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Statement of Topic: Components of real-life illustration tasks in online journalism

Significance and Relevance of the Topic

In work environments, images are retrieved by end-users who need visuals to complete their work tasks. For example, in online journalism where images have a particularly strong presence (Pavlik, 2001), image professionals perform tens of illustrating tasks daily. They source images from online collections of *ready* imagery e.g., Getty Images (<http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/>), Google Images (<https://images.google.com/>), Bing Images (www.bing.com/images). To allow users to search through the immensity of the visual content of such collections, and enable them to find images that they are looking for, these collections must employ effective image retrieval systems.

In the tradition of interactive information retrieval (IIR), systems are built to support their users in performing work tasks, and the effectiveness of systems is measured in respect to their capability to meet users' information needs. In work situations, users' information needs are triggered by work tasks that in information and knowledge professions such as e.g., journalism, frequently, require the user to interact with an IR system. Therefore, it is important to gain a thorough understanding of the type and structure of work tasks, and how their individual components affect users' information behavior. This knowledge is fundamental to planning, designing and developing of systems that will effectively support their users.

Some important work on search-based tasks that require images was done by e.g., Fidel (1997), Conniss et al. (2000), McCay-Peet and Toms (2009), and specifically to journalism, the work of Markkula and Sormunen (2000) and Westman and Oittinen, (2006) need to be mentioned. However, overall there is a paucity of literature concerned with this subject.

To fill in this gap in the knowledge, we undertook an analysis of 25 illustration tasks observed in a qualitative study with online journalists. The focus of this work is on tasks that required 'ready' images sourced from image collections. These tasks were compared for similarities and differences, and 6 components, common to all tasks, were identified: *title*, *URL*, *editorial section*, *publication time*, *image size*, and *image use*. Further, the impact of each component on image searching was explored.

This thorough understanding of the image-based work tasks performed by image professionals in online journalism can be used, for example, for the purpose of

predicting actions carried out by image users when searching for images that they need, hence, it directly contributes to the development of more supportive systems for this particular user group.

Content

Since the focus of this study is on images, the subject lends itself well for visual presentation. The work will be presented in four major sections:

- 1) an introductory section that will provide details around: the motivation for this study, research questions, review of related work, data collection and analysis, and definitions of key concepts, e.g., *'ready' images*, and *'composite' images*;
- 2) a section that will present selected examples of the illustration tasks requiring *ready* images as identified in observation sessions in this study, each with a clear but concise description;
- 3) central to the poster will be a section presenting the 6 task components, and explaining how these components inform the image searching process, with examples of images that were selected and/or created in individual tasks presented in 2. above.; and finally,
- 4) a section that will explain how the knowledge of task components contributes to information system evaluation and design, and how it can be applied in practice.

Abstract

In work environments, images are retrieved by end-users who need visuals to complete work tasks, yet, the literature shows that image retrieval systems fall short of meeting image users' needs.

This poster contributes to the evidence of how research into information behaviour directly informs the design and development of information systems that effectively meet users' needs. Specifically, it will a) present a model of an image-based work task that emerged from a study with image professionals working in online journalism; b) explain how each task component impacts on image searching; c) provide examples of real tasks; d) link the findings to system design; and e) present an application of this model in practice.

This model was derived after an analysis of 25 illustration tasks collected from observations of eight image professionals at the BBC Online. The data included written record of tasks received by participants, and transcripts from a 'think aloud' protocol used in the observations. The illustration tasks were compared for commonalities in regards to their format, components, and process. Thematic analysis was used on the transcripts from the observations to cross-check the findings.

Six components common to all tasks were identified: title, URL, editorial section, publication time, image size, and image use. Further, their impact on image searching was explored.

A thorough understanding of the image-based work tasks performed by image professionals in online journalism will contribute to the development of more supportive systems for this particular user group.

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