

Report on OGF-Europe Community Outreach Seminar

The Digital Repositories Community Outreach Seminar was well attended at OGF23 with an audience of up to 70 participants. There was a healthy mix of grid technologists and repository community representatives from a variety of communities which lead to lively discussion. Chaired by David De Roure, Southampton University, UK, presentations from a number of experts highlighting user case studies of how Grid can benefit Digital Repositories and the challenges of standards adoption and interoperability::

- The state of the art and future visions from the European Commission, Enterprise and Research.
- Domain specific perspectives from Natural Resource Science, Space Sciences, the Humanities, and Earth Science.
- Horizontal issues focussing on the implementations of standards and interoperability and data infrastructures.

Conclusions indicated the importance of greater mediation between infrastructure and user-needs. As digital repositories are there to empower users, it is vital that the Digital repository community is sensitive to specific user environments to ensure that needs are integrated into systems.

Discussion also focussed on metadata, audit trails (provenance), versioning, data life cycle which were previously viewed as over domain specific and therefore ignored by the community. Instead, it has been found that a number of communities actually share the same requirements therefore, effort is required by the various digital repository communities to use universal terms of reference in order to create a common ground on which to meet.

It was generally agreed that within this environment, Grid should focus on moving toward services similar to semantic grid, service oriented knowledge utilities and digital objects, as opposed to focussing on virtualisation of compute and storage hardware.

Examples were given showing how digital repositories can leverage from Grid. These included analysis of primary data managed by repositories, large scale migration efforts and primary data and work flows. Further fully-fledged user cases are required to further support these examples. The D4Science project, gCube and iRODS were given as examples of evidence that there has been an increase of systems that stem from the grid community whereas, repository systems such as Fedora were cited as performing “grid like” functionalities such as journaling and replication plans.

The future of Digital Repositories is unsure. Debate exposed a variation of views with experts discussing the possibility of the superseding of isolation repositories by the creation

of a federated repository. Furthermore, speed of setting up repositories was also discussed as well as, the view that the next 10 to 20 years will serve as a test-ground for digital repositories, highlighting how they may be used in as yet unexplored areas.

What is clear is that cooperation amongst the Digital repositories community is vital and that this can bring a wide range of challenges such as tapping into unexplored resources and experiences to create a core set of synergies. It will also provide stimulating opportunities such as standards compliance.

The Digital repository community must strive to achieve this and provide users with reliable information and at the same time be sensitive to user community needs and strive toward interoperability.