

HUMANE

Heads of University Management & Administration Network in Europe

SEMINAR

University of Exeter

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Information and Communication Technology

ABSTRACTS

Session 1

High-speed Regional Networks - Creating Opportunities

Dr Laurie Burbridge: (Former Director of IT Services, University of Exeter)

This paper describes the national and regional factors that led to the formation of the new South West England Regional Network (SWERN). The original reasons for the development of the network are discussed, together with the various problems which were encountered. We shall also describe the nature of the resulting network and its place within the national high-performance network for UK Universities (SuperJANET 4).

The paper then considers the advantages that the new network has brought to the region and describes a number of new and exciting projects which have been made possible by the presence of the new network. These advantages were unexpected, and were not part of the original case for setting up the network. Overall, our argument is that the presence of a high-performance networking infrastructure can bring real advantages to a region, outweighing by far any problems and difficulties. Universities can play an important role in facilitating such developments.

Particular projects that have been made possible by the new network include the innovative new Peninsula Medical School and a new University campus in Cornwall. The paper will explain how these projects were made possible by the new high-speed regional network.

Session 2

Universia: Shifting The Power to our Universities

Javier Sagi-Vela, UNIVERSIA (ES)

On 9 July 2000, the Santander Central Hispano Group, together with 34 Spanish Universities, the Conference of Chancellors of the Spanish Universities and the Higher Council of Scientific Research, launched an innovative Internet-based project, called the Universia portal (www.universia.net). For the first time, a ground-breaking joint initiative between public and private universities and the private sector, attempted to promote and disseminate the vast wealth of information, knowledge and on-going research produced in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world. Barely a year and a half after its inception,

Universia has expanded into an unparalleled global project encompassing over 600 universities, with about seven million students in ten Ibero-American countries. Moreover, Universia has become a case study for international collaboration between higher education and the private sector.

Today, Universia is rapidly becoming the point of reference for the rest of the higher education world when exploiting the World Wide Web. Thanks to the commitment of the Santander Central Hispano Group, one of the largest and most innovative banks in the world, all the universities are joining forces. As part of the support which the Bank has given to the universities, particularly over the last four years, the Santander Central Hispano Group has devoted \$60 million globally to provide development funds for the Portal and to guarantee its development for a minimum of three years. This makes the universities essential partners of Universia. In each of the ten countries where Universia is currently established, the universities have become shareholders with active decision-making through its Board of directors and specialist committees. Furthermore, all the dividends generated by the Project will be distributed among the partner universities, while the Bank is committed to re-investing 100% of its dividend share in the Portal. In addition, most professionals working for Universia worldwide come from a university or from other academic backgrounds. This mélange of knowledge, experience and resources has made Universia a soundly-based project, sensitive and responsive to the challenges and special situations faced by our universities in today's inter-related world.

Together with the individual universities, the Universia portal is developing a completely new infrastructure which lays the path towards a completely new way of creating, exchanging and delivering services and products. Universia is bringing the Hispanic world to the forefront of innovation and technological development by uniting and complementing the dynamic ideas and projects of our Ibero-American universities. Thus, Universia has provided an infrastructure which makes it easier to decide on the best trade-offs, and generally to facilitate the decision-making processes of partner universities.

Some facts:

- 653 universities are shareholders of Universia (7,500,000 students)
- 12,000,000 web page "hits" per month
- 400 university libraries
- 100 university Presidents are members of the national Board of Directors

Session 3

eLearning – Factors for University Management & Administration

Tim Hall: Director, Ulim-EMRC, University of Limerick.

What is eLearning? It is an umbrella term for the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) as the vehicle to deliver material to learners. There are many types or "flavours", ranging from simply giving students access to lecture material over the internal network to providing entire courses, via the Internet, to students engaged in distance-learning.

How are universities involved? Most have some level of eLearning implementation, ranging from *ad hoc* use by individual staff to formal, centrally-supported programmes, but most commonly ICT is used in a hybrid on-campus form.

Should eLearning be left to develop on its own, championed by the academics and IT people? Maybe! However, there are resource implications and other pressures which show this not to be the best approach.

The Information Society is eroding the conventional view of the University as the place where knowledge is to be had. Ideas of lifelong learning are changing society's views on how and when people learn. Demographic and financial pressures mean universities have to fight for students and funds. In addition to these various external factors, eLearning is another element which cannot be ignored.

Within the university other factors are at play. IT managers may predict that wider use of eLearning will clog up the computer network or require huge investment in ICT. Academics may see the move to eLearning as a way of releasing more time for research. Students may see eLearning as an alternative to boring lectures; they and their parents may see it as the “in” thing and demand it.

What is the real promise that eLearning holds for universities? Some possibilities are:

- more effective teaching of large groups
- potential for individualisation of learning, particularly at post-graduate level
- consistency in educational quality
- merging of on- and off-campus learning
- academics being seen as mentors, not teachers.

Some possible routes to the implementation of eLearning which might be initiated and supported by university management are:

- a virtual campus building as a metaphor,
- supporting champions as exemplars,
- an eLearning company approach
- an eLearning support unit.

There are also other factors to take into account. For example, most academics lack knowledge in ODL techniques, while students do not instinctively know how to use eLearning. Meanwhile, the development of one hour of good eLearning takes about 110 hours, and needs very careful planning by a team.

However, these are not the real problems. Successful eLearning should be carried on within a Learning Management System (LMS) which is integrated into the central student record system (registration, student progression, assessment, timetabling etc). Perhaps this seems a scary concept, but it is at this level that a centralised approach is best taken.

eLearning is here! Go slow on it at your own peril, because others won't. Meanwhile, just coming over the horizon is ... mLearning – but more on that at the seminar!

Session 4

The recent achievements of Italian universities in e-procurement fields:

Luigi Pace, Consip S.p.a.

Francesco Savonitto, Head of Administration at the University of Udine

The presentation will describe the Italian e-procurement business model, as applied to the public sector in general and to the higher education system in particular. It will illustrate the rationalisation of public spending and the extension, or broadening, of a shared web-based system for purchasing.

The Italian Government is promoting the development of E-Procurement models to rationalise the public expenditure for goods and services. It is worthy of note that the government objective for the year 2005 is to have at least half of the total expenditure for goods and services done through e-procurement models.

Consip, a limited company totally owned by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, has been in charge of this process for a couple of years. The initiative involves putting the e-procurement models in place, targeting three main objectives:

- cost saving
- simplification of the purchasing process
- transparency.

Three e-procurement models are being introduced: **electronic catalogues** (where "common" goods and services are offered on the basis of large frame contracts), **on-line auctions** (used to purchase more "specific" goods) and **market-place** (designed for highly fragmented expenditure categories, such as stationery). The first two models have been already implemented while the market place is going to be introduced by early 2003.

The project, which at first was conceived only for the administration of central government, has later been considered with increasing interest by other public administration offices such as health agencies, local government and universities, especially those who were more eager to foster innovation and organisational change.

The University system in Italy is responding to the project in a very positive way. Many new purchasing formulas have been introduced through web technologies as well as standard framework agreements for certain types of goods and services categories.

To date, we have achieved significant results as about 80,000 purchases have been made through Consip's electronic catalogue, leading to an average saving of about 31%. Also, a number of on-line auctions have been carried out on a trial basis, leading to an average saving of 35% in terms of standard prices. Moreover, the use of on-line orders has allowed the various forms of public administration to hugely simplify the overall process of acquiring goods by eliminating "no added-value" steps within the procurement process, thereby reducing the time involved compared to the previous system.

The presentation will emphasise the savings which universities have achieved and the further advantages to be obtained through the application of the e-procurement models to the various categories of goods and services. Illustrations of good practice will be given with specific reference to typical situations found in the university world.

The e-procurement web portal designed and developed by the company Consip S.p.a. will also be on display and commented on by the presenters.

Session 5

Leading a Horse to Water: Success & Failure in IT Projects

Claire Surridge: Project Leader, EVINCE (based at the University of Reading)

Daniel Neyland

EVINCE (www.reading.ac.uk/EVINCE) is a HEFCE project, supported by the Development of Good Management Practice Fund. It is using three case studies across two HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) to investigate and analyse the social and cultural issues surrounding the initiation and implementation of IT projects. It was conceived

- following major failures within an IT-related project (where the actual technology had worked well!)
- from the need to address information strategy issues,
- and with an aim of better understanding what makes the difference between success and failure in IT-related projects.

So far this has involved EVINCE looking at issues concerning information strategy and auditing process, together with questions surrounding the definitions and identification of project success and failure. We anticipate drawing these threads together in the context of organisational structure, culture and social relations. This paper will present an analysis of two of those issues – the notion of 'success' in the context of information strategy.

Is success defined? When? How? By whom, or what? In what context? How is it then identified?

The answers to all these questions can be crucial to the development of a(n IT) project. Furthermore, the re-negotiation of what counts as success throughout a project life cycle (and perhaps beyond) is fundamental to the progress of that project and to the consequent operational system. Moreover, definition isn't everything. The gaps between definitions, perceptions, identification and acknowledgement of success can be important, too.

In order to analyse success, this paper will use an analogy of water technology (the African Bush pump) and will present a case study, examining the various roles played by people, processes and technology within an IT-related project.

And what of information Strategy? Conclusions concerning success connect with ideas arising from EVINCE studies of information strategy. This paper will outline case study material and analysis, drawing on stories ranging from hotel keys to Portuguese sailing routes. It will then propose models for HEIs to explore in their development of information strategy: These models could also prove useful for the successful implementation of IT projects.

From this, the paper will draw conclusions about the need for robust information pathways, enabled via flexible and fluid communications, and the implications which this has for the role(s) of professional administrators.

The girl's name Janet provided the original acronym for the Joint Academic Network when it was first established. As it became faster and more impressive it became SuperJANET, with various later developments indicated by stage numbers.

To “outweigh” is to be heavier in the balance – a literal use would be in a description of the heavier of two boxers.

Exeter is in the administrative county of Devon; Cornwall is the next (and last!) county on the mainland of south-west England.

See further detail in the following paragraph.

To “clog up” is an expression based on the word for a heavy shoe (clog), and refers to obstructing some kind of mechanism or process with bulky or unwanted material (often the phrase is “to clog up the works”).

The “in” thing is the current, most fashionable thing to do or have.

Open and Distance Learning

(That is) others will not go equally slowly.

See third paragraph for further detail.

Higher Education Funding Council for England.