

Designing Large-scale Collaborations

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INTRODUCTION

With the internet being increasingly used for e-Life (communication, commerce, social networking, information discovery) the potential for collaboration across boundaries, distance and time is greater than ever before. Many activities that fall under the title of eResearch have been addressing e-enabled collaborations and developing the tools to make this possible. But how do we ensure these tools are effectively crossing organisational boundaries and not establishing new barriers to collaboration? For large-scale eResearch projects, how do we plan for the best possible outcome before too much effort is invested and data is embedded in inappropriate infrastructure?

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

VeRSI, the Victorian eResearch Strategic Initiative [1], is a state government funded consortium of three Australian research universities – The University of Melbourne [2], Monash University [3], La Trobe University [4] – and the Victorian government Department of Primary Industries [5]. Since 2006 VeRSI has been funded to undertake a program of eResearch development and uptake. The initiative includes three primary activities across the consortium members:

- Capability Projects - exemplar development of eResearch capability within research projects and groups
- Infrastructure Development - building core infrastructure and services to support capability projects and consortium members
- Outreach and Awareness - a team of communicators promoting and accelerating eResearch uptake through the exemplars and infrastructure

Building upon the success of the awareness program and capability projects, and to better support the initiative the VeRSI operating model has evolved to include the following additional activities:

- Research - research into collaboration, research practice, infrastructure and the investigation of emerging ICT
- Advice and Consultation - VeRSI experts in strategic Victorian and national eResearch projects, especially in ICT planning.
- Knowledge Transfer - building on project outputs, leveraging development for the members, and developing skills

VeRSI's activity in eResearch awareness, support initiatives, and cross institutional collaboration, at both researcher and infrastructure layers, has lead to a unique perspective of eResearch and also a responsibility of communicating this to the consortium members and wider research community.

The presentation will summarise our activities, discuss models of collaboration, case studies, knowledge transfer activities and a method VeRSI is using to aid in designing for collaboration and collaboration infrastructure. The knowledge transfer activity, part of the VeRSI outreach program, informs research communities of existing models of practice and exemplars of collaboration. This activity aims to accelerate the uptake of eResearch, promote the use of eResearch infrastructure, and promote the reuse of ICT outputs from government funded eResearch projects. The VeRSI method for collaboration infrastructure design facilitates the development of a framework tailored to the needs of each specific collaboration/project and, with early use, aims to increasing the likelihood of success. These frameworks can be used to rapidly initiate a shared understanding of:

- collaboration goals;
- communication models;
- activity and workflow;
- functional requirements; and
- information architecture

The following diagrams illustrate a few of the original VeRSI capability projects and resulting knowledge transfer initiatives with subsequent eResearch projects (those listed in red), including extensions to and/or reuse of capability projects and expertise.

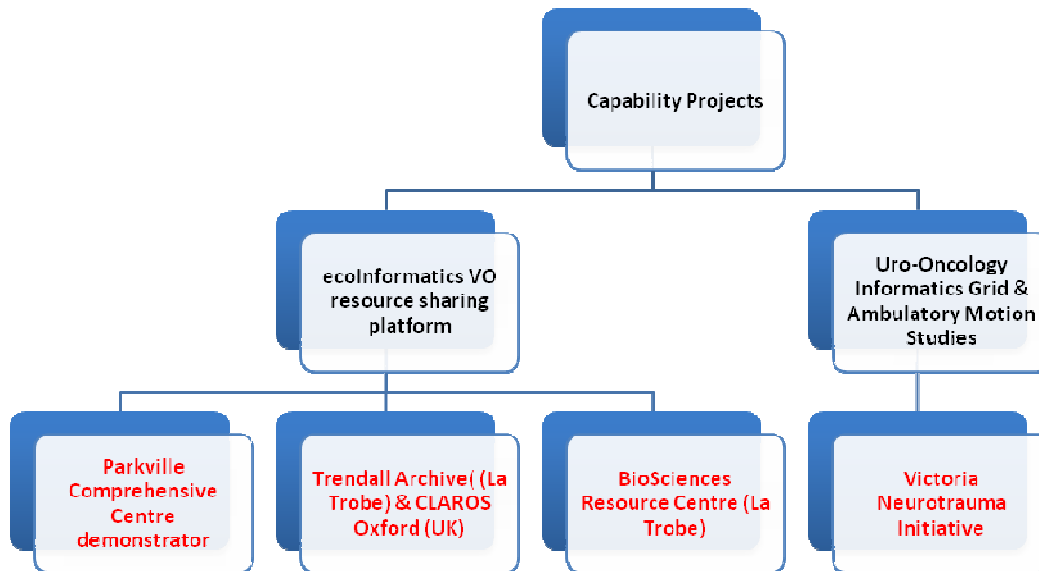


Figure 1: VeRSI ecoInformatics and uro-oncology projects knowledge transfer.

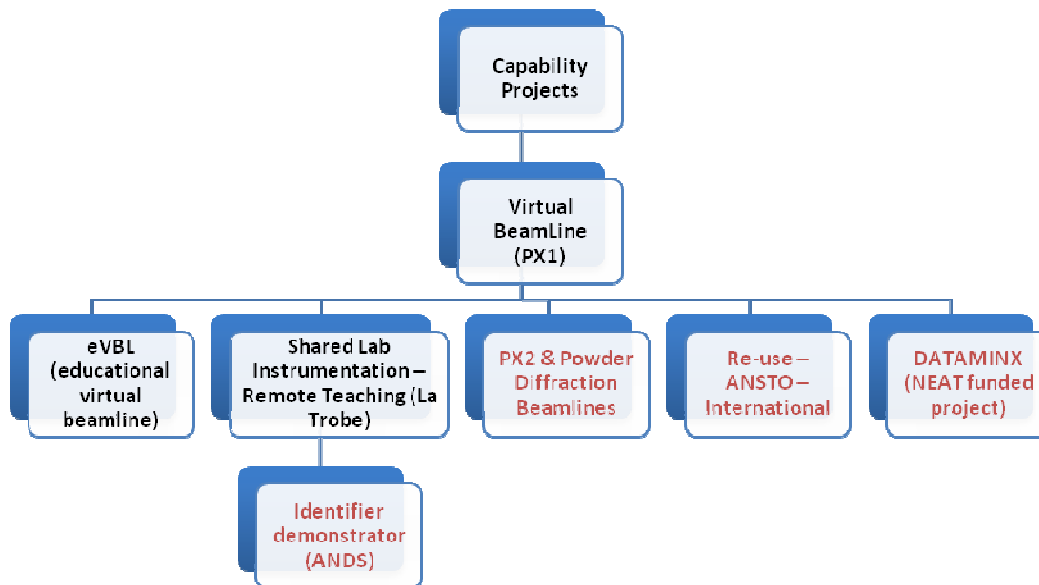


Figure 2: VeRSI Australian Synchrotron Virtual BeamLine (VBL) project knowledge transfer and reuse.

REFERENCES

1. Victorian eResearch Strategic Initiative (VeRSI), <http://www.versi.edu.au/>, accessed 13 July 2009.
2. The University of Melbourne, <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/>, accessed 13 July 2009.
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