Is there a place for the app in strategic mobile library development? - a report from UCD Library, Ireland

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A Small Piece of Research

- In 2012 the small and newly established Outreach Unit at University College Dublin Library successfully submitted an application to receive the ANLTC/Swets Award, grant designed to facilitate some practitioner research in an Irish library into a hot topic.

- We wanted to clarify our understanding of the extent to which app development was being pursued in third level libraries, with some focus on the Irish context.

- Also aimed at developing a good non-technical overview and understanding of the options available to us for developing library apps.
By 2014, mobile internet should take over desktop internet usage

Global Mobile vs. Desktop Internet User Projection, 2007 - 2015E

Internet Users (MM)


400 800 1,200 1,600 2,000

Mobile Internet Users

Desktop Internet Users

Ellyska Kroski presentation on Slideshare Mobiles to Go
What We Did

- Desk research
- A survey of Irish libraries
- A student feedback exercise at our own institution
- Visits to libraries in the UK and Ireland to interview a range of staff for case studies
- Developed a couple of demonstrator apps to round of the project
What We Found Out: options for the mLibrary

Which way to go?

Mobile websites
Some or all of the desktop site - outdated

RWD
Desirable route we would like to follow

Native apps
Pros and Cons, users like them

Webapps
Come to the fore during research period
What We Found Out: Added Library issues

- App area for libraries there is added complication of catalogue vendors and 3\textsuperscript{rd} party library specialists offering fairly hard coded ready to go mobile websites and now apps, focus on catalogue search but can put in other info as well. Library Anywhere used a lot in Ireland, Boopsie widely used and SOLUS a new entry mostly public libraries presently.

- Key question to go it alone or try to get good level of content into university-level app.
Library vendor catalogue + app solutions: Prototype Innovate Interfaces library app, and Sirsi/Dynix catalogue app

Library Anywhere, Boopsie and Solus: third party solutions
What We Found Out: Library development of apps has been modest

- Are many examples

- Overall though in Ireland and elsewhere not been a Library priority compared to alacrity with which libraries took up internet and then web to deliver resources and services
  - Lack of staff with the technical ability and the time to develop high end apps
  - Lack of financial resources to buy in the technical expertise from outside
  - Lack of evidence of a return on investment
  - Lack of clarity on the best strategic mobile development route to take – and doubts about the app route
“Libraries seem to have engaged enthusiastically with the early web, with many of us having web pages by 1995...However, most of us seem only recently to have started to think about engaging with mobile phones or mobile computing..”

What We Found Out: How to Build It

Building an app...

Native app development kits SDK
High level languages

Webapp development
HTML5, CSS3 etc etc.

High level languages
For hybrid solutions

Zero-coding solutions
Third party products, hosting in the cloud
What We Found Out: Case Studies

• We interviewed Library staff at University of Maynooth who teamed up with their Computer Science staff to develop a specialised book location app, developed using DrupalGap, a Drupal mobile SDK plug-in, and PhoneGap, an open source framework that allows a developer to build cross-platform apps using HTML5, CSS and JavaScript.
What We Found Out: Case Studies

- In UCD Library technical and coding skills are to hand which have enabled the UCD Digital Library to be redeveloped with a responsive website built using Bootstrap, with no plans to follow the app approach, and having moved on from plans for a separate mobile website built using JQuery mobile.
What We Found Out: Case Studies

- We interviewed staff at St Angela’s College, a small institution with limited technical skills to hand, about how they have proceeding using ready to go app developments tools - dudamobile, Andromo and theappbuilder
What We Found Out: Case Studies

- Leeds Metropolitan (Beckett) Library were interviewed about their use of the SIRSI/Dynix native app for catalogue access and a mobile website approach.
What We Found Out: Case Studies

- The Institute of Technology Tallaght were using the Library Anywhere catalogue native app/mobile website, used by a number of Irish libraries, and were about to move to a responsive website as well
Final Demonstrators 1: Web app

- Computer Science graduates “Team Swift”
- Webapp
- General purpose, to replace our mobile website pages hypothetically and go into the University app as a library springboard page
- Did not go live with this one – too many implications for adjusting the whole of our mobile website to retain webapp navigational framework, not sure the approach was the best one, not got technical knowledge to say
Final Demonstrators 2: native app, zero-coding solution in the cloud, Appy Pie

- A niche app for our new students
- Used Appy Pie tool > Android and iOS apps
- Number of limitations e.g. widgets do not work to pull in content
- Monthly subscription (about €20)
- **Fell foul of Apple validation process, rejected twice over our new student competition = 4 week delay in the iOS version**
- Exciting to go live – usage however POOR, <100 downloads
Make an App, As Easy as Pie.

CREATE APP

UCD Library Welcome
By University College of Dublin
Open iTunes to buy and download apps.

Description
Welcome to UCD Library—an app to get new students to the key information about the Library service fast, plus instant actions to check classes, chat, book group study rooms.

UCD Library Welcome Support

Welcome New Students
UCD Library offers a range of events and assistance during Orientation Week. We help them get started on their studies:

Welcome to UCD Library!
Take a look at our Libraries
James Joyce Library Virtual Tour
Competition Time!
New Student Information Desk
Library Basics & Tour
How to Find What You Need
Our Study Spaces

Screenshots

UCD Library Welcome
Library LibGuides Home
Welcome to UCD Library!

UCD Library Online Guides and Tutorials
Choose from our wide selection of online guides and tutorials

Compatibility: Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. This app is optimized for iPhone 5.

Customer Ratings
We have not received enough ratings to display an average for the current version of this application.
We have developed a mobile app designed to assist new students in getting acquainted with the Library’s services and resources. The app is available for both iOS and Android devices and can be downloaded in iTunes and the Google Play Store. Click one of the icons below depending on your device:

![App Store](apple.png)

Access the following via the app:
- New Students Guide at your fingertips
- Welcome Video
Finally...

- Case is not made – we would prefer to be able to shift our website to be Responsive Design as the future priority for mobile users.

- Keeping the new student apps going to catch our January 2015 exchange student intake, see if gets used then.

- Not looking like this is a real priority area.

A CISCO survey from 2012 of Generation Y – 18-30 year olds

Can a Library app become a regularly used app?
So far for us the answer seems to be No!