What do Faculty Need and Want from Digital Libraries?

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we report on the results of a national survey of faculty members concerning their use of digital resources (DRs), collections of resources and digital libraries (DLs). The research reported here explored issues such as: value of DRs, motivation for using DRs and barriers to use of these resources in teaching. The results have implications for how DLs might develop education and outreach efforts to increase visibility and use of their collections.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.3.7 [**Digital Libraries**]: User Issues.

General Terms

Design, Human Factors.

Keywords

Digital resources, usage.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this poster we give an overview of the results of a nation-wide survey of more than 4500 faculty members and instructors from 120 higher education institutions, administered from October 2006 to January 2007. Vast amounts of resources have been devoted to encouraging faculty members and instructors across all levels of higher education to integrate digital materials found in DLs and repositories into their courses and curricula. The value of these resources has been called into question in part because of their perceived low use. The findings from this research will be useful to DL designers and perhaps more significantly, to those working with faculty and instructors in the use of these resources.

2. Results

Preliminary analysis of the results of the survey indicate that the respondents reflected faculty and instructors in higher education with approximately 31% at four year baccalaureate/liberal arts schools, 27% at community college/two year or vocational schools and 40% from masters or doctoral granting institutions. 41% of the respondents were tenured faculty members and 83% of the respondents worked full time. Most respondents taught face-to-face courses and half taught over five courses in 2006.

The majority of the respondents were very experienced teachers with only 12% having taught for less than three years.

One of the purposes of the survey was to identify how DRs were used. The respondents held the use of DRs in high regard with over 59% reporting that they were of great value to their instruction. The resource type used most frequently by the respondents for teaching purposes was digital visual materials (over 40% reported very frequent use), and most of the usage was for in class presentations and lectures. Online scholarly resources received the highest ranking for use however, this was mainly for non-teaching purposes, e.g., professional development or for their own scholarship.

Another purpose of the research was to identify barriers to use of DLs and DRs. When asked to identify barriers they experienced, the three top barriers were: lack of time, lack of useful DRs and lack of training in how to use resources in the classroom. Focus group results confirm these barriers but suggest that lack of time might be 'code' for some other factor such as lack of incentive or other competing priorities.

3. Discussion

As our analysis deepens, we are finding confirmations, such as, respondents reported being 'self-taught' users of digital resource technology, which supports their claim of lack of training. Conundrums are also appearing, e.g., respondents reported using Google extensively and DLs less so, for searching for materials related to content (we had hypothesized the opposite), they did report however, slightly more use of DLs when looking for pedagogical information. These types of findings require deeper analysis, exploring for instance, differences based on institutional type, or motivation for using DRs. (In a related poster, we explore the differences in resource use by discipline group.) For additional information about the project and our results please visit: http://serc.carleton.edu/facultypart/index.html.

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