

Susanne Dobratz, Wednesday, 26 June 2002

## **OAF Workshop Pisa, May 2002 Session Technical Validation**

The session focused on the experiences made with existing OAI implementations and the problems, that particular demands caused. The session was prepared by an web-based questionnaire on the Open Archives Forum website, that participants were asked to fill out before the workshop.

18 People contributed to the questionnaire, 6 from Germany, 5 from Italy, 2 from Belgium, 2 from the Netherlands, 1 each from France and Sweden and 1 from the UK.

Half of them said, that they were still in a planning or test phase and had no fully established ideas for which services they would use OAI. If people were using OAI as data or service provider in most cases the software used was implemented by themselves. If not, one of the following software tools was reused from the OAI software archive: ETD-db software with OAI extension or the Eprints software.

The main point about using OAI as an approach to open archives was that people want to provide additional services to existing services, such as a supplement to a paper catalogue, a delivery of electronic holdings info to an OpenUrl resolver system, or they want to use other, different and additional possibilities of dissemination of information about scientific results of their research staff.

Some participants mentioned the replacement of existing services through an OAI Interface, e.g. to replace the single, non-searchable lists of eprints available on the websites or to develop the practice of alternative means of dissemination of the scholarly communication. A number of answers referred to research projects, e.g. one person answered: We used to run a search-engine which tried to combine different HTML-outputs from different sources. This has been replaced by an compatible OAI search-engine.

The importance of the OAI technical framework was also measured by the better retrieval, people expect by using OAI. In order to make metadata exchange available single projects started harvesting their own archive via OAI (replacement of search engine) or to build an interface for metadata exchange within several projects (new service). Another goal of using the OAI technical framework was that to establish an exchange of the library catalogue with other universities and the integration into a virtual union catalogue for the whole country. Many people started using OAI because they want to be able to develop services based on OAI compliant archives maintained by others.

As the advantages of OAI the following points were seen: OAI provides a chance to share scientific knowledge and to harvest other knowledge databases, it provides an opportunity to import metadata in library software and to implement a major dissemination of researchers' results. It is simple in implementation for data providers and provides a simple to implement facility of exchanging metadata in comparison to more complex protocols like Z3950, or others because in many cases the archives are too small for a Z39.50 service. By harvesting several relatively small archives at once it is possible to maintain a Z39.50 service.

There were about 25 persons attending the session on " Technical Validation ". After the partners from Humboldt-University gave an overview of the answers to the questionnaire, the following topics were particularly mentioned during the discussion:

- How can sets and set hierarchies within the OAI protocol be defined? Is there any standardisation either on a subject based level or on a cultural and country based level?

- How does the implementation of an OAI data or service provider fitted into the local existing IT infrastructure?
- Which are the points that need to be solved by special communities in order to get clear data? Are there standards?

Thomas Place from Tilburg University spoke shortly about the Dutch ARNO project (<http://www.uba.uva.nl/en/projects/arno>), where they integrated an OAI based search into an Z39.50 environment.

Jens Vinvad, Riksbibliotekjenesten Oslo, talked about the situation in Norway, where there is no OAI implementation, but the new library system ahlaa contain an fulltext search and use OAI.

Heinrich Stamerjohanns, Institute for Science Networking at the University of Oldenburg, Germany, gave a short overview of the implementation costs and strategies used for the Physnet/PhysDoc (<http://www.physics-network.org/PhysNet/physdoc.html>) OAI based Search engine.

Many of the participants in this breakout session had not yet any experiences with OAI, so contributions to the session were made by a few specialists, that talked about very special aspects of their OAI implementation.

Finally the discussion got back to the metadata topic and to the use of classification schemas and controlled vocabulary and the quality of metadata and the XML output used by data providers.