

Collaborating in a wiki-way: a knowledge sharing solution for research networks

Teppo Hujala¹, Jarmo Saarikko² and Pekka Leskinen³

¹ Researcher, University of Helsinki, Department of Forest Resource Management, Finland, Teppo.Hujala@helsinki.fi

² System Analyst, Finnish Forest Research Institute Metla, Information Service and Library, Vantaa, Finland, Jarmo.Saarikko@metla.fi

³ Senior Researcher, Finnish Forest Research Institute Metla, Joensuu Research Unit, Finland, Pekka.Leskinen@metla.fi

Modern research networks are interdisciplinary with diverse variety of applications, and they require openness and transparency as working principles. In addition, the research networks are starting to recognise the potential of social web applications for collaborative knowledge creation purposes. Social media enables new means of interaction, which could enhance flexible dialogue and knowledge building, encourage giving feedback of initiatives, attract new, previously unknown project collaborators, and accelerate the extension of research findings. If managed wisely, this would result as "science 2.0". However, the social web requires a totally new working culture and new information management skills among established researchers. The collaborators have to overcome their reservation towards open participation and concerns about losing ideas and looking unprofessional. Paradoxically the greatest challenge in supporting the wiki-way of working is a chronic shortage of time, although online collaboration could be of help with that in particular. In the present contribution we will introduce a generic wiki solution for research networks. The solution is applicable for all networks that share the interest towards social web in research and development processes. We will utilise the research network "Methods and processes of decision making in forestry", initiated and led by Finnish Forest Research Institute Metla, as an example. Recently the exemplary network has perceived a many-sided challenge of Internet-mediated knowledge management. Through facilitation of the information management services in Metla, an evaluation of possibilities and challenges of a wiki-based collaboration scheme has been conducted. The presentation will cover database and platform selection, considerations on author- and reader-friendliness and ontologies, the integration of the solution into the present practices as well as motivation, training and facilitation aspects.