Digital Walkthrough Method for Audiobook Research: Audible's ACX

This paper addresses doing audiobook research using a digital walkthrough method grounded in platform studies (an interdisciplinary field drawing on business and software studies). Scholars such as Sundén & Tanderup Linkis (2024) have used the walkthrough method to analyze digital reading platforms. The walkthrough method presents a systematic way to explore a platform, site, or software application by "engaging directly with an app's interface to examine its technological mechanisms and embedded cultural references to understand how it guides users and shapes their experiences"(Light et al., 2018: 882). In our current research on Audible's 'Audiobook Creation Exchange'or ACX platform, we use the digital walkthrough method to explore independent audiobook production. Given the platformisation of contemporary audiobook publishing, analysing audiobook publishing platforms like ACX through the digital walkthrough method integrates and investigates the making of an audiobook with the contexts and processes that shape it, including experimenting with the interface and affordances of the platform. Through our walkthrough, we highlight the significant role of geopolitics in structuring participation in contemporary audiobook self-publishing as well as the transformation of creative labor as a result of platformisation.

Hauptautor: Dr. PARNELL, Claire (University of Melbourne)

Co-Autor: NOORDA, Rachel (Portland State University)

Vortragende: Dr. PARNELL, Claire (University of Melbourne); NOORDA, Rachel (Portland State University)

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