Testing the usability of
Share-VDE
search portal

Serafia Kari, 19.9.2023

Serafia Kari

National Library of Finland
Finna-services

serafia.kari@helsinki.fi
+358 29 4144354

Intro

- National Library of Finland is part of the Share-VDE project
- Work-exchange at Casalini Libri in spring 2023

The goal was to understand

- Possibilities and problems of converting Marc 21 -metadata to BIBFRAME-format
- How the transformed data can be searched in Share-VDE portal

In this presentation

Background

Portals and users
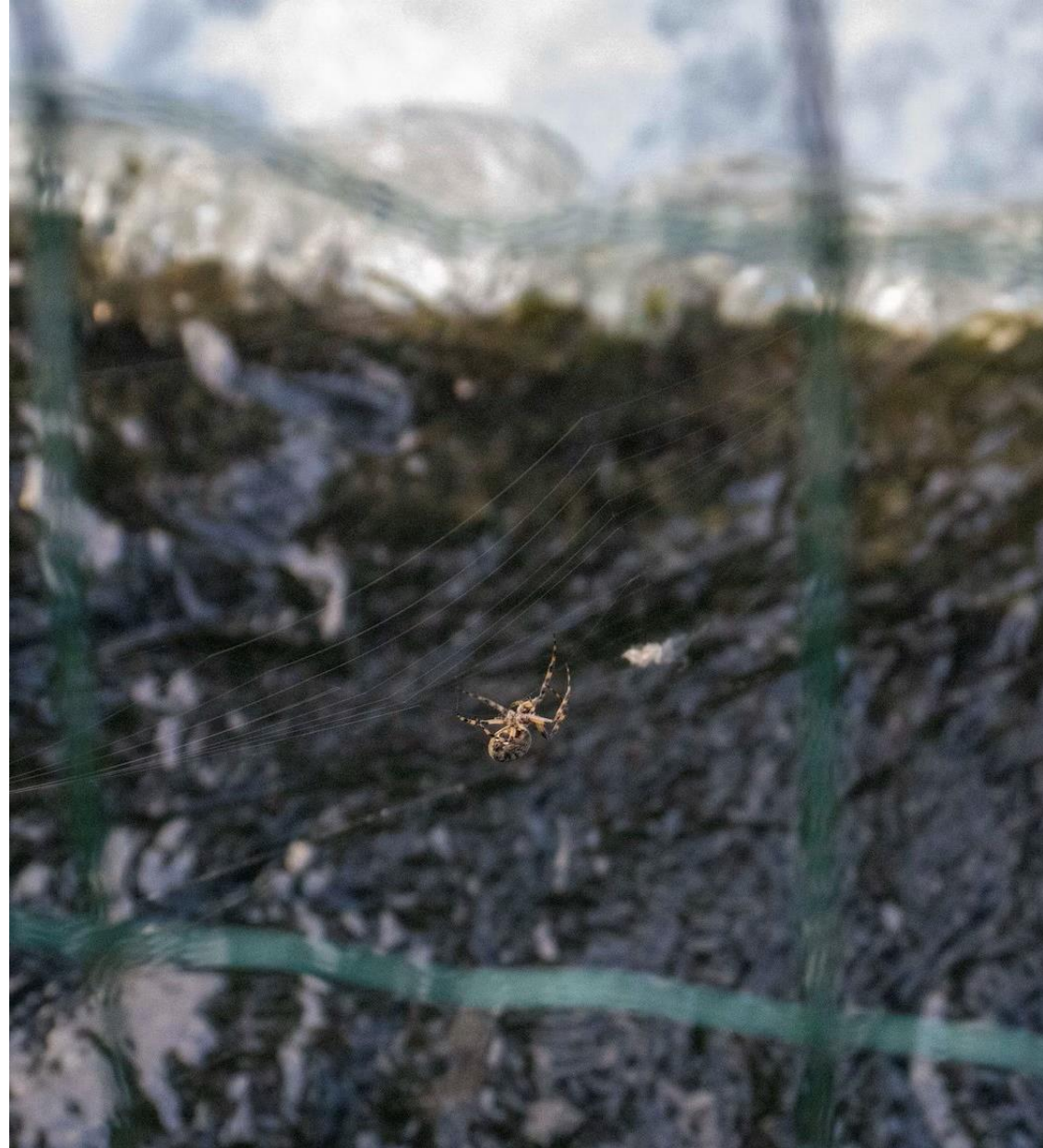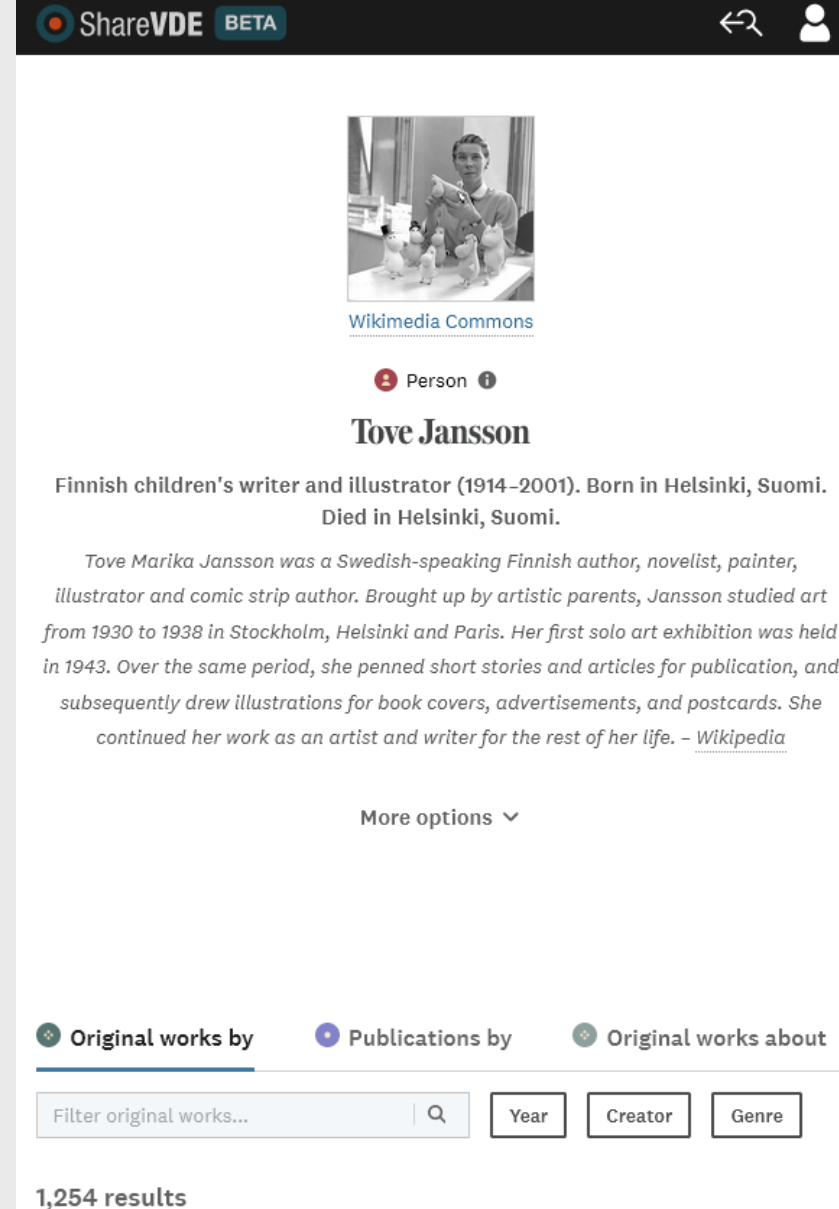
Search portal is a tool

- **for the user** to describe what they are looking for

- **for the owner of the information** to describe what information they can offer to the user

Search portal acts as a link in a conversation between humans

Share-VDE for the curious

- Bibliographic catalogues and authority files of a "**community of libraries in a shared discovery environment**" based on linked data
- User can search entities and discover links between them
- User friendly search portal or refined tool for information professionals?

- <u>Usability testing</u> or user tests are one of the most common methods to assess usability

- A target user group of <u>3-5 people</u> is selected

- During the test sessions, users get tasks that they need to solve

- The sessions and tasks may vary from structured and formal to informal depending on the goals of the testing

NKM 5682:180

Roles

- A **facilitator** works with the user during testing
- One or more **observers**, that take notes during the testing
- To get realistic results, the facilitator can't interfere too much

The goal

- Get insight on how the users would use the product
- Get the key usability problems or strengths of the product to improve the design

Information seeking

- Usability tests are done with different usability heuristics and models in mind
- **Kulthau's model of the information search process** was used for this usability test to reflect the various emotional stages that are common during information seeking process
- This helps to interpret the results more realistically

Carol C. Kulthau

Kulthaus information seeking model

FINNA

	Initiation	Selection	Exploration	Formulation	Collection	Presentation	Assessment
Feelings	Uncertainty	Optimism	Confusion Frustration Doubt	Clarity	Confidence	Satisfaction or disappointment	Sense of accomplishment
Thoughts	Vague			Focused			
					Increased interest		Increased self awareness
Actions	Seeking relevant information			Seeking pertinent information			
		Exploring			Documenting		

Uncertainty as a part of the journey

- **Uncertainty** is one of the central themes in Kulthau's model

- In the context of user test, the uncertainty is doubled: the user not only has to learn about the results, they have to learn to use a system the aren't familiar with

- Increased uncertainty may require intervention but can also be viewed as "beginning of innovation"
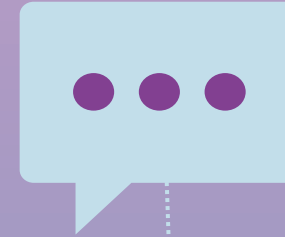
Test-setup

Setup for the usability test

FINNA

Target group of 5 people: information professionals

5 tasks using the Share-VDE portal

Mentimeter-questionnaire and Think aloud -method

16 40
KANSALLISKIRJASTO
NATIONALBIBLIOTEKET

Tasks

Task 1	Warm up: "search"-task with paper-prototype and trying out Mentimeter
Task 2	Taking a look in to the portal and getting used to the search tools
Task 3	Finding persons and publications
Task 4	Getting a hold of single item
Task 5	Classification in advanced search

Main questions:

- Are entities and hierarchies clear for the users?
- Does the portal provide enough help for the user?
- How important are classification and advanced search?

Mentimeter: result example
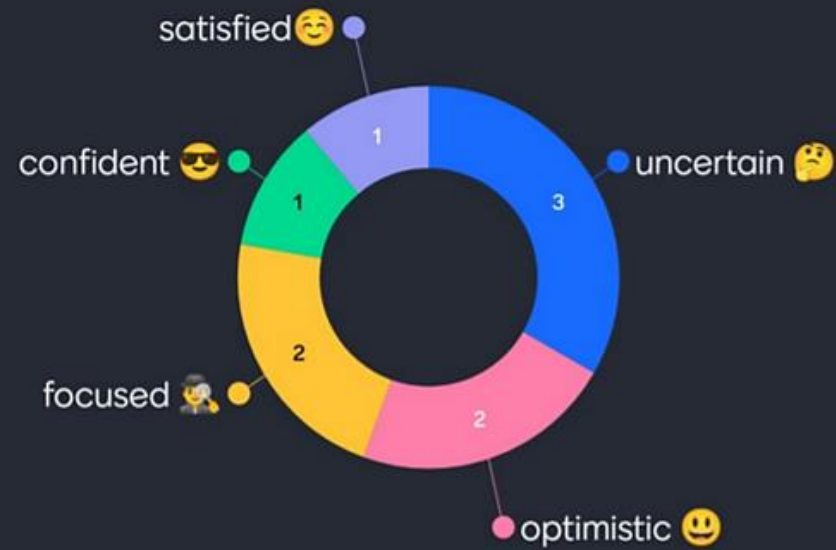
Findings
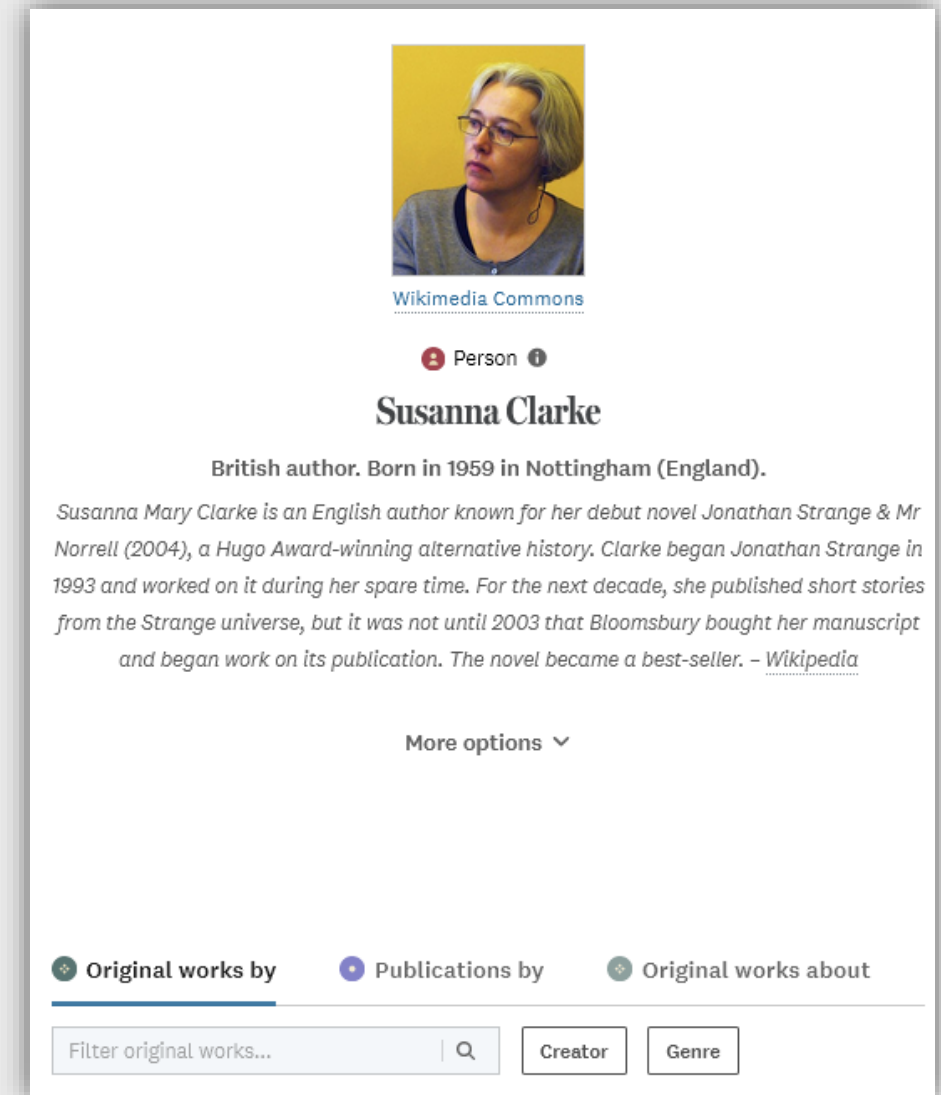
About-page

- About-page can be accessed from either the link on the front page or **Learn more** -links

- It provides useful information for the user, and was often visited during the tasks

  - This might also be a tell that everything is not clear to the user, if they have to visit the page often

- Mostly users were content on the information that they found
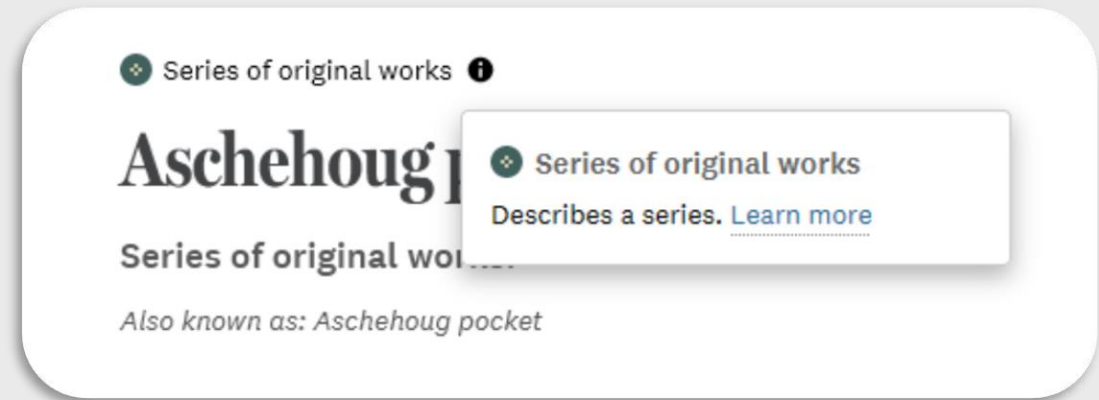
Suggestions

- Sometimes the Learn more -link doesn't offer information about the entity that the link is originally from

  - For example Subject-and Series-entity are missing

Person-entity

- Person entity -page received praises from most users
- Picture on the entity-page gave users certainty quickly
- Looking through original works and publications was usually confusing for the users
  - Clusterization errors and duplicates may have caused most of the confusion

- During the tasks users were asked if they knew the difference between different tabs on either **Agent**-page or **Original work** -page
- From familiar ➔ confused ➔ pretty sure
    - After looking through About-page or trying things out usually helped
- Sometimes users got "lost" between relationships or meanings between entities
- Some users expected to find the art work from the artists they found
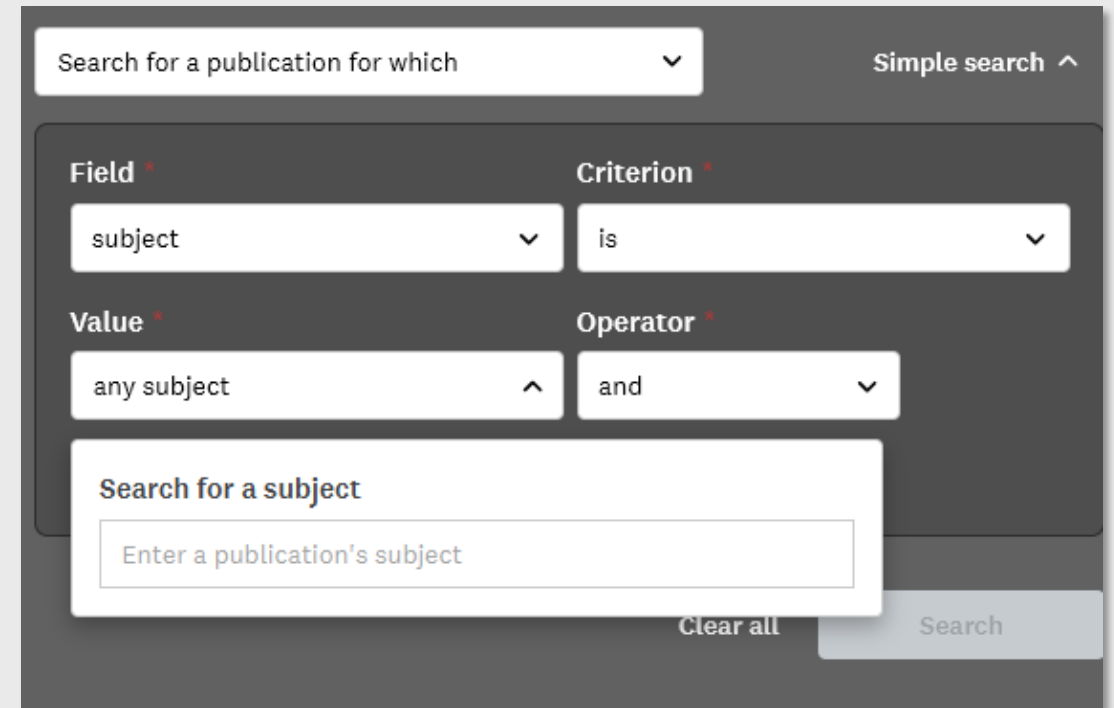
Subject-entity 1/2

- Subjects are an important tool for browsing in the traditional search engines

- In Share-VDE portal it is possible to use subjects in the advanced search

- Because of the wide range of metadata providers and cataloguing cultures, the subjects don't always cluster well

Clustering problem, subject-example

- The selection of the subjects doesn't seem to match with what should be found
- It also isn't clear for the user, what kind of subjects can be used in the search
- The relevance of the subject-suggestions seems questionable
- Using subjects in simple search doesn't seem to give relevant results

Suggestions

- Subjects should be searchable, like Person and Work entities
  - A new tab in simple search?
  - Subject authority records could be the key to fix this?
- User should be able to freely write the subject they are searching for
  - At this point the chained subject headings are misleading

Simple vs. advanced search

- Users were pretty experienced with different search interfaces, and all knew what the advanced search was like
- Few users actually preferred starting out with the advanced search to get a better overview of the system
- One user commented that it was easier to understand the results from the advanced search than the simple search

Comments

- As advanced search faceting options might be more similar to traditional library interface, and therefore easier to learn to use
- For basic user, the simple search seemed natural place to start learning the new interface

Using classification

- Classification searches were usually successful, and users found relevant results
- Some uncertainty about the results: the classification of the publications isn't shown anywhere
  - Only option is to go check the linked library OPAC or try to study the original marc-record
- There is no indicator what classification systems could be used in the search and how
  - Some users tried with the names of the instead of numbers

Suggestions

- The classification should be shown on the publication page
- The possible classification systems should be presented to the user, either with the search tools or the Help-page

Conclusions

Main findings

FINNA

Getting to know the users 🕷
Different users (and usergroups) have different information retrieval strategies

Clustering traditions together 🕷
Getting more knowledge about the original data can help fix problems with search

Understanding the entities 🕷
In the future by editing and fixing cluster errors will help users to understand the relationships better

Finding help 🕷
Lot of problems can easily be fixed by improving About-pages and contextualized help
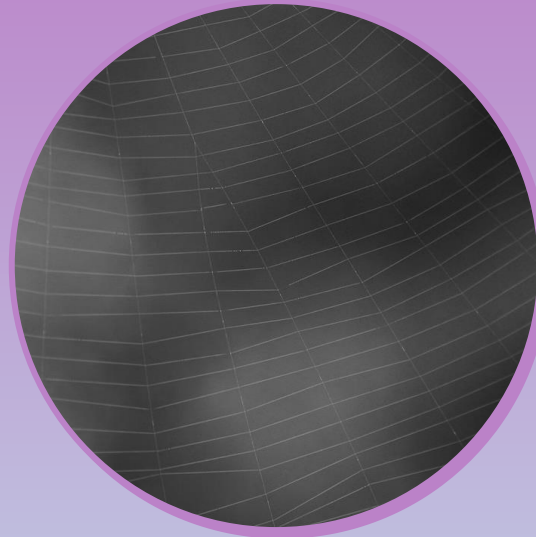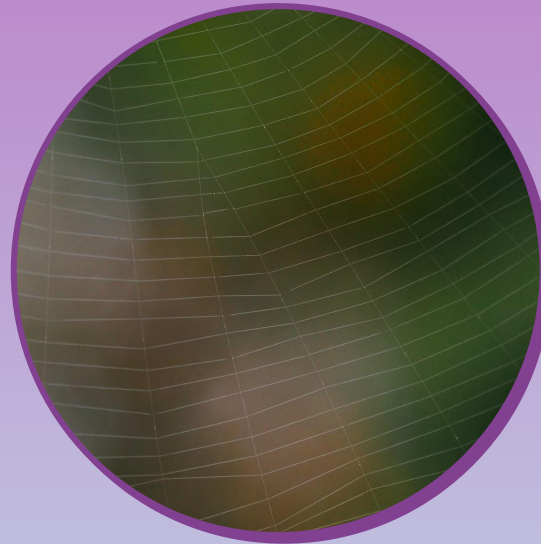
Summary

Background   Test-setup   Findings   Conclusions

Background   Test-setup   Findings   Conclusions