

Formative Report Template for period 1st October 2002 – 28th February 2003

1. Project Details

The INFORMS Project
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2. Activities and Progress

(Please note -as the 5/99 INHALE Project and INFORMS Project inextricably overlap in some areas, most notably in the area of dissemination of the database developments, some of the activities under the aegis of and reported for the INHALE Project also apply to the INFORMS project).

Tasks or Activities for period to 31 January 2003	Planned Completion Date	Actual/Predicted Completion date	Explanation for an slippage or changes to original plan
Workpackage 1- Informs Dissemination Tool Set up web site/design logo/discussion board/shared content areas and test.	Nov/02	Completed	
Workpackage 2 – Database Documentation & Support. Write, disseminate & test database instructions with partners. Continue updating & amending as database developed.	Version 1 Nov/02 Continuous to Jul/03	Completed Nov/02 Jul/03	
Workpackage 3- Evaluation Strategy Create strategy for evaluation with partners Modify evaluation instruments	Dec/02 Dec/02	Completed Completed	
Workpackage 4- Identify academic staff & modules to be included in the project	Dec/02	Completed	
Workpackage 5- Workshops for partner project teams &	Dec/02	Completed	

relevant key academic/library & technical staff on project database, additional tools & methods. Additional Workshops, as required, the project progresses	Ongoing to Apr/03	Apr/03	
Workpackage 6- Identification of key resources for new units	Dec/02	Completed	
Workpackage 7- Creation of new information skills units/re-purposing of existing units	Jan/03	Completed	
Workpackage 8- Baseline Skills audit of students/academic staff & library staff. Dissemination & collection of survey questionnaires at partner sites.	Underway Jan-Feb/03	Mar/03	
Workpackage 9- Publicity Create project logo/ write news items to the web site/write articles to key publications.	Underway & ongoing to Jul/03	Jul/03	
Workpackage 10- Embedding/testing new units in modules	Underway to June/03	June/03	

3. Learning from the process of implementation

So far the project is delivering to plan, which in itself is a learning process since this is so far demonstrating that: -

- it has been easy for the partner institutions to use the methodology for creating information skills units in the INFORMS database
- the evaluation methodology developed by the INHALE project has transferred to the other institutions relatively easily

- the start-up template used for recording discussions and plans for incorporating the INFORMS information skills materials into modules has been successfully used by the University of Loughborough

Differences in the delivery of teaching at the University of Oxford, where courses are not modularised, and direct access to the teaching time by anyone other than tutors is not the norm, has meant that some aspects of the transfer of the INHALE project methodology to Oxford is requiring a different approach: -

- it has not been possible to have much academic input into the preparation of customised information skills units for the chosen courses
- the pre- and post-test evaluations of the use made of the information skills resources, normally run via the course tutors, have not yet been possible
- the faculty librarians, led by the e-learning department, are the main support for delivery of the pre- and post-test evaluation surveys (as opposed to academic tutor and librarian support in the original INHALE model)

4. Evaluation activities

The main evaluation instruments, i.e. the Baseline survey and the more detailed Pre and Post-test surveys, prepared originally for the INHALE project have been customised by the partner sites for use within their own institutions. Customisation was fairly simple and, on the whole, transferred across the institutions without too much re-editing.

Most of the editing required, not surprisingly, since the INHALE surveys included questions that related to health information resources, was in the questions that were pertaining to specific subject information resources. Also as the original questionnaires referred extensively to the DNER this also had to be edited out.

So far, the Baseline survey has been administered at both Loughborough and Oxford, whilst the Pre-test surveys have been delivered in 2 modules at Loughborough.

Two key developments in the evaluation methodology have been: -

- the development of scripts to analyse the web logs from the Inhale/INFORMS database. This has been triangulated against the previous INHALE evaluations to test its efficacy. The results have been informative and the project team are planning to disseminate the learning from this
- scripts have also been created to enable the automatic collection of all the completed online surveys and these can then be uploaded in large batches to SPSS (as opposed to individual survey data entry- which is exceptionally time-consuming).

The INFORMS discussion board is proving to be a useful tool in the dissemination of information, for collecting the problems being encountered and the developments being made. It will be particularly useful as a record to re-visit towards the end of the project to review the progress of the project.

Programme Level Evaluation Activities

The INFORMS evaluation officer gave a presentation on the methodologies used for evaluating information skills for the INHALE and INFORMS projects to the 5/99, X4L and FAIR Programmes at the joint Programme meeting 31st October 2002.

The INFORMS Project Director and Advanced Web Developer and partners from the INHALE project ran a hands-on workshop on editing the units in the INFORMS database of information skills materials online at the JISC “Creating Environments for Learning: VLEs, MLEs, Digital Libraries and Middleware” event at Birmingham on December 3rd, 2002.

The workshop was used to assess the possible usefulness and interest of the database to the HE/FE community as well as introducing some of the pedagogical issues of embedding the materials in VLEs. This event was of value to the project – a few of those who expressed interest now have their own portfolios. One contact (University of Glamorgan) invited the project to present to the UCR Group in Wales at which the infrastructure and pedagogical issues surrounding the successful introduction of information skills teaching were well discussed.

10th February, JISC X4L Programme on Learning Object Repositories. The project team participated in the reporting back to the X4L programme on the tests made in uploading resources to Intralibrary. The team are also continuing testing Intralibrary as well as planning to test the Xtensis repository.

The INFORMS Project is collaborating with the ILT to run a benchmarking and evaluation event on information skills teaching at the University of Huddersfield on 2nd April, 2003.

5. Address the needs of accessibility

Style sheets are in use to automatically create accessible versions of the information skills units in the INFORMS database (as far as is possible with those parts that the project has control over).

Consideration is currently being given to the testing out of the information skills units using Jaws or other compatible text reader software.

The accessibility work of the project is being disseminated to key disability support, teaching, technical, project and library staff at the University of Huddersfield.

6. Dissemination Activities

After the first DiVLE programme meeting of 25th October 2002, initial workshops were run at Loughborough University and the University of Oxford on November 11th and 12th. Since the 1st Steering Group Meeting of December 9th contact with the partners has been mostly via the INFORMS discussion group.

Contact was also made with the East Midlands Regional Support Centre and whilst interest in being part of the Steering group was expressed by the RSC – no action was made on their part to continue the contact.

The following national dissemination activities have been undertaken: -

- presentation on the evaluation methodology being used by the project at the 5/99, X4L and Fair joint programme meeting on 31st October, 2002 at the University of Nottingham

- presentation of the work of the project to TFPL, London 12th December, 2002
- presentation, demonstration and workshop on using the INFORMS database at JISC Birmingham event “Creating Environments for Learning VLEs, MLEs, Digital Libraries and Middleware”, on December 3rd 2002
- meeting with the PORTOLE project, 22nd January 2003 to discuss sharing of pedagogical design issues and technical details of the INFORMS database
- presentation to the Wales UCR Group, 5th February at the University of Glamorgan
- meeting with representative from Sheffield Hallam University (Infoquest) to discuss and share common areas being developed e.g. metadata
- presentations on the evaluation methodology and the INFORMS database to Midland’s UCR Group at Nottingham Trent University, 19th February
- presentation to the DiVLE COLIS event 28th February
- discussion with VTS on common areas of work (e.g. metadata and the methods of online editing of resources in the respective databases) plus possible areas for collaboration, held 7th March in Bristol.

Future dissemination plans include: -

- March 14th University of Coventry, workshop on the use of the INFORMS resources
- Joint event with the ILT on benchmarking and evaluation, 2nd April 2003
- Invitation to write a reviewed article for the New Review of Information Networking on the INFORMS Project
- Article for CILIP UPDATE on the use of web logs to triangulate evaluation results

7. Project Outputs and Results

The project partners have written additional units to the database for the 6 new subjects as planned in work package 7 and are linking these into their VLEs as per



Learn screen
shots.doc

work package 10, (LEARN at Loughborough and Bodington at Oxford-
<http://www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/bodington/site/testarea/informs1/>).

- Interest in the project database has increased through the various demonstrations and presentations for both the INHALE and INFORMS projects as detailed in the Dissemination Section 6.

The web logs from the INFORMS database list the institutions that are making use of the database (some are using the freely available INHALE portfolio of materials). They are also set up to give some “indication” of the use being made of each unit and each step in the units. (there is still some work to be undertaken on this hence the use of the word “indication”- the statistics cannot yet be considered to be clear evidence of use). The file of the latest web log statistics is included here: -



web log March 2003.txt

We hope that the project's outputs will eventually have some impact on raising the awareness of the HE/FE community's knowledge of

- the pedagogy of Information Skills

that the case studies produced by the partner institutions may be: -

- used as examples of embedding information skills teaching into VLEs to be built upon

or for those institutions where information skills is not a high priority that the project's work may be: -

- used as a lever for involving academic staff in information skills teaching

and that the database will enable librarians: -

- to develop their skills in creating resources for the Internet

8. Collaborations

Please see details of meetings with other projects in Section 6, Dissemination Activities and also Section 7, Project Outputs and Results.

Discussions are currently underway with VTS in which we are looking at and investigating a number of possibilities that may have national significance in relation to the range of the JISC's Information Skills resources.

We are also supplying the VTS with data relating to the student use being made of one of the INFORMS database units (Evaluating Web Sites) that incorporates some of the VTS material.

Contact has also been made with the JISC funded CHCC (Census Learning and Teaching Project) with the possibility of collaboration in the near future in disseminating the teaching and learning materials produced by CHCC at Huddersfield University. CHCC are also interested in the methods used by the INHALE/INFORMS project to embed resources in the Blackboard VLE at Huddersfield.

9. Future developments

The project is set to follow the initial project plan and other than the possibility of moving the INFORMS database to a server external to the University of Huddersfield there are no other foreseen changes.

At some time in the future it might be worthwhile to pool all the DiVLE case studies for embedding resources within VLEs and to build an event around these.

10. Feedback to the Programme Manager

The project is currently experiencing difficulties with the speed of the web server at Huddersfield. This is having a knock-on effect for the project partners. An urgent meeting is being planned with the head of the University of Huddersfield's Computing Services to look at all the possible solutions to this. However it is by no means certain that a suitable solution at Huddersfield will be forthcoming in the near future. Therefore it might be necessary to explore other avenues for the hosting of the INFORMS database. Possible solutions might be to arrange for the database to be

hosted at MIMAS or EDINA, at one of the INFORMS partner sites or with a commercial hosting service.

The project would welcome some support or guidance on this if possible in the near future should this be necessary.

All the events organised by the different programmes (5/99, DiVLE, X4L) have been of value to the project: -

- the JISC 5/99 conference “Creating Environments for Learning: VLEs, MLEs, Digital Libraries and Middleware” event at Birmingham on December 3rd, 2002 was instrumental in garnering further uptake of the INFORMS database as well as providing experience for the project team in the delivery of training on the functionality of the database
- the X4L Programme meeting in Manchester on Learning Object Repositories, 10th February and access to the repositories has been very useful. Having the practical experience of the key metadata elements, as opposed to the theoretical knowledge, makes all the difference. We have found that this has enabled us to begin to have some clarity on what metadata elements we will be choosing to use. It has also enabled us to think more clearly about the indexing vocabularies and classification schema we will use.
- the DiVLE COLIS event held on 28th February provided an invaluable insight into the progress of IMS and its relation to the work being undertaken by the JISC and its projects