

End-users, User Generated Content, and Personnas: Testing the European waters

Dr. Susan Hazan, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
Chair, UGC Task Force, Europeana

Working with large datasets (30 million objects) and literal millions of users around the world means that it is very hard to know your users – even when they are themselves are active players, contributing, collating and creating content in rich cultural heritage environments; such as the Europeana ecosystem.

This presentation will look at end users from two perspectives: the active participant who agrees to be *crowd-sourced* and drawn in to collaborate with others whether they be man or machine, and those absent users who can only be identified as generic, abstracted individuals who need to be characterized as a generic type that can be evoked to evaluate how a user would typically behave.

This approach to user studies incorporates the use of personas; a form of role-playing where volunteers are asked to take on a role, or persona and to perform an explicit task with a specific outcome. In the AthenaPlus study we chose to run the tasks twice; once requiring our volunteers to complete their scripted task within the Europeana environment with a second round using in a more open environment; typically searching with Google and including results from Wikipedia, national portals and other specified parameters. Using this methodology, the performance of search engines and the way websites are structured (usability) the results are then evaluated. The results indicated from searches over other platforms (retrieval and use indications) serve to broaden the scope of our research and to act as a base of comparison with the results of the searches that were carried out exclusively in the Europeana environment.

The second part of the talk discusses a recent workshop carried out by the Europeana User Generated Group where a series of case studies were presented to illustrate the different kinds of user activities that are taking place in cultural heritage environments by individuals who wish to dedicate their own time and become an active player.



Persona 2 - Caroline

Photo image © <http://www.exactitudes.com/>