FLASH BUILD: UNDERSTANDING SHAKESPEARE

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You have an idea.

How can you find out if it’s worthwhile as quickly and cheaply as possible?

This is how Folger and JSTOR did it.
The Folger’s collection contains the world’s largest and most important collection of Shakespeare-related materials.

It also has a vast array of other rare books, manuscripts, and works of art.
In most cases, the Folger has the first printed editions of Shakespeare's works.

In their original form, they are not always palatable for modern audiences.
The best-selling editions of Shakespeare in North America.

Contains the complete works, along with glosses and explanatory materials.

Some plays are available as audio recordings, and the first Kindle versions are now for sale.
An electronic version of the Folger Editions texts that is free for non-commercial use.

Available in HTML, XML, and PDF formats.

Coming soon in MS Word and plain ASCII.
The foremost journal in its field, *Shakespeare Quarterly* has been published since 1950 and is part of JSTOR.
What if Shakespeare Quarterly could cross-reference quotations in the Folger Editions?

How can we find out as quickly and cheaply as possible?
THE PARTNERSHIP

Folger Shakespeare Library

- Folger Digital Texts
- Shakespeare Quarterly
- Scholars and students

Objective: demonstrate the value of Folger Digital Texts to scholars and students and demonstrate how it can be cross-referenced with Shakespeare Quarterly.

JSTOR

- The full archive run of SQ
- 2000+ other journals
- A newly-formed Labs team

Objective: validate the value of using a primary text as a portal into secondary literature.
A new team at ITHAKA

Mission: to seek out new concepts and opportunities, to refine and to validate them through research and experimentation.

Among our methods: Flash Builds (or a version of them)
WHAT’S A FLASH BUILD*?

Like a flash mob, but with coders

Time-bound, usually one week

Team collocated

No distractions

Daily access to end users

* We first heard of Flash Builds from Marty Cagan, describing the work of the Nordstrom Innovation Lab. You can see an example of that work here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szroezLyQHY
THE FINISHED PRODUCT

Pick a play. Click a quote. Instantly see JSTOR articles that reference the quote.

Hamlet
Henry V
Julius Caesar
Macbeth
Romeo and Juliet
Twelfth Night

http://labs.jstor.org/shakespeare
HOW WE GOT THERE

Prior to the Flash Build:
1. Interviews with scholars
2. Create the data & infrastructure

During the Flash Build (w/c Sep 29)
3. Design Jam
4. Paper prototypes
5. Low-fi prototypes
6. Working site

Interviews with scholars and students every day
1. INTERVIEWS

Exploratory interviews with Shakespeare scholars and students

Example questions:
Tell me about a time when it was fast and easy to make connections between a play and what’s been written about it.

If you had a magic wand to make it easier to make it easier go between the play and what’s written about it, what would you do?

Conducted in person or over Skype

Entire team participates
2. CREATE THE DATA & INFRASTRUCTURE

Exploration informed in part by interviews with scholars

Selected candidate articles first by a Topic Model and then by full text search

Quote-matches found by fuzzy-text-matching the candidate articles with the Folger digital text

Skeleton site created
3. DESIGN JAM

Organized brainstorming

Began with “personas” that were based on initial interviews

Objective: design as many means of solving this problem for these people

Two rounds. On the second round, steal other people’s ideas!

Best with a diverse set of participants
4. PAPER PROTOTYPES

Inspired by the design jam

Used to test wildly divergent directions

Users “click” with their finger

Test as many as possible, as quickly as possible!
5. LOW-FI PROTOTYPES

Used to refine ideas before building

Test multiple approaches to the same idea
6. DESIGNED SITE!

A live data, high-fidelity prototype, which has been validated by users.

A little visual design goes a long way.

Lots and lots of good ideas are put aside to get working software in this timeframe!
THANK YOU

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