

Search and Delivery Beta System: Overview of Feedback December 2008

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Background

Australian Newspaper Beta Service was released to the public on 25 July 2008, with the specific aim of gathering feedback from public users in order to help future development of the service and ensure that user needs and expectations were being met. Feedback was gathered from August – December 2008. This document outlines how the feedback was gathered, how it was interpreted and gives a summary overview of the results.

Methods of gathering feedback

Feedback was gathered from both Contributors and users of the service, in order that the service may be further developed to meet user needs. Several methods of gathering feedback were used:

- Feedback survey located within beta (under 'feedback' tab).
- Web 'contact us' form on ANDP website and linked to from beta 'about' and 'feedback' page.
- Observation on user activity and use of the system.
- Comments posted to blogs and forums.
- Comments from Facebook fans.
- Suggestions from ANDP team.
- Feedback from users in State and Territory libraries gathered via ANPlan.

Direct phone and e-mail contact from users was not generally encouraged or supported (due to there being no service support at present). A small number of enquiries were received directly, but on the whole the feedback survey and the generic e-mail in the contact form were used effectively by users in providing feedback.

Amount of feedback gathered

The ANDP team received feedback from more than 600 individual users during August – December 2008. Individual users generally made several suggestions and provided multiple comments within their feedback, resulting in thousands of specific items being raised. Many of the comments were repeated by different users. It was a significant task to compile, analyse and review all of the feedback received.

More than 340 individuals responded to the survey feedback form and approximately 260 users contacted us by other means. Both of these channels for communication with users are remaining open indefinitely. ANPlan members reported on feedback from users in State and Territory libraries at a meeting held at the National Library on 28 November 2008.

The first stage of analysing the feedback was to sort the feedback into the following groups:

- Positive feedback and comments about the service and features
- Statements (neither negative or positive) about the service
- Suggestions for improvements to the service and features

The next stage was to sort the suggestions into groups by type e.g. searching suggestions, user interaction suggestions. No direct negative feedback about the service was received.

Items changed in beta after release in response to user demand

At beta release the library committed to fix any bugs that were found. 11 bugs related to using different browsers were identified by users and fixed in the first month of public availability (August 2008). In addition, during the first month of release the following changes were made in direct response to user feedback.

- Added total number of pages in system to 'about' page (so users know how many items are in system).
- Link to advanced search page was added to home page (link was only on search results prior to this but was being heavily used as direct search method and users wanted it on home page).
- Issue pdf added to page view (issue view not available in beta, so issue pdf was not initially provided).
- Help and FAQ expanded (more information on OCR correction, printing, saving and articles 'in process', framesplitter).
- Added top OCR correctors to home page with number of lines corrected (so users can see how much the most prolific users are doing).
- Increased amount of lines users are able to correct before having to click the 'save' button from 1 to 100, then to unlimited lines (so users correcting large parts of text don't have to click 'save' at end of every line).

During September the frame-splitter functionality was added which enables users to change the width of the left hand frame containing the OCR'd text or hide it all together. The frame-splitter had been in the prototype but the team had not had sufficient time to implement this before beta launch. The team worked on the frame-splitter in August and released it in September. During August a significant amount of feedback was received from users requesting the ability to show/hide OCR text, see the end of corrected lines, and make the newspaper page image fill the screen. Implementation of the frame-splitter functionality resolved all these issues.

Positive Feedback about the service and features

Many positive comments and general appreciation for the service and for the Library providing it were received. A snapshot of positive comments was circulated to NSLA in October 2008. A more comprehensive list of positive feedback is available here: http://www.nla.gov.au/ndp/project_details/documents/ANDP_PositiveFeedbackBetaDec2008.pdf

The areas which received the most positive feedback were:

- The service as a whole.
- Keyword searching capacity.
- Speed of finding information.
- Time saved in research.
- Online access from home.
- Free.
- Capacity to increase research due to 24/7 online availability.
- Easier to use than microfilm reader.

- OCR correction is a fantastic idea.
- Body of content planned is excellent.

The quotes below are typical of some of the hundreds of comments received.

From a Facebook Fan in August 2008

"This is the BEST. Converted me to deep religion. Filled the so-called inner void in my soul. This will change history this will. And I thought The British Library was Good ! This is DELIGHTFUL. Free access ! and a chance to participate ! Bravo ! My daughter and I are already addicted. "

From the Feedback survey in September 2008

"Can't really see how it could be substantially improved; this would have to be the best searchable database I've come across"

"This is an unbelievable service you are providing researchers. I can't tell you how fantastic this project is and how appreciated it is. Can't wait for more papers and more years to be online. THANK YOU!!!!!"

"the text fixing and tagging is quite addictive".

"So much better than microfilm!!!"

"Wow! This saves so much time".

From a Genealogy Forum in October 2008

"While going through a whole month in a slightly obsessive crazed mind searching Australia Newspaper Beta online I just realised the kilo's I've stacked on in just one month. I can't seem to snap out of it, from dawn to dusk I seem to be in this website craving to find more on my ancestors. (the gritty stories). Housework seems to have taken a backburner and meals are starting to come out of cans. I don't know when this site will be updated next but I hope they give me at least a month to lose this round of kilo's. Am I the only one with this problem or do I need some serious help. Is there an "AA" for genealogy junkies. "

"I "LOVE" this site. I feel almost like a stalker looking daily for juicy articles."

"Fantastic! It's wonderful for people like me who have to travel over 600k's return just to look up an old newspaper or two"

Statements (neither negative or positive) about the service

- Addictiveness of OCR correction
- Better than the British Library's service
- Want more content as fast as possible

Suggestions for improvements to the service and features

Before beta was released to the public the ANDP team had already established a list of possible enhancements for the service. The team were interested to find out if suggestions from users would match the items they had identified and also if users would come up with new suggestions that the team had not thought of. Users did suggest new features and these were mainly connected with user interaction of the service (web 2.0 type items). About 50 new suggestions were received for how users could better interact and work with the article data. Users also confirmed that on the whole the user interface was easy to use and met their needs, and that keyword searching and the service as a whole already exceeded their expectations.

Some of the suggestions are listed below. A more comprehensive list of enhancements grouped by type is available here:

http://www.nla.gov.au/ndp/project_details/documents/ANDP_BetaEnhancementSuggestions.pdf

1. **(NEW item)** Be able to specify whether fuzzy or actual phrase searching takes place. System currently fuzzy searches all words since OCR is so poor. Users want advanced option to specify fuzzy vs. actual phrase searching.
2. More advanced search options e.g. proximity searching, searching comments, tags, keeping restrictions on, fuzzy vs. phrase searching. Usage statistics indicate a much higher proportion than was expected is using advance search techniques. The team has already responded to need to have advance search link direct on home page.
3. OCR correction. Users want to be able to do it more easily in bigger chunks (i.e. power user mode). System is clunky and basic at present. Users have suggested many specific things e.g.
ability to add missing lines in OCR text, if text hard to correct /read want to be able to flag this to other users to get second opinions on correct text, want to know what articles have not yet been corrected that need to be, want to see articles that have been corrected flagged in results list, want to know overall stats for OCR correction not just their own amounts, and where they rank in entire body, not just top rankers, want acknowledgements/thank you/publicity/certificates for top text correctors to encourage them and others to do more, guidelines for OCR text correctors e.g. italics em dashes, pound symbols, want time delay in OCR corrections being saved reduced so that do not accidentally correct it twice. People doing correction are keen to find ways to build the community and connect with each other.
4. Want to be able to contact other users about what they are doing to seek help, share things. People have utilized the comment feature to do this at present (which is not what it was intended for). Blog, forum, opening user profiles, enhancements to user profiles would solve some of this.
5. **(NEW item)**. Login sign up needs more work. Not clear when/if need to login, difficulty with captcha, user id already taken, using symbols in password not OK, difficulty with successful sign up process, if have found an article already and then sign in to tag or correct it you lose it and go back to home page.
6. **(NEW item)**. Users want updates and statistics about when new titles, years added, number of pages added per week, number of pages corrected per week, individuals being able to check their own activities and compare with others, and see entire ranking lists.
7. Want it clearer about the content available in the system (the 'about' graph is not good enough).
8. Tags – want guidelines for entering, want to be able to search for names in tags, tags are messy and inconsistent, want to be able to edit them to make them conform, tag cloud is too big to use, need to be able to search. Stats show 18,000 tags added so there is prolific use of this feature. The top tag in use is being used by a railway group to identify their work.
9. Personalisation – want to keep track of everything they are doing and be able to look back over weeks and months at previous OCR corrections. Want a way to keep track of their research (using tags at present).
10. **(NEW item)**. Want to be able to either do global OCR corrections or report global OCR corrections needed, or have post processing done on material prior to it going into beta. A number of specific examples given e.g. change all winks and spirits to wines and spirits, change all streefc to street.
11. Comments - want to be able to edit and view all. Comments have not be used that well.
12. Saving and printing – finding it and understanding it especially difficulties with classified ads which may be an entire page and they only want to save/print small parts.
13. Newspaper title groups – finding titles that change name.
14. Ability to search tags, comments, corrected OCR text.

15. Being able to add missing lines into OCR by user for poorly scanned articles and for adverts that have text treated as image.
16. An issue level view of newspapers with thumbnail images.
17. Enhanced personalization (dependant on user management system development) e.g. editing tags and comments, user view of their own activity, user personalization of home page, saving searches and articles to user area.
18. Further development for tagging (searching tags, guidelines on creating tags, breaking tags into personal names, place names and events, synonym management, tagging whole issue/page, being able to place tags in specific place in article).
19. Creating group titles for newspapers that have changed name over time and making these searchable in advanced and as a limit in filters.
20. Ordering of high quality prints.
21. 'Related' articles.
22. Creation of additional filters when more content available (e.g. Sunday papers, weeklies, regional papers).

No feedback was received from users on:

- Category types (which implied they were working fine).
- Needing moderation of OCR correction by the Library (in fact the reverse was implied that the public moderate each other if enough additional features are enabled for them to be able to see what others are doing).

Summary

In summary Australian Newspaper beta users are exceedingly happy with the service as it is, namely the proposed content, that it is freely accessible online, and that it is keyword searchable. Overwhelming positive feedback was also received about the public text correction feature. The areas of improvements users identified can be summarized as follows:

- Enhancements to advanced searching.
- Enhancements to login.
- Enhancements to user interaction at article level especially text correction, tags and comments.
- Creation of networking features for users to communicate, help, share, work and interact with each other.
- For users to moderate themselves and others in the community for the greater good of Australian historical newspapers users.