Explorative interface for accessing a bio-bibliographical data set of GDR authors

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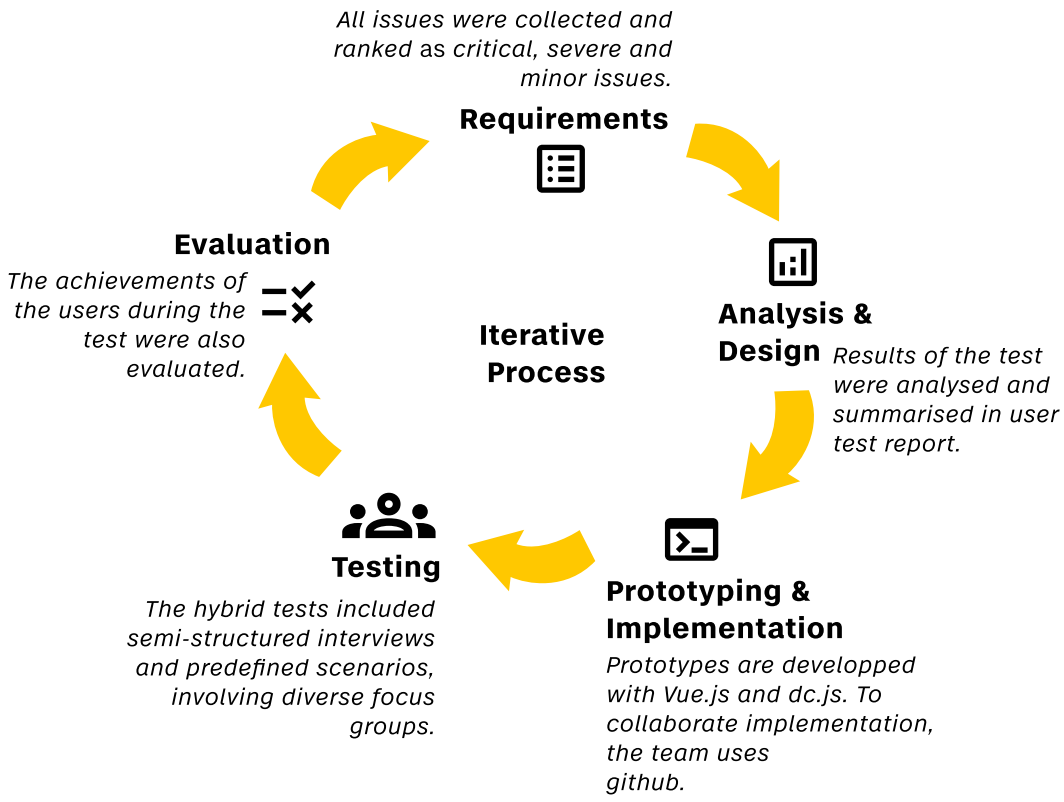
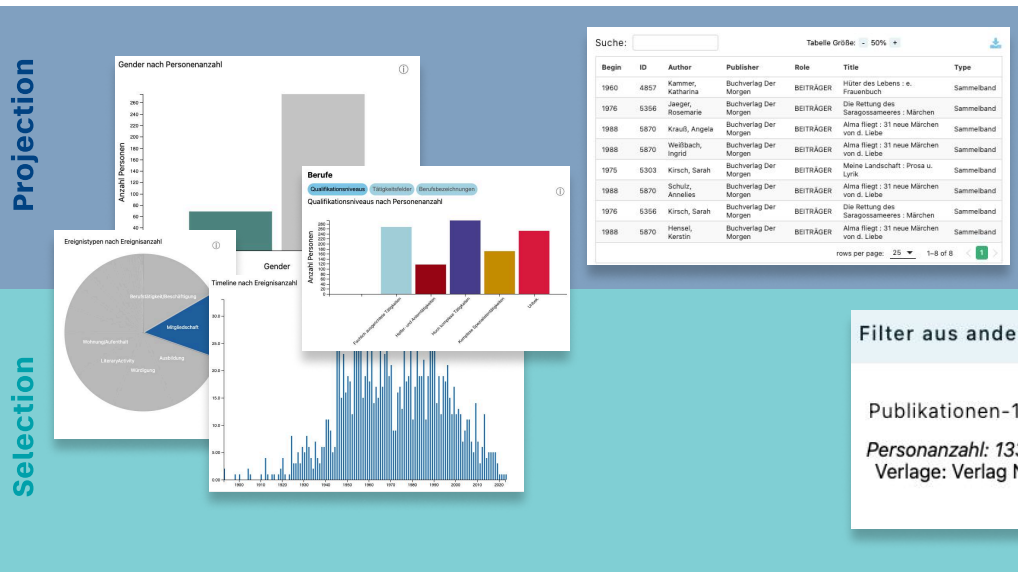
This application is part of the research project *Forschungsplattform Literarisches Feld DDR: Autor*innen, Werke, Netzwerke*, focusing on 344 persons who studied at the *Institut für Literatur Johannes R. Becher* in Leipzig. Our interface employs Shneiderman's Information Seeking Mantra and offers an interactive dashboard as an overview for data exploration. By using charts as filters and by combining various instances of the dashboard, complex selection constraints can be expressed. Users can drill down into specific data points, the detailed properties of which will be displayed in a table view.

According to Grandjean's (2022) typology of visualisations, the current solution provides a mere “interface” to the data. Ultimately, we target the “research” level of the typology by incorporating more complex statistical analyses. Results will be displayed in a comprehensive overview as an alternative to the dashboard as a collection of single, yet synchronised, charts.



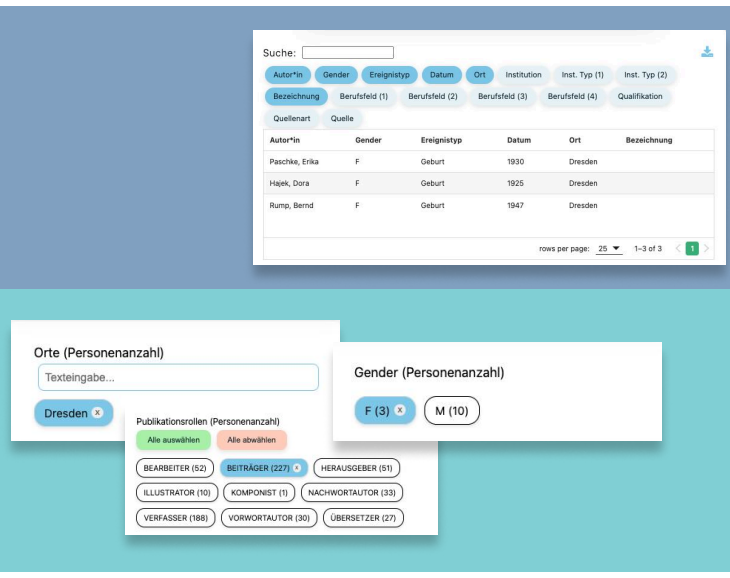
First Prototype



Key findings from the first test indicated that while the dashboard view was considered innovative, using charts for filtering data appeared not entirely intuitive to our primary user group — literature studies researchers. Users preferred more traditional input methods, such as drop-down lists or autocomplete text inputs. Users also exposed strong interest in interacting with the provided — textual — table view displaying the filtered data. These preferences align with their familiarity with Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) search interfaces and textual query formulation.

The initial prototype thus highlighted the need for an interface that would better meet users' preferences regarding the interface modality. To achieve this, we integrated textual input options. Moreover, we enhanced the table view of filtered data by allowing to individually select the properties for data projection. In order to obtain a clear statement on the desired interface modalities, all charts were removed from the tested prototype. The interface thus provides a strict separation between data selection and projection.

Second Prototype



Key findings from the second test were that the textual modality was appreciated, but users particularly missed the ability to immediately perceive data quantities and ratios. Users expressed a desire to individually choose between textual and visual selection and projection options. By combining these options in the future, we aim to create a flexible interface that can adapt to various user experiences and research needs.

Our observations underscore the challenges of interdisciplinary Digital Humanities projects and highlight the need for tools that adapt to users' varying levels of familiarity and to their preferences regarding interface modalities. We expect that further iterations of the employed user-driven design process will facilitate even more comprehensive and insightful research regarding crucial aspects of humanists’ usage of digital interfaces.

Shneiderman, B. (1996): The Eyes Have It: A Task by Data Type Taxonomy for Information Visualizations. In: *Proceedings of the IEEE Symposium on Visual Languages*: 336-343, Washington. IEEE Computer Society Press.

Grandjean, M. (2022): La visualisation de données, entre usages démonstratifs et heuristiques. In: B. Bohet & V. Pringuet (Eds.), *Les devenirs numériques des patrimoines*, Edition de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, pp. 199–217.

MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT:
https://ddr-literatur.de/

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