

Monitoring and Evaluation NEWS

A news service focusing on developments in monitoring and evaluation methods relevant to development programmes with social development objectives. Managed by Rick Davies, since 1997

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Overview: An open source document clustering and search tool

Posted on 23 January, 2015 - 7:04 PM

Overview is an open-source tool originally designed to help journalists find stories in large numbers of documents, by automatically sorting them according to topic and providing a fast visualization and reading interface. It's also used for qualitative research, social media conversation analysis, legal document review, digital humanities, and more. Overview does at least three things really well.

- Find what you don't even know to look for.
- See broad trends or patterns across many documents.
- Make exhaustive manual reading faster, when all else fails.

Search is a wonderful tool when you know what you're trying to find — and Overview includes advanced search features. It's less useful when you start with a hunch or an anonymous tip. Or there might be many different ways to phrase what you're looking for, or you could be struggling with poor quality material and OCR error. By automatically sorting documents by topic, Overview gives you a fast way to see what you have.

In other cases you're interested in broad patterns. Overview's topic tree shows the structure of your document set at a glance, and you can tag entire folders at once to label documents according to your own category names. Then you can export those tags to create visualizations.

Rick Davies Comment: This service could be quite useful in various ways, including clustering sets of Most Significant Change (MSC) stories, or micro-narratives from SenseMaker type exercises, or collections of Twitter tweets found via a key word search. For those interested in the details, and preferring transparency to apparent magic, Overview uses the k-means clustering algorithm, which is explained broadly here. One caveat, the processing of documents can take some time, so you may want to pop out for a cup of coffee while waiting. For those into algorithms, here is a healthy critique of careless use of k-means clustering i.e. not paying attention to when its assumptions about the structure of the underlying data are inappropriate

It is the combination of searching using keywords, and the automatic clustering that seems to be the most useful, to me...so far. Another good feature is the ability to label clusters of interest with one or more tags

I have uploaded 69 blog postings from my Rick on the Road blog. If you want to see how Overview hierarchically clusters these documents let me know, I then will enter your email, which will then let Overview give you access. It seems, so far, that there is no simple way of sharing access (but I am inquiring).

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Research on the use and influence of evaluations: The beginnings of a list

Posted on 16 January, 2015 - 12:15 PM

This is intended to be the start of an accumulating list of references on the subject of evaluation use. Particularly papers that review specific sets or examples of evaluations, rather than talk about the issues in a less grounded way

2014

- Herbert, J.L., 2014. Researching Evaluation Influence A Review of the Literature. Eval Rev 38, 388-419. doi:10.1177/0193841X14547230. Reviewed 28 studies
- Raab, M., Stuppert, W., 2014. Review of evaluation approaches and methods for interventions related to violence against women and girls (VAWG). Reviewed 39 evaluations. A QCA analysis
- Assessing the uptake of strategic evaluations in EU development cooperation. April 2014 Jean Bossuyt, Louise Shaxson and Ajoy Datta. Reviews practice of 7 agencies and 25 evaluations, and more. See Annex for details of reviews of individual agencies and evaluations

2012

- Ledermann, S., 2012. Exploring the Necessary Conditions for Evaluation Use in Program Change. American Journal of Evaluation 33, 159-178. doi:10.1177/1098214011411573. Reviewed 11 evaluations. A QCA analysis

2009

- Johnson, K., Greenseid, L.O., Toal, S.A., King, J.A., Lawrenz, F., Volkov, B., 2009. Research on Evaluation Use A Review of the Empirical Literature From 1986 to 2005. American Journal of Evaluation 30, 377-410. doi:10.1177/1098214009341660 Reviewed 41 studies. PDF available
- Peck, L., Gorzalski, L., 2009. An Evaluation Use Framework and Empirical Assessment. Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation 6, 139-156. PDF available

1997

- Shulha, L.M., Cousins, J.B., 1997. Evaluation Use: Theory, Research, and Practice Since 1986. American Journal of Evaluation 18, 195-208. doi:10.1177/109821409701800302. Reviewed 41 studies. PDF available

1986

- Cousins, J.B., Leithwood, K.A., 1986. Current Empirical Research on Evaluation Utilization. REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH 56, 331-364. doi:10.3102/00346543056003331. Reviewed 65 studies.

Related docs

- Improving the use of monitoring & evaluation processes and findings. Conference Report, Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen, June 2014
 - "An existing framework of four areas of factors influencing use ...:
 - 1. Quality factors: relation to the quality of the evaluation. These factors include the

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- ◀ MAKING EVALUATION SENSITIVE TO GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS Different approaches
- ◀ Livelihoods Monitoring and Evaluation: A Rapid Desk Based Study
- ◀ Process evaluation of complex interventions. UK Medical Research Council (MRC) guidance

Post categories

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