

PILOTS

Professionalisation for learning in technology and science
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D7.1.1: Survey on explainers using Internet

Workpackage 7: Webplatform and exploitation

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1 Methods

Between December 2008 and January 2009 a quick survey has been held. For a better planning of PILOTS web presence, we wanted to understand how the explainers use the web: Are they using the social networks, like Facebook? And what about other web 2.0 tools, like Youtube? For how long they use them during a week? And for what purposes? The results, that have not statistical relevance, have been used for planning PILOTS official website and the participatory webplatform.

The ten questions questionnaire was available online from the 11th of December 2008 to the 8th of January 2009. The questionnaire was advertised through partners, THE group mailing list and website, and DOTIK mailing list. Participants remained anonymous, apart from an ID code that was assigned at the beginning of the session by the automatic system. No timing was taken, but the form had to be completed in a single session. The questionnaire form is replicated at the end of this document.

54 people filled-in the online questionnaire.

2 Results

1. How many minutes did you spend on the net last week?

The first item of the questionnaire was a multiple choice question, that asked how much time the individual had spent in Internet the week before answering to the questionnaire. The results are in *Table 1*.


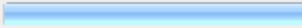
1. How many minutes did you spend on the net last week (approx.)?			Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1h			1.9%	1
1h-3h			18.5%	10
3h-6h hours			27.8%	15
More than 6 hours			51.9%	28
answered question				54
skipped question				0

Table 1. Amount of time spent on the web the week before answering (answers 54).

Most of the participants (more than 50%) reported that they had spent more than 6 hours browsing the web. Only one reported less than one hour, and nearly 30% had an average between 3 and 6 hours. This means that nearly 80% of the sample had spent at least 3 hours on the web during that week. The average of this sample seems distant from European means: for the EIAA Mediascope Europe 2008 report, a typical European spends 12 hours per week on the web, a lot more than the explainers that answered our questionnaire.

2. Of that time, how much did you spend in the following activities?

The second question explored what the people do while spending time in the Internet.

From the results it is clear that most of the time is spent gathering information and mailing (altogether over 52%). A lot of time is also spent downloading files. The sum of these three activities represents nearly three quarters of the total time (see *Chart 1*).

A substantial amount of time (14%) is also dedicated to social networking. We could expect more, considering the rapid growth of social networks in the last few years, but nevertheless the number is not so small.

These results are consistent with European data: the EIAA Mediascope Europe 2008 report, “serachig” and “email” are the top two internet activities (84% and 81% of the sample respectively). In these report “communicating via social networking sites) scores third.

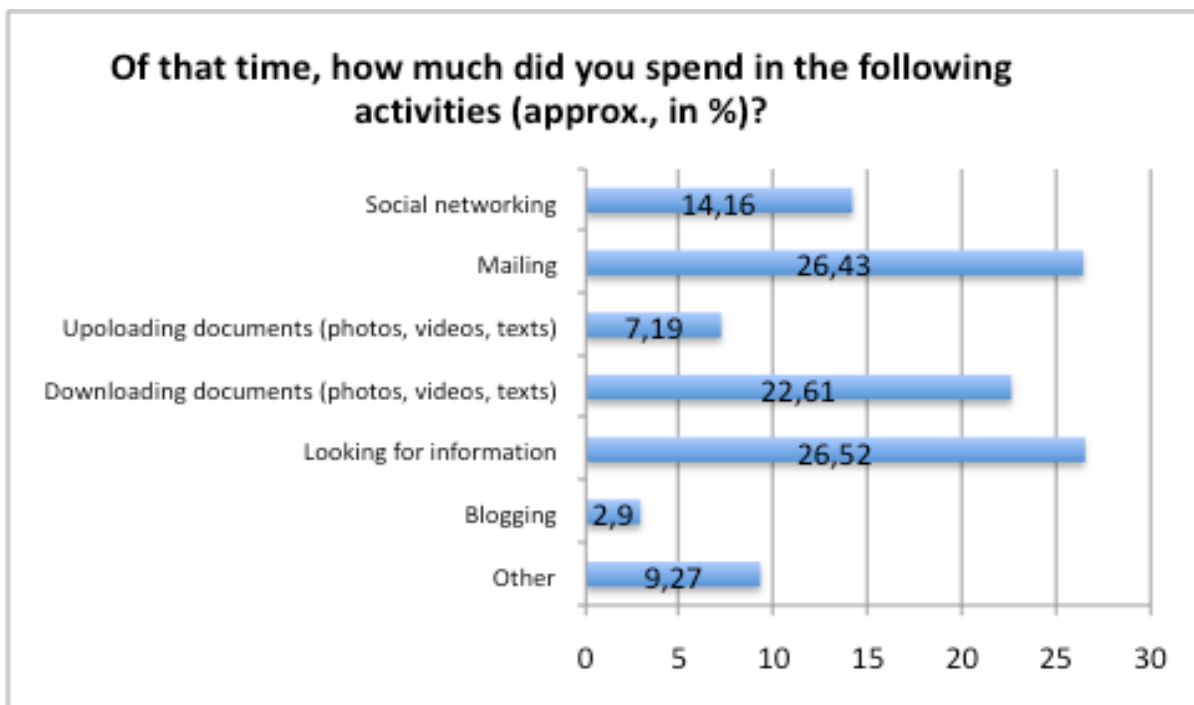


Chart 1. Activities performed on the web

3. List the 5 most used websites for your personal needs

As it is evident from the chart below (*Chart 2*), when asked to name and rank five most used sites for personal needs, the most used website is by no doubt Google, and gmail ranks second in the list of the first preferred sites. This result is consistent with the one

above mentioned (question 2), that indicates mailing and looking for information as the most common activity performed in the web during the week before the session.

Besides gmail there are other sites that are probably used for mailing (such as yahoo and hotmail), so mailing sites seem to be very popular.

There is also a moderate use of news sites: newspaper sites, like “le Monde” and “la Repubblica”, but also sport newspaper sites. Putting together Wikipedia, Youtube, Facebook, Last fm and similar, it seems that social media are popular, though less then expected.

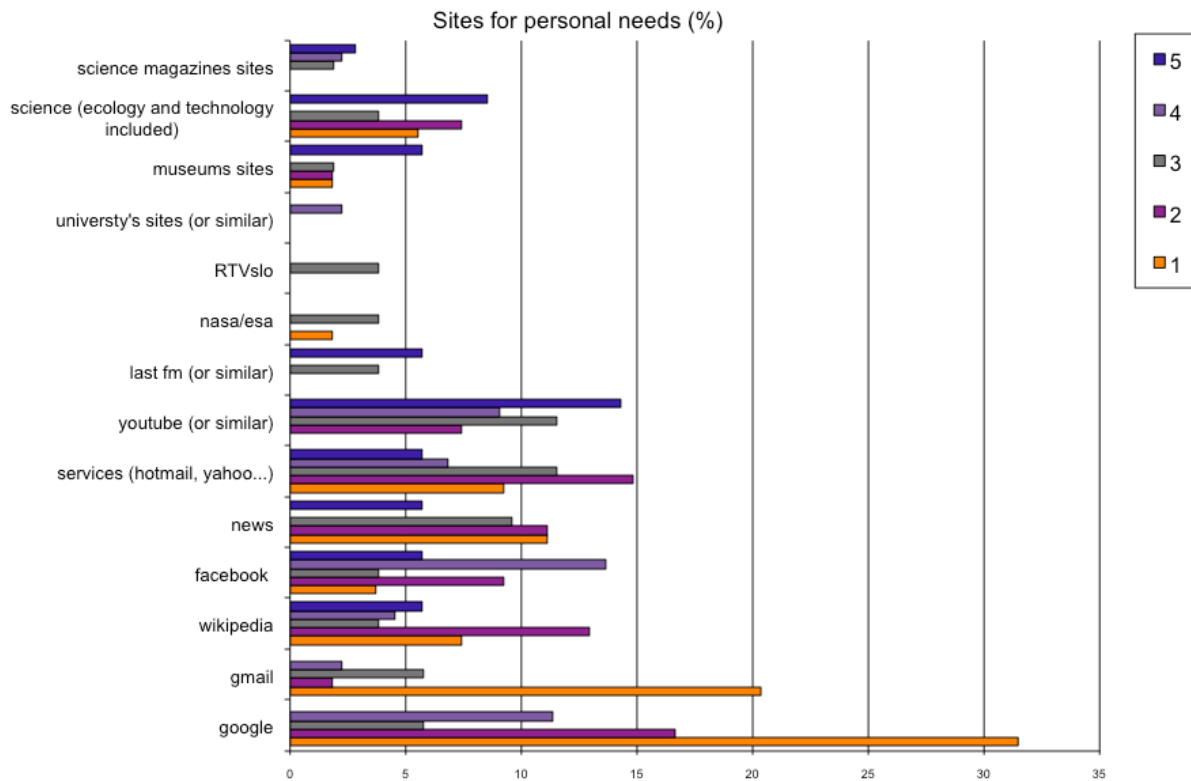


Chart 2. Most used websites for personal reasons. The names on the left are the names of the site. Chart bars indicate the percentage of preferences (referring to the number of total answers for each ranking position - first, second, etc.) given to a particular site. Colors, with reference to the legend on the right, indicate the ranking position of the website (as given by the participants).

4. List the 5 most used websites for your professional needs

As for the most used websites for professional needs, Google performs in a very similar way that in the previous question, but gmail lowers its popularity. Also Wikipedia gains popularity and scores and become the second most used site for professional need. If we

read these results to the light of the declared most commune actions, it seems clear that explainers for professional needs first of all look for information, using the most famous web encyclopaedia.

All together university and museum sites, generic science sites, and science magazine websites own a large amount of the preferences for professional needs. Facebook, youtube and other social activity's popularity instead collapses (see *Chart 3*).

In *Table 2* the preferences related to museums sites are listed. It would have been interesting to ask to each participant their place of work, in order to understand if they indicated their museum homepage.

In *Table 3* the science sites quoted as useful are listed.

In general there are many websites in English, but the majority seems to use websites in its mother-languages. Famous website for science information, normally used around the world by science communicators, museums operators and curious (as New Scientist, 0 users), are missing or not very commune (Exploratorium: 4 users on 54 answers).

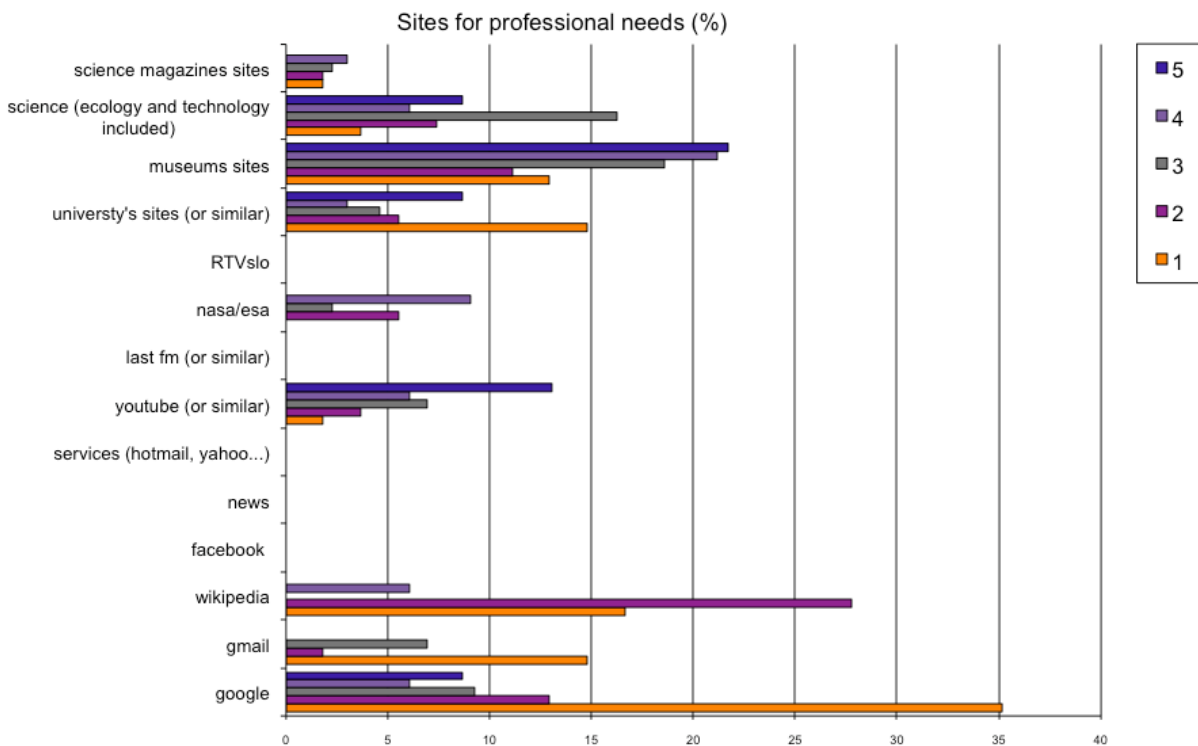


Chart 3. Most used websites for professional needs. The names on the left are the names of the site. Chart bars indicate the percentage of preferences (referring to the number of total answers for each ranking position - first, second, etc.) given to a particular site. Colors, with reference to the legend on the right, indicate the ranking position of the website (as given by the participants).

Site	1	2	3	4	5 tot
Citè de sciences	1	1	2		1 5
Technopolis	1	1	1		3
Pavilhão do conhecimento	2	1	1		1 5
Ecsite	1			1	2
Exploratorium		2	1	1	4
Leonardo da vinci Museum	2				2
Hisa eksperimentov			1	1	1 3
Icom Italia			1		1
Dana centre			1		1
Imtal Europe				1	1
Museo del Bali				1	1
Smithsonian					1 1
Science museums					1 1

Table 2: Museum sites quoted as useful for professional needs. The number above are the ranks in which the website is quoted.

1	2	3	4	5
Notre planete (ecology)	Futura services (ecology)	Ecology.gouv (ministry of ecology)	Gravitacija (science for kids)	Dico.cnrs (semantics)
Naturlink (ecology)	Biology	How stuff works (experiments, hands- on...)	Progetto est (educational project)	
	Vesolje (astronomy)	Steve Spranger experience (experiments, hands-on...)		
	Enchanted learning (science for kids)	Xplora (science for kids)		
		Mocho (science for kids)		

Table 3: Ranking (top row) and names of science sites for professional needs.

5. Name a website that you find particularly useful and well structured for your professional needs or interests.

When asked, individuals say that the most useful site for professional need is Wikipedia, while data show that the most used is by far Google (see *Chart 4*). This observation suggests that opinions and actual choices don't coincide. *Table 4* shows the list of the websites quoted as “particularly useful and well structured”. As for question 4, many famous science websites are missing.

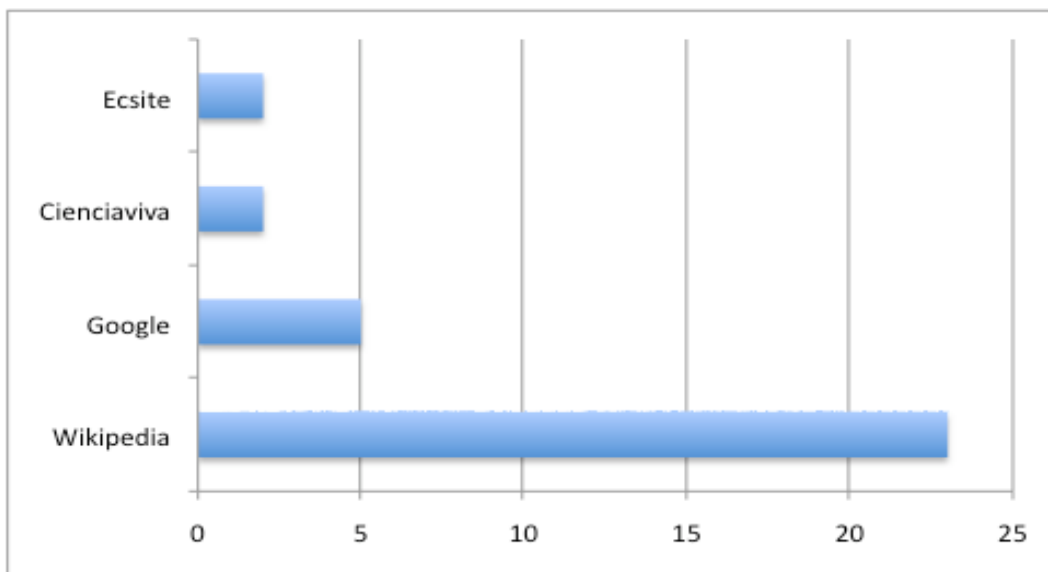


Chart 4: Most useful sites for professional needs

Website	preferences
Wikipedia	23
Google	5
Cienciaviva	2
Ecsite	2
snv.jussieu.fr	1
www.gravitacija.net	1
http://www.howstuffworks.com/	1
http://www.teachersource.com/	1
siencedirect	1
http://isl5.ntf.uni-lj.si/tikiwiki	1
www.fmf.uni-lj.si	1
http://www.serralves.pt/	1
http://www.bbc.co.uk/	1
ncbi	1
Evrokorpus	1
www.nxtasy.org	1
www.sciencemag.org	1
naturlink	1
apple	1
http://www.exhibitfiles.org/	1
http://www.imtal-europe.org/	1

Table 4: most useful sites for professional needs

6. Which of these services do you use?

Taking a closer look to explainers use of the web 2.0, which are the most social services used by the participants?

Youtube is definitely the winner: 91.7% of the sample report to use it. Facebook scores second, and nearly half of the sample signal it as useful. Other services to mention are Flickr and Hi5 (similar to Facebook).

It has to be noted that only 48 in 54 participants answered this question - this means that the 10% don't use those services or preferred not to say anything about them (see *Chart 5*).



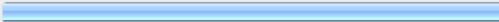
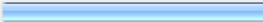
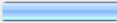

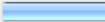

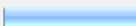
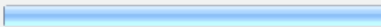
6. Which of these services do you use?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Linkedin 	6.3%	3
Flickr 	16.7%	8
Badoo	0.0%	0
YouTube 	91.7%	44
Facebook 	47.9%	23
Twitter	0.0%	0
MySpace 	20.8%	10
Windows Live Space 	8.3%	4
Netlog	0.0%	0
Friendster	0.0%	0
FriendFeed	0.0%	0
Bebo	0.0%	0
Hi5 	18.8%	9
Other (please specify) 	6.3%	3
	answered question	48
	skipped question	6

Chart 5: List of most used participative services.

7. Do you have online friends that you never meet in real life?

Most of the participants report that have not friends on the internet that they never meet in real life (see *Chart 6*). Nevertheless it is quite relevant that the 25% of people (one quarter of the sample) reports to actually have some “only virtual” friends.

7. Do you have online friends you NEVER met in real life?				
			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			25.9%	14
No			74.1%	40
			answered question	54
			skipped question	0

Chart

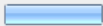
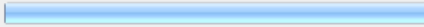
6: Percentage of people having or having not “virtual” friends.

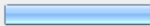
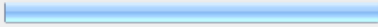
8. Do you use bookmarking sites? If yes, please mark which ones.

Bookmarking still seems to be a rather rare activity. Only four participants use bookmarking sites (such as Del.icio.us or Digg).

9 and 10: Do you use THE group website? Do you use the Ecsite website?

Only ten participants out of 54 use THE group website, and 15 use the Ecsite website (see *Chart 7* and 8).

9. Do you use THE group website?				
			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			18.5%	10
No			81.5%	44
			answered question	54
			skipped question	0

10. Do you use the Ecsite website?				
			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			27.8%	15
No			72.2%	39
			answered question	54
			skipped question	0

Charts 7 and 8: Are THE group and ECSITE site used?

3 Discussion

Most people involved in the study used the Internet for at least three hours during the week precedent to the answering session. It is not a large number, but considered their profession (which demands interfacing with a public and not to spend a lot of time in front of a computer screen) it not so little too.

The most significant part of the time spent browsing is dedicated to gathering information, mostly using the Google search engine. Downloading is also a very popular activity. Maybe gathering information and downloading are related actions: first you find the thing that interests you and then you download some multimedia file related to it.

Of course (our everyday experience is an evidence) the study participants had spent a lot of time reading, writing and sending emails.

Looking at the website quoted as useful, it seem that explainers don't frequent very much specialized websites, as the ones usually preferred by science communicators (for example: New Scientist) or dedicated to professional needs of museums staff, such as the websites of the Exploratorium, the CILS – Centre for informal learning, the ASTC – Association for science and technology centres, etc. They mostly rely on Wikipedia and Google, possibly also because they are not aware of the existence of specific sites where to find useful information about science, but also their job and activities related to it.

There is a lack of tutoring from their institution? There are also language barriers (because most of these sites are in English)? Or they are only looking for quick bits of science knowledge, as definitions and names? In any case PILOTS website should not only offer useful information for explainers, but also give hints on where to find professional materials and information.

There is a significant use of participative services, confirmed by answers to questions 3, 4 and also 5 (Wikipedia in fact is a social network, even though it depends on how it is used).

Among social sites (question 6) the winner is Youtube, thus showing a big interest in videos.

Facebook scores well, too.

This should be taken in account while designing the PILOTS website: the recommendation is to make it participative and visual, allowing visitors not only to give feedback to the editors of the site, but also to interact in an horizontal manner among themselves. Another suggestion is to let people upload not only texts, but also multimedia

files, such as photos (maybe using Flickr), videos (maybe embedded from Youtube), audios etc.

Media experts today stress the need for sociality of web users, and how it happens that spontaneously “tribes” (groups of people with common interests) are formed around social sites. In our case there is already a community (the explainers) that may be interested to interact at various levels, sharing materials, opinions, experiences... Giving them the right platform to do it maybe useful for the PILOTS mission.

This may also be the reason why THE group and Ecsite websites seem not to be very popular. Ecsite website for the moment is very top-down, that don't give a lot of tool to people in order to talk to one another. It has a lot of information, constantly updated, but it's not very flexible from the users point of view. THE group website could be used as a social website, because it has some participative tools (forums, comments, etc.) but it is too complicated to use, and web-navigators are now used to more friendly environments.