

JISC FAIR PROGRAMME

THESES ALIVE!

PROJECT PLAN

Project Acronym	<i>Theses Alive!</i>
Project Title	<i>Theses Alive!</i>
Start Date	1 November 2002
End Date	31 October 2004
Lead Institution	Edinburgh University Library
Project Director	John MacColl
Project Manager & contact details	To be appointed
Partner Institutions	

Document History

Version	Date	Comments
1.0	19 November 02	
2.0	13 January 2003	
3.0	5 March 2003	Revision of Plan following departure of Project Officer. Rescheduling of Workpackages 3 and 4.

1. Introduction

This project will examine the use of OAI-compliant software designed to handle electronic thesis metadata. Various open-source software packages are now in use which permit individual institutions to disclose metadata about their institutional theses and dissertations. The *Theses Alive!* Project will seek to adapt and develop one of these for use across the UK. It will develop a pilot national service which will have the aim of supporting electronic theses (e-theses) creation and management for UK universities.

We recognise that there are particular characteristics to the UK environment for thesis metadata (largely because of the well-known services of the British Library and of the *Index to Theses*) which suggest that a national approach may be the most effective way of enabling universities to produce multi-purpose thesis metadata, to accept the need to develop procedures and systems to accommodate e-theses, and to ensure that the advocacy work required to generate e-thesis content is deployed with maximum efficiency. The Project will therefore work both to create the submission software required to make the disclosure of theses metadata as simple as possible, and to secure the take-up of the system and – through it - of electronic theses production and management generally in UK HE. The Project will complement the work of the *Electronic Theses* project led by the Robert Gordon University.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 Aim

Through its British Thesis Service, the British Library has for many years offered UK universities a service which was national in scale. However, it has not yet taken advantage of the availability of the networked digital environment, and we consider that JISC, representing UK Higher Education, has an opportunity at the present time to promote the adoption of this environment by universities in order that theses can be provided online for the benefit of international research and scholarship. JISC can coordinate a national system which caters to the needs of researchers and meshes with the hybrid library environments currently being developed by university libraries through the provision of a new service, *Theses Alive!* We recommend that this system be based upon a distributed model, with the chosen software being made available to universities for the provision both of a metadata submission system, and a full-text repository for those universities wishing to use it.

2.2 Objectives

The Project's objectives are:

Objective	Measurement
To test the value of a national support service for e-theses creation and management in the UK	Demand for service; hits on web site; number of requests for documentation; number of requests for assistance.
To develop an OAI-compliant thesis submission system for use in all participating universities	Software in active use in pilot institutions.
To develop and support a generic metadata format capable of delivering metadata to a number of relevant metadata repositories for UK thesis information	Scheme in use with ETDs in system. Numbers of metadata records generated and passed to repositories.

To develop an infrastructure which enables e-theses to be published on the web to the extent that a minimum of 500 e-theses exist within the UK segment of the NDLTD after two years	Target number reached by end of project.
To work with other e-theses developments internationally, and in particular to assist the research aims of other e-theses projects funded within the JISC FAIR Programme.	Participation in international conferences; dissemination activity; FAIR programme cluster activity.
To produce a 'checklist approach' for universities to use as they develop e-theses capability.	Checklist in use.

3. Overall Approach

The Project will be based around a core team of three staff at the University of Edinburgh – a Project Director, Project Officer and Systems Developer. The Project will work with a group of pilot universities who will take delivery of the *Theses Alive!* software for use in their institutions, and populate it with their own ETD data, assisting the Project team with product evaluation and user feedback. During the development of the software, and afterwards, the Project will work to provide a general information and user support service on ETDs for UK HE as a whole.

4. Project Consortium

Theses Alive! is not a consortium, being based within the SELLIC Project in Edinburgh University Library. However, the Project will work with non-funded partners, viz:

- Supplier of open-source submission software
- Universities involved in piloting the system
- Theses metadata agencies: the British Library's British Thesis Service, and Learned Information, publisher of the *Index to Theses*.

End-user interests will be represented via the pilot sites. Each pilot site will be asked to nominate a group of end-users (i.e. research supervisors and postgraduate students) as well as 'technical users' (i.e. library and IT staff). The Project Officer will visit each pilot site and convene meetings with end-users and technical users in the course of the Project.

5. Protocols and Standards

The Project will employ the following standards:

- Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH). It is essential that the chosen platform for ETD submission and management is PMH-compliant.
- XML: An XML Document Type Definition will be written or adapted for use in the project, in order to support the provision of common metadata to a variety of theses description services.
- MARC: The MARC standard will be supported for the generation of metadata for OPACs.

6. Project Management

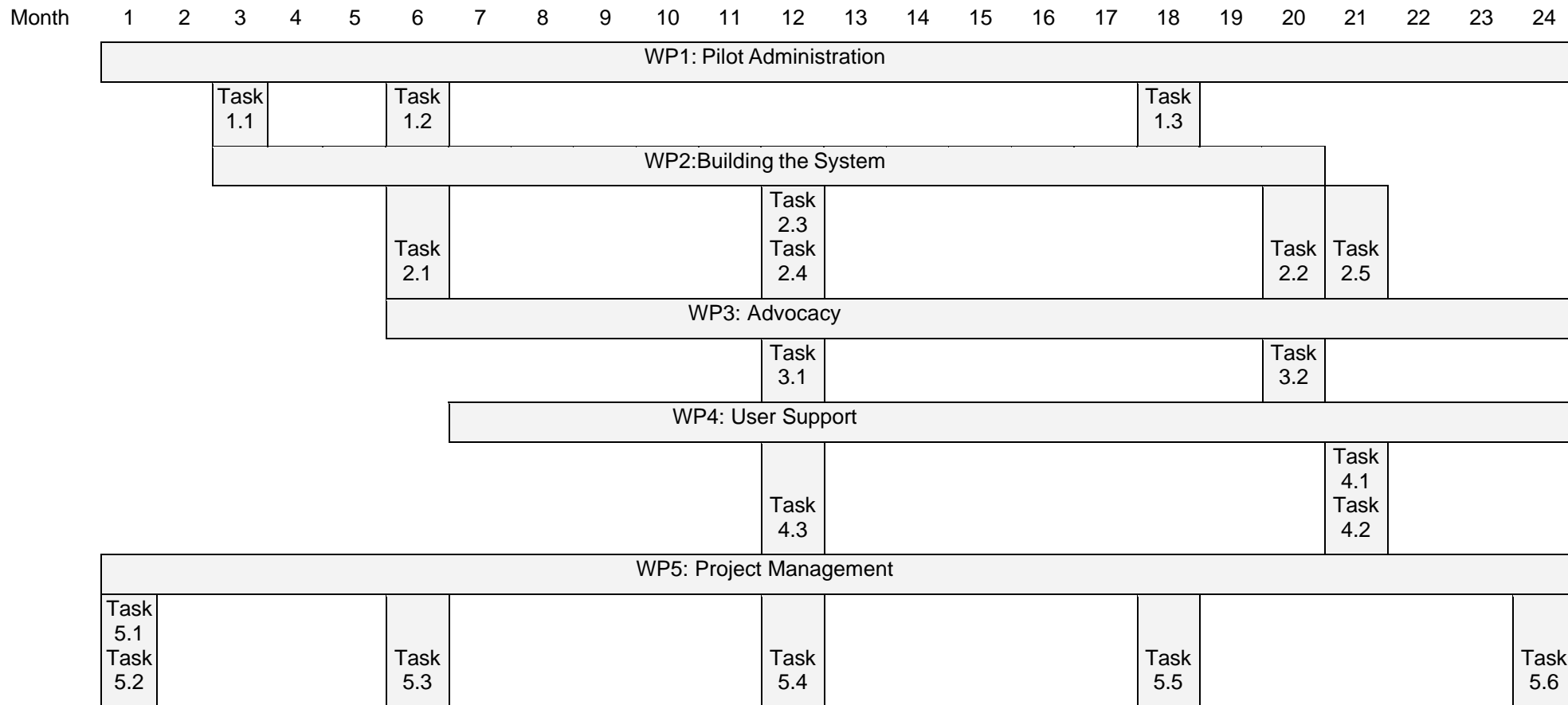
Programme Advisory Board	
Cluster Steering Committee	
Project Director (John MacColl) 0.1 FTE	Responsible for strategic direction and management of the work of the Project Officer and Systems Developer. Reports to Programme Advisory Board.
Project Officer (to be appointed) 0.5 FTE	Responsible for advocacy implementation, and user support. Reports to Project Director.
Systems Developer (Richard Jones) 0.5 FTE Year 1, and 1 FTE Year 2	Responsible for writing the <i>Theses Alive!</i> system on the basis of available open-source software. Reports to Project Director.

7. Overall Project Structure

Workpackage	Description	Project Members Responsible
WP1: Pilot Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the pilot sites. • Interviews with technical and end-users prior to system launch. • Liaison with site representatives. 	JM/PO PO JM/PO
WP2: Building the System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of open source platform. • Coding of a system for use in the UK context. • Development of a metadata schema for use within the system. • System launch. • Provision of technical user support. 	JM/PO/RJ RJ JM/PO/RJ JM/PO/RJ RJ
WP3: Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to pilot sites to meet with contributors – research students, supervisors, administrators, library staff • Production of advocacy material in print and on the web site. 	PO PO
WP4: User Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a web- and telephone-based user support service for pilot sites where students are working with ETDs • Provision of a web- and telephone-based user support service for the UK as a whole, for institutions outwith the pilot considering the issues in setting up an ETD service. 	PO PO

WP5: Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project planning and coordination• Organisation of work according to plan in order to ensure that deliverables are produced and work is done according to the schedule• Reporting to JISC	JM JM JM
JM: John MacColl; PO: Avril Conacher; RJ; System Developer		

8. Project Schedule



9. Detailed Project Plan

WP1	Pilot Administration
Start Date	1.11.02
End Date	31.10.04
Objectives	To involve a number of UK universities (5 or 6) in field-testing of the <i>Theses Alive!</i> software, and to target advocacy and user support effort at them.
Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the pilot sites. • Interviews with technical and end-users prior to pilot launch. • Liaison with site representatives.
Quality Assurance/Review	Regular feedback in the course of visits and other contacts with sites. 1-day workshop in month 18 involving the whole pilot group to assess progress.
Outputs	Creation of ETD repositories at each site. Minimum of 500 ETDs in UK sector of NDLTD by end of Project. Final report to JISC.
WP2	Building the System
Start Date	1.1.03
End Date	30.6.04
Objectives	To create the <i>Theses Alive!</i> ETD management system.
Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of OAI-compliant open source platform. • Coding of a system for use in the UK context. • Development of a metadata schema for use within the system. • System launch. • Provision of technical user support.
Quality Assurance/Review	User testing reports by pilot sites and by metadata agencies. Aim to have initial system development completed by month 12, with subsequent period for revision, refinement and support.
Outputs	<i>Theses Alive!</i> system.
WP3	Advocacy
Start Date	1.4.03
End Date	31.10.04
Objectives	To promote the benefits of ETDs both within the pilot group and across UK HE as a whole.

Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to pilot sites to meet with contributors – research students, supervisors, administrators, library staff • Production of advocacy material in print and on the web site.
Quality Assurance/Review	User-testing of advocacy materials by representatives from pilot sites. Feedback evaluation from all dissemination and advocacy events.
Outputs	Advocacy materials on project web site, including an ETDs FAQ.
WP4	User Support
Start Date	1.5.03
End Date	31.10.04
Objectives	To support users of the system in the pilot sites, and to provide advice and support on ETD adoption across the UK HE sector.
Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a web- and telephone-based user support service for pilot sites where students are working with ETDs • Provision of a web- and telephone-based user support service for the UK as a whole, for institutions outwith the pilot considering the issues in setting up an ETD service.
Quality Assurance/Review	Feedback evaluation from pilot sites. Follow-up evaluation with those requesting help and support from outwith pilot sites.
Outputs	FAQ on web site. Guide to adopting ETDs produced both in print and on the web.
WP5	Project Management
Start Date	1.11.02
End Date	31.10.04
Objectives	To ensure that the Project meets its objectives in respect of deliverables according to the Project timetable.
Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project planning and coordination • Recruitment • Organisation of work according to plan in order to ensure that deliverables are produced and work is done according to the schedule • Reporting to JISC
Quality Assurance/Review	Cluster Steering Committee and Programme Board will evaluate the management of the Project.
Outputs	Reports to JISC.

10. Task Descriptions

Task	Title	Team Members	Description	Complete by month
1.1	Pilot Set-up	PO/JM	Identification of the pilot sites.	8
1.2	Initial Interviews	PO	Interviews with technical and end-users prior to pilot launch	10
1.3	Workshop for pilot participants	JM/PO/RJ	Event aimed at gathering participants and allowing the exchange of experience and an update from the Project Team.	18
2.1	Platform Choice	JM/PO/RJ	Choice of open source platform.	6
2.2	System Programming	RJ	Coding of a system for use in the UK context.	20
2.3	Schema Development	PO/JM	Development of a metadata schema for use within the system.	12
2.4	System Completion	RJ	Initial system development completed.	12
2.5	System Launch	PO/JM/RJ	Launch of <i>Theses Alive!</i> system.	21
3.1	Site Visits	PO	Visits to pilot sites to meet with contributors – research students, supervisors, administrators, library staff.	12
3.2	Site Visits 2	PO	Visits to pilot sites to meet with contributors – research students, supervisors, administrators, library staff.	20
4.1	FAQ Creation	PO	Creation of an FAQ service on the web site.	21
4.2	Guide Creation	PO	Creation of Guide to adopting ETDs both in print and on the web.	21
4.3	User Support Set-up	SC/RJ	Provision of a web- and telephone-based user support service for pilot sites and for the UK as a whole.	12
5.1	Production of Project Plan	JM/PO/RJ	Production and submission of Project Plan.	1
5.2	Recruitment	JM	Appointment of Team staff.	1
5.3	Reporting	JM	Provision of monitoring, evaluation and final reports to JISC according to	6

			Programme timetable.	
5.4	Reporting (2)	JM	Provision of monitoring, evaluation and final reports to JISC according to Programme timetable.	12
5.5	Reporting (3)	JM	Provision of monitoring, evaluation and final reports to JISC according to Programme timetable.	18
5.6	Reporting (4)	JM	Provision of monitoring, evaluation and final reports to JISC according to Programme timetable.	24

11. Dissemination

Assisted take-up will be in the form of the advocacy and support work undertaken with the pilot sites and with other interested sites as time allows. Dissemination will be achieved by means of submission of papers to conferences and to the professional press. The Project will undertake to speak at professional events whenever this is requested as far as possible. The *Theses Alive!* team is happy to be involved in JISC programme and inter-programme events.

12. Project Steering Committees

Theses Alive! belongs to the 'Eprints and ETDs' Cluster and the Director and Project Officer will normally attend cluster meetings, twice-yearly. In addition, an informal ETD 'sub-cluster' has been created, for Projects *Theses Alive!*, Daedalus and Electronic Theses. This group will meet on rotation in the home universities of the lead sites, on a quarterly basis.

13. Quality Assurance and Evaluation

Arrangements for quality assurance and evaluation are described in the detailed Project Plan (above).

14. Risk Assessment

Risk	Action
Staff long-term sickness	Wait for recovery, or – if medical advice warns that this is unlikely within its normal timeframe (6 months), re-recruitment. In either case there is a need to be aware of the potential damage caused by slippage (potentially 6-9 months) and the lack of alternative funding to re-appoint before the termination of the contract of the member of staff concerned.
Staff incompetence	Need to instigate and await the termination of University disciplinary procedures (as with long-term sickness, this may result in the loss of at least 6 months of paid effort). As with long-term sickness, there is a need to be aware of the potential damage caused by slippage (potentially 6-9 months) and the lack of alternative funding to re-appoint before the termination of the contract of the member of staff concerned.

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Pilot sites cannot be found	Early indications are that this is unlikely. In the event that the target number (5 or 6) cannot be found, we may need to reduce the number to 2-3, and find these – if necessary – from within the ETDs sub-cluster.
System rejected or superseded	Formative user-testing during development will be undertaken in order to reduce the risk of this. In the event of a product superseding the one developed by the Project during its lifetime, we would seek to influence the new product to the extent of incorporating any elements of our design which were unique. The likely outcome eventually is a hybrid environment in any case, with several systems available besides <i>Theses Alive!</i> – some commercial, some open-source, some focussed on ETDs only and others more inclusive. We would aim to ensure that <i>Theses Alive!</i> remained a viable contender in that mixed market, with the advantage of having been designed ‘from the inside’.
Schema rejected or superseded	As in the case of rejection or the superseding of the system, we would seek to ensure that <i>Theses Alive!</i> offered a viable alternative product, and influenced the design of any leading product to emerge. The UK metadata schema will be a particular feature of <i>Theses Alive!</i> which should help its claim to be uniquely useful to UK HE.
Target number of ETDs not met	We will seek to alert the Cluster Steering Group in good time if it looks like our target number of 500 ETDs will not be met in 2 years. In that event, we will make recommendations on how to accelerate the output of ETDs in the period following the conclusion of the Project.

15. Budget

	Salary	Year 1	Year 2
Project Management	0.1 FTE @ AL5	4,634	4,819
System Technical Support and Development	1 FTE @ AD2	24,083	13,125
Hardware & Software		5,000	750
User Support Service	0.25 FTE @ AL2	6,021	6,563
Promotion and Advocacy	0.25 FTE @ AL2	6,021	6,563
Travel & Subsistence		3,000	3,090
Consumables		300	309
Totals		49,058	35,219