Learning and Teaching Investment Fund 2011

Final Project Report

Submission date: 17 February 2012

Title of project:  
The Project Studio Online Edition

Strategic objective(s) addressed: Support the activity of project-based designing as a specialised focus of the RMIT Strategic Plan.

Project leader:  
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Project team members:  
- Graham Crist  
- Andrew Burrow  
- Jessica In  
- Halil Ali
1. Executive summary (up to half a page)
   • Provide a summary that describes the project and what was achieved.
     *This will appear on the RMIT website and the full final report will be linked to the summary.*

The Project Studio (online edition) investigates an online collaborative work space for project-based design activities. New physical work spaces for designing (such as the new RMIT design hub) emphasise project based activity, teams are assembled in shared spaces working on particular projects which have a defined durations, resources and outcomes. This project investigates an analogous information space similarly directed towards producing these kind of projects.

The Project Studio is envisioned as a collaborative web-based repository for project information. It is understood as fostering both individual projects and an ecology of related projects. Typically design projects begin by assembling resources, such as surveys of other research and precedent projects, and base materials, for example site information and specifications. New knowledge is built from this base, by a process of iterative and incremental development.

Typically a range of participants contribute to different parts of the whole. Key concerns are the rapid and organised access to shared information, and the management of versions of the developing project. Once a project is complete, it becomes an important archive of information from which subsequent projects may learn and grow. The Project Studio will house an ongoing collaborative culture that emphasises creativity and invention.

The Project Studio proposes a clear and simple informational structure for achieving these objectives.

1. A list of outcomes
   • Provide a brief overview of the project’s outcomes and impact.
     *List any scholarly output in the form of conference presentations or journal papers. This will appear on the RMIT website.*

1. Scoping document, highlighting issues and priorities, showing a proposed design, operational use-cases and technical procurement strategy for Project Studio (online)

2. Functional and design limited test-bed website to gauge participant response, test functionality and highlight issues (operational, evaluation ongoing). The website is currently being piloted by a select group of RMIT undergraduate design projects.
2. **Project outcomes and impacts**

- List and discuss the outcomes the project was designed to achieve and the outcomes the project has achieved, including any literature review and evidence of the impact the project has had on students.
- Describe briefly any issues that may have prevented you achieving all the original outcomes stated in the application.
- Describe any disciplinary and interdisciplinary linkages that have emerged as a result of the project.

The initial proposal aimed to design and construct a functional pilot online project space (with a request for $40,151.53) We were allocated funds of $10,000, and outcomes were correspondingly reduced.

We have produced a scoping study that derives a set of desired capabilities, identifies the technical and design requirements following from those capabilities, then outlines a design and technical scope that satisfies those requirements. The report discusses the proposed design with respect to comparable systems, and identifies opportunities for integration with other platforms. We identify priorities: it is important to do a few things well, and duplicate the capabilities of other applications.

A pilot website is operational. It has reduced capability and significant design differences from the 'optimal' system proposed in the report. It does, however, have sufficient functionality to test key assumptions of the design. Our user evaluation of the pilot system will provide users with enough experience to feedback on both the successes of the pilot and begin to assess whether our proposed design will provide solutions to the shortcomings of the implemented pilot.

One important outcome has been the collaborative work between the School of Computer Science and Information Technology, and architecture and design. It is clear that the space between technical and design requirements contains both potential for misunderstanding, but also great potential to think transformationally about both how design knowledge can be productively structured, and how novel technical systems can be implemented to support these structures. Although not directly connected, these connections have allowed us to run collaborative elective subjects combining architectural and CS students investigating design computation and generation.
3. **Dissemination strategies and outputs**
   - List materials or outcomes that will be made available to the university or groups of stakeholders within the university or sector and provide information about where any project material is available.
   - Describe the ways in which the project's outcomes have been or will be shared across the university, the sector and/or nationally and internationally. For guidance refer to the ALTC Dissemination Framework (url: [http://www.altc.edu.au/print/resource%2Ddissemination%2Dframework%2Daltc%2D2008](http://www.altc.edu.au/print/resource%2Ddissemination%2Dframework%2Daltc%2D2008)).

This project proposes the construction of a functional system for the support of design projects. Meaningful evaluation of the project's assumptions can only be established after the pilot has been used in real-world projects. As such public dissemination is more appropriate as part of the second stage of this study.

We have outlined an engaged dissemination strategy:

1. Identify potential users and stakeholders, beginning with design studios in the undergraduate Architecture program, expanding to related postgraduate interdisciplinary projects (GRC, UAL, DRI), then to other specific design disciplines (fashion, landscape, industrial design, and potentially engineering, art and multimedia).

2. Develop strategies to engage with users during the development of implementation of the prototype. This engagement has begun with small groups of users, and will continue with wider groups as their feedback is incorporated into the project design. We judge it will be detrimental to go too wide too soon; early problems with insufficient support will be damaging to uptake.
4. Evaluation of project outcomes

- Provide evaluation outcomes including evidence of the impact of the project and the value it will bring to the university and/or the sector. For guidance refer to the ALTC Evaluation Framework (url: http://www.altc.edu.au/extras/altc-gsep/index.html)

Again, as this stage of the project is primarily about establishing scope, it is too early for a full evaluation. We expect to evaluate the pilot website at the end of semester 2, 2012. Our evaluation framework is designed to establish:

- How effective is collaboration between participants working in different times and spaces? Including asynchronous contributions by those at RMIT, and also their ability to collaborate with those located in different organisations and countries.

- How usable is the system? Does it handle all the required types of information? Do collaborators use Project Studio to communicate and share in preference to other methods? If not, why not? What is the predominant pattern of usage for different projects/users?

- Can information be quickly and readily retrieved? What are the useful parameters for search and retrieval? How might they be optimised?

- Is project studio an effective archive? After a project is complete, can others usefully retrieve information to build on for new projects?

We intend to conduct this evaluation by assessing data from the website itself, interviewing users in focus seminars, and conducting questionnaires.
5. **Budget report**

- What was the amount of funds approved?
- What was the final amount of funds acquitted? Please attach a financial statement.

All financial claims related to your project must be processed against your internal order number **before the end of 2011**. Claims cannot be accepted in the New Year 2012. Unexpended funds will be retained by the university and unclaimed costs will be borne by your School/College.

A financial statement (in PDF), signed by the team leader and relevant Finance Manager of acquittal of funds must be attached to the report. It should include a statement of income and expenditure against the budget categories specified in the approved project proposal. Please consult your Finance Manager for further information.

Amount of funds requested: $40,151.53

Amount of funds approved: $10,000

See acquittal attached. Please contact Caesar Sutiono (caesar.sutiono@rmit.edu.au) for further financial information.

6. **Appendices**

- Include any material that may support your claims of outcomes and impact.
- Attach pictures, presentation material, website links and so on that may be important. In particular, please provide an image that can be used for publications, such as a poster.

**Submitting the Final LTIF Project Report**

- Please follow the headings listed above.
- Please save the report in Microsoft Word using the following formula: team leader’s surname_College_LTIF2011_finreport.doc (e.g. brown_DSC_LTIF2011_finreport.doc).
- Please include a Table of Contents.
- Please sign the final signature page.
- Submit the final report by close of business, Friday, 17 February 2012 to diana.cousens@rmit.edu.au

**Further information**

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