

A Planning Meeting 6-9 October '04 at Merri Creek Productions, Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Participants: Michael, Bryce, Helen, and Trevor and Juli from Merri Creek Productions

This was planned as a looking back and looking forward exercise in several aspects of IKRMNA. First we wanted to think about the community projects we are involved with. Second was the issue of the partner organisations in IKRMNA and their needs. Third we considered the technical products we are now dealing with. We wanted to consider the website and how to 'do' it better (fourth), and fifth we considered how to manage the remaining funds that would be made available to the project. Helen and Michael on the meeting

Helen: The first thing that seemed to happen when we began to talk to each other was that TAMI and the DSTC database separated themselves. I had previously seen TAMI as an interface for DSTC, however quite suddenly I saw that that was a silly way to look at things. The significance of this only became apparent across the next few days.

Michael: As I see it, it became clear to me as the discussion (mainly) between me and Bryce started to firm up the possibilities of a useful database, it looked less and less like something which could be glued on of the front end of the DSTC. I was becoming increasingly worried that whatever we came up with would technically impossible for Anthony (and Barbara's team) to implement.

Helen: On our website, in introducing our project we say "First we need good databases and agreements in place, and then we need to negotiate ways of uploading, finding and using digitised material with IP owners." As I understand one outcome of our talk last week, that assumed sequence of proceeding has been put in doubt, at least it's become more complicated. Maybe some of us feel we should have started at the other end so to speak.

Michael: Absolutely. And then we may never have come up with a database solution at all.

Helen: We now have "a good database in place", it came out of our work with DSTC. It can meet our specifications of working with only one single field for data and metadata. (It wasn't actually delivered with upload/search capacities to do that in the end the programmers just didn't believe that that's what we wanted?) This database will be useful for the CDU Yolngu studies, and Yothu Yindi Foundation-Garma Cultural Studies Institute sub-projects, where we expect them to be deployed very soon.

Michael: Yes there's still some work to be done on that, (thinking about the lemmatiser and a possible drop down menu, and more discussion with Barbara and Anthony) but I feel that it's a bit under control, and I'm looking forward to getting some notes and drawings done.

Helen: However for the rest 'East Arafura', 'Gulmerrgin', 'Kapulwanarmyo', 'Larrikia Lands Plants and Animals Identikit', and 'For The Children', it seems that what we originally saw as subsequent, is actually what drives the process. Ie "negotiating with IP owners over ways of uploading, finding, and using digitised materials." For these, the types of 'storage matrices' (ie the 'bases' for the 'data') have grown out of the types of uploading/finding/using that IP owners have negotiated they have been in various ways 'stuck on'. Here the structure of the underlying coding of the storage facility will be informed by the interface. These bricolaged solutions fall into two types. Some of the sub-projects

want a map interface with digitised resources linked to specific places. Others will be a 'Digital Resource View and Management' (DRVM) system growing from TAMI (texts, audio, movies, images) (TAMI-DRVM?) The storage facility will be a single ontic field.

Michael: Yes, albeit with distinctions between images, texts, audios and videos already assumed by the suffixes the resources must carry (.mp4, .txt. etc)

Helen: At the end of our project for the latter solutions we will have an electronic proof of concept (EPoC) of the graphic user interface (GUI) and wonder if the product it foreshadows might have significant intellectual property value (IP). I suppose that this, and the stories of how we got to this point, and what it means for thinking about doing collective memory with indigenous knowledges and digitising technologies and enhancing their natural resource management capacities, is the outcome of our research.

Michael: Or one of the outcomes.

Helen: The other significant element that flavoured the meeting I think was the shared sense that we had turned some corner, perhaps at Garma, and now saw ourselves as 'heading into the finishing straight' for the project. This went along with a shared recognition of ourselves as a group who knew what we were doing, in an on the ground way. Of course academic type writing now needs to emerge from this if we are going to leverage the project into a successor project perhaps this time "Indigenous Knowledges in Northern Australia and Digitising Technologies" (IKNADT). Of course we could just stay with IKRMNA, since indigenous Australians actually don't differentiate between so-called natural and cultural resources.

Michael: I think it might be a good idea if we were to apply for more money, to look more specifically at the notion of narrative as the conveyer (or purveyor?) of memory, and the particular possibilities and complications digital technologies bring to the production of narratives - the DVD as performance for example.