

COMMUNITY LEARNING SPACE PROJECT
Rural Switchboard Pilot Project #3

Thursday, September 5, 2002
2:30 pm – 4:30 pm
University of Waterloo, Waterloo

Present:

Shirley Fenton	University of Waterloo, Computer Systems Group
Jennifer Uttley	University of Waterloo, Computer Systems Group
Doug Mulholland	University of Waterloo, Computer Systems Group
Trudy Beaulne	Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
Kyle Young	Waterloo Regional Library
Melissa Kingdon	Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo

1. Welcome

Shirley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Review of Agenda and Last Meeting

The agenda and the activity since the last meeting were reviewed.

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Review of Agenda and Last Meetings
3. Discussion of Pilot Data Needs and Development
4. Discussion of Pilot Objectives
5. Next Steps and Timelines
6. Other

3. Discussion of Pilot Data Needs and Development, and Pilot Objectives

Kyle explained that there are many different sources of information for the Rural Switchboard that he has been exploring. The following list represents several of the potential searchable directories of farm-related businesses and organizations across the Waterloo, Wellington, Oxford and Perth regions:

- Seed Dealers – Pioneer Seeds (still waiting to hear from them), NK Seeds, First Line Seeds, Highland Seeds
- Equipment Dealers
- Feed Mills
- General Businesses
- Access to farms.com
- Access to COOL database
- OMAF – list of rural organizations [OMAF can not contact farmers directly, but once a farmer contacts OMAF they can contact them. OMAF has given permission to use their data, but it is unclear as to how we will be able to get it. OMAF may not allow us to open up their database, but it is available on the Internet. Doug can set up an agent to check the website daily if necessary.
- List of food sources (e.g. farm date sales)

Kyle noted that he has been talking to a lot of people who have maintained databases and many of them are open to us using it.

Feedback Committee

It was suggested that there is a need to have two groups to provide feedback on this pilot project. A larger group is needed to give feedback directly to Kyle and a smaller group is needed to provide rapid feedback for the development phase of the site. It was suggested that the smaller group contain a representative from the farming community, data providers, municipality, and business owners. The following lists potential members of a feedback committee that would be available for rapid feedback:

Representative	Name	Organization
Pilot Partner	Kyle Young	Waterloo Regional Library
Municipal Representative	Peter Simmons	Woolwich Township
Data Provider	Graham Dryer	Communitech
Data Provider	Joe Dale	farms.com (London)
Data Provider	David Johnston	Rural Mail Box (Wellington County)
Business Owner (rural)		
Farmer		

Mapping Capabilities

- Where will we get maps? The Waterloo Regional Government has several maps available through their GIS system. They also have photographs of rural areas. The aerial photographs overlap with the maps.
- Oxford County is willing to provide maps, but they want information to be fed back to them. They are trying to promote it as a usable feature. They are willing to open up KOOL and match it with their GIS system.
- Not sure what maps Perth and Wellington County have and how fast it will take to get information from them. Perhaps this project will encourage them to expand their mapping capabilities, if they see other counties with more advanced maps.

Interface Personalization

- For each separate region, there could be a separate interface that users would log on to (e.g. a profile of Perth County that would include information about weather, etc. from the main page). The whole database would be searchable, but the interface would be customized for each region. When users enter the site, there will be a map of the counties (possibly a splash page) with buttons for Perth, Oxford, etc.
- We could have personalized interfaces. Users could bookmark the page once they are in.
- All data has been pulled together across counties (e.g. Seed dealers).
- Many of the listings are business. Many are home-based businesses, such as seed dealers and these types of businesses would not have concerns about making their address available on the Internet. However, there may be concerns about confidentiality with other home-based businesses of which we need to be aware.

Data Needs and Development Process

- First we should start with the data and then get maps of this Region. The Region of Waterloo would like us to feed back additional information to them when we use the maps.
- There needs to be a direct connection to the Region (Planning Department). They need to buy into the purpose of this project. The Community Health and Social Services Department are interested in providing mapping. We need the commitment from the Region.
- Some organizations/businesses are nervous about giving data out. They want to see a concrete site to see what it will look like. We could approach them after we have something to show.
- Businesses are willing to promote the CLS if we develop things that they find useful.

Feedback Providers

- We will need the names of feedback providers in order to determine how many people contribute and maintain their commitment to providing feedback.
- The feedback providers represent a cross section of data providers, stakeholders and users.
- Kyle will contact the potential members of the feedback committee and determine their availability to meet on either the morning of October 16th or the morning/afternoon of October 17th.
- There are two points that we would like to discuss with the feedback committee: (1) whether they would be available to provide rapid feedback through email, (2) objectives – their ideals, hopes, and dreams for the project.
- We want this feedback committee to drive the direction of the pilot. We want them to have a vested interest in the project.

Ideas for Database Content

- We may be able to access data from Ontario Agricultural Training Institute (OATI). David Johnston used to work at OATI.
- The Waterloo Regional Library has other training data that will be available for this project.
- Local Mennonite shops may not want to be promoted on-line. We will change this to “Local Unique Businesses.”
- KW Tourism gathers tourist information for rural municipalities. However, they do not put this information on their web site. Many rural groups have not renewed their memberships with KW Tourism. We could partner with the Chamber to present their data.
- Wellesley used to have a list of farm tours.
- Board of Trades and Business Groups in Woolwich have formed a group to provide tourist information.
- Elmira has a business database.
- It was suggested that we should demote the tourism information for this pilot.

Regional Library Connection

- We could consider interactive elements for this pilot. The library needs to be showcased through this pilot. They may be able to provide a role in answering questions from users.

- The library's logo will be present on the site for promotion purposes. The library is currently redesigning their logo.
- It is intended that if the Rural Switchboard is a success, then it will exist on its own and will be separate from the library. The library will always want to access information, provide information and refer people to the Rural Switchboard.
- Who owns it? This question needs to be addressed further.
- The library needs to make statements about why they are interested in it – their local needs, service development issues, objectives of library. There are different motivations from key players, but there are some key objectives that will drive the direction of it for the libraries goals.
- We are trying to include information on major speciality associations and groups, such as poultry, pork board, general cash crop, Organic Growers, etc. However, information on other speciality providers, such as Ostrich farms has not been gathered to date.
- Kyle indicated that local school boards are interested in posting school bus information (e.g. routes) on this site.

Site Development

- The name of the project will be "Rural Switchboard". It was decided that it is better to have a single name than having "FARM" in brackets or as an alternate name.
- Kyle has ideas for a colour scheme: green and yellow (harvest yellow). He has also considered a logo for the site: a tractor made up of computer components. During different seasons, the site could feature pictures of spring planting or fall harvest.
- Kyle is getting a domain name for this site: ruralswitchboard.com. This will remain on the libraries server.

Web Server Logs

- Kyle will send the web logs for the library as soon as possible.
- There is no local community information currently on the library site.
- We could get logs from organizations that will be using the CLS site daily as a seamless part of their business. We could determine how it has affected the traffic on their site.

4. Next Steps and Timelines

- Shirley will modify the pilot general objectives and revise the list of ideas for the Rural Switchboard project. She will remove the OATI example for the textual training material.
- We should consider having letters of agreement with database providers in order to specify the data base access. Kyle indicated that some of the data providers are already doing this. We need to document how the data will be shared.
- Kyle will look into a location for the meeting with the feedback committee. Some possibilities are the OFA room at St. Jacobs (but there is no Internet connection), the Library Headquarters, or UW.
- At this meeting we need to show a demonstration and ask them technical development questions.

Next Meeting: To be determined.