Title page

Education paths for documentary distribution: DAF, ATOM and the study guides that bind them

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In 2010 his film, The Brisbane Line, was officially selected and screened at the Brisbane International Film Festival. In 2012 he completed a documentary on the Queensland Parliament House which has been distributed across Fairfax Digital’s Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and
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Abstract

An expanding education market targeted through ‘bridging material’ enabling cineliteracies has the potential to offer Australian producers with increased distribution opportunities, educators with targeted teaching aids and students with enhanced learning outcomes.

For Australian documentary producers, the key to unlocking the potential of the education sector is engaging with its curriculum based requirements at the earliest stages of pre-production. Two key mechanisms can lead to effective educational engagement; the established area of study guides produced in association with the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) and the emerging area of philanthropic funding coordinated by The Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF).

DAF has acted as a key financial and cultural philanthropic bridge between individuals, foundations, corporations and the Australian documentary sector for over 14 years. DAF does not make or commission films but through management and receipt of grants and donations provides ‘expertise, information, guidance and resources to help each sector work together to achieve their goals’ (Documentary Australia Foundation 2013). The DAF application process also requires filmmakers to detail their ‘Education and Outreach Strategy’ for each film with 582 films registered and 39 completed as of June 2014.

These education strategies that can range from detailed to cursory efforts offer valuable insights into the Australian documentary sector’s historical and current expectations of education as a receptive and dynamic audience for quality factual content. A recurring filmmaker education strategy found in the DAF data is an engagement with the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) to create a study guide for their film. This study guide then acts as a ‘bridging material’ between content and education audience. The frequency of this effort suggests these study guides enable greater educator engagement with content and increased interest and distribution of the film to educators.

The paper Education paths for documentary distribution: DAF, ATOM and the study guides that bind them will address issues arising out of the changing needs of the education sector and the impact targeting ‘cineliteracy’ outcomes may have for Australian documentary distribution.
Keywords

Documentary distribution, Education audiences, Screenrights, Documentary Australia Foundation, Australian Teachers of Media

Introduction

Despite acknowledged value (George 2013; Kaufman 2007; Kaufman 2011; Einspruch 2013; Screen Producers Association of Australia 2014) amongst the documentary sector regarding opportunities in education few quantitative indicators are available that can provide a comprehensive mapping of the education market's financial dimensions. Despite the gaps that exist in verifiable quantitative data on the education market, key indicators do exist for the sale and licensing of documentary content within Australia through Screenrights financial reporting, the existence of longstanding education focused film distributors and recent figures cited in the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) review, 'Copyright and the Digital Economy'.

Screenrights is a non-profit organisation occupying the critical juncture between educational organisations and the copyright owners of screen content in Australia. A key coordinator in terms of licensing screen content across the education sector, Screenrights was established in 1990 to administer provisions in the Australian Copyright Act that allow educational institutions to copy from television and radio, provided payment is made to the copyright owners' (Screenrights 2014). As well as Australian schools and tertiary institutions, Screenrights licences are available across all State and federal government departments and New Zealand institutions.

Screenrights Head of Member Services, Emma Rogers (personal communication, August 20, 2014) advises in 2013/2014, consistent with previous years and taken from over 300,000 records of educational copying, Screenrights returned $15.9 million back to documentary rightsholders. While Screenrights do track total dollars paid to Australian members versus overseas members, this data is not currently genre specific and does not allow a definitive answer to how much of the $15.9m paid to documentary rightsholders was assigned to Australian documentary rightsholders. For the same 2013/2014 period Screenrights returned 66% back to Australian members across all content including feature films, documentaries, news and current affairs. Assuming a breakdown may be roughly

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consistent across genres, an estimation of $10.49m returned to Australian rightsholders from educational distribution of their documentaries is reasonable. This $10m figure not only underscores the importance of Screenrights as a remuneration mechanism for Australian documentary rightsholders, but also provides an indication of market size which has until now remained illusive.

Indication of the value of the education market can also be charted through the success of online distributors with clear focus on education audiences such as Australia’s Kanopy. With stated revenues ‘in the millions’, (Fulwood 2013) Kanopy generated quarterly growth up 35% on the 2012 financial year and claims the largest collection of commercial online video in Australia at 15,000 titles compared to Bigpond’s 3000. Outside of the specifics of documentary distribution to education, there exist broad indicators of market size for learning resource provision through recent submissions to the Australian Law Reform Commission’s (ALRC) review, ‘Copyright and the Digital Economy’. This includes the estimate of $665 million dollars per annum on purchasing educational resources for Australian schools (Copyright Advisory Group Schools 2013, 5) and for the 2011 period a figure of $256.7 million for university libraries - the majority of which was spent on electronic resources (i.e. journals and e-books). When viewed as an indicative whole the figures from Screenrights, Kanopy and the ALRC submissions provide clear indication of the value of education audiences for audiovisual content creators. However, while a market clearly exists for documentary in education, an understanding of the strategies and mechanisms which facilitate the passage of documentary through education is still under-researched. This article demonstrates the value of education audiences to the Australian documentary sector as evidenced through the public reporting of Screenrights and other sources. The article also highlights a key strategy for educational engagement by examining the creation and distribution of study guide “bridging materials” through juxtaposition of Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) and Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) data. If distributors of documentary content are to appeal to educators what becomes apparent are some fundamental approaches that need to be pursued in the earliest stages of project development. Documentary filmmakers understanding of the education market at pre-production and production stages are revealed through collective responses to the question of ‘education and outreach strategy' from the 582 films registered with The Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF). Chief among the strategies is an understanding on behalf of Australian documentary makers that proper planning and budgeting should be committed to the creation of a study guide - many of which are produced by The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM).

The assumption among documentary producers indicated in the DAF data is that a study guide will increase educational implementation and corresponding returns from that market. As of June 2014, 39 of the 582 films registered with The Documentary Australia
Foundation have successfully been produced. By examining the performance of the completed DAF films as set against the industry benchmarking offered by the ATOM Awards it is clear many of the completed titles have been both well received by education audiences and may enjoy greater uptake in education as a result of their recognition as valuable audiovisual teaching resources.

The clear connecting and recurring strategy seen amongst this data is the role of the study guide as a crucial ‘bridging material’ (Dr Michael Dezuanni, personal communication, January 28, 2014) between the documentary production and distribution sector and educational use through pedagogical uptake of documentary film. Further digitally enabled innovations emerging in study guides produced by ATOM offer the potential for both improved pedagogical implementation by educators and greater returns to documentary rightsholders from educational use of their content.

**Documentary film in Australian education: market dynamics**

There are long-standing and contentious issues arising from the costs of educational resources in the education sector that can overshadow discussions of the education market. It is not the intention of this analysis to weigh in on either side of these debates including the complexities surrounding legal remuneration of resources. Instead, the focus is on how in the specific area of documentary, the needs of education are best met and measured.

A strong general consensus exists among the Australian documentary sector that ‘One of the great income-generating opportunities with documentaries is being able to sell your film to educational institutions such as universities and libraries’ (Fuller 2014). The concept of universities, libraries and schools collectively forming an appreciative and ideal audience has long currency amongst Australian documentary makers. At the 2007 Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC), Tina Kaufman summarised both the nascent promise and significant challenges facing those keen to engage with education audiences.

The biggest panel of the conference was on the changing educational market, which has quietly become a major growth area. As educational markets catch up with the digital revolution, and as teachers and students have access to more visual and electronic resources, the possibilities for documentaries and factual programming to find a place within education seem to be very exciting – but demanding.
Valuable data and insights into the educational use of audiovisual materials were recently brought to light as a result of the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) review, 'Copyright and the Digital Economy'. As well as providing an overview of grievances on both the supply and demand sides of audiovisual content in education, rare insight could be gained into the wide educational use of audiovisual content including the potential value of that market to Australian rightsholders and content creators.

In their ALRC submission the Copyright Advisory Group Schools cited an internal survey conducted among 379 Government, Catholic and Independent schools across Primary, Secondary and Combined grade levels. This survey helped inform the CAG Schools submission that The Australian education sector currently spends upwards of $665 million dollars per annum on purchasing educational resources for Australian schools, an amount over and above the $80 million on copyright licensing fees currently paid to collecting societies' (Copyright Advisory Group Schools 2013, 5). Although this figure encompasses a broad range of resource provision of which audiovisual content purchasing and licensing is but one, it remains a significant spend from secondary schools of which the documentary sector in Australia is an undeniable beneficiary.

Similarly, the Universities Australia (UA) submission to the ALRC review representing interests of the tertiary sector also indicates a relatively recent (2011) annual spend on resources of which the digital licensing of academic journals understandably form a significant part.

The vast majority of educational content used for teaching purposes in Australian universities is purchased directly via commercial licences. This is a very different situation compared with when the statutory licence was first introduced....in 2011 university libraries spent $256.7 million, the majority of which was on electronic resources (i.e. journals and e-books). It can be expected that this direct spending will increase over time, especially as a result of the increasing penetration of e-books and their associated add-ons.

(Universities Australia 2013, 27)

The UA submission does not stratify educational spending to indicate specific amounts expended on the purchasing and licencing of documentary content. What the UA submission does highlight is the role played by the Australian Copyright Act’s statutory licences under which Screenrights and their resource centres operate. The UA submission disputes the ongoing relevancy of the statutory licences, although in conjunction with direct licences, these copyright mechanisms continue to be a key means through which
screen content like documentary is both easily accessed and able to generate remuneration.

The Screenrights license in conjunction with innovations occurring through digitally facilitated distribution efforts of subsidiary resource centres such as EnhanceTV Direct, Informit EduTV and ClickView are a crucial consideration in terms of the effective, monetised distribution of documentary content into the education market. This is evidenced in aggregate form through Screenrights returns to rightsholders. Within the 2012-2013 financial years, financial disclosures in annual reports by Screenrights reveal it distributed more than $34.9 million to rightsholders in film and television (Screenrights 2013, 2). In Australia, for documentary films alone, Screenrights licences returned $15.9 million back to their rightsholders in 2013 (Emma Rogers, personal communication, August 20, 2014). Despite representing a single income stream from the education market, Screenrights statutory licences occupy a central position by virtue of their comprehensive coverage. These returns are argued to provide an indispensable income source for independent content creators like established producer Veronica Fury of Wild Fury Productions, ‘Screenrights incomes are an utter, utter godsend...it would be an exaggeration to say that this revenue has saved my business but it would not be far from the truth’ (cited in George 2013).

Many independent content creators such as Fury distribute their work into theatrical and home entertainment markets in addition to education. However unlike the theatrical or home entertainment markets, there are few reliable quantitative indicators of the size and shape of the education market. Therefore to better understand both education as a market and the passage of documentary through this commercial/cultural space, innovative approaches to data collection and industry benchmarking are required.

DAF as a window to education strategies of documentary distribution

The 582 titles registered with the Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) and the responses to the DAF question on “Education and Outreach Strategy” offer a valuable dataset to map intentions of documentary makers regarding uptake of their films amongst educators. Analysis of this publicly available data provides an opportunity for an improved understanding of Australian documentary filmmaker expectations around engaging education audiences with their content. Although a single indicator, study guides are a recurring strategy in the DAF responses and represent a key mechanism to improve educational implementation and financial returns. As evidenced through industry
benchmarking via the ATOM education awards for documentary films, the creation and use of study guides as 'bridging material' linking documentary rightsholders and education is crucial for the success of documentary films in the Australian education sector.

In terms of methodology the data collected on both registered and completed Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) films was drawn from the public facing DAF site in June, 2014. At that time the data on both registered and completed films occupied distinct and easily accessible pages on the website. DAF had previously been contacted by the author to provide the publicly available, education specific data in a single collection but were unable to do so.

In July of 2014 DAF updated their public facing website. Currently it is both difficult to distinguish between registered/approved and completed films as a result of a scrolling renewal of films for those wishing to navigate the site. The new website also makes previously easily available information, such as number of registered/completed films, unclear. The additional questions, including education and outreach strategy, required by DAF registration are also not immediately visible and rest under an 'Expand' button. In addition, certain links and search functionality at the time of writing were not operational. In the absence of DAF’s ability to provide segmented data these changes may lead to an increased degree of difficulty for researchers seeking to replicate the data gathering approach taken in this article.

The Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) aims to

Inspire and nurture partnerships between philanthropic individuals, private foundations, charities and documentary filmmakers. DAF provides expertise, information, guidance and resources to help each sector work together to achieve their goals. DAF does not make or commission films. We manage and receive grants and donations which are directed either towards our own operations or to specific film projects

(Documentary Australia Foundation, 2013)

As of June 2014, 582 films were registered with DAF, 40 of which have been produced. Of the 40 produced documentaries only 30 films articulated any kind of education strategy through DAF’s online registration process. Half of the 30 addressing the education element of DAF’s ‘education and outreach strategy’ cite collaborating with ATOM or study guides as a key part of their strategy. Therefore one in every two successfully completed films that pass through the Documentary Australia Foundation identify ATOM and study guides as a
crucial factor in accessing educators and a potential education market. While acknowledging the factors contributing to a registered DAF film becoming a completed film are broader than simply an education strategy, the question of whether these films are completed as a result of, or in spite of, a clear education strategy is a salient one. Arguably a causal link can be drawn between foresight in education strategies and demonstrated success in educational usage and uptake.

One way to demonstrate this link is to assess which, if any, of the DAF documentary films have been successful in education. While that question may be contentious and difficult to answer in strictly commercial terms, there is a significant quality assurance discussion to be had by comparing the education strategies of successfully completed DAF films against the nominees and winners of the ATOM awards. In addition, by collating publicly available Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) data alongside industry benchmarking via the ATOM awards and WorldCat tertiary library holdings, the passage of key documentary titles and their uptake and reception through education can be charted.

**ATOM Awards as a benchmark of DAF education strategy success**

Founded in 1982 the ATOM awards celebrate the best of Australian and New Zealand screen content from the education sector and screen industry professionals with entries in over thirty categories covering everything from feature-length documentaries and factual television programs to animation, educational resources, games and new media (ATOM 2014).

At the 2012 ATOM awards four DAF registered documentaries where nominated six times across the award categories of Best Documentary Short Form, Best Documentary History, Social & Political Issues, Best Documentary Science, Technology and the Environment, Best Documentary Arts and Best Documentary Biography. Similar success occurred in 2013 with three DAF registered documentaries nominated six times in the award categories of Best Documentary Arts, Best Documentary Biography, Best Documentary History, Social & Political Issues and Best Documentary General. Documentary makers and distributors who clearly design their educational engagement and distribution appear to have better results in the education sector than those which do not.

The cumulative effect of DAF’s querying documentary filmmaker assumptions regarding education audiences at the pre-production stage combined with the marketing and industry benchmarking afforded by the ATOM awards also leads to increased awareness and demand at the tertiary level. In viewing Australian tertiary institution holdings of DAF completed and ATOM benchmarked titles via global library catalogue WorldCat - further
evidence of the successful distribution of these documentary titles through education can be seen. Although more recent ATOM award winners such as Paul Kelly: Stories of me (2013) may be held in only a handful of tertiary institutions, older titles such as Contact (2009) have had time to gain recognition across both secondary and tertiary audiences and is currently held by over 39 TAFE’s or Universities within Australia. This steady, albeit, slow passage of key Australian documentary titles through the education landscape chimes both with Anderson’s (2007) much discussed notion of the ‘long tail’ of film revenues and would appear to support Screen Australia’s (2010) Documentary Production report which states ‘documentaries often have a long life...many popular older title have continued to sell to educational users’.

DAF support and ATOM award recognition is not an easily replicable pathway for every documentary seeking an education audience. However, by comparing education market intentions at the DAF production stage with education outcomes at the ATOM award stage, key strategies for educational success are signposted. Chief among these strategies is for content creators to actively engage in the planning and resourcing required to create effective bridging materials in the form of study guides and other materials. Although a close examination of the education strategies of each of the DAF completed, ATOM benchmarked films is beyond the scope of this article, it is clear that planning and investment in study guides as bridging materials between the education and documentary sectors is a base requirement for increased educational implementation of individual documentary titles. The greater the penetration into classrooms through the ability of study guides to promote wider engagement with educational curricula, the greater the chances are producers and distributors can benefit from educational uptake of their titles.

Study guides bridging the documentary and education sectors

Within both the documentary and education sectors ATOM is synonymous with study guides. At their most basic study guides are text and image based PDF’s which contextualise a documentary within clear curriculum strands and on content and themes within a film to promote discussion and aid in lesson planning. Study guides represent the greatest value-add to education and, arguably, the most crucial service provided by ATOM to the screen sector. The guides function as crucial bridging material in shifting documentaries from neutral, uncontextualised content into a valuable cineliteracy resource with the potential for both widespread educational use and commensurate returns to the rightsholders. As ATOM note in addition to pedagogical value ‘our guides also provide innumerable benefits for content producers granting them much greater access to the educational market than they could otherwise attain’ (2014).
Although a broader, holistic conceptualising of bridging materials extends beyond study guides to incorporate many efforts a producer or distributor makes to connect a documentary with education, the fact remains study guides both nationally and internationally form the core of the bridging materials concept. Additional ways in which documentary filmmakers “bridge” their content into education can be seen in the re-versioning of certain titles to suit the time constraints of the classroom. Richard Leigh, the director of digital educational distributor and social enterprise Campfire Film Foundation, has worked with Australian documentary Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea to create an abridged version to align with the length his secondary school education audience favours – under 10 minutes and 59 seconds.

The study guide creation process involves ATOM initially being contacted by a documentary maker or distributor wishing to promote their work within education. ATOM will assess the program against the current curriculum and depending on suitability will employ a team of teachers within the identified subject area to produce the guide. ATOM regularly produces study guides for feature films, documentaries, television shows and exhibitions with all guides initially available as free PDF’s via the Metro magazine website before migrating to the Education Shop where they are available for $4.95 each. However despite the relatively minor cost to educators in accessing study guides the perceived value of the study guides from the perspective of the documentary sector is significant. As such the study guide is often the fundamental, reoccurring engagement filmmakers and distributors make with the secondary school education audiences.

The ‘innumerable benefits’ of the study guide ATOM highlight are similarly recognised and supported by Screen Australia who currently request a budget line item of $2500 be committed towards the creation of a guide in any documentary funded by the agency (see below). It should be noted this budget condition applies to documentary only, as opposed to feature films, further underscoring the long standing educative function of documentary in Australian classrooms.

Screen Australia requires the producer to supply an approved study guide publisher with:

- three DVDs of the finished project
- a press kit; and
- a post-production script
The cost of the study guide must be included in the production finance budget as a line item of $2500. If the publisher decides not to create a study guide, the $2500 can be applied to marketing expenses. The producer must seek Screen Australia’s approval of the choice of publisher (ATOM is pre-approved).

(Screen Australia, 2014)

In addition to Screen Australia’s institutional support for the value of study guides generally (and ATOM specifically), other significant players in the content distribution space such as Screenrights have also encouraged the creation and use of study guide bridging materials. Screenrights has long been vocal in their support of study guides across Australasia. In the 2009 Screen Australia Stage 2 review Screenrights argued for dedicated funding to continue for the guides in the context of their subsidiary and resource centre EnhanceTV which commands a membership of more than 17,000 educators, website traffic exceeding a million page views a month and study guide downloads of over 30,000 via EnhanceTV alone from 2006-2009. Screenrights argue the study guides ‘form an integral part of the service that is offered to education to support both the use of film and television in the classroom and the teaching of media literacy. Screenrights, would strongly urge that funding support for these guides continue in the future’ (Screenrights 2009).

Further supporting the contention that study guides act simultaneously as educative and economic drivers of documentary distribution in education, Screenrights (2009) also argue ‘there is strong anecdotal evidence to support the notion that the production of these guides increases the likelihood that a title will be copied and used in an educational environment thus increasing the returns to rightsholders’. By 2012 Screenrights had engaged their members in research to support the strong anecdotal evidence they cite.

Producers regularly tell us that study guides are an invaluable marketing tool, and that strong educational resources improve the likelihood of their programme being copied and used in the educational sector. In addition, Screenrights this year surveyed educators across Australia. More than 70 per cent of the teachers who responded said that the availability of a study guide would influence their decision whether or not to use a programme in class.

(Screenrights 2012)

If creation, download and use of study guides influences teacher decisions to use a program in class then it may follow these bridging materials have a direct impact on the $15-$16
million Screenrights return annually to documentary rights holders from the education market.

**Interactive digital study guides**

Recent efforts from ATOM to create study guides around individual films as apps for iOS and Android tablets demonstrate another innovative move forward for both educative function and potential new revenue streams for rightsholders. In partnership with Victorian cross-platform developers NMG, ATOM developed two interactive study guides in 2011 - *Oranges and Sunshine* and *Kapyong*. In 2012 this was followed with additional interactive guides for the feature film *Blame* and the documentaries *Wide Open Road* and *The Triangle Wars*. Outside of the increased potential for digital returns to rightsholders from the global education market, ATOM argues the interactivity of the study guides enhances the educational experience overall:

> With these interactive guides, clips from the film and other audiovisual material can be embedded, thus reinforcing the educational experience while simultaneously promoting the program to a global market. Embedded materials will allow for more challenging questions to be posed to students, as clips can be viewed a number of times before questions tailored to the scene are answered.  

(ATOM cited in *Inside Film*, 2011)

ATOM has identified three potential new education market revenue streams for rightsholders as a result of the interactive study guide initiative - direct sales of the study guide, copyright revenue from reproduction of the embedded material and sales of the film through the app itself. In addition, sales of the film via the app will be able to be geoblocked for specific territories, reflecting availability in different countries, as well as sold at varying institutional price points for schools, university’s or libraries.

On launching the interactive guides, ATOM director Peter Tapp further reinforced the benefits to rightsholders of an expanded education market arguing the interactive guides are the ‘first step in a new vision for screen education – one that is likely to lead to substantially increased returns for the Australian film industry’ (Poole 2011). Although the $6000 figure to produce the interactive study guide app is a significant investment above the $2500 for a standard guide, Tapp argues the additional cost warrants consideration having argued that ‘A study guide is really a marketing document in that they can’t be used effectively unless students have seen the film, which, in turn, encourages schools to buy the program. What is more, the market is international’ (Poole, 2011).
Just as the growing functionality of digital study guides allow embedding and linking to content which may have previously sat outside of the guides, such as links to filmmaker forums or filmmaker statements, other online initiatives enlist study guides as a key component of a broader strategy to link documentary with receptive education audiences. Emblematic of such an approach is newly launched online service, Film Platform which has partnered with international sales agents to create an website where filmmakers can connect directly with the education audiences in a dynamic, value added remunerative exchange that extends well beyond the film screening alone. Film Platform wishes to not only provide access to bridging material, but to effectively “be” the bridge between documentary and education audiences in the digital space.

**Conclusion**

Established distributors with high quality, broad appeal Australian screen content, whether documentary or fiction have not relied on education as either primary market or primary audience for their content. However, documentary filmmakers, conscious of the form’s longstanding educational use, are both aware of this valuable audience and wish to develop resources to engage them as evidenced by the responses and recurring study guide strategizing displayed in the DAF data. Charting the passage of successful DAF films with articulated education strategies through secondary school quality assurance provided by the ATOM awards and into the institutional collections of Universities’ and TAFE’s connected via WorldCat, underlines the need for ‘bridging materials’ to connect documentaries with education audiences. As the pedagogical benefits and remuneration potential of new digital bridging materials grows, the need for the documentary sector to appropriately plan and resource for the creation of digital study guides is underlined.

The Australian documentary sector will continue to create compelling work with both pedagogical relevance and remuneration potential for a receptive and copyright compliant education audience. Scholarly appreciation of the role of study guides as crucial bridging materials is arriving at the same time the potential of these materials is being significantly enhanced through digital affordances. While the demand for bridging materials seems assured, the challenge for both the education and documentary sectors is allocation of time and resources to allow ongoing digital development of these bridging materials. Innovation through digital enhancement and the creation of highly attenuated educational products will safeguard and heighten the distribution pathways of documentary through education.

**References**

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Screenrights. What We Do 2014 [cited 21/04/2014. Available from