Virtual Update Notes 12/1 and 12/2 2008 LTER CI Assessment and Needs Survey

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Mon, 12/01/2008 - 6:05pm — sremillard

LTER CI Assessment and Needs Survey; John Vande Castle

To discuss if, when, and how, the LTER IM Committee would like to revise the LTER CI Assessment and Needs survey. It is suggested that participants review the LTER Network CI Assessment Survey Summary, your respective individual responses, and probably the 2007 LTER GIS survey which can be found on the LTER technology page at: http://www.lternet.edu/technology/ [1]

Participants:
Monday (12/1): John Vande Castle (LNO; moderator), John Porter (VCR), Jason Downing (BNZ), Suzanne Remillard (AND), Mark Servilla (LNO), Don Henshaw (AND), Barbara Benson (NTL), Dave Balsinger (NTL), Bob Waide (LNO)
Tuesday (12/2): John Vande Castle (LNO; moderator), Emery Boose (HFR), Nicole Kaplan (SGS), Mason Kortz (CCE), Margaret O'Brien (SBC), Ken

Ramsey (JRN), Wade Sheldon (GCE), Theresa Valentine (AND), Jonathan Walsh (BES)

Monday Notes:
by Suzanne Remillard
It's time for another survey; when do we want another one? Before ASM, after ASM? Consensus is for before ASM so that we can discuss it there.
Have we heard from NISAC and how the assessment would work with their planning activities? (NISAC meeting in February).
We would want the survey before ASM. Should be done in conjunction with what NISAC is developing (CI implementation plan).
Title should have more zip to it as to what exactly the survey represents.
"Site capabilities". Keep the word 'Needs".
What are the bottlenecks? What are the technologies that will help us get past those bottlenecks. Need to be forward looking. Needs to be accurate and compelling (when presenting the info to NSF).
Identity the capabilities and the needs. Perhaps frame these questions in a way so that they're separate. Also enable some sort of prioritizing for different sites.
JVC has assessed some points from survey results that led to confusion and would like to discuss these.
JVC's specific points:
1) Define an FTE. This is trying to look at funding. Is there a better way to get at this information?
Perhaps add a comment field to describe the tasks when the FTE value is really high (like 10 FTE).
Could document or better clarify the efforts, like field time, experiment set up, maintaining field equipment, etc.
Should be more clear in what we really want to gather; amount of effort to information management only (managing data).
2) EML confusion; should we assess this from the Metacat since sites are so far along with their EML?
Still need to assess what % of site data is registered in Metacat. This could be a specific question.
3) Remote sensing and GIS activities; how do we integrate these components into general site information?
A lot of GIS data is from other sites and is not LTER specific. If this info is available elsewhere, do we really want to put it up on our sites as well? There is a difference from putting metadata online versus actually putting the data online.
4) 4) Site capabilities/internet connections/specific software used at site
This sort of information is easily outdated. How do we assess what sorts of software or systems are used together? How do these lists help in the evaluation?
Draw the correct inferences from survey; maybe link to implementation survey with specific questions about implementation process to help ID gaps where we can look for funding. More target this question. What is the primary tool that sites are using? What are sites main expertise? Are their specific tasks that

can be identified and represented with different tools? General IM tools versus scientific tools?
5) Do we need a "needs" component to the survey?
What are the needs that your site could use now? Perhaps find out what sites would do with $xxx funding? What sorts of new capabilities will this enable? How have IMs used supplement funding? What have past supplements enabled? What percentage of supplement funding over 6 year funding cycle is devoted to IM? May still need to categorize this supplement money (personnel, equipment, software, hardware, etc.), say in the last 3 years.
6) Other issues?
Data access questions should be in this survey so that we can document and assess the site's ability to point from metadata to data. We need a summary of where each site stands.
JVC will compile notes after tomorrow's VTC and send out to IMC for evaluation.

Tuesday Notes:
by Emery Boose

Participants: John Vande Castle (lead), Emery Boose, Nicole Kaplan, Mason Kortz, Margaret O'Brien, Ken Ramsey, Wade Sheldon, Theresa Valentine, Jonathan Walsh

Goal is to complete next CI survey for ASM meeting (Sep 2009). Ideally survey should be vetted by NISAC. Timeline for survey will be discussed in next NISAC conference call.

In last survey it was helpful to include other IM staff, diversity of skill sets, etc. But this makes for a longer survey. Is this needed every time?

What level of IM is needed at each site? What tasks, how many people, etc.

Sites that reported high numbers of IM staff in last survey included field technicians, etc.

In this round focus on site efforts for data management (not field work, etc). What does it take to implement the site information management system and keep it going?

But separating tasks (e.g., IM and web enterprise) can be difficult

Try to learn more about roles of core personnel. In last survey more than 40% of IMs categorized their roles as "Other."

Are there trends in terms of training needs? Most IMs learn by on-the-job experience. Is the need for training related to obstacles to progress (e.g., EML implementation)?

Organize the survey around tasks. Often key tasks are accomplished by a combination of personnel. Skills may not always fit tasks. How do core personnel spend their time?

Sites agree that more staff is the greatest need. But for what tasks? Supplemental proposals require a specific task.

What are current impediments to LTER Network operations? Network functionality is a recently added goal without adequate funding.

Surveys can be used to track trends over time. Some elements (e.g. EML questions) go out of date quickly. Surveys also document rapid changes in technology.

A list of tools might be useful on the IM website (e.g., code, lessons learned). The survey currently generates a laundry list of all tools. A list core tools would be more helpful.

What is the suite of tools that a site uses to get its information out? Everything from GIS to streaming data.

Identify the roles of specific personnel (not just total FTEs)

Scientists rarely think about CI (database architecture, etc) when designing new projects. Is there some way to gauge the interactions between scientists and IMs (modes of communication, etc)?

IM design should be a clearly defined step in the scientific process. This issue has been partly addressed in the language for NIS modules.

Working groups might be a good starting point. Incorporate IM design on a policy level. E.g. working groups must specify IM plans in order to get funding. Comparable to other required tasks such as preparing reports.

Use the survey to gather information to make a strong case to the EB. Include case studies where IM planning was not done and sharable data products were lacking.

Formulate questions in a positive light. Deficiencies will come out in any case.

Gather more information on socio-economic inputs to research. A new area for LTER.

Last survey contained a series of questions on EML. Move focus to how much data is actually available online.

Different levels of online availability. E.g. EML may contain a direct link to data or a link to the site information management system. Ideally data is streamed exactly as described in the EML.

How confident are sites that they can create new EML or upgrade current EML? Existing scripts may lack sufficient flexibility for these tasks.

Gather more information on specific needs at sites. Link needs more directly to funding opportunities. E.g. if $10k were available through a supplement, how would the site use it? If $100k were available, how would the site use it and what new science would be supported?

Differentiate between one-time awards and long-term recurring funding. One-time awards require sites to set priorities. Recurring funding can address staffing levels.

In recent LTER strategic planning meetings, IM was rarely integral to the discussion and was often tacked on at the end.

Also address the cost of maintaining existing core projects (climate stations, etc)

John VC plans to revise the survey in January 2009. To be vetted by NISAC and IMC.

Get input from NSF? Perhaps in a small, focused way. But NSF has provided clear direction to the EB.

Should survey be vetted by EB? In past survey was filled out by IMs. Most PIs are not interested in this level of detail. But ask EB at next meeting. EB has not provided input to questions in the past.

Attachment	Size
LTER Cyberinfrastructure Assessment and Needs Survey Update 2008 - John Vande Castle.pdf [2]	62.77 K

- Virtual Updates [3]

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Links:
[1] http://www.lternet.edu/technology/
[2] http://im.lternet.edu/sites/im.lternet.edu/files/LTER Cyberinfrastructure Assessment and Needs Survey Update 2008 - John Vande Castle.pdf
[3] http://im.lternet.edu/taxonomy/term/169