eRA Technical Coordinators

Date:	May 20, 2004, Thursday
Time:	1:30–3:00 p.m.
Location:	6700 B Rockledge Drive, Rm 1205
Advocate:	Chip Groh

Next Meeting: June 17, 2004, Thursday. Location TBA.

Action Items

1. (eRA Technical Coordinators) Test Web QT and send Patti Gaines any feedback, especially regarding failed queries.

2. (Tim Twomey) Provide update on status of Virtual Organizational Layers at the next eRA Technical Coordinators meeting.

Handouts

1. Drafted letter from Dr. Lederhendler, Acting eRA Project Manager.

2. eRA Web Query Tool Presentation: http://era.nih.gov/docs/Web_QT_Presentation_eRA_Tech_Coord_meeting_05-20-04.pdf

3. Demo of upcoming Web QT User Interface: http://era.nih.gov/docs/Upcoming_UI_Web QT_demo_eRA_Tech_Coord_05-20-04.pdf

Announcements

Steve Hughes

Steve announced that he will no longer be attending eRA Technical Coordinator meetings in the future. Rather, he will be participating via teleconference from his new home in Alabama. He hopes to return to the NIH at least 10–12 times a year for important meetings.

J2EE Migration

Steve Hughes

Steve recapped eRA's plan to migrate all client/server applications to a Web-based platform known as J2EE. He explained that eRA selected J2EE as the ideal architecture because it provides many technical advantages and is stable, secure, and fast. Efforts to maintain both client/server applications and J2EE applications are costly in terms of budget, time, and resources. By moving all eRA applications into a J2EE environment, eRA hopes to open all applications to more effective enhancement procedures.

To achieve this Web-based platform, eRA issued a contract to Kumaran, a company that focuses solely on the conversion of software. Kumaran is currently in the process of converting the Grants Management and User Administration client/server applications into J2EE applications. No additional functionality will be added to these applications; they will simply be converted so that the eRA system has a more uniform platform architecture. The conversion of these two

applications will not affect the redesign of the Grants Management module; ongoing business process modeling will continue as planned. Once Grants Management and User Administration have been converted, eRA will evaluate the success of the conversion. If the conversion is successful, eRA will convert the remaining client/server applications to achieve a single-platform architecture. Client/server applications will not be retired until the converted J2EE applications are fully functional.

As a final note, Steve encouraged the group to stay alert and be prepared to face changes in the next few months regarding the move to J2EE. The eRA Technical Coordinators is a vital group and necessary for the success of this transition.

Status of eRA Data Mart

Steve Hughes

At the end of August, an internal prototype of the eRA data mart will be released. Steve hopes to have the data mart in production sometime in the first quarter of 2005.

Web QT Demonstration

Patti Gaines

Patti Gaines (eRA Task Order Manager), Tina Milner (eRA Task Order Manager), and Daniel Fox (Requirements Analyst) delivered a brief presentation and demonstration of the eRA Web Query Tool (Web QT): http://era.nih.gov/docs/Web_QT_Presentation_eRA_Tech_Coord_meeting_05-20-04.pdf.

Patti explained that the development of a new query and reporting tool is necessary because the NIH is moving from a client/server to a J2EE environment. Although a plethora of query and reporting tools are already available at the NIH (i.e., CRISP Plus, QuickView, ICSTORe, etc.), there are too many query and reporting tools to maintain and replicate as the NIH migrates to a J2EE environment. A single Web-based query and reporting tool for operational and production use is more efficient.

Patti distributed a letter drafted by Dr. Israel Lederhendler, the eRA acting Project Manager, to illustrate eRA's plan to—

- Migrate reporting tools that are familiar to the NIH (i.e., QuickView, ICSTORe, and CRISP Plus) to Web-based applications. The first reporting tool that eRA will migrate is QuickView. However, the current version of QuickView will not be turned off until eRA is certain that its functionality has been successfully migrated to the J2EE version.

- Continue to develop the J2EE version of QuickView. This J2EE version is called Web QT.

Patti provided a brief overview of eRA's new query and reporting tool, explaining that Web QT is intended to provide operational support with a simple and intuitive way of executing queries against the eRA production database. Eventually Web QT will include the functionality from QuickView, ICSTORe, and CRISP Plus. However, these reporting tools will not be turned off until eRA is certain that the functionality of Web QT is on par with these reporting tools.

Daniel explained that the Web QT engine running "behind" the Web QT User interface was designed to funnel all queries and other reporting requests that use the OLTP; in other words, rather than multiple engines and tools building *different* queries, the backend will ensure that a *single* query is constructed.

For the June 2004 release, eRA will release a number of enhancements to the current Web QT pilot. These enhancements include:

- PI Search

- Increase in the number of hitlist rows to 50

- Modification to the Abstract header by adding Project Title and Institution Name

- Inclusion of an Application Status code sort within the hitlist

- Increase in the merge limit on abstracts and resumes to 500

- Correction of several defects/bugs

For the July 2004 release, Web QT will feature a new range search on numeric fields and date fields as well as a wild card search in the RFA/PA field.

Additional releases include—

- Addition of Roadmap functionality

- Deployment of external version of Web QT to NIH eRA Commons

- Addition of Maintain Layouts functionality

- User interface changes to mimic QuickView search capabilities

Patti and Daniel presented the group with a demonstration of the upcoming Web QT User Interface scheduled for release in June 2004:

The group reviewed the interface and provided the following comments:

- *User Interface*—Overall, the group agreed that the upcoming user interface that is scheduled for the June release is much more comprehensive than the current Web QT pilot. Chip Groh said that concerns that the eRA Technical Coordinators have voiced in the past seem to have been addressed with this upcoming user interface. Steve Hughes explained that the eRA Technical Coordinators have an opportunity to further "craft" the User Interface by experimenting with Web QT and providing feedback to Patti Gaines. However, the eRA Technical Coordinators need to be proactive in this endeavor. Steve reminded everyone that the user interface can easily be revised and changed. If there are fundamental problems concerning performance, then it is the Web QT engine that needs to be fixed.

- *Timeline*—Chip said that there needs to be a realistic timeframe for the implementation of Web QT. Patti explained that the Task Order, which includes Web QT development has already been awarded to a contractor and is well underway. Steve Hughes also asked the group to keep in mind that eRA has many tasks, priorities, and projects to juggle on a daily basis. Unlike QVR, eRA does not have the benefit of focusing solely on the enhancement of a single application. Rather, eRA is challenged to look across all business areas at all times; as such, this may delay the completion of what appears to the

rest of the NIH as a relatively "straightforward and simple task." The group said that they understood these challenges and appreciated Steve emphasizing this key point.

- *Speed*—Chip Groh said that his main concern about Web QT was the speed at which users could access data. He was worried that the speed was too slow and potentially could be cumbersome to users. Daniel explained that the speed of Web QT will vary depending on the number of search parameters entered. The OLTP database is not designed for long queries. Eventually, Web QT will run against the eRA data mart, which will increase the speed at which users "call up" data. Steve Hughes explained that when Web QT was developed, the Architecture Team had no way to conduct performance testing. As such, many artificial limitations were placed on the development of Web QT and the various combinations of search parameters could not be tested for speed and efficiency. ,With the data mart, these performance issues should disappear. Steve also said that Web QT must measure up to the same performance specifications as QuickView. If Web QT fails to do this, then Steve cannot recommend the use of the tool. However, he is confident that Web QT will measure up to the performance specifications of current reporting and query tools, if not surpass them.

- *Retiring Client/Server Query and Reporting Tools—*Chip asked at what point eRA will determine that the current client/server query and reporting tools are "ready" to be retired. Steve said that this decision is up to the user community. When the user community feels that Web QT "is ready," then eRA will retire the client/server applications.

Finally, Patti encouraged the group to email feedback to her about Web QT (especially any queries that fail to work). She also outlined Dr. Lederhendler's upcoming plan to—

- Demonstrate Web QT to various user groups to ensure user needs are met.

- Expand the current Web QT Focus Group to accommodate additional business areas.

- Create a sub-group for migration planning.

- Provide transitional support to Quickview users.

Action: (eRA Technical Coordinators) **Test out Web QT and send Patti Gaines any feedback, especially regarding failed queries.**

Virtual Organization Layers

All

The group asked about the status of implementing Virtual Organization Layers. Tim Twomey said that he would find out more about the status of this initiative and provide a brief update at the next eRA Technical Coordinators meeting.

Action: (Tim Twomey) **Provide update on status of Virtual Organizational Layers at the next eRA Technical Coordinators meeting.**