

JISC Progress Report Template

Overview of Project

1. Grant Statement

I confirm that the project is being conducted under the terms agreed with JISC in the letter of grant and the JISC Terms and Conditions attached to it.

An extension to the CREE project to implement WSRP consumer and producer capability within the JA-SIG uPortal portal framework was agreed on 12th August 2004. The project plan for this is currently being developed, but it will become Workpackage 10 within the CREE project.

2. Aims and Objectives

There have been no changes to the original aims/objectives outlined in the project plan.

The following areas of work were scheduled to take place during the reporting period:

a. *Initial Literature Review*

As part of the initial investigations by CREE partners into the JSR 168 and WSRP standards, a body of literature has been gathered together. Due to recruitment difficulties at the University of Hull, it has not been able to appoint a researcher to pull this activity together and extend it as anticipated. The literature review is a top priority for the next reporting period; details of staffing changes to allow this are given below.

b. *Establish criteria for online survey, adapt an existing survey toolkit, and carry out survey*

The online survey has been developed successfully in collaboration with the CREE partners using the ICONEX survey toolkit. It has agreed between partners that the survey would be delayed until September/October to ensure a wider audience, rather than run it over the summer.

c. *Plan focus groups*

Preliminary discussions have taken place with CREE partners on the holding of focus groups. Detailed planning is scheduled for the autumn, to take full advantage of the results from the online survey.

d. *Initial investigation of JSR 168 and WSRP to assess feasibility of use with existing tools at CREE partner sites, and development of toolkits to enable the use of these standards*

The initial investigation has been undertaken successfully and details are reported later in this report. All sites carrying out development (Oxford JAFER team, EDINA, and the ADS) are currently developing JSR 168 toolkits for testing in October 2004.

3. Overall Approach

There have no changes to the overall approach taken by the project. In keeping with the subject being explored within CREE, the first six months have been largely taken up with background explorations of the issues at hand and the technologies involved. The past six months have also seen many developments in the field and we are grateful to have industrial media + magic (im+m) as a subcontractor keeping us up-to-date on these developments. The project is now in a position where it is able to progress within both user requirements and demonstrator development strands well and in parallel with each other as planned.

One particular area that has been identified for further development is the enhancement of the uPortal framework to incorporate WSRP. Initial investigations by CREE partners revealed that exposing their existing services and tools as JSR 168-compliant portlets was considered straightforward when compared to using WSRP. This was in part due to the relative maturity of the two standards, but also

the relative inability to test out WSRP in easily available frameworks, and the uneven implementation of the standard in those that have adopted it (e.g., Oracle, Sun and IBM). An extension proposal to enhance the open source uPortal portal framework by implementing was successful and this work will be appended to the CREE project plan in due course. The work will implement both producer capabilities, allowing uPortal to expose services using WSRP for others to make use of, and consumer capabilities, allowing uPortal to accept WSRP services from elsewhere. This will enhance the ability of the CREE project to test out a wider range of services within a portal and also enable the uPortal community as a whole to enhance the services they offer through the portal.

4. Project Outputs

The following project outputs have been either completed or are in progress at this time:

Deliverable	Name	Status
S1D1	Literature review	Ongoing - completion 15 th October 2004
S1D2	Criteria for evaluation of existing use (survey development)	Completed
S1D3	Survey toolkit adaptation	Completed
S1D4	Criteria for focus groups	Ongoing - completion 30 th September 2004
S2D1	Summary investigation JSR 168/WSRP	Ongoing - completion 31 st August 2004
S2D2-5	Initial investigation of JSR 168 and WSRP for existing toolkits	Ongoing - partners have submitted initial notes on their investigations and are ongoing with more detailed documentation during software development
S2S1-4	Adapted tools and toolkits using JSR 168 and WSRP	Ongoing - completion of JSR 168 portlets by 30 th September 2004. WSRP development will await the extension activity described in section 3.

Two project meetings have taken place, on 16th February 2004 and 24th May 2004. The CREE project website is available at <http://www.hull.ac.uk/esig/cree/>

5. Project Outcomes

Summarise achievement against objectives, list outcomes and findings to date, and any interim conclusions.

The first six months of the CREE project have been exploratory in nature, but very beneficial for that. The initial investigation of JSR 168 and WSRP by the CREE partners has revealed that exposing their existing services via the former appears to be far more straightforward than using the latter. This initial conclusion coincided with a wider community desire (evidenced by projects within the JISC and in the US) to enable WSRP more easily so that services could be exposed via this route. In order to benefit both the project and the wider community, therefore, it was felt appropriate to submit an extension proposal to CREE to fully enable the uPortal framework to use WSRP and allow developmental progress on a number of fronts. This extension has raised the profile of CREE in the US and there has been much interest in what the project is aiming to do.

Notwithstanding this conclusion regarding WSRP, the CREE partners all concluded also that exposing their services using JSR 168 was feasible and are working towards this by the end of September 2004. This will provide a range of portlets that can be tested within the CREE demonstrator and used as part of the user requirements analysis later in the project. The experience of developing these portlets will be documented for wider dissemination to the community.

The CREE partners have also contributed towards the literature review as part of their technical investigations and this information will be collated and included within the wider literature review.

The first six months have also been used productively to develop the criteria for a national online user survey and the adaptation of an existing survey toolkit (developed as part of the ICONEX 5/99 project)

to carry this out. Once launched it is expected that this will attract wide interest and a wide response. It has been a valuable experience working across the partners, as each as their own slightly different requirements. But this has increased awareness of each other's needs and the background within which each partner is working.

How do you see the project developing? Has progress changed the project in any way, and are there implications for the programme?

The project has reached a point where it is now able to kick-start a range of productive activities that will run parallel but also feed into each other over the next reporting period. The project is still intending to run as planned, and has been able to take on board wider developments as they have occurred. It is intended that CREE should continue to be able to do this over the rest of its lifetime. The extension work on WSRP may affect the timetabling of the project slightly, but it is not expected to have a large impact.

What lessons have been learned that could be passed on to other projects or applied elsewhere?

Working with a wide range of partners and in a field that is developing rapidly, it has been important to ensure that all partners are aware of what stage CREE is at and what is required of them. If wider developments mean that it would be advantageous for CREE to alter its direction or methods, and CREE has endeavoured to place itself in a position where it can adapt, it will be important to ensure this does not conflict with the aims of the partners and the project as a whole.

6. Stakeholder Analysis

One of the parallel strands of activity within the CREE project is a user requirements analysis. Engagement with users, covering all those involved in learning, teaching and research, will commence shortly through the CREE survey, and be followed up with the holding of a number of focus groups at the different CREE partner sites.

CREE has also attracted a lot of interest from the communities involved in working with the uPortal framework and the JSR 168 and WSRP standards, in particular with regard to the use of these standards to deliver library search functionality within a portal. Our sub-contractors, im+m, are keeping the project up-to-date with developments as they are closely involved in these communities, and CREE will seek to feed experience and outcomes into these as appropriate.

The University of Hull has recently joined the Sakai Educational Partners Program (SEPP) and is actively involved in exploring the use of the Sakai framework within the University. This investigation, primarily for e-learning purposes, will feed into the CREE project and experience on the delivery of library services will be fed back into Sakai. The University of Indiana, a core Sakai partner, has expressed interest in using the CREE survey and this is being further explored.

Through the CREE partners, the project is working with and talking to national service providers (at EDINA and the ADS) and the experience of CREE will feed into their wider development plans.

7. Risk Analysis

Staffing - due to recruitment delays and the lack of a suitable candidate, it was not possible to recruit a researcher, and this is mainly the cause of the literature review being delayed. A sub-contractor has been identified to take on this work, which will be shared with the Project Manager, and details are currently being finalised. Additional technical staff have been brought into the project at two CREE partners, to bring on board greater experience of the technologies involved (Java). This has had a beneficial effect on the project. The project suffered minor disruption from the change of Project Manager halfway through the reporting period and an office re-organisation at Hull, although neither have had a knock-on effect.

Technical - the investigations into JSR 168 and WSRP have revealed that use of the latter may not be as straightforward as had been hoped. The CREE extension work will help towards alleviating this, but delays in the use of WSRP to expose services will result. This is currently being assessed, but it

is not thought to be too much of an ongoing problem, as this work will either feed into the refining of the toolkits scheduled for the autumn (Workpackage 7) or require an extension of Workpackage 6.

8. Standards

The standards to be used within CREE remain the same: z39.50, JSR 168, and WSRP. There has been a great deal of interest in the use of SRW in recent months, and CREE is investigating to what extent this standard might be used as well - the JAFER team have developed SRW access to JAFER already, and the Xgrain team are working on this.

9. Technical Development

No changes have occurred in the development approach or technologies being used.

10. Intellectual Property Rights

The project is currently clarifying the ownership of IPR in the existing tools being used within CREE and the developments that will be carried out to enhance these and deliver them using JSR 168 and/or WSRP. All IPR is planned to remain with the existing holder of a tool.

CREE will also be investigating the use of Google alongside the toolkits being developed to assess how users interact with these when made available together. The issue of a licence for Google being required to use the Google API in this fashion has arisen and is being explored by im+m.

Project Resources

11. Project Partners

Explain any changes to the institutional project partners or subcontractors, and any impacts this has/will have on the project or schedule.

The Archaeology Data Service has expressed interest in making use of the CREE survey within a wider user analysis they are carrying out on behalf of HEIRNET this autumn. We are working with them to see how the results of this work might possibly feed into the overall CREE survey results. Different staff are responsible for this work at ADS and the technical work they are undertaking for CREE is not expected to be affected by it.

As reported elsewhere, CREE has been awarded extension funding to develop WSRP capability within uPortal. This work will be carried out by im+m, but will not affect existing commitments (indeed, it is hoped to help with these!).

What other institutions or organisations are you or do you plan to collaborate with?

The University of Hull will be acting as a testbed for the outputs for the E-Learning Frameworks (ELF) Connect Embedder project, which is itself an extension of the Connect Learning & Teaching Portal. We are also investigating links with the MDC and d+ projects within the ELF programme through our partners at EDINA and JAFER, particularly with reference to their work with SRW.

12. Project Management

Chris Awre took over as Project Manager from 1st July 2004, with Ian Dolphin becoming Project Director.

The University of Hull has not been able to appoint a researcher for CREE due to administrative difficulties and the lack of a suitable candidate. A consultant has been identified to carry out this work (primarily the literature review). This has meant that the literature review is slightly behind schedule; the first phase of this will now be completed by the middle of October.

Both the Archaeology Data Service and EDINA have brought other existing members of staff on board to work on and advise on CREE. This has strengthened the knowledge and skill base available to the project and is welcomed.

13. Programme Support

Summarise contact with/influence of the programme, e.g. with the programme manager, formal or informal links with other projects, or programme-related activities.

It is understood that programme support is currently in transition due to staff changes. Support so far has been welcome and timely, and mainly at the beginning of the project during the set-up phase.

What further support would you like from the programme, e.g. guidance, workshops, etc?

Bearing in mind the recent re-writing of the Standards document, it would be useful to hold a series of workshops on the standards covered within these for project staff. This will assist with implementation and provide a space for questions to be raised and contacts made, increasing experience.

14. Budget

Use the budget template to report expenditure against and attach as Appendix A. Explain the reasons for any significant overspend or underspend.

See attached.

Detailed Project Planning

15. Workpackages

Report progress against plan, noting key activities during the reporting period. Explain why any targets haven't been met.

Workpackage 1: Desk-based research

The initial literature review (Deliverable S1D1) has been delayed due to administrative difficulties and the lack of a suitable candidate for the post of researcher to carry out the work for this workpackage. A consultant has been identified to take the work forward and this will be done in conjunction with the Project Manager. It is intended to complete this first phase of the literature review by 15th October.

Workpackage 2: Online survey

Criteria for the online survey were established in conjunction with user requirements analysis partners (S1D2) and these were used to construct an online survey to examine current usage of online services. This survey has been built using a toolkit designed as part of the ICONEX 5/99 project (S1D3). It was originally planned to launch the survey in July, but this has been postponed until September 2004 in order to increase the range of respondents available. Analysis of the results is planned to take place prior to the focus groups being held in November.

Workpackage 3: Focus Groups

Criteria for the focus groups are currently being established in conjunction with user requirements analysis partners (S1D4).

Workpackage 5: Investigation of the potential of JSR 168 and WSRP for search integration within a conformant portal

Notes on the initial investigations by partners into the use of JSR 168 and WSRP have been completed (S2D2-5) and will be brought together in a summary report (S2D1).

Workpackage 6: Initial toolkit adaptation

All partners are currently developing JSR 168 portlets to enable their tools to be surfaced within a portal, and it is intended that this work will be completed by 30th September 2004 (S2S1-4). WSRP development has been postponed on the whole pending work on the CREE extension funding proposal. However, initial investigations are ongoing within the JAFER team.

Other workpackages have not yet started.

List objectives for the next reporting period, note if any changes to plan are needed, and explain why.

Workpackage 1 - The initial literature review will take place, with an intended completion date of 15th October. It is not planned to complete the final literature review until the end of the project, but is intended to maintain a watching brief throughout the project and feed in what is learnt as we go along.

Workpackage 2 - The online survey will be launched in early September and data will be collected throughout the remainder of the project. Initial data analysis will take place in October to inform the focus groups. The survey will also be revised with a view to re-launching it in Spring 2005 to get responses based on experience so far.

Workpackage 3 - Criteria for the focus groups will be finalised and focus groups themselves organised at all user requirements analysis partner sites during November. The Archaeology Data Service may also host a focus group as part of their HEIRNET work, though this is to be confirmed. Planning for focus groups in early 2005 to test out the portlets developed will also take place.

Workpackage 5 - An extended version of the summary investigation into the use of JSR 168 and WSRP will be written, to draw together ongoing investigations from partners and reflect the experience they gain from developing portlets. This will be finalised by the middle of November.

Workpackage 6 - Delivery of the initial portlets will conclude this workpackage. WSRP development may result in this workpackage being extended.

Workpackage 7 - Iterations of the toolkits will take place during the remainder of the project and involve all technical partners.

Other workpackages are not scheduled to start during the next reporting period. No changes to the project plan are required, with the exception of adding Workpackage 10 following the recent award of CREE extension funding.

16. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation planned by the project is as stated in the project plan, and is due to commence in September 2004. There may be slight delays in taking forward some of the evaluations due to minor delays reported above, but these are not thought to affect the evaluation in any way.

17. Quality Assurance Plan

As with evaluation, the QA planned by the project is as stated in the project plan, and is due to commence in September 2004.

18. Dissemination Plan

The CREE project is disseminating its findings and work through its website on an ongoing basis, and this is currently being re-designed and updated.

CREE was announced as part of a presentation on the PORTAL project by the Project Manager at a FAIR Programme Synthesis meeting, held in Brighton on 6th July as part of the JISC Joint Programmes Meeting. The Programme Director has also announced CREE in presentations and meetings held over the last six months.

im+m have disseminated CREE to audiences in the US working on the standards CREE is investigating. The response has been good and further collaboration is being sought with interested parties.

19. Exit/Sustainability Plan

The Sustainability Plan is as stated in the project plan. The main outputs from the project will be documents, which will be made available via the project website, and software, which will be made available through the OS community. Further investigations of how this might best be achieved will be carried out in the next reporting period.

Appendixes

Appendix A. Project Budget

Chris Awre
August 2004