

Naturalistic Diary Studies: A Method for Capturing the Reading Experience

Abstract

The acceptance rate and popularity of electronic books – digital books and e-book devices – are growing rapidly (Milliot, 2008). With the introduction of new technologies such as e-ink and e-paper, electronic books seem to become a viable alternative to traditional books. Electronic books (e-books) frequently draw upon metaphors from traditional books, such as page turning and 3D digital representations of books (Chu et al., 2004). However, it seems valuable for us to explore e-books beyond these traditional book metaphors, because e-books possess their own unique features, such as hypertext and dynamic content. Furthermore, individuals who have been accustomed to using diverse forms of technology to access their reading materials (such as web browsers, tablet PCs, and handheld devices) may be better served by new metaphors for interacting with digital-based reading materials.

In order to identify the reading behaviors and needs of readers and to understand e-book use, researchers rely on *user studies*. Frequently, *diary studies* are used as the chosen methodology for studying user behaviors. A diary study consists of two phases: participants' diary-keeping of daily activities in a paper log with pre-defined categories, followed up by researchers' post-interviews with participants in their own context.

In this presentation, I will review previous diary studies in human computer interaction research, discuss their strengths and limitations for capturing reading experiences, and propose a more naturalistic method of study. The goal of this proposed approach is to overcome limitations in traditional methods of human-computer interaction research (Rieman, 1993) and to provide a more naturalistic approach that captures use in diverse contexts. Ideally, this approach will allow for better understanding of the reading experience and facilitate the creation of new metaphors of use in electronic books.

Bibliography

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