

Constructing The Mental Models of Webrecorder Users

Webrecorder /

A web archiving tool developed by the non-profit, born-digital arts organization Rhizome that enables users to create de-centralized, experiential, and curated repositories of net ephemera.

Problem /

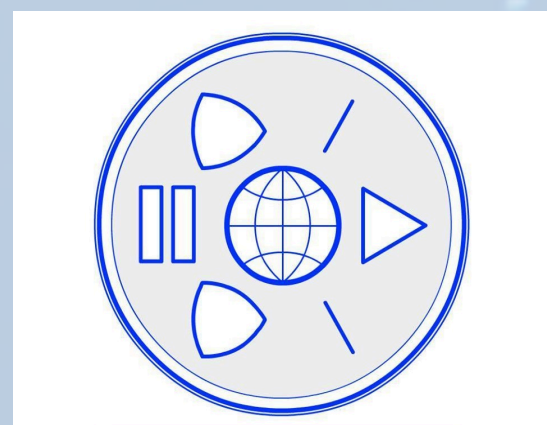
While Webrecorder is anecdotally widely used, there are no in-depth data to support this. This lack of data has subsequently prevented the team from understanding their user base & from creating robust user documentation.

Goals /

To provide the project team with insights into their user base and to allow them to create user documentation.

Deliverable /

A large amount of diverse data qualitatively analyzed to reveal user behaviors, needs, and perceptions of Webrecorder.



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- ### Methodology
- Grounded Theory
 - Inductive coding of:
 - Survey answers (*structured*)
 - Interview transcripts (*semi-structured*)
 - Email-only answers (*structured*)
 - Unsolicited email feedback (*unstructured*)
 - Codes analyzed and organized in Excel
 - Interview transcripts:
 - Inter-coder agreement approximated as resources allowed:
 - Single-coder coding of 1/9 interview transcripts & subsequent discussion of codes' reliability with colleague
 - Personally unitized transcripts
 - Inductively grouped codes into thematic buckets
 - Did not transcribe pauses or excessive 'thinking words' (e.g. "um")
 - Transcription software: Express Scribe

- ### Outcomes
- A robust set of structured, semi-structured, and unstructured data about Webrecorder users
 - Four sets of coded data grouped thematically that are ready for in-depth analysis
 - Intimate familiarity with Webrecorder users

- ### Constraints
- Not enough bandwidth to do inter-coder reliability testing
 - Many interviewees lived internationally, so scheduling was sometimes difficult, which prolonged interview process
 - Solo-coding data = implicit bias included in analysis
 - No funding for proper qualitative analysis software (e.g. Atlas.ti)
 - Recorded audio via Android application Voice Recorder, so audio quality was lacking
 - Many interviewees' first language was not English, so transcriptions took a long time and were sometimes best guesses

- ### Next Steps
- Present project status on June 1, 2017, to Rhizome and Webrecorder team members
 - Qualitative analysis of each dataset
 - Work with the Webrecorder Lead Designer and a PhD student working with Webrecorder on a similar project to construct an action plan for the Webrecorder team that will recommend steps to address the following:
 - User interface
 - New functionality wanted by users
 - Points to touch on in user documentation (e.g. epistemology & ontology of Webrecorder, the Internet, and web archiving; model collections; roadmap for optimal use)
 - Nexuses of confusion
 - Give a formal write up of my specific project and its role in the larger recommendations to the Webrecorder team

