

## **EVINCE – The Project – Executive Summary**

“A breath of fresh air”<sup>1</sup>

### **EVINCE Methodology**

In order to capture the complex features of IT-related change, often labelled “cultural factors”, EVINCE has developed an innovative methodology combining ethnography and Science and Technology Studies (STS).

Ethnography involves participation in, and observation of, particular interactive settings. EVINCE has used three IT-change case studies as settings: Committee papers, reading lists and research expertise information.

The data collected from these case studies has been analysed using insights from STS in order to address theoretical issues and practical recommendations.

### **EVINCE Audit and Accountability**

Because this novel approach is attempting to capture the unknown, it does not easily fit current audit and accountability practices, such as performance measures and benchmarks.

In order to demonstrate the value of the EVINCE Perspective, we have had to develop an alternative approach to audit and accountability. As such, audit and accountability have become themes addressed by the project.

The outcomes, including an accountability relationship developed with HEFCE observers, speak directly to the debate regarding the costs, benefits and consequences of audit procedures within HE.

### **EVINCE Outcomes**

The product of these efforts is summarised via five inter-weaving themes of (information) strategy, success and failure, decision-making, audit and accountability, and utility. These themes provide a range of insights into the way HEIs and the HE sector operate.

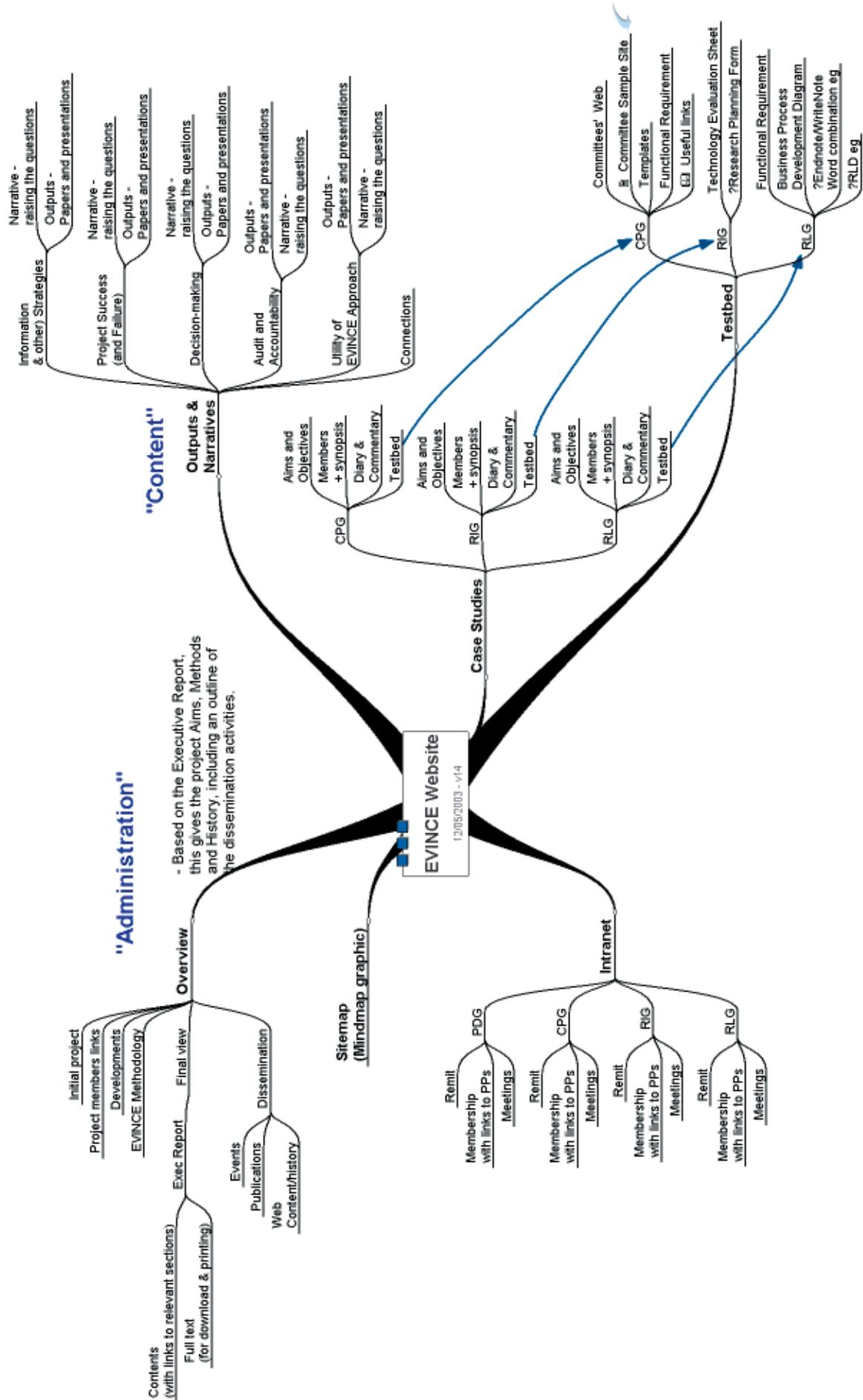
In addition, a number of practical aids have been developed via the case studies.

We have found, via dissemination to a broad set of audiences, that the EVINCE Perspective is of direct interest to senior managers, academics, administrators and information professionals.

<sup>1</sup> Comment from AUA Conference 2003



# Website Map







### **Executive Report to HEFCE – Summer 2003**

#### **Contents**

This is the summary report of the EVINCE project. It divides into four main sections described below.

Full details of the project can be found on the EVINCE website, and links from this report can be accessed via the electronic version at

[www.reading.ac.uk/EVINCE/overview/execrep.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/EVINCE/overview/execrep.pdf)

#### **Project Development**

This section provides the history of the project.

It includes the initial outline; EVINCE methodology, and the unorthodox means of meeting audit and accountability requirements.

#### **The Original Objectives**

##### **How the work has been done**

##### **EVINCE Methodology**

EVINCE uses an innovative combination of ethnography and Science and Technology Studies (STS) to capture “social and cultural” aspects of IT-related change.

##### **Meeting the Objectives**

##### **EVINCE, Audit and Accountability**

This tracks the project’s developing relationship with HEFCE. It investigates how this relationship became a means to set expectations and demonstrate their fulfilment.

#### **What we have learned from the project and disseminated**

##### **Themes and Recommendations**

In addressing questions about IT-related change, EVINCE has developed five interweaving themes, which form the first part of this section.

Information (and other) Strategies

Success and Failure

Decision Making

Audit and Accountability

Utility

## **Case study commentaries**

The next section outlines the case studies observed, and the specific lessons identified within each.

Committee Papers

Research Information

Reading Lists

## **How we have disseminated and responses**

This demonstrates the breadth of the EVINCE audience, and includes some personal reflections from members of the project

## **Roll-out Strategy**

## **Future Possibilities**

This highlights where EVINCE can go from here.

## **Appendices**

## **Abbreviations**

## **References**

## **Local Partner Activities**

outlining some of the activities the EVINCE team were engaged with, as part of exploring the institutional context and contributing to the work of partner organisations.

## **EVINCE Products**

Samples of some EVINCE outputs which may have practical application in other HEIs. In most cases, the electronic version may be more appropriate, since they will need adaptation to fit local requirements.

## **Information Principles**

Committee Papers Functions Spreadsheet

Reading Lists Functional Specification

Research Information System Grid

EVINCE team  
June 2003



## Project development

*Original Objectives, Methodology, Audit and Accountability*

### The Original Objectives

“EVINCE is one of the HEFCE FDGMP (Fund for the Development of Good Management Practice<sup>1</sup>) projects.

However, rather than concentrating on the implementation of a given management package or IT application, this project is concerned with observation of such change projects, within their social and institutional context. By taking careful note of the process, from scoping a project through implementation and delivery of a new system, we aim to produce guidelines to enhance the success of similar projects.

As focus for these observations we have identified three sub-projects<sup>2</sup>, covering the broad spectrum of university activities - research (research information), teaching and learning (reading lists), and administration (committee papers). Activities associated with each case study will be co-ordinated and progressed across three institutions - the Universities of Reading, Southampton and Brunel. In addition, we plan to maintain contact with other related projects within the partner institutions, and to develop a good knowledge of the context(s) in which these developments are happening.” (From the initial project specification.)

<sup>1</sup> The HEFCE programme has since been rebadged as GMP (Good Management Practice).

<sup>2</sup> From an early stage, the term “sub-project” was replaced with “case study”, which seemed to reduce confusion for EVINCE audiences.

### How the work has been done

#### EVINCE Methodology

##### Getting to grips with IT change

A new finance system is deemed to have failed in an English University. Why? The technology did exactly what the provider company promised, which matched what the project board had requested. However, the everyday practices, regularly recurring routines and responsibilities played out in the University could not easily accommodate this new system. The problems were labelled ‘cultural’ – that abstract set of intangible factors frequently cited as problematic. It is not just a problem amongst academic administrators either – there are frequent calls in the current management literature (see Smits, van der Poel and Ribbers 1997, and Pettigrew 1987, for examples) for a greater understanding of the everyday practices of organisations, about how things actually get carried out. These too are frequently labelled ‘cultural’ issues.

This section of the report presents one means through which the ‘cultural’ aspects of university IT can be accommodated within on-going processes of change. Firstly, this section will outline how IT ‘culture’ has been studied and transformed from an abstract unknown to a distinct and complex set of factors in the EVINCE project. Secondly, this section details how this complex set of factors was analysed, deploying particular theoretical constructs. Thirdly, this section highlights where and how this analysis has been utilised.

##### Analysing IT projects

##### An introduction to ethnography

Although it had been agreed within the Universities involved in EVINCE that the culture of IT change was important, who could say what exactly counts as culture? Furthermore how would it be possible to go out and capture culture? The research associate was brought into EVINCE to offer experience of sociological research methods. It was thought that employing a sociologist might be a means to get at the culture of IT change. The research associate began carrying out an ethnography of three IT change case studies (see ‘Case studies’ for more detail).

Ethnography is a research methodology, developed originally in the field of anthropology, which is now utilised in a range of work (anthropology, sociology, management theory, organisation

studies and cultural studies). It involves observation of, and participation in, particular groupings (for a guide on how to do ethnography, see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). This observation and participation aims to produce detailed data on how a particular group operates, what it means to be a member of a particular group and how a group attains and retains its identity as a group. The origins of ethnography in anthropology lie with colonial endeavours to uncover how particular native groups operated before they were too greatly influenced by western European ideas (for an example, see Evans Pritchard's study of the Nuer, 1940). The co-option of ethnography by sociology has resulted in numerous studies of groups closer to home (such as youth cultures, see Cohen 1972, for an example). Ethnography has recently been augmented by a shift toward studies of the understanding and use of technology (see for example Miller and Slater on Trinidadian's use of the internet 2000).

The strengths of ethnographic data are that: a detailed, in depth picture emerges of a group; the social and political issues which other methods find intangible are at the centre of data capture; ethnography is strongly participative, allowing for members of groups to comment on the data and data gathering as it occurs. An innovative feature of the EVINCE ethnography has been to translate such data into practical recommendations. These recommendations are particularly robust as they are developed in tandem with local groups (and so are inclusive), pay attention to the detail of local groups (and so are informed) and allow for change to be an iterative and participative process (rather than an enforced set of top-down management decisions).

It should be noted, however, that ethnography cannot be treated as unproblematic. There is no easily available 'culture', which can be scooped up and then studied under a microscope. Ethnographic data is produced through the close association of the ethnographer in a particular setting. The EVINCE ethnography is the interactive outcome of activities in the field setting. Studying the role the ethnographer has played in the production of data is then an important feature of our analysis. Furthermore ethnographies require a great deal of access to the field being studied and require a great deal of time to be spent in the field. The EVINCE ethnography makes no claims for objectivity then. That is, the involvement of research participants in the collection, organisation and analysis of data, their opportunities to reflect on these processes and reflection on the researcher's own involvement in these processes all form a part of the data collection, organisation and analysis. The EVINCE ethnography seeks validity by not making claims to objectivity and instead through carrying out reflexive analysis of its subjectivity. This raises further problems though regarding performance measures (see 'EVINCE, audit and accountability').

### **Analysing ethnography**

#### **An introduction to Science and Technology Studies (STS)**

Ethnographies allow for the collection, collation, grouping and ordering of in-depth, qualitative, observational data. However, the means for analysing this data and the purpose this analysis is put to, are not fixed by ethnography. Within the EVINCE project, the kinds of issues of interest related to technologies in use in Universities or technologies which might be rolled out across Universities. A means was required through which the observational data could be coupled with a body of knowledge surrounding notions of technology use and deployment in order to produce practical recommendations. This means was provided by Science and Technology Studies (STS). STS could provide a body of research within a broadly sociological remit covering a wide array of socio-technical stories (for example the development of the electric car in France (Callon 1986), diagnosing anaemia in Africa (Mol and Law 1994), configuring computer users (Woolgar 1991)). STS offers insight on how people relate to technology, how technologies, people and other resources interact, how users can be configured, issues of responsibility, identity, accountability and so on. This allowed for a range of analyses of the ethnographic data to be made accessible.

### **Utilising ethnographic analysis**

EVINCE has gone beyond collecting and analysing data. The EVINCE ethnography has enabled the project team to develop a list of themes with practical recommendations surrounding university IT. The continuation of the ethnography has enabled the EVINCE team to relate these themes back to the research participants who have agreed the on-going relevance of the themes.

The continuation of the ethnography has also allowed for the research participants to further comment on and try out the practical recommendations that EVINCE has been producing on these themes. Thus the production of themes has been collaborative.

## Summary

The advantages of utilising STS informed ethnographic analysis are:

- Access – being able to spend time working with participants in the research has enabled the EVINCE team to develop a detailed understanding of their current needs and practices.
- Participation – establishing ourselves as part of the community within which the participants work has further enabled the EVINCE team to assess the relevance of our own research findings and to assess our role in the production of research outcomes.
- Time – an extended amount of time working with research participants has allowed the EVINCE team to observe the outcomes of our own research findings and recommendations and to assess how useful these have been.
- Collaboration – working with the research participants has further allowed us to change the way we have approached university IT culture and to incorporate these changes into our analyses.

These aspects of STS-informed ethnography have contributed to the development and assessment of 5 central themes, which form the basis for the next (blue) section of this report:

- Information (and other) strategies
- Project Success (and failure)
- Audit and Accountability
- Decision Making
- Utility

## Meeting the Objectives

### EVINCE, Audit and Accountability <sup>(1)</sup>

**Establishing the EVINCE project and establishing a flexible and accountable relationship with HEFCE**

Establishing the EVINCE project involved a series of negotiations initiated in late 1999. These negotiations were sparked by an invitation to bid document sent from HEFCE's new Fund for the Development of Good Management Practice (FDGMP). The fund of £10 million pounds would be made available to “accelerate the implementation of management improvements” (HEFCE, 1999).

During 1999, the University of Reading had been looking at running three IT change projects. Reading's Director of Information Services was aware that these projects had parallels at other Universities (at Southampton and Brunel particularly). A decision was made by the Information Strategy Committee at Reading that these projects could form an observational basis for getting at how IT change occurs in practice in universities and a joint bid to HEFCE could be launched. It was suggested this could help avoid another project failure (see 'EVINCE ethnography').

In January of 2000, a short bid document was produced emphasising that 3 case studies would form the basis for an ethnographic study of IT change in Universities (see EVINCE ethnography for details). HEFCE wanted 'hard' quantitative performance measures and 'soft' qualitative performance measures to be clearly set out in the bid. Reading suggested that 'hard' measures would be the number of users using the case study technologies and how long it took them to use it. 'Soft' measures would be the observational data. However, these do not fit traditional notions of performance measures. A performance measure involves the identification of a range of types of numbers to be collected against which a benchmark figure will be set from which change can be measured. Ethnography is not particularly useful at setting figures to aim for or benchmarks to measure along the way. Ethnographies, their aim and direction, tend to develop over time and indeed this is seen as an advantage of the ethnographic method. This exploratory approach to research, however, makes the establishment of performance measures in advance of the research

difficult. This indicated an early slippage between HEFCE's call and the bid.

HEFCE assessed the bids using 6 criteria (the proven events value of financial and non-financial improvements, extent of roll-out across Universities, possibility of sustaining improvements, level of commitment, value for money, robust performance measures). HEFCE responded rapidly to the EVINCE bid and informed Reading that it had progressed to the next stage. HEFCE suggested the second round document would need to provide more detail on: senior level commitment, performance measures, milestones, collaboration, relevance to HE, how progress would be reported, financial and non-financial benefits, what each University was contributing to costs.

In March 2000, a further bid document was produced. In terms of financial benefit, the second bid emphasised that HE would benefit from a minimum saving of £200,000 in staff time (the project cost was £170,000). In terms of non-financial benefit, the project would improve user experience and provide a greater understanding of HE. The document also clearly set out a reporting structure for the project, benefits to HE as a whole, milestones (at least dates when a report would be produced, not what the content would be) and the long-term relevance of the likely findings of the project were highlighted. Project management diagrams established the Project Direction Group (PDG) which would meet 4 times a year and include members of each collaborating institution, someone from each case-study, an ethnographer (to be funded by the project) and Professor Woolgar as academic consultant.

In April 2000, although HEFCE accepted the bid and sent a letter of congratulations to the collaborating Universities, they still required further information. In June 2000, further detail was submitted to HEFCE, including a detailed plan of the ethnography, detail on each case study and the costs to each institution, and an overall project plan was produced. In July, HEFCE responded that the University had obviously worked very hard, that the Performance Measures would require further work, but presumed the PDG would complete this work. This stage of the bidding process featured the gradual production of a field of relations in, around and through which the research project was produced. There was the production of the terms on which assessment of the projects' on-going correctness would be assessed (meeting milestones, holding meetings, producing spending plans, spending but not exceeding the budget, etc). Then there were also a series of suggestions that the ethnography would have to demonstrate success (ie feature at a range of conferences and other dissemination events including HEFCE's own events). The introduction of the HEFCE auditor<sup>(2)</sup> to the PDG meant PDG meetings could form occasions on which the project's on-going correctness/success could be demonstrated to, and assessed by, HEFCE.

### Correctness

There were a series of PDG meetings spread across 2 years of research activity. The negotiated bidding process, it turned out, had produced a robust series of accounting relations that the PDG had to meet. Thus progress of the content of case-studies, relevance of the project to HE, continuing the project beyond the HEFCE money, financial and non-financial benefits that the project might be able to deliver, alongside ethnography having utility value, were persistent and resistant reporting categories.

However, correctness was not just a constituent element of the reports for each meeting, but was also a feature of the interactivity of members of the PDG meetings. Thus the Universities involved in the project had to demonstrate high-level commitment to the project through having high level figures on the PDG. Also the academic consultant had to be present in PDG meetings to confer expert comments. Further to this, the HEFCE auditor had to turn up and contribute HEFCE's latest interests in each meeting. The pre-project negotiation established a commitment to produce reports, to meet regularly and to use those meetings to hold the reports and members of the group to account. The upshot of these meetings was an on-going assessment that the project was continuing correctly.

### Success

With the commitment to maintaining correct reporting facilities came a matching commitment to demonstrate success. Success for HEFCE, according to the original call for proposals, entailed the production of a set of deliverables of relevance to the HE community as a whole, which would

have a long-term impact. As secretary to the PDG meetings and ethnographer on the project, in each meeting we produced an agenda that allowed for us to report on the latest analysis produced from the ethnographic data. At the first PDG meeting we presented a selection of themes drawn from initial ethnographic observations. We gained corroboration of the relevance and strength of these themes from other PDG members and from HEFCE, and from Professor Woolgar the academic consultant on the project. At later meetings we presented detail on the conferences where project papers had been delivered and offered versions of these presentations to the PDG.

Delivering success to HEFCE through the PDG involved a range of different claims for these presentations. Firstly, the PDG members from each collaborating University could be called upon to corroborate the utility of the presentations produced by the project. Secondly, the academic consultant on the PDG could corroborate the strength of the ethnographic work. Thirdly, claims were made that conferences were well attended and that high scores had been achieved on feedback forms produced at these events. Fourthly, however, the presentations themselves were delivered to the PDG. This provided a range of stimulus as to how the utility of findings from the EVINCE ethnography might be assessed by University IT, University management and HEFCE audiences. The performance of success through provision of deliverables and claims about deliverables to HEFCE involved expanding relations with the HEFCE auditor beyond the boundaries of the PDG. An on-going relationship was established with the auditor (later identified as “HEFCE administrator”) to communicate deliverables and receive feedback.

## Summary

Just as the PDG meetings formed a useful alternative arena for assessment of the project’s on-going correctness, the project’s relationship with the HEFCE auditor provided a useful means for the interactive communication of success. Rather than restricting the project to setting benchmark figures to measure against (something which the ethnography may not have been able to achieve), providing detailed reports of project progress to PDG meetings with HEFCE presence, provided a detailed alternative arena of accountability. These reports allowed for EVINCE to provide more suitable detail than could be provided through performance measures and offered that detail for discussion in each meeting. The relationship with the HEFCE auditor also allowed for the on-going communication of success. While there may have been potential problems with communicating the utility of ethnography (including terminological differences, uncertainty over how to read ethnography, occasional problems with clarity in what the project was recommending), the relationship with the auditor allowed for mutual learning. That is, over time the auditor could be configured (provided with instructions) as to how to read ethnography and, simultaneously, the project team could develop more suitable means for communicating ethnographic findings. The benefits of this relationship were alluded to by the HEFCE representative at the project’s final PDG meeting. He suggested that the relationship had provided a useful alternative to standard Performance Indicators.

<sup>(1)</sup> Accounting here does not merely relate to financial accounts but rather those occasions on which the project team produced various forms of report to be assessed.

<sup>(2)</sup> One development that took place over the course of the project was HEFCE’s lessening emphasis on audit. This culminated in a change of nomenclature for the HEFCE auditor who became the HEFCE administrator.





## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Themes and Recommendations

*Strategy, Project Success, Decision Making, Audit & Accountability, Utility*

### Information (and other) Strategies

Information Strategy is increasingly prevalent within British Universities. Its importance is emphasised by government reports (Dearing 1996), it is the subject of initiatives run by national funding bodies (JISC 1998) and Information Strategy Committees are run by many Universities. However for two of the EVINCE partners (in common with many other institutions), Information Strategy posed problems. One institution wanted to replace a five-year-old strategy which had never been acted upon with a more effective document. Another had a five-year-old Information Strategy Committee (ISC), which had never produced a strategy.

EVINCE drew on a well-known story from within STS to help grasp these strategic problems. Bruno Latour (1991) provides us with an analysis of the hotel room key in which a hotel manager becomes concerned that guests are going out on the town with their keys and losing them. This loss is a constant financial and security consideration for the manager. In order to ease these problems, the manager puts together a scheme that encourages guests to hand in their keys; a desk is placed by the door with a sign above it saying 'please hand in your keys.' This fails to operate in the manner the hotel manager wishes though, as people ignore the sign, cannot read the language it is written in, forget after reading the sign to follow its actions and so on. The manager comes up with a new scheme. In this, the sign and the desk remain, but in addition, the keys are given weighty metallic key-fobs. The message then becomes you can drop off this weight at the hotel desk instead of having to carry it around town. This is more successful, but still people on occasions, put the weight in their bag, decide they want to keep control of the key and so on.

Latour suggests that there remains a distance between guest and manager and so there are no guarantees the guest will stick to the path of action the hotel manager sets out. The second scheme is slightly more successful in that the weighty metallic key fobs provide stronger barriers to keep guests on the preferred course of action. This problem of distance and lack of guarantee that people will stick to the preferred course of action can help re-think strategy issues. There is:

- a distance of time: both Universities intend to produce a document now to have an intended future effect. A great deal could happen over time to render a document out of date.
- a distance of space: academic faculties often identify themselves as at the periphery of strategy processes with documents imposed upon them by central ISCs.
- a distance of action: if faculties do pick up strategies they are likely to produce different interpretations leading to simultaneous but disparate strategic actions across each University.

How to overcome these distances? Another story from STS can help think through these problematic distances. Law (1986) tells a story of Portuguese navigation. In this story, Law looks at what made the Portuguese sailing ships of the 15th and 16th Century so successful. He suggests that 'success' was the result of building durable routes from the centre (Portugal) to the periphery (the east). The Portuguese covered distances or rather transformed the distant into the proximal. They produced and controlled a range of mobile resources, documents and devices (from boats, to maps, to food storage facilities). The Portuguese made multiple complex and mundane connections not just to get somewhere, but to bring that somewhere here. The Portuguese were also expert at incorporating flexibility into their routes, making alternative ports of call where conditions favoured while retaining the connection from centre to periphery. This made Portuguese navigation routes particularly durable.

How does this then fit with the discussion of strategy? The story suggests that: The various distances of strategy could be identified (such as locally specific problems with time, space and action). Routes to incorporate distances could be considered (for example which groups could be linked together in order to ensure that a desired change in information usage can be communicated across the institution). Strategy could be considered as an on-going process of incorporation rather than just a single document (so the building of routes for communication between departments, committees (etc) can be a strategic process). The assemblage of people, technology and resources that make up those routes could be identified (this may help identifying who/which group has responsibility for information). There needs to be a flexibility about the process in which the routes, people, technology and so on can all be questioned or redirected as

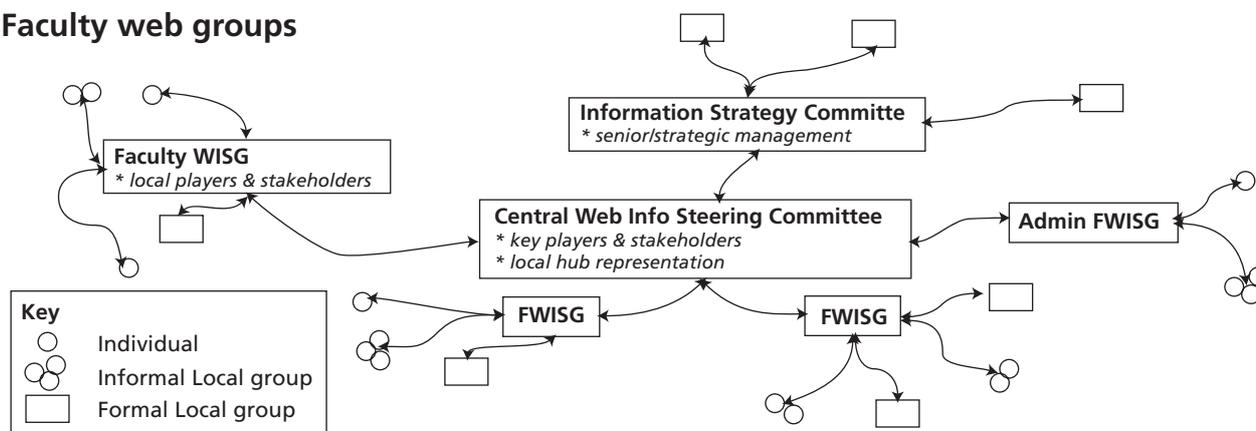
necessary within the on-going strategy process.

This can be drawn together to overcome the three types of distance highlighted previously:

1. The future is no longer distanced from the production of strategy documents; an on-going process can help diminish this problem.
2. Problematic barriers between centre and periphery can be overcome through the plaiting of complex and mundane connections between a range of social and technical resources relevant to a particular informational issue.
3. Instead of multiple interpretations of strategy documents existing in an unconnected way, the strategy process could seek to incorporate multiple interpretations as a means of moving the process along.

EVINCE has looked at how this might be enacted in both organisational groups connected from centre to periphery and in quite different project management groupings. (For further detail see: [Neyland and Surridge 2002](#)). In one EVINCE partner, web information was highlighted as a problematic area. The University developed a structure involving faculty web groups, linked to a central web group who then reported to the ISC.

### Faculty web groups



How does this link back to the analysis of distance? There are four points to be highlighted:

1. representation – each faculty has space to select representation appropriate to their locality;
2. interaction – the addition of formality provides a reporting structure, which should enable 2-way interactivity between centre and periphery;
3. flexibility – the FWISGs enable local interpretations of strategic principles (alongside the initiation of new strategic principles) to be incorporated within the on-going process ;
4. connectivity – through robust, flexible information routes. Local groups and routes for information can be promoted to increase awareness of University strategy activity.

Like the Portuguese then, the EVINCE partner has attempted to collate the people, technology and resources required for the development of robust, durable, flexible, on-going routes, in this case for web-related information strategising. These entities have been incorporated, not entirely via a central drive but also by faculty groups pushing for such strategising to be recognised.

## Summary

To overcome problematic strategic distances through the plaiting of durable routes:

- Information Strategy needs to be a process, enacted via networks, which exploit formal and informal connections between University resources – including the institution’s members and technologies.
- Networks may be established via organisational structures or projects.
- They need to be reflexive, communicative and responsive to change.
- [Information Principles](#) can provide a useful starting point.
- An action/project-based plan can be a useful tool.
- Part of the strategic development will usually require a cultural shift in terms of the perceptions, values and understanding of information and its flow.



## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Themes and Recommendations

*Strategy, Project Success, Decision Making, Audit & Accountability, Utility*

### Success and failure

Success and failure became a prominent and recurring theme of the EVINCE ethnography. While it was clear to most associated with the EVINCE project (and numerous other IT projects within HE) that success was not easy to guarantee, it also became apparent during the course of the project, that there are many available recipes which each claim to aid success in IT projects. Rather than simply add to the list of recipes (or project methodologies) or dismiss all the recipes as inappropriate, the EVINCE team sought to take a different approach to the notion of success and failure.

Utilising observations of the case studies, it was possible to produce chronologies that highlighted:

- how aspects of the case-studies were identified as successful or not
- a variety of viewpoints on the same aspects of case-studies which were differentially identified as successes or failures
- how it was possible to maintain some features of some case-studies as successes

One particular example, which proved useful as an exemplar of the complexities of success and failure, was the purchase of a University database for research information (see the research information case-study for details).

The EVINCE team were handed the remit to investigate the possibility of producing a database of University research publications. On talking to Deans of Faculty it became clear that a database of expertise might be more useful to allow for research collaboration across faculties, to encourage collaborative research with other Universities and to allow the outside world to know what expertise the University had. An expertise database would be at least as difficult to construct as a publication database: who had what expertise and how could we know and get that knowledge put into a database? It turned out through further investigation that the University already had some data about University expertise. But would it be possible to draw this data together, would it work in a single database, how many academics would such a database include and would it be possible to maintain it. Further to this, would the current owners of this information be willing to give up some ownership to produce a joint database, would this affect their role within the University, how could the current owners of information be encouraged to collaborate and what role would academics have to play within this to make the data more complete?

The ethnography highlighted a range of information owners who identified ownership as a part of their role and status within the University, as being a part of how they currently did their job. A change of technology would require a change in working practice, a change in their status and a change in how they thought about and related to University information. Further to this, it was becoming apparent that academics had a range of views about University IT projects, and particularly administrative data gathering, and had particular concerns about projects that they perceived were imposed from the centre without great regard for their views and/or their needs.

The project team attempted to sell the advantages of the new database:

- For administrators, it could cut down on their workload
- For information owners, information sharing might mean access to more, possibly enhanced, information
- For academics, it might mean more publicity, more information about funding and less administrative work.

So what would affect the likely success of the project, for whom and how might this be used to make a broader point about success and failure? A well-known story within STS is the development of the African Bush Pump (see de Laet and Mol 2000). The project team used this story in order to highlight an alternative means of thinking about the issues raised by the ethnography.

The African bush pump story involves four stages:

- Identification of the problem – the production of a version of a problem, which can be transported to various groups and identified in the same way by each group (the need for clean water delivered in a cost-effective, clean, efficient manner to remote villages spread across huge distances in Africa).
- Identification of the entities involved – the various resources, people and places that are required to share a recognition of the problem (a pump, water sources, a company to build pumps, drills, villagers, etc).
- Enrolment of entities – tying these entities into a solution producing situation, involving working with entities to establish what their roles currently are and what they might need to be in the future (the pump can provide clean water if used correctly, it can make the villages more sustainable).
- Mobilisation – establishing a series of social and technical allies who can move from the centre to a range of locations where the technology and use of the technology will be enacted. The allies provide technical maintenance, but also maintenance of the cultural understanding of the technology, what it can do, how it can be used and so on (villagers can, overtime, be encouraged to take control of maintaining the pumps and maintaining their use, but may need some support initially in adopting new usage patterns into their existing ways of life).

The EVINCE team used these four stages to investigate how we could get agreement on a single problem and who this agreement would need to involve, how we could enrol these entities into a solution producing situation and then how we might move from that group of enrolled entities across the University. This may sound straightforward, but firstly it has taken several attempts to get various groups to recognise the problem. Secondly, it has taken several attempts to sufficiently enrol entities into the solution producing situation and maintaining that enrolment has proven difficult. Uncovering all the relevant information owners, users and providers of information took several months of meetings. Thirdly, the mobilisation phase of the database, promoting the database to academics in their departments, encouraging them to keep the database up to date, encouraging them to use the information and maintain all these processes is only just beginning now. This has taken an amount of time as our first attempt at enrolment failed; the various entities verbally agreed to perform new roles, but this tacit agreement was not translated into practice.

## Summary

So the EVINCE project has used this ethnographic exemplar to highlight the difficulties of success and failure in IT projects. These difficulties have then been analysed using a well-known study from STS. This analysis has not produced another success or failure recipe to add to the list. The analysis has not attempted to dismiss all attempts at producing recipes either. Instead, the EVINCE team have highlighted that:

- Success and failure are not decided in any single time or place.
- Success and failure are contingent and on-going features of projects.
- One means to approach this on-going and contingent phenomenon is through the four step story.
- This story can be utilised as an aid to thinking through the complexity of success and failure.
- It may even be compatible with several of the recipes suggested by more conventional project management methodologies.



## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Themes and recommendations

*Strategy, Project Success, Decision Making, Audit & Accountability, Utility*

### Decision Making

How do Universities make decisions? Is it possible to say there are particular ways in which Universities should make decisions? During the course of the EVINCE ethnography, it has been almost universally agreed that decision-making is a difficult and messy area. It is difficult to pin down particular, single moments of decision, instead decisions are best approached as a kind of process. However, in looking at differing types of University processes that involve moments of decision the ethnography highlighted 23 broad categories:

- Committees making decisions
- Committees rubber-stamping decisions
- Responsibility taken by a group
- Responsibility given to a group
- Deciding on a working party
- Fait accompli
- Re-performing previous decisions and accountability trails
- Audit and avoiding responsibility
- Decisions made through demonstrable ignorance
- Uncertainty in accounts
- Deferral tactics and strategies
- Senior manoeuvres
- Championing change/policy
- Strategy implications/implementation
- Policy decisions
- The deployment of rhetoric
- Unknown and ambiguous decisions
- Multi-stage decision making
- Uncertainty over number of processes
- Accumulating sufficient resources to a proposal
- Shifting responsibility externally
- Gather momentum together in centre
- Go mobile and gain a distributed momentum

The management literature on decision-making does not provide a great deal more focus. On J-Stor, a search of business journals reveals 2007 articles on decision-making written between 1995 and 2002. The top 200 of these articles, ranked by Highest Score, reveal an enormous variety of subjects for analysis. A sample of 20 of the articles from the top 200 featured 56 further ways of approaching decision-making. Indeed such is the messiness of decision making that the business literature has moved away from the area in recent years. Only 56 of the 2007 articles were written between 2000 and 2002, the other 1951 were from 1995-1999. Leadership, strategy and accountability have become far more popular subjects and have subsumed some of the themes the 2007 decision making articles touch upon.

Some of the themes touched upon include:

- Co-operation, incorporation and collaboration in decision making (McCaffrey, Faerman and Hart 1995 and Collins 1995).
- Leadership in decision making (Denison, Hooijberg and Quinn 1995).
- On-going pragmatism that delivers advantages for organisations (Mosakowski 1997).
- Taking into account various contextual elements (Langley, Mintzberg, Pitcher, Posada and Saint-Macary 1995).
- Accountability as implicated in decision making (Cooke et al 1995).

So where does this leave work on decision-making? How to make a decision about decision-making? It is possible to produce some generalised themes, which are frequently considered to be good management practice in relation to decision-making.

These include:

- Incorporating many people for a more democratic process.
- Leadership (both in choosing a course of action and seeing it through).

- Pragmatism (being flexible in the implementation of decisions according to things which arise).
- Context (taking into account particular current pertinent features of organisations and not trying to change the world).
- Responsibility, accountability and transparency (and making people aware of these).

However, as positive and beneficial as these ideas might appear, it is equally easy to negatively implicate them:

- Incorporating many people's ideas can lead to endless drift and deferral (although these are also occasionally highlighted as beneficial).
- Leadership can be misplaced or misdirected if the wrong course of action is driven through and this can contradict incorporation. Which is preferred democracy or dictatorship?
- Pragmatism may lead to constant change without an overall idea of likely future destination.
- Should context be brought into decisions or should decisions improve context – this is a difficult decision in itself.
- Responsibility, accountability and transparency can be draconian and don't necessarily do what they claim.

So what can we say about decision-making? It is difficult, messy and unpredictable and, rather than spend a great deal of time learning 79 different schools of thought on decision making, it is better to spend time developing an understanding of how the organisation operates locally. This can enable:

- The development of appropriate communication infrastructures suited to local aspects of the organisation.
- These can afford members of the organisation opportunities and knowledge to participate in processes of decision making.
- While retaining local leadership which should aim to drive on with decisions through communicative structures.
- Participants in the communicative structures can in turn hold the local leaders to account in cases where decision directions appear inappropriate and leaders can hold participants to account.

The [EVINCE decision-making work](#) uses the committee papers case study to explore these ideas in practice.

## Summary

Such an approach to decision making is intended to act as a flexible guide to on-going work, not a strict set of rules to be followed. The approach can be summarised in the following 3 recommendations:

- De-emphasise the importance for organisations of single moments of decision making.
- Approach decisions as aspects of long-term and interconnected processes.
- All recommendations need to be considered in line with local organisational practice.



## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Themes and Recommendations

*Strategy, Project Success, Decision Making, Audit & Accountability, Utility*

### **Audit and Accountability**

Audit has become prevalent throughout UK Universities and in associated institutions including funding bodies, and in local and national government. There are messages from central government about the need for greater transparency of processes and greater responsibility for action. Subsequently there is pressure from funding bodies for HEIs to be seen as audited, and for HEIs to be accountable and held to account. EVINCE is not exempt from this (see 'EVINCE, audit and accountability'). These pressures have resulted in the development and deployment of an increasing number of auditing practices and performances. Examples include internal and external audits, environmental audits, strategic audits, research assessment exercises (RAE), teaching quality assessments (TQA), information audits, value for money audits, and HEFCE sponsored research into 'best practice'. These exercises are consequential in social and cultural, as well as financial, terms.

Given the potential significance of these consequences (and the frequency with which the EVINCE project in various ways entered into audit and accountability practices) the project team decided they needed to know more about how audit and accountability operated in practice. Using experiences drawn from the project ethnography it was possible to conclude that:

- Firstly, audit and accountability processes are remarkably messy, contingent and uncertain. Many of the audit and accountability activities of the EVINCE project case studies were characterised by confusion, a lack of available standardised procedures, and making up processes as we went along. In particular, there were no clearly available mechanisms for making ourselves accountable or for establishing our accountability.
- Secondly, the identity of relevant audiences was both unclear and seemed to keep shifting. Even at those occasional moments where a stable audience identity could be established, audience expectations remained unclear or contradictory. As a result it was hard to judge what should or should not be included, say, in a report that might later be audited.
- Thirdly, the extent of each of these preceding difficulties varied over the course of the project. The relevance of any specific audience or constituency seemed to come and go.

### **Summary**

So, in concert with the (varying) expectation that we might at some future point be taken to task for the adequacy of our reports and recommendations was the realisation that the identity of our potential assessors was unclear and changing. Recognition of this fluidity in audit and accountability practices seems absent from frequent proclamations of the necessity of transparency, of audit increasing responsibility and of accountability regimes offering a check on resource usage and misuse.

- Transparency, rather than offering a window on organisational practices, often puts in place a regime of accountability which requires the production of accounts for the purposes of the transparency exercise (rather than for the on-going practices of the tasks at hand in an organisation).
- The production of reports to be held to account is a creative and uncertain process. Items are selected for reports, which it is hoped, will succeed on the terms of the accountability exercise, but there can be no certainty of success.
- As EVINCE has demonstrated, it might be possible to use ethnographic reporting methods to get closer to the activities of an organisation if that is the desired goal of transparency activity.





## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Themes and recommendations

*Strategy, Project Success, Decision Making, Audit & Accountability, Utility*

### Utility

What is the utility of the EVINCE approach and how is this utility assessed? British Universities are increasingly scrutinised through the rubric of accountability relations established by government funding bodies and EVINCE is no exception. Research, teaching and learning, university management and administration are all expected to engage with accountability assessments. These accountability assessments require that specific utility claims are produced and negotiated with funders (in this case, the HEFCE Good Management Practice Programme). The EVINCE project then forms one example of an increasing number of HE-utility assessments. So what claims to utility value does EVINCE make, how are these accounted for and with what results?

Current social science research features a range of claims to utility value:

- There are claims made that work has policy relevance (such as Weiss and Bucuvalas 1980, Wagner, Weiss, Wittrock and Wollman 1991 and Weiss, 1986)
- Other research claims to have political value (see for example Pels 1996, Winner 1993, and Smith 2001)
- Further enhancing public understanding can also form a utility claim (see particularly the work of Michael 2002)
- User orientation forms a fourth area for claims to utility (see Du Gay and Salaman 1992, Shove and Rip 2000 and Gibbons 2000)

However, none of these seems to match the EVINCE project. Simmons and Walker (2000) help introduce a further notion of utility by arguing that “policy oriented social science research almost invariably involves an on-going process of negotiation and mutual construction of what constitutes ‘relevant’ or ‘usable’ knowledge,” (2000:193). Rappert (1997) when talking of collaborative research suggests that “rather than being a rational, well defined process of meeting specific needs, collaborations are better seen as processes in which goals, needs, and the criteria for quality are negotiated,” (1997:7). This suggests that decisions on utility might be the result of an on-going negotiation where the terms of the negotiation are established in order to produce a claim and a corroboration of utility.

In this case, what were the utility claims which EVINCE made, how were these negotiated and with what results? EVINCE developed a range of outputs around the ethnographic themes of Information Strategy, Audit and Accountability, Success and Failure and Decision Making. The project team suggested these were of utility value. These claims to utility were made through EVINCE’s close relationship with its local partner sites and its on-going relationship with the project’s HEFCE auditor (see ‘EVINCE, audit and accountability’). Rather than an on-going production of Performance Indicators, working in conjunction to produce the themes with both the partners involved in the project (to ensure local relevance) and in conjunction with our HEFCE auditor (to ensure wider relevance) reinforced the utility value of the themes.

But how were these claims of value assessed? A little like decision making, assessment did not occur in one time or place, but rather through the relationships EVINCE established with HEFCE, local partners and particular user constituencies (eg, UCISA, AUA, SCONUL). These relationships enabled not just the delivery of EVINCE accounts and reports to particular audiences, but a mutual learning process. HEFCE were, over time, enabled to see the benefits of EVINCE ethnography while the project team also learnt of HEFCE’s own particular interests. Local partners were quick to comment on our preliminary findings, were keen to put these to use and these uses fed back into the project. Conference audiences too, were offered an informative set of findings and were offered the opportunity to engage with the findings, feeding back suggestions of their own. These relationships ensured a value-continuity in EVINCE deliverables.

## Summary

- EVINCE has not produced conventional Performance Indicators in order to demonstrate its utility as it was not clear that these were relevant for the EVINCE approach.
- Instead EVINCE has established relationships with HEFCE, with local partners and with user constituencies
- EVINCE has also emphasised the range of different dissemination audiences and relationships the project has established.
- These relationships have enabled the initiation of a two-way learning process. In this the EVINCE team have delivered reports and papers, gained feedback, used feedback for further reports and fostered opportunities for dynamic learning experiences.



## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Case studies

*Committee Papers, Reading Lists, Research Information*

### Committee Papers

This Group, with members from the Universities of Reading and Southampton, aims to

- investigate how the institutions handle documents, in terms of structure, storage and archiving, and distribution.
- use appropriate pilot schemes as a route to developing more established practices. Pilots employing elements that are both sustainable (eg beyond the EVINCE project life) and transferable.
- investigate how document handling affects the effectiveness and efficiency of committees, and to what extent the introduction of IT can provide an agent of broader change (for good or bad).
- evaluate the relationship between information handling and management, and institutional management.

### Establishing the Scope and Plan

This case study began with a deceptively simple title and initial remit of “committee papers on-line”. It developed via observation, participation and co-ordination across a variety of largely independent sub-project activities at the two institutions.

This commentary provides a review of the project’s initial aims and objectives, an outline of some key issues involved, a brief synopsis of each sub-project that emerged, and a summary of the lessons learned, including a generic functional specification derived from those lessons.

With a range of independent projects, with varying aims, and a set of issues already emerging, it was difficult to produce an overall scope, aim and objectives. Instead, drawing on the emerging issues, the group set some:

Targets:

- to identify key issues for committee functioning and use of IT
- to produce a functional specification for IT
- to produce a staff development specification

And areas to explore:

- archiving meeting notes and papers
- distributing & tracking changes on working papers
- pursuing (committee) debate via e-means

### Projects and Pilots

#### Southampton

At Southampton there was a project about to begin, and an informal agenda regarding committee papers and working practices, and an awareness of the potential impact development of IT support might offer:

**Southampton Senate papers** The direct cost of distributing Senate papers, usually a large set of

papers to a large membership, for whom much of the paperwork was not directly relevant, had been calculated to be in excess of £5k per annum. A previous initiative concerning committee papers had already identified AIMS, an in-house IT application, as an appropriate means of managing such activity. And Senate had agreed to a pilot distribution of its papers via the WWW. Implementation was set for December 2000.

With clear leadership from the top, including the Senate secretariat, the work was undertaken and the pilot took place. The project also had the advantage of a clear objective (reducing the central printing costs), and clearly de-limited scope (of simply distributing the papers, not archiving them, managing working papers, extending to other committees, nor developing ways of e-working). The design handled the “Restricted Agenda” via passwords, and enabled all University members to see (unrestricted) papers. Senate members were given opportunity to comment - the consequent distributed printing costs were briefly discussed, and a request for download to PC as well as printer was quickly met, to enable acceptance of e-distribution as the on-going working practice.

**Southampton Committees** Prior to EVINCE, Southampton had addressed the question of committee websites more generally, in terms of publishing and archiving papers. This had come to an impasse largely because of the political questions concerning issues such as timing of publication and the (explicit) extent of access. Staff changes also reduced the likelihood of a re-visit. However, toward the end of EVINCE, this work was revived, and a pilot system initiated. The aims were necessarily broader than the Senate project, and concerned with increasing the visibility of university committees to the internal audience. The initial priority is the practicalities of enabling committee secretaries to use the system ahead of issues to do with archiving and search. At the time of writing, the project is in initial stages, with a website designed to demonstrate the committee

structure and interaction, and tools developed to make collection and publication of meeting papers as straightforward as possible.

## Reading

At Reading there was an identified pilot committee, a potential short-term project and an initial Reading working party. Providing a useful contrast to the Southampton project, there was an emphasis on archive and search functions ahead of papers' distribution, to address concerns about the storage of paperwork, and the difficulties of finding relevant papers once they were filed.

**Reading Committee of Deans** had been identified as an initial pilot, because it generates a lot of paperwork, which is often required post-meeting to confirm decisions agreed: Senior managers are advised that they will need three filing cabinets to hold all the committee paperwork generated during their term of office. Alongside the consequent space issues are the difficulties of locating specific items, and tracking down items from committee activities prior to arrival in office. An electronic archive would both remove the need to retain paperwork post-meeting, and should provide adequate search facilities.

Unfortunately, there have been clear disadvantages of selecting this committee, including the sensitive nature of some of the material, restricting access by the EVINCE Team; the complexity of the meetings and papers, and the relatively high level IT skills required to publish papers using the available technology. While a pilot site has been developed, and appropriate search tools investigated, it proved impossible to keep the site up-to-date. It has also been difficult to gain sufficient access to encourage take-up of the resources available by committee members. The work, however, has provided valuable input to the functional requirements of such a site, and prepared the way for future development should additional (technology) resourcing be available.

**Reading Committees** to supplement the work with the Committee of Deans, EVINCE approached two committees, where access was already available, to also become pilots within the case study. These agreed, and websites have been developed and used by the committees. Currently the available tools remain cumbersome for the committee secretaries, and given the quantity of material for each meeting, one committee has chosen to continue hard-copy distribution of papers, using the website as an archive and means of promoting their activities more widely across the University. Both committees find the website useful, and have had to develop ways of working to take advantage of the potential. This has provided useful lessons, both as to the flexibility there needs to be within a University system, and to the tools needed, and the issues a committee may need to address as to how it can make best use of the facilities.

## Reading Effectiveness of Council Working Party

a final area of activity within this case study concerned a small, short-term working group, with a specific task to complete. The group included remote, non-University members, and there was a desire to work electronically so as to reduce the number of physical meetings required, and to ensure the work could be completed adequately in the time scales set. Rather than using a website, this involved use of an e-mailing list and exchange of working documents. Once again, a clearly de-limited scope to achieve a single purpose enabled the group to take advantage of relatively simple tools to meet their need. The group achieved their targets, in the timescales, and felt that the e-working had increased the between-meeting work to a discernable degree, aiding their success.

## What we learned – Institutions, Committees, Secretaries and Technologies

Key questions include: Who should have access to what information, via what gatekeeping process, and when

Priorities (which vary between institutions & committees):

- papers distribution or archiving
- e-administration or e-working
- administration or promotion

Other concerns:

- ownership, gate-keeping & (secretarial) role
- papers' content and style
- committee discipline and working practices

These lessons have been used to derive a [functional requirement](#) for on-line committee papers.

It is also clear that putting these materials on-line needs to form part of a more general records management policy and information strategy, especially in light of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## Rollout Plans – Where are we now?

Both Reading and Southampton continue to develop these activities, currently with the added impetus of the Freedom of Information Act, which requires clear publication and access processes alongside a formal records management policy. Both institutions will probably have to look at the potential for serious investment in more specific technologies to manage the complexity committee papers entail, and the work so far has provided useful input in terms of identifying key issues (aside from the technology) and a functional requirement.



## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Case studies

*Committee Papers, Reading Lists, Research Information*

### Reading Lists

This Group, with members from the Universities of Reading and Southampton, and Brunel University, aims to investigate and evaluate processes for managing information directing students to course-related resources, developing and encouraging changes in practice so as to improve the efficacy of these activities for all groups of users.

The Reading List Group (RLG) was the one EVINCE case study group with partners from three institutions, the one which stated a common aim, and the one which looked likely to try the same technology across all three partners. In July 2001, the partnership was reduced to two institutions, when Brunel University decided to withdraw as an active partner in consequence of the Library's internal re-structuring.

### Initial Remit

EVINCE began with a remit to put reading lists on-line, an apparently straight-forward task, especially since many reading lists are produced via word processors, the introduction of VLEs provides resource list sections and library catalogue systems offer means of managing such data.

However, as library staff are usually well aware, "reading lists" cover a wide range of practices, managed (more or less) in a variety of ways, and often without cognisance by academics of the central library need for the information, ideally before students receive it, in order to manage the resources students will need to use.

Early activities included investigating current practice elsewhere in the HE sector - within and beyond the UK; refinement of "putting reading lists on-line" to provide an agreed project scope and aims, and setting up the steering group (to include academic, student and supplier representation as well as library and learning support staff).

### Reviewing Practice in the Partners, the UK and beyond

From the outset this was seen as a key activity. Alongside regular reports from partner sites, including interviews with QA departments, and from the bookshop representative, a number of reports were initiated, and circulated ([EVINCE RLG papers](#)).

This work indicated a variety of practice, using in-house systems (on paper and on-line), library systems applications, and simple tools such as spreadsheets. It also demonstrated the rapid developments in the availability and supply of electronic resources - within the sector and from commercial concerns.

It was also clear, that management and maintenance of reading list information across institutions remains a largely unachieved aim.

### Establishing the Aims, Objectives and Initial Plan

The scope, including aims and objectives, was established by July and October 2000. Alongside the (Library) need for aggregated management information, the agreed scope attempted to incorporate the use of reading lists as a means of encouraging the development of good teaching (and learning) practice, for both teacher and learner benefit. This was seen as particularly relevant in a context where use of IT in teaching and learning is being heavily encouraged by government and institutions.

Maintaining a balance between these competing needs, and within the technology available, has proved a difficult task. Currently it looks likely that a hybrid model, using various tools to accommodate the variety of reading list styles and the sometimes conflicting needs for discipline-appropriate, student centred, and aggregated management information, will be needed.

An initial outline plan was drawn up in January 2001, concentrating on the first activity of assessing current and recent activity across the sector. This plan has been developed and re-drawn during both subsequent summers (2001 and 2002) in the light of technology and piloting experiences. It has proved difficult to operate according to agreed plans throughout the project. In part this is because technology has not provided the expected answers, as outlined below. In part, it is because it has taken longer to establish the detailed working practices of academics preparing reading lists, and the required functionality to meet associated needs. Perhaps in part this is also because the work has largely been viewed as an "EVINCE case study" rather than an institution-initiated project with local implementation and operational targets. In addition, while corporate management of reading lists has long been an intractable problem faced by library staff, the issues, including timely provision of listed texts to students, are not so well recognised by other stakeholders.

## Establishing and Maintaining the Group

There was early agreement to include a wide representation of stakeholders. The first academic staff, from the lead site, attended the third group meeting in January 2001, and reports were brought from academic departments at the other partner institutions. From May 2001 an academic took on chairing the group, increasing the representation and involvement of this group. Academic pilot subjects, at both remaining partner sites, have contributed useful feedback.

Nonetheless, library staff have been the main players within the project. Investigation beyond the partner sites has (necessarily) centred on library activities, and library staff have led in terms of investigating current activities and in defining the functional requirements. This may indicate that the interest in and need for improved reading list management is felt most keenly within libraries, where it is recognised as a means of providing better student access to reading list materials. A means that is perhaps not as well recognised, appreciated or as highly prioritised by academics and students.

## Creating a Functional Requirement

Following investigation of current practice, and some initial exploration of the types of IT application that had and might be used to manage reading lists, it became apparent that a clearer specification of the functional needs was required. The resulting [functional specification](#) identified different stakeholders and their associated needs. It also noted the requirement for any developments to be managed alongside, and integrated with, other technologies and activities, such as the student record system, virtual and managed learning environments, and library systems. This again highlighted the need for such IT developments to be addressed within a strategic context.

## Piloting Technology

We were drawn to the possibilities of using reference managers in the construction of reading lists because: the technology seemed to meet many of the functional requirements; the technology is familiar to some potential users, and because reference managers can also be used for other academic and administrative activities. There was also the potential for use of reference managers to aid development of student key skills and academic literacy – adding pedagogic aspects to managing reading lists in this way. This coincided with the availability of Endnote site licences and an application to publish such libraries via the web, and led to a small pilot involving four academics across the two institutions.

The piloting provided some useful insights to reading list production. These included the need for reading lists provide additional information, such as time-tabling, key topics and assignments. It also highlighted the difficulties of composing lists via single items. However, it did not produce a satisfactory means of developing a system for on-line reading lists. In part the technology failed, when the supplier withdrew the publication software because it had proved unstable; and in part Endnote without additional tools was not adequate for reading list production.

Using the lessons learnt, we were able to make an initial evaluation of two more new products, and identify ways of working which may meet the shortfalls of our previous pilot. The partners are now moving to more independent piloting and implementation. At Southampton, Reading List Direct is about to be trialled, and at Reading, Reading List Direct will be piloted alongside WriteNote. We anticipate retaining contact so as to compare experiences as the projects progress.

### Lessons Learnt

“Reading Lists” comprise a range of complex activities and information provision, for several stakeholder groups including students, academic and administrative staff, library staff and suppliers.

While reading list data aggregated across modules and courses could provide a valuable resource to aid library management of stock (in terms of delivery options and loan periods as well as acquisitions), this potential is not often recognised beyond the library community.

Reading (or resource) lists could provide a means of exploring the use of IT in teaching and learning, especially in the area of key skills, academic literacy and (reducing) plagiarism. This may provide a greater motivation for academics to try new ways of working.

There are a number of technologies available to aid reading list management, but they usually imply heavy (library) staff resource. It is especially important to assess maintenance costs.

Reading list developments need to be managed alongside other teaching and learning developments, especially where virtual or managed learning environments are being developed.



## What we have learned from the project and disseminated Case studies

*Committee Papers, Reading Lists, Research Information*

### Research information

This Group aims to initiate an 'Expertise Directory', providing academic staff profiles in a partitioned, secure, on-line environment. Alongside search and browse access for internal and external audiences, individuals and departments will be able to edit the database information.

To facilitate updating of on-line information, support services for data access and editing will form part of the project's remit.

### Initial Remit

Partly borne out of the effort required to build RAe (Research Assessment Exercise) 2000 returns, the original case study was to "put University publications on-line". However, this apparently limited scope and relatively simple requirement became ever more complex and difficult to de-limit and define.

### Exploring the Project Scope

Initially, the EVINCE team met with key stakeholders at the two sites, to establish what was in place, and what was required. It quickly became clear that, especially now the immediate pressure of the 2000 RAe return had been met, University publications was not the current central concern at either partner site.

At Southampton, the major concern was to establish more comprehensive management information concerning all research activities - not just publications. However, with the arrival of a new VC and change of staff in key roles, priorities and time scales on this activity changed, and there has been insufficient activity available to external EVINCE observation and participation.

At Reading, the interest was to develop an existing directory of expertise for media enquiries, so as to meet a wider range of corporate needs, including matching of expertise to funding opportunities. EVINCE has tried to co-ordinate, and to participate in and observe activities, across a range of offices and services within this area. The following commentary outlines some of the key events and activities with which we have been involved.

Given the different emphasis, priority and timetables, the work in this area has been carried out in parallel at the two institutions, with EVINCE providing a reporting mechanism between them.

### Establishing and Maintaining the Group(s)

In order to clarify objectives and priorities, and initiate activities, we attempted to build a group representing the key stakeholders. Initially this

was attempted across the two institutions, but as it became clear that the interests of the institutions were quite distinct, we moved to work with a group at each site.

**At Reading** our group comprised research support (who maintained a funding bids database) and the information office (which already maintained a directory of experts available to respond to media enquiries), a Dean, and an academic who was championing one of the University's research initiatives. We also involved library staff, able to advise on potential bibliographic and thesauri sources, and administrative staff - those who produce the annual (hard copy) report of University publications, and those able to provide staff and contact information updates.

Having established wide ranging interest in construction of a more complete directory of expertise, which in part would include some of the data already held by each member of our group, we discovered a wide range of requirements for such data, and a significant concern that the data already held should not be compromised by sharing or re-creating a more comprehensive system. At the same time, having also identified some discontent amongst academic departments at their perception of duplicated information requests, we wanted to ensure any replication between existing systems was reduced.

Maintaining these groups, and any sense of cohesion between the various agendas and systems has proved difficult. It has also proved difficult to avoid EVINCE being seen as (yet) another autonomous data gathering activity in this arena, a misconception which, at times, has resulted in EVINCE being outside relevant activities. To try and address all these issues, and recognising the need for a flexible approach, we have moved from the conception of a single database for all, to a system of datasets with information flowing between them. The aim is to fulfil various administrative, information and management needs by ensuring a flow of update information. This should enhance data holdings of individual offices while limiting, as far as possible, the number of update requests made to academic units and individuals.

At **Southampton**, our contacts were within the planning department, which also reported wider interests and activities, and noted the key committees involved in scoping ideas. Given the sensitive nature of the data involved, direct access to the stakeholders remained difficult, and, as noted above, priorities for this activity were largely taken over by events within a few months of EVINCE work beginning. A resurgence of activity in this area has been reported to the EVINCE team, but this was after completion of EVINCE data gathering.

## Evaluating Technology

A number of technologies and services addressing these issues are available, and keenly marketed. During the course of this case study, EVINCE was asked to evaluate a collection of potential tools. This has generated a schema of evaluation parameters and application types, which may be of value to others considering how IT might be used to support research information initiatives. In brief key headings were:

### Functions

- Provision of funding opportunities data
- Means of capturing expertise data (eg self-completion web form)
- Inclusion of RAe-specific records and quality control
- Matching of expertise and funding opportunities
- Support tools for:
  - research bidding process
  - management of funded accounts & activities
  - exploitation of research output and IPR
  - aggregating research management information

### Technical features

- In-house or externally hosted service
- Fixed or variable data/record structures
- Support for existing data import and export
- Ease of use for individual update tools
- Reporting opportunities
- Access control and security issues
- Development and on-going support
- Costs - setup, maintenance, development, consultancy and customisation

A purchase was made, but in the light of limited take-up, more recent and improved products, and a growing research support remit, has been since superseded. This underlines the need to ensure future transferability of data.

## Faculty Research Planning Database

During the final few months of EVINCE, another group has emerged: As a consequence of a restructuring of academic units into larger schools, and the associated planning cycles being put into place, a faculty, aware of EVINCE interests in the area of research information, began looking at collection of research planning information. EVINCE was invited to participate. This has widened the scope of research information even more, while providing an avenue via which we may be better able to marshal and encourage data gathering for more central purposes.

## University publications – starting again?

As part of working to a new model, with a system of information resources rather than a single comprehensive database, University publications has again become a single issue. Drawing on work within the reading list case study, and a commonality of IT, we are currently developing ways of working with reference managers (Endnote and WriteNote) to better manage collection, aggregation and (on-line and hardcopy) publication of University of Reading publications. As well as offering a means of populating some research expertise datasets, this approach offers the potential of encouraging takeup of a technology which has wide application within research, and teaching and learning practice as well as administration.

## Lessons learnt

- identify key stakeholders, and their needs and concerns
- establish and maintain [stakeholder enrolment](#) to a clearly specified project or activity
- ensure on-going support of collaborations between individuals, offices and departments
- allow fluidity – eg working to integrate existing datasets rather than combine them into a single database; recognising when it is time to move onto a new solution.
- clear, top-level direction as to current and potential project scope and objectives is essential
- work within the strategic context



## How we have disseminated ...and Responses

### Introduction

EVINCE has aroused interest in a range of audiences, including HE administrators, senior managers and information professionals, public and private sector managers and IT professionals, and academics. This has enabled a broad spread of dissemination at a range of conferences, and publications, encompassing both academic and practitioner journals. The details are listed below.

A website has been maintained throughout the project, and has been re-launched at its completion, with additional material describing the project and its case studies, and including a variety of outputs. The Executive Report has extensive references to further material available on this website, and the on-line version includes dynamic links. A brief outline of website contents, and usage data is given below.

Through individual responses to our work, we have also established a number of productive relationships, which are also outlined below.

### Publications

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (2003) 'Information Strategy Stories – Evolving a Dynamic Strategy Process' (AUA Perspectives)

D. Neyland and S. Woolgar (2002) 'Accountability in Action? The case of a database purchasing decision' (British Journal of Sociology, Vol 53 (2), pp 259-274)

### Conference Papers and Workshops

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (April 2003) 'Strategy - What's the use?' (AUA Annual Conference, Derby)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (April 2003) 'Do universities work?' (AUA Annual Conference, Derby)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (March 2003) 'High Speed EVINCE' (BCS, Reading)

D. Neyland and S. Woolgar (November 2002) 'Who Are You Calling An Actant? Issues of utility surrounding Science and Technology Studies' (4S Conference, Milwaukee, USA)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (September 2002) 'You can lead a horse to water...Success and Failure in IT Projects' (HUMANE Conference, Exeter)

D. Neyland and S. Woolgar (July/August 2002) 'Accountability in Action? The case of a database purchasing decision' (EASST Conference, York)

C. SurrIDGE (June 2002) 'Information Strategy - An Essential Navigational Tool?' (UKOLN Institutional Web Managers' Workshop, Strathclyde)

D. Neyland (June 2002) 'EVINCE Part One: Building A Method To Capture IT Culture' and 'EVINCE Part Two: Information Strategy Stories – Evolving a Dynamic Strategy Process' (EUNIS Conference, Porto, Portugal)

C. SurrIDGE (June 2002) 'Information, Communications and Technology – Who do you need to know?' (94 Group 'Best Practice for Senior Management through Inter-Institution Collaboration', Bath)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (May 2002) 'High Speed EVINCE' (HEFCE GMP Conference, Sheffield Hallam)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (April 2002) 'Information Strategy – Mapping or Reaching for Stars?' (SCONUL Conference, Cambridge)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (April 2002) ‘Strategy – An essential navigational tool?’ (AUA Annual Conference, Southampton)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (April 2002) ‘Technology - Always a Tide of Change?’ (AUA Annual Conference, Southampton)

D. Neyland (March 2002) ‘The Contest Of Information Strategy: Utilising Alternative Approaches To Produce ‘Good’ ‘Management’ Practice’ (Strategy World Congress, Oxford)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (March 2002) ‘You can lead a horse to water... Success and Failure in IT Projects’ (UCISA Management Conference, London)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (November 2001) ‘Reach for the Stars. Strategy and IT Professionals Navigating the Future’ (UCISA MISG Conference, Sutton Coldfield)

D. Neyland and C. SurrIDGE (November 2001) ‘An Introduction to EVINCE - using ethnography to evaluate IT-related change’ (OU Library Research Seminar programme)

D. Neyland (November 2001) ‘Who Wants A University Information Strategy? Antagonism, Scepticism and Champions of Change’ (4S, Boston, USA)

## Website

The website was set up prior to the official start of the project, and has been regularly maintained throughout. It is our main on-going means of publicising EVINCE activities and outputs, and the re-launched site will remain in place beyond the end of the project.

Year	2000		2001			2002				2003	
Hits a quarter	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2
EVINCE Directory	1014	3737	10524	20336	15983	14360	18871	25829	26617	19095	25158
EVINCE Home	136	221	225	267	424	297	502	630	505	449	377
Committees Dir	–	–	–	–	–	105	121	148	102	121	122
NIPP	–	–	–	116	168	141	65	97	101	90	102
SCITTL	–	–	–	–	–	523	56	90	92	103	108

Notes:

- 1 The EVINCE site was re-structured and re-vamped during Summer 2001, and re-launched July 2003.
- 2 The committee sites were produced during June, November and December 2001.
- 3 The EVINCE-directories row indicates the total number of hits across all EVINCE pages
- 4 EVINCE-home indicates the number of hits on the home page.

It is difficult to draw many conclusions from web statistics, partly because the content of the site has changed during the project life-cycle and partly because during periods of development many hits may be those of the EVINCE Team. However, it seems fair to suggest that take-up has gradually grown throughout most of the project. More detailed figures suggest that conference presentations have usually preceded major increases in the number of hits, and we have also noted that the most popular page has usually been the “Overview”, with “Narratives” (now called “Outputs”) a close second.

The main sections provide:

- Overview of the project, including this report
- Case study commentaries, including various “Products” such as the Information Principles, Functional Requirements and samples
- Outputs describing the ideas surrounding the five main EVINCE issues (Information (and other) Strategies, Project Success (and failure), Decision Making, Audit and Accountability, and Utility) and including presentation summaries and papers.

For a map, see the website sheet within this report.

## ...and Responses

We have made a number of useful contacts at various times during the project, some of the key enquiries and on-going relationships include:

- Oxford-Brookes University  
have expressed keen interest in the EVINCE methodology, especially as a means of evaluating implementation of their information strategy. This has led to bids for funding and on-going contact re information strategy and other common developments.
- [GMP22 - BPSMP](#), 94 Group at the University of Essex  
contacted us and asked for input to their senior managers course in respect of IT and information awareness for HEI senior managers.
- [BECTA](#)  
includes information strategy high on its agenda, and we have been asked to provide a case study from EVINCE work for the BECTA website.
- [GMP201](#), University of Luton  
has also requested a case study summary for their website's virtual university.
- [HUMANE](#) members  
were very interested in the notion of "Information Principles", as developed and discussed by EVINCE.
- UCL  
contacted us for advice as they were evaluating the issues surrounding the introduction of a document management system.
- University of Pisa  
wanted to know more about the possibility of using our project success work as a methodology, alongside more conventional methodologies, during planning and implementation of a large-scale project. This discussion has encouraged us to develop the case study commentary to suggest ways the project success work might be applied.

## Within the EVINCE project a range of participants have made the following contributions:

- HEFCE  
**Pramod Philip,**  
"The EVINCE project was funded under the first (2000) round of bids to the HEFCE Good Management Practice (GMP) programme. Information Technology systems implementations too often concentrate on the technology and overlook how well the technology serves its users. EVINCE took an unusual approach - ethnography - for its work. HEFCE believes the findings of GMP projects need to be shared with the sector, and we have encouraged dissemination activities. We congratulate the EVINCE team for producing several papers and giving many, well received, seminars to higher education professionals in the UK."
- **University of Reading**  
**Annette Haworth, Director of Information Services,**  
**EVINCE Project Direction Group member and fundholder**  
'The IT worked, the project was a mess'.  
Is there something about the university environment which engenders, if not complete failure, at least delay and unpleasantness? ESRC's VirtualSociety? Programme indicated some possible ways of getting to grips with this embarrassing phenomenon. If we could get under the skin, observing what really happens, perhaps we could extract good management practice? Having an observer participate in your tribe is not necessarily comfortable and EVINCE did experience a hiccup when permission to observe a senior committee was withdrawn but observation of real case studies fruitfully continued.  
For me the breakthrough came in an analysis of two universities' attempts at information strategising: one having unrealised shelf-ware, the other having failed even to articulate a strategy. I stepped back from attempts at persuading myself that military style strategising

was essential. Thanks to EVINCE we now have agreed Information Principles, and are using these in practice, for example in conjunction with JISC's work to produce a working draft of an information security policy. And our Information Strategy Committee shows signs of being a pan-University forum which can take on the broad issues raised, less absorbed by the IT components.

We now have to assess whether the practices do indeed represent good management. A rather neat test will be the way this University tackles the challenges of the Freedom of Information Act and I look forward to EVINCE's evaluation with HEFCE next year.

**Professor Bob Chapman, Head of Archaeology,  
EVINCE Project Direction Group member and Reading List Group Chair**

'The EVINCE project was a revelation to me. From my student days I remembered ethnography being used to study exotic tribal societies. Never did I think that the same methods would be used to cast light on academic practice in dealing with IT related change. Having seen the results of this project, I believe it could provide the impetus for broader studies of how the academic community is coping with the unprecedented, and often unpredictable changes that are being imposed upon it. A knowledge of how higher education 'works' and decisions are taken would be a positive asset to the development of education policy and practice.'

- **University of Southampton**

**Sheila Corrall, Director of Academic Services,  
EVINCE Project Direction Group member and initial Reading List Group Chair**

"As someone who moved from one partner to another during the EVINCE project, I particularly valued the comparative study of information strategy development at my former and current institutions. It was fascinating to compare the researcher's perception with my own assessment of the two institutions' approaches. The ethnographic method provided a much richer picture than can normally be gained in inter-institutional comparisons and the STS perspective offered different insights into recognised problems.

The 'project success' and 'decision-making' themes reinforced the ongoing and interconnected nature of many university processes, warning against over-emphasis on specific elements of project success or single moments of decision-making. The three case studies also highlighted cultural differences between – and within – the partner institutions, but in addition enabled useful sharing of experience and exchange of ideas at a practical operational level.

When we embarked on this project I was unsure how much value would be added by the academic dimension and I have been pleasantly surprised by the outcome. A key learning point here is the benefit that can be derived from sharing and comparing reflections on the managerial issues, irrespective of the technical solutions adopted."

- **Saïd Business School, University of Oxford**

**Professor Steve Woolgar, Professor of Marketing and EVINCE Academic Advisor**

One of the most impressive features of EVINCE is the way in which esoteric abstract academic ideas informed the practical demands of technological implementation, and vice versa. Ideas drawn from Science and Technology Studies – a research area concerned with the human and social dimensions of the development and take up of new technologies - came into engagement with the pressing organisational problems of managing the implementation of new technological systems. The detailed ethnographic approach entailed careful analysis of these problems and their proposed solutions, showing in particular how our reliance on synoptic "strategic level" solutions needs modifying in favour of much greater attention to the idiosyncracies of organisational culture.

HEFCE should be congratulated on supporting such an innovative project. The approach developed here – the EVINCE perspective – looks set to influence the conduct of a whole range of system implementation projects in higher education and beyond for some time to come.

- **Brunel University**

**Mandy Mordue, Records Manager**

Although Brunel was a partner for just the reading list case study, contact with Mandy was made soon after she joined Brunel, and the relationship and collaboration has blossomed since:

“Since starting work at Brunel as Records Manager in April 2001, I have found the EVINCE project extremely valuable.

The management of committee papers is a particularly relevant topic at Brunel, and I have found this part of the project very useful. Brunel’s strategic movement towards managing committee papers electronically relies on work covered by the project, whose website is invaluable in this and other areas, as has been our contact with Claire Surridge and Daniel Neyland. Claire’s role in EVINCE has informed and enriched the work of MERIT, Brunel’s JISC project in electronic records management.”

## Roll-out Strategy – Future Possibilities

EVINCE has developed its own particular approach to roll-out, just as it has to methodology, and to audit and accountability relations. While conventional performance indicators have proved inappropriate, the key value provided by the project is reflexive insight into relationships and practices found within HEI. The permeation and consequences of such awareness within local institutions as well as the wider HE community can be seen in the above quotes from individuals, in responses from EVINCE audiences, and in success with refereed publications.

There is also a range of tangible outputs from EVINCE:

- The EVINCE perspective  
As noted, the application of ethnography and STS to evaluating IT-related change, is novel, particularly within an HE environment. It has provided rich analysis of a complex and messy world, enabling new insights. The value of the perspective itself has aroused considerable interest and, were funding available, there are a number of potential projects through which the EVINCE perspective could be developed and provide additional insight. We are currently considering ways in which the approach may be exploited through future partnerships.
- A complementary means of demonstrating audit and accountability  
EVINCE work in the area of audit and accountability seems timely. The public agenda is seeking to reduce bean counting and red tape. This is a response to the backlash against a culture of quantified assessment (such as league tables, benchmarks, targets and performance indicators) as the only means of establishing value for money, success and accountability. Because EVINCE has had to develop an alternative means of approaching this issue, and has sought to demonstrate success and value through reflexive development of a relationship with the funder’s representatives, we have been able to suggest a complementary way forward, which may be applicable to other projects and activities. Our funders have already expressed an interest in examining this further.
- Ideas and practical recommendations  
EVINCE findings have been divided into a series of five inter-connecting themes, each providing a series of ideas and a number of practical recommendations. Those the EVINCE team work with are already finding application of those ideas in on-going projects, including EVINCE case studies and activities beginning to address issues related to implementation of information strategy and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. EVINCE team members have had feedback from those drawing on the project’s ideas as part of their daily activities. We trust this embedding of ideas at a day-to-day level, across a wide range of interested readers will continue to good effect.
- Case study products and lessons  
The case studies continue at the partner institutions, with some systems in place (eg distribution of Senate papers at Southampton) and others close to realisation (eg development of research information systems at Reading and piloting of reading list tools at both institutions). We anticipate next year’s update report will be able to note further progress and rollout of good practice in these areas.

In addition, the case studies have provided a number of lessons, and several products, now available to the HE community at large. Given interest shown so far, we trust takeup of these will continue and increase, aiding development of good practice within IT-related change management within UK HE.





### Abbreviations

4S	Society for the Social Studies of Science
<a href="#"><u>AIMS</u></a>	Academic Information Management System - “is designed to store and make available on the Web documents that are to be printed or published without the author having to convert the document to HTML.” at the university of Southampton
<a href="#"><u>AUA</u></a>	Association of University Administrators
AUP	Acceptable Use Policy
<a href="#"><u>BCS</u></a>	British Computer Society
<a href="#"><u>BECTA</u></a>	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency - “is the Government’s lead agency for ICT in education. It supports the UK Government and national organisations in the use and development of ICT in education to raise standards, widen access, improve skills and encourage effective management.”
CP(G)	EVINCE Committee Papers (Group)
EASST	European Association for the Study of Science and Technology
<a href="#"><u>EUNIS</u></a>	European UNiversity Information Systems
<a href="#"><u>EVINCE</u></a>	Evaluating INformation technology-related ChangE
<a href="#"><u>(FD)GMP</u></a>	HEFCE Fund for Development of Good Management Practice
HEI	Higher Education Institution
<a href="#"><u>HEFCE</u></a>	Higher Education Funding Council for England
<a href="#"><u>HUMANE</u></a>	Heads of University Management & Administration Network in Europe
I(C)T	Information (and Communications) Technology
ISC	Information Strategy Committee
<a href="#"><u>IWMW</u></a>	Institutional Web Managers Workshop
<a href="#"><u>JISC</u></a>	Joint Information Systems Committee - “supports further and higher education by providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to support teaching, learning, research and administration.”
<a href="#"><u>J-Stor</u></a>	The Scholarly Journal Archive
<a href="#"><u>MISG</u></a>	(UCISA) Management Information Systems Group
MLE	Managed Learning Environment
NIPP	University of Reading Network Information Policy Panel
OU	Open University
PD(G)	EVINCE Project Direction (Group)
QA	Quality Assurance
RAe	Research Assessment Exercise
RI(G)	EVINCE Research Information (Group)
RL(G)	EVINCE Reading Lists (Group)
<a href="#"><u>SCONUL</u></a>	The Society of College, National and University Libraries
STS	Science and Technology Studies
TLL	Trainee Liaison Librarian
<a href="#"><u>UCISA</u></a>	Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association
<a href="#"><u>UKOLN</u></a>	UK Office for Library and Information Networking
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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## **EVINCE RLG (Reading List Group) Reports**

July 2000 - TLLs reports of practice in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and in the US and Canada.

October 2000 - TLLs report of the JISC e-Lib projects relevant to course-related learning support, which included e-books, e- and hybrid libraries, and provision of e-texts.

October 2001 - Reading Library Focus Group reports relating the reading lists & student resource provision.

June 2001 - TLL report "An investigation of commercial e-library ventures in the US".

May 2002 - Circulation of report to lis-link, from Tracey Stanley at the University of Leeds "Online Reading Lists - how it's done elsewhere".

## Local Partner Activities

In part to provide context to the case study observation and follow-up on issues raised, and in part to provide input to the partner institutions, the EVINCE team took part in a variety of local activities, using the project findings as appropriate. These activities included:

- **Information Strategy Committees at Reading and Southampton**  
This formed part of the information strategy work, in which Daniel observed the committees, and an Information Strategy Working party at Southampton, over a year, and interviewed members as part of investigating ideas, views and issues relating to information strategy. This also enabled EVINCE to contribute its findings, and practical recommendations to the committees, and at Reading the Information Principles have been adopted as University policy.
- **Development of The University of Reading Policy for e-Information**  
EVINCE co-ordinated and contributed to development of this policy, through membership of the University's Network Information Policy Panel. The vision was to provide an umbrella policy, pointing to more specific acceptable use policies in areas such as web (access and authoring), computer and library service use. The work is currently under review, and likely to be extended in the light of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and consequent development of records management policy.
- **Input to MLE/portals project**  
Work here has involved both co-ordinating and advising developments related to managing the Reading learning environment, and the reading list case study work has been one of the components. Key issues raised have included the need to ensure learning environment develops happen in both "real" and "virtual" settings, the consequent need for student service providers to develop a team approach, and for the work to be managed in the strategic context.
- **Acquisition of a staff development administrative system**  
EVINCE advice was sought by the department concerned, to help ensure the product purchased met current requirements, but was also capable of future integration with appropriate (corporate and computer) systems.
- **Research network support**  
The EVINCE team have been involved in setting up a maillist and website to support a University research network, established to encourage local collaboration across disciplines. From this and contact with similar networks, we have been able to identify ways in which special interest groups can provide an impetus to more general information gathering activities. This has been useful during the most recent efforts within the EVINCE research information case study.
- **Scientific instrumentation inventory system**  
This provided an opportunity for EVINCE to apply ideas from the project success work, anticipating ways in which individuals might be enrolled into a shared solution to a shared problem set. It was also an opportunity to develop skills and means of helping groups identify key functional requirements, in order to seek appropriate IT help.

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## Products

In the course of the case studies, and some associated activities, EVINCE has produced a number of charts and spreadsheets to aid project development and contribute to the development of strategy and policy. These are all available on the EVINCE website, from where HEIs are welcome to download the relevant files for adaptation and use for their own purposes, subject to identifying EVINCE origination. The report includes one hard-copy example; electronic versions of all are available for download and adaptation from the [EVINCE website](#)

### Information Principles

These were produced, together with a commentary to explain the purpose for each, as a “portable device” which might aid development of information strategy. A set of principles, adopted as part of a university strategy or policy provides a “checklist” against which debate as to further strategic development or implementation can be assessed. It also provides a simple, clear statement of intentions (perhaps with reasons) for wide dissemination as part of encouraging a more strategic culture to evolve.

### Committee Papers Functions Spreadsheet

This draws on the JISC Document Life Cycle work, as well as recording EVINCE development of the functional requirements of an on-line committee papers system. It documents the prototype development, noting limits and likely long-term requirements in technical and functional terms.

The spreadsheet can be taken and adapted to meet an institution’s needs, and provides a checklist for those attempting to build or purchase and develop such systems.

### Reading Lists Functional Specification

Identifying the problem, and devising a shared solution to which project participants (in the widest sense) can be enrolled, are critical elements of a successful project, according to EVINCE ideas. A “functional specification” can help summarise the problem and potential solutions, and can provide a useful means of communication between project participants and stakeholders.

These frameworks endeavour to do that, by providing a summary of needs, for each stakeholder group. Both also contain comments designed to either explain the need or suggest possible limits or alternatives, which may be more appropriate.

As well as use within a specific project, the frameworks could be developed to aid construction of specifications for other projects.

### Research Information System Grid

This sheet attempts to provide a means of comparing three systems, each of which offered different research information management capabilities. This could form part of developing a cohesive and prioritised functional requirement, using market offerings as a means of exploring the potential for such systems.

