

Convenient Discovery in Suitable Resources: Design Issues.

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A review of design issues, solutions, and implications in the development of tools to empower learners to discover reliable explanations in suitable resources, based on the Context Finder and Context Builder tools in our “Context and Relationships: Ireland and Irish Studies” project.

The “suitability” of an explanatory resource is considered in terms of four aspects: The topical domain of the inquiry; the appropriateness of the cognitive level of the explanation for the learner; whether the sources are considered relatively trustworthy; and acceptable price and access.

Popular search engines, which routinely retrieve resources that are out-of-date or unreliable, are very heavily used. However, scholarly, carefully edited resources (often digital versions previously printed reference works) remain relatively little-known and little-used in the deep web. Use is extremely sensitive to convenience, so the design challenge is simple: the relatively trustworthy resources need to be made as easy and convenient as the popular but less reliable search tools.

Design issues will be considered for three stakeholders. For the individual learner support needs to be easily integrated into daily work practices if it is to be used. Providers of resources must adopt practices that avoid or automate obstacles arising from the pass-word protected silos using unfamiliar metadata vocabularies and local search engines. The mediating role of librarians will require changes in existing practices in bibliographical description, pathfinders and guides to reference services, and a renewed emphasis on self-service by learners.

Digitizing the services provided in a traditional print on paper environment is an important first phase. The real design challenges come with the second phase: Using digital technology in new and different ways to provide similar but better services in the emerging web environment.

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The above abstract (279 words) seems relevant to the following PNC Conference theme of e-learning, incl. these Draft Session Topics:

1. Projects Status Report
2. Digital Archives
3. Digital Libraries
4. Digital Museums
5. e-Publishing
6. e-Resource
7. Knowledge Management from Humanity Aspect
8. Metadata