Applying User-Centred Design to Archives

Janet Villata – City Archivist
Michael Smith – Manager Information Management, Session 1.2
User-centred design
City of Sydney Archives

• Collection dates from 1842

• 12,500 shelf metres

• 5,000 requests per year

• Business archives of the City and a collecting archive

• Access enhanced via:
  – volunteer program
  – digitisation program
User-centred design
CAMPAS Project

- City Archives Management & Public Access System
- 1 million records
- Merging 13 systems into one
- Releasing hundreds of thousands of new items
If archives are not willing to become obsolete then that is exactly what’ll happen to them.

Throw out the archives completely, start with value and how to co-create it, and then you’re designing the new archives …

Get people engaged in your service and it will grow naturally.

Arne van Oosterom, Design Thinkers
A speed date with design thinking, 2012
https://www.slideshare.net/zaana/a-speed-date-with-design-thinking-11491017/36-so_design_thinkingwhat_next
User-centred design
Archives value triangle

Archives Value
Capture
Manage / Preserve
Provide Access
User-centred design
Methodology

- Empathize: Learn about the audience.
- Define: Sharpen key questions.
- Ideate: Brainstorm and create solutions.
- Prototype: Build representations of one or more ideas.
- Test: Test ideas and gain user feedback.
# User-centred design – Empathise/Ideate

## User types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User types</th>
<th>User %</th>
<th>Service level</th>
<th>Access methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Skimmers** | 98%    | • self-service  
• highly unlikely to ever set foot in the archives | • browse (category or via interactive map)  
• “Surprise me”  
• navigate from a general web search (e.g., Google) |
| **Delvers**  | 2%     | • self-service  
• some assisted access | • simple search  
• search within categories  
• apply simple filters  
• enter via TROVE |
| **Deep divers** | <0.1%  | • self-service  
• assisted access  
• high level of assistance from archivists | • detailed search (including location specific)  
• navigate via relationships  
• search within categories  
• apply complex filters |
User-centred design - Empathise

Current User Experience

Simple Search Results
Search criteria: Keyword(s)="horse"; Using="Exact Phrase"; Exact Word(s)="View"; Entity Types="All"
Total 1,317 results

To find more information about any entity shown in this search result, click on the Entity Name or Entity Title text to go to the entity detail screen.

To request access to an Item, you need the Series number and the Item number and/or title.

Entity @Title @

Removal of waste from streets, public places and premises
Cleansing of garbage and offensive matter by collection from streets, public places and from private property. Includes removal of graffiti from buildings and public places generally. The activity includes a range of actions taken to ensure that the architectural hist...

Activity

City Engineering and Building Surveyor's Department
In accordance with the recommendations of the City Commissioners in 1918, four departments and two branches from other departments were amalgamated into a new department called the City Engineering...

Agency

City Engineering Engineer's Department
This Department was responsible for cleansing of the City and disposal of refuse. This included collection and transportation of household and trade refuse, cleansing and removal of litter from public...

Agency

City Cleaning Department I
On 9 September 1899 the Council resolved to adopt a Minute by the Mayor, separating the duties of Superintendent of Street Cleansing from those of the Inspector of Nuisances. The first Superintendent...

Agency

Keck, Harry
HENRY KECK'S LIFE AND CAREER. Henry Keck was baptized in 1800 in Balbriggan Parish, County Dublin, Ireland. He was the son of Thomas Keck and Sarah Love. Thomas Keck came to Ireland in 1787 to hold...

Agency

Person

1800 ~ 1853
User-centred design - Empathise

- Historical Atlas, 39%
- ArchivePix, 38%
- Sands Directory, 9%
- Newtown Project, 3%
- Assessment books, 3%
- Trove, 4%
- Archives Investigator, 2%
- Planning Street Cards, 1%
### User-centred design - Define

#### User personas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persona</th>
<th>What do they want</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General public</td>
<td>property enquiries (photographs, maps, plans, house histories) and some family history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>historians, post grad students – intensive access for defined period on a narrowly defined subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist/media</td>
<td>anniversaries, then and now comparisons, events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial, cultural heritage</td>
<td>heritage architects - previous land use, archaeological reports, conservation management plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property researchers</td>
<td>real estate agents, people buying a property, conditions of use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
User-centred design - Define
Making the most of metadata

- Standards: ISAD-G, ISAAR-CPF, RiC
- What metadata is most likely to facilitate access
- Context specific metadata
- How can we bring to light items that people wouldn’t normally think about
- Improved metadata can also support:
  - Well defined and controlled archives business processes
  - Greater visibility for donated collections
User-centred design - Define
Making the most of metadata

• New business rules:
  – Title field limited to 100 characters
  – Transcription vs Description
  – Consistent fields across all item-like templates
  – Value of metadata in its own right
User-Centred Design - Ideate

Design rules

Rule 1: Users can engage without knowing anything about the collection (especially without knowing the Australian Series System)

Rule 2: When searching and browsing users will see items (Context will be under the surface enhancing the user experience - not dominating it)

Rule 3: The system will be designed to meet user expectations – with the public user taking precedence over the archives staff users

Rule 4: Simple, uncluttered page layout with minimal text
User-centred design - Prototype
### User-centred design - Prototype

#### Making the most of metadata

**From ...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0857/37</td>
<td>Elizabeth St and Chalmers St (Dental Hospital). New building [R]</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**To ...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item number</th>
<th>Plan Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description of works</th>
<th>Building Name</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Address 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>126_1937_0857</td>
<td>Architectural</td>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>New building</td>
<td>Sydney Dental Hospital</td>
<td>2-18</td>
<td>Chalmers</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Address 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Further Information</th>
<th>Additional Approvals</th>
<th>Council Stamped Approval</th>
<th>Stamped Date</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Architect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Randle Lane</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>New building for a dental hospital; Former address 2-12 Chalmers Street Surry Hills</td>
<td>31/01/1938</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28/01/1939</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>United Dental Hospital of Sydney</td>
<td>Stephenson, Meldrum &amp; Turner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Property Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Builder/ Engineer/ other</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Total plan sheets</th>
<th>Specs</th>
<th>Internal Residential Floor Plans</th>
<th>Extant</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Engineer: CS Steele</td>
<td>22 colour plans, 61 blueprints</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Plan - Rolled</td>
<td>CSA012345(CSA012346) CSA012347(CSA012348) CSA012349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Model
Australian Series System

CONTEXT

Agency

Position

Person

Organisation

CONTENT

Accession

Box

Consignment

Archive Box

Item

(folder level)

Sub-Item

(document level)

System Data

(AIP)

Series

Event

Location

Function

Activity

System

Library Items

OTHER
User-centred design – Empathise/Ideate

What does the future hold

• Location based services (LBS)

• Enriched metadata for photos
  – Lat/long of photographer
  – Direction facing
  – Buildings in the photo (lat/long)

• Online volunteers
“... you sometimes note an impatience on the part of a specialist that the public does not show sufficient interest in his assemblage of information as such. He is likely to conclude that the average person is somewhat stupid. The opposite is true. It is a sign of native intelligence on the part of any person not to clutter his mind with indigestibles.”

Freeman Tilden, 1957