IT as a Utility Network+ workshop series

Scoping workshop – University of Southampton: 27 February, 2013
Plans and notes

Aim: to examine the extent to which IT as a Utility underpins the Digital Economy.

Attendees: Jeremy Frey, Steve Brewer, Mike Surridge, Colin Bird, Bogdan Gabrys

Outcome: to establish a working framework with which the ITaaU Network+ can further investigate the question through workshops, pilot projects, secondments and other actions. By framework we mean a succinct scoping of the events and actions needed to move forward with the Network. This would include the key themes to be covered by the workshops, technologies and issues that pilot projects should cover and domains that secondments should cover. The framework should also encompass the optimal communication channels that the network should embrace from video clips, reports and website.

Questions:
- What do we understand by Digital Economy?
- How do we differentiate between Utility and Service in the context of IT?
- How does the Platform Model relate to ITaaU?
- What are the key technologies available or applicable to become utilities?
- What is the audience that we should be targeting?
- What is the global scope of this activity?
- What are the dominant business models contributing to the growth of the Digital Economy from an IT perspective? Ie. What roles do academia, big business, Government, SMEs and VCs play?

Notes from meeting:

Introduction
The ITaaU Network+ was introduced
- RCUK sub-theme to Digital Economy
- Growing the Network+ is an important goal
- Busy Co-Is – need to maximise their time
- Excellent Advisory Group – keep to participate and gain from participation
- The wider Network+ needs to be cultivated and expanded
- New Website, new logo and design framework presented

Comments:
- Everyone is swamped – we need to be efficient
- We want to exploit what members are already doing
- Accounting for time matters - what and why are things being done

Background
Emerging document from Colin presented – with references
Is computing a utility?
1. Data as the new spice (trade) metaphor explored
2. Utility vs. Service? – what are the differences and similarities?

Comments:
Tightly scoped literature surveys have been produced, 2 so far -
- IT as a Utility - same as utility computing
- 1974 - first utterance by Nicholas Carr in Harvard Business Review – contentious

Other utilities have standards, regulations etc however, IT looses its benefits if tied down too far
- Application utilities have emerged as powerful and inherently different to the outsourced
- Trade magazines could be a good stating point for getting the more general message out.

How do we spark a debate?
Key terms to address are: utility, usability and usefulness

RCUK and DE - what dissemination channels do they have?
- Cross-disciplinary channels?
- We could have a role as the news channel
- We have to know the market - who reads what?
- Compile data with web site analysis

Spice Trade - metaphor - work with Roger and the New Economic sub-theme - workshop? oil? How to value the data you have as a commodity?
Bogdan, how could this be used to value companies
Tyrannies of the past tried to force people to give data

Workshop on Data Science (Bogdan) leading to data products. August?
'Predictive analysis' - where is the gold?

We should focus on producing a report.
Target audience? Advisory Group brings in companies; we also need users, local councils? researchers?

Aim: the goal is to stimulate new thinking.

There is much activity in this area but we need to go further.
Data is now challenging traditionally qualitative research. Eg social networking, social sciences, social machines, scale of investigations now possible but requires diverse skills sets. Data Science - new role - but, not engineering or computer science, what about within social science. Different to stats.
Bogdan to propose time and location – Bournemouth University location?

ITaaU Network+

Opportunities and processes for growing the Network+
- Website – itutility.ac.uk
- Mailing list
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Newsletter?
- Workshops
- What else?
- New projects?
  - EC, UK, …

Future Activities

Comments:
- More pilots, secondments, workshops planned…
- Pilots – close to initiation
- Secondments – text more or less ready for publication
- Workshops – a couple in preparation
- Workshops – proposed themes:

Future workshops
1. Future Libraries
   1. Libraries as social spaces
   2. Future roles for library information specialists
   3. Uses for mobile technologies in libraries
   4. The potential for libraries to offer data and information curation services
2. Emerging Economies
3. Smart Spaces
4. Internet of Things
5. Broadcast, film and games
6. Medical and health care
7. Food chain – from field to fork

Comments
LotF - We need a date now for this w/s - in April (Oxford) and October (BL) - Lib of the Future
EE - April
S - well covered for now
Broadcast/film - alternative path entertainment
- Games - Christos Gardis? - European - games as learning tool? Games as an education utility? Newcastle, Tyneside - Danish uni led project - Bogdan to investigate -
- speculative workshop on Games as a utility? Is this an industry solved problem?

- Medical? Fragmented, Welcome Trust have done work. Soton sleep monitor, so what can we do? Put out feelers - ... We could at least produce a report on the state of play.
- Food Chain - yes - security and validation - role of IT Utilities - smart agri-food guys - Mike has contacts
- Aberdeen - Rural net - have they done anything? Co-branded and they run it?
- Cyber security at SOTON - Vladimir? real and perceived and trust and belief... Mike has involvement and Bogdan has visiting Prof. and Chris Richardson appointed in this area at MOD. Information assurance. Go for early July. DOc for Bogdan to circulate.
- Usability - contact Paul Watson - work together - IT aaU impacting on assisted living - them to host.

Environmental research - IT for monitoring. November? Effects of IT utility on the environment and the vice-versa. Geo-informatics. What should we focus on? Education - MOOC meet ITaaU - aim - to train the citizen scientists? Ted talk - Google and Stanford prof AI for 30-40 people, as experiment made open and had 100,000 audience. Feedback is very useful - data as a utility - produces evidence of what works.

Does citizen science work?

Linked In? separate ? Advisory Group has a role – share list of members and there interests?
"What's in it for me?" perennial question that has to be answered
Network, dissemination, contacts , matchmaking, prioritisation
What are our oricesses
We take on the facilitator role – we get it going –
The role of the network is to facilitate new initiatives.
Eg – secondment – we have project partner in Germany – is there someone in UK we could work with? Eg Process industory
Personal contacts matter
Harvest LinkedIn

Libraries of the Future – preliminary findings
1. Future Libraries
    1. Libraries as social spaces
    2. Future roles for library information specialists
    3. Uses for mobile technologies in libraries
    4. The potential for libraries to offer data and information curation services
2. Cross-cutting themes and ideas

Future areas of interest
- Interaction with DE and the other RCUK sub-themes?
- A conference on ITaaU?
- Other projects

- STEP actions
- TSB?
- Horizon 2020 EC projects?
- Business partnerships?
- Govt/policy initiatives

Other matters:
- ICTomorrow – infrastructure, ICTomorrow.co.uk
- Communication/dissemination within the network/web
- Events, calls
- Secondments
- Pilot projects