Chapter 13
Rolling NVivo 10 out to a University’s Research Community: Live Trainings and a Semantic Web–Friendly E–Book

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ABSTRACT

At Kansas State University, there has been a concentrated effort to evolve the institution into one of the nation’s top 50 research public universities. One small part of that involves the rollout of NVivo to the university’s faculty, staff, and graduate students. By the second year of the site license, the campus was on its own to provide training. This effort involved multiple live face-to-face (F2F) trainings and the use of a multimedia e-book. “Using NVivo: An Unofficial and Unauthorized Primer” (http://scalar.usc.edu/works/using-nvivo-an-unofficial-and-unauthorized-primer/index) was written over a several week period (hyper-fast agile development) and released on the Scalar platform in Fall Semester 2014. This chapter addresses how a designed e-book, built on a Semantic Web–friendly platform, harnesses the power of multimedia, digital repositories, the Surface Web, and crowd-sourced feedback.

INTRODUCTION

“By 2025, Kansas State University will be recognized as one of the nation’s Top 50 Public Research Universities.” -- The visionary goal of the “K-State 2025” plan

At Kansas State University, the thematic goals of the 2025 plan include the following: research, scholarly and creative activities, and discovery; undergraduate education experience; graduate scholarly experience; engagement, extension, outreach, and service; faculty and staff; facilities and infrastructure; and athletics. The descriptor for the first goal reads: “Create a culture of excellence that results in flourishing, sustainable, and widely recognized research, scholarly and creative activities, and discovery in...
a variety of disciplines and endeavors that benefit society as a whole.” Across the goals are common elements, including technology. Universities that advocate faculty research need to provide the necessary technologies to support that work (Goodwin, Kozleski, Muth, Rhodes, & White, 2006).

On a campus with a main focus on quantitative research in the traditional “hard sciences,” it can be difficult to garner sufficient resources, the political will, and the knowledge and skill sets to support the work of researchers who use qualitative and mixed methods research approaches. Often, the larger-sized grants come from funding agencies that focus on core hard sciences. Qualitative and mixed methods research on the campus may bolster research in the hard sciences, or it may be stand-alone, with costs covered as part of the faculty pay or small on-campus grants. In such a context, there is often much less credibility given to non-experimental non-bench-method types of research.

The “K-State 2025” plan helped coalesce administrator support around purchasing a multi-year site license for NVivo, a state-of-the-art data analysis tool for use by university faculty, staff, and graduate students. The initial contract with QSR International, the company that makes NVivo, involved six webinar trainings for the use of the tool in the first academic year (2013-2014). Attendance to the initial sessions in Fall 2013 were robust, with 20 – 30 attendees in the physical room and maybe a half-dozen online; however, the enthusiasm for the trainings dwindled, and by the end of the academic year, there were only a handful of attendees, and the last scheduled session was cancelled because no one showed up at the training even though the researchers who used Macintosh computers had expressed enthusiasm for having a research tool to use native to their machines. What were actual campus needs then in terms of support for NVivo? Was there a gap between felt needs and actual needs? Whatever the case, how could these needs be met?

A needs assessment. There was one course for graduate students on how to use this software tool, but the training was often specific to the discipline. Another department had lost a faculty member who had moved on to another institution of higher education. There were limited pockets of expertise. There were two small graduate student computer labs on which this software was installed. Suffice it to say that the numbers of those who had installed the software were small particularly relative to the capacity in the site license, which was to be expected, given the software tool’s high learning curve. However, for the site license to be worth the cost, it was important to ensure that it had as wide use as possible. There had to be support for the tool’s use without any trainer over-stepping into the realm of faculty serving as doctoral advisors or contravening the teachings of various disciplines (each with their evolved research methodologies, ideologies, theories, and ranges of attitudes about technologies). The complexity of addressing such histories and understandings would be well beyond the purview of a technology training.

From the beginning, the university had to take responsibility for integrating usage of the software tool into the research community on campus. Initially, this depended on the paid webinar trainings and the thin local resources at the various departments (there were pockets of expertise in a number of tools, with only limited transferability between software tools). There was not a natural bureaucratic position for this endeavor. The individual who ended up negotiating the contract and collecting funding came out of the Information Technology part of campus, namely, an instructional designer (the author)—and it ended up that this individual took the lead on the training. She also wrote the e-book in order to broaden the breadth and depth of expertise on campus. This was strategic, in order not to hold the “NVivo portfolio” too tightly—because of a range of other continuing professional commitments. [To elaborate, there were challenges with the instructional designer role. One faculty member handed off multiple graduate students for customized trainings, without any prior consultation with the instructional designer or formal request. Likewise, department administrators did the same for some of their faculty members and graduate
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