

Report to OSI on the ACIS project

Thomas Krichel

<http://openlib.org/home/krichel>

2004-04-06

1. Introduction

This report comes with my sincere apologies. I was not aware that we would have to report annually on 1 January. Now it being the early April 2004 I am writing about the state of the project at this stage. It is likely that the project completion will be delayed. More details on this are below. Please let me know if you wish to have future reports at dates other than the 1 January 2005, at which the final report is due, according to the funding letter. I will be happy to furnish future reports, because I believe that OSI have a right to know what is being done with their money, and because I believe that ACIS is an important project that will, come time, stand out as a watershed in the creation of freely accessible academic digital libraries. But the ACIS software is not written in a day. Services built on the software have ultimately to run on volunteer power. They can not be funded, so volunteers have to be found. This will take time.

2. Background

The funding proposal was written by Ivan V. Kurmanov and me. Ivan gets the bulk of the funds for writing the software. At the time the proposal was written Ivan assured me that the timing for getting the components written was realistic. There are four stages to the project, lasting 5 month, 4 months, 7 months, and 6 months, with 2 months to spare, adding up to 24 months. The moneys to be paid to him contain a fixed wage of 1000. In addition, he will be paid a bonus at the completion of each stage.

3. Substantive report

The steering committee of the project has been created. It comprises the following individuals.

José Manuel Barrueco Cruz	University of Valencia	RePEc & rclis
Less Carr	University of Southampton	eprints.org
Jean-Claude Guédon	University of Montreal	OSI
Melissa Hagemann	Open Society Institute	OSI
Eberhard Hilf	University of Oldenburg	PhysNet
Sergei I. Parinov	Russian Academy of Sciences	RePEc & Socionet
Herbert Van de Sompel	Los Alamos National Laboratory	OAI
Simeon Warner	arXiv.org	arXiv
Jeff Young	OCLC	
Christian Zimmermann	University of Connecticut	RePEc

A mailing list called ACIS-steering was created for the committee communication. Ivan Kurmanov and I are also members of the list. But we are not members of the steering committee.

Thus the economics community has three representatives, the physics/mathematics community has two, or three if you count in Herbert, but the computer/information science information science community have only José Manuel in the steering committee, since the two representatives that we contacted declined to join. However this is not a problem since my work, these days, essentially revolves around that community.

There is also small, but recently lively list ACIS-tech at <http://lists.openlib.org/mailman/listinfo/acis-tech>. It supports detailed technical discussions about ACIS. Finally, there is the project web site with all documents related to the project. It is available at <http://acis.openlib.org/>.

Overall the project has seen substantial delays. First, the university finance refused to pay Ivan. They argued that they could only pay a company. Then they refused to wire the funds. To cut a long story short, I finally got them to wire in the beginning of 2003-03. In the same month flew to Minsk and had a meeting with Ivan. There we wrote the requirements document for stage 1. It is available on the project web site. During the meeting, I convinced him---he was initially opposed to the idea---to report the official start date to 2003-03-01. Ivan worked on implementing the software. In 2003-09, a meeting in Moscow took place to devise stage 2. The meeting was controversial, but by the end a draft emerged.

When ACIS software reached certain level of functionality, Ivan installed it for testing purposes (based on RePEc data) and collected the feedback. Several rounds of testing and active development have gone. In January 2004, Ivan reported that he was still working on the stage one, amid mounting personal debt. I conceded to his call to pay half of the bonus that he will obtain. In 2004-03, the existing HoPEc project was transferred to run on ACIS software. This means most important part of stage 1 was done. Just a part, however, because the implementation does not read the document data in AMF format, but rather uses ReDIF data. The implementation writes ReDIF too, despite the fact that the requirements document prescribes AMF.

There have currently been no expenditures on the other projects budget. Neither have any of the project director's funds being spent.

Construction of services that implement ACIS is now becoming an important issue. To make sense of ACIS, it is important that there are collections that are similar to RePEc that will make use of the software. I have myself been working on the rclis collection. I have mainly been working to collect bibliographic data. Institutional data will still have to be collected, but if I don't find a volunteer, there may be a case of expending some of the funds in the exceptional budget on it. Thus the rclis collection will be done, even if I will have to set it up personally. However, the PhysNet collection has been making not much progress. PhysNet do have a collection of institutional data, but they have no document collection of their own worth noting. There have been formal discussions with PhysNet, there has even been a formal document, but to date there have been no steps of implementation. In the meantime, it is probably best to further look for volunteers and other partners who may be interested in working with us.

4. Financial report

I have downloaded from the university's budget all the expenditures that have been made by the project. As you will see a small part of the sum has been disbursed, we have strictly stuck to a policy where I will not pay if the work does not show progress as the funding application requires.

These are the figures as shown by the university accounts. They are slightly erroneous, but let us look at them first. All amounts are in US dollars.

<i>id</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>beneficiary</i>	<i>amount</i>	<i>reason</i>
01	2003-03-13	Ivan	\$2025.00	two months regular wage
02	2003-04-30	Ivan	\$3000.00	three months regular wage
03	2004-02-23	Ivan	\$1475.00	first half of stage one bonus
04	2004-02-23	Thomas	\$631.40	flight to Minsk in 2003-03
05	2004-03-22	ACIS	-\$1475.00	check of payment 03 blocked
06	2004-03-26	Ivan	\$1475.00	first half of stage one bonus

There is \$42,868.60 more to spend in the account.

Payment 01 includes the wiring fee of \$25. Subsequent claims of Ivan have therefore been reduced by \$25, thus imposing the wiring fee on him. This worked out in payment 02. When the university accounting made payment 03, it was issued as a check, despite my explicit request for a wire. When Ivan did not receive the wire transfer, the university blocked the check and credited ACIS. The subsequent wire did not include the wiring fee. I will have to investigate if this is a mistake, or maybe the bank does no longer charge the \$25 wiring fee. In any case, we ACIS is now even with Ivan as far as payments is concerned.

There are a number of smaller expenditures that are part of the project but that I have not claimed back. These should be considered as my donations to the project. First, I paid \$100 for the visa to Belarus. Second, I paid Ivan's train fair to Moscow for the meeting in 2003-09. I think that amounted to roughly \$50.

I have some more funds from an earlier project. These are held in the UK, I expect them to fetch around 10,000 dollars. I will move them to the US soon, because the exchange rate looks quite favorable. A part of that money will be spent on activities related to ACIS implementation services.