

ECSCW'07 Workshop on Realising and Supporting Collaboration in e-Research

Expression of Interest: CARET, University of Cambridge

The Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies at the University of Cambridge (CARET) has participated not only in the first phase of the JISC VRE Research Programme but also in a wide range of other projects which have led to exploration of conceptual frameworks which contribute to the understanding of the needs of researcher involved in collaborative activities, including those drawn from e-Research, CSCW, Educational and Information Science perspectives. We recognise the value of this workshop and would welcome the opportunity to participate.

CARET and its Projects

CARET provides technological support for teaching, learning and research across the University of Cambridge and carries out research and evaluation of educational innovations, the majority of which involve educational technologies, throughout the University. The Centre also undertakes externally-funded research and development work under projects and programmes funded by the JISC, AHRC, ESRC and the Cambridge-MIT Institute (CMI), and has partnership agreements with other centres, projects and programmes, including the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme and the Applied Educational Research Scheme of Scotland (AERS). CARET is also a partner in the Sakai Consortium and a major activity over the past three years has been the incorporation of our developing understanding of the needs of diverse groups of researchers into requirements for VLE and VRE development based on the Sakai platform, although we are also concerned to develop generic tools and which have cross-platform applications.

Projects relevant to a joint e-Research/CSCW agenda include 'Sakai VRE for Educational Research', a JISC VRE Programme project (2004-2007) which involved the provision and support of the Sakai Virtual Collaboration Platform to research projects within the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme; to investigate the needs of the researchers; and to evaluate the extent to which Sakai meets those needs. The research involved the development of a series of comparative chronological case studies as well as the collection of summative data. Development activity informed by the research and evaluation activities led to the development of wiki and search tools. The project provided a detailed analysis of how the collaboration (and other) tools of the Sakai project can support and enhance collaborative research projects in the social sciences, as well as having developed enhanced understanding of the nature of academic collaboration and knowledge creation.

This project has stimulated a great deal of interest within the education research community more generally about the role, purpose and nature of CSCW and e-Research and has stimulated follow-up projects, applications and a wide range of publications for different audiences. Other relevant projects at CARET are concerned with the role of archives and repositories, their integration within VLE/VRE frameworks and their role in research activity flows: for example, in supporting

collaborative and secondary analysis of data sets in different contexts.

Themes

Current themes in our work at CARET which have relevance to the agenda of this workshop include:

- * Workflow and Research Activityflow generation, representation and support (including human factors in workflow)
- * Patterns of archiving and reuse and the status of different kinds and sources of knowledge; and patterns of reuse and transfer across contexts and domains (including driver and barriers)
- * Implications for support of online collaboration of: differing research designs; diverse research relationships (between researchers, participants, technologies and knowledge); and ethical and IPR frameworks
- * Integration of online collaboration environments with existing network and client-side applications, standards and formats - the 'tools of the trade' of different domains.
- * Technology-Enhanced Research including the integration of data 'born digital' into multi-method research designs and analysis

Conceptual Frameworks

Another reason for our interest in this workshop is the opportunity to engage with debate about the range of conceptual frameworks relevant to academic collaboration; we are particularly concerned to explore how domain-specific theories of learning, innovation and knowledge construction can be integrated with overarching conceptual frameworks such as those developed by Lave and Wenger (1998); Ciborra (2002, 2004) and integrative social science approaches and theories (Developmental Work Research; Actor-Network Theory) - while still retaining a relevance in software development environments.

Patrick Carmichael

Senior Research Associate

Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies, University of Cambridge