

The UK Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Information Environment Strategy A Joint Panel Session with NSF

The JISC DNER strategy (for background see:

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/overview/stratandpolicy.html>)

has been developed to deliver an Information Environment for researchers and learners. The Information Environment vision is ambitious and is being delivered via a number of development programmes over the next few years. The related strategy is being launched in the UK this November. There is already increasing interest from other national bodies in making it a basis to go forward into a common environment.

Researchers, academics and students increasingly expect to access information on-line. The quality and quantity of resources available is improving. However, the range of material available is far from comprehensible. Considerable development work is also required to make it easier to find relevant on-line resources of quality, to ensure their long-term availability and in building sustainable business models. One of the biggest challenges facing the JISC over the next five years will be the design and building of such an environment, in an international context. An easy to use, secure and comprehensive collection of electronic resources is essential to support staff and students in higher and further education.

The current environment is largely one in which there are many monolithic information services. Services do not work together and they do not easily share content between themselves. This is an increasingly less effective way of providing information services and it is agreed that this approach is not sustainable. The end user wants to be able to see resources wherever they are located. Another important and related area is that of virtual learning environments (VLEs). There is increased use of VLEs and there is a perceived need to join these with institutions managed information systems within a Managed Learning Environment (MLE).

The panel session will present an overview of this challenging area of development and the areas of work that are being taken forward to deliver an integrated and flexible Information Environment. This strategy demonstrates the context and basis for much of the JISC work including the new JISC and NSF joint digital library and learning and teaching programme. In addition to this joint programme the JISC is taking forward a number of the following areas of work

- demonstrators of the potential of MLEs to enhance learning and teaching and evaluate different pedagogic models;
- demonstrators of the benefits of a student-centred approach to service provision;
- enriching the educational sector understanding of the cultural and organisation issues encountered when developing MLEs;
- developing a presentation layer to the overall information environment;
- developing content/service delivery through structured protocols such as Z39.50,LDAP, Open Archives Initiative and open urls;
- fusion services using various technologies to fuse content in different ways;
- middleware development, addressing security and authentication services and common services such as user profiling, and collection description directory services.