Internet–Based Research & CI Workshop

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1 Overview

This workshop is designed for librarians and information professionals who (plan to) offer research and competitive intelligence (CI) services to clients with Internet–affiliated products, services, or target markets. “Online” clients have information needs that are new and unique to the Internet. Report models developed with Inter@ctivate Consulting Group customers and consulting projects will be shared and discussed.

2 Research Evolution

- traditional methods
- new media, old methods
- new methods for the new needs

3 Scenarios

- new or improved online service
- targeting a specific online audience
• converting from competitor’s offering
• what do netizens say about my company online?
• how do we rank in search engines and directories?
• trend and traffic questions

4 Tools

4.1 Feature Analysis of an Online Product or Service

Figure 1: excerpt from an online feature matrix

**purpose** A feature analysis allows you to compare specifics of your (client’s) online product or service offering to competitors. This matrix allows intelligent business decisions to be made with current awareness of how competitors are (not) handling comparable options and opportunities.

**method**

• brainstorm initial criteria with client
• identify competitor URLs

4.2 Visual Presentation of Competitors on the Web

Figure 2: side–by–side thumbnails allow fast comparison of key visual interface elements.

**purpose** Provide your client or design team with a visual overview of competitor interfaces at–a–glance. Makes it easy to spot trends in look and feel among sites in a given industry.

**method**

• consider audience technology
• identify competitor URLs
• screen captures, about 2 minutes per competitor site
• add executive summary, if appropriate
### 4.3 Presence Evaluation

Presence comes down to two questions for the client, brand, product, or service of interest:

1. Can people find us online? This type of presence (or lack of presence) might be called **Search Presence**.

2. If people have found us, what are they saying about us online? This sort of presence can be referred to as **Discussion Presence**.

#### 4.3.1 Search Presence Analysis

**Figure 3:** SavvySearch position analysis tool

**purpose** Provide feedback on a client’s efforts at search engine placement and results optimization against desired key terms.

**method**

- determine key terms. *top–down,* from client; *bottom–up,* from search logs or on-site poll. Typically query from two scenarios: 1. user knows this URL exists and is trying to recall by exact name, 2. user is performing a general subject search related to this client URL.

- query key terms in an online position–analysis resource (or perform manually if desired)

- report results with suggestions for legitimate improvements to the online content.

- re–submit the URL to appropriate directories and indexes

#### 4.3.2 Discussion Presence Analysis

**Figure 4:** Usenet mentions of a client name over time

**purpose** Is there a consumer audience online discussing our company, product, or service? Is this audience waxing or waning? What are they saying about us? Which of these online audiences is the most appropriate target market for our product?

**method**

- define research question and goal

- spot–check some sample queries in a discussion search engine

- run queries over desired time period

- analysis, maybe help from a statistics guru

- present data, usually tables or charts
4.4 Usability

Figure 5: excerpt from a usability review for a client web site

**purpose** Determine how well a (client’s) interface and related online factors adhere to web usability principles, and suggest improvements.

**method**

- establish usability criteria/template
- surf the site in question, record observations
- compare real to ideal, recommend improvements

4.5 Systems Analysis & Design

**purpose** Refine systems in the context of an entire department, organization, or information watershed.

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1 you are welcome to contact me via email for a copy of the usability template one that i use: sean@durak.org

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Figure 6: detail - use of frames - from an online usability review

Figure 7: client extranet access to online systems analysis report
method  Systems analysis (and friends, e.g. contextual analysis) is a long, formal process, unique to the client and situation being studied. It is not the kind of service you’d perform in an afternoon—but it’s definitely an option that librarians should be aware of and prepared to recommend to clients with complex situations where information needs and retrieval may be a small part. The broad steps:

- define user/audience, scope/focus
- determine needs
- audit existing systems
- research alternatives
- iterative design, development
- implementation (including training, documentation, conversion)
- maintain, monitor, refine

5  Online Delivery

- intranets, extranets, web servers
- access to live/raw data
- portable document formats
- security
- monitor / measure use
- recycled reports make excellent search gateways!

6  Keeping Up

- reduce infoglut with filtering
- profile-based standing queries
- serendipity. it happens.

- market trends - qualitative
- market analysis - utility industry market analysis - agriculture

7  Speaker Bio

Education  BA in visual art media from the University of California, San Diego. MLIS with specializations in information systems and information access from the University of California Los Angeles.

Work  University of California: Internet instructor, academic computing specialist and network administrator. Founded Kensho, a consultancy for Internet research, education, and marketing in 1995. Joined Inter@ctivate Consulting Group as director of research & intelligence in December 1996. Presently dedicated to the commercial success of SavvySearch.

Additional Information  Most of the projects, cases, and clients discussed in this talk are care of the Inter@ctivate Consulting Group:  http://interactivate.com/ Professional and personal URL:  http://durak.org/sean/ Notes from this conference available:  http://durak.org/sean/pubs/ili/