ANDREA POTGIETER
University of Johannesburg , South Africa

KAGISO MABE
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

THE FUTURE OF ACCESSING OUR PAST: COLLABORATION AND DIGITISATION IN LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS

Abstract:

Technological innovation has led to disruptions in the global economy. In South Africa, one such disruption has been the shift towards the digitisation of resources that were previously only available in hard copy. Institutions most notably affected by the digitisation drive, have been libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs), which serve as important cultural heritage organizations. Considering the significant financial implications of a digitisation project, this paper explores the possible benefits and challenges that are faced when LAMs collaborate with each other, when digitising content. This qualitative, cross sectional study compared results from the data of 21 interview transcripts, which were first analysed through thematic coding in ATLAS.ti, and then analysed in Leximancer, a software tool which applies natural language processing to text. The results discuss relevant themes and concepts, revealed during the interviews with digitising-focused employees, at various LAMs in South Africa. This paper aimed to illuminate which user-generated perceptions of concerns and opportunities should be noted when an organization considers a collaborative technological intervention, specifically in the context of LAMs in South Africa. Findings showed that the sharing of technology, skills and knowledge was prevalent when considering potential benefits of a collaborative digitisation project, while access to resources and the inefficient use of resources, were identified as significant challenges in collaborative digitisation projects. The novelty of this discussion lies within the triangulation of results by using different analysis tools, and the value of the research is the unique view given of the challenges and opportunities which arise when a collaborative digitisation project is deployed.