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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction, Mission & Vision Statement

In 2006, the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto, together with the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Research Institute (KORI, http://research.knet.ca) organized a workshop discussing the possibility, feasibility, and implications of developing a digital library system for remote, isolated Aboriginal communities. This workshop, the Digital Libraries for and with Aboriginal Communities (DLAC) workshop, considered the unique challenges and issues within communities whose existing infrastructures may not satisfy the need for appropriate, authoritative, and meaningfully organized information resources.

The workshop set out a preliminary framework for the research and development of the On Demand Book Service (ODBS) project. With the use of bookbinding technologies, such as those graciously donated by the Internet Archive Bookmobile (http://www.archive.org/texts/bookmobile.php), the goals of the ODBS project included the development and implementation of a culturally appropriate, usable, and relevant repository of digital contents and services, as well as enabling users to turn online texts into a collection of physical print materials.

During the winter of 2009, the Faculty of Information course *FIS 2125: Information and Culture in a Global Context* began work on implementing the vision of the ODBS. Instructors Nadia Caidi and Adam Fiser led the course. The class was divided into four individual teams, each focusing on different elements of the project, while working in collaboration to lay the ODBS' foundation. The role of the Community Research team was to assess existing resources, build community connections and partnerships, identify potential ODBS users and their needs, and pass on this information to other teams. These processes involved:

Compiling and analyzing useful resources to steer research conduct, such as the OCAP principles. These will be further discussed below;

Engaging in dialogue and establishing solid relationships with stakeholders and community liaisons;

Determining and implementing appropriate assessment tools, such as the online and print surveys that were distributed near the final stage of the project's course term;

Evaluating the data and information collected from the surveys and preparing a report of outcomes. The data and reports are to be shared among the communities involved, and they will also inform the project's future research and development phases.

1.2 Goals and Objectives

Goals

- *Develop accessible information systems*
- *Develop partnerships between users and system developers*
- *Develop sustainable information systems*

Objectives

- *Collect demographic and socio-cultural information pertaining to potential user groups*
- *Collect data pertaining to community informational needs*
- *Analyze and synthesize data in order to isolate relevant informational themes that would apply to the construction of the ODBS, in terms of content and system requirements*
- *Disseminate findings to community partners and other groups*

1.3 Team Members and Associated Roles

Noa Bronstein, Celene Faludi, Mark Gelsomino, Nathifa Grier, Kim Le, Fiona Martel, Dominika Solan and Amber Wilde made up the Community Research team. At the beginning of the project, specific roles and associated tasks were distributed among members in order to ease workload distribution. It was acknowledged that these roles would remain flexible and open to redefinition over the course of the term. The group agreed to assign the tasks and responsibilities as follows:

Dominika Solan and **Mark Gelsomino** were *Team Coordinators*, acting as the primary lines of communication with course instructors, coordinating workflows, and assessing progress;

Fiona Martel and **Amber Wilde** were *Community Liaisons*, managing contacts within communities and participating in video conferences;

Nathifa Grier and **Celene Faludi** were the *ODBS Project Liaisons*, maintaining communications with other class teams and keeping updates of their progress to be shared with the rest of the Community Research members;

Noa Bronstein and **Kim Le** were *Project Secretaries*, completing key administrative duties including updating the wiki of weekly meeting minutes, and compiling and editing final reports.

The team addressed the reality that community research would likely involve several unexpected variables, that various facets of the project would overlap, and that responsibility for assigned tasks may grow and shift.

1.4 Outcomes and Deliverables (see Appendices)

The primary deliverables produced by the Community Research team are:

Surveys

The surveys were designed in order to gather data regarding various informational habits, needs, and wishes of communities. Two different surveys were designed, with one geared towards general community members and the other towards community information providers. The final survey products were posted on the project's K-Net Moodle website to be accessed and taken online after a lengthy editing process. The results of the survey can be viewed by those registered with the Moodle online community. Some preliminary data analysis has been executed with these results. In addition, print surveys were mailed to our liaisons and distributed at Big Grassy First Nation. Due to time constraints, the results of the print surveys will be gathered and analyzed after the completion of this report.

Contacts Spreadsheet

A spreadsheet combining community contacts and technological profiles of various First Nations libraries was created. This tool compiles and organizes valuable contact information and is a useful resource for those who may be involved with the ODBS in the future. It was also used to introduce the ODBS to existing First Nations library systems that may not have known about it and aided in determining interest levels in the project. The contact spreadsheet assisted in community outreach; it was divided among team members, who then contacted the libraries to promote the survey.

Pamphlet

The Community Research team also produced a pamphlet as a means of introducing and advertising the ODBS. The pamphlet's purpose is to spread awareness of the project, to establish intrigue and interest, and to help attract additional parties who may be willing to continue with the development process. It outlines the basic purpose of the project and introduces users to its potential functionalities and benefits.

OCAP PRINCIPLES REVIEW

The principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession were developed in order to protect and empower First Nations communities and their relationship to information. These principles were used as guideposts throughout the development of the ODBS.

OCAP Principles (Schnarch, 2004)

Ownership

The information gathered through the survey belongs to the communities from which it originated, with the understanding that current and future students and course instructors of the Information and Culture in a Global Context course, University of Toronto, are allowed to access and use it.

Control

First Nations partners have control, if they should so wish to exercise it, over all stages of the project. As Schnarch notes, "First Nations control of research can include all stages of a particular research project from conception to completion. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the formulation of conceptual frameworks, data management and so on (2004, p. 81)."

Access

The data collected and all documents produced is open to various stakeholders, including the students of Information and Culture in a Global Context, community partners, users of the ODBS, and the individuals and their communities who contributed to the survey. The Community Research team has a responsibility to make available the information collected in the course of the ODBS project to anyone who has an interest in it from these mentioned groups.

Physically, the information collected will be made available in report format on-line on the Moodle site. Hard copies will be made available to community partners in order to circulate relevant information to community members. A final report will also be kept in the Faculty of Information Inforum for consultation. An archive of the online wiki communications will also be made available.

Whether accessed for the purposes of information, inspiration, or assessment of ownership, the information remains in the hands of the First Nations Communities, and it may be shared at their discretion.

Possession

The community is in full possession of all ODBS related information and it is housed or stored in a place that is accessible to First Nations community members, where they may have *full* possession of it. In this case, the information is stored on Moodle, which is owned by K-Net. Therefore, the community is in full possession of all of the documents. Hard and virtual copies of the final report will also be in the possession of the First Nations communities involved in the project.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Primary Research Tool: Survey

For the purpose of reaching the greatest and most varied cross-section of Ontario's First Nations communities in a short time period, the Community Research team elected to focus on a survey as the main deliverable.

Online and hard-copy surveys were constructed over the course of a two month period with the assistance of Brian Beaton, Nadia Caidi, Adam Fiser and with input from other teams. Data was collected and preliminarily analyzed.

3.2 Design and Dissemination

The survey design process took roughly a month and a half to complete. From the Community Research team, Celene Faludi and Mark Gelsomino were the main contributors to the surveys, while Nathifa Grier, Fiona Martel, and Dominika Solan also provided useful advice and input when possible.

The beginning of the design process for the surveys (which were eventually titled "Survey for Community Information Providers" and "Survey for General Community Members") started with research and discussion regarding how to properly create a survey. Team members involved had each participated in different research courses in their academic careers, which contributed to the formulation of the surveys. As a theoretical starting point, Adam Fiser posted a useful article on the Sakai site titled "Towards a Theory of Self-Administered Questionnaire Design" (1995) by Cleo R. Jenkins and Don A. Dillman. Other useful information came from Don A. Dillman's *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (2000). At this beginning stage, the team was able to communicate with Ricardo Ramirez (University of Guelph) via videoconference, who provided an honest opinion of how troublesome surveys can be: they are incredibly difficult to write in order to satisfy the information needs of a project. Once incorporating these useful lessons, and considering the limitations of surveys in general, the team began the process of creating the surveys.

The Community Research team sought to make the process of survey creation collaborative and transparent and elicited suggestions and feedback from other teams and the community. The first basic questions that seemed relevant to the project were posted under a heading named "Draft Survey Questions" on the On Demand Book Service webpage of the K-Net Moodle site. This was also the area where class members and the K-Net Moodle community were welcomed to post ideas for the surveys. This information was incredibly helpful throughout the writing process; the posts helped the team focus on specific aspects of the surveys for editing purposes, as well as potential responses to the questions which would be most useful to the project and the various KO communities at this preliminary phase of the ODBS.

Once the Draft Survey Questions thread was accumulating useful data, the survey team members began meeting frequently. Alongside valuable discussions and debates, the team began to craft the surveys using the "Feedback Option" on the K-Net Moodle site (Margaret from the Systems team was integral in teaching the team how to create a survey using this framework).

So began the arduous, and at times confusing, process of trying to incorporate information and advice from a variety of sources. Between receiving recommended questions from our class and valued community partners like Brian Beaton, and revising the surveys multiple times via the guidance of our instructors, the creation of questions became a hotly debated area within the project. Due to time constraints, the revision process finally had to come to a close after much discussion, reflection, and learning.

By mid-March, the two surveys were completed, and made available for responses via the Internet on the K-Net Moodle site. Nathifa modified the surveys to PDF form in order to facilitate hard copy printing and dissemination.

In order for the surveys to be made accessible through these two means, there were many individuals who selflessly aided the Community Research team. Brian Beaton, Cal Kenny, Angie Morris, Danika Tom, Kitty Gale, and Margaret Lam helped to promote the surveys through the K-Net Moodle site and in discussion with K-Net community members (both online, and in Kitty and Danika's case, in person). Adam Fiser also assisted, by mailing out hard copy documents to Kitty and Danika, at Big Grassy First Nation.

The team was very excited when the time came to make the surveys available. Nevertheless, the team discussed other opportunities that may have been exploited before publicizing the surveys. For example, a different agreement among the FIS 2125 class could have lead to an earlier dissemination of the draft survey. This may have helped to eliminate some of the difficulties experienced by all stakeholders concerning aspects of the surveys that were unsatisfactory to some persons. Furthermore, it might have been useful to have created a third version of the survey

that was designed solely for children, as it is debatable how much their needs will be communicated from the final versions that have been disseminated.

As of March 31, 2009, 20 individuals from a variety of First Nations communities shared their time and ideas by participating in the surveys. The data gathered is available in the appendix.

Recommendations for handling future research tasks and iterations of the surveys will be included later in this report.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Given the small sample size, it is impossible to infer the results to the larger communities that are involved. The surveys were never intended to indicate social trends or preferences with any level of scientific certainty. Instead, they were exploratory in nature. The team hopes that the information collected will be used as a road map to place potential users in an appropriate cultural context.

The team has made every attempt to avoid creating false assumptions about First Nations peoples. It is understood that it is we cannot experience the realities of life in the Far North and cannot truly understand the social, cultural, economic and environmental realities First Nations peoples deal with on an everyday basis. It is our hope that these surveys will help us understand, if even in a small way, the needs of our potential users. Measuring the needs of our First Nations users by an urban yardstick would be wholly inappropriate. If the ODBS is to be successful in Northern communities we must remove ourselves from our own preconceptions and create a system that makes sense to First Nations users.

The use of surveys as a methodological tool served several purposes. They helped to introduce the ODBS project to the communities we hope the ODBS will serve. The fact that individuals took the time to respond indicates that interest does exist. Responses to the Information Providers survey indicate there are members of the community who are interested in engaging us and in helping to move this project forward. It appears we have accessed a potential user population as well. There are people within these communities who have been intrigued by the ODBS concept and are willing to utilize its services.

Survey for Community Information Providers:

Our survey attracted respondents from a fairly wide array of community information providers. As expected, we received several responses from K-Net staff. Other respondents were typically employed in either school (Keewaytinook Internet High School, Standing Stone School) or health centre (Deer Lake Health Services) settings. There was a noticeable absence of responses from staff in band offices, recreation or community centres and other organized social groups. It is recommended that future iterations of this class make a particular effort to contact Chiefs, Elders and other community members of interest.

The occupations of our respondents were quite varied. Several of our respondents work directly with the community members the ODBS project aims to serve (youth workers, classroom mentors, educational assistants). Since serving the needs of the larger community is the ultimate goal, it is highly important to include their perspectives. There were also several responses from individuals holding key positions in community organizations. Respondents included the K-Net Coordinator, the Director of Research for a First Nations health centre, and a member of a board of education in a First Nations school. Creating dialogue with community gatekeepers is an important first step in gaining acceptance for this project.

Access to computers and the Internet was central to our respondent's everyday work lives. Respondents reported spending a great deal of time either using or teaching others to use computers. Access to computers figured prominently into user needs.

Health and career information were depicted as highly important to our users. Users also expressed an interest in being able to access community-specific news, traditional stories from Elders and Native language materials. This may indicate a gap in the availability of culturally appropriate content.

Questioning information providers on their opinions of user needs elicited one of the most useful pieces of information our surveys returned. One respondent objected to being asked to respond on behalf of others. This respondent's comments indicate that is it uncomfortable for Aboriginal peoples to speak for others. According to the respondent, some First Nations peoples will gladly express their own needs, but may feel some discomfort speaking for others.

Survey for Members of First Nations Communities:

The vast majority of respondents fell within the age ranges of 13-20 and 21-40 years old. There was a single respondent older than 41 and no respondents younger than 13. This does not indicate that children or older users do not exist in these communities. It is more likely that the use of an online survey tool is not the best way to reach these particular groups. The lack of response from these two groups highlights the added effort that will be required to include the perspectives of children and Elders. Other methodologies and tactics may have to be created in order to reach out to these groups.

Survey responses were evenly split between male and female participants.

Combined Findings: Issues Applicable to Both Surveys

The majority of respondents indicated that local schools were among the most often used public spaces in their communities. Many also felt that schools would be the best location for the placement of an ODBS system or a public library. Unpleasant memories of this system are very real factors in the minds of First Nations peoples

who were affected by its policies. Schools are still associated with ideas of paternalism, assimilation, and abuse. Yet, the school was still chosen as a preferred location for the addition of new facilities. This may indicate the extent to which members of isolated communities are constrained in their choices. In spite of what schools often symbolize, the realities of life in Northern communities may offer few other options.

Without exception, all of the respondents indicated an ability to speak English. Considering the survey was available only in English, this information is fairly inconsequential. Our respondents also indicated skills in several other languages as well. The most common were Ojibway, Cree and Oji-Cree but several also indicated abilities in European languages, such as French and Greek. Many respondents also indicated a need for instructional Native language material and for general content in traditional languages. Given the high level of Native language speakers it would be of good use to include language-specific materials in the ODBS acquisitions policy.

Usage patterns were evenly divided between those who read heavily and those who made frequent use of computers and the Internet. While the Internet is very popular, it has not supplanted print materials as a means of fulfilling information needs. Our users' Internet browsing habits seemed to centre on maintaining social contacts over entertainment or professional endeavours. Email and social networking sites were by far the most popular uses of the Internet. Other popular usages included doing homework and research, reading, news, and watching music videos.

Knet.ca, MyKnet.ca and mail.knet.ca were among the most heavily used websites. Use of the K-Net portal was cited more often than other social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace. Due to the fact the survey made use of a convenience sample of Knet users, these theses results were not unexpected. This recalls Brian Beaton's remarks on ownership of communications infrastructure. Brian remarked that users in Northern communities all have an ownership stake in the services K-Net provides. This sense of ownership is not possible through more commodified services such as Facebook.

COMMUNICATIONS

An integral aspect of the Community Research team was continuous inter- and intra-group communications.

4.1 Wiki, Moodle, and Google Groups

Online communication was multifold. Between group members and the class as a whole, Google Groups and the course wiki were utilized and allowed for continuous idea sharing. The Community Research team used both sites to post announcements, edit reports, share resources and discuss action points, which kept all team members, the course instructors, and other teams apprised as to the team's progress. Team members also kept a personal wiki for the purpose of reflecting on the course and outlining personal tasks, goals and objectives.

The Moodle served the same purpose as above, but had the additional value of being accessible to those who access K-Nnet and was therefore a means to involve community members in the process of developing the ODBS. The chat rooms accessed via Moodle were used to attempt to contact community members in a familiar, informal, and un-intimidating manner.

4.2 Community Partners

Community Partners were introduced to the Community Research team by course instructors Nadia Caidi and Adam Fiser and proved vital for providing guidance and gateways into the communities.

4.3 Group Liaisons

Group Liaisons were appointed during the 4th week. The role of the Group Liaisons was to ensure ongoing contact with other teams. This was a key aspect of the Community Research team as it enabled a holistic approach to the ODBS project. As a result all teams were able to simultaneously work along two trajectories, one that was team oriented and the other that was aligned with the mission of the ODBS in general. Group Liaisons were also able to ensure that the survey was representative of the information requirements of the other teams.

4.4 Weekly Meetings

Regular weekly meetings were conducted prior to class in order for the Community Research team to check-in with one another and set goals for the coming week. These meetings allowed for open discussion amongst group members and the re-evaluation of goals and objectives on an as needed basis. An agenda was emailed to each group member a day or so before the meeting by Dominika Solan and the

agenda was then posted on Sakai. Minutes were taken at every meeting and then also posted on Sakai as an archive of the progress of the Community Research team.

PROJECT APPRAISAL

5.1 Evaluation of Goals and Objectives

The goals of developing accessible and sustainable information systems as well as partnerships between users and developers have served as the guiding principles to the work of the Community Research team, and to the rest of the class as a whole. The teams acknowledged at the beginning that realistically, it was unlikely that these goals be achieved by the end of the course. Nonetheless, identifying them as the overarching aims of the ODBS helped to establish the scope of the project and aided in the creation of shorter-term objectives.

An overview of the objectives that were identified and achieved:

Collect demographic and socio-cultural information pertaining to potential user groups

> To begin, the Community Research reviewed available resources to get a basic picture of the demographic and socio-cultural make up of potential user groups. These resources included published works done by sources external to the communities, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The team acknowledged that the data seemed problematic, appearing to contain data entry errors and representative of only a small sample of the population. Due to the political implications surrounding census forms, as well as the difficulties obtaining information from isolate and remote communities, data may be erroneous and incomplete.
>
> However, the team did review the available data for initial assessment purposes, and considered factors including geographical location, governance, population, age groups, completed education levels, language, and income.

Collect data pertaining to community informational needs

> Because of time constraints, the Community Research team concluded that the most feasible and efficient means of gathering information would be through the use of surveys. Two surveys were developed and distributed, one targeted towards general community members and users, and a second targeted towards information providers.

Analyze and synthesize data in order to isolate relevant informational themes that would apply to the construction of the ODBS in terms of content and system requirements

> At the time of this report, survey responses, which comprise the bulk of the data for analysis, were still continuing to filter in and therefore provided only a small sample size. The data from this sample was organized into graphs and charts **(see appendix _)** for an initial, general sense of potential trends. However, the length of the course has been an undeniable time constraint and any meaningful data analysis will likely be conducted after the course, when a more appropriate amount of time has been allowed for additional surveys to be completed.

Disseminate findings to community partners and other groups

> Throughout the duration of the course, the Community Research team has been in contact with community partners and fellow groups. The team has ensured that all updates and findings be easily available by posting weekly meeting minutes to the course wiki, inviting representatives from other teams to attend meetings, actively engaging in communication as well as encouraging feedback on Moodle (especially during the development of the surveys), and participating in class presentations designed to bring all teams up to date. Through these ongoing activities and extensive email communications, the team's working progress has allowed for much transparency.

In addition, the deliverables that can be found in the appendices represents a more formal embodiment of group work and findings. Again, the findings from the surveys have been limited and will likely be more finalized by continued work in the future.

5.2 Evaluation of Methodology

From the onset of the project, the class reviewed the OCAP principles in order to become familiarized with a general research approach that respects the cultural tradition of First Nations peoples. As demonstrated earlier, the OCAP framework helped to keep important ideas in mind while conducting research- in particular, the conflicts that can arise when working with First Nations communities in particular. The Community Research group has worked under agreement with these principles and has acknowledged that collected information has been done under the consent of the community members involved. Feedback was actively encouraged and elicited as demonstrated throughout the development of the surveys. Overall, collaboration with other teams as well as those involved outside the classroom was highly valued and helped enforce a shared ownership of research data.

As described above, the survey went through several stages of development that consisted of producing a draft copy that was posted for viewing on the Moodle site, engaging in discussion over suggestions and issues of contention, editing questions to reflect feedback responses, and sending out the new and improved copies out for the same cycle to begin again. This ensured that anyone could have the chance to provide input into the appropriateness and effectiveness of survey questions.

The use of surveys as a methodological tool served several purposes. They helped to introduce the ODBS project to the communities we hope the ODBS will serve. The fact that individuals took the time to respond indicates that interest does exist. Responses to the Information Providers survey indicate there are members of the community who are interested in engaging us and in helping to move this project forward. It appears we have accessed a potential user population as well. There are people within these communities who have been intrigued by the ODBS concept and are willing to utilize its services. Hence, the survey was extremely effective in spreading news of the project as well as gauging and confirming interest. It also promoted a lively discussion which in turn helped solidify a working relationship between members of the class and community representatives, which has been highly valued.

Although the choice of the survey as the primary research tool was chosen due to consideration of time constraints, the team was not able to do a full meaningful analysis of the data that had been returned by the end of the term. A preliminary overview of the survey responses that were received alluded to possible trends, but no decisive conclusions could be made due to the small sample size.

One of the most challenging aspects of the project was to make meaningful connections with community members in a condensed time period that did not allow for physical, non-digital contact. For instance, there would have been a radical difference in methodology if these constraints were eliminated; group members may have been able to physically travel to far Northern Ontario and initiate contacts over a prolonged period of time. In this case, the survey and Moodle chats would probably not have remained the sole focuses of the Community Research Team as both tools were chosen for the ease of their use within the time confines of the course. For the same reason, the initial plan of incorporating regular video conferencing was also discarded to help narrow down the possible avenues of communication. The primary use of the Moodle forum for sharing ideas and engaging in discussion was a simpler means of allowing contact between the team and community members. Individuals could post to the site at their leisure, and in contrast to the use of video conferencing, the Moodle forum did not require setting up a specific time for different parties to be available to converse in real time. Moreover, real time communication was also available through Moodle in the form of the Breeze (Chat) Room which did not require booking specific equipment and room time. Some technological 'face-to-face' contact did occur throughout the term

as there was some general class time allotted for video conferencing between all teams and outside participants.

5.3 Evaluation of team structure and role assignment

At the beginning of the term, the team decided on role assignments to help identify and distribute tasks evenly. It was also acknowledged that over the time of the course, tasks may overlap, become unnecessary, or lead to additional tasks. As a result, members agreed to commit to assigned roles while remaining flexible to taking on extra roles if required. Ultimately, the team strived to remain organized and actively ensure that each individual workload was fair and manageable. To this end, members were in constant communication through email and weekly meetings which allowed the group to work out any issues that arose.

Although the team size was perhaps larger than would have been ideal, the spirit of teamwork and good leadership that was provided by group coordinators Dominika Solan and Mark Gelsonimo played a huge role in keeping the workflow moving smoothly. Morover, the surveys would not have been possible without the collaboration all members, but especially the hard work of Celene Faludi, Mark Gelsonimo, Fiona Martel, and Nathifa Grier. Amber Wilde took on the initiative of comprising an extensive list of community contacts, which was also contributed to by Kim Le and Nathifa Grier, that will undoubtedly remain a valuable resource for future work with the project. Finally, Noa Bronstein and Kim Le's roles as secretaries were highlighted in producing the final report as well as maintaining the regular wiki meeting minutes.

5.4 Challenges and Lessons Learned

At the onset of the project, the Community Research team envisioned that after the 13-week term there would evolve a number of concrete deliverables, including a survey that was to be distributed to a high number of communities, garnering a high number of respondents. However, as the project evolved it was clear that community-based research is slow-paced, and therefore it was perhaps unrealistic to expect to collect large-scale data sets.

Throughout the duration of the project, through discussions, readings, and research, the class as a whole explored broader issues. For example, the Community Research team and other teams were confronted with issues of how to approach culturally specific ideas regarding literacy and book culture. Such discussions proved vital in the continuous evaluation and re-evaluation of differing and often conflicted notions of information and informational needs in regards to the ODBS.

Before attempting other methods of study, the team first reviewed the literature. Such as it was, the team sought current published information about First Nations communities in Northern Ontario. This included Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) First Nations Profiles Database, Aboriginal Canada Portal Connectivity Profiles Database, Ontario Public Libraries statistics, the Ontario First Nations Public

Library Strategic Plan Liaison Committee 2004 report *Our way forward: A strategic plan for Ontario First Nations libraries,* literature about OCAP, and other official government and community websites. The team never intended to rely on publications as a primary source of information, but even so it was surprising how little information was derived from these resources. The INAC statistics were particularly problematic, as not only were the response rates low, but there were also many data entry errors. The information we gained from the literature was primarily concerned with community institutions, like schools, libraries, and health centres, and not very much about the people themselves.

Another source of information came from talking to other researchers who had worked with First Nations communities or dealt with the issues of information literacy and the digital divide. These people included Gabe Juszel, from the Internet Archive Project who had also worked on the bookmobile project that was the original inspiration for the ODBS project; Lisa Sloniowski from York University, whose work concerns information literacy; Ricardo Ramirez from Guelph University, who has previous research experience with First Nations communities; Kitty Gale, the head librarian from Big Grassy First Nation and her YICT worker Danika Tom; and several people from K-Net including Angie Morris, Brian Beaton, Tina, Brian Walmark, and Franz Seibel. Most of these informal interviews took place in class via videoconferencing. Although most of these people were representing institutions, they were a rich information source in terms of the personal experience they brought. Those who had direct experience with Northern First Nations communities stressed the negative impact that residential schools had had on these communities and the unethical data extraction practiced by previous generations of researchers. Others, like Lisa Sloniowski and Gabe Juszel talked about the unequal access to information experienced by the underprivileged and the need for user-centred design of information systems.

The Community Research team had originally planned to use the videoconferencing equipment to stage focus groups in Big Grassy and possibly other consenting communities, but as it turned out, we were overly ambitious. The implementation of the surveys was delayed so many times that the team no longer had enough time to organize focus groups. This was unfortunate as focus groups would have been a good way to communicate directly with the potential users of the ODBS.

That is not to say the team did not communicate with community members in other ways. The YICT website had a dedicated chat room, and team members were able to go there and talk informally with the YICT workers. The YICT workers were from all over Northern Ontario and from these people we were able to learn and share stories about our daily lives, where we lived, where we had been, our interests, our families, and our plans for the future.

Lastly, we looked at popular Aboriginal entertainment websites and personal homepages to find out more about the digital culture of the K-Net affiliated

communities. Social websites of particular interest were NishTV and Seventh Generation. They are both based in Thunder Bay and feature content from youth in many of the K-Net communities. K-Net also hosts the personal websites of the members of its communities, most of which belong to the youth. These online communities portrayed a vibrant youth culture.

There were numerous challenges in regards to this project, which can be categorized as follows:

Maintaining Communications

In regards to communications, as there were numerous outlets for inter- and intra-group communication, it was often difficult to track the numerous dialogues occurring over the various media. It was also difficult to communicate with other teams due to the relatively large class size. Therefore, it was challenging to keep track of the progress made with others and to determine how the action points of the Community Research team coincided or clashed with other teams.

Establishing Relationships

Building meaningful relationships with community members proved to be problematical. Primarily, as distance restraints did not allow for in-person communication, the Community Research team often felt removed from community members. The resultant relying on digital communications as the sole bridge into communities was less than ideal, and did not allow for the level of personal connection the team envisioned at the onset of the course. Moreover, not being able to visit First Nations communities in Ontario's Far North most probably further contributed to an "us versus them" or North versus South mentality.

Academic balance

In terms of balance, there were numerous issues. Time constraints were challenging on two fronts. As this project required constant attention and a greater workload compared to other courses, it was difficult to balance this course with other school, work and life commitments. Further, as a 13-week course, it was challenging to balance realistic goals that recognized the condensed time-period involved, while maintaining optimistic and wanting to produce concrete deliverables. In other words, these time constraints contributed to a tug-of-war between the initial and idealized goals and objectives, and realizable outcomes. For example, the Community Research team had envisioned conducting multiple videoconference sessions in order to more personally engage with community members. However, as time progressed it was decided that focus would have to be directed to the development, dissemination and analysis of the survey.

As students, it was interesting to work on a real-world project, with real-life ramifications, while in the academic environment. For instance, academic discussion

of ownership is different than trying to apply OCAP principles of ownership in relation to actual communities. Further, the academic worldview is not always shared, in regards to, for example the importance of book culture. Therefore, it was challenging to look beyond our own academic biases and find balance between academic bias, personal bias, and the non-academic environment. Similarly, it was challenging to find balance between being guided by the principles of OCAP and remaining committed to such principles, while not being overwhelmed into in-action by the principles. Legacy was also a constant challenge throughout the duration of the project. The team was consistently concerned with mediating between the project of now and the future project. In other words, concern for leaving behind an archive of the developmental stages for future use or the project and tangible deliverables to be further developed, while not ignoring those action points that were specific to the present.

The "trapped by the project" mentality

Lastly, the weight of the project was so immersive that it was not always possible to think outside of the box . In the midst of working on the project and attempting, in a short time period, to adhere to our goals and objectives, it was often difficult to think creatively, objectively, with a keen eye and take the time to ask the big questions such as, is the ODBS needed?

5.5 Recommendations

In regards to the class structure, the fist recommendation is to have a smaller class size and by extension smaller group sizes. Although the Community Research team worked well considering its larger group size, it would be advantageous to keep groups to a four or five people maximum as smaller groups are more easily managed. It would also be advantageous to consider dismantling the Community Research group and instead appointing members from each team as communication liaisons.

As the development of the ODBS project for isolated First Nations communities in the context of a graduate course was a new undertaking by the Faculty of Information, the parameters of the project evolved as the course progressed. In order to account for such changes, numerous alternates for deliverables, communication options, and methodology should be conceived early in the course. Doing so would allow for a straightforward transition should problems arise with pre-determined tasks. For instance, at the onset of the course the Community Research team proposed utilizing YICT workers as one of the principal sources of contact between team members and community members. However, for various reasons this plan was not fully realized and it would have been beneficial to have a contingency plan already in place in order to efficiently transition into alternate options.

In order to avoid some of the challenges highlighted above, the Community Research team recommends the following;

Outline a broadly defined scope, goals and objectives.

Therefore, the Community Research team will not be trapped by narrowly defined and isolating action points.

Set aside specific meeting times to discuss alternative action points or simply to discuss the big picture questions in regards to the intentions of the project.

Doing so may provide a mental break from focusing exclusively on the project deliverables and may enable the team to avoid being trapped by the project. This will further allow the team to discuss how to best balance some of the issues mentioned above, such as working under the guidance of OCAP.

Remember the importance of maintaining continuous contact with external community members to the FIS 2125 class.

Efforts should be made in this regard for online relations, but also for face-to-face communications: Invite speakers from First Nations communities to visit the class in person and engage in face-to-face dialogue about important issues pertaining to community research, literacy, life in the North, etc. These acts will help to ensure that the Community Research team continually affirms its commitment to the OCAP principles.

Consult interdisciplinary informational projects, such as archival or museological projects, that relate to community research and participatory undertakings.

This will broaden the scope of the project and encourage the exploration of alternative paths.

LEGACY

The Community Research team hopes that the work that has been produced throughout the course will provide part of a solid foundation for future groups who will be involved in the project. The primary deliverables (surveys, information pamphlet, and contacts spreadsheet) will most likely be useful resources to refer to. They, along with the initial proposal, various update reports and work charts, survey rationale document, wiki logs, and this final report illustrate the approach taken by the team as well as its benefits and downsides.

In terms of the small amount data that has been collected from the survey responses, the team has produced a number of charts to represent the information

that could be gathered from this small sample size. While the charts are not meant to indicate any conclusive findings, they provide a visualization of potential trends that may develop after a larger number of survey responses have been completed. It may also be interesting to compare these initial charts to those that may be created after a longer time period.

The surveys, as already discussed, will hopefully provide some insight into using the survey as a research tool. The team hopes that they reflect the meticulous process of creating a survey that is effective, easy to read, accurate, and respectful of the communities they were sent to. They may also act as helpful examples in the case that those involved with the ODBS in the future wish to create their own surveys. The survey rationale document additionally illustrates the process by which the surveys were created, and further elaborates on the specific steps that were taken.

The pamphlet can be reused and redistributed. It was designed for the purpose of providing an informative introduction to the project, as well as furthering a more widespread interest in the ODBS. In addition, it may also act as a template for future pamphlets or informational material. The contacts spreadsheet is a simple and effective tool that amalgamates an extensive list of First Nations library contacts that can be easily altered and referred to.

On the other hand, the individual wiki summaries, Power Point presentations, and work timeline/update reports provide a more personal look at how the team approached organized itself and its work flow. The wiki summaries in particular represent the reflections of each member as the project progressed and identifies specific challenges that were individually faced.

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APPENDICES....