

Metadata Assignment #1

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1. How easy was it to find what you were looking for? Was there good documentation about how to search?

On both the WGBH Open Vault and Nga Tonga Sound and Vision websites had simple and clear search functions. Once typing in the term searched for, the process was quick and simple. The websites did, however, assume a certain familiarity with the operation of search functions. Someone unfamiliar with the concept may be baffled, as web design is in general rife with Norman doors.

2. Were there multiple ways of searching (e.g. simple and advanced)?

Nga Tonga had a robust system of filters that could be applied to a search after the fact. Based on media type, availability, WGBH, however, was limited to a very simple “Media Only” filter, which could be clicked on or off to display only media objects, as well as categories based on format. None of it was particularly robust. It all led to a very sparse search system.

3. Was the search interface easy to use? Was both browse and search supported?

Both of these sites were simply laid out, with both search and browsing options listed at the top of the page. The collections were clearer in WGBH, but smaller and less optimized for web search.

4. Did you get the results you were expecting? Did you get what you were looking for?

WGBH offered a much more limited selection of objects, confined primarily to interviews and images, while Nga Tonga Sound and Vision offered an extremely robust and diverse set of objects. Unfortunately, none of these objects were available online. WGBH may have had a more limited collection but much of it's content was available for streaming and viewing.

5. Could you tell what metadata standard was used and if so which one? Is there documentation about the metadata? Make sure you look around the site to see if there is any documentation. If it doesn't say see if you can determine which.

WGBH looked to be organized along the lines of Dublin Core or PB Core, with a limited set of fields and a general set of terms, applicable to a great variety of object types. The New Zealand Archive was less clear, making me believe it was either an internal system, or using hidden factors to sort the information.

6. How well did you think the metadata supported finding what you were looking for?

I think the metadata in WGBH was useful, but that it may be incomplete. Objects were sometimes easier to find through browsing the collection than searching the archive. Meanwhile, NZ had a robust search function, and the metadata, however hidden it may have been, must surely have been playing a role in that.

7. After doing a search were the search results displayed in a meaningful way?
Could you tell how they were ordered and was it easy to sort through them?

I could not tell anyone what the logic behind the order of the results in either. It was not alphabetical, nor was it always clear what the connection to the search term was.

In a standard search for David Bowie and related materials in either database there were very different results. In WGBH Open Vault David Bowie, being a subject in the episode “The Wild Side” in their Rock And Roll series, came up, but only as a part of this series and episode. In the New Zealand Archive there were a total of 91 results, but few had anything to do with David Bowie directly. There were several stills or concert footage, or interviews. But most of the material was incidental radio play, or documentaries and news where the connection was to the names David or Bowie, rather than the person David Bowie.

In an attempt to browse for news on World War 2, neither site was easily navigated. Neither site had a collection on the subject, so search terms eventually had to be used to find any material. WGBH had a number of materials ranging from news footage from the time, to interviews from much later, even to episodes of the series Sherlock. New Zealand had a similarly varied set of results, from television series about the war to objects from the time period, specific to New Zealand and otherwise.

The term transgender brought limited results from both archives. The New Zealand archive had episodes of a show called Takatapu for the Maori LGBT community. It also had documentary footage and radio recordings. WGBH primarily had news footage, with one possible book review, though the information is unclear.

Finally, typing in David Simon brought up material about the Wire in WGBH's archive, but also talks by unrelated people or organizations that happened to include the names David or Simon. In the New Zealand Archive there wasn't even a clear mention of David Simon or The Wire. Instead, mostly unrelated material came up, which led me to understand that either my search terms needed to be specified through advanced searching, or the New Zealand Archive had no materials by or about David Simon.