



## eRA Technical Coordinators

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**Date:** March 18, 2004, Thursday  
**Time:** 1:30–3:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Rockledge 6700B, Rm 1205  
**Advocate:** Chip Groh

**Next Meeting:** TBA

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### Action Items

1. Contact Steve Hughes within the next few weeks if there are any objections to applying an Oracle patch set that will upgrade the run time of client-server applications.
2. (All) Ask a group of users in your respective ICs to pilot the Web Query Tool; email Patti Gaines any feedback about usage, usability, and the possibility of replacing CRISP Plus, ICSTORe, and QuickView with Web QT.

### Handouts

1. eRA Web Query Tool (Web QT)

### eRA Password Policy

The eRA Password Policy implemented in November 2003 states that the use of any character is acceptable for secure passwords. Unfortunately, while the policy permits use of any character, the system itself currently is not accepting asterisks or dashes for some unknown reason. Oracle has been contacted and it has been recommended that eRA implement a patch set that will upgrade the run time for client-server applications. Oracle believes that the patch will remedy the problem; however, there is no guarantee.

Steve Hughes said that eRA plans to test the patch on several applications. If the patch is successful, eRA will issue it to group members for distribution at their respective ICs. If the patch is unsuccessful, eRA will implement a warning box that asks users to avoid the use of asterisks or dashes when changing passwords. Chip Groh asked how long it would take to test the patch; Steve said that he did not have a set timeline, but estimated that it would take at least a month. Steve asked group members to let him know if the patch would be problematic; if he does not receive any objections, eRA will proceed with testing. The group agreed to voice any concern in the next few weeks.

**Action:** (All) Contact Steve Hughes within the next few weeks if there are any objections to applying an Oracle patch set that will upgrade the run time of client-server applications.

### Zip Files

The Center for Information Technology (CIT) has been deleting any emails with Zip file attachments in an effort to protect the NIH from potential viruses. This has proven very problematic for NIH staff who use email to access and transfer Summary Statements: recipients

never receive emails with Zip attachments and senders never discover that the transfer of their messages was unsuccessful.

As of today, CIT has not resolved the problem; however, they have suggested the possibility of renaming Zip files to “.z” or some other variant that would be recognizable to NIH staff and still pass through the CIT filter. Renaming Zip files would pose a real challenge to eRA: code would have to be changed, scripts would need to be modified, a “rename” command would have to be issued, and the code would then have to be tested. Since the current approach by CIT is the containment of problematic files, eRA is not sure whether there will be additional refinements that could be more flexible that would permit us to resume email transmittal of zipped files. Additionally, further changes to the approaches used by hackers to deliver potential damaging files could force additional measures to be undertaken by CIT to protect NIH. CIT’s top priority is the protection of the NIH, and they will not implement a solution on their end that doesn’t support this priority. Therefore eRA has decided to discontinue the practice of emailing new Summary Statements until a permanent solution for distributing compressed archives is implemented. If such a solution is implemented, eRA may be able to resume distribution using their current applications. Until then, Steve recommended that staff use ICSTORE to access Summary Statements.

## **eRA Data Mart**

In an attempt to provide users a more intelligent means of extracting reporting information from the eRA system, the Architecture team is currently developing an eRA data mart. The data mart should provide users a better alternative than going to the OLTP database for reporting information. The data mart can be thought of as a “middle database” that will allow users to copy data from the OLTP into a staging area; it will provide greater flexibility and a “refresh” time of minutes as opposed to the hours required when working with the current IRDB.

The Architecture team also is working on funneling all queries and other reporting requests (that do use the OTLP) through a central function that controls how queries are built. Rather than multiple engines and tools building *different* queries, the central function will ensure that a *single* query is constructed. Steve explained that a single backend procedure for building queries is ideal because it is easier to maintain architecturally.

The Architecture Team is planning to test the functionality of this back-end query-building procedure using the newly released Web Query Tool (QT). Steve explained that (architecturally-speaking) Web QT was not intended to function as a reporting tool but more like Snapshot in QuickView. The Architecture team has decided to use Web QT for testing because it is the only front-end tool available that was intentionally designed to work with the back-end. Steve said that he needs a large group of users across the NIH to pilot Web QT to fully test the back-end and asked group members for their assistance in encouraging ICs to use the tool. If the Web QT interface fails to work with the back-end functionality, Steve plans to recommend the development of a different interface or a different tool altogether.

Finally, Steve encouraged group members and staff in their respective ICs to provide any feedback about Web QT to Patti Gaines, the eRA Task Manager for Web QT. Users trying Web QT may consider providing feedback on the following:

- *Usage*—How do you use Web QT? How do you foresee using Web QT?

- *Usability of Interface*—Is the user interface intuitive?
- *Replacing current reporting tools*—Do you foresee replacing CRISP plus, ICSTORE, and QuickView with Web QT? If so, why? If not, why not?

**Action:** (All) Ask a group of users in your respective ICs to pilot the Web Query Tool; email Patti Gaines any feedback about usage, usability, and the possibility of replacing CRISP Plus, ICSTORE, and QuickView with Web QT.

## **NIH Roadmap and eRA**

Chip asked Steve how the existing eRA system will handle grants that are submitted under the NIH Roadmap initiative. Steve said that currently there is a Roadmap (RM) IC code that is being used in the RFA field and that is associated with grants that have Roadmap significance. So far, that is all that has been accomplished to date. In the near future, eRA plans to meet with representatives of the Roadmap initiative to discuss and establish requirements for reporting on grants that are classified in the Roadmap category.