

INTRA - PROJECT ANALYSIS - PART 1



EXPLORING THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT AND PARTICIPANT INTERACTION WITH AN AIM TO FACILITATE
COLLABORATION WITH SELECTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND PROCESS APPLICATION

Matthew Simpson

matts@itee.uq.edu.au

Information Environments Program

School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering

The University of Queensland

Document prepared for Milestone 1

12th February 2006

This document was prepared with the assistance of Ros Cooper and Stephen Viller.

Description

What this analysis aims to do.

This document aims to outline the analysis of the intra-project interaction. An important aspect of the Touchstone project involves an introspective view of the project interaction as a testbed for methods, tools and techniques which could be deployed in conjunction with industry partners.

Aims which are the primary focus of this introspective analysis:

- 🔍 identifying appropriate methods for initial analysis of a project and context;
- 🔍 reviewing the nature of technology and tools with consideration for integration and user work practice;
- 🔍 exploring techniques for self reflection and critical analysis of tools and methods thus far employed.

At this stage, milestone 1, this analysis is still ongoing. The findings below reflect the results as found in the Touchstone project team towards the first milestone completion.

Process

Steps involved in this iterative process of evaluation are not unlike the initial stages of a rapid design project. The process was kept simple and lightweight working on an informal basis with the project members involved.

1. Brief is considered. The project context - members, nature of project, activities required to be undertaken;
2. Analysis of potential technologies and tools - a list drawn firstly from those used and known to the project members, then an analysis of social networking tools;
3. Cross-check that the integration between applications covers the projects needs;
4. Review the usage and usability of the tools deployed and observe against the changing needs to the project.

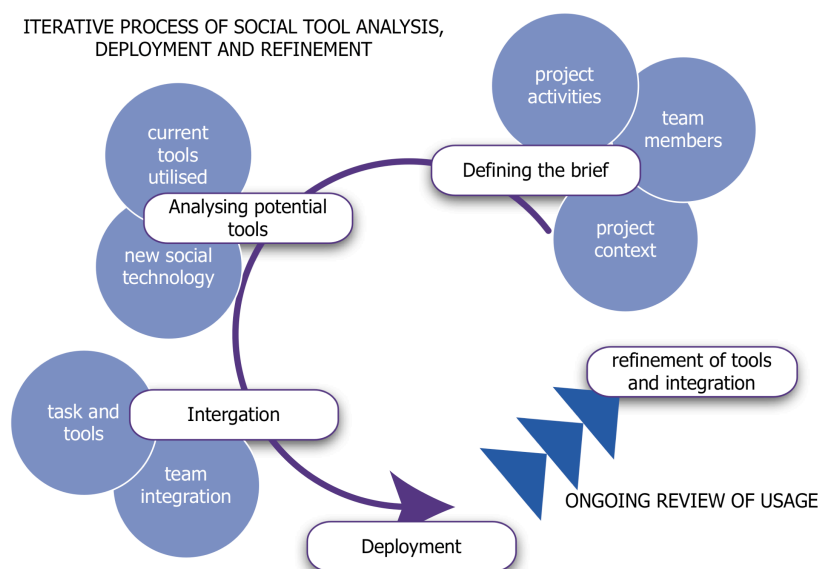


Figure 1: Social tools iterative process

Project Analysis - context, use and users

Under users you need to consider not only skill levels but work environments and culture of habit

Initial Technology Analysis

The analysis of the online tools is the first point of consideration. This process will consider the researchers as the initial target audience. Secondly, a list of potential tools which can help inform and support these tools will be listed. The tools listed below are those considered in the first round of project development. At this stage the underlying need for a quick and efficient deployment of tools was required, in order to facilitate project momentum.

Shortlisted Tools for initial deployment

This list was produced on consideration of the current tools utilised by project members, the needs for interaction of team members with each other, current tools used by team and resources which are structured to project management. The list below is a short review of these tools in relation to the HDM project context.

Media Wiki

Media Wiki is an open source version of a wiki - An online collaboration system which enables users to edit the content of web-pages through a web browser.

Pros: online editing of web pages, accessible and traceable, easily expanded. Includes RSS for easy remote tracking of updates by subscribers (researchers).

Cons: uses a quasi html to help with formatting (though can use normal text also) which requires some limited learning of a new protocol.

Share file space

A simple online shared web space through which the contents of a directory can be listed, enabling users to share group files, store in a collective location with download and upload abilities.

Pros: nice and simple. could be useful for large pre-formatted documents.

Cons: will require secure web-space to live behind, though this is a limited issue.

Delicious

An online social bookmarking tool. Designed to create a linked community of bookmarks around searchable tags, facilitating finding interesting bookmarks of users with similar interests to your own.

Pros: Great for sharing public links and content

Cons: Can be an issue in research projects when members wish to protect IP. Though items which are bookmarked are already in the public domain so there is little risk of breaching IP related issues.

For deploying our own we could use - Del.icio.us <http://de.lirio.us/code/> This would enable an internal version of a social bookmarking tool to be run.

Cons: Technically this requires the Rubric engine to be running, but more importantly it loses the community aspects of Delicious, making the service little more than a complex online list of bookmarks.

CiteULike

CiteULike is a social bookmarking service for academics. Instead of letting users catalog web pages (like Del.icio.us) or photographs (like Flickr) it specialises in academic articles, and provides specific tools for that purpose.¹

Pros: enables academics across a project or of similar interests to share citations and notes. Online citations can be converted to endnote, which would be useful for group paper writing.

Cons: The resource is stored online in a public forum and is not easily linked to other HDM resources.

Flickr

A digital online photo sharing system. Contains attributes of other social networking software tools, allowing for multiple upload techniques (web, email and mms) and cross-referencing with other users collections. The public nature of the tool, requires some consideration of the privacy issues of the project, and the ultimate possibility of being used inside industry partners.

Possible - Will be considered for deployment in Milestone 2.

Blogs

A lightweight online tool for recording/posting short thoughts, musings, reflections or points for discussion in a time-specific context. Commonly used as an online diary tool, there is potential this tool could be deployed internally for the project for members to post thoughts on topics which are not necessarily structured to be in formal documents or in a wiki page. Would be an alternative to email lists to share thoughts, and enable a collective listing of threads in a single accessible location.

Possible deployments - Blogger / Blojsom - Will be considered for deployment in Milestone 2.

Deployment

The combination of tools deployed is based as previously mentioned on:

- ☺ How tools give a coverage of project needs;
- ☺ Fitting into context of use for users (not changing culture of habit);
- ☺ On exploring a variety of interaction approaches for future deployment in industry contexts.

¹ Drawn from wikipedia.org description of CiteULike.

The following section outlines how these tools were deployed in combination.

HDM web-space and online tools

The nature of the collaborative tools proposed for the online site requires a careful consideration of the needs of the users involved. There are several stages in this process to consider:

1. A public face for human dimension project - touchstone

location: <http://hdm.acid.net.au/>

purpose: This section can gradually build over time to incorporate:

- a public face for our research milestones and outcomes
- a point of interaction for clients and partners

This site could ultimately house the revised combination online tools which we explore through the researcher-only space.

2. A private web-space

location: <http://hdm.acid.net.au/secure/>

purpose: Designed for the research group involved only. This part of the site will live behind a generic username and password for the project as a whole. The site would be used to:

- test the appropriateness of collaborative for internal project needs
- evaluate and customise chosen tools before deployment to the public website.

It is envisaged that all tools and online resources will be discussed and evaluated as a group before deployment on the public server. Ongoing crafting and refinement will occur throughout the period of use by the research team.

The private project web-space contains:

- MediaWiki installation
- File space - for upload and sharing
- Links to external web resources

3. Externally stored services

Delicious - the online social bookmarks for the project are stored at <http://del.icio.us/tag/hdm.acid.net.au> - this link shows all tags which reference the 'hdm.acid.net.au' tag.

CiteULike - the online citations for the project are publicly stored at:

<http://www.citeulike.org/tag/hdm-acid-net-au> - which is all references which include the 'hdm-acid-net-au' tag.

<http://www.citeulike.org/group/hdm> - for all items posted by group members (not just hdm tagged).

Analysis of Use

Reviewing the use of the project tools

At present, the nature of analysis for tools deployed in the project has been kept simple. Lightweight techniques have been used with the process being one relying on consulting amongst group members rather than a formal analysis of use.

However, there are several indicators which provide a good indication of the suitability of the tools currently deployed.

Frequency of use

The following findings come from a cursory analysis:

<i>tool</i>	<i>level of use</i>	<i>style of use</i>
email	heavy use	both group and individual
wiki	moderate use	for milestones, agenda items, minutes, how-to-guides
file space	heavy use	working and final documents for group viewing - all nodes
delicious	limited use	bookmarking is being done in documents instead (UQ, RMIT)
citeulike	moderate use	for citations to be used in formal documents/reports (UQ centric)

While this technique shows frequency of use by various people and nodes of the project, it does not reveal whether the communication medium is being accessed by other project members or if it is useful. More conclusive success criteria shall be analysed during the second milestone.

Consideration of tool integration

At present coverage of tools deployed has been informed by the needs of team members and an initial consideration of the styles of workflow used by particular team members. This has provided a range of tools which enable diverse work practices to be supported.

The analysis of gaps in tools for workflow is a consideration for the beginning of Milestone 2. How integration between the tools deployed requires formalising, however some initial data is available.

During Milestone 1, the following findings reveal the main integration activities:

- ☹ Email is clearly the main conduit of integration of project resources, particularly to the wiki or file space;
- ☹ The wiki provided links to the file space, when discussion in minutes was around an uploaded document;
- ☹ CiteULike and Delicious were both used as standalone tools, though some team members used rss to keep updated of new additions in the group space.

These initial findings, while far from conclusive, provide an insight into the success of various tools to fit into project members daily workflow's. Further formal analysis will reveal more detail during Milestone 2.

Future Direction

In order to build on the work done during Milestone 1, the following areas need to be considered during Milestones 2 and 3.

- 🔊 Ongoing review of the use of the project tools
- 🔊 Formalising techniques for project, site and context analysis
- 🔊 Development of tool integration
- 🔊 Formalising approaches to analysing the success of tools deployed
- 🔊 Light weight self reporting on usage of project tools
- 🔊 Analysis of tools and techniques with regards to project members culture of habit
- 🔊 Analysis of tool integration and coverage of project needs
- 🔊 Encouraging interaction through tools across the university nodes

Further Reading

A small selection of articles provided as further reading in the space of social and collaborative tools.

1. Social Bookmarking Tools - A General Review

<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/april05/hammond/04hammond.html>

Tony Hammond, Timo Hannay, Ben Lund, and Joanna Scott

D-Lib Magazine April 2005

Volume 11 Number 4 ISSN 1082-9873

2. Collaborative tagging: how networking sites connect people by interests and goals

<http://www.knowledgeboard.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=286>

Published by: Silverio Petruzzellis 13 Oct 2005

3. Touchstone Project - CiteULike Citations

<http://www.citeulike.org/tag/hdm-acid-net-au>