

My portfolio can be found at: <https://aidancurley.github.io>

The homepage for this module can be found at:

<https://aidancurley.github.io/module%20pages/research-methods.html>

This reflection at: <https://aidancurley.github.io/reflections8.html>

Introduction

Before the module began, I felt like I had a good grasp of what it might contain as I previously completed an MA. I was looking forward to discovering the differences between a 'standard' research project and a project in the field of computer science. I was particularly interested in the insight that this module would provide on the format of my dissertation project. The module was split into four distinct parts (for me at least).

Part 1 - Ethics

The first focussed on ethics in research. There were some stimulating discussions in the forums about the case studies that we evaluated and summarised, and I felt positive about moving forwards into the module.

One major disappointment was that I learned the fortnightly seminars were to be held at 9am on Wednesdays. This made it impossible for me to attend due to work commitments, and effectively turned the module into a completely online experience. In previous modules, I have always been a regular attendee at seminars, only missing one seminar from the previous five modules combined. I always found them a great way to build relationships with the tutor and other

students on the course - online forum posts are no replacement for live synchronous chat.

When I first heard about the schedule, I felt quite annoyed to be honest. I soon realised that there are participants from all over the world, in various time zones, and in previous modules, when I considered the seminars to be at convenient times, there were always some who had unsuitable schedules. I felt a bit selfish that I had initially jumped to conclusions, and resolved to suck it up and watch the recordings ensuring I was not missing important content.

Part 2 - The Literature Review and Research Methods

I really enjoyed completing the literature review. I searched for and read almost 30 papers in the area of fake news detection on Twitter. Previously, I have found it difficult to summarise the reading I have done and to find a way of synthesising meaning from the literature as a whole. This time, I developed a system. I did some initial searches and noted the papers I found. Then I read the abstract and conclusion of each one, categorising them and noting any important points.

This is something I will definitely do as I move into my dissertation. In fact, I have already started reading around the topic of hygrometers and the IoT, populating my Zotero with useful papers, summarising them, and categorising them for future use.

A number of the units in this 'section' of the module were about focus groups, interviews, and questionnaire design. I realise the importance of these topics when conducting academic research, but I was not sure how this would actually tie in to the practical coding project we are to produce for our dissertation. Over the course of

this Masters, I have worked hard on developing the skill of knowing where to focus my efforts, building confidence in my ability to distil the materials presented to us and concentrate on the units that provide a direct benefit to my grade and my future dissertation. I found it difficult to give these units my full attention. If we were obliged to carry out some primary or even secondary academic research for my dissertation, like I did for my previous MA, then of course these units would be essential, but my dissertation project is a practical coding project. I will develop some software, or architecture pattern, or some other artefact, and then produce a rationale for its design. I will certainly need to produce a literature review and a research proposal, but there will be limited, or no, scope for the use of questionnaires, interviews or the like.

Part 3 - Statistics

The practical statistics exercises were challenging, but I enjoyed doing them. I like maths. Once again, however, I found it difficult to see how this would be relevant to my own dissertation.

I did the work that was required, but honestly felt like I was just ticking some boxes. The fact that I had not really communicated with anybody else on the module, was by now, also beginning to demotivate me. I procrastinated a lot - leaving some of the formative assignments till the end of the module.

This is not a good way to work. I will really need to be more dedicated in completing the tasks during my dissertation module. I will be working alone. Some of the work will be less interesting than other parts, and I will need to ensure I do not start procrastinating and neglecting or postponing tasks. I plan to do this by creating a timeline for the dissertation in JIRA. I will have work separated out over each of the

30 weeks of the project and a strict time limit for each section's completion. I use JIRA at work, and find it a great tool for dividing work into smaller pieces and tracking the progress on each of the tasks. The fact that I am familiar with the tool, and log in every day as part of my job should contribute to a successful project.

Part 4 - Research Proposal

The second assignment required us to produce a proposal for a research project. This is good practice for my upcoming dissertation. I did a fair amount of reading into how to write a research proposal, and decided to stick to the same area I had studied for the literature review.

The fact that the proposal was to be submitted as a recorded presentation meant that I was a little unsure of the formality required. Of course, a written research proposal should be written in formal academic English, but I believed that an oral presentation of the proposal surely should be less formal, and consist of more than just reading my proposal over a couple of slides. This was an error on my part. In future, when I am unsure about something or I think something is unclear, I need to be proactive in seeking clarification. It is my responsibility to ensure that I know what is expected, and this is definitely something I will bear in mind when writing my dissertation.

Conclusion

I learned some good practical skills in this module, particularly how to structure and write a literature review, how to formulate a research question, and how to present a research proposal.