A Framework for Evaluating E-Books in DL

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Outline

- Definitions
- Methodologies for evaluating e-books
  - Visibility
  - Availability
  - Usability
  - EBONI
  - Future

What is an E-book?

- Various and Contrasting Definitions
- In itself constitutes a barrier to uptake
- Two major types of e-book:
  - The electronic version of a whole text (for example, of a book that already exists in print)
  - or a database of linked materials, some but not all of which may exist in a print version (for example, scientific encyclopaedias which include interactive tables, etc.)

An Academic Definition

- The result of integrating classical book structure, or rather the familiar concept of a book, with features which can be provided within an electronic environment, is referred to as an electronic book, which is interpreted as an interactive document which can be composed and read on a computer.

Different Types of E-Books

- With or without paper counterpart
- Exact copy of paper counterpart vs. Added Value e-books
- Textual vs. Multimedia
- Page Turners vs. Scrolling
- Extra/Dedicated Software/Hardware vs. Standard Platform
- Portable vs. Desktop
- Free vs. Complex Distribution Model
- Dynamic/Static

Different Points of View

- Authors, Publishers, Educators, Librarians, e-Book Providers and Readers all seem to have different definitions and expectations.

- Most librarians include database versions when they are discussing e-books.

- Many individuals (lecturers, academics, students, even some publishers) assume that the term refers to electronic versions of discrete books only.

More Definitions

- "I'd describe them as computer files embodying the content of a book that can be viewed on an e-book reader.– an …. encyclopaedia or an electronic dictionary are probably not e-books."
- Non-conventional thinkers would argue that a website, a CDROM, even an e-mail might in some circumstances be described as an e-book.

Basic Problems with E-books

- Common perception that e-books should be either free or cheaper than print books.
- Publishers do not yet understand how e-books will affect their established revenue streams.
- Lack of a commonly understood definition of what an E-book is.
- E-books have disrupted the traditional book supply chain.

Modelling E-Books

- Content,
- Format,
- Purpose and
- Use

How to Evaluate E-books in the context of DL

- E-books as objects in a DL
- Visibility
- Availability
- Usability

E-books Visibility

- Where do readers find out about available e-Books?
- Promotion and Publicity crucial issues
- Cataloguing and Metadata Issues.
- Archiving Issues together with Formats and Standards.

E-Book Availability

- Depending on Delivery Model
- Ideally:
  - As many copies as needed
  - For as long as needed
  - Personalised version for each reader
- Or Netlibrary style even if things are changing there too

E-Book Usability

- Different Levels
- User Centred
- Comparative Approach
- SuperBook paradigm
- EBONI
- Common Benchmarks and Procedures?

EBONI...

- Electronic Books ON-screen Interface project.

- 20-month project funded by the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee).

Methodology

- Objectives and Resources.
- Flexible framework:
  - Selection of material
  - Selection of actors
  - Selection of tasks
  - Selection of evaluation techniques
- Results to be comparable with previous and future results.

Output Level
(the way the system interacts with the users)

- Usability issues surrounding portable electronic books.
- Five devices were evaluated by lecturers the University of Strathclyde:
  - A Hewlett-Packard Jornada with Microsoft Reader
  - Franklin's eBookMan
  - A Palm Vx with Palm Reader
  - A SoftBook
  - A Rocket eBook

Use and User Level

(the way the system answers the users' overall needs)

- Similar content different appearance:
  - Textbook for Psychology students of 2nd and 3rd year.
  - Three electronic encyclopaedias for High School pupils:
    - Encyclopaedia Britannica,
    - The Columbia Encyclopaedia,
    - Encarta.
- Same content different appearance:
  - *Hypertext in Context* by Cliff McKnight, Andrew Dillon and John Richardson (McKnight et al, 1991)

Use and User Level
(the way the system answers the overall users needs and tasks)

- Same content different formats:

  - MobiPocket Reader, a universal reader for PDAs and Pocket PCs.
  - Adobe Acrobat Ebook Reader for reading PDF format electronic books on a PC.
  - Microsoft Reader.
  - Geography 2nd year students.

Social Level
(the impact of the system on the community it addresses)

- In order to identify any differences in:
  - Needs
  - Use

  - Attitudes to technology
- Lecturers in different academic disciplines...
- Teaching undergraduate, postgraduate and evening classes.

What next ...

- Analysis of other methodologies for evaluation of different types of e-books especially in DL
- Definition of what a successful/desirable evaluation of e-books is
- Recognise and involve the right kind of expertise for the Hypertext, Web design and IR community
- Definition of a working framework where to evaluate e-books
- Testing it in the DL scenario
- Integration of E-book evaluation with DL evaluation models