Scoping Exercise

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1 Bounds of Project

I am currently undertaking my research degree in the field of philosophy. Throughout my studies of philosophy the main source of information I have collected has been textual data such as books or journal articles. While it is correct that philosophers may use other sources of information, at this stage it seems most likely that the data for my thesis will be predominantly textually based. Therefore, I will keep this in consideration when I am analysing my pains that could be relieved by technology and the gains that I could receive from technology. How technology could be used to assist in the gathering of primary sources of information will be outside of the bounds of this scoping exercise.

2 A Day in the Life

I will usually begin the essay writing process with a review of the literature in the topic I am interested in. This will involve jobs such as:

- Searching through databases for readings on the topic

- Compiling a list of the readings I look at for the bibliography

- Actually reading through the readings

- Taking notes on interesting sections and quotes within the readings

- Taking notes on my thoughts on what is being argued within the readings

Once I have a solid understanding of the topic and the literature surrounding the topic I will move on to forming the outline and drafts of my work. This usually involves:

- Writing an outline of my idea so that it is clear to me

- Writing draft structures of the essay so that I understand how ideas are connected

- Beginning to write the essay

During the essay writing process there are also tasks such as:

- Reengaging with literature to refresh my ideas

- Inserting citation information

- Writing multiple drafts

- Keeping track of changes in the work

- Editing the final document

Once the essay writing process is complete I move on to the formatting stage. Tasks in this stage involve:

- Taking my list of readings and putting them into the correct bibliography format

- Reformatting the bulk text into the required font, spacing and size

3 Pains

3.1 Pains I Encounter

1. The biggest pain I encounter in the essay writing process revolves around the citations. I often write "(NEEDS REFERENCE)" in my work because I find that stopping, finding the citation information and inserting it into the essay interferes with my flow of writing. However, this is a habit that I foresee will become an issue when I am producing work that is over 5000 words long.

2. Another pain I encounter is having trouble keeping track of all the documents that I need for the essay writing process. The amount of external sources of information I use can grow quite large, and my personal documentation (such as the notes, scaffolding and drafts) can be scattered across various areas and formats.

3. An additional pain is the difficulty of searching through my hand written notes.

4. In the past I have encountered the issue of deleting parts of my writing and then regretting that decision later.

5. At the moment I usually am referencing books or articles. As a result, these are the references I find the easiest to do. Occasionally I have to reference something different, like a tweet or a video, and it always takes me a long time to figure out how to reference it.

3.2   Pain Relievers

1. To relieve this first pain I need a tool that allows me to insert citations more quickly into the document.

2. Part of relieving this second pain is probably just that I need to organise my information better. I would require a tool that allows for quick access to information, such as through command line navigation. I would also need a tool that can store various file types, such as JPEG, as a lot of my notes are hand written. It would be useful to also be able to write a description of each file for ease of search later.

3. A tool that allows me to digitise my hand written notes would be useful for this.

4. Better version control would solve this third pain. I have since started using Google Docs which has been working fairly well. However, sometimes it can be unclear exactly what I have changed and why. I would like a version control that tracks the reasons for changes better.

5. To relieve this pain I would need a tool that I can input the type of reference needed and the information and then it outputs the reference format.

4   Gains

4.1   Gains I would Like

1. To be able to see who has referenced the work I am currently reading in their own work.

2. To be able to change the formatting of a bibliography to whatever system is required

3. To be able to understand philosophical work written in different languages. This would increase communication between researchers in different countries.

4.2   Gain Creators

1. Currently I can do this a bit through the use of google scholar, but it would be useful if I had a tool that could search for references of the work I am reading without having to search for that work within google scholar.

2. For this gain I would need a tool that is able to automatically change formatting of the bibliography

3. A tool that translates publications in other languages would be useful for achieving this gain.