



welcome

This is the first issue of the Intrallect Newsletter. We hope you find it interesting. Please offer feedback on any aspects of the Newsletter, including any topics you would like to see covered. If you have friends or colleagues who would like to receive the Newsletter please pass it on to them or encourage them to sign up for their own copy at <http://www.intrallect.com/news/newsletter.htm>



C.E.O. Charles Duncan

contents

intrallect wins £250k contract	p1
can you guess what it is yet?	p2
events	p2
the real world: networks of learning object repositories	p3
case study: university of edinburgh	p4
intraLibrary 2.0	p4
digital rights management	p4
intrallect's expanding team	p4

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intrallect wins £250k contract

Major learning object repository for UK academic sector

Intrallect has been awarded a £250,000 contract to develop a national learning object repository on behalf of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Intrallect's learning object repository, intraLibrary, will form the basis of a major new initiative in online learning and teaching. The JORUM service will form a key part of the JISC Information Environment (see article on page 3). Intrallect will work with the JORUM technical infrastructure, support and outreach services which will be fully supported by the two national data centres, EDINA at the University of Edinburgh (<http://edina.ac.uk/>) and MIMAS at the University of Manchester (<http://www.mimas.ac.uk/>). The full national service is due to be launched from August 2005.

Susan Eales, Programme Manager at JISC said, "JISC supports and funds a number of initiatives that aim to facilitate wider access to intellectual output within the further and higher education community. The JORUM repository is a core element of JISC's Strategy that will enable teachers to adapt and re-use each other's learning materials. The IntraLibrary system from Intrallect will support these key objectives and help to foster a new sharing culture."

A major technical requirements and scoping study was carried out by EDINA and MIMAS culminating in a detailed report (available at <http://www.jorum.ac.uk>) which is one of the most comprehensive studies of learning object repositories now available.

The Director of EDINA, Peter Burnhill, added: "Our scoping study gave us a list of demanding requirements from our

colleagues in colleges and universities around the UK, with the need for a user-friendly system interface and good support services being paramount. We are very pleased to be able to offer them intraLibrary and to work with the team at Intrallect and JISC to develop our services to the academic community."

The contract was awarded to Intrallect following a European Union procurement process that began in February 2004. Eight vendors were short listed to tender from seventeen that submitted pre-qualification questionnaires. JISC and the two national data centres were delighted to offer the contract to Intrallect who tendered a very strong bid and were able to demonstrate a robust and flexible standards-based repository system.

The Director of MIMAS, Julia Chruszcz, said: "After surveying the requirements of the user community, we had to find a system that would not only deliver a solution but also be scalable, extensible and deliver good value for money. We took into consideration the skills and experience of the system providers, the support arrangements, ability to meet timescales and Intrallect's willingness to meet emerging requirements."

Charles Duncan, CEO of Intrallect commented: "We are delighted to have intraLibrary selected by Jorum and look forward to working with the team. This system is leading the world in its scope and it aims to stay at the leading edge with further development over the next three years."

can you guess what it is yet?

Rolf Harris may never have sketched a learning object repository but the question is still relevant. Do you know what a learning object repository is? Or, more importantly, how does your organisation plan to use learning object repositories? What is your organisational strategy for managing learning objects? In most educational organisations the

digital educational assets produced by its staff form a significant part of its overall assets. Where do these assets currently sit? Who is responsible for managing them? How do you make sure they are used and reused to maximise the return on the time and effort invested in them? Are these assets designed to survive changes in technology or will they

forever have to be reinvented?

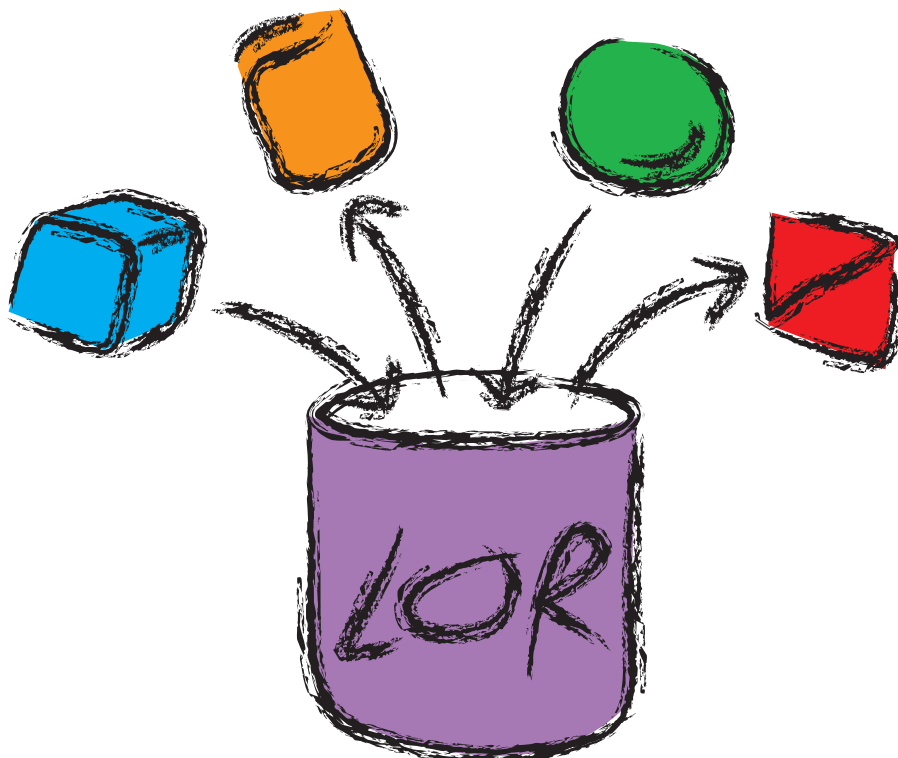
Two years ago enterprise-wide management of educational assets was a new concept but it is now so well established that the phrase "learning object economy" is being applied to various models that encourage people to share and reuse learning objects. Intrallect has been very active in this domain and several useful papers are available on the Intrallect web site: <http://www.intrallect.com/products/intralibrary/moreinfo.htm>

- Digital Repositories: the back-office of e-learning or all learning?
- The Value of Managing Learning Objects
- Learning Object Economies: Barriers and Drivers

For those looking for a more in-depth introduction to learning objects two books are recommended:

Reusing Online Resources: a sustainable approach, edited by Allison Littlejohn, Kogan Page, 2003, ISBN 0749439491, <http://www.reusing.info/>

The Instructional Use of Learning Objects, edited by David Wiley, 2000 (<http://reusability.org/>)



events

CETIS SIGs

Intrallect regularly attends and presents at the Special Interest Groups of the Centre for Educational technology Interoperability Standards, particularly the Educational Content SIG and Metadata and Digital Repositories SIG.

IntraLibrary Users Group

This event is open only to existing intraLibrary users. Intrallect will present plans for the next stages of development of intraLibrary and the group will discuss these plans and help prioritise them. This all-day event will be held in

Edinburgh on 28th October 2004. To register please email events@intrallect.com

IntraLibrary Developers Forum

This forum is for those interested in technical aspects of integrating intraLibrary with other systems. Topics to be discussed include: authentication (LDAP and Athens), WebDAV, metadata harvesting (OAI-PMH), IMS Digital Repositories Interoperability, web services interfaces. This meeting will be free for intraLibrary customers (for up to two places) and £100 for others. The

event will take place in Edinburgh on 29th October 2004. To register for more information please contact events@intrallect.com.

ALT-C 2004

Intrallect is presenting a paper at ALT-C (14-16 Sept. 2004, Exeter) called "Digital Rights Management: a UK Perspective".

Please come and visit the Intrallect stand to see a demonstration of what is coming next in learning object repositories or just to chat about learning objects!

the real world: networks of learning object repositories

In a normal working day most people take on many different roles. In fact switching between roles is something we do so seamlessly that we are usually unaware that at one moment we are a teacher, then a researcher or an administrator. The networked environment in which we work needs to manage and support this flexibility. Put simply, the tools we need to do our work need to be within easy reach. Even more, these tools must extend our reach and break down barriers rather than imposing limits.

One view of an information environment aimed at meeting these needs has been described by Andy Powell of UKOLN, University of Bath. Behind the scenes in this environment lies a complex network of services and repositories but the intention is to keep that complexity behind the scenes and let people carry out their day-to-day work effectively.

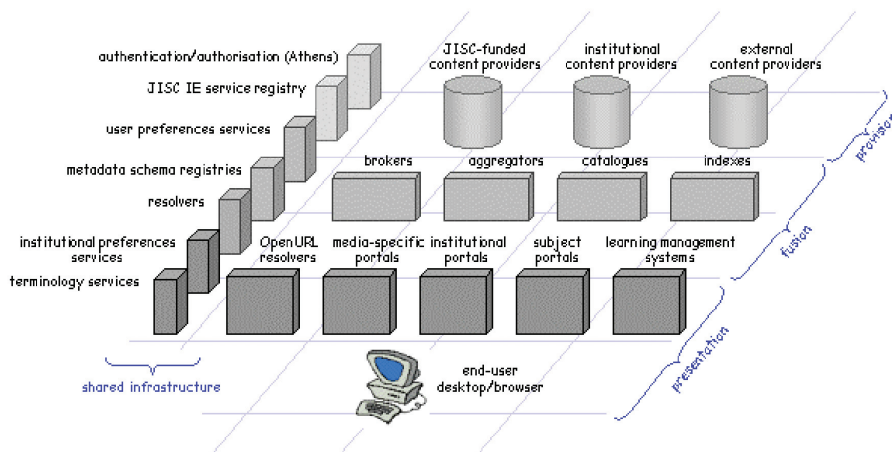
Let's take a specific example to see how this works. Natalie teaches social work at a well-known university. She is preparing a course on mental health issues for second year students. One day she uses her university portal to search the library catalogue for resources to support this course. The library catalogue lists a wealth of useful material including: textbooks, journals and e-prints; several PowerPoint presentations used by Natalie's predecessor; a reading list; and a reference to her own department's web-based support for the course. The next day, while browsing a subject portal for research material, Natalie realises that she also needs a case study and several examples of evidence-based research to promote discussion in a tutorial. Her first search, based on keywords, finds good research references but the case studies are too complex for the second year class so she restricts the search by educational level and finds a suitable case study. This case study exists as a

learning object which she downloads and places in the course web pages on her university's VLE.

Is this scenario realistic? What needs to happen behind the scenes for this to work smoothly? On the first day Natalie used her institutional portal (on the presentation layer in the diagram) to obtain access to the library catalogue (fusion layer). The library catalogue gathered information (metadata) from a number of sources including the library holdings and e-prints as well as Natalie's departmental learning object repository which contained the PowerPoint and reading list. On the second day Natalie was using a subject portal. This subject portal, which could be a node of the Resource Discovery Network (RDN), is linked to many different sources including national and international reports, known centres of excellence in the subject, and national repositories of teaching resources such as the JISC JORUM or Becta National Learning Network (NLN). The subject portal uses an aggregator (fusion layer) to make the process efficient. This aggregator harvests metadata from each of its target repositories (provision layer) every night. When Natalie searches for resources the search displays the matching metadata from the aggregator. Then, once Natalie has used the

metadata to determine which case study was suitable, she was able to download it because the aggregator used the metadata to find the learning object in the correct repository.

This works because there is a network of learning object repositories at different levels, departmental, subject, research-based (national and international), national, educational. Contributions to the learning object repositories are made according to the role of the repository. These repositories use international standards for the metadata describing the objects they hold. They expose their metadata so that aggregators and brokers can harvest it and catalogues and indexes can be formed. These fusion-layer tools can be interrogated by portals. So the only tools people like Natalie need to see are simple portals. But they can discover resources which have very specific subject-domain metadata describing them including the educational level. International standards are at the heart of this information environment. Systems which use proprietary standards cannot be integrated. Intrallect's learning object repository, intraLibrary, with its new interoperability features in version 2.0 (see article in this issue) fits seamlessly into this information environment.



JISC Information Architecture (Andy Powell, UKOLN, University of Bath, 2003)

case study: university of edinburgh

Edinburgh University plans to develop its e-learning capability and will spend £5M internally over the next five years. "In the past there has been a lot of innovative work in pockets around Edinburgh University but we are now looking for an enterprise-wide impact. We want to manage our learning objects in a way that will encourage sharing and reuse." said Jeff Haywood, Director of the Media and Learning Technology Service. Projects are being funded across the University's three colleges but only on condition that they share the resources they produce. To ensure university-wide access to these shared resources Edinburgh University chose Intrallect's intraLibrary repository.

"A number of factors were important in our decision to use intraLibrary: adherence to international interoperability standards; platform-independence at both client and server; the ability to integrate intraLibrary with our library catalogue; and the friendly user interface" said Jeff Haywood.

Intrallect provides on-going support as members of the project steering group, by participating in university seminars and training events. Intrallect staff are in regular contact with the Edinburgh team, helping them to optimise their repository, with the aim of understanding and satisfying their future needs.

digital rights management

Intrallect has just completed a far-reaching study on digital rights management (DRM) on behalf of JISC. The objective of this study was to make recommendations on the best approach for JISC and the UK education and research communities to adopt in relation to Digital Rights Management.

The final report from this study is now in a consultation phase (until the 8th October 2004). This report is available from <http://www.intrallect.com/drm-study/> and comments on the report are welcomed either at drm@intrallect.com, or subscribe to the mail-list and contribute to jisc-drm@jiscmail.ac.uk.

intrallect's expanding team

In the last few months, two new members of staff have joined Intrallect's team

Ed Barker has joined Intrallect as a senior consultant. Ed previously worked at ICBL at Heriot Watt University and led the JISC project on "Long Term Retention and Reuse of E-Learning Objects and Materials" as well as working on many other projects including the JISC X4L "Healthier Nation" project, and FAILTE. Ed has also been a researcher for the CETIS Metadata SIG. Ed is working on a wide range of different consultancy projects at Intrallect including digital rights management and business models



Gordon Rogers has joined Intrallect as a senior developer. Gordon has many years experience as a Java developer, working in the commercial sector. His main technical areas of interest are in data integrity, the use of re-usable components and the application of core design patterns. His experience is well aligned with Intrallect's platform-independent philosophy and he is proving a valuable addition to Intrallect's development team.

intraLibrary 2.0

Would you like to integrate your learning object repository and your library catalogue? Wouldn't it be useful to add comments to learning objects in a repository, and to read the comments made by others? Would you like more control of the metadata in your learning object repository? How would you like to be able to use multiple classifications for subject domain, educational level and accessibility? Wouldn't it be great to enormously reduce the effort of creating metadata? Well now you can with intraLibrary version 2.0.

"the changes to the interface and the general performance improvements are fantastic"

Steve Rogers, JORUM Project.

The next leap forward in learning object repositories has arrived. Intralibrary v2.0 offers a wealth of new administrative and metadata tools in an even friendlier user interface.

To find out more, please go to our website at http://www.intrallect.com/news/v2_release.htm.