



FP6-001917

EURON

European Robotics Network

Network of Excellence

Information Society Technologies

DR.10.1

Statistics on web usage and structure

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Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable:

SDU

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Dissemination Level: PU

1 Summary

The EURON website was completely redesigned and restructured during June 2005 — April 2006 following comments and recommendations from the reviewers. Material from the Education and Training Key Area was integrated into the site, and new material was developed. A final decision on the CMS to use (TikiWiki) was made, but transfer to the CMS was prioritised below the site redesign and so has not been completed.

2 Goals and Activities for Period 2

The principal original goal for Period 2 was to transfer the site to Content Management System (CMS) hosting using a suitable open-source CMS, so that site authoring could be delegated to appropriate sub-groups. Secondary goals were to continue to add new material to the site, integrate the existing EURON sub-sites within the main site, and improve the visual appearance of the site.

However, the reviewers at the end of Period 1 made several substantive comments about the website:

- they did not like the look-and-feel, and wanted the site to be professionally designed.
- they felt that the site was difficult to navigate, and did not have sufficient emphasis on what EURON actually does.
- they felt that EURON did not sufficiently exploit its “brand”, and that EURON’s web presence was too fragmented with different styles for each separate sub-site.

Period 2 goals were therefore revised, to prioritise site redesign over transfer to CMS hosting.

A review of available CMS suites was nevertheless conducted. TikiWiki was chosen for the site CMS, as it provides a Wiki-based interface for site authors, allows editorial control and staging of publication, is cleanly implemented, fully customisable for appearance and functionality and (above all) is relatively well-documented both for users and administrators.

2.1 Responses to Reviewers Comments

Redesign: A web-designer was commissioned to redesign the site appearance to achieve a more striking impression, make the site more visually cohesive, and provide better navigation possibilities, while maintaining the original design criteria of accessibility both to experts and people with more limited knowledge of robotics, behaving the same way on all common browsers, being fast and standards-compliant.

She chose to make the menus horizontal and so limit the number of items possible at each level. She chose to have a different theme colour for each main section to make navigation easier. The dramatic colour change gives different sections a strongly individual identity while retaining strong “branding” similarities through keeping everything else the same. A right-hand-side column provides space for extra information associated with each page’s main content and adds to section identity.

Navigation: Problems with navigation resulted mainly from the fact that different people identify different “obvious” places for some pages. The original structure of the site, organised by Key Area, exacerbated this, since it isn’t clear to newcomers what the Key Areas encompass. We therefore discarded the Key Area organisation in favour of one based on Member Information, Activities and Resources. The first of these comprises information about members and information for new (and old) members on opportunities and responsibilities. The other main sections (News etc., and Documents) also have distinct contents, meaning that gratifyingly few pages from the old site had no “obvious” home. An Introduction section is addressed to non-experts and general public visitors.

Unification of the “Brand”: Complete Integration of most of the EURON sub-sites requires the authoring facilities provided by the CMS, since their current managers will continue in that role. Several sub-sites were integrated during period 2 — Summer School information, the Education and Training Thesis Database and the Conference Calendar. Full integration, using the CMS, was delayed by the effort involved in the site redesign and consequent re-authoring of the site pages.

2.2 Current Status

The redesign and restructuring is complete, and virtually all the old pages have been ported to the new site. Unported pages are those deemed to be unwanted. The new site was available for preview at the end of Period 2 and officially replaced the old site on May 8th 2006.

Background work, to enable the transfer of the new site to TikiWiki hosting during Period 3, is complete.

2.3 Site Statistical Data

At the end of Period 2 the web site had been running for 16 months and contained approximately 200 “real” EURON HTML pages (i.e., excluding pictures, PDF files, HTML pages sent in by others and displayed “as is” etc.).

Analysis of the server logs for the 16 month period indicates that the site receives 100 successful hits per hour on average with 12% of these being search engine bots. 1310 distinct IP addresses fetch pages each week. The most frequent accesses are by search.msn.com. Note that the number of hits is generally lower than the number of times that the pages are accessed — looking at locally-cached versions of pages generates no hits, for example. Also, the number of IP addresses is a low estimate of

the number of distinct users, since some organisations map many users through one address.

The most popular individual pages are (all numbers are hits/week):

Rank	Hits/week	
1.	636	homepage www.euron.org
2.	212	/euros06/ , and especially the cfp (74 extra)
3.	210	/news/phds.html (PhD-level job list)
4.	203	/robotgallery/
5.	106	/education/ ; especially the Schools (51) and the PhD Awards (39) pages
6.	98	/joblists/ (Job list section)
7.	94	/research/ ; especially the roadmap (33)
8.	94	/students/
9.	86	/news/ ; especially calls for papers (40) and conferences (36)
10.	66	/resources/ ; especially the University texts page (53)
11.	60	/aboutus/ ; especially industrial members (44) and research groups (41)

In general, it is clear that the site is actively used; the IP number data shows it is of wider interest than just EURON members. The robot gallery is popular, as are the job pages and the pages relating to EURON's industrial members.

3 Structure of the New Site

The new site has been designed to serve both network members and other visitors, the latter being experienced roboticists, students and also the general public. Its principal design goal is therefore to provide information about and for EURON members in an attractive and accessible manner. The new graphic design contributes to this; however, the site was in addition completely restructured to make its contents more easily accessible. This section summarises the new structure.

The new site has five main sections and two minor sections at the top-level. The main sections are:

- EURON Members
- EURON Activities
- Resources
- News and jobs
- EURON Documents

The minor sections are the Introduction and a set of administrative items such as the site map and the FAQs.

The first four main sections appear in the Main Menu bar, which is visible on every page. These four sections are described in more detail below. Each section has its own sub-menu, and the main sections are identified by their own section colour.

The Main Menu bar also contains the heading “Introduction”, since the introductory section is obviously aimed at people who are visiting the site without much prior knowledge of EURON or even robotics itself. Such people cannot be expected to navigate the site knowledgably so it was felt appropriate to make this heading visible on every page.

The Documents section mostly contains items which are only of interest under certain defined circumstances (such as forms for claiming expenses, or for applying for membership). These items are linked into the site in the appropriate places and the section itself, which is not of interest to the general public, is “hidden” in the home page sub-menu bar.

3.1 EURON Members

This section contains information about how to become a member and what “being a member” means. It also contains contact information for existing members. The list of existing members is long and unwieldy, so is also presented split into countries to make browsing easier. Industrial/commercial members have their own page as well. Individuals with leadership roles are also accessed through the membership section.

The geographical distribution of members forms a visually attractive and intellectually interesting home page for the members section.

3.2 EURON Activities

EURON does too many different things for each activity to appear individually on a single sub-menu, so the activities are grouped. While it is normally clear to network members which Key Area an activity pertains to, this is not necessarily obvious to other visitors and in any case results in an unbalanced site. Thus activities are grouped in three sub-categories: ‘Networking’, ‘Promoting Excellence’ and ‘Creating Resources’.

3.3 Resources

The resources that we really want to advertise are those we produce ourselves. These therefore have a prominent place at the start of the resources sub-menu. Pictures of interesting robots with interesting applications — the core of our research — are also a resource aimed outwards towards the general public. This robot gallery is in the process of being developed into a “showcase project” database. Resources generated by the Education and Training activities are also prominent.

Other items on the resources page primarily aim inwards, gathering together information which might be useful to our members. This information comprises links to useful sites and notification of useful books.

3.4 News and Jobs

This section provides information about ephemera: calls for papers, job opportunities, upcoming conferences etc. Information here is collected and summarised from the EURON mailing lists and other robotics-related sources. This section also contains a home for press releases.