Design as part of the plan: sustainability in digital editing projects

Digital Scholarly Editions as Interfaces
International symposium
We are

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@HuygensING
From the early 90s...

Still going strong

PAGE NOT FOUND
(p.s. see you soon)
Houston, we have a problem

What’s that?

We are stuffing content in a box that doesn’t fit.

Maybe we should build a new wrapper around the content.
And it has to last longer, maybe grow with it too.

It needs to be flexible, thus sustainable.
It’s not just DSE

Project development  = content design / information architecture
What’s fixed and what can be flexible?

Time vs Costs vs Features

Without compromising on quality
Waterfalls

Agile

FEATURES
QUALITY
COST
TIME
FEATURES
QUALITY
COST
TIME

FIXED
VARIABLE
What to do?
We are trying to be more... Agile.

An iterative methodology that supports a flexible approach to development assigning different priorities to tasks.

Faults are discovered and fixed early in the process. The final product is functional because the minimum requirements are always satisfied (if not, the project fails).
Agile in a nutshell

- Iterative / incremental design
- Willingness to explore & adapt
- Responding to change
- Face2face collaboration
- Valuable product
- Tasks’ prioritisation - MoSCoW

Find out more about Agile: [https://www.agilealliance.org/](https://www.agilealliance.org/)
MoSCoW approach

**Must**
- The most vital things you can’t live without

**Should**
- Things you consider important, but not vital

**Could**
- The ‘nice-to-haves’; desirable but not necessary

**Won’t do this time**
- Things that provide little value and that you can give up
  - Life is short*
How does it look in an actual project?
What does it have to do with Digital Scholarly Editing projects?

Time and cost are often (strictly) fixed variables. We all want to deliver good quality though. Also, we all would like projects to keep running even after the funding period.
Sustainability

Set up an iterative workflow
+ Follow a process

Don’t reinvent the wheel.
Don’t do more than what you need.
(Do write documentation, but don’t drown in it).
KDL’s Workflow *

Also applicable to DSE projects

* Simplified for the sake of this presentation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-PROJECT</th>
<th>FEASIBILITY</th>
<th>FOUNDATIONS</th>
<th>EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>DEPLOYMENT</th>
<th>POST-PROJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand the business case</td>
<td>Outline solution architecture, development and delivery plan</td>
<td>High-level schedule of <strong>increments</strong></td>
<td>Timebox planning</td>
<td>Assemble</td>
<td>Assess if expected benefits are met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss with Project Partners</td>
<td>Prioritise Requirements List</td>
<td>Produce a summary for the final go/no-go decision</td>
<td>Daily stand-ups</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce a Term of Reference document</td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timebox review records</td>
<td>Deploy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Content design / Information Architecture

Content is **king**.
So let’s build around it.
How a database structure looks like.

Not particularly friendly.
Move towards Human friendly.

- Get the conversation started quickly
- Don’t design, sketch!
- Get feedback
- Move on to the next step
Work together

- Some feedback could look like this ----->
- Might not look appealing, but if it gets the point across, work with it.
- Because design will help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Search Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phenomen Initial</td>
<td>Names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographic Date
- birth - death - natural - veteran - exile - adopted

Dates
To specify a particular date fill in the 'from' data only; to specify a range, fill in the 'to' data only. For one specific year, put the same value in both boxes.

From to

Career and Status
Must allow choices of more than one item from each list (and/or). Must reflect the structure of the source table and allow expansion of orifice hierarchy groups within the selection box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magistrational Posts</th>
<th>Provinces or locations</th>
<th>Provinces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>valid for the following offices: Canton, parishes, municipalities, bishopric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-magistrational Posts</td>
<td>Agglomerated hierarchy list which can be expanded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equestrian Functions</td>
<td>Distinctions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagenmann</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project partners, Developers, Users

Everyone is happy.

Reset search
Know instantly the size of the pool of data you are exploring
Fine grain search
Free text search (not a priority for this particular project)
What does design do for you?

Gets your content across.
Makes it more accessible
and more rewarding for users to explore.
Text vs Visual

There is nothing wrong with text.
There is nothing wrong with visual.
Choose what delivers to your audience in that particular context.
Iulius Caesar (131)
- Son of Aurelia (248) and Iulius (130)
- Married to Calpurnia (126), Cornelia (126), Pompeia (143)
- Father of Iulia (547)
- Divorced from Pompeia (52)
- Betrothed to Cossutia (7)
- Adoptive father Iulius (132)
Options

Whenever possible, let users choose.
Search a body of work

Before
Search a body of work

After
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filter by</th>
<th>Browse sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Selected filters (1) No filters are currently selected showing all results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chopin Online
AC Online
OCVE
Contact
Privacy
Looking for a needle in a haystack
Challenges

Raise your hand if a project had no setbacks from start to finish.
Challenges

- Find a common language
- Embrace the Agile philosophy from the start
- Keep the communication channel open all the time
- Include design early in the process
“If you build it they will come” *

And if they like it they will use it.

* “Field of Dreams”, USA 1989, directed by Phil Alden Robinson
Thank you!

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