SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME

Research Infrastructures

Deliverable 6.3

Report on support and help center

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Section 1: Summary of Deliverable

Background

The WeNMR Virtual Research Community website functions as the central point of access for the users, developers and contributors targeted by the WeNMR project. To provide high quality services and support, the project has set up a support and help center to provide easy access for WeNMR users to experts in the field. The support and help center is accessible through the WeNMR website.

Goal

Our goal has been to provide online support by WeNMR experts for all of the WeNMR services. Support for each service should be provided by at least one expert, and easily accessible for users. Experts should be notified automatically of any incoming requests and respond within a reasonable amount of time depending on the complexity of the request or problem that needs to be addressed. An average response time of less than 5 working days should be achievable, apart from occasional exceptions due to absence leaves of the experts. Users requesting support, but also other users, should have the ability to indicate the quality of the support using an online rating system. All requests and responses should be made publicly available, and thus can serve as an organically built up list of questions. With this, providing a separate "Frequently Asked Questions" section should be not necessary, as all questions and support requests are available and searchable.

Summary

The service has been up and running successfully from early on in the project (before month 12). The technical implementation of the support and help center is based on the forum module within the Drupal system, in which topics are categorized by WeNMR service.

The main advantage of using a forum type implementation is that the use of online forums is commonly known, and does not require special training or tutorials. In addition, it allowed us to assign WeNMR project partners, internal and external, as main responders to any incoming requests by users. All requests are automatically e-mailed to the assigned WeNMR expert, who can then address the request online. As such, it is a convenient system for both users and help center experts. Initially, the support and help center was separated from the WeNMR forum. However, noting that there was some confusion among users on where to post their questions, we decided to merge the support and help center with the normal forum. The merge causes less confusion for WeNMR website visitors and allows regular users to become active on the help and support center as external experts, which in the long run is important for the sustainability of the Virtual Research Community.

The number of accessible help and support topics is currently over 40, including 25 of the 28 active WeNMR Services. The additional support and help center topics include the near future SAXS services, and a number of software packages that are related to the WeNMR services.

In summary, the support and help center is implemented, manned and active in processing incoming requests.

Section 2: Support and help center statistics

Although the support and help center has been up and running for over a year, only a total of 27 issues have been posted (Table 1). Assuming that the system is easily found on the website, reasons for the low number of support requests can be various, e.g.:

- Users still need to make the switch from the classical request for support (e.a. direct email to the portal developer) to the use of the Help center.
- The level of documentation (wiki, tutorials) and services interfaces are of high quality and little additional support is needed.

Table 1: Help requests and response times by service

Software	Help requests	Average response time (days)
GROMACS	2	19
HADDOCK	6	1
AMBER	4	5
Cing	1	1
PROSA	1	1
CS-ROSETTA	1	1
MDD-NMR	1	1
TALOS	3	2
XPLOR	2	7
Grid Issues	5	16

Table 1 details the help requests and the response times to the help requests. The total of 27 requests were responded to on average within 9 calendar days. It is clear that there is a great variation between the response times, and the statistics should at this stage not be seen as more than a handle to get insight in the usage of the service. For example, the responses to HADDOCK issues were all within a day, sometimes within minutes. Some issues were overlooked and not responded for a long time, some issues were posted in the wrong

category and probably ignored by the persons responsible for that category. Obviously, this issue needs to be addressed to improve the response time. This can be done by requesting people to forward wrongly posted issues to correct categories such that experts can answer more quickly, or by one person monitoring all incoming requests and managing the responses.

The user rating system of responses has been used by users very little, and doesn't provide any meaningful insight at this moment. The question of how to get user ratings from users has been discussed, and there is no way in which we can or should force users to rate the services. We hope to receive more ratings in the future, to be able to do some quantitative analyses on the quality of the support and help center.

Conclusions

The support and help center is up and running and processing requests. The initial analysis of responses indicates that the service can be improved by minor modifications in management of incoming requests that should drop the average response time to less than 5 working days. The low number of requests and lack of easy to quantify response rating make it hard to judge how the service is being perceived by the community, but it is expected that with a growing user community more meaningful statistics can be gathered in the near future.