

Qualitative Research

Observation & Think-Aloud Protocol

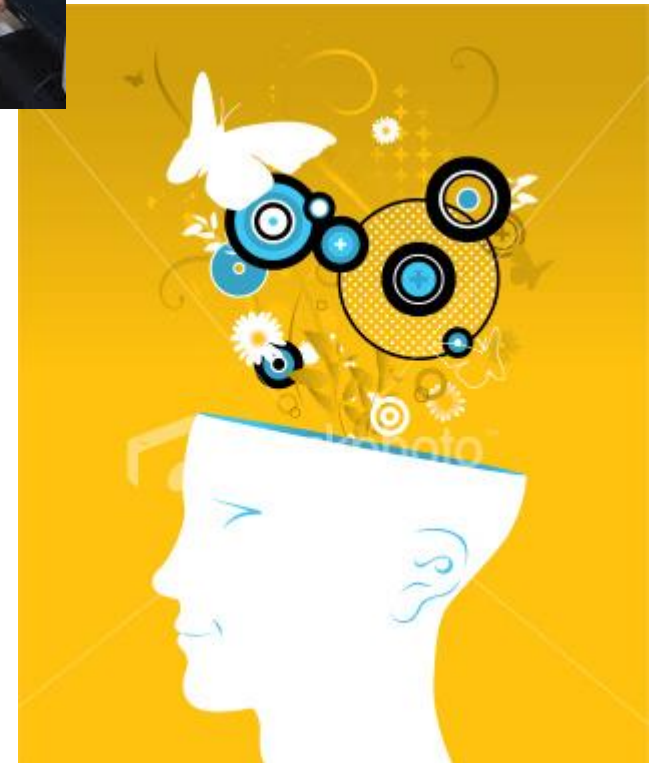
NELIG SIG

2011

Qualitative Research

- Quantitative research tells us “what”
- Qualitative can help us explain “why” and “how”
- What are our patrons thinking & feeling- what do they like or not like and why?
- How can we better understand their experiences?

Think-Aloud



Think-Aloud

- Possible Topics for Think-Aloud
 - Information-seeking behavior
 - Research strategies
 - Usability/navigation
 - Information Interaction
 - Human-Computer Interaction

Think-Aloud

- Involve subject in actual or pre-determined tasks
- Subject engages in task:
 - explains what they are doing and why
 - What they are thinking
 - How they feel
- Researcher observes process/actions and takes notes
- Prompt subject to verbalize

Observation & Think-Aloud

Advantages

- Captures short term memory
- Immediate feedback
- Opportunities for clarification
- Low-tech requirements

Challenges

- Depends on subject's ability to verbalize while working
- Actions and reactions might be affected by the process itself
- Recruitment of subjects

Planning for Research

- Define the problem or research question
 - What do you want to know
 - What do you want to learn
 - Develop a set of questions to answer
- Design activities for subjects
- Pre-test
- Recruit subjects
 - Give-aways
 - Prizes
 - Class credit



Facilities

- Doesn't require fancy technology!
 - Computer, researcher (or two), and subject
- Usability Lab
 - Screen-capture technology
 - Eye-capture technology
 - Transaction Log
 - Video and audio taping
 - Two-way mirror



Engaging in the Research

- Allow subject leeway- try not to guide
- Prompt subject to talk as necessary
- Ask clarifying questions
- Take copious notes
 - Separate observation from analysis/interpretation
- Debrief immediately afterward

Analysis of Data

- Read, re-read, and read again
- Look for patterns and themes
- Compare coding (inter-coder analysis)
- Revisit research questions
- Can you draw conclusions from your results?
- Next steps...



Thank you!!!

Questions?

Activity