

Learning and Organisational Resources for Communities of Practice

Type of resource: Choosing and (individually and collectively) appropriating tools, supporting CoPs in conceiving scenarios of tools uses

Type of scenario: Identity development

ActivitiesToolsScenarios: Matching different types of activities with types of tools and scenarios

Summary

Each CoP is unique and has unique needs when it comes to tools and services they may need to support their activities (be them PALETTE tools and services or not). Finding the right tool for the right job (and using it while following a usage consensus) is the key to success.

Objectives

Allow a CoP to quickly and efficiently select the PALETTE and non-PALETTE tools and services that would help them in their practice.

Scenario

1. A CoP decides it will need tools for its activities – a new CoP, or a CoP with the desire to modernize its practices. The negotiation process is described in the LOR “**ChoicesTools**: Negotiating, discussing and making decisions about the choices of tools”. As for the next points, this can be done either in plenary meetings or at a distance, with the help of a forum engine or a mailing-list, for instance.
2. For each of the identified needs, there is an abundance of tools and services (PALETTE or not). They decide that a different CoP member has the task to select which tools would suit each identified need and to define guidelines for using it (see the LORs “**ChoicesTools**: Negotiating, discussing and making decisions about the choices of tools” and “**UsesTools**: Negotiating, discussing and making decisions about the uses of tools”). The choice can also be either horizontal or vertical, according to the organization of the CoP.
3. To help them, they have access to multiple resources, one of which is a table (see next subsection) organized after pedagogical goals. Various PALETTE productions (see ‘Links to further resources’) are available to help them further in they reflection process.
4. For each activity, a trial of the pre-selected tools and services is conducted with the CoP members that are part of the activity, or plan to join it.
5. If PALETTE tools are not the best answer for some activities, non-PALETTE can be chosen either thanks to the report ‘D.PAR.04’ non-PALETTE tools section (<http://palette.ercim.org/images/stories/DocumentPDF/dpar04.pdf>), either using one of the many online pedagogical resources for finding tools lacking is PALETTE, such as text editors, forums, instant messaging/VoIP clients, etc.

Tools to support activity

- A discussion forum
- A mailing-list
- The PALETTE services (in particular SweetWiki, eLogbook and CoPe_it!) could also be used, but since the activity is about assessing these tools, it would be an anachronism in some cases to use them before having discovered them.
 - CoPe_it!: (<http://copeit.cti.gr> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/156/119/>)
 - eLogbook: (<http://elogbook.epfl.ch/> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/155/119/>)
 - SweetWiki (<http://argentera.inria.fr:8080/> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/160/119/>)
- The following table helps to match activities to PALETTE tools and services:

	Amaya	SweetWiki	LimSee3	eLogbook	CoPe_it!	BayFac
Reflective process	XX	XX		XXX	XXX	X
Reification – for one person	XXX	XX	X			XX
Reification – for others	XX	XXX	XXX	X	X	
Sharing, reuse	XXX	XXX	XXX	XX	X	XXX
Knowledge Management	X	XX	X	XXX	XX	XXX
Classification of documents				XX	X	XXX

Legend of the table:

- X makes it possible, but with difficulty
- XX makes it possible but it is not its first purpose
- XXX makes it possible because it is its purpose

We define the terms used in the first column of the table as follows:

- **Reflective process:** reflections about the topics that are to be discussed in the CoP activities, but also reflections about the CoP itself, the activities to conduct, how to organise themselves as a CoP.
- **Reification:** Formalization of thinking, ideas, how-to and know-how, formalization of lessons learned, writing down of conclusions based on practice. Can be split in:
 - **Reification – for one person:** the work of writing down one’s thoughts (knowledge and practice) for one’s own use. For instance, a teacher takes notes on what parts of his courses worked and what parts failed.
 - **Reification – for others:** the work of writing down one’s thoughts (knowledge and practice) for other people. For instance, a teacher publishes his notes about his pedagogical experiments, what worked and what failed.
- **Sharing, reuse:** activities that involve sharing knowledge and documents, activities that involve reusing documents (while modifying their contents or not).
- **Knowledge management:** activities that aim at managing knowledge by sorting documents, discussing their contents, adding new contents to a database, suggesting contents.
- **Classification of documents:** a subset of knowledge management, the classification of documents occurs when there is no discussion about the documents: the only goal here is to classify documents in order to make them available to other people quickly and efficiently.

Example of use by a community of practice

- For the ePrep CoP (teachers in “Classes préparatoires” in France), reification for others has been made by a member, ‘thematic referent’ of the Pedagogical

Innovation project inside the CoP, helped by LimSee3 developers. Together, they have built a LimSee3 module to explain CoP members how to prepare a course with LimSee3, how to play this course for students, how to prepare the post-course (see the ePrep account of this experiment - in French - on the ePrep Website).

- Inside the ePrep CoP, when the use of Amaya and LimSee3 is generalised for building courses to be uploaded on the ePrep platform, teachers will be able to share and reuse the pedagogical content available through the platform under a Creative Commons license (thanks to the standards of Amaya - XHTML/MathML/SVG - and the standards of LimSee (SMIL). At the moment, the CoP is too young for this sharable and reusable document production (there are only one LimSee3 History course and one Amaya Physics course available on the platform (see here: <http://129.104.30.7/>).

Further resources

- PALETTE deliverable D.PAR.04: <http://palette.ercim.org/images/stories/DocumentPDF/dpar04.pdf>
- PALETTE deliverable D.PAR.07: http://palette.ercim.org/images/stories/DocumentPDF/d.par.07_final.pdf
- The PALETTE services gallery can help in choosing tools for CoPs: http://palette.ercim.org/component/option,com_alphacontent/Itemid,119/

These documents give insights from various points of view on what can be accomplished with which tools and services (the D.PAR.04 has a section about non-PALETTE tools).
