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The Arts and Humanities e-Science Initiative

Wednesday 9 May 2007 17:30 (20 minutes)

Describe the scientific/technical community and the scientific/technical activity using (planning to use) the EGEE infrastructure. A high-level description is needed (neither a detailed specialist report nor a list of references).

This poster will explain the activities and context of the Arts and Humanities
e-Science Initiative in the UK, funded by the AHRC, EPSRC and JISC. It will firstly
present to the wider EGEE community last year's activities of workshops discussing
opportunities of e-Science in A+H, of the A+H e-Science Scoping Study, and of
small-scale demonstrators. Secondly, the award holding projects for the major funding
scheme for A+H e-Science will be presented, as they start their work in summer 2007.

Report on the experience (or the proposed activity). It would be very important to mention key services which are essential for the success of your activity on the EGEE infrastructure.

Current discussions within the A+H initiative tackle questions about the shape the
new e-infrastructure for humanities research could take and the technologies that
could help address the specific issues of arts and humanities data. On the data
consolidation level, technologies like the Storage Resource Broker (SRB) for easy
distributed file access or OGSA-DAI for a middleware to assist on distributed
database access, are considered to be highly useful. SRB, Shibboleth as well as
Semantic Web technologies are tested in early adaptor projects for their use in
providing access and organizing arts and humanities data. As humanities data is so
dispersed, metadata technologies could help cross-institutional boundaries. Moreover,
it has been shown that the development of ontologies can assist understand better
research questions in the domain. Probabilistic indexing and record linking services
have also been successfully used in A+H projects.

With a forward look to future evolution, discuss the issues you have encountered (or that you expect) in using the EGEE infrastructure. Wherever possi-

ble, point out the experience limitations (both in terms of existing services or missing functionality)

The base e-Infrastructures still lack user-friendliness, and
efforts have to be made
to make them accessible to less technical users, e.g. by portals,
rich clients, or
Shibboleth. More user-centric approaches will leverage the
results of these efforts.
Another reoccurring topic in the early arts and humanities
e-Science projects is how
to foster and enhance interdisciplinarity. To make the Grid work
in A+H, it is
essential to reorganize the interoperability and reusability of
their production.

Describe the added value of the Grid for the scientific/technical activity you (plan to) do on the Grid. This should include the scale of the activity and of the potential user community and the relevance for other scientific or business applications

The work of the so-called early adopters of A+H scholars suggests
that the benefits
of integrating this particular group of researchers into the
wider e-Science
community are mutual. A+H researchers face a mushrooming of the
size of digital
information for their research, as a result of the general
availability of digital
information and specialised digitisation programmes that preserve
artistic and
cultural assets in a digital format. This makes it necessary to
find tools and
methodologies that allow the exploitation of the digital
information. The e-Science
community itself can benefit from the unique challenges of A+H
data. Relative
fuzziness of the data and the interpretive character of research
in the A&H will
enable a further advance on other e-Science projects.

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