



eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2002
Time: 9:00–11 a.m.
Location: 6700 B Rockledge, Room 1205
Chair: John McGowan

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 28, 9:00 a.m., 6700 B Rockledge, Room 1205

Action Items

1. (Eileen Bradley, Tracy Soto, Dan Hall, George Stone, Tim Twomey) Work together to prepare demos of IAR, eSNAP and Status to be distributed to the CWG. George is responsible for packaging the final products.

Attachments

- OLAW Interface with eRA: http://era.nih.gov/Docs/OLAW_Interface_eRA_01-14-03.pdf
- NIH eRA Status with IAR Integration: http://era.nih.gov/Docs/Commons_Status_IAR_01-14-03.pdf

Project Update

Dr. John (JJ) McGowan

DHHS—JJ met with Dr. Sontag and Joe Montgomery, representatives from DHHS, to brief them on the IMPAC II and NIH eRA Commons systems. There is a particular interest in the feasibility of using the eRA systems throughout DHHS, or using it as a model to build upon.

Clinical Research—Dr. Elias Zerhouni, NIH director, made it clear that his emphasis is on *knowledge, discovery and tools*. He doesn't think that resources are being managed the way they should in regard to clinical research. He would like to set a high-level standard, providing patient information in a format that can be mined, common terms and dictionaries, data standards, all of which pose enormous challenges. It was also clear that the ICs cannot be restructured, but that "small science will take place in a big-science ICs."

OER—Within the NIH, OER's structure is being scrutinized to determine its most logical and effective organization. One idea that is being considered is whether or not the eRA project belongs in OER or whether it belongs in CIT.

OMB—The OMB has cut NIH's budget, with a third of IT budgets in ICs being cut (\$15M). This puts more pressure on the eRA project to deliver its systems.

OLAW—This group is aggregating data, making it logical for it to integrate with eRA.

eRA Budget—The eRA request for \$40M is being submitted to the Board of Governors and will be defended in February.

Advocates—JJ said that he is restructuring the eRA Project Team with results to be presented in February. He mentioned that changes will most likely take place in Receipt and Referral, Grants Management (Marcia Hahn will move on to new responsibilities and there will be a new Advocate), Reporting, and Training Activities. He will also add a clinical research component to the Project Team.

JJ asked current Advocates to assess their future commitment to the project. He also noted that he has been most pleased with the dedication and results of Advocates to date.

Proposed Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) Integration with eRA

Carol Wigglesworth

Carol presented a plan for the integration of the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare database system with the eRA system (see presentation).

She said that institutions submit Animal Welfare Assurances every five years and a report once a year to OLAW. This information is maintained in an OLAW database. Currently these reports are submitted on paper.

OLAW would like to provide the option for electronic submissions from institutions, complying with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act and reducing the regulatory burden. Consequently, it makes sense to coordinate efforts with those of the eRA.

OLAW proposed that the NIH eRA Commons serve as the entry point into OLAW's database. OLAW could then take advantage of the user ID and passcode for authorized institutional officials as built into the eRA system.

Carol said that the interface they propose includes the following:

- Designation by the institutional Account Administrator of individual(s) authorized to submit data to OLAW (institutional official who signs Assurance; chairperson of Animal Care and Use committee)
- Designated individual(s) only authorized to submit data to OLAW
- Access to data submission controlled by logon
- Data flow into OLAW database

She proposed that the next steps would be for OLAW to designate a contractor for the OLAW database and to provide financial resources to the project as well as coordinating with appropriate eRA staff.

George Stone asked if there are other project-specific assurances that should be addressed, but Carol said that, although there were a few, they would not be suitable for this application. George noted that it would be more cost-effective if more than two reports were included.

Jim Cain said that these were good first steps, but that, in the long run, there should be a more strategic plan to fold the OLAW data structures into the eRA. He suggested that it would be more effective to put OLAW data into the common database repository, which OLAW could access. This would better leverage the advantages of eRA.

Motion: Approve the concept of the short-term steps and long-term strategy of integrating OLAW into eRA. Motion passed.

Operations Team Testing Proposal for the NIH eRA Commons

Brad Sachar

Jim Cain introduced this topic by praising the Operations team for the stability of the backend servers, which have had an excellent record of no downtime.

Brad said they are conducting different types of testing:

- **Load testing:** simulates normal load
- **Stress testing:** pushes the system to the limit to determine the maximum it can handle
- **Functional testing:** including regression and integration

They are using Mercury Interactive's LoadRunner for the load and stress testing and WinRunner for the functional testing. They have engaged Mercury Quickstart for three weeks of testing. A test environment has been set up for this testing.

The results of the testing may mean putting some new business processes in place. However, it is doubtful that this can be done in time for the March release.

Brad said that automated testing will lead to higher quality applications, reduced production downtime, savings from resolving issues when most cost-effective, aligning analysts and ops/dev/test around user objectives, continual business process performance improvement and satisfied users, which will make the program a success.

NIH eRA Commons Status with IAR Integration

Dan Hall

Dan gave an overview of the progress of the NIH eRA Commons and the deployment of the Internet Assisted Review (IAR) module.

The major NIH eRA Commons milestones are as follows:

Date	Milestone
10/14/02	■ NIH eRA Commons deployed to the Commons Working Group (CWG)
11/1//02	■ eSNAP and FSR
12/6/02	■ IAR in pilot (authentication to IMPAC II)
1/11/03	■ Integrated IAR and stabilization <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Fully integrated IAR (two meetings in pilot)– Doubled performance– Closed 85 remaining bugs– Super-user access– Open registration

Date	Milestone
3/03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Optimize workflow (eSNAP, maintain accounts) ■ Additional performance initiatives ■ Database combination/eliminate replication ■ Demo facility

The requirements for IAR are: one userID/password; single sign-on with NIH eRA Commons; SRA accounts authenticate to IMPAC II; and support for both affiliated (with an institution) and unaffiliated accounts. He pointed out that 80 percent of reviewers are PIs.

The SO/AA/AO maintain accounts in the NIH eRA Commons. For the IAR, the SRA initiates the invitation. If the reviewer has an account in the NIH eRA Commons, s/he is issued an invitation to the meeting. If the reviewer isn't registered in the NIH eRA Commons, s/he is sent an email containing an account registration URL and asked to register.

There are two types of IAR accounts: *affiliated* and *unaffiliated* with an institution. Institution administrators manage these accounts by either creating the reviewer's account in the first place and affiliating them with their institution or by entering the system and affiliating a reviewer who is already registered. These administrators can also remove an institution affiliation from a reviewer record. The account itself is not deleted, merely the affiliation. Management of these accounts is currently done through the userID and email but, in March, it will be integrated into the "Maintain Accounts" function.

Dan said there were 200 bugs last September and today there are only eight bugs. There are 78 registered institutions that have recorded logins, and 615 users have entered the system and done something other than register. There are no tracking systems as yet that can show where these users are going on the site, but a tracking system should be in place by March.

Menu—The menu items are dynamically generated, depending on the permissions of the user's role.

File Archiving—JJ McGowan asked if the CWG has provided input regarding the length of time to archive electronic files. George responded that they have not addressed this issue as yet.

Reporting—Sherry Zucker is working with NIH eRA Commons staff to integrate the reporting function.

Data Retrieval—They are still working on issues regarding the speed of data retrieval.

Status—By July, there will be an increase in the types of information that will be retrieved through this module.

Registration—Open registration started on January 12. Although it is now open, it hasn't been widely advertised. There are still concerns about back-end performance, and, although the system can now handle 1,000 simultaneous registrations, the decision was made to let the registrations ramp up gradually. This allows problems to be more quickly dealt with. By March, the system should be fully debugged and then open registration can be widely advertised and encouraged.

Profile Validation—Profile validation is now taking up to three business days. Jim Tucker said that he will be monitoring this process this coming week and would like to see the timeframe reduced to one day.

CWG Feedback—George Stone reported that the CWG seemed pleased with the progress of the NIH eRA Commons and he congratulated the eRA team for its work, giving them much credit for this product. The CWG was very positive in their feedback.

George will present highlights of the CWG meeting at the next Project Team meeting. He suggested that he may package Dan's presentation today with a demo and distribute it to the CWG. JJ suggested preparing a PowerPoint demo about what a PI can see in the Status module, as well as demos for IAR and eSNAP.

Action: (Eileen Bradley, Tracy Soto, Dan Hall, George Stone, Tim Twomey) Work together to prepare demos of IAR, eSNAP and Status to be distributed to the CWG. George is responsible for packaging the final products.

Program Interface Update

Carlos Caban

Carlos reported that he and Bud Erickson met with analysts and JJ McGowan in early December where they made a commitment to forge ahead with the development of a Program interface. A new analyst has been assigned to the project and Carlos is in the process of restructuring the user group work for this project. There will be a quick turnaround on development with March as a target for a first release.

JJ suggested that the development team work very closely with the user group. He would also like a presentation made at the eRA Symposium on June 30. Additionally, he noted that the Program Advocate (Carlos) is working closely with the ECB/QVR Advocate (Thor Fjellstedt) to integrate features of these two programs.

Proposed eRA Website Design

Carla Flora

JJ McGowan introduced the Web site design project by noting that Carla Flora's group, the Office of Communication and Outreach, has been given the responsibility of Web site content management and presentation uniformity, and has been charged with improving overall navigation within the site.

Carla displayed a screen shot of the current eRA Web site, which was launched in January 2002, and a prototype of the new site. Since last January, the project has grown and even changed direction, with its leap to J2EE migration. The redesign of the Web site takes this into consideration.

The overall concept is to make the home page an information gateway, parsing the users into audience types—New to eRA; Scientists & Research Organizations; NIH Staff, Government & Industry; and eRA Project Team—and also offering them content—Help, newsletters and upcoming events.

Carla introduced the Web site design team in OCO: Allyson Armistead, Matt Craner, and Jim Soden.

Dan Hall observed that, once the design is solidified and implemented, it will be applied to the NIH eRA Commons so that they both have the same look and feel.

Carla asked the group provide input on this new design. The prototype can be viewed at this site: http://era.nih.gov/docs/era_nih_gov_concept_screenshot.pdf.

Carla asked the group to provide input on this new design.

April 30 eRA Symposium

Carla Flora

The overall direction of the Symposium will be to look at NIH business processes and what people envision them to look like in the future. The entire Natcher Conference Center has been reserved for April 30. Carla would like to establish a steering committee for symposium planning and asked that interested people contact her.

General Discuss and Round Robin

January 10 Deployment—Scarlett Gibb reported that, despite a late start and a power outage, a successful deployment took place. She said that there are still some power issues with the report server, but they are working on it.

Committee Management Fast Track—Krishna Collie reported that the CM Fast Track Module is going to be released on January 24 as a pilot. Currently there are 8 bugs, but they are working with Mitretek on acceptance testing with a goal of zero bugs. There will be 30 pilot users, who will be trained. Full deployment is targeted for July.

Training—Patty Austin reported that she is developing training for all of the NIH eRA Commons roles.

NIH Portal—Carlos Caban reported that there has been much activity in regard to the NIH Portal recently. He is looking to see if there are any sections that could be leveraged for the Program interface or if there are any ideas we could use.

Reporting Tools—The eRA project uses Oracle's reporting tools. CIT has now adopted Crystal Reports, which is not an ad hoc query tool but rather a reporting application. The eRA staff is trying to redefine reporting tools for the eRA now.

Contract Data—Della Hann suggested that there be a committee or JAD convened to determine how best to integrate contract data into eRA systems. There are many issues that have to be resolved. She also agreed that Earl Hodgkins and the budget staff should probably be responsible for this issue. None of the budget systems in use today have been built as enterprise systems. They have been built as reporting tools that focus on one function and are only at the IC level. Consequently, we have to try to build most of their requirements into the enterprise system. Some functions, e.g., contract receipts, work well in the NIH eRA Commons, but others will probably be more suited for the NBS system.

Attendees

Armistead, Allyson (LTS/OCO)	Hahn, Marcia (OER/OPERA)	Sinnett, Everett (CSR)
Austin, Patricia (OER)	Hall, Dan (Z-Tech)	Snouffer, Anna (OD/OFACP)
Bradley, Eileen (CSR)	Hann, Della (OER)	Soto, Tracy (DEIS)
Caban, Carlos (OER)	Martin, Carol (NHGRI)	Spitzberg, Bobbi (OER)
Cain, Jim (OER)	McGowan, JJ (NIAID)	Stone, George (OER/OPERA)
Carter, Dave (OER)	Moore, Bob (OER)	Tucker, Jim (OER)
Collie, Krishna (RN Solutions)	Morton, Larry (OER)	Van Brunt, Virginia (LTS)
Copeland Sewell, Zoe-Ann (OER)	Panniers, Richard (CSR)	Wallace, Patrick (LTS)
Cox, Mike (OER)	Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)	Wilson, Mike (NGIT)
Flora, Carla (OCO)	Pearson, Johnnie (Z-Tech)	Wright, David OPERA)
Gibb, Scarlett (OER)	Sachar, Brad (Oracle)	Presenters:
Goodman, Mike (OER)	Seppala, Sandy (LTS/OCO)	Wigglesworth, Carol (OLAW)
Grandy, Vanessa (Z-Tech)	Siegert, Mark (OER/OPERA)	Garnett, Dr. Nelson (OLAW)
	Silver, Sara (Z-Tech)	
	Silverman, Jay (NGIT)	