

## **Putting Eprints software into the User Community SOAS London, 23rd June 2004.**

Notes from the 2nd breakout group discussion, slated as being about technical issues, but in practice focussed on business models and development. - 50 minutes of discussion.

1/ A number of significant issues were listed on the whiteboard before discussion proper began. These included: whether a wiki might be a useful tool for the development of Eprints.org software; Sharing knowledge and code among the community; Personal IDs; Preservation; Platforms and architecture; and timestamping.

Early on Steve Hitchcock made a comment about the possibility of changing the development model (should the development be open source, etc). This seemed to steer the discussion of the group away from the list of topics on the whiteboard towards what we were originally going to discuss in a later session - business models and development processes.

2/ Take-up of the software: - it was suggested that if a platform and the version of software for a set-up was to be specified, and accompanied with step by step instructions, like a recipe, the configuration will work, and then it is up to the individual what to do on top of that. At least it will work. The support issues would then go away. However dependencies are a problem (such as mod\_perl2).

3/ At the moment Eprints software is a vertical application -should it be more flexible to accommodate different business models? Currently it requires both significant designer and programmer man hours. Fabio Simeone suggested a distributed model for the development of Eprints software, by creating a core level which can be deployed and developed by third parties. For this we would require an application independent framework. A reference implementation would be useful perhaps, developed in parallel, built on top of the core level. Eprints.org would support the core layer, and let third parties do the actual development.

4/ We might have an institutional configuration and modules, and most would use the reference model and related modules. Essentially this is the Linux model of software development.

5/ In the course of the discussion, Zeno Tajoli (CILEA) mentioned that his organisation charges 5k euros for technical support for archives using Eprints software in Italy. They offer support for some features of eprints 2.3.

6/ Following Fabio's model, would third party modules still be written? Chris Gutteridge suggested that the software might be for free with an open license. For extra payment you might install software and do basic customisation. But would Zeno's model would be followed? Keen advocates get things going without extra payment, which is how things tend to go.

7/ If we were to offer services for other universities, they might buy a commercial license and this would feed back cash to Southampton. Continuation of the project funding route was discussed, as a way of keeping going while longer term and more sustainable funding was secured.

8/ Chris Gutteridge pointed out that JISC didn't take ROADS funding forward because the software was in competition with other commercially available applications. D-Space for example, (was) wholly commercial. Eprints has a higher user base than ROADS ever had. Should projects using Eprints software fund the software development? We could offer a priority version for cash, in addition to other options. Whether or not the size of institution and type is an important factor in charging for services or software was considered, and the JISC banding of costs considered as a possible example, with different configurations charged at different prices. Fabio asked if we were talking about development or in fact the fragmentation of the product. Red Hat Linux is perhaps a useful model - the software is sold, but is essentially the same as that available free - the only difference is that support is part of the package. Perhaps what we are talking about is what it is easiest to get an invoice for.... Eprints might seek funding for customized development of code from funding bodies.

9/ Finally, there was discussion of the possibility of a funding stream from the use of the Eprints software in the context of RAE databases. This was considered to be a possibility, but it was pointed out that others are already going after this stream.

Notes and transcription by Philip Hunter, UKOLN, University of Bath, 15 July 04