

Supporting the iSchools collaborative network

A proposal for extending the iSchools web site towards a web portal to support the iSchools collaboration network.

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Background

The iSchools organization (ischools.org) currently has 77 member institutions, or iSchools, from around the world. While each individual iSchool has its own focus and strengths, together the iSchools consortium intends to be the global resource for education and research at the nexus of information, people and technology. The iSchools consortium is also a community with the world's largest body of students, academics and scholars in the field of information that ought to be able to seamlessly interact, share knowledge and collaborate for acting together.

The results of the recent iSchools Survey of Deans and Heads of Schools (held in May 2017) pointed that community building is a strongly shared priority. However, the current ICT support to the development of this community is quite limited. It is provided by the iSchools website, which mainly disseminates information one way, and by the iDeans email list that enables one-to-many asynchronous communication.

For achieving its full potential, the iSchools community needs tools to support interpersonal/group interaction, improving information sharing, communication and coordination. The current iSchools website doesn't provide support to these needs, so we propose to develop a new platform extending the current website towards the support of the iSchools collaboration network.

Vision

We envisage then a digital platform, departing from the current content of the iSchools website, that will provide support to the iSchools community in information sharing, collaboration and collective action. In the technological plan, there is a need to adopt a platform that enables an answer to the identified requirements and be scalable at the pace of the iSchools members adoption.

Objectives

This project will develop a prototype of a web portal that extends the current web site to support the iSchools community and collaborative network and will setup a pilot for demonstrating its use. The iSchools web portal is intended to support the needs of the iSchools community in terms of knowledge sharing, social interaction and visibility by providing tools for information sharing, collaboration and collective action.

Scope

The project will deliver a functional prototype with enough functionalities to enable setting up a pilot involving a number of iSchools to demonstrate the potential of the approach. This is not a platform ready to enter in the production phase, however it is expected that at the end of the first phase (by the iConference 2018) the functionalities implemented (basic features) and the gathered feedback will enable the planning the

production phase. This feedback will be used to improve and finalize the prototype. As the prototype is a functional and evolutionary prototype, it is expected that to transform it in a production platform will not take longer than three months (according to the calendar of this project this would be in the end of October 2018, assuming that the decision to enter the production phase would be taken in July 2018).

Basic features

The basic features to be demonstrated in the pilot are the following:

Information sharing

<i>Basic features</i>	<i>Pilot demonstration</i>
Content management	Basic content types, basic metadata, content structure and organization, content search, filtering of results; content exploration; selective diffusion; Current content of the iSchools website available in the iSchools web portal;
Activity/news/events streams	Global and personalised streams;

Collaboration

<i>Basic features</i>	<i>Pilot demonstration</i>
Groups	Closed groups implemented for PhD students and early career faculty;
Social network features	Profiles, follow, notifications, related content, comments;
Integration with social networks	Integration with twitter

Collective action

<i>Basic features</i>	<i>Pilot demonstration</i>
Collaborative spaces,	A collaborative space implemented for PhD knowledge sharing activities;
Foruns, polls,	A general forum implemented; a simple poll implemented;
Events management,	Enrollment, coordination

Platform

<i>Basic features</i>	<i>Pilot demonstration</i>
User accounts and profiles,	At least 30 active users and profiles
Administration,	Management of users, groups, roles, content, comments

These basic features and pilot demonstrations can be changed or expanded depending on the evolution of the project.

Beneficiaries and impact

The beneficiaries of this project are (i) the iSchools community: individually, the faculty and students and, institutionally, the iSchools organization as a whole and each iSchool

member and (ii) the general public, particularly in information related sectors. The iSchools online community will foster collaboration and networking between faculty, students, researchers, making potentially continuous the interaction between the iSchools between face-to-face meetings. This will result in the strengthening of togetherness and mutual bonds. The main outcome will be a substantial increase in knowledge sharing in the teaching, research and industry relationships areas. The general public, particularly in information related sectors, will find in the iSchools web portal a rich and diversified body of knowledge made public by the iSchools community. This will also impact the iSchools organisation for the increased visibility of its activities and outcomes.

Relationship with other projects

This project will have a close interaction with the Northumbria University project “Promoting teaching and research in information through a searchable interface of iSchools’ teaching and research activities”. In particular, it is a requirement that the digital platform will have access to the database in order to extract information useful for dissemination or collective action.

A note about the governance of the future iSchool web portal

As mentioned before, the project will deliver a prototype and pilot of the iSchools web portal in a first phase, and a governance model in a second phase assuming that the iSchools web portal will be officially deployed. At a starting point the current iSchools IT support will be adequate to maintain the portal. Nevertheless, it is foreseeable that a community/information manager will be required to deal with the continuous needs of creating and maintaining the collaboration dynamics and nurturing the iSchools collaborative network, as well as giving support to data and information management. This is an important success factor and scenarios will be described in the governance model.

Work plan

We aim at demonstrating at the iConference 2018 a pilot of the iSchoolsOC/DP featuring realistic information/knowledge sharing, collaboration and the support of some collective action. In our initial vision, this pilot would involve at least two iSchools of each geographic area. We’ll also try to have a rough prototype at the euro-iSchools next meeting in October in Porto.

	Tasks
1 st phase [August 2017-April 2018]	t1. Vision, goals and high-level requirements
	t2. Platform selection and setup (baseline)
	t3. Base requirements specification
	t4. Iterations on the development and evaluation of the prototype
	t5. Pilot planning, implementation, management and evaluation
2 nd phase [May 2018-July 2018]	t6. Prototype improvement and finalization
	t7. Development of a governance model

Milestones

- M1 — 30SEP17 — Vision for the iSchoolsOC established
- M2 — 30NOV17 — Prototype proof-of-concept
- M3 — 16MAR18 — Pilot ready for demonstration

Deliverables

- d1 - Report: Vision, goals and high-level requirements - end of September 2017
- d2 - Software: Prototype proof-of-concept - first week of October 2017
- d3 - Software: Prototype and pilot - third week of March 2018 (iConference 2018)
- d4 - Software: Final prototype - end of July 2018
- d5 - Report: Final report including the governance model - end of July 2018

Project management

The project will be managed locally by the University of Porto (INESCTEC) and steered by a group composed of 4 members: 2 representatives of the euro-iSchools, 1 representative of the Americas iSchools and 1 representative of the Asian-Pacific iSchools.

The project will be developed at the labs of the Center for Enterprise Systems Engineering of INESCCTEC. INESCCTEC is an independent R&D institute who has the University of Porto as an associate. It is located at the campus of the Faculty of Engineering (see annex for further details).

Budget

- 1st phase: 20,000€
- 2nd phase: 6,600€

This price covers one full-time research assistant allocated to the project plus the overhead costs. Project management and scientific/technical coordination will be subsidized by the University of Porto/INESCTEC.

Any travel expenses are not included in the price and will be funded by the iSchools.

One travel is planned: the participation in the iConference 2018 in Sheffield of one person (research assistant). The travel costs will include the flights Porto-Sheffield-Porto, accommodation in Sheffield and per diem subsistence.

Risk management

The main risks of this project are the following:

Risk	Contingency measure
<p>Problems due to technical complexity</p> <p>The development can encounter some technical complexity. It can happen that the development team encounter difficulties that delay considerably the planned deliveries.</p>	<p>INESCTEC and UPorto have several centers and labs with experienced web developers. Also, decisions on the development path will be cautious in a way not to enter in unknown or undocumented areas.</p>
<p>Lack of iSchools stakeholders involvement</p> <p>The success of the prototype will be directly dependent on the involvement of stakeholders from multiple iSchools. A weak</p>	<p>The steering group is composed by a group of iDeans highly committed and enthusiasts of this project. They will be able to mobilize</p>

<p>participation of the future users in the design of the platform will compromise the quality of the specification and the prototype and can diminish the overall acceptance of the platform.</p>	<p>the adequate iSchool faculty and other staff that will contribute effectively to the prototype design and pilot implementation.</p>
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Research opportunity

Although this is not a research project, it will provide an opportunity for research. Data can be collected, from stakeholders and designers, regarding topics such as the knowledge community design process or the collaboration drivers. Action-research can be an effective research approach.