

Executive Summary

Project Purpose

The aim of this project was to integrate the searching of e-books and other e-resources into the COSE Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in order to provide reusable and searchable reference objects within the VLE which draw seamlessly on the referenced resources, and which could be integrated, packaged and exported with other content.

Overview of Project Status

The project has successfully enabled the searching of two leading e-aggregators from within the COSE VLE via its standard 'Search Tools' interface. Referenced objects are viewable via the standard COSE Browser. It has successfully integrated RELOAD to enable the re-use of reference objects through the metadata description based on UK LOM CORE. Our implementation of this schema is recorded in an application profile developed by the project. Some work, principally that relating to the export of the new re-useable reference objects using COSE's existing content packing tool, is still outstanding but will be progressed as part of Staffordshire University's wider ICE project.

Key achievements and outputs

- An important objective was to identify and work with a small number of leading e-aggregators in order to both establish seamless searching from the VLE and, through the appropriate selection of partner e-aggregators, highlight the wider significant challenges and potential. The project identified two e-aggregators to work with initially: ebrary - an e-book aggregator and Emerald - an e-journal provider, and with whom very productive collaborative working relationships have been established
- The project is implementing facilities to enable the searching of both named aggregators, and the retrieval and saving of results, together with accompanying metadata, as Reusable Reference Objects (RROs).
- The project has capitalised on the COSE VLE's pedagogically principled design and component structure in order to integrate RROs in a way which both reflects and facilitates the expression of educational context and has highlighted many significant challenges in this area
- The project has identified UK LOM Core as a suitable metadata schema. An application profile for the addition of metadata relating to the reuse of saved RROs based on this schema is being developed.
- RELOAD has been successfully integrated to enable the addition, editing and saving of metadata with RROs.
- An enhanced version of COSE incorporating the above features will be made available in early 2004 for experimental testing and evaluation.
- An associated Staffordshire University-based project has been established to explore legal and copyright issues associated with metadata highlighted by the ICE project.
- Review and evaluation of 5/99 and DiVLE projects. The work undertaken by ICE will be contrasted with the approaches taken to eResource – VLE interoperability taken by the DiVLE Programme projects as part of a technical review of the DiVLE programme currently being carried by Prof Mark Stiles of Staffordshire University and Howard Noble of the University of Oxford

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- Dissemination to X4L 'community'. Trial of the outputs of Staffordshire ICE is being built into the workplan of the Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) X4L project. Dissemination of ICE through the X4L cluster has started. ICE will be disseminated at the JISC conference in March as part of a talk on "linking your VLE to your Library". We will also look into the possibility of disseminating at the CETIS EC-SIG later in year, to SURF X4L partners, via the X4L-Wales-Midlands cluster and X4L programme meetings
- Development of expertise in servlet technology (specifically Apache Tomcat). The project has afforded us the opportunity to explore the use of servlet technologies in linking to ebrary, and so gives us further opportunities / options in development of the VLE. In particular it will underpin University intentions to exploit the COSE VLE in a **Web Services** approach to MLE implementation.