

Don't tease the reader

Techniques for making social science
CRIS more useful to research users

Dr Neil Jacobs, University of Bristol, UK

External drivers

- Efficiency (Value for money)
- Effectiveness
 - Evidence-informed policy and practice
 - Scientific advice in major debates
- From:
 - “public understanding of science”
- To
 - “public participation, democratic principles”

Limits

- Only social science
 - Perhaps a special case?
- Only
 - “publications CRIS”
 - **not** “primary data CRIS”
- But, are these issues more widespread?

Regard

- Database of UK ESRC since 1997
- Records of
 - over 8000 projects
 - over 75000 outputs
- Aimed at researchers, research users and ESRC

2001-2 Market research

- Major survey ($n > 1000$) of research users
- Cross-sectoral
- Which information sources do they use?
- Insight into what they find useful

Success factors for online information

1. Carry full text, including non-academic summaries, digests, etc
2. Emphasise research provenance, 'brand'
3. Find a way into the user's local information environment
4. Become topical or, at least, regularly and obviously updated

Focus of this paper

- Full text problem
- Service model problem

The full text problem

- Lack = frustration
- Solutions:
 1. Open archives (eprints)
 2. OpenURLs

Open archives

- OAI-PMH protocol, data providers, service providers
- Barriers:
 - Organisational
 - Cultural
 - Legal

Open archives (con't) – issues:

1. Appropriate level for data provider (subject, funder, institution?)
2. Metadata requirements
3. Accountability in a harvested environment
4. Legal open access without:
 - compromising rights of authors
 - affecting peer-review?

OpenURLs (SFX)

- Codes metadata into URL
- URL then resolved into queries on specific sources
- Can be personalised to include subscription metadata

The service model problem

Users want:

- Topical information
- Differential access depending on who they are and what they are doing
- Branding / provenance 'built in' – an editor they can trust
- Integrated into personal information environment

Regard developments

- 'In the News' + topic search
- New research and reports
- But it is not enough...

Personalisation

- Who is the user?
 - Authentication, authorisation
- What is the user interested in?
 - Explicit or implicit routes
- What is available?
 - Classification or automatic clustering?
- Match between the two...

Portalisation

Delivery options:

- Web site
- Embedding within local services (Web Services, etc)
- Email ('Newswire')
- RSS syndication
- SMS?

Next steps (was 'the horizon'!)

Much more user focus:

- Linking it all up (SW, Grid...)
- Helpdesks and advice contacts, people able and willing to speak to policy / media workers
- 'Translation' services
- Digests, summaries of policy/practice implications of scientific research

"What does this mean for me?"

A service, not a database

- Build on excellent databases
- New context
 - evidence-informed policy and practice, public participation, an informed citizenry in democratic countries...
- New mission for CRIS...
- New partners (open archives, media organisations, policy organisations...)