

e-Framework Update March 2009

The e-Framework for Education and Research is an [international initiative](#) that provides information to institutions on investing in and using information technology infrastructure. It advocates service-oriented approaches to facilitate technical interoperability of core infrastructure as well as effective use of available funding.

This newsletter will inform and update you about the e-Framework developments and related activities. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please log-in to the e-Framework [subscriber list](#) and unsubscribe.

The views expressed in papers and contributions are the views of the contributor and contributing organisations and may not reflect the views of the e-Framework Partnership.

News from the Initiative

A managers' compact guide to SOA

It is not always easy to present the benefits of Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) to managers. The Managers' Guide to SOA (a SURFfoundation paper), describes in one-page chapters what every manager needs to know about SOA. Titles such as 'SOA - what is it?', 'SOA why do we want it?' and 'SOA - am I ready for it?' provide managers and others with an easy read that informs them about the essentials. If you want to update or refresh your basic understanding of SOA go to the SURFfoundation paper ['What every manager needs to know about SOA'](#).

Review of Oracle Academic Enterprise Solutions white paper

A recent Oracle White Paper describes the role of Service Oriented Architecture in the design of future systems to support learning and teaching. Ian Dolphin, International e-Framework Director, reviewed the Oracle Academic Enterprise Solutions White Paper. Dolphin states that at a time when vendors move to integrate open and community source software with their own offerings, and open source communities diversify and mature, there may well be a need for common language with which to describe the services and functionality offered. The e-Framework Partnership paves the way to share and develop such a common language. To view the review, go to: [Review of Oracle Academic](#)

[Enterprise Solutions White Paper by Ian Dolphin, International Director, e-Framework for Education and Research](#)

e-Framework as platform for strategic exchange

The Executive Secretary of the JISC, Dr Malcolm Read, and International e-Framework Director, Ian Dolphin, recently undertook a whistle-stop tour of New Zealand and Australia. Conversations with the leadership of several national institutions and agencies during the trip confirmed the e-Framework as a potential platform for strategic exchanges and coordination of e-infrastructure development, involving organisations in education, research and IT-policy.

e-Framework Technical Review

An e-Framework working group was recently appointed to review the core technical model underlying the e-Framework approach for describing service components. The members of the working group – drawn from across the e-Framework partnership – represent several years of accumulated experience in using the e-Framework methodology and documentation templates. The group's goal is to refine the technical model, facilitating wider adoption of the e-Framework's approach for documenting components and reusing services. Progress to date includes a revised list of service genres as well as four new service genre descriptions and two new service usage model descriptions – documenting the essential functions needed to manage collections.

Service genre descriptions provided for managing collections

Among the newly published service genres are [Add](#), [Read](#), [Replace](#) and [Remove](#). This set is analogous to the set of common database functions: Create, Read/Retrieve, Update and Delete. It is anticipated that these four service genre descriptions will be widely reused since many complex business processes use these functional building blocks.

Simple and searchable collection maintenance SUM descriptions published

These two new Service Usage Models (SUMs) combine the Add, Read, Replace and Remove service genres into useful "bundles" of services that describe the functions inherent in maintaining collections. Their broad functionality will make them highly reusable in other SUMs that underlie numerous applications and ICT systems.

The [Simple Collection Maintenance SUM](#) provides four function points that correspond to the Add, Read, Replace and Remove service genres while the [Searchable Collection Maintenance SUM](#) additionally includes the capability for Search operations.

Community experience reflected in Service Genre Registry update

As the result of a recent analysis and review, the list of approved service genres has been revised to reflect the experience gained since the e-Framework began collecting and publishing descriptions of the service genres in 2006. The [updated registry](#) includes précis (brief descriptions) for all the genres, and links to full technical descriptions for many of them. Completion of descriptions for the remaining genres is proceeding, based on submissions from the community. The list will incorporate additions, revisions and re-factored service genres building on the experience and use of service genres in SUMs.

SURF to review e-Framework model

In three years the e-Framework has matured and the time is right to review the applicability of the technical approach. SURF is commissioning a review of the new technical model by the Scientific Technical Council, WTR. The WTR is an independent advisory body that supports SURF and higher education institutions on managerial and technological issues. The members are acknowledged expert authorities from different academic fields and are highly involved in IT developments in research, education and management.

Partners' Updates

SURF Enterprise Architecture activities continue

SURF will continue its activities on Enterprise Architecture, exploring opportunities for institutions to take better advantage of new technological concepts. The programme will interact with e-Framework activities, especially those that relate to Enterprise Architecture. The emphasis of the programme will be on service architecture orientations and descriptions; on developments within The Open Group Architecture Framework (TOGAF 9 – see the Forthcoming Events section of this Newsletter) and on the modelling language Archimate. Three formats will be used for SURF's EA programme: presentations, classes and advisory sessions.

Dutch universities exchange course information

3TU, a collaboration of three Dutch technical universities, is working on a project which focuses on course information interoperability. This aligns with new European regulations for student mobility and current research in the Netherlands on ways to digitise study guide information.

New Zealand launches the Schools Managed Learning Environment (MLE) Initiative

The New Zealand Ministry of Education has begun work on a new initiative to design and promote an educationally relevant, open standards-based, sustainable approach to the development and use of an MLE for New Zealand schools. One of the key motivations is that whilst some schools are starting to increase their use of elearning techniques and ICT through the use of LMS systems, there remains a great disparity across the country in the capability and access to technologies to support new ways of teaching and learning with ICT.

It is perceived that greater educational benefits and efficiencies across the schools sector can be achieved by establishing, at a national level, a common interoperable framework that allows multiple LMS systems to exchange data, to support integration with student management systems (SMS) and allow for the development of other shared services at a national level, such as digital content repositories and e-portfolios.

The first stage of this work is currently underway, in which a small number of LMS vendors and open-source systems currently active in NZ schools have been selected to work together on making their systems interoperate through a common web-top. This will provide the core platform for additional services to be integrated as the project progresses. A desired direction of change is for the LMS to cease providing all the functionality within the suite. It will serve instead to call on services and applications outside to perform specific tasks while offering a central point for holding user data and co-ordinating the requests/replies.

At the heart of this work is the use of open-standards and service-based components. The MLE project provides a coherent, practical basis for engagement with the international e-Framework as work being conducted elsewhere within the e-Framework partnership is likely to contribute significantly to this development.

Learner identity management moves forward in Australia

e-Framework approaches were recently adopted by the Australian Learning Identity Management Framework (LIMF) project which explored how student data can be shared between jurisdictions. The project team,

Link Affiliates, was able to map and analyse current manual systems and a range of potential electronic options. The recommendations are currently being considered for funding under the Australian government's [Digital Education Revolution \(DER\) initiative](#).

[Link Affiliates](#) provides services to support Australia's engagement in e-learning and e-research standards development.

Shared services resources available as JISC infoKit

JISC infoNet has launched the [Shared Services infoKit](#), which clearly describes the benefits, inhibitors, enablers and first steps towards a greater understanding of shared services within higher education.

JISC infoNet aims to be the UK's leading advisory service for managers in higher education, promoting the effective strategic planning, implementation and management of information and learning technology.

Making UK educational institutions more agile through flexible service delivery

JISC is to fund a £2m Flexible Service Delivery (FSD) programme, from May 2009 to March 2011. The aim of the programme is to make educational institutions more capable of planning and providing flexible administrative and academic services. The vision is that, by improving service integration, institutions might reduce costs and achieve increased control over services and the business processes they support. Service platforms or modes of delivery could be adapted to meet evolving institutional needs.

A community of purpose – an active and evolving community of representatives from individual educational institutions and cross-institutional consortia – will be established to take the programme agenda forward. The community will receive support to ensure progress, marshal skills and resources, to unlock doors and promote achievements. JISC is inviting expressions of interest from appropriate institutions or consortia wishing to join the community of purpose, via a grant funding call in March 2009.

Please contact Alex Hawker (a.hawker@jisc.ac.uk) for further information.

Fundamental questions about Persistent Identifiers answered by Australian project

The [Persistent Identifier Linking Infrastructure \(PILIN\) project](#) in Australia has received praise for its guidelines for managing information using

persistent identifiers. A persistent identifier is a name for a resource which remains the same regardless of where it is located, thus links to the resource continue to work even when it is moved. Members of the International Persistent Identifier Initiatives, who gave feedback to PILIN, were particularly impressed by the guidelines developed by the project.

Rather than building yet another persistent identifier system, PILIN took a 'back to first principles' approach, asking fundamental questions such as "what is an identifier?", "what things should be identified?", and "for how long should something be identified?". By answering these questions the project was able to develop practical guidance to help communities manage information using persistent identifiers, independently of particular technologies or policy domains, through a policy-driven service-oriented approach.

As persistent identifiers are expected to play an essential role in information organisation and service processes, the e-Framework will pay close attention to PILIN and similar European initiatives (e.g., the Knowledge Exchange – URN-based Persistent Identifier Infrastructure pilot).

Tools and Resources

Open Library Environment project publishes draft reference model

With support from The Andrew W Mellon Foundation, a multinational group of libraries is developing the design for an Open Library Environment (OLE). The project aims to produce a design for a next-generation library system based around Service Oriented Architecture. The project has recently published a draft reference model, which is available from: <http://oleproject.org/overview/ole-reference-model/>

Events Update

Enterprise Architecture in Higher Education Symposium

This symposium, held in Melbourne, Australia on 10 & 11 November 2008 provided a useful opportunity for knowledge building. Of particular interest were presentations by Simon Porter (e-Framework Meets Dutch Higher Education) and Simon Vaughan (University 2.0, The New World of Work), a DEEWR-sponsored speaker from Cardiff University. These presentations (and others) can be found here: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ea2008/>

IDEA 2008 - Enabling Technology: Forging a Digital Future

IDEA 2008, a series of events focusing on technology and education, was held in Melbourne, Australia on 12 & 13 November 2008. The event included:

[IDEA Lab](#): a series of workshops which provided updates on technical developments in interoperability.

[The Technology in Education Open Forum](#): a discussion that focused on enabling technologies to forge a digital future and act as agents for positive change.

Forthcoming Events

JISC workshop on Flexible Service Delivery

JISC is to run a workshop at the forthcoming UCISA Conference in the United Kingdom on *Aiding Institutional Agility through Flexible Service Delivery*. The workshop will introduce JISC's new Flexible Service Delivery (FSD) programme, set in the context of the JISC-funded Duke and Jordan study into Shared Services for corporate information systems. The FSD programme will involve substantial input from senior managers in higher education. Accordingly, the workshop will invite discussion of the nature of this involvement and of the programme as a whole.

The UCISA 2009 Conference is taking place between 11 and 13 March 2009, with the workshop on 11 March.

UCISA Conference: <http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/events/2009/conference.aspx>

Duke and Jordan study:

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_jos/ssprev.aspx

International repositories workshop

In order to progress the development of repository networks, JISC and SURF are organising an international repositories workshop (16, 17 March – by invitation only). The focus will be based on wiki discussions, but will certainly address architecture, links with other data and resource types and reflect trends in research practice, including international, collaborative, data-driven science. The workshop will review the current position and aims to come to a shared vision of an international repositories infrastructure and approaches towards sustainability, scalability and interoperability. The next e-Framework newsletter will report the relevant outcomes.

A day in the life of a digital learning resource - from access to reuse

This one-day conference to be held in New Zealand on 19 March will feature international and local experts who will look at the future of digital learning and resources.

Among the guest speakers are:

Rob Abel (CEO of IMS Global Learning Consortium), who will discuss how interoperability standards are enabling innovation;

Dr Wayne Mackintosh (founder of the WikiEducator project), who will present on how New Zealand learning technologies are leading the world in sustainability of digital resources.

The conference programme will also include Dr Sandy Britain's work on producing a content lifecycle Service Usage Model and his experiences using the e-Framework.

Full conference and registration information is available at www.minedu.govt.nz/dayinthelife.

JISC e-Framework Surgery

The JISC e-Framework Community Engagement Team (CET) will be running an [e-Framework Surgery session at the JISC Conference](#), Edinburgh Scotland on 24 March. The Surgery is aimed at JISC-funded projects that have been asked to engage and submit to the e-Framework as part of their dissemination. They will have an opportunity to talk face-to-face with the CET, to receive feedback and resolve any practical issues. Please contact Alex Hawker (a.hawker@jisc.ac.uk) for further information about the Surgery.

Enterprise Architectures session at the JISC Conference 2009

A panel session at the JISC Conference 2009 (Edinburgh, Scotland) will consider the potential and proven benefits of Enterprise Architecture and explore the considerable challenges for institutions in adopting this approach.

Enterprise Architecture and Service-Oriented Approaches have been enjoying a high profile as a means of bringing about flexible business and information infrastructures that support evolving organisational goals. The conference session, suitable for a non-technical audience, will outline the initiatives, support and resources available. At the same time, JISC TechWatch will publish an Enterprise Architecture early-adopter study including case studies of educational institutions.

For information on the JISC Conference 2009 Programme visit:
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/events/2009/03/jiscconference09/programme.aspx>

Open Group Conference - London 2009

The Open Group is organising the 22nd Enterprise Architecture Practitioners Conference from 27 April to 1 May 2009 in London. The conference's theme is "Enterprise Architecture: The Way Ahead" and the event will feature the European launch of TOGAF™ Version 9.0 -- the global architecture framework. TOGAF™ 9 introduces significant enhancements to the previous version of the standard, which will be showcased in detail by TOGAF experts and trainers. For programme details go to <http://www.opengroup.org/london2009/> and click on The Open Group Conference - London 2009.

Get Involved

To keep up-to-date with e-Framework activities visit the [e-Framework community wiki](#).

To share your own experiences and let us know the topics that you would like us to explore, email Bas Cordewener: cordewener@surf.nl