



M3.13 Recommendations to modify products

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Work package: WP3 'Training, outreach and community support'

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Recommendations for Scratchpad developers, project management and future user studies.

Based on results Survey Maintainers 2011

Below we listed a number of recommendations based on the results of a survey among Scratchpad maintainers held in September 2011. Please be aware that the questionnaire had a low response rate (17%), so the results reflect the experiences and opinions of a specific group of 61 Scratchpad users and cannot be understood as being representative for all maintainers.

Therefore the recommendations are not a receipt list to be literally implemented but should be treated as directions for improvement and further studies.

Also note the survey was held among Scratchpad *maintainers* and so does tell us something about this specific group who are the power users of Scratchpads.

Demographics of the respondents

1. For future studies: aim at higher response rate or sampling method to know the representativeness of the response dataset. But in order to do so structured information on demographics of the total population of Scratchpad maintainers is needed, which was not available at the time.

2. (Q4) It would be valuable to compare the age distribution of the respondents (42% between 25-35) and how this relates to the age distribution of the total population of SP maintainers and to the age distribution of researchers in taxonomy. Based on the survey results our first impression is that there is an over representation of users in the age group 25-35.

Based on these results we suggest an effort should be made, to integrate the older, experienced taxonomic experts in Scratchpads and so link them and their knowledge base to the younger generations. By doing so Scratchpads could play a valuable role in reducing the taxonomic impediment issue such the shortage of trained (alpha) taxonomists.

3. (Q6) The survey hints to an over representation of respondents from UK (KEW and NHML 31%). In future survey an effort should be made to collect information from other maintainers too, otherwise there is a risk to develop a tunnel vision and so of losing touch with the larger user base. Mechanisms that could help to give the user support a more local focus are the ambassadors' programme and cascade training.

4. (Q7) 69% of the sites have more than one user, this is an increase in comparison to earlier survey [Daphne check]. However still 31% of the respondents said their site is a community-of-one. It would be interesting to dig up stats on how this figure is over the whole population of Scratchpads and if this changed over time something to consider for future research.

Use and user satisfaction

5. (Q9) 41% of the respondents said that Scratchpads do not help them in their work, or that they do not know if Scratchpads are helpful. This made us curious for what part of the work they use Scratchpads instead. Something to consider to include in a future survey.

6. (Q12) Half of the maintainers are satisfied with activity level of users and half of the respondents is not.

Via the SP team, or the ambassadors programme an effort should be made to reduce the number of unsatisfied maintainers. For instance, provide information to maintainers, on how to build an online community and how to encourage /facilitate user activity. Develop guidelines on communication and managerial issues and propagate Google Analytics or other analytics tools so maintainers can monitor how much/little and what content is contributed to their site by other users.

Although half of the maintainers were not satisfied with the activity level of their users, an important part of the maintainers say they are satisfied *with the level of expertise* of their users (Q15). Even more a reason to encourage these skilled and valued experts to actively contribute.

7. (Q19) 54% of the respondents said they usually work on their Scratchpad during office hours. Between 22-31% of the respondents said they refer -to their site for reputation management reasons (e.g on a blog, CV, job evaluation, job interview or in a peer reviewed publication) (Q18). These numbers indicate that users feel that Scratchpads are a legitimate tool to support their work and contribute to their professional reputation. Between 26-41% of the respondents answered they plan to refer to Scratchpads in these types of settings in the future.

Scratchpad support: training

8. There is a strong demand for training courses and courses are appreciated. Based on the feedback of the respondents, a list of key recommendations to consider in future training is given (tables 22,25).

Key topics that should be covered in training courses are:

- general workflow of a Scratchpad and all its possibilities;
- custom content types;
- import and export of data;
- integration with other tools (e.g; keys).

9. It is evident from the answers that there are two audiences: those that are familiar with IT terminology and content management systems and those that are not. Hence, training needs to be well structured with special attention in the use of IT terminology. (tables 22,25)

10. Some of the respondents requested tailor-made and face to face training. Trainees would appreciate if they could use their own data during the training course instead of examples.

11. Concerning the training manual, more detailed explanation is needed, more easily searchable content and more information on certain topics.

Scratchpad support: other help services

12. (Q32) Email and Help pages are the most widely used support systems. (Q33) The email is evaluated as satisfactory but the Help pages are judged by some as dissatisfactory (18%). Also some comments on the Help pages were expressed under Q31 (table) and Q36.

a) A reason for the negative comments could be that respondents refer to an old version of the Help pages and have kept a record of their negative experience. Here a solution would be to improve the communication to users when support tools are updated and/or improved.

b) In general to keep track of user satisfaction of the online support consider using a standard feedback question "Was this information helpful" (YES/NO/SOMEWHAT).

Other recommendations

13. Stability and transparency of the system is important for the respondents. Stability in the support, what can they accept from the support team, what they can expect from the system (server speed, bugs), transparency about the long term viability of Scratchpads (support) (see comments Table 36)

14. Avoid use of IT jargon in communication an support to users (tables 22,25,36).