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Results from the PubPsych launch survey: Short report

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Concise results from the PubPsych launch survey

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PubPsych is an open access information retrieval system with European focus. It is developed and maintained by the Leibniz Institute for Psychology (ZPID) in collaboration with a number of European and American database providers. At the time of this writing it contains references to approx. 0.9 M documents, mainly comprised of journal articles, book chapters, monographs, diagnostic measures, and research data. Its user interface is available in English, French, Spanish and German languages. Concurrent to its official release, ZPID conducted a survey of the quality and usability of PubPsych, the results of which are reported below.

Method

The participants of the survey were recruited through written information to student associations in psychology, advertisements at conferences, within social media channels, and at the homepages of ZPID and PubPsych. Interested scientists and students of psychology were invited to evaluate PubPsych and state their opinion in a ca. 20-minute online survey. The survey first familiarized participants with the user interface through the execution of some basic literature search tasks. They were then asked to answer a series of questions concerning the quality of the obtained search results and the usability of the system. To this end, the *SQuaLL – Scale on the Quality of Literature Lists* (Linek & Tochtermann, 2011) and the *SUS – System Usability Scale* (Brooke, 1996) were utilized in addition to a number of ZPID items.

Results

The survey was completed by 351 participants from 25 countries (68% Germany, 12% France, 5% Spain, and 4% Austria; average age 35 ± 11.4 years; 59.6% female). Most of the participants had at least one academic degree and were employed at universities or colleges. About 23% of the participants were students.

Starting off the survey, participants were given some practical literature search tasks to test the PubPsych search interface. Subsequent control questions, which referred, e.g., to drill-down navigation features (facets) of the PubPsych interface, were answered correctly by almost all participants.

The quality of the search results was measured with the SQuaLL. Participants' scores were distinctly positive, as on average 74% of the maximum (most positive) score was achieved (M = 3.7, SD = 0.65), where 5 is 'strongly agree' and 1 is 'strongly disagree'. In particular, participants were satisfied with the relevance (78% agreement) and concordance of the

search results with the search terms (76%), additional information provided by the system (64%), and the quality of the search results (63%). However, 17% of the participants were not satisfied, mostly because of a relative small number of search results.

Usability was measured using the SUS. The scoring of the items is similar to the SQuaLL, which was designed analogous to the SUS (Linek & Tochtermann, 2011, 62). Participants again scored very positive, as on average 79% of the maximum points were achieved (M = 78.6, SD = 14.8). 83% of the participants agreed that most people should be able to learn to use PubPsych quickly and 77% liked the design and the navigational elements (facets) of the PubPsych user interface. 15% found it difficult to check for full text availability.

Generally, PubPsych is evaluated very positive: 93% of the participants would recommend PubPsych to their peers, 75% see PubPsych as valuable addition to other resources, and 74% would like to use PubPsych more frequently. Single free text comments of users revealed that they value PubPsych because it is easy to use, fast and freely available while maintaining a high scientific quality. Asked for missing features, participants expressed the wish to have additional resources added to PubPsych, more facets for drill-down navigation, and the option to conduct cross-lingual searches using controlled (thesaurus) terms.

Conclusion

The quality of PubPsych's search results and the usability of its user interface were both ranked high by the participants of this initial survey. According to the adjective rating proposed by Bangor, Kortum and Miller (2008), the usability of PubPsych can be judged as "very good" to "excellent". Results indicate that participants broadly welcome PubPsych as an open access and cross-lingual information retrieval tool for psychology in Europe and beyond. Further research and development should focus on enhancing full-text linking and expanding cross-lingual search features, especially concerning thesaurus-based searching.

References

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