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WEB SITE ON BEST IT PRACTICES IN NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTES¹

A proposal of the Seminar on Integrated Information Systems ISIS 2002

Submitted by OECD²

Introduction

1. Although there is quite a lot of information on and off the Web on IT projects and practices in relation to the statistical production process, it is not readily available. For unpublished information, one would need an extensive personal network to find the right information and persons. For the Web content one needs to sift an impressive number of web sites that carry a huge number of project descriptions (sometimes very technical) in a hierarchy that serves their projects but not always the visitor from an NSO seeking information.

2. A lot of research is involved in the improvement of the statistical process and the IT that goes with it. This web site is designed for information sharing in an attempt to better utilise the scarce resources involved in this research and other IT projects.

3. The participants at the Seminar on Integrated Statistical Information Systems, held in Geneva 17-19 April 2002, agreed to bring to the attention of the Conference the proposal for the creation of a Website on Best IT Practices in National Statistical Institutes. The report of the seminar (CES/SEM.47/2) under recommended future work (page 2, paragraph 7) says:

“ The meeting recommended that a Website on the Best “IT” Practices in Statistical Offices be created as proposed in document CES/SEM.47/CRP.3. OECD offered to host the Website, with the terms of reference specified in the paper. The authors were asked to prepare a revision of the proposal, which would reflect various interest groups emerging in the Programme Activity 2 of the Conference. A coordination group was created to manage the work on the website.”

¹ The site is available at <http://cs3-hq.oecd.org/scripts/stats/itp/index.asp>

² Prepared by Mr. Gérard Salou.

Purpose and function of the web-site

4. The purpose of this initiative is information sharing about best IT practices in National Statistical Institutes. The primary function of the web site is to serve as a collaborative knowledge base of IT practices and solutions arrived at. Contributors will be the national statistical offices, IT or statistics departments from central banks, ministries and organisations like Eurostat, the IMF, the OECD, the United Nations, etc. The users will be personnel at decision-making level and others whom it may concern in the community of statisticians. National statistical offices from countries in transition are a particular target of the web site.

5. The web site will serve no commercial interests and will carry no advertisements or vendor related material other than for purposes of illustration or instruction. The site is hosted by the OECD but the actual documents are located on the web site of the organisation that has submitted the corresponding Best practice.

Web Site Structure

6. This web site has a structure that covers the full range of topics appropriate to the informatics domain. This has been accomplished through the employment of the *Zachman* framework. The Zachman Framework (ZF) is a well-known classification system used to guide the development of Enterprise Architectures. It provides, in a two-dimensional tabular format, the topics that should be dealt with by architecture and other study projects. The right-hand side deals primarily with management issues, topics such as Motivation (WHY should the project be approved and funded?), People (WHO are the user communities to be serviced by the proposal?) and Time (WHEN will the various project milestones be completed?). The left-hand side deals with technical subjects such as Data, Function and Network. The vertical dimension deals with scope, from strategic concerns to detail specifications (the target audience also varies in this dimension from strategic planner to technology builder).

	WHAT Data	HOW Function	WHERE Network	WHO People	WHEN Time	WHY Motivation
Scope (Planner)						
Enterprise Model (Owner)						
System Model (Designer)						
Technology Model (Builder)						
Detailed Representations						

Figure 1: The Zachman Framework

7. This structure is shown as an actual implementation in Figure 2, overleaf. In this application, navigation is accomplished directly by clicking on the appropriate icon, corresponding to the topic of interest.

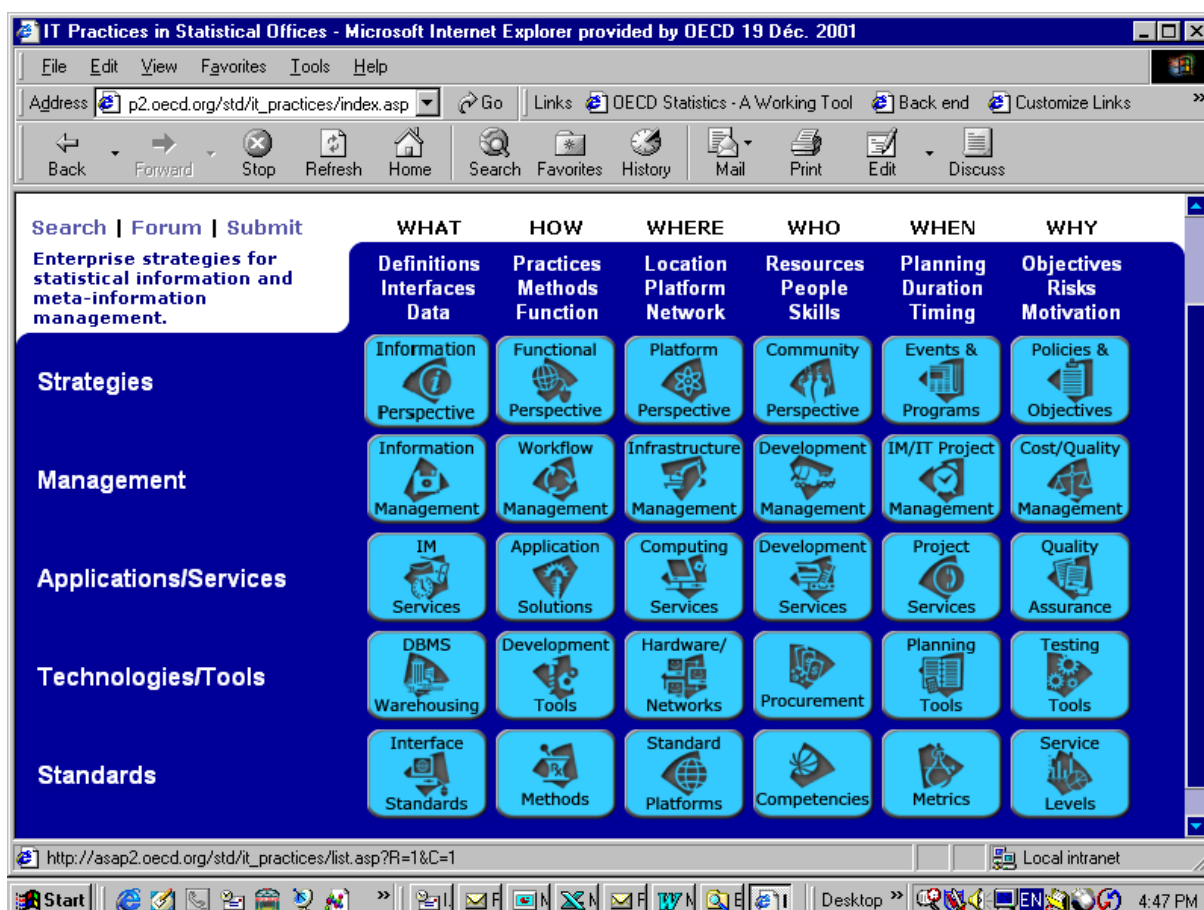


Figure 2. Implementation, main (navigation) page

8. The web site is entirely database driven. Instead of having a static html page for each item, there is one dynamic page that loads the database content corresponding to that item. This structure makes the site much easier to manage and to search.

Management of the web site

9. It is proposed that the OECD host the web site and that a co-ordination group manage its content. The web site will not contain the actual documentation but only hyperlinks to documentation existing on the web site of the organisation submitting the corresponding Best IT Practice. A co-ordination group has been formed during the ISIS 2002 Seminar. It includes staff from Statistics Canada, Statistics Finland, Statistics Latvia, Statistics Netherlands, the United States Census Bureau, Eurostat, the OECD and the UNECE.

10. NSOs and other statistical institutes can submit proposals for Best IT Practices to the web site. Submissions can be research papers, design studies, reports from successful or unsuccessful projects as long as they lead to best or better IT practices. Members of the co-ordination group will review all submissions before they appear on the web site. Submissions must contain:

- A title, brief and relevant;
- An abstract, representing a detailed description of the document linked to. The abstract is limited to 2000 characters;

- Prerequisites and limitations, listing any criteria to be met for this Best practice to apply. This is also limited to 2000 characters;
- Keywords, limited to 255 characters;
- Name of Organisation;
- Email of contact;
- url of document.

11. The site also offers a search mechanism to facilitate the location of Best IT Practices. The search engines searches all the fields submitted giving preference to the title field. The actual document is not searched.

12. A discussion forum is also available on the site.