Marketing for participation: How can Electronic Dissertation Services win authors?

Bettina Berendt
Elke Brenstein
Yunfan Li
Bert Wendland

Humboldt University Berlin –
Institute of Information Systems (www.wiwi.hu-berlin.de/~berendt)
Inst. for Computer Uses in Education / Inst. of Work Psychology
Electronic Publishing Group, Computer and Media Services
ETD success

- To be successful, an ETD service must
  - employ advanced technology
  - know about and reach its “market”

- To know the market, it needs to answer these Qs:
  - What is the (main) goal of the service?
  - Does the service have other goals (e.g. image-building)?
    - What are the financial constraints?
  - Who are the target group(s)?
  - Do they use and like the service? Why (not)?
  - What methods are adequate for answering these Qs?
HU doctoral dissertations
(without Medical Faculty)

Total no.s of online publications by German universities

http://edoc.hu-berlin.de
Questions and goals of the study (1):
EDOC target groups and goals

**EDOC goal:** enable everyone who wants to publish online to do so.
Questions and goals (2): Dissertation authors’ attitudes, experiences, wishes

Don’t publish online because they
- don’t wish to?
- do not feel capable / adequately supported?
- are unaware of the possibility?

- Publication on EDOC is a fast & easy way to satisfy the German university publication requirements.
- I have learned about EDOC (too) late.
- The formatting requirements are difficult.

EDOC & its Questions • Method • Results & Discussion • Outlook

(EDOC readers: A separate study)
Method

- Participants: all HU doctoral students & doctors (without Medical Faculty)
- Materials & Procedure:

Date: Tue, 11 Mar 2003
From: Yunfan Li
To: the edoc survey mailing list
Subject: Digital Dissertation Questionnaire for HU Doctoral Students and Doctors

Dear doctoral student, dear doctor,

Would you please take about 5 minutes to complete the HU Digital Dissertation Questionnaire. The goal of this investigation is to find out how the Digital publishing opportunity is known and used by HU doctoral students and doctors. With your help, we aim to continue to improve the service of the Document and Publication Server (http://edoc.hu-berlin.de).

...
Respondent characteristics mirror the targeted population (1)

- 1180 emails sent out
  - approximately all HU doctoral students and doctors (without Medical Faculty)
- 162 respondents started questionnaire (159 online)
  - response rate 13.7%
- 101 respondents finished it
  - completion rate 64.2%
- 69.3% doctoral students (population ’98-’01: 89.5%)
- 67.7% males (population: 57.3%)
Respondent characteristics mirror the targeted population (2)

Faculties / institutes of respondents

All dissertation authors ('98-'01) by scientific area
Do authors not wish to publish online?

No, but...

How would you like to publish your dissertation?

- Book by a publishing house
- Book by a copyshop
- Microfiche
- Online only

Online? Yes, but...

- Online only: 19.8%
- Online in addition to a book: 62.2%
Why ...

- Have you decided to publish online? (34.9%)
  - It’s faster & easier than traditional publishing.
  - It’s cheap.
  - My documents can be accessed by more people.

- Have you decided not to publish online? (15.6%)
  - In my discipline, online publication is considered informal.
  - I would like to publish a real / physical book.

- Have you not made your decision yet? (49.5%)
  - I will make a decision after I finish writing.
  - My submission date is far from now; I will think about it later.
  - I know too little & will make a decision when I know more.
Do authors feel incapable / inadequately supported?

- Authors need to format their dissertation using the “dissertation template” to enable DiML markup.
- Most authors feel adequately supported.
- Most helpful in case of problems with the dissertation template:
  - “author information” (on the Web),
  - friends,
  - computing centre staff (email, personal, phone)
- ~ 20% can’t use and/or don’t need training course.
  ➔ cf. ~ 20% LaTeX users.
BUT: Few concrete steps taken towards a digital diss. publication so far

When did you / do you intend to start using the dissertation template?

- not decided yet
- after I finish writing
- in the middle
- at the beginning

⇒ ACTIONS HAPPEN TOO LATE!
Are authors unaware of the digital diss. publishing opportunity?

How did you find out about the opportunity of publishing your dissertation online?

- 28.3% wished they had learned earlier about EDOC.

YES! ... INFORMATION ARRIVES TOO LATE!
Suggestions for improving information flow and EDOC promotion

Participants gave many suggestions ➔ 3 groups
... and we based our proposals on these suggestions:

- Inform doctoral students when they start their dissertation project
  - Professors, examination offices, ... as informers & promoters
  - Doctoral seminars etc., within or across scientific fields
  - Lectures and tutorials within the faculties
  - Stress the advantages and new opportunities of digital publication!
- Send a regular email newsletter
- Offer more service with the formatting
Outlook: Topics for further research

- Specific patterns in different faculties:
  - authoring (up to 67% EDOC authors – in Mathematics)
  - use of EDOC services (e.g., training course)
- Structured use of metadata as a key competence
  - Authors experience problems when using the “dissertation template”
  - EDOC readers study: Users prefer “searching” (keyword type-in) to the use of metadata-based structured browsing lists (controlled vocabulary)
  → Develop training & education strategies further!

Thank you!

Questions?