

ARCS Status Report

to the Australian eResearch Infrastructure Council (AeRIC)

4 August 2008

ARCS continues to develop and progress well overall against its Business Plan milestones. Specific comments for each Milestone up to the end of July in the Business Plan are included below.

Milestones before 31 July 2008:

- *ARCS announces that after an initial Establishment Period it is now formally 'Open for Business' and widely advertises and promotes this;*
Wide knowledge of the existence of ARCS is now evident. Release of the ARCS Data Fabric announcement has been broadly distributed. The ARCS Manager recruitment process has also assisted with this promotion. Approaches have been made to and have been made by various NCRIS communities. A similar announcement re ARCS Collaboration Services is in preparation and awaits the formal launch of EVO@AU.
- *Communication and Outreach Strategies finalised and initiated;*
An ARCS Communications Policy has been prepared and is awaiting ratification by the ARCS Executive Committee. An initial focus is on approaches to the NCRIS communities. The EVO@AU launch is being negotiated with DIISR in collaboration with AARNet, its partner in EVO@AU. This is the first in the development of press releases and stories about ARCS.
- *ARCS Telephone Helpdesk fully deployed with the phone answered during all standard Australian business hours and with the email Helpdesk available for registering issues after hours;*
The ARCS Telephone Helpdesk 1800 TOARCS is now operational as described during all Business Hours across Australia. It complements the ARCS email helpdesk request tracker (RT) system available at help@arcs.org.au.
- *Establish an ARCS User Reference Group to provide advice and guidance on appropriate ARCS Services and new service directions;*
This has not been fully implemented as described. On reflection it was thought that a formal structure of this type might be a burden to those in the user community involved in it and that a combination of a 'developers' forum plus mechanisms for seeking feedback from users on ARCS services would be preferable. In line with this thinking there is now an ARCS email list that has been implemented and is being very

well used called developers@arcs.org.au and which serves many of the same purposes as a reference group.

- *ARCS Data Fabric available to the whole research community with basic functionality and modest storage for free and for more significant storage needs at hardware cost;*

The ARCS Data Fabric has been launched and widely promoted. It is available now and continues to be refined and developed.

- *ARCS compute grid and GRISU will have their production services well-defined, in full production-mode operation and be well-documented on the ARCS web site with exemplars and use case studies;*

Grisu is currently in operational mode and also continues to be refined and developed. Documentation is now available on the ARCS web site <http://www.arcs.org.au>.

- *ARCS web site completed including clear and accessible explanations of the full suite of ARCS Production Services including exemplars and use cases;*

The ARCS web site has been substantially reworked and restructured along the lines of available services. It also includes exemplars and instructions and a page of FAQs is under development with step-by-step instructions for solving frequently encountered problems. The web site will be under continuous development and refinement with additional details, FAQs and use cases to be included over time as they arise. A professional design of a 'skin' for the web page will be commissioned very soon now since the content is maturing in style and presentation and becoming more complete.

- *ARCS and EVOGH enter into a formal agreement for the licensing of EVO use in Australia, where legitimate use will encompass all activities and entities involved in furthering research and education in Australia;*

The agreement between ARCS and EVOGH has been signed and EVO@AU is being developed for deployment in the very near future. A second agreement between ARCS and AARNet for the support of EVO@AU has also been signed, where ARCS provides the overarching support to the users and manages the EVO@AU communities and where AARNet manages the PANDA servers and network.

- *ARCS Authorisation Services Manager appointed and Authorisation Services activities underway;*

Three members of the Authorisation Services Team have already been appointed and are working at MELCOE via INTERSECT. In addition a volunteer/unfunded Team Member is working along with them to assist with the development and delivery of Authorisation Services. The search for the Authorisation Services Manager is nearing completion, with national advertisements including in the Australian HES. The Data Services and interim Systems Services Managers are co-managing the Authorisation Services Team while the Authorisation Services Manager appointment is being completed. A set of interim Identity Providers (IdPs) for those researchers needing them are being established at the MARCS and will be used for the development and operation of Authorisation Services pending the availability of AAF IdPs for all researchers. Once AAF services are widely available ARCS IdPs will only be used when no AAF IdP can be provided to a researcher.

- ARCS Collaboration Services Manager appointed and Collaboration Services undertakes a structured program of enthusiastic and proactive engagement with regional and discipline-based research communities and University IT Directors;*

The positions of Collaboration Services Manager and Systems Services Manager were advertised simultaneously with the Authorisation Services Manager and all three appointment processes are proceeding in parallel. Some applicants have applied for more than one of the positions. In the meantime, the interim Collaboration Services Manager is doing an outstanding job of managing the Team and in proactively pursuing users of Collaboration Services.
- ARCS engagement with New Zealand counterparts initiated and opportunities for cooperation explored;*

ARCS is currently developing a policy toward the admission of and cooperation with international Affiliates such as BeSTGRID in New Zealand. Once developed this will be applied to other international cognate eResearch support organizations such as OGF, EGEE, UK eScience, TeraGrid, DIESA etc.
- NeAT Project Committees established and NeAT Project Managers appointed and NeAT Projects underway;*

ARCS has worked closely with ANDS and the respective NeAT communities to progress the NeAT Projects in the ARCS Business Plan. After extensive discussion between ARCS, ANDS, the AeRIC Executive Director and various NeAT communities, a straightforward ANDS-ARCS NeAT Governance Agreement has been reached. Those projects with an interim plan in the ARCS Business Plan are mostly already underway and, while this is occurring, their detailed Project Plans are now being finalized for formal approval by ARCS, ANDS and DIISR.
- Each of ARCS Collaboration, Systems, Data and Authorisation Services Teams produce a written document describing their Quality Assurance and Change Management Procedures so that they can be placed on the ARCS web site and available for the research community and other Service Providers;*

A common set of ARCS Quality Assurance and Change Management Practices has been formulated and is in the process of being added to the ARCS web site now.
- Each NeAT Project Committee establishes its own Quality Assurance and Change Management Procedures and wherever possible these should be consistent with those of ANDS and ARCS;*

While ARCS strongly supports and encourages the establishment of these for each NeAT Project, the governance of each NeAT Project is now being left in the hands of the respective NeAT Project Committees to empower the relevant discipline communities and the committee itself. ARCS will have a representative on each NeAT Project Committee and will be in a position to argue for these procedures through that process. In addition, ARCS and ANDS will be asked to approve each project quarterly in arrears and this will provide a suitable mechanism for ensuring quality project management and delivery.

- *Explore with the NT Government and Charles Darwin University the possibility of establishing a MARCS in the Northern Territory to enable the delivery of ARCS Services and Capabilities into the region;*
Initial contacts have been made and conversations initiated with the NT government. In addition, this possibility has been raised with the ABIN board by the ARCS Executive Director at a recent presentation to them. It would appear that the most appropriate time to revisit and pursue this issue is when the ABIN board has progressed ABIN activities to the point where the advantage of an NT MARCS is self-evident.
- *Complete planning of the ARCS 1-day Workshop at the eResearch Australasia 2008 Conference in Melbourne.*
ARCS will be presenting three half-day workshops immediately after and as part of the eResearch Australia Conference. There will be one in each of Collaboration, Data and Systems Services. A set of training workshops in Videocollaboration have also begun with one in Adelaide this week and one in Melbourne the week after.

Other matters:

Independent Chairperson: The ARCS Executive Committee has expressed a preference for the ARCS Executive Committee to have an Independent Chairperson. This has the advantage of: (i) bringing a dispassionate broker into ARCS who can steer ARCS through any potential conflict of interest issues, (ii) of providing an influential champion for ARCS hopefully with high level connections with universities, government organizations and industry; and (iii) of enhancing the collective skill set and experience of the ARCS Executive Committee.

Relationship to ANDS, NCI, AAF, AARNet and CAUDIT: ARCS is fortunate to enjoy an excellent rapport and comradery with the leadership of ANDS. The mutual understanding of the respective core missions, the common user/customer oriented approach and the desire to cover the full range of necessary services in a complementary and cooperative manner are all welcome and lead to efficiency for all. Andrew Treloar will be making a presentation on ANDS at the next ARCS Executive Committee face-to-face meeting in Brisbane in August. A similar relationship is being sought with NCI and AAF. ARCS is a firm believer in and supporter of AAF and looks forward to its full deployment as soon as practicable. Cooperative relationships with AARNet are being pursued and are exemplified by the joint agreement to support EVO@AU. The ARCS Executive Director has been invited to give a presentation on ARCS at the annual CAUDIT meeting in Brisbane on 17 October and the CAUDIT leadership kindly distributed the ARCS Data Fabric announcement to all of the CAUDIT members. ARCS is seeking a constructive and cooperative relationship with the university IT Directors as in the future they will be delivering and enabling some of the key 'last mile' components of ARCS and other eResearch services.