Enabling national collaboration in exhibiting cultural collections in web platform and improving approachability of cultural heritage materials

Strategic and operational learnings from Finna Services

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Five-year timeline

Our path for enabling curating material packages on national level

What we did and why

Three objectives of the presentation

How we have improved and are planning to improve approachability of cultural heritage materials

1. **How we have enabled on national level curation of cultural heritage material packages for educational purposes**
   - Reasoning why - snapshots to our user and customer research results
   - Learnings from doing this
2. What are our plans to broaden the possibilities to curate material packages
   - **Reasoning – snapshots to out customer research**

How did we get there? *(if we have time)*

3. How user centered-design activities have helped us step by step to take ideas forward
   - How we did manage to cross the no-mans land between organizations

Short introduction to Finna

As a context

- A common service funded by the **Ministry of Education and Culture** and maintained and developed by the **National Library**.
- Finna services include national search service finna.fi, national re-use services (e.g. APIs) and platform services for libraries, archives and museums
- The service was introduced in 2014 and it has become an essential part of the digital supply of Finland's cultural heritage organisations.

- Over 450 Finnish libraries, archives, museums and other actors are already importing their unique materials to Finna.

- Our objective is to provide single place for end users to find and use materials from all of those material providers

Finna tries to enable the easy re-use of CH materials
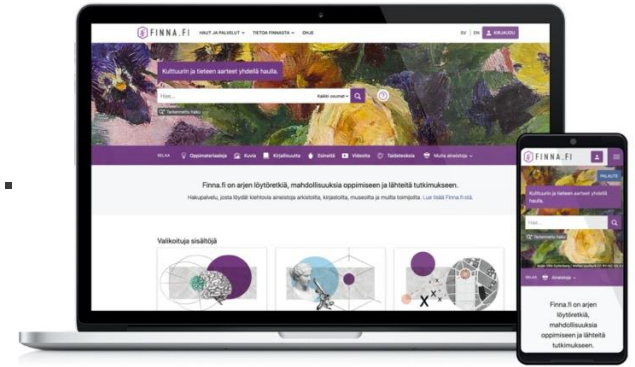
- Finna.fi is the one-stop-shop for looking digitized materials from Finnish organizations
- We require metadata to be CC0
- We advocate the usage of CC-licenses and Right Statements
- For usability
  - We advocate certain minimum number of descriptions for the materials
  - We advocate providing good quality digital objects without water marks or need or asking the higher resolution version separately

(On most cases we can only advocate, not demand)

Creation of the Finna Classroom

(2018-2019)

What triggered the work?

Teachers have always been one of the core target groups of Finna.fi

Our marketing has tried to raise the awareness of teachers about Finna.fi since the beginning

Around 2018 we started to get more and more signals that, awareness is pretty good already, it just doesn't lead to usage of Finna.fi and cultural heritage materials

=> Either cultural heritage materials are not as useful to teachers than we assume, or we have an issue with site

- **Research question 1:** Do teachers get inspired about cultural heritage materials, if they are raised over the first difficulty to start to use finna.fi
  - 2 teachers (Finnish language & history) participated longer experiment:
    - They received basic introduction what is finna.fi and how to use it and they agreed to use it in someway materials from finna.fi in their lectures (no restrictions how)
    - They kept small diary about it and afterwards we interviewed them
  - We interviewed 1 art teacher, that had used finna.fi extensively in past
- **Research question 2**: What seems to prevent teachers from starting to use Finna.fi
  - Three group interviews, with teachers that had not used finna.fi previously
    - Primary school teachers, Finnish teachers, history teachers

Teachers loved Finna.fi and CH materials

Once the teachers got over the first difficulty to start to use finna.fi, they loved it

- They considered it being much more suitable for education purposes than Google
- They felt comfortable to bring students to use Finna.fi

The problem

- The sheer number of materials is two-edged sword
  - Most likely there is something useful for everyone
  - But the amount is overwhelming and for new user it I hard to understand what there is just for them
- The everyday reality of a teachers at school is harsh
  - They have too much work in too little time
  - Usually, the preparations of lectures and school assignments have don't typically have the luxury of proper time
- They hear about Finna.fi, they get a glimpse of it and realize they don't have time just then and decide they come back later **=> but they seldom take that time and actually come back**

What teachers wished for

Ready-made (easy to take in use) material packages related to curriculum topics

Curriculum topics = Implies clear connection to their own subject and age group of their student

- **The wishes of the teachers clearly pointed towards the topic of curating material packages... To the no-mans land**

  - The National Library of Finland develops the platform.. easy to think shouldn't this we be handled on the side of the collection systems…
  - The material provider CHI feel that this requires tools… easy to think shouldn't the initiative to be on the platform developer side…

**=> Basically, both sides are needed for this**
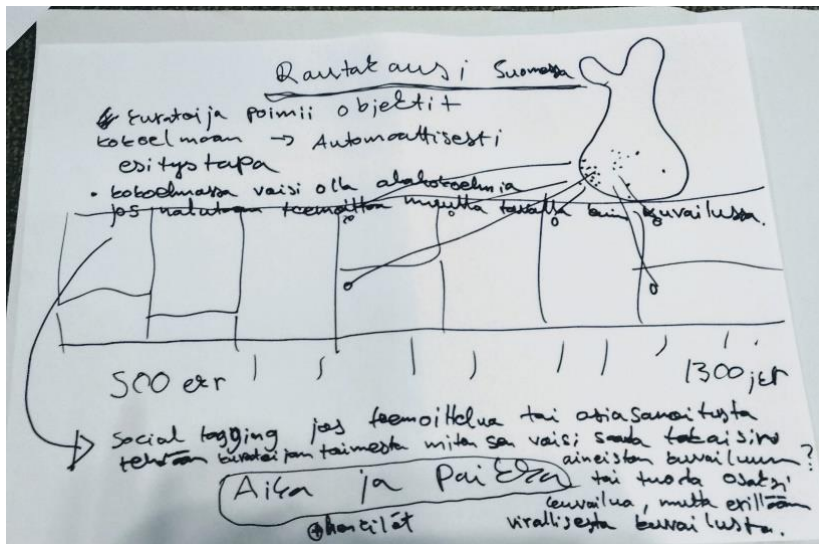
- We sent out for open call for our libraries, archives and museums to a co-creation workshop
- We presented the results of the user research for them, and
- We ideated together ways to respond to the results
  - Topics that could interest schools
  - Ways to form packets
    - Automation based e.g. could certain topic words used to gather interesting lists etc.
    - Manual curation
  - What a material package should look like and what elements it should contain?

- They workshop came up with ideas, that strongly pointed towards manual curation of packages and was basically the early rough concept of Finna Classroom
  - Even though organizations would have liked to produce automated ways to create packages they didn't believe that it would be realistic
- The first sketches of how material package should look like
- The workshop send **strong signal to NLF that if there would be tools and place for material packages the Finna member organizations would be willing to do the curation work**

Internal ideation of minimum viable product
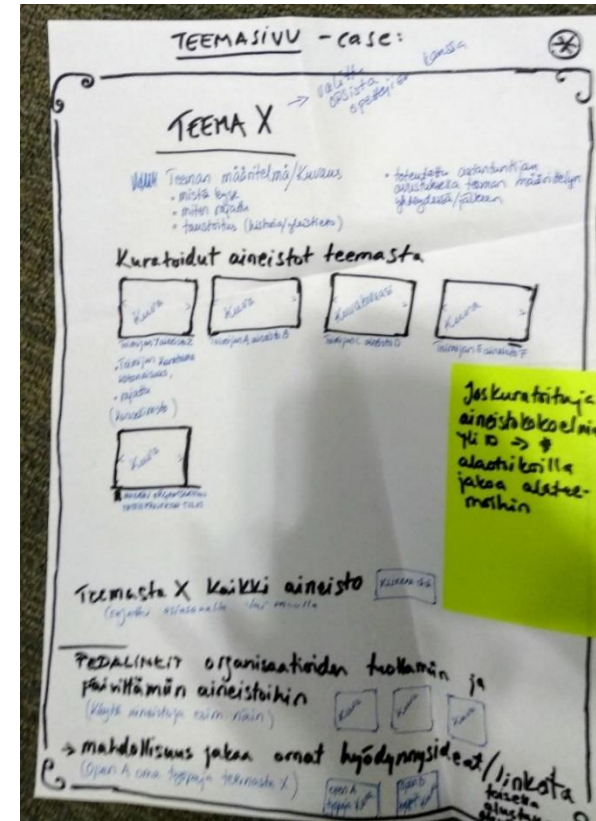
- The results of the workshop pointed the direction
- The clear actionable concept required brainstorming and concepting from Finna team
  - What the current tools at that point would allow to us to do
  - Could it possible to create MVP solution without extensive tool development

=> We managed to figure out how to create an MVP version of a material package with existing tools with just VuFind favorite-lists and content pages, only developing presentation styles

=> From the user research, we had a good reasoning, that already a minimum solution with just few material packages per school subject could help us to provide that one first easy to use packet for teachers to stay for the first time and perhaps use the materials to enrich their lectures and assignments

=> We got permission to pilot it

The pilot

- 7 very different organizations curated1-3 material packages per organization and created additional content to go with them (their focus on history related packages)
- We cannot demand any certain content creation ways e.g. usage of user centric methods from the organizations, but we can encourage them*
  - For duration of the pilot, we hired a history teacher to the be available for contacting
  - We arranged a separate kick of meeting with each of the organizations with the teacher, these affectively became user interviews situations, organizations interviewing the teacher what would interest them
  - Teacher reviewed their packages and gave them feedback and helped them to create educational utilization ideas if needed
- Design and the development of the presentation format by Finna team
  - The layout for packages
  - Layout for the content page
- Guidelines and instructions for organizations to create material packages

=> End of 2019 we published the first version of the Finna Classroom

*Peltonen, R., & Nieminen, M. (2023, November). Creating Digital LAM Content for Schools: Modelling User Involvement in Multi-organisational Context. In International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries (pp. 46-61). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Confirming further needs of the content providing LAM organizations and broadening the concept of Finna.fi

2020

What triggered the work

- Lot of organizations that created educational material packages hinted strongly that they would wish to be able to do material packages or online exhibitions for other target groups *(especially for more free-time usage or entertainment purposes)*
- We were anyway updating the concept of finna.fi
  - It was clear, that Finna member organizations were expecting us to take a stance on supporting the curation work in the future

We used customer research to gather hard data

- We did comprehensive questionnaire related to Finna.fi topics with the Finna member organizations
  - One section focusing on wishes and expectations related to enabling curation work
- Two co-creation workshops with the organizations to deepen the understanding what organizations really would like to be able to do
  - Little bit user research as a feed for thoughts to one of the workshop

Bigger interest to curate for various target groups than we expected

- Close to half of the organization representatives answering the questionnaire listed their organization as interested in, to curate learning related materials
  - As we assumed lot of museums and archives , but also libraries and publication repositories
- For those who answered yes, the top four target groups were (groups getting > 50% answers)
  - Primary and secondary school -> as expected based on The Finna Classroom work
  - Hobbyist and self-learners -> this we new to expect
  - Higher education -> *didn't expect this one*
  - Research -> *didn't expect this one*
- Also in open ended answers roughly 40 % of the representatives wished for lighter less regulated possibility to create online exhibitions or something for more like entertainment purposes.

=> Now we had hard data that yes it really is justified to study this deeper and really consider this as part of Finna.fi's conceptual update

Two co-creation workshops for further dialog with customer organization and gathering in-depth knowledge

- What organizations mean when they want to curating for higher education and research
  - Interest to create similar material packages than for secondary education for higher education courses as well -> Finna Classroom will serve them
  - Promote little researched materials and angles to research them for students searching for master thesis topics and for researchers looking for their next research topic -> this will need very different approach for material packages than Finna Classroom
- What organizations means when they say they want to curate for hobbyist and self-learners
  - They mean mostly hobbyist
  - The range is huge in what type of groups could be considered hobbyist
    - People just want light and easy to digest entertainment equivalent of tweets or blogs
    - People with hobby e.g. restoration or folk music/dance or crafts etc. that require reference materials or freely usable materials for delimited purposes
    - People enthusiastic about some era because of their hobby e.g. role-players or historical film fans that are interested in all kinds of materials related to that era as inspiration materials
    - People doing research as hobby e.g. local history groups
    - People with very deep and professional information of very narrow field they are interested in
  - Organizations have also crowdsourcing interests with the groups that have in-depth information about the materials

Internal concepting work

- In 6 years of existence finna.fi had grown in size and it would make sense to start to produce targeted landing pages for most of the main target groups
- The target groups identifies through customer research matched well with existing target main groups of finna.fi: education, research, hobbyist
- Additionally, we recognized fourth landing page that would support balanced introduction to finna.fi and materials it offers: page promoting research publications

  => As a part of the updated outlines of Finna.fi concept we proposed these landing pages with the additional assumption that we could proceed enabling curation for these target groups

  => Concept got approved

Operational learnings from orchestrating Finna Classroom work

(2020-2022)

Running the Finna Classroom

- Using the existing tools was cumbersome the more the organizations wanted to create packages
- The organizations were interested in to create more packages, The Finna Classroom grew step by step
  - The requirements for Finna team to create content page for each material package manually was a bottleneck
  - We introduced periods to join Finna Classroom, so we got some predictability to the work and clear kick off meetings to the beginning of the period and peer review meetings at the of it => better quality packages
- We had a rule that material packages should be on both Finnish and Sweden if applicable from materials point of view, each language version was separate manually produced package
- But the more we had packages, the more it became clear that re-purposing the current tools were not enough, not professional enough
  - There were issues with accounts having the favorite-lists expiring accidentally
  - The bottle neck with requirement of work from Finna team became more unsustainable

Step-by-step committing to the new concept

2021-2024

We started with the low hanging fruit

- We needed to raise the profile of Finna.fi as place to find Finnish researched information

- This more required just promoting its existence and getting people to read their first article -> no extensive curation needed, just regular proposals for interesting individual publications to be promoted

- We create the minimum viable version for it and processes for the organizations to send their proposals during 2021

We committed for development of better tools

- The operational experience from running the Finna Classroom had showed that we were pretty much on our limits how much manual work related to publishing curated packages we can handle
- Through the workshops with the organizations, we had also recognized wishes for more professional content publishing and management features
  - Co-operation possibilities with curation, better language version handling, automated publishing features, no risks for unintended expiration of packages, better tools to update the packages, packages to be discoverable through material search as any other individual LAM materials etc.
- Our technical experts brainstormed with possible technical solutions and came up with proposal to create Drupal* based material packed tool => we didn't need to start completely from scratch even though it still needed considerable amount of work

=> So finally, we were able to commit a significant amount of development resources to start to develop a more professional tool for curation. We planned this work to start 2022, it continued through 2023 and we finally got the first version of the new tool published this spring

=> The renewed Finna Classroom was published also this spring

* Drupal = Open source based content management tool.

- For taking any further steps we have waited the new tool to be available => around the end of 2023 that started to be visible
- At the end of 2023 appeared a possibility to apply redirection of a certain short piece of funding originally granted for other purpose to a new purpose with the limitation that the new purpose should serve researchers and doing science.
- At this point there would have not been a time to do any new concepting work, but because of the earlier extensive work we had a rough concept available for this target group
  - And based on the earlier work with the Finna Classroom cration and now the creation of the new tools, we had good estimates how much work it is to broaden the tool for new purpose, create processes for organizations and create a new landing page
  - Because we had good research and solid concept to back the idea it was possible to create strong application as well

=> We applied the funding to be redirected and our application go accepted at end of March
=> We have started with the recruitment of pilot organizations this May and the work is starting

How user-centered design and co-creation methods have helped us to make this a success story

The biggest pitfalls we could have fallen

- The initial internal attitude at the NLF management side
  - This is larger issue at LAM sector and the initiative should be on content owner side i.e. it is not our business take the initiative
- Even though we are continuously funded service this is a larger issue we can not do anything without a separate funding
  - The initial creation of the Finna Classroom
  - The development of the material package tool would serve only small amount of our content providers, it would not be justified to commit that much development resources for it
- When there is a short window for applying funding we wouldn't have had time to create concrete enough concept to create a good application

So how did the UCD and co-creation helped us? 1/3

- **The initial user research**
  - it studied the problem that was clearly our business, no need for permission from very high levels of organization
  - it narrowed down the problem scope potentially being the larger issue to be solved in general in LAM sector to the problem with the site we manage i.e. something that is our business to react
  - With the narrower focus, also the MVP didn't need to be that demanding to develop i.e. easier to get permission
- **The initial co-creation with the organizations**
  - It gave is confirmation that the organizations would commit to contribute i we arrange the tools and the place to publish the material packages for schools
  - It borrowed their power for making the pilot proposal for our management

=> With data backing it up, for management it was much harder to ignore the problem and be convinced that it is not our business to react and think someone else in the ecosystem should take the initiative

=> We asked permission to much smaller initiative, that wouldn't commit that much resources up front and if it would fail it would be small decision to withdraw => We could do it without extra funding => Also no need to ask permissions from very high level

FINNA

- Developing the MVP just with few organizations
  - Hone the design and guidelines for the material package with real life examples
  - Situation to capture what benefits there would be from customer-centric content development => good reason to recommend it for organizations
- Having pilot version of the Finna Classroom
  - Gave us a concrete boundary item that made it clear for content provider organizations what it would mean to produce material package for education
    - Steady and growing interest to create packages
    - Helped those needing separate funding for the work to apply it => organizations started to include the intention to create a packet to Finna Classroom in their applications for digitization funding applications to the ministry
    - Provided us data for where the problem areas and limits are with the current tools
  - Data that the packages were used and that the teachers liked the concept
  - Gave us a concrete boundary item that helped organizations to imagine something similar for other target groups as well and start to voice their wishes for us in more concrete form

  => Data which became relevant for making the decision how to proceed further

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- The customer research with the LAM organizations
  - It gave hard data that it is not just small portion of our customer organizations that wish for these tools
  - It made the wishes to be solved concrete enough, narrow enough that it again the focus could be on finna.fi i.e. something that is our business to react
- Internal brainstorming and workshopping around finna.fi concept helped to refine the ideas into a balanced and coherent overall concept
  - But to do the ineternal work would have not been possible without the inputs from the organizations

=> Including it into updated finna.fi concept in practice was asking permission from higher level

=> finna.fi concept approval by the Finna consortium board made it much more justified in future to commit more of the development resources to it (from our continuous basic funding) without asking any separate permissions for it from higher level => it was internally possible to make decision to start develop a new tool

=> With approved solid log term concept and the new tool in development phase, it became possible to craft funding application quickly for next part when the opportunity rose

Thank you!

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