Understanding online audiences

- a practical guide

Visitor Studies conference, 5 March 2015

Martin Bazley

Digital Heritage Consultant

Martin **Bazley** & associates

Previously:

- Teaching (7 yrs)
- Science Museum, London, Internet Projects (7yrs)
- E-Learning Officer, Museums,Libraries and Archives (MLA) South East (3yrs)
- Founder: Digital Learning Network DLNET

Martin **Bazley** & associates

Now:

Developing online resources, websites, user testing, evaluation, training, consultancy…

HLF digital projects Mentor and Monitor

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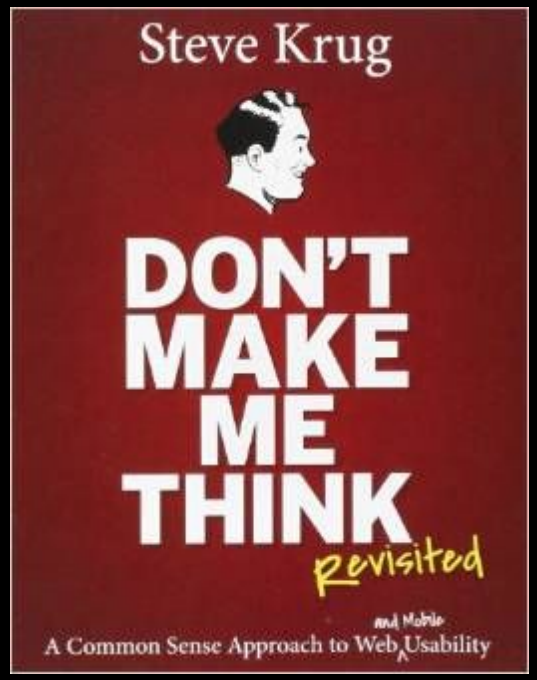


Don't Make Me Think by Steve Krug

Classic, entertaining introduction to improving website usability

Different users, different needs…
How do you get it right for everyone?

You can't get it right for everyone.

You need to make clear decisions such as…

- **Who is it for?**
- **What does it offer them?**
- **How will they use it?**

To do that, you need to find out about your users

GOV.UK

Search the service manual

Government Service Design Manual

Digital by Default Service Standard | Start using the manual | Feedback

Tell us what you think (opens a 3 minute survey on another website)

https://www.gov.uk/service-manua

From April 2014, digital services from the government must meet the new Digital by Default Service Standard.
Read the standard »

Digital by Default Service Standard

Government Service Design Manual

Build services so good that people prefer to use them

Think differently about digital delivery

Discover what it means to be part of an agile, user-focused and multidisciplinary team, delivering digital services in government.

Start building digital by default services

Guides and resources for...

Service managers

Content designers

Designers

Making a service

Learn about the different phases of service design and get guidance for the phase you're in now.

Discovery

A short phase, in which you start researching the needs of your service's users, find out what you should be measuring, and explore technological or policy-related constraints.

Learn about the discovery phase

Alpha

A short phase in which you prototype solutions for

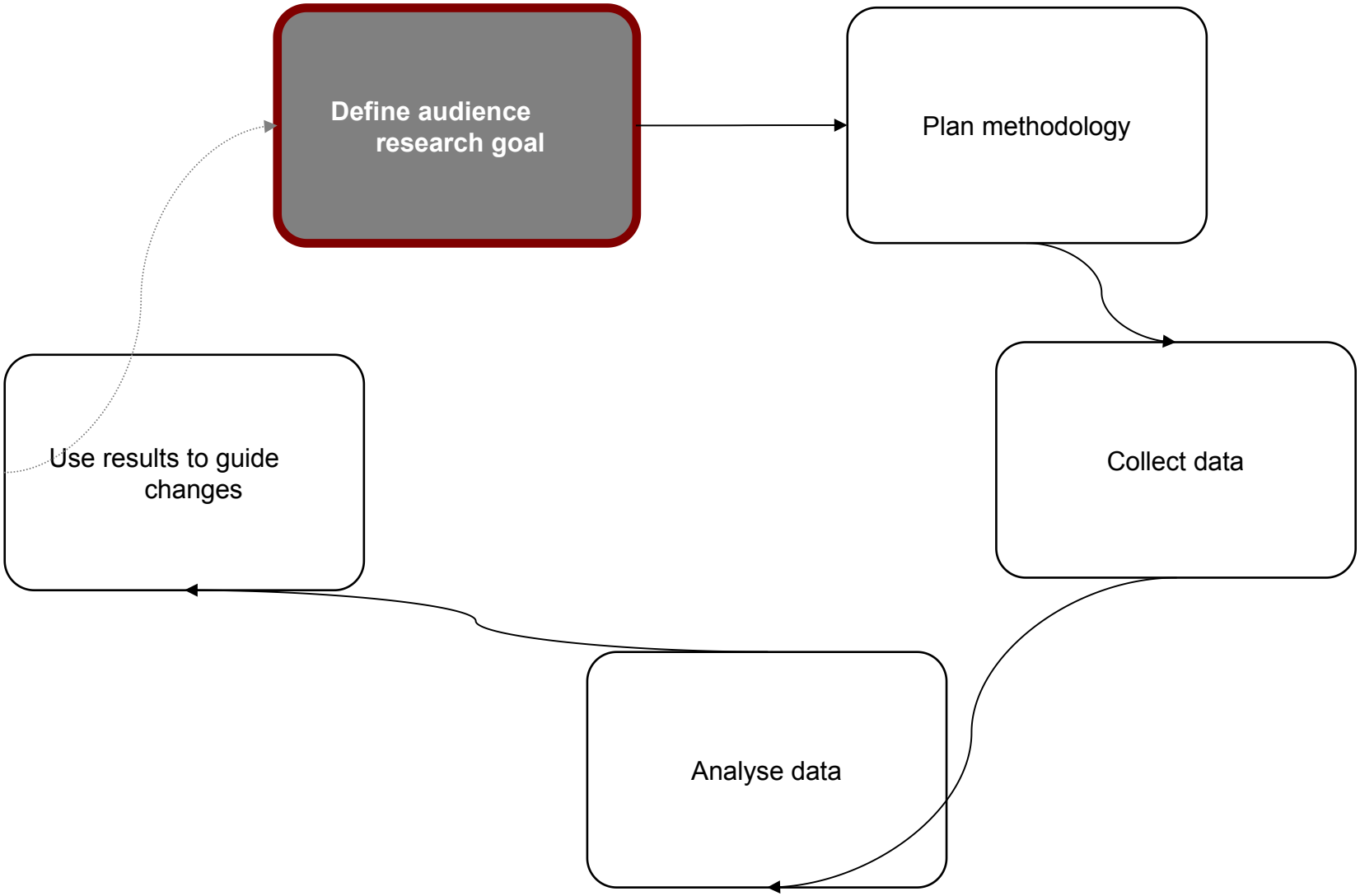
How could you find out the answers to these questions?

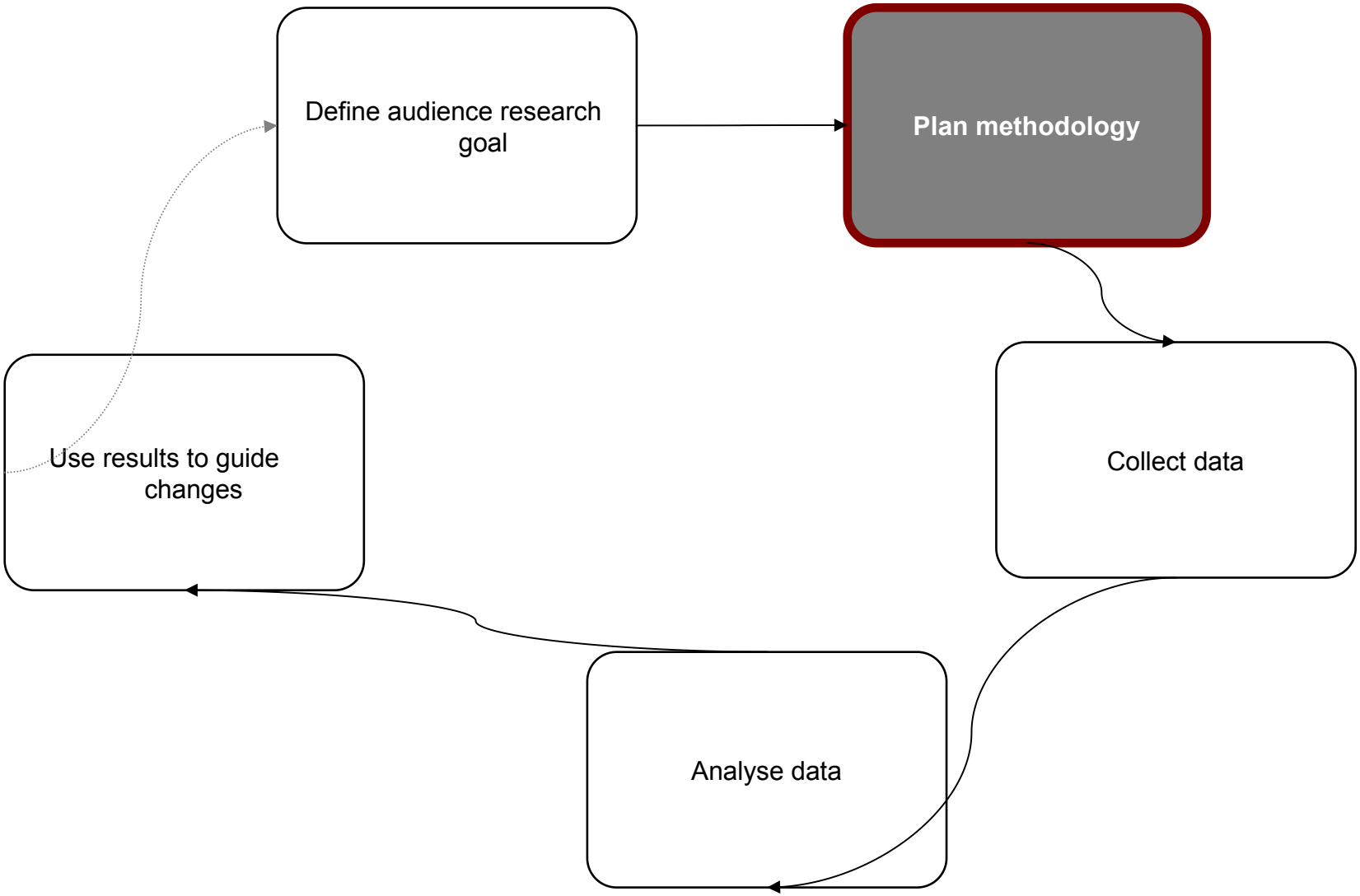
Why would you want to know the answers?

What would you do with that information?

So what audience research should you actually do?

Planning audience research


Define audience research goal
Plan methodology
Collect data
Analyse data
Use results to guide changes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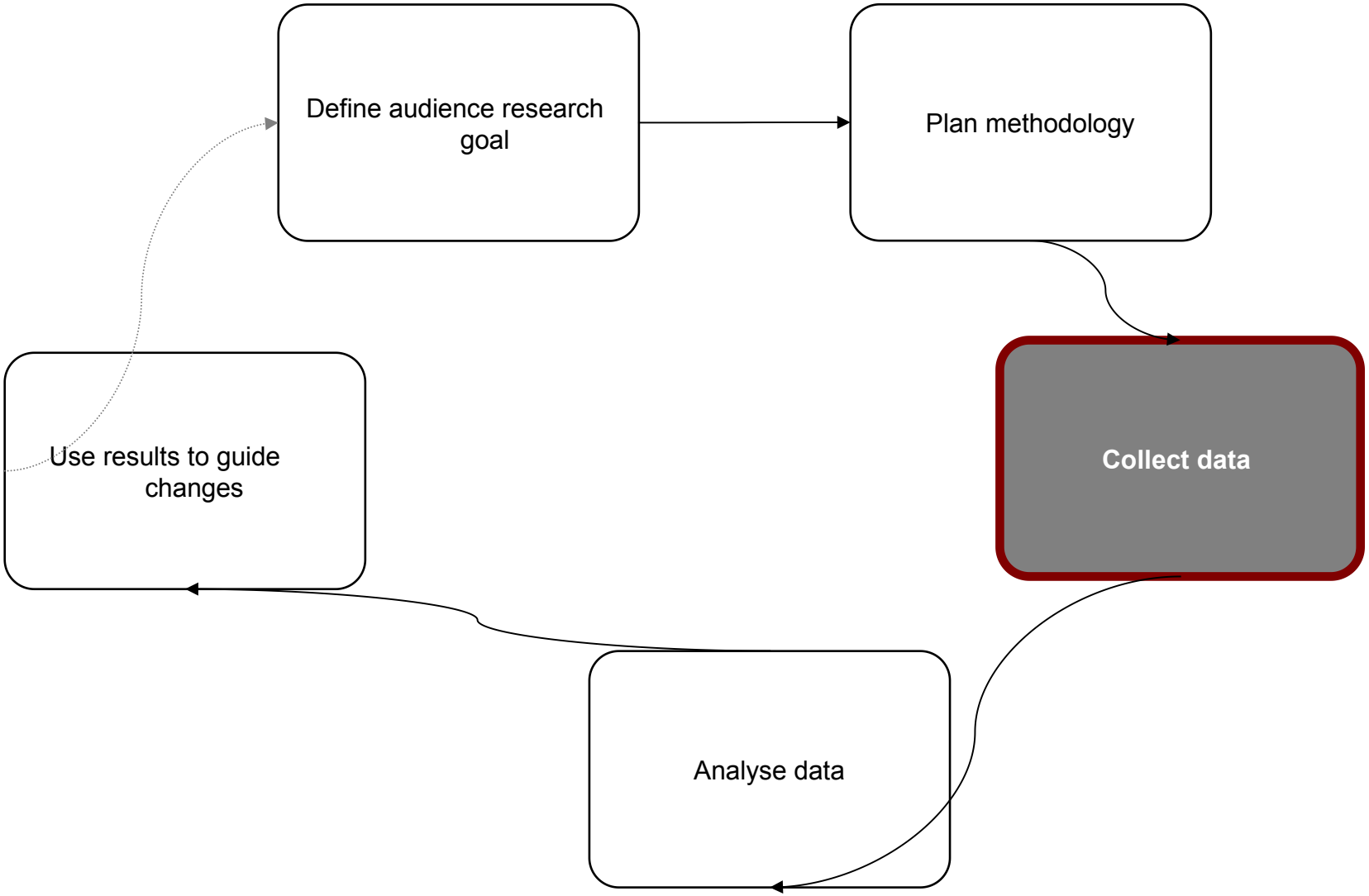
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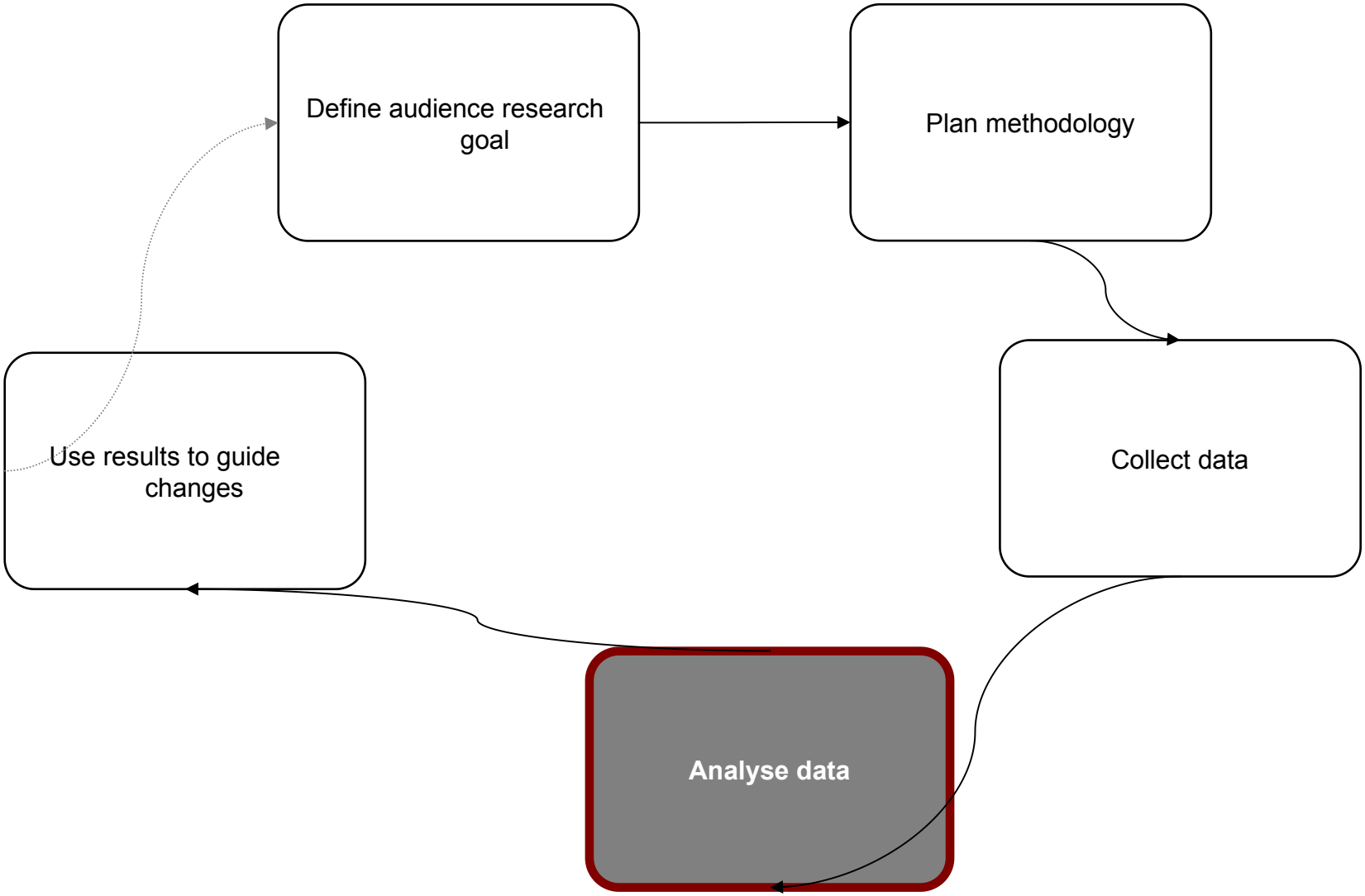
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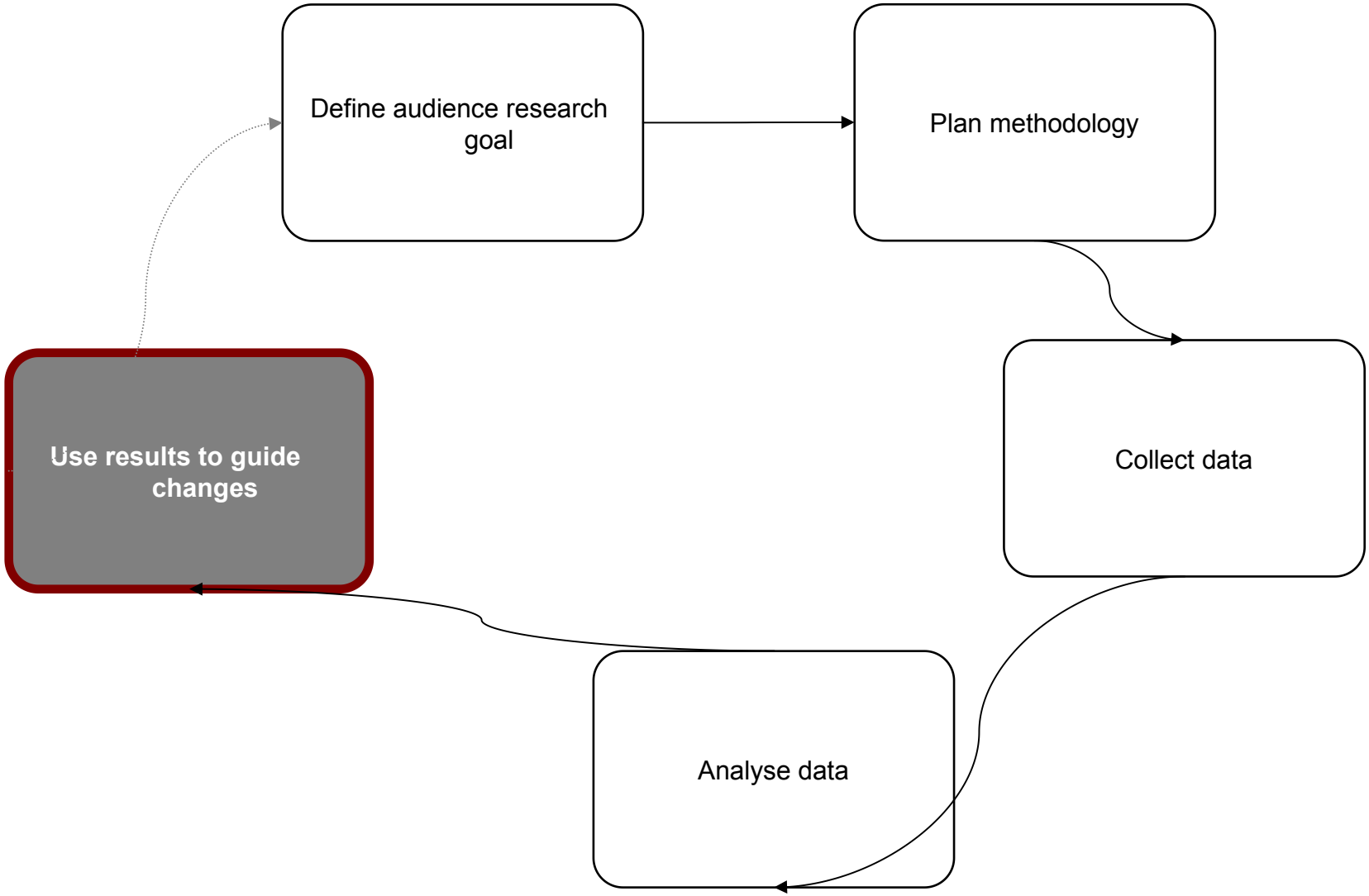
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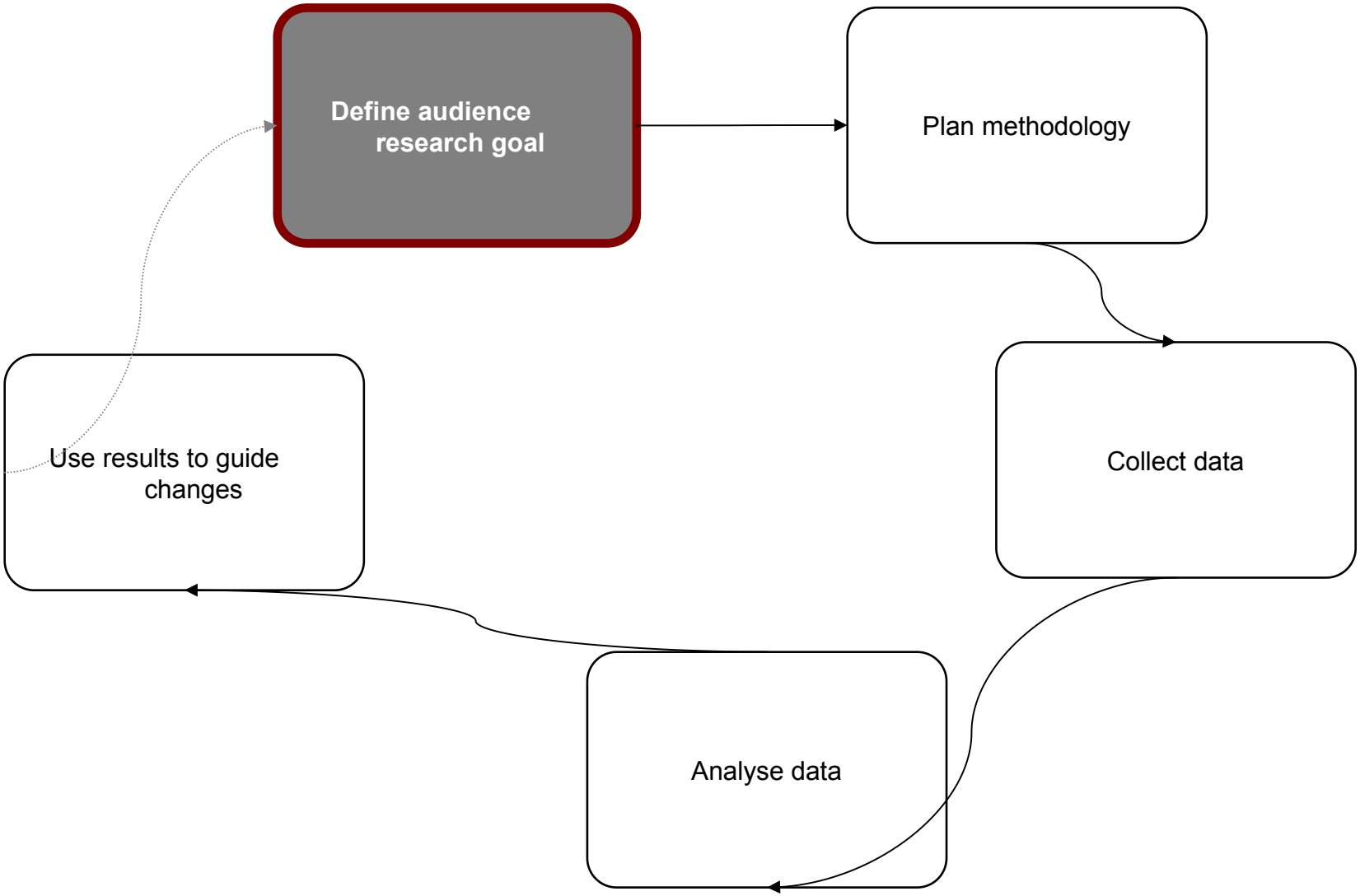
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Researching your audiences is essential to deliver services which provide the maximum public value

About this chart

This chart sets out the key steps involved in audience research. It has been developed from The Guide to Researching Audiences, and references to the full guide are shown like this: 5.1

The Guide and supporting documentation have been produced by the Strategic Content Alliance, and can be accessed from its website: http://sca.jiscinvolve.org/2009/02/06/download-audience-analysis-toolkit

Audience research is an ongoing, iterative process. Where you begin will depend on the current maturity of your service – but understanding your target audience is an important first step.

Where should I start?

Do you know who the target audience for your service is? (2)

No → Knowing who you would like your service to reach and what you will offer them is a vital part of business planning and service development. (2.1)

Segmenting your audience
- Demographic categories
- Role-based
- Functional or task-oriented
- Objective-oriented

(2.4)

Yes

Do you know why you want to research your audience? (3)

No → The key to good audience research is setting out clear objectives and planning appropriate research activities to meet these objectives. (3.2)

Possible audience research objectives
- To extend the reach of your service
- To enhance the service for existing users
- To see if the redesign of your service has been a success

(3.3.2)

Yes

Do you know what questions your research needs to answer? (3)

No → Think about what you want to know about your audience. It is also important to consider what you want to know about non-users. (3.2)

Possible questions about USERS
- WHO is using our service?
- WHY are they using it?
- HOW do they use it?
- WHAT do they think of it?

(3.3.3)

Yes

How will the research be conducted? DIY or buy? (4)

No → Decide whether you should conduct the research on a 'DIY' basis, or commission a market research agency to undertake it on your behalf. Each has its pros and cons . (4.1)

Things to think about if you do commission...
- Which elements do I need to outsource – the full project or specific elements?
- Which agency is right for me?
- Does it offer Value for Money?

(4.1.4)

Yes

Do you know how to collect the data you need? (3 & 4)

No → There is a range of quantitative and qualitative audience research methods- the information you want about the audience will help to determine the methods you use. (3.4)

Research methods
- Surveys
- Interviews and focus groups
- Web statistics
- Ethnography

(4.2)

Yes

Do you know how to analyse and interpret the data you collect? (5)

No → The techniques used will depend on the type of data and the aims of the research. Full analysis of the data should provide wider insights into the audience and their behaviour. (5.1)

Tools for analysing quantitative data
- Regression analysis
- Correlation analysis
- Factor analysis
- Cluster analysis

(5.2)

Yes

Do you know how to use your audience research to improve your service? (6)

No → Evidence from audience research can help service providers to make informed decisions about spending on digitisation, new services, support for different platforms etc. (6.1)

When applying the information...
- Were the research objectives met?
- Consider how to disseminate the findings
- Assess the wider implications of the work
- Plan follow-up and future research

(6.2)

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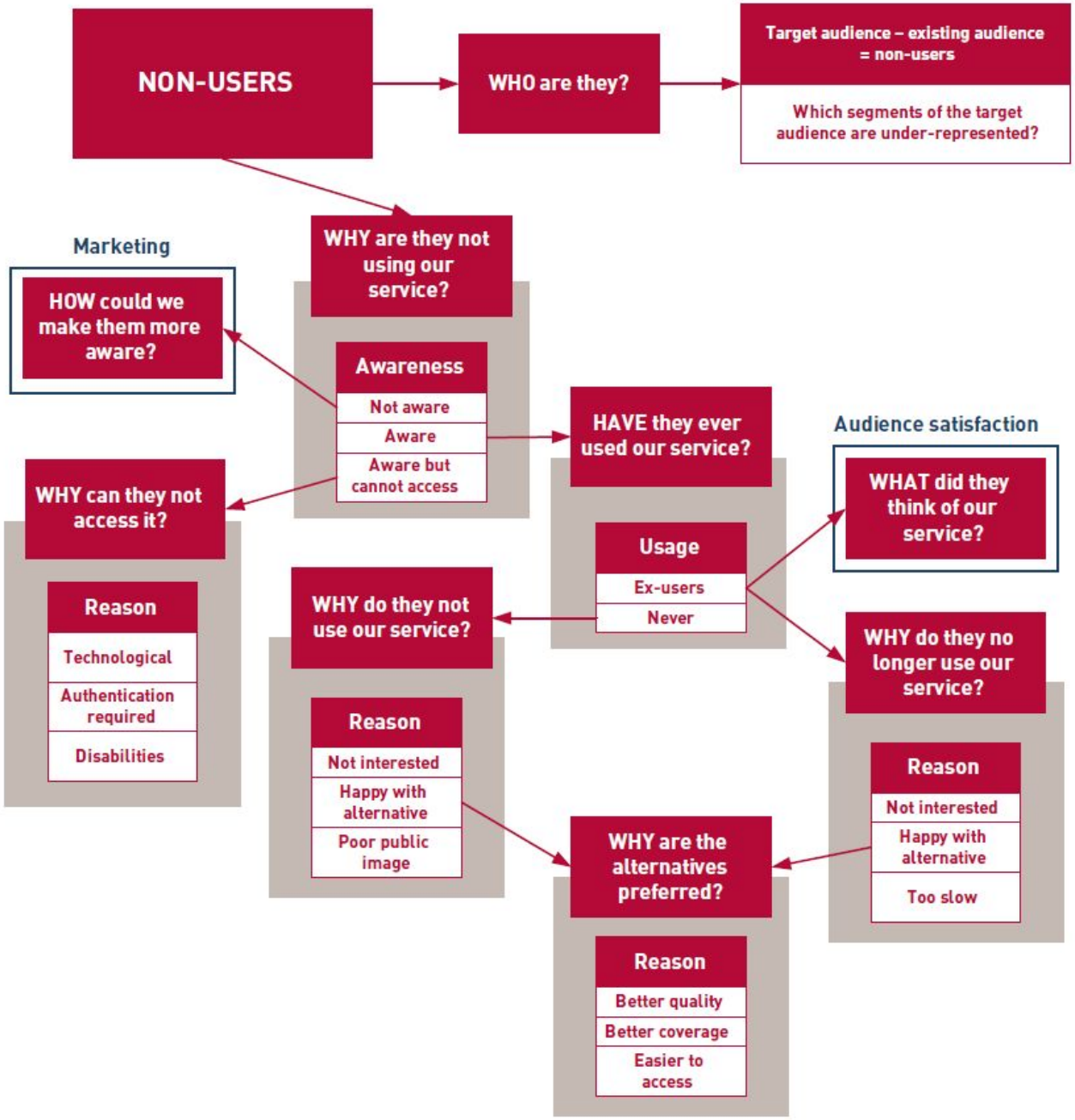
curtis+cartwright

Figure 3-1: understanding non-users



SCA guidance

http://sca.jiscinvolve.org/wp/audience-publications/

Good overview

Step by step approach

Lots of sources of information:

Culture 24 Let's Get Real

http://weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/

What tools are there for gathering data?

Data gathering tools

- **Qualitative:** focus groups, “free text” questions in surveys, interviews
- **Quantitative:** web statistics, “multiple choice” questions in surveys, visitor tracking
- **Observational:** user testing, ethnographic

Online surveys

SurveyMonkey

www.surveymonkey.com

Web stats
Google Analytics GA

The best way to learn GA is to use it:

www.google.com/analytics/

Web stats: Focus on trends rather than absolute values

Be clear about purpose:

Diagnostics

– making a project or service better

Reporting

– to funders, or for advocacy

When to do what

User testing
- beta version and fully working version

Online questionnaires
– current version, new version

Focus groups
- concept testing near beginning of project, or at redevelopment stage

Visitor surveys

- compare online and real visits

Web stats

- long term trends, events, journeys

Activity:
Planning an audience research project

Online Audiences workshop activity

Trimptonshire Museum is a small local museum.

A small number of items across various collections have been digitised on an ad hoc basis and some have been available online for just over a year. There is a searchable online catalogue.

As part of a funding bid, target audiences identified were:

- Schools
- Higher Education courses
- Specialists
- Interested individuals
- Family researchers

Online Audiences workshop activity

Overall aim: improve online provision for users

Suggested objective for this research: assess user satisfaction of current website and identify options for improvement

Activity – small groups

Decide on a project manager (surname first in alphabet).

They moderate discussion, and also present research approach at the end.

Refine research objectives, identify info you need and choose data-collection methods.

Agree an audience research plan

Data gathering activity	Staff time (days)	Timescale (weeks)	Costs (£)
Online survey (in-house)	6	8	200
Online survey (consultant)	2	8	800
Phone survey (in-house)	6	3	200
Phone survey (consultant)	3	3	1200
Focus groups (in-house)	7	5	200
Focus groups (consultant)	2	5	1500
Web analytics (consultant)	1	2	500
User testing (in-house)	4	3	200
User testing (consultant)	1	3	900
Analysis (in-house)	5	2	0
Analysis (consultant)	2	2	1200
Not more than:	15 days	16 weeks	£4500

(These are not real values, and anyway are highly variable.)

Don’t spend too long on the figures – focus on the rationale for using each data collection method, and overall objectives.

Remember to consider what you will actually do with the data once you have it.

Crit room

Crit room

Simulated user testing

- **Learn how user testing works**
- **Get feedback on specifics of websites**

Remember this is just a simulation of real user testing!

The best way to learn GA is to use it:

www.google.com/analytics/

Web stats: Focus on trends rather than absolute values

Ways people use online collections

Browsers - Followers - Searchers - Researchers (MHM)

To engage **Browsers** you need a few strong 'jewels' / in-your-face interesting stories

Followers: accessible narrative content

Searchers: may search for family name or pet topic - offer suggestions for onward links / structured searches

Researchers: just leave them to it - they will put up with anything!

For all: good search + presentation of results

Fix your site not your users

'Educating' people on how to use your existing website and catalogue is an uphill struggle. They don't have to use your site.

A better approach is to help them want to.

www.slideshare.net/martinbazley

www.digitallearningnetwork.net

www.martinbazley.com

Martin: 0780 3580 727
- phone for a chat

Extra slides

not used in session

Some of these may be useful - please feel free to call for clarification or more info

Online questionnaires

(+) once set up they gather numerical and qualitative data with no further effort – given time can build up large datasets

(+) the datasets can be easily exported and manipulated, can be sampled at various times, and structured queries can yield useful results

(–) respondents are self-selected and this will skew results – best to compare with similar data from other sources, like visitor surveys

(–) the number and nature of responses may depend on how the online questionnaire is displayed and promoted on the website

Focus groups

(+) can explore specific issues in more depth, yielding rich feedback

(+) possible to control participant composition to ensure representative

(–) comparatively time-consuming (expensive) to organise and analyse

(–) yield qualitative data only - small numbers mean numerical comparisons are unreliable

Visitor surveys

(+) possible to control participant composition to ensure representative

(–) comparatively time-consuming (expensive) to organise and analyse

(–) responses can be affected by various factors including interviewer, weather on the day, day of the week, etc, reducing validity of numerical comparisons between museums

Web stats

(+) Easy to gather data – can decide what to do with it later

(+) Person-independent data generated - it is the interpretation, rather than the data themselves, which is subjective. This means others can review the same data and verify or amend initial conclusions reached

Web stats

- (–) Different systems generate different data for the same web activity – for example no of unique visits measured via Google Analytics is generally lower than that derived via server log files
- (–) Metrics are complicated and require specialist knowledge to appreciate them fully

Web stats

(–) As the amount of off-website web activity increases (e.g. Web 2.0 style interactions) the validity of website stats decreases, especially for reporting purposes, but also for diagnostics

(–) Agreeing a common format for presentation of data and analysis requires collaborative working to be meaningful

When to evaluate or test and why

- Before funding approval – project planning
- Post-funding - project development
- Post-project – summative evaluation

Testing is an iterative process

Testing isn’t something you do once

Make something

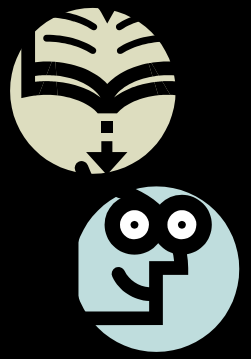
=> test it

=> refine it

=> test it again

Before funding – project planning

- ***Evaluation of other websites**
  - Who for? What for? How use it? etc
  - awareness raising: issues, opportunities
  - contributes to market research
  - possible elements, graphic feel etc



Research

- ***Concept testing**
  - check idea makes sense with audience
  - reshape project based on user feedback

Focus group

Post-funding - project development

- ***Concept testing**
  - refine project outcomes based on feedback from intended users

Focus group

- **Refine website structure**
  - does it work for users?

One-to-one tasks

- ***Evaluate initial look and feel**
  - graphics,navigation etc

Focus group

IF YOU DON'T LIKE
OUR MUSIC TURN AROUND
FOR 360 DEGREES AND

Card sorting - get various people to try out the website structure before you build it
SHOP & CAFÉ
WHAT'S ON
THE COLLECTIONS
FAMILIES
Exhibitions
Events & Activities
Community Programmes
Permanent Collection Displays
14.

BUSINESS CENTRE
BUSINESS CENTRE
Venue Hire
Picture Library
Supporting us
Venue Hire
Weddings & Parties
Cocktail Parties & Dinners
Conferences, Meetings & Seminars
Corporate Patrons Offer
Commercial Photography & Filming
Contact and Booking
Our Other Venues

Post-funding - project development 2

- ***Full evaluation of a draft working version**
  - usability AND content: do activities work, how engaging is it, what else could be offered, etc

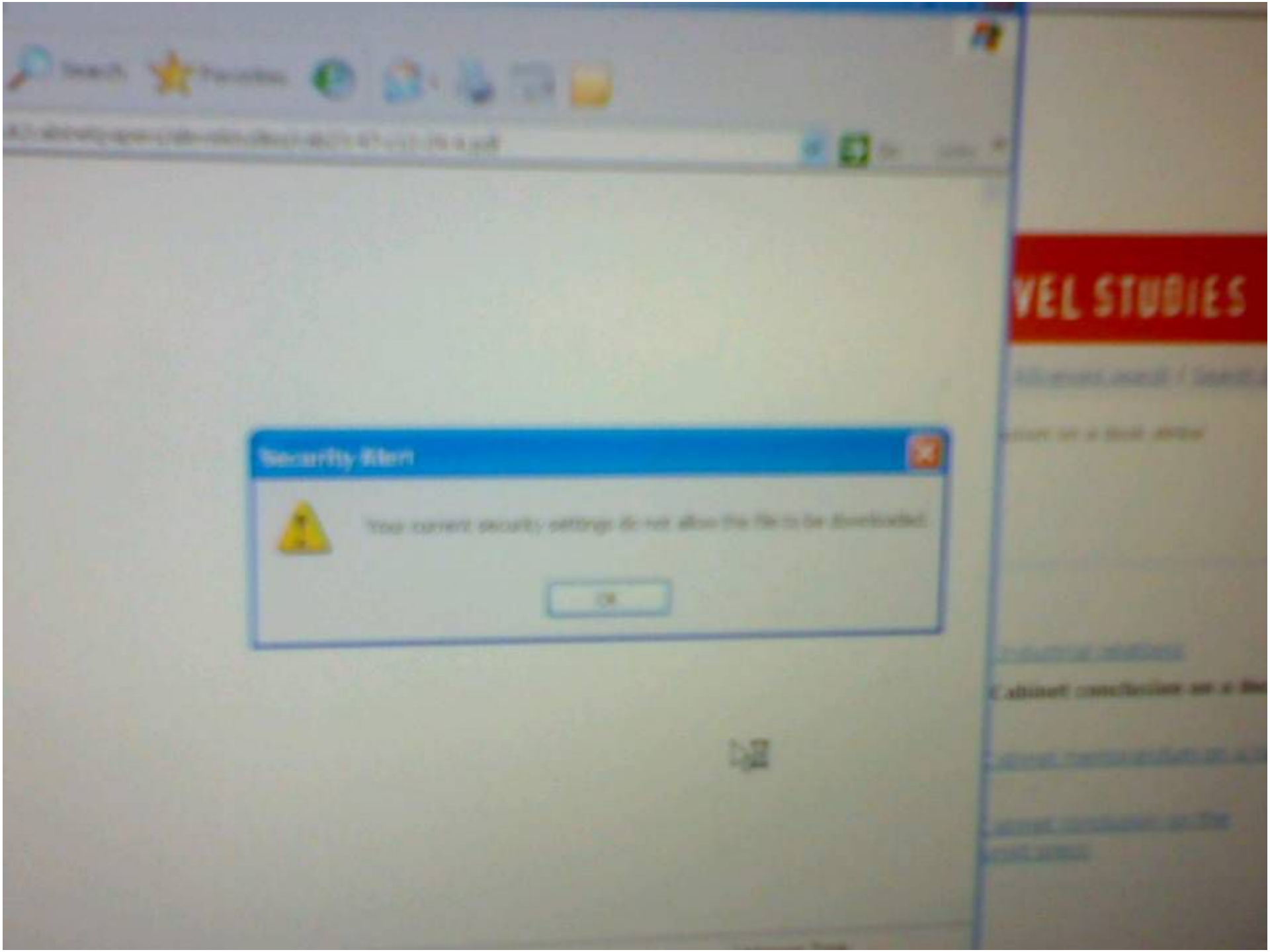
Observation of **actual use of website**

by **intended users**,

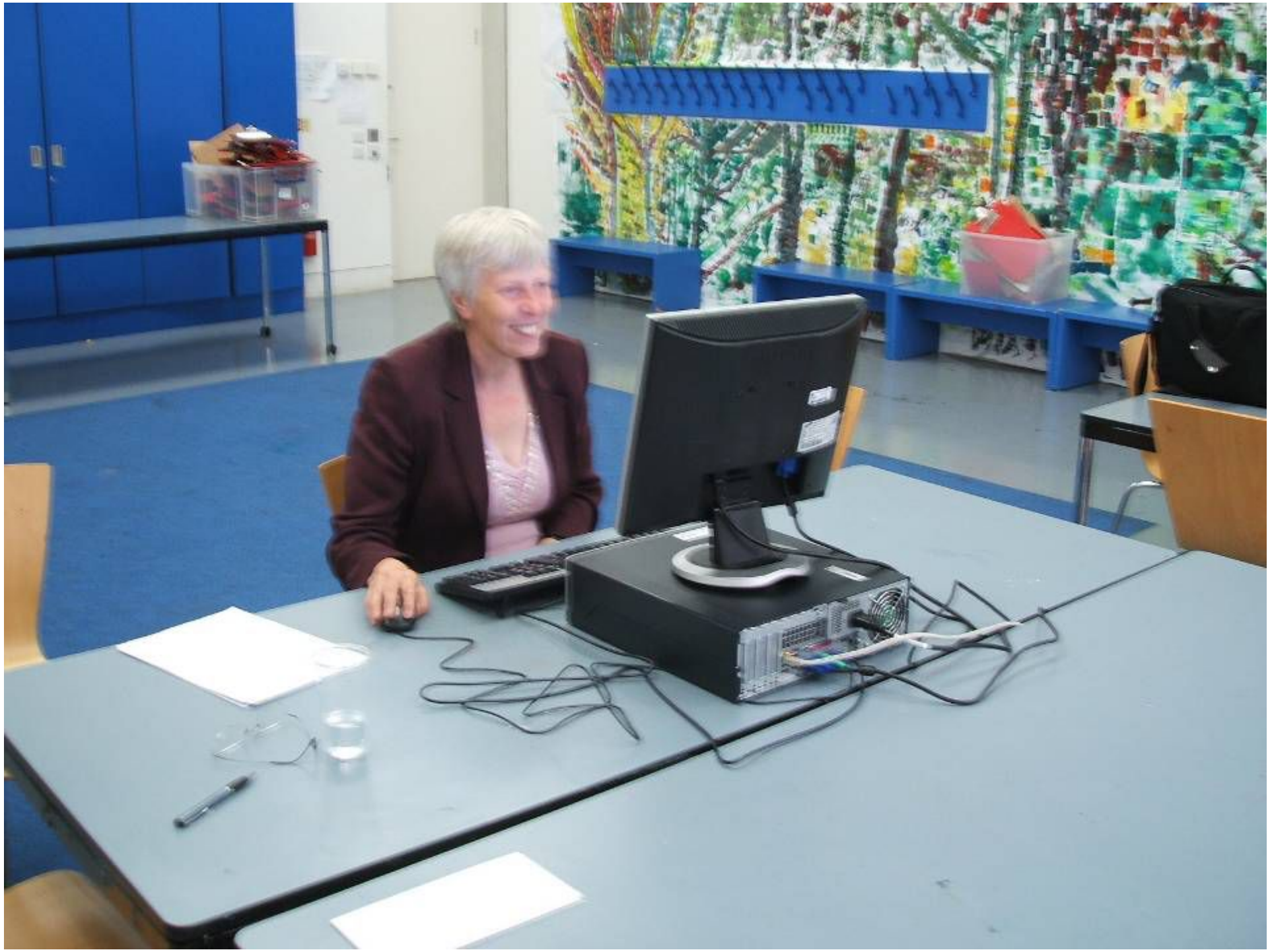
using it for **intended purpose**,

in **intended context** – workplace, classroom, library, home, etc

Explore the painting
Teachers' area
Pupils' gallery
Background to the painting
Developing the interactive
Ford Madox Brown's painting is brought to life in this exciting interactive.
Work


Security Alert
OK

Manchester
Art Gallery



Post-funding - project development 3

- **Acceptance testing of 'finished' website**
  - last minute check, minor corrections only
  - often offered by web developers

- **Summative evaluation**
  - report for funders, etc
  - learn lessons at project level for next time

Website evaluation and testing

Need to think ahead a bit:

- what are you trying to find out?
- how do you intend to test it?
- why? what will do **you do as a result**?

The **Why?** should drive this process

More information / advice / ideas

Happy to help

Martin Bazley

0780 3580 737

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Who for…?
What for?
How will they use it?

Learning resource: iterative planning

content ← → curriculum
(find a match)

Learning activities ← → Learning outcomes
(find a match)

Filtered by your specific audience needs

www.slideshare.net/martinbazley

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www.martinbazley.com

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