
BOOK SPRINT: A TOOL FOR CO-AUTHORING AND DOCUMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

States that with the advent of technology, documentation and content creation are becoming easy, collaborative activities gaining importance and evolving day by day. Book sprint is a new tool which enables a group of people who are pursuing a collaborative task of authoring a book to come together and share, review, exchange their thoughts on a particular task and as a result the pursuit will finally brings out a new book within short time, which usually can take months or years together in a traditional mode.

KEYWORDS: Book sprint, Co-Authoring, Collaborative Authoring, Collaborative Writing, Documentation, Content Creation

Introduction

Book sprint is a tool which helps in collaborative authoring, the concept of collaborative authoring was devised by Tomas Krag in the year 2005. Book sprint provides a new platform for computer aided documentation, while the traditional documentation has been tarred as a bit irksome and unpleasant of tasks. Traditional book authoring and production is a lengthy process usually takes months or sometimes even years together to bring out, but book sprints enable writers or authors produce comparable content in much shorter amount of time, a few months, weeks or even a few days sometimes.

A book sprint process starts with when a group of people or domain experts feel that there is need for documentation on a specific topic or in an area. Once the proposal accepted by a funding agency which helps the group over financial matters, all the experts who constitute a group start the sprint for a particular purpose, it may be for content gathering, content creation, to bring out a book or to complete a particular project assigned by the funding agency. In a book sprint each person involved in the process will be allocated a particular work or a particular task which they are going to achieve over a period of few months or weeks, focussing on a bulk of content creation. Book sprint provides a platform which helps to achieve real time intensive interaction on a particular topic among experts and as a result a quality documentation and content creation on a specific topic the group of people and other tools engaged is possible consequently it will result in achieving the common goal.

Tools of Book Sprint

Tools for a book sprint consist of both hardware as usual and software. Even with the efficient team of authors that works collaboratively, writing a book will be tedious job without a right set of tools. The following tools would be helpful in preparing a book sprint.

- a. Booki: An editing tool or FLOSS manual, which is designed for writing as a team. Using Booki, each member can work on a different chapter of the book or a project, edit, retrospect, discuss the changes and talk to each other Booki's inbuilt chat interface. Booki's also allows authors or participants to export their manual to PDF and ePUB.
- b. FLOSS manual: A web authoring online writing tool designed for writing as a team and enables simultaneous editing of content. However each web page can be edited by only one person at a time.

Steps and Planning Involved in Preparing a Book Sprint

Pre-planning is essential for any activity to achieve successfully. The same thing applies for Book Sprinting also, which involves certain steps to be completed on a successful note. Pre-planning lessens burden, saves time, energy and money to the some extent. Following steps will ensure a successful collaborative Book Sprint.

1. Finance: The first step involves finding a financial support from an institution or agency which may be a project or task.
2. Determining topic of discussion: Determining the topic is an important task in the planning process. The topic and the intended audience are co-related, where we find answer for who will benefit from the project and which extent? It may be particular community or an organization.
3. Scope and limitation or approximate length of the book: Once the topic is determined, what are the subtopics need to be covered is the major question. Here we have two constraints to consider; the first one is a sprint must ultimately have a limited scope, because most books come out less than 250 pages in length, some worthy topics will have to be left out if the scope is wide. And the next one is topic should be based on the participants competency to write about and interest in writing about.
4. Preparing a feasible outline: The feasible outline reveals the scope of the book by listing all the topics in a logical order. The outline should be prepared considering time, scope and limitations and group of experts participating in the process of book sprint. Otherwise it will be a critical disconnect among all the tools that are involved.
5. Determining style and tone: Guidelines should be framed in advance regarding tone and

style of the text. Style should be legitimate and tone must be such that user should not feel quite easy while reading a book sprint.

6. Identifying key contributors or authors: Finding authors who are interested and have adequate knowledge regarding the topic or chosen field is another major step. Relations among sprinters is also important because a book sprint involves intense discussions under pressure, how experts interact therefore plays a large role in what is going to be produced.
7. Handling logistics: The process includes planning of the dates, location and participants before very far. Authors identified for book sprint may pick the convenient dates and location for them. Logistics also involves some basic issues like venue to conduct a Book Sprint programme, travel, accommodations, resources, food and other things.
8. Post print tasks: If the Book Sprint manual is to grow or develop further, one need to determine and identify the person to take the ongoing maintainer role.

Different Roles in a Book Sprint

- Sprint facilitator: A person whose responsibility is to ensure smooth running of the sprint and coordination among all parties.
- Local host: Someone whose role is handling logistics.
- FLOSS Manual expert: Person familiar with FLOSS manual, whose role is to offer troubleshooting advice if things go wrong.
- Manual maintainer: Manual maintainer's role is to ensure updation when necessary after completion of the sprint project.
- Participants or contributors: Participants are the heart and soul of the book sprint. Sprint participants write the content and edit each other's content as well.
- External editor: External editor is someone who goes through and edits material on the basis of feedback whenever possible. Examining the content for flow, logic, spelling, punctuation and other grammatical aspects ensures flow of thought content of the book sprint.

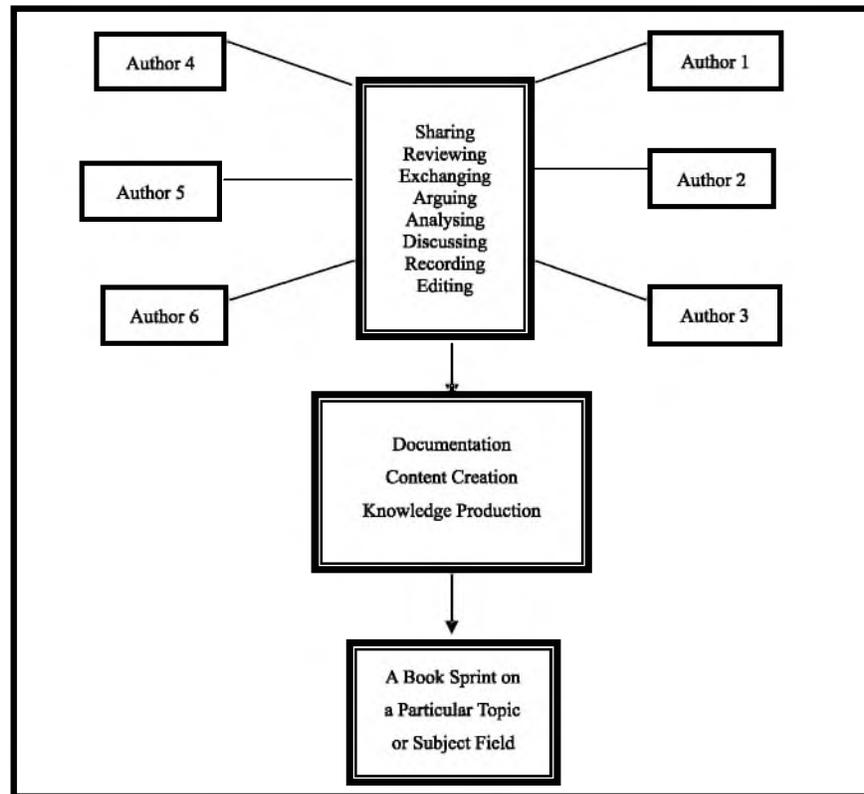


Figure 1: A Book Sprint Model

How Libraries Can Make Use of Book Sprint?

Libraries are evolved from mere traditional libraries to virtual libraries and modern libraries are well connected using library networks, they share each other's information resources within no time with the advent of information and communication technology. Today most of us feel that every bit of information is available at the click of a mouse on the Internet, but as Librarians and Information Scientists, many times would not be able to fulfil the needs of the users. At the same time self sufficiency is just mirage in this information age where information is growing at an exponential rate, but some of the areas not yet developed and evolved as a concept or lagging behind in research and knowledge production, finally the needy user or research community thirst for information will be ended up in frustration. In such cases libraries and information centres can take help of a book sprint and experts on a particular field or topic, within a few days or a week a book will be ready on that particular topic, ultimately the end user information needs will be satisfied. Documentation, content

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creation, knowledge production are some of the areas where librarians play a major role. On the other hand information consolidation and repackaging are essential to fulfil the diverse needs of the users. By utilising book sprints libraries can play a key role in content creation, knowledge production and documentation in following way.

- Identifying the key areas where people or communities need more information and the areas where the information is lacking.
- Create a platform for group of experts from different universities, research institutions or sometimes with the help of parent institutions, libraries and information centres can hire experts from different parts of the world for creating a book sprint which will satisfy the information needs of a community.
- By organising a book sprint on a particular topic or research field, librarians can play a mediator role in creation of knowledge, documentation and content creation which would be very helpful in research which is undergoing in the parent institute.

Conclusion

Information communication technology is playing a crucial role in promoting documentation, content creation and knowledge production. With the development of tools like Book Sprint, the growth of information source will multiply and at the same time, as discussed above book sprint technology will help to satisfy the user needs, community information needs and help to promote research and development activities by providing a platform for experts to share, critically analyse and discuss on a particular topic or subject. Moreover, libraries can utilise the book sprint for documentation or content creation, where library and information scientists play a mediator role and facilitates to organise a book sprint on a topic which will help to satisfy the information needs of the user community. Libraries are ideal place for organising a book sprint since they provide all the necessary inputs and resources which authors may need in a book sprint process. Book sprint benefits consumers as well as contributors and enables to bring out a quality work within short time and makes available at very low cost.

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