COMMUNICATIONS IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMY...

CSc Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador

www.enVision.ca

Sub Node 6 created information technology tools for collaborating within complex networks...and evaluated their uses

Introducing a web community to a community-university research network

"The community works really well as a file repository."
— *Sub Node Coordinator*

"The web community sounded like a great idea, but I have difficulty finding the time."
— *Researcher*

"I found I checked it more often when people were posting frequently. It was much more motivating when everyone was using it consistently."
— *Community Education Network (CEN) User*

"Our members are above age 50 and not very 'techie'."
— *Sub Node Coordinator*

"People usually asked me to email files, even though I posted them in the community."
— *Administrator*

"The 'recent postings' feature allows me to quickly find new items."
— *Sub Node Coordinator*

benefits

- Access to 'event postings' by other collaborators
- Access to research reports by other members
- Centralizing administrative files

We learned:
Having staff assigned to helping users would increase the benefits of online file sharing

usage

- About half of the SES network members registered to use our online communities
- A small number of users contributed the majority of information posts
- The majority of users logged in only occasionally, for example, when notified to read specific postings

We learned:
The web community was primarily used as a file repository

Visiting Trends: Nov 2006 – June 2008
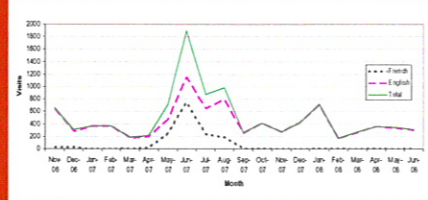
Visits to Sub Nodes 1 to 6 and Atlantic Node Online Communities
Nov 2006 – June 2008
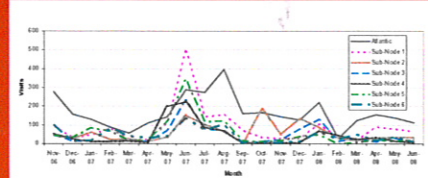
design

- There is some confusion about how and where to store files in the SES online communities
- Logging in and remembering passwords are thought to be time-consuming
- Basic functions like file sharing are more popular than tools like chat or discussion forums

We learned:
With tutoring, users found the site functional and easy to use

Participation: Seven Online Communities: Nov 2006 – June 2008

Group	Number of Web Community Members		Files Shared
	Registered	Visible	
Atlantic Node	40	36	297
Atlantic Sub Node 1	29	26	161
Atlantic Sub Node 2	31	29	134
Atlantic Sub Node 3	29	28	107
Atlantic Sub Node 4	30	29	107
Atlantic Sub Node 5	29	28	125
Atlantic Sub Node 6	29	28	119
Overall	45	41	300-400*

*Estimate (some duplication)

Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité

Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités

We hope to increase the region's capacity for a dynamic social economy by building partnerships, knowledge, and networks across the region and its peoples; by working with our community partners to meet their research needs, and by making an impact on policy at the provincial and municipal levels. **** Nous espérons augmenter la capacité de la région pour une économie sociale dynamique en créant des partenariats, en accroissant nos connaissances et nos réseaux pour l'ensemble de la région et de ses gens; en travaillant avec nos partenaires communautaires pour répondre à leurs besoins en matière de recherche; et, en ayant un impact sur les politiques aux niveaux provinciaux et municipaux.

About Us Notes — 1 posting

Final Document Folders — 7 postings

Events — 12 — 21 postings

Team Logistics — 33 postings

Discussions — 1 posting

Library Article Folders — 18 postings

Working Document Folders — 1 posting

Image Folders — 1 posting

Early Research Findings: Bridges and Pathways

- **On dissemination:** *online communities do not replace email*
- **On structured learning:** *tutorials increase usage and interest*
- **On promotion:** *web communities must be marketed to potential users*

Busy people perceive online collaboration tools to be an 'extra step' in the communications process requiring time and effort.

Looking forward… the web communities will be an excellent archival tool for research products and a useful tool for dissemination.

voluntarygateway·ca connecting people and resources for community vitality

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