IMIA Web 2.0 Exploratory Task Force Swings into Action

A cornerstone of IMIA’s vision for its future, as articulated in the Strategic Plan — Towards IMIA 2015 is to be “recognized as an inclusive global association that connects groups and individuals at the leading edge of the state of the art of the field of health and biomedical informatics, within and without the IMIA community, in order to advance, develop and disseminate the (art and) science of informatics in support of health”. In addition, the Strategic Plan makes specific reference; inter alia, to IMIA providing for:

- outstanding communications (in all senses), e.g. web services/collaborative tools, newsletters, conferences, etc.;
- the e-Agora for academic exchanges;
- the exploration and integration of appropriate technologies.

As a consequence, a proposal for a Web 2.0 Task Force was submitted by Lincoln de Assis Moura Jr. (current IMIA Treasurer) and Dr. Peter Murray (Vice President Working and Special Interest Groups) at the MedInfo 2007 meeting of the IMIA Board in Brisbane, Australia. The General Assembly approved the creation of the Task Force at the IMIA General Assembly meeting.

The Task Force is currently co-chaired by Lincoln de Assis Moura Jr and Peter Murray; other members are: Ed Hammond (USA); Chris Paton (New Zealand); Margaret Hansen (USA); Gunther Eysenbach (Canada); Miguel Cabrer (Spain); Peter Elkin (USA); Bertalan Mesko (Hungary); Scott Erdley (USA); Jacob Weiss (USA); Walter Lim (Singapore); Thomas Campion (USA); Luiz Renato Evangelisti (Brazil).

The first step to making appropriate use of new and emerging technologies is to develop knowledge of them and awareness of their possible applications. This is especially true with the emergence of what are being called “Web 2.0” technologies, around which much hype currently exists. However, if their potential is realised, they provide possibilities for delivering many of the aspirations in the IMIA Strategic Plan, as well as providing the collaborative environments needed in the wider global health informatics community.

Executive Summary of Activities to Date:

A web portal was set up in September 2007 at http://www.difference-engine.net/imia20. The aim of this portal is to coordinate information and activity with regard to the task force.

- A paper titled “Towards addressing the opportunities and challenges of Web 2.0 for health and informatics”, and authored by Peter J. Murray, Miguel Cabrer, Margaret Hansen, Chris Paton, Peter L. Elkin, W. Scott Erdley on behalf of the task force, will appear in the IMIA Yearbook 2008. This paper will be expanded to form an initial background paper for IMIA members.
- A panel will be presented at MIE2008 – “IMIA and Web 2.0: exploring the potential for integration into international health informatics” (Peter J. Murray, Lincoln A. Moura Jr, Miguel Cabrer, W. Ed Hammond, Margaret M. Hansen).
- Members of the task force will be involved with the Medicine 2.0 Congress to be held in Toronto, Canada on Sept. 4-5, 2008 (http://www.medicine20.congress.com/) – this activity has been spearheaded by Gunther Eysenbach, and links into a special issue of JMIR, the Journal of Medical Internet Research (http://www.jmir.org/).
- Several trial Web 2.0 applications have been developed, and have had some small-scale testing to assess their possible use as the basis for IMIA developments in social networking and other means of engaging members and the wider community. These include a Ning group (http://imia20.ning.com/).

Note: As many people will realise, things are moving very fast in relation to Web 2.0 and similar developments. As a result, some of the initial scope of the task force may already be out of date. To take account of rapidly moving developments (e.g. “semantic web” developments and web 3.0 applications that impact healthcare education, training, and building of communities) its scope may need to be re-focused, or other IMIA activities initiated.

Medical Informatics Leader Prof. Jean-Claude Healy Passes Away

Prof. Jean-Claude Healy passed away on March 21, 2008.

A prominent figure in European medical informatics, he began his illustrious career as a professor of biophysics and medical informatics in French university hospitals for 30 years. He later joined the European Commission (EU DG INFSO) in 1995 as head of the unit “Telematics Applications for Health”. In 2004 he was seconded to World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva as the Director in charge of the WHO eHealth strategy.

He has authored more than 250 scientific publications and additional administrative documents for the eHealth Resolution (WHA 58 28), WHO eHealth Action Plan, the EU-WHO eHealth report for the World Summit on Information Society among others.

IMIA and its members extend our sympathy to Prof. Healy’s family, friends and colleagues and will honour the passing of this remarkable man. We will miss his passion, his vision and the profound energy that were his trademark throughout his career.
IMIA General Assembly – Göteborg, Sweden

The next IMIA General Assembly will be held in conjunction with MIE 2008, the 21st international congress of the European Federation of Medical Informatics (EFMI) (http://www.mie2008.org). It promises to be of major significance in the growth and transition of IMIA.

In addition to conducting the business of IMIA, the election of six members and officers of the Board and the approval of new National, Academic and Corporate members, IMIA president Prof. Dr. Reinhold Haux will ask the General Assembly to consider and discuss proposals for changes to the frequency of IMIA’s current tri-annual MedInfos, the establishment of a Region for North America, and the implementation of IMIA’s Strategic Plan.

IMIA representatives are encouraged to attend this extremely important meeting of the General Assembly.

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