Selling our Services: Spreading the Word BoF

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DESCRIPTION

It is in the eResearch community’s interest to see eResearch succeed, and succeed quickly. That is easier said than done. What are the impediments to advocating the benefits of eResearch? And how might we overcome them? A panel of those involved in communication and engagement strategies across the sector shares their experiences.

One of eight priorities, “Marketing and cultural change - co-ordinate efforts to raise the visibility of services and highlight the benefits” emerged from the inaugural AeRO forum in Sydney 20 Feb 2012. The Selling our Services BoF is an opportunity to connect with others in the eResearch community who share a mutual interest if not the specific role of communicating the benefits of eResearch. The audience for the session is identified as eResearch support staff or ‘professional intermediaries’, i.e. data managers, librarians, IT staff, software developers, eResearch analysts and managers. This BoF is an informal session focused on coordinating efforts to raise the visibility of services and highlight benefits, increase awareness and gather ideas.

This BoF is a collaborative effort from several members of the AeRO (Australian eResearch Organisations) Communications group: Intersect, eRSA, AAF, CAUDIT and RDSI, convened with the aim of coordinating our efforts to achieve greater effectiveness.

OUTLINE

Using their collective knowledge, the panel will share their experience highlighting some of the challenges met while ‘spreading the message’. Key questions/issues to be covered include:

- Language: the language we use is unlike the one the rest of the planet speaks and writes. Terms used to describe eResearch and eResearch tools aren’t well understood.
- Awareness: how do we identify the user/client base? The people we are talking to about eResearch are those who have already realised it’s usefulness. How do we reach the people we know we don’t know?
- Impact: We sell our services by selling the impact on research. That’s an easy sell to those whose research is amenable to computation. To others data management, security and back up are seen as needless overhead. What is the best way to interact with non-core eResearch disciplines?
- Embedding communication: Can we entertain the idea of a ‘best practice’ solution? Could we for instance embed a strategy into the eResearch project lifecycle to include communications, key contacts, advocacy etc?
- Funding: eResearch is expensive. While we have good institutional support today, our future depends on broadening and deepening our client base. How do smaller research groups fund eResearch?
- Investment: Most researchers will choose to fund their team’s research rather than the long-term investments required for research infrastructure. What are the optimal funding structures and metrics to adopt in getting the balance of investment right?
- eResearch demands a different skill set to research. How do we take people through that change?
- Resourcing: We aim to share information on existing resources to maximise ‘bang for buck’. Participants are invited to join the AeRO Communications mail list.
Following the panel presentations and Q & A, discussion will be opened up with a focus on generating ideas to meet the challenges brought to light by the panel. As further objectives, the BoF is intended to raise awareness, enlist greater sharing of resources and encourage better engagement between the eResearch support staff and their clients.

**Introduction/ welcome:** Brief background, introductions, outline the session.

*4 minutes*

**Panel and convenor Q & A:** Speakers address the issues as they see them, sharing their experiences and theories.

*20 minutes*

**Group discussion:** Engage the audience to contribute observations, speculations and ideas.

*30 minutes*

**Wrap-up:** The call to action. Where to from here?

*5 minutes*

**REFERENCES**

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   Co-developing eResearch infrastructure: Technology-enhanced research practices, attitudes and requirements
   Summary Report
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**ABOUT THE SPEAKERS (SPEAKERS TBC)**

**Leonie Hellmers (Convenor)** is Communications Manager for Intersect Australia, Leonie has worked in the digital realm for 17 years: with the National Portrait Gallery, the National Gallery of Australia, Fairfax, Brainwaave Interactive, founding the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online (now Design and Art Australia Online) in 2007. She delivered communication solutions for the Australia Council, Australian Heritage Commission and the private sector, and worked extensively as a journalist, broadcaster and reviewer. Leonie has a BA in Fine Arts, Literature and Politics from the University of Sydney.

**Dr Joe Thurbon** is Intersect’s Member Services Manager. He has a research background in logic and diagrammatic reasoning, and has practiced software engineering for almost 20 years. Prior to joining Intersect, Joe worked at CISRA, Canon’s Australian R&D company, researching and developing machine learning approaches to image processing problems. Joe has a BSc (Hons) from the University of Sydney in computer science and psychology, and a PhD in computer science from the University of New South Wales.

**Patricia McMillan** is Director, Strategic Initiatives & Member Services for CAUDIT. Patricia has 17 years experience in IT and broad experience across the sector, having worked at the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney, Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology, and Carnegie Mellon University. She has worked with the Australian Access Federation (AAF), the Middleware Action Plan and Strategy Project (MAPS), and the Research Data Storage Infrastructure Project (RDSI). She was the founding Program Director of the eResearch Australasia conference. Patricia has a Graduate Certificate in Management from the Macquarie Graduate School of Management, a Master of Science in Library Science, and a BA.

**Glenys Kranz** is the Service Delivery Manager at the Australian Access Federation (AAF). Glenys was appointed to support the AAF’s operations and to engage with the higher education and research sectors to promote the value proposition of the federation. Glenys has a background as a Human Resource Management professional and has worked in the tertiary education sector for over 20 years. A role on the PeopleSoft Implementation project led to undertaking further project work and the opportunity to tutor undergraduate and postgraduate students in HR Information Systems (HRIS) before a permanent move into project management as a Change/Communications Manager. Now that the AAF has reached critical mass,
engagement with AAF subscribers to promote and increase the awareness of federated services is a key activity for Glenys.