Deliverable 6.1.2

Report on the VRC infrastructure, functionality and user statistics

Grant Agreement number:	RI-261572
Project acronym:	WeNMR
Project title:	WeNMR, A worldwide e-Infrastructure for NMR and structural biology
Deliverable type and status	Report – Public
Due Date	November 1st, 2012
Delivery Date	January 7th, 2013
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Section 1: Summary of Deliverable

Background

The WeNMR Virtual Research Community website forms the central point of access for the users, developers and contributors that are targeted by the WeNMR project, to help them harness the potential of the WeNMR services and thus improve their research. Information, training, technical support and direct access to the grid services are provided through the VRC portals with access on different levels to serve different communities. Active participation of users and partners from various backgrounds is strongly encouraged and available through the Forums, Blogs and Wiki areas of the website.

Goal

The VRC website is an important tool in reaching the ultimate goal of the WeNMR project: to establish an e-Infrastructure-based global virtual research community for structural biology in the life sciences. From a technical point of view, the website should be built on a modern online community building platform, be secure and include backup facilities. From the user point of view, the site has to be user-friendly, secure, easy to be found and accessed, and contain quality content and easy access to services for users from different backgrounds and at different levels of expertise. Content on the site should ideally consist of "official content", such as tutorials, which are created and validated by partners and other experts, and community-contributed content such as forum posts and wiki. Services comprise Support services (Help center), as well as the access to software tools (NMR and SAXS services).

During the second 12 months of the project, it has become clear that user contributions only form a small part of the content of the website, despite a continued growth in number of users. To compensate, the partners of the project have made an effort to make a significant number of additional tutorials and portals available, the structure of the website has been simplified and an NMR Marketplace was added to the site.

Summary

In summary, the VRC website has grown in information content, functionality and number of users over the second reporting period. We see an increased usage of most portals and the website has gained significant additional attention through the use of videos and social media. The site is currently well known within the structural biology community and efforts continue to increase the number of users and provide more services.

Section 2: VRC infrastructure and user statistics

VRC website deployment – www.wenmr.eu

Deployment of the initial version of the VRC website

The VRC website has been complete and fully functional since months 12, as already anticipated in Deliverable D6.1.1. Current and future additions focus on content, technical maintenance and upgrades, and addition of new advanced functionality.

All deliverables related to the VRC website development have been reached:

- D6.2: Report on standard protocols, online tutorials and training, M19
- D6.3: Report on Support and Expertise Centre activities, M23

The planned upgrade to the new Drupal 7 system is progressing well, with the data migration being almost completed and the new theme in development. It is expected that the fully functional Drupal 7 version of the WeNMR website will be in beta testing early 2013.

Website design, functionality and structure

While adding functionality and new content, the structure of the site was reorganized to present a more logical menu structures, categorized content and simplified access. Most importantly, the discussion forum and help center were merged as suggested at the 1st year review.

Single Sign On

A centralized user management and Single Sign On (SSO) system for subscription to the WeNMR services has been identified as an important requirement to complete the VRC ecosystem. Such a system has been developed and is in advanced beta-testing stage, expected to be deployed at the beginning of 2013.

Site statistics

Service portals

The number of service portals has increased from 19 after the first year to 26. Of those, 9 are provided by external developers, showing the fact that the WeNMR VRC is attracting a wider audience from the Structural Biology developer community.

Help Center, wiki and tutorials

The support and help center has been covered in detail in Deliverable 6.3. Although the support and help center has been up and running for over a year, only a total of 27 issues have been posted. This brings the total number of accessible help and support topics to over 40, including most of the active WeNMR Services. These requests were responded to on average within 9 calendar days.

The production of standard protocols and training materials for the project up to month 18 has been described in detail in Deliverable 6.2, but at month 24 the WeNMR site contains 52 tutorials, covering 15 of the 17 web portals developed by WeNMR partners, 70 wiki documentation pages and 20 online tutorials and movies.
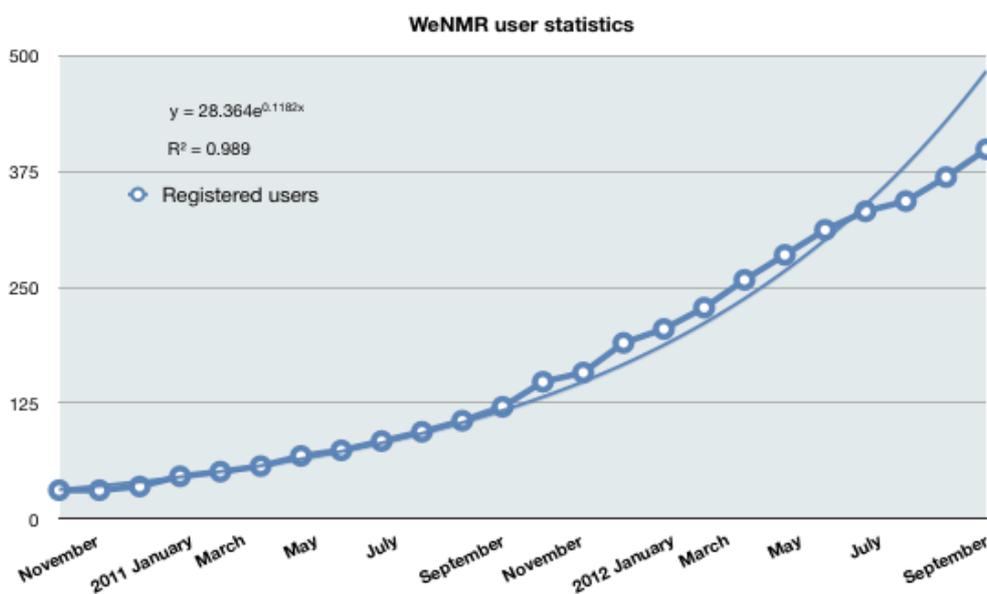
NMR Marketplace and Resources

A significant achievement over the last period was the addition of an NMR Market and Resources, which allows users to advertise events, jobs, products, equipment and such. We hope such new functionality could be a tool for sustainability, as it will increase the user base and might provide a means to gain income from advertising and services in the future. See Deliverable 2.2 for more information on the sustainability of WeNMR.

VRC user statistics

The number of registered users on the WeNMR website has continued a steady, yet close to exponential, increase since the start of the project and throughout the two years. As of October 2012, 389 users have registered on the site (compared to 135 at month 12):

The growth in number of registered users is largely in line with a growth in the number of enmr.eu VO users over the second period of the WeNMR project, from 351 to 459 users. Note that not all WeNMR services require Grid access and therefore not all new VRC members will sign up for the enmr.eu VO.

Unfortunately, we are also noticing increased spamming, and as a consequence, registration to the WeNMR VRC is no longer automatic, but does require administrator approval. This increased targeting of the WeNMR site could also be interpreted as a sign of good exposure and visibility, which makes it an attractive target for spamming.