

Use versus Access: Design and Use in Educational Digital Libraries

The Evolution of Educational Digital Library Evaluation from Access and Usability to Context and Application

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Assumptions:

- Educational digital libraries should contain high-quality online learning materials
 - *Quality* is defined by selection and inclusion
 - Focus is on collection building
- Access to materials is sufficient to motivate faculty to incorporate materials in their teaching and courses
 - Use of educational digital libraries will improve teaching and learning

The Problem:

- Educational Digital Libraries are *different* than traditional digital libraries
- Current evaluation methods focus on access and usability (of the digital library)
 - Evaluation focuses on collection quality and use of the collection (what we can measure with relative ease)
 - Evaluation methods do not focus on outcomes associated with intended uses of the materials

Today

ACCESS AND USABILITY

Much work has been done on evaluating traditional digital libraries—focusing on access to the collection and usability of the digital library. Much of the early work by the educational digital library community built upon this existing work.

What we've learned so far is:

- Digital library evaluation is complex, undefined and difficult
- There is no one framework to “fit all”
- The focus has been on the collection, in the traditional sense
- Evaluators have learned much about usability, user needs and work flow of access to the collection

Existing measures and methods include:

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Simple log analysis
 - Number of visits to the site
 - Number of visits to a metadata record/detail page
 - Time spent per visit
 - Number of registered users (if applicable)
 - Location of users (geographic)
 - Time of use (day, hour)
 - Location of referring site

Tomorrow

CONTEXT AND APPLICATION

As the Web has grown and evolved since the first educational digital libraries of the early-/mid-1990s, much has changed. However, we're still evaluating these projects as if they were traditional digital libraries. And in many ways are still trying to build an educational digital library” circa 2000 instead of one of today.

We propose a number of new measures of context and application that focus on the content as well as the use of the content of educational digital libraries as contrasted with the educational digital libraries themselves.

- Number and quality of contributions to the site
 - Comments
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
- Number of links to content (direct or via social bookmarking services)
- Reading time of content (comprehension and skimming)
- Number of downloads of content (if applicable)
- Number of copies of the content that are generally accessible
 - Straight copies (as in Creative Commons by-nc-sa)
 - Derivative works
 - Translations
- Content web-server logs (in contrast with educational digital library server logs)