IM / LNO Collaboration Rational and Mission

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Motivation: Collaboration between members of different disciplines has been acknowledged to need not only the development of a methodology but also an understanding the process involved in that collaboration. Different groups' collaborations are made difficult by the different perspectives of the groups involved in the process. Deana Pennington tackles the problem of the difficulty of collaborations between research scientists and computer scientists (McOwiti 2007). We believe that one of the information manager's main task is to serve as a liaison between technology and the scientists (Baker 2007).

Curiously enough, while implementing ways to assist scientists with technology, the information managers face the same kind of problems themselves; they need to interact and make collaboration teams with the developers who in turn have their own perspective about the LTER sites' problems as well as about their solutions. These two perceptions may not necessarily coincide.

In the LTER case, these problems arise from the interaction between the sites' information managers (IMs) and LNO's developers and programmers. The LTER IMs community is an heterogeneous community of people with different academic backgrounds and preparations, not necessarily in the field of software and system development and programming. The fact that some of the IMs are

developers/programmers themselves only corroborates this interaction problems because usually collaborations between IMs and LNO developers are more successful when the information manager is a programmer or developer(*).

We became aware of the need to develop a structured way for the collaboration between the LTER IMs and the LNO developers when we realized that, in spite of the successful cases of collaboration in the past between these two groups, there are still needs from both groups that have to be met by their counterpart and are not being accomplished.

We intend to find possible ways to structure this type of collaborations and also to become aware of the process we follow as we collaborate with each other. By doing so, we intend to facilitate further enhancements in the collaboration methods that we will create.

Goals: to create a structured mechanism for the collaborations between and the LTER site IMs and the LNO developers and programmers such that:
• the IMs community actively participate in the decisions made by the LNO in regard to the projects affecting the sites' information management activities
• the LNO receive the feedback they need from the IMs community in a timely manner so their projects meet their deadlines
• both communities work together in creating network-level projects that will assist the IMs in their endeavors to facilitate science
• collaborations between LNO and IMC coordinate in an appropriate, effective way with the activities of the Network Information System Advisory Committee (NISAC)

Also, to make both communities aware of the way they have collaborated in the past and how it has evolved to the present in order to be able to enhance the collaboration methodology in the future.

Products: (1) a mechanism to facilitate the interaction between the IMs and the LNO personnel when the LNO is designing projects that will have an effect on the sites' information management activities, (2) an effective mechanism in which the IMs community provides the LNO personnel with the feedback they need on a timely manner, (3) a list of possible IMs-LNO projects in the near future that will facilitate the information management activities at the sites and at the Network level, and (4) a general description of the different processes (**) we have observed when this collaboration has taken place along with its outcome.

Subsidiary Products: (1) a list of past and present (up to August 2007) IM-LNO collaborations

Timetable: The products intended from this working group will most probably consume more time than that available in the annual meeting, so I foresee follow up activities to meet this group's goals as stated herewith.

NOTES:
(*)This is a personal generalization after interviewing five IMs who have collab-

orated with LNO's developer in sites and network projects. More interviews might change the aseveration done in such a statement.

(**)E.g., the idea of the project came about as a need for a similar kind of tool was expressed by several sites simultaneously.

REFERENCES:

McOwiti O. Thomas. 2007. Unique LNO virtual training launches in cyberspace. The LTER Network News 20(1):1,3

- IM / LNO Partnerships and Collaborations [1]

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