How to avoid research debt

a workshop on ResearchOps
for user research in service design

#SDinGov

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User research is crucial for service design

2. Do ongoing user research

Put a plan in place for ongoing user research and usability testing to continuously seek feedback from users to improve the service.

Read more about point 2

What happens after user research?

- Decisions made, do you move on and forget it?

- Do you preserve that research for re-use?

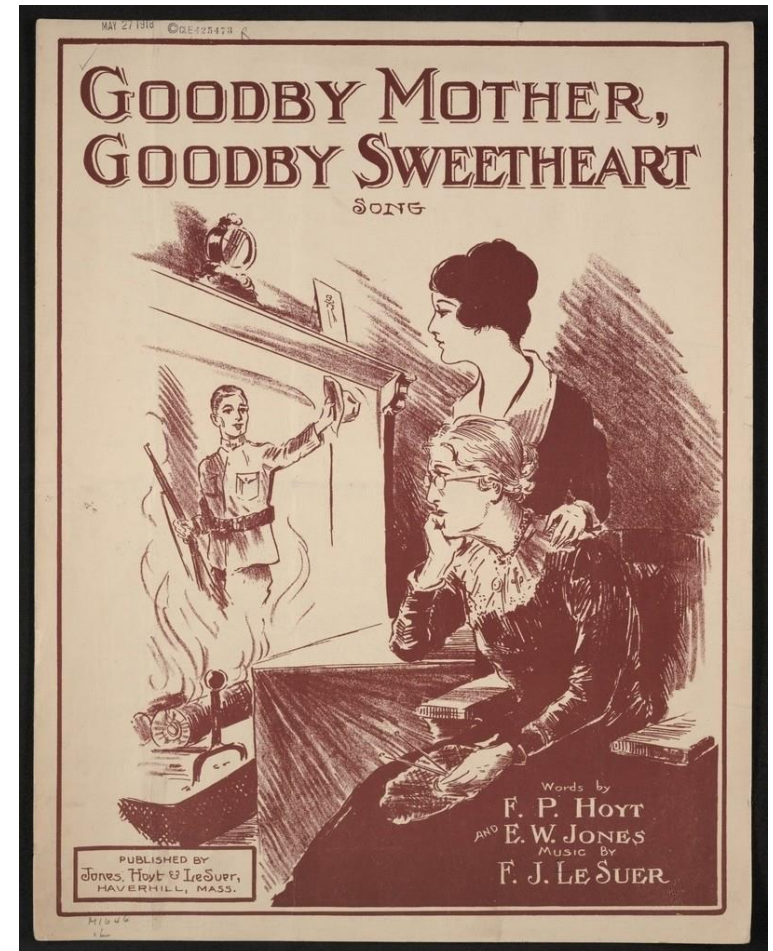- How do you communicate research to someone new?

Image credit: https://picryl.com/media/goodby-mother-goodby-sweetheart-song

ResearchOps is work that we do to do good research

" ResearchOps is
the mechanisms and strategies
that set user research in motion.

It provides the roles, tools and processes
needed to support researchers
in delivering and scaling
the impact of the craft across an organisation."

@teamreops / @katetowsey

https://www.slideshare.net/uxbri/what-is-researchops-kate-towsey

"our user researchers are only actually researching about 30% of their time"

- "We work with the team to improve the service"

- "We communicate what we know"

- "We prepare for research"

- "We look at site analytics"

Leisa Reichelt

https://userresearch.blog.gov.uk/2014/09/10/what-user-researchers-do-when-theyre-not-researching/

There can be a surprisingly large quantity of pieces of paper after an evaluation

Jarrett, C (2001) "Unit 7: Evaluation in Practice" in
Open University course M873 User Interface Design and Evaluation

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Missing items?

- We review previous research for relevant insights

- "We work with the team to improve the service"

- "We communicate what we know"

- "We prepare for research"

- "We look at site analytics"

- We organise what we have done for reuse later

Research debt is
work that we assign
to our future selves

Technology evolves, people move on

https://web.archive.org/web/20170429074727/
https://servicemanual.hackpad.com/User-research-on-design-patterns-di8PSAAShG1

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This. Document everything. And do it in a sustainable, searchable way. I say this having trawled through 4 years worth of research on @GOVUKverify to unpick the reason for a design change. I found it, but it involved reading a lot of PowerPoints and viewing a lot of prototypes.

Emma Graham @emmag_ux
Excellent advice on why you should keep records of service decisions
hodigital.blog.gov.uk/2017/10/27/tak...

8:42 AM - 12 Jun 2018

1 Retweet 3 Likes

https://twitter.com/Lorna_Wall/status/1006441548488331269

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This workshop is in three parts

1. Describe:
   What things does research create?

2. Compare:
   What do we currently do with those things?

3. Improve:
   What does best practice look like?

$ 1,000 REWARD.
For the proof of the existence of a better liniment for human & animal flesh than "MERCHANTS GARGLING OIL" or a better worm remedy than "MERCHANTS WORM TABLETS" MANUFACTURED BY MERCHANTS GARGLING OIL CO. LOCKPORT, N.Y. JOHN HODGE Secy

IF I AM DARWIN'S GRANDPAPA, IT FOLLOWS DON'T YOU SEE, THAT WHAT IS GOOD FOR MAN AND BEAST, IS DOUBLY GOOD FOR ME.
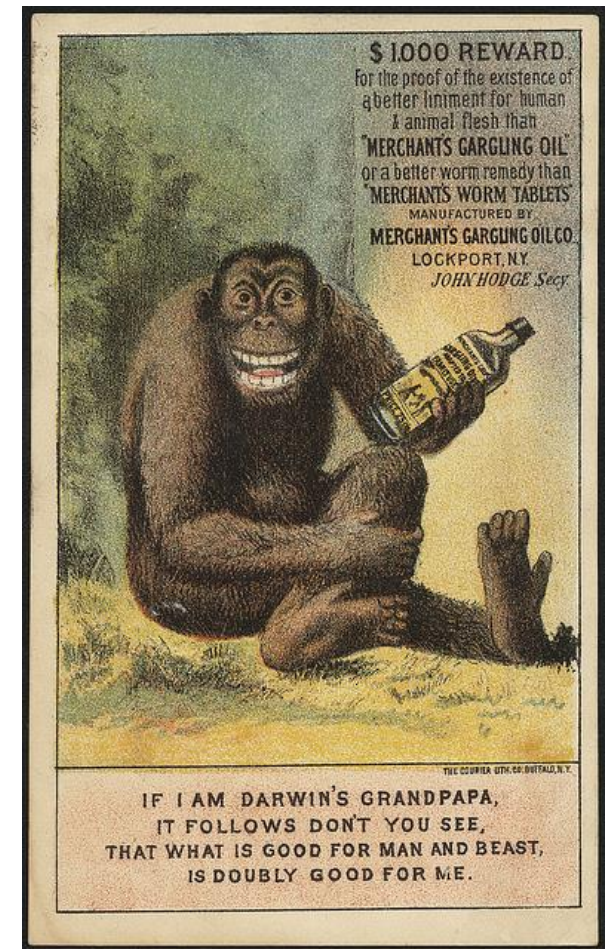
Image credit: https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/8557193567

Describe – on your own at first

- What things does your research create?

- Consider:

Tangible:	such as objects, things you pick up / set down / back up
Intangible:	such as decisions, opinions, empathy, 'lightbulb moments'
Immediate:	answers to the research questions, explorations of hypotheses
Longer-term:	deeper understanding of users, better ideas about how to meet their needs

Pair up and swap ideas

- What things does your research create?

- Consider:

Tangible:	such as objects, things you pick up / set down / back up
Intangible:	such as decisions, opinions, empathy, 'lightbulb moments'

Immediate:	answers to the research questions, explorations of hypotheses
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Pool ideas in larger groups

- What things does your research create?

- Consider:

Tangible:	such as objects, things you pick up / set down / back up
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Immediate:	answers to the research questions, explorations of hypotheses
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Compare – on your own at first

- What things do you (or your organisation) currently do?
    1. We have a clear policy for this and we do it immediately
    2. We have a policy and we get round to it occasionally
    3. We don't have a policy but we wish we did
    4. We don't have a policy and we don't see any need for one

Improve:
What does best practice look like?

- What are your ideas for making this happen regularly?

Tips for a good handover - Nadia Huq

- Write down names and job titles of everyone involved in the build, from senior management to developers to contacts at GOV.UK.

- Keep a list of additional functionality or design changes you would have explored if you'd had the time.

- If you can, put together a map of the end to end journey. They're great for quickly getting a bird's-eye view of a service.

- If you do a heuristic review of an existing service, include screenshots of it at the time of review. Years down the line, without screenshots, it can be really tricky to work out what you were looking at.

- Save everything in one place, with a clear taxonomy and naming conventions.

https://hodigital.blog.gov.uk/2017/10/27/take-note-why-you-should-keep-records-of-service-decisions/

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Idea 1: The Research Debt Sprint

(mainly for agile teams working in 2-week sprints)

- Set aside one sprint each quarter for paying research debt

- No new research

- Organise and clear up the stuff

- Think about the insights and gaps

- Write some reports, publications, blog posts

Idea 2: The Project Close-Down

(mainly for agencies working on specific engagements)

- Set aside a week of close-down time after each

- Organise and clear up the stuff

- Do a retro on the project
  - What went well
  - What went badly
  - What we'll do more of next time
  - What we'll avoid next time

- Write a whitepaper, case study, marketing literature

Keep in touch

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