

## The Creative Process

Apparent phases (ie. ad hoc, not planned, deliberately managed or organised):

- Starting point: agreement on a particular data set. This imposed a broad direction to the project in terms of possible user groups, functionality and other useful datasets.
- Anarchy: every individual team member full of unique, largely unstructured ideas. Little consideration of development feasibility or user targeting. The challenge was; first, to enable and encourage everyone to express their ideas freely and equitably; and second, organically and informally to distill, collate and relate ideas.
- Specialist Teams: partly through the overall team leader allocating people to specialist teams, and partly through people naturally clustering together into common interest groups, the processing of ideas decentralised and progressed at a greater rate. However, the thinking of the different groups was uncoordinated with limited commonality in direction and wide diversity in basic issues such as terminology and modelling styles. The risk was a return to the anarchy phase.
- Direction: Education team applied a semi-formal systems analysis methodology; ie. identify actors, produce high level scenarios (questions which each actor might ask of the dataset) and use cases, find commonalities between the scenarios, and prioritise use cases for development. The result, after a surprisingly short period of discussion, was an elementary project development strategy and terminology.
- Development: characterised by individual team members breaking away to work alone and away from group and team interaction.
- Final lap: characterised by the most explicit centralised leadership, particularly imposing a code-freeze time after which there could be no further functionality enhancements or changes beyond interface refinements and bug fixes.

## Notes

- Happenstance: each specialist team came across unexpected opportunities; such as new datasets, new functionality, new uses etc. The common issue was always if and how these opportunities could be integrated into the general design and prioritising them into the development timeline.
- Formal and informal team structure:
  - technical: the App team, the Learning Object team and the Web & Social Media team,
  - business: the Education team, and
  - marketing and promotion: the Video team.
- Inter-team discussion: with minimal formal guidance from the overall team leader, except on commencement of the final lap phase, developed through the six phases as follows;
  - from the Direction phase, technical teams in close dialog but limited discussion.
  - from the development phase the video team worked closely with all teams to plan final presentation. This became quite pressured in the final lap phase.
  - Technical teams worked, in a few short sessions in the development phase, with education team to refine and test interface design and functionality.

## Observations

- The overall process was collaborative, highly cooperative and democratic. This was extraordinary given the number and diversity of team members.
- Unclear is if the creative process would have been as successful if the project extended over a longer term and the deadline not so tight, and if participation was not voluntary.
- Probably of singular relevance were the delicate and limited, but targeted, interventions of the overall team leader.