iSGTW / The Digital Scientist
Report to the OSG Council:
14 September 2010

Executive Summary

According to statistics from Google Analytics, US-produced stories have consistently performed well over the last quarter. After much deliberation, we've chosen the name The Digital Scientist. The EU's designer will be creating a new logo for us, but that is behind schedule. We also need to purchase our domain names. We have created three groups to work towards the creation and ratification of the new website – a small one with daily responsibilities, a medium-sized one with a 2-3 day turn around, and one that will approve major milestones (the Board). Meanwhile, site design is proceeding as expected. Funding for the US Editor may become an issue as early as the end of 2010; Judy Jackson, Paul Avery, and Ruth Pordes are working with the Department of Energy and National Science Foundation on a plan for continuation.

Google Analytics

Stories were ranked by unique pageviews, as recorded by Google Analytics.

All stories:

7 of the top 10 stories
and
63.6% of the top half of all the stories that ran in the last 14 issues
 ...were US-produced stories

Written by Miriam: 15 of the 20 above average US stories (two of which were interviews)
Written by Dan: 5 of the 13 above average EU stories

Features only:

8 of the top 10 features
and
61.9% of the top half of all the features that ran in the last 14 issues
...were US-produced features

Written by Miriam: 8 of the 13 above average US features (two of which were interviews)
Written by Dan: 0 of the above average EU features

iSGTW's new name

After soliciting possible names, the iSGTW advisory board went through a series of votes to select a new name, ultimately settling upon "The Digital Scientist." The name was also floated by the OSG council, our funders, and the European funders.

A number of factors went into the decision, including:

- Availability of domain names
- Shorter length – Our current name is ten syllables and five words long, with a seven-syllable acronym. The new name is seven syllables and three words long, with an acronym of only three syllables. It is easier to pronounce and remember.
- Broader applicability – As we broaden the mandate of iSGTW to encompass distributed computing, the inclusion of the word "grid" in the title is increasingly misleading. The name would become still longer with the addition of all the other descriptors that are relevant. By removing the reference to the week, we free ourselves to consider alternative publishing models in the future, although no such plans currently exist.
- Projected image – The image projected by the current title is something like that of a small trade publication. We hoped to choose a name that would fit in with the like of New Scientist, Scientific American, Discover, WIRED, and Popular Science. We believe that in choosing The Digital Scientist we have achieved this goal.

The greatest misgiving we had about this name was the fact that "scientist" could be seen as excluding those researchers who do not identify as scientists. This came down to a decision between being more inclusive, or choosing the name with the better "sound" to it, as it was agreed by the board that The Digital Scientist sounds better than The Digital Researcher. Given that we take for granted coverage of non-science research in publications such as New Scientist, Scientific American, and Popular Science, we ultimately concluded that this misgiving was not adequate to overturn the vote that had ranked The Digital Scientist as our top choice.

Logo and domains

Now that a name has been chosen, we will need a new logo and domain name. Under the advisement of Xenomedia, the web developers who manage our web presence, we plan to purchase a number of related domain names which our readers may visit accidentally. We may also choose to reserve domains such as digisci.org, to provide a convenient short URL for use on promotional materials.

The Europeans have graciously offered to have their graphics designer, APO, do a new logo for us. This is currently behind schedule by over a week.

New website

The website team has been divided into three groups:

- Working group – Miriam, Dan (the EU Editor), Corentin Chevalier (the EU web designer), and two representatives of Xenomedia (Kevin Munday and Tim Hanft)

- Strategy group – The working group + Catherine Gater (project manager for e-ScienceTalk, the umbrella project for The Digital Scientist in the EU) and Ruth Pordes
- Approval group – The iSGTW board

So far, the working group has had one teleconference addressing website architecture, and begun to populate a shared Google Site with pages on a number of issues we must resolve as website design progresses. Based on those discussions, Xenomedia has produced a first pass at wire frames of the front page and article pages, which we will be discussing at an upcoming teleconference.

The current goal is to meet the following deadlines:

1. 15 November – have a "Coming Soon" splash page at our new URL that we can promote at SC10
2. 30 November – be prepared to showcase the front-end of the website (at least) for one of the e-ScienceTalk project milestones; ideally, launch the complete, proofed and tested website

Funding

Funding for iSGTW's full-time US editor may begin to run out as early as the end of 2010. The Europeans have budgeted 59 person-months for iSGTW over a 33-month project beginning 1 September; that comes to about 1.78 FTE. To continue the delicate balance we have maintained between the EU and US in this collaboration, it would behoove us to ensure the continuation of at least one FTE here in the US.

Judy Jackson, Paul Avery, and Ruth Pordes are working with the Department of Energy and National Science Foundation on a plan for continuation.