

A Process for Developing Collaborative Portals for International Biomedical Research Collaborations

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International biomedical research collaborations frequently fail. A portal development process which is led by an information specialist can produce a portal that meets the needs of your collaborators and increases your odds of success.

Why Is International Collaboration Difficult?

- Overhead of running a collaboration places administrative burden on PIs who want to focus on their science
- Huge volumes of information and data are generated, making the assets of the collaboration difficult to manage
- Time zones make communication difficult
- Distributed nature means collaborators don't know or trust each other as easily
- Information is scattered among collaborators, making it a challenge for anyone to find anything or to see the big picture

Why Portals?

- The overhead of collaboration is reduced by spreading the burden over entire set of participants
- Information resides in a centralized repository
- A shared workspace builds community and trust
- Contributing gives participants a sense of ownership of the collaboration and fosters greater dedication
- Tracking and recording of assets and artifacts is simpler and becomes a group responsibility

Authors

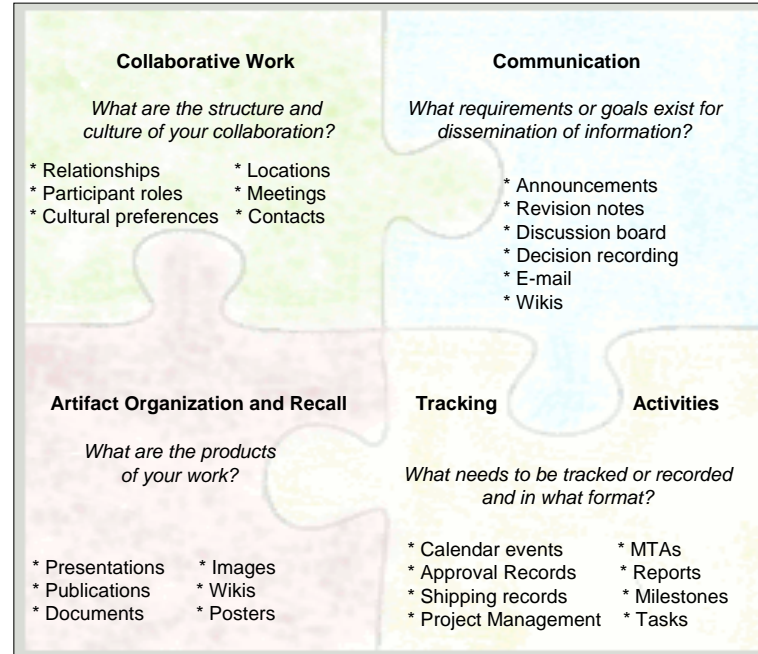
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Planning for a Portal

A good portal meets four primary user needs through simple questions about collaborative work, communication, artifact organization and recall, and tracking activities.



Portal Successes

- ❖ At SBRI, there are now many research collaborations utilizing portal technologies including the Seattle Structural Genomics Center for Infectious Disease, the Malaria Clinical Trials Challenge Center, the Genetically Attenuated Parasite Malaria Vaccine Program, the US-India Joint Research Training Program in Global Infectious Diseases and the Trypanosomatid Drug Development Consortium.
- ❖ At FHCRC, many research collaborations are beginning to use portal technologies to enhance their collaborative work, including the Asia Cohort Consortium, the FHCRC Practice Plan and researchers in the areas of personalized medicine, HIV/AIDS and cancer care development in Africa.

Information Specialist-Led Portal Development Process

Phase	Information Specialist Role
Requirements Gathering	Meet with clients to determine requirements for collaboration
Development & Testing	Iterative prototyping, development, functional testing and usability testing of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information architecture • User Interface • Functionality and features
Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute rollout, communications, maintenance and user adoption plans • Meet with clients for final sign-off on functionality and user interface • Conduct user training • Write project wrap-up report with lessons learned
Maintenance	Implement maintenance plan

Positive Outcomes of this Process and Lessons Learned

- Information and work artifacts are centralized and organized in a way that makes sense to collaborators.
- The burden of managing information is spread over greater number of people, allowing investigators to spend more time on the science and less time managing the collaboration.
- A context-rich environment provides a single source of information that is available to all collaborators. This environment is enhanced by cross-format searching capabilities.
- The focus of the information specialist's work is on the development of the "soft" elements of the collaboration such as information flow, structure of the environment and community building.