How Do Experts Use Digitized Photographs?

Theory Development on Users and Use

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Presentation Elements

- Research questions
- Study population
- Initial findings
  - Expertise
  - Modes of inquiry
  - Material/visual
- Implications for practice

Thanks to the National Science Foundation for funding support, the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, and UM doctoral student Ricardo Punzalan, who conducted phase one interviews.
Research Questions

- What is the nature of visual expertise?
- What is the relative importance of visual content versus technical properties in determining use?
- What is the archival nature of digital surrogates?

- Theory development [Yeo 2008]
  - Embedding and perceiving information quality dimensions in digitized collections [information products]
  - Advancing theory of archival quality [boundary objects]
Method of Investigation

- Participant identification
- Phase one interviews [45 min. each]
- Collection and user project contextual data
- Phase two interviews [2-1/2 hours each]
  - In-depth
  - Semi-structured
  - On-site
- Grounded theory analysis of transcripts
- Iterative assumption testing

Please attend the poster session this afternoon for more information.
Expertise

Based on Medieval guild hierarchies, an expert is:

“...the distinguished or brilliant journeyman, highly regarded by peers, whose judgments are uncommonly accurate and reliable, whose performance shows consummate skill and economy of effort, and who can deal effectively with rare or ‘tough’ cases. Also, an expert is one who has special skills or knowledge derived from extensive experience with sub-domains.”

Expert User Categorization

- **Challenging User Categories**
  - Status/employment orientation
  - Seriousness of purpose
  - Gate counts for administration

- **Motivation** [Conway 1994]
  - Affiliation(s) [social group]
  - Process [inquiry method]
  - Product(s) [outcome]

- **Visually Intelligent Users**
  - Photo-based projects
Interview Subjects [phase one categories]

- Library of Congress / Prints and Photographs
  - United States based
- Criteria
  - Significant use [18 months]
  - Tangible product
- Seven deep case studies
  - Orientation toward visual artifacts
  - Influences on decisions to use
Findings: Self-Assessment of Knowledge

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Findings: Modes of Inquiry [phase two categories]

- **Discovering** [visual detail] [P1, P4, P5, P7]
  - V. Unknown, unseen, unappreciated
  - T. Ultra high quality; camera negatives
  - A. Intrinsic qualities [reliability] of record
Findings: Modes of Inquiry [phase two categories]

- **Storytelling** [composition] [P1, P2, P3, P5, P6]
  - V. Narrative of scene’s composition
  - T. Derived descriptive metadata
  - A. Image as authentic record
Findings: Modes of Inquiry [phase two categories]

- **Landscaping** [context] [P2, P5, P4]
  - V. Geographical and temporal context
  - T. Object sequencing; structural metadata
  - A. Information beyond the image

V. Geographical and temporal context

T. Object sequencing; structural metadata

A. Information beyond the image
Findings: View of Digital Surrogate

**Materialist [picture domain]**
- values derived from source
- point two
- point three

**Visualist [image domain]**
- value derived from system
- point two
- point three

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**Surrogate is phys. memory**

**Surrogate is transcendent**

**Surrogate is imaginary**

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Implications for Practice: Building & Using

- Selection: **Comprehensive**, cohesive, collaborative
- Digitization: Masters, **derivatives**, and versions
- Metadata: **Derived** trumps applied metadata
- Interface: Beyond search to navigation
- Interface: **Tools** for personal information management
- Interface: Tap user **knowledge**

- Archival properties of digitized records
- User perspective on archival values
The Legacy of Digitization?

“I aspired to authenticity, but I never got beyond verisimilitude.”
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

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References [1]

References [2]


References [3]


