Research Support with Optical Character Recognition Apps

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The purpose of this presentation is to report results of a formative usability study that investigated first-year undergraduate student use of an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) mobile application designed to help students find resources for course assignments. The app uses textual content from the assignment sheet to suggest relevant library resources which students may not be aware.
The study methodology used formative evaluation techniques; data were collected to inform the production level version of the mobile application and to understand student use models and requirements for OCR software in mobile applications.

The OCR application is designed to help students learn about availability of library resources based on scanning (e.g. taking a picture, or "Text-shot") of an assignment sheet, a course syllabus, or other course related handouts. The Text-shot module reported here is designed for integration as a component within the Minrva mobile app (Hahn & Ryckman, 2012a). Minrva is designed modularly so that new components can be added to it over time. A catalog of modules developed thus far is available at the Minrva Project website: http://minrvaproject.org/catalog.php

Researcher findings indicated that mobile optical character recognition apps are helpful for undergraduate students searching known titles of books, general subject areas, or searching for help guide content developed by the library. The results portion of the presentation will detail the how student feedback shaped the next iteration of the app for integration as a Minrva module.

This study contributes a new area of application development for libraries, with research methods that are useful for other mobile development studies.

Cited

Hahn, J. & Ryckman, N. (2012), "Modular mobile application design," C*ode4Lib Journal,* 18. Available from: http://journal.code4lib.org/articles/7336 (accessed 23 October 2013)