User-Centred Interactive Search with Digital Libraries

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Summary

Effective working with information is central to most knowledge-based activities. There is an ongoing shift towards digital provision of information, including through digital libraries. However, few knowledge workers have strong information seeking skills, and existing digital libraries provide poor support for acquiring such skills. One reason for poor support for skill development is that the focus of most past research has been on the improvement of system capabilities (through work in information retrieval). Another is that there have been very few studies of how information seeking skills develop over time, and therefore of how this development can be supported. In parallel, although there is an established tradition of studying information seeking, little of this work has addressed how information seeking fits within the broader information task, such as writing, and how the detailed design of the system interface influences individual behaviour. This project takes a three-pronged approach: studying use in context with Humanities users (chosen as a group who typically have impoverished information seeking skills in digital environments); studying the development of expertise with information management students; and developing and testing novel interface features that support novice users and the development of expertise.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this work were to:

- specify user-centred requirements for designers of digital library systems, to support effective use, including the development of expertise through use.
- construct a detailed account of the development of expertise in information seeking with digital libraries.
- develop models of information seeking behaviour with digital libraries – both process and declarative – contextualised within an understanding of the broader information tasks (researching and writing) of Humanities academics.

We organised a workshop on “Digital Libraries in the Context of Users’ Broader Activities” (DL-CUBA) at JCDL 2006.

People

Core project team: Ann Blandford, Claire Warwick, George Buchanan, Jeremy Gow and Jon Rimmer.

External advisor: Prof William Newman.

Collaborators at Waikato: David Bainbridge; Ian Witten; Sally-Jo Cunningham.

Project outputs

Refereed international journal and conference papers:


**Other outputs**


