it enable cross-regional research of questions that have been explored only at a local level?

**Usage statistics analysis**
- Does it increase the usage of digital resources?
- Does the MODS-Level of Adoption of a record have an impact on its selection?
Methods Interacting With Users

Interviews

- **Best for:** Learning about an array of possible behaviors, opinions, needs, problems not the frequency of any one behavior.
- **Doesn’t do well:** The sample sizes are so small and the margin of error so great that you can’t determine how prevalent a behavior, opinion or problem is.

Participant Observation

- **Best for:** Surfacing problems with services. Learning about coping strategies used when services are inadequate.
- **Doesn’t do well:** The sample sizes are so small and the margin of error so great that you can’t determine how prevalent a behavior, opinion or problem is.
Methods Interacting With Users

Focus Groups

- **Best for:** Open ended questions to find out about user needs and opinions.
- **Doesn’t do well:** The sample sizes are so small and the margin of error so great that you can’t determine how prevalent a behavior, opinion or problem is.

Surveys

- **Best for:** Finding out the prevalence of specific behaviors, opinions, needs, problems..
- **Doesn’t do well:** Solicit new information.
Status – In Process

- Faculty interviews to discuss Portal – Emory & Stanford
- Faculty focus groups to discuss Portal and Commercial Search – University of Southern California
- Semester long student use of Portal and Zotero – New York University
- Sakai usability – Indiana University
- MODS Level of Adoption -- DLF
Results

- Usage analysis – Log data and Google Analytics
- Preliminary results from Emory
- Preliminary results from Illinois
Managing the Collaboration

Challenges
- Work schedules
- Internal priorities of participating institutions
- Time zones
- Funding for travel
- Changes in leadership
- Experience with assessment

Communications Tools
- Bi-weekly conference calls
- Face to face three times/year
- Email
- Wiki for documentation
- Templates for use/reuse