



Response to PaNdata's WP4 report on ICAT

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Installation

Some liked the individual components distributions each with setup script.
However:

1. Many sites favoured some form of integration.
2. One site wanted more help with manual installations
3. One site commented that it is hard to resolve glassfish problems
4. There was an observation about non-standard property files

Integrated Installer

- A license has been obtained for InstallBuilder (free for Open Source Projects) from BitRock
- Have built an easy to use installation program which is available both for Linux (and soon Windows).
- It expects Java, Python and MySQL to be installed but will tell you if not.
- The installation is done as an ordinary user.
- It includes ICAT, the authenticators you choose, IDS with the storage file plugin, TopCAT and some data so that TopCAT has something to look at.
- After running the script the directory structure will be useful for anyone wanting to do subsequent manual configuration.
- The installation program does not support Oracle because of licensing issues and because **it is not expected to be used to set up a production environment** but rather to get started easily.
- A complete installation takes just a few minutes.
- Command line install supported in principle but not working yet.

The PSI Installer

- There is also an installer from Leonardo Sala
- Unix only (uses bash scripts)
- Driven by a single configuration file which you edit first and then run.
- Probably more sys-admin friendly than the BitRock one.

Help with manual installation

- Some documentation will be written - mainly explaining how to read the setup script which contains all you need.
- The setup scripts use a python utility library (setup-utils) that handles the interaction with Glassfish. By enhancing this library an alternative container could easily be introduced.
- The installation scripts are designed to be robust rather than fast - doing things by hand increases the risk.

Other Installation Issues

Glassfish Problems

- The glassfish installation instructions will be augmented to include solutions to common problems.

Property Files

- The property files all conform to the specification. It turns out that the BitRock generated installers will only manipulate a restricted set of property files so they are being harmonised to match what InstallBuilder expects.

TopCAT

- TopCAT2 should address the problems brought up.
- All should check that TopCAT2 as described by the mockups is what they want.
- TopCAT2 will be developed using an “agile” process so should be able to interact with it rather early on in the development.

IDS

- The main complaint about the IDS was documentation; this will be addressed - see below.
- There was also evidence of some misunderstanding about the flexibility of the plugin mechanism.
 - It is the responsibility of a site to implement the plugin interface.
 - The `ids.storage_file` is an example which you can take to get started.
 - If you have your own site specific requirements that are not met by `ids.storage_file` then implement your own plugin.

Documentation

- Some thought it was getting better and there were even a few compliments however most did not find it satisfactory.
- Have added a link from the <http://icatproject.org/about/useful-links/> page pointing to the 50 page document contributed by PSI which explains in a lot of detail how they installed.
- Reference material will continue to be release specific and will be installed by maven procedure under <http://icatproject.org/mvn/site/>
- It is clear that there is a need for documentation that explains things a bit more generally and is not tied to a specific component release.
- Brian R has started writing for the IJP: <http://icatproject.org/user-documentation/the-icat-job-portal/>
- Tom has volunteered to write introductory material on some of the other components.

ICE

- People did not find ICE attractive
- It will probably be withdrawn as the IcatManager is much better.
- The only small benefit of ICE is that it does not require installation by end users.
- For those wanting to import a block of data to get started with ICAT the import facility in 4.4 should do all that is wanted.
- There is also the suggestion that ICE functionality should be included in TopCAT. This could be done but do people want it?

GIT

- There was a suggestion made to move to GIT with the claim that it encourages collaboration.
- Though originally not convinced as Google Code is now closing down some action is required
- Have reserved icatproject organisation under github
- If we go the github route I suggest:
 - Use the google tool to migrate
 - Use finishGoogleCodeGitHubWikiMigration to do the wiki properly
 - Fix the history to get authors correct
 - move it to icatproject organisation
 - carry out sanity checks
 - mark the googlecode repository as having moved with a simple message on googlecode top page
 - after a period of time mark the project as having moved
 - Persuade other contributors to migrate their repositories

LDAP Authenticator

- An enhancement has been requested to allow for the case when the ordinary user cannot “bind”.
- This has been coded but not yet tested and released.

Lifetime of the project and dependency upon EU funding

- Many STFC facilities currently depend upon the ICAT family and there are significant contributions now from outside STFC.
- The steering group is starting up so the ICAT project should have a long life yet.
- The post - PaNDaaS meeting is also a positive sign

Schema

- One site noted that ICAT is falling short of its goal as the place to “store all meta data from proposal to publication”.
- Is this true - and if so is the schema wrong or is the goal wrong?

Ingestion software and links to the User Office

- So far these have both been considered to be site specific.
- It is not clear what scope there is for common solutions.

REST vs SOAP

- The world is using REST like interfaces in preference to SOAP
- REST permits streaming out of the box
- The IDS only has a REST like interface and the new ICAT features (import/export and soon a special TopCAT interface) all rely upon streaming and are only accessible via REST like calls.
- IDS “REST” is not done according to the book though the ICAT rest conforms a little better.
- SOAP is basically RPC and provides no flexibility.
- The challenge is to make sure that REST like calls are all done in a consistent style.