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Providing technical support during research projects

Matthew Barr

HATII
Introduction

- What is a Technical Appendix?
- Overview of a Technical Appendix
- Where to get help
What is a technical appendix?

- Documentation that outlines the technical aspects of a project
- Forms part of any application that involves the creation of a digital resource (website, database, app)
- An opportunity to demonstrate that your proposed project team possesses the know-how to deliver on the technical aspects of your project
Overview of a technical appendix

Questions divided into six sections:

1. Project management
2. Data development methods
3. Infrastructural support
4. Data preservation and sustainability
5. Access
6. Copyright and intellectual property issues
Overview of a technical appendix

1. Project Management

   a. Management & Reporting Structure

      • Could refer to the *Project Management* section of the Case for Support

      • Focus is on delivery of the **technical aspects** of the project

      • May consider including details of the project steering committee
Overview of a technical appendix

1. Project Management, cont’d

   b. Project timetable

   • Provide a textual overview of the proposed timeline

   • Might refer to a Gantt chart or other visual evidence

   • Make provision for planning at the beginning of the project and for evaluation at the end
Overview of a technical appendix

1. Project Management, cont’d

   c. Project deliverables
      
      • Includes the obvious technical outputs (website, database)
      • Might also include ancillary technical deliverables such as the results of any evaluation and your documentation

   d. Monitoring process
      
      • Could refer back to the management section
      • Role of the steering committee may be expanded upon
      • Might also include existing line management structures
Overview of a technical appendix

2. Data development methods

a. Content selection
   • This will largely be driven by the researcher, but should be developed in conjunction with the systems developer or equivalent
   • Consider things such as maintaining high-resolution archival copies of images in addition to those intended for everyday web consumption, for example
Overview of a technical appendix

2. Data development methods cont’d

b. Data/file formats
   • Emphasise open standards and compliance
   • Consider well-supported open source tools (e.g. MySQL) over proprietary solutions
   • Think about metadata (e.g. Dublin Core) where appropriate
   • XML is a standard and a preferred archival format for text-based material
Overview of a technical appendix

2. Data development methods cont’d

c. Documenting the resource
   • Good documentation can help ensure life of any digital output beyond the end of the project
   • Might include the requirements specification as well as any user manuals or even contextual help
   • Be aware that requirements will likely shift somewhat over the course of any project: documentation should be updated to reflect changes
Overview of a technical appendix

2. Data development methods cont’d

d. Advice sought
   • Locally-available expertise, in addition to external contacts
   • Collaborators with established form in the field can carry considerable weight

e. Consultation with projects using similar methods
   • Again, we have a wealth of successful projects within the University to highlight
Overview of a technical appendix

3. Infrastructural support

This is where technical support – e.g. Arts Support or IT Services – come in

- Software & hardware support, including hosting websites and databases
- Back-up facilities, redundancy, etc.
- This is also where you might justify the acquisition of new hardware
Overview of a technical appendix

4. Data preservation & sustainability

- Demonstrate that you have sought advice from relevant organizations
  - External: JISC Digital Media, National e-Science Centre, Digital Curation Centre (DCC)…
  - Internal: HATII, University of Glasgow Archive Services

- Following the cessation of AHDS funding, institutions are encouraged to preserve and maintain resources “in house”
  - Project partners may play a role

- Open standards and open source software are also worth mentioning (again), with particular reference to sustainability
Overview of a technical appendix

5. Access

- Publicly-available, free-to-use website is most obvious digital output
- Should state aim to adhere to Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) guidelines
- Avoid extraneous or proprietary technologies where possible
Overview of a technical appendix

6. Copyright & IP issues

- Plenty of advice available:
  - JISC Legal, JISC Digital Media (formerly TASI), UK Patents Office, and the University's Research & Enterprise Department

- Issues to consider include:
  - Assertion of Database Right
  - Assertion of the project team’s right to claim authorship
  - Proper permission sought and acknowledgement given where other authors’ materials are used
Where to get help

What do we mean by ‘technical support’?

– Good **IT support** is essential:
  • Server maintenance
  • Sourcing new hardware
  • Dealing with your researchers’ technical queries

– A good **technical partner** is equally important if there’s a digital component to your project:
  • Writing the Technical Appendix
  • Developing bespoke databases, novel user interfaces, websites & other tools
  • Providing intellectual input and technical advice

→ A **collaboration** with your technical partner
Where to get help

How HATII can help

– Within the College of Arts, IT support is based at HATII

– In addition, we are also technical partners in many, many projects

– Our research has informed and strengthened many successful bids

– Partners in a wide range of projects, from interdisciplinary collaborations within the university to large-scale EU-funded programmes
Thanks!

HATII
George Service House
11 University Gardens

http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/hatii/

matthew.barr@glasgow.ac.uk
Digital Curation Centre
- http://www.dcc.ac.uk/

DMP Online
- http://dmponline.hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk/

JISC Legal
- http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/

National E-Science Centre
- http://www.nesc.ac.uk/