AV-CC

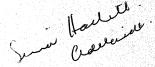## Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
(INCORPORATED IN THE A.C.T.)

Ref: AARNET/47/91
22April 1991

The Australian Academic and Research Network
Summary of 1991 Submissions

	Institution	Project	Amount Requested
1	University of Queensland	Private X.25 network feasibility	$10,000
2	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	Training Video	$5,000
3	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	Interoperability Test Centre	$23,506
4	University of Sydney	A/V Broadcasting over AARNet	$16,250
5	James Cook University of North Queensland	Training Video	$33,500
6	University of Technology Sydney	Transputer User Interface	$14,000
7	CSIRO, DMS	AARNet Time Reference	$7,400
8	University of Technology Sydney	AARNet Training Courses	$7,000
9	University of Sydney	Information Archive Directories	$20,000
10	University of Wollongong (plus Deakin & Adelaide)	Archive Servers	$50,000
11	University of New England	Novice User Interface	$13,000 + print costs
12	University of Adelaide	Guru - Text Database	$38,000
13	University of Queensland	X.400 mail services	$15,000

Copies to   Robin Erskine

Alan Coulter ✓

Mary O'Kane

Technical Comments (Geoff Huston)

The criteria used in formulating these comments were based on a judgement as to whether the project would offer tangible results which would be of benefit to the AARNet user community, and additionally that the proposal was in support of an activity which would not otherwise be undertaken as a part of the institution's normal academic, research or service support activities.

Project #1 - X.25 feasibility

The majority of this activity has already been undertaken on AARNet - with the outcome that of the 17 sites who responded to a call for information regarding X.25 requirements, 15 of the 17 sites simply wanted a TCP/IP Telnet / X.29 gateway on the network. There appears to be no demonstrable requirement for AARNet to commit funds to support the reticulation of X.25 through AARNet at this point in time. From a technical viewpoint this proposal is not considered of critical importance to AARNet's activities.

Project #2 - Training Video

The resolution from the evaluation of 1990 proposals was to request a site (QUT) to prepare written training material for AARNet, and not to commit to any video production expenditure until such a booklet was produced.

Project #3 - Interoperability Test Centre

There is no role within AARNet to support this activity - such a test centre should properly be established and operated either as a commercial undertaking or as an activity of RMIT. Either way such centres operate as a service to vendors and consumers as a commercial operation based on demand for such services. This proposal is not considered as one which should be funded under the AARNet program.

Project #4 - Audio-Visual Broadcasting of Academic Conferences over AARNet

This proposal appears to be a research proposal at this point in time, with no offered tangible outcome of broader benefit to the wider AARNet community. Such a proposal is more properly addressed as a normal research proposal, to be directed towards channels for research funding.

Project #5 - Training Video

The comments of project #2 are also applicable here.

Project #6 - Transputer User Interface

This project is not one which would result intangible benefit to the broader AARNet community, nor one which falls logically within the area of AARNet's domain of activity.

Project #7 - Time Reference

This project does address a real technical shortfall within AARNet. Many system environments, particularly those supporting shared file systems, rely on a single reference time in order to synchronize operations correctly. Currently a reference time is pulled across the US link, consuming just under 1% of actual traffic on the incoming side of the satellite link. This proposals offers the ability to reduce the level of this traffic be introducing a Stratum 1 NTP server on AARNet.

Project #8 - Development of Training courses

The issue of development of homogeneous training material across the heterogenous AARNet user environment is one which was highlighted previously in evaluating the 1990 proposals. The proposal calls for AARNet to fund the development of material which would in effect be sold back to institutions via attendance at such courses. This does not appear to be a feasible approach to this area.

Project #9 - Information Archive Directories

Archival and access to information is an Internet-wide problem. This project, and Project #10, address this problem in different ways. This proposal essentially calls for resources to support an archive index facility, based on the finger protocol, and can be compared to the Archie project currently being undertaken at Magill University. Such a comparison would indicate that for such an archive information resource the Archie approach, of attempting to hold relatively complete archive information for the entire Internet, is a more effective approach than attempting to hold only local information. From a technical viewpoint this project requires more definition as to the scope of the activities, and the nature of the resultant services.

Project #10 - Archive Servers in Australia

This project does address a critical problem with AARNet - too many users are pulling duplicate copies of files into Australia, resulting in a very high level of load across the link to the US. From this perspective there is a critical requirement for a large disk system to provide a local cache of the most common files, and that this system and its services be publicised widely and forcefully within Australia to ensure that a large proportion of the user population are aware of the local resource, and use it in preference to an equivalent overseas service. From this perspective the message about the local cache site needs to be a simple one, and this would imply the implementation of a single service for all of AARNet. Thus I would suggest that there are strong reasons for implementing a single archive service for AARNet, but not for three such systems. It may be a reasonable direction to request the working group to meet with the direction of submitting a more concrete statement of the intended activity, and to provide funding to this activity on such a condition.

Project #11 - Novice User Interface

As noted in comments earlier, AARNet is already funding the production of documentation relating to the use of AARNet. The other component of this activity, a menu based interface, is presumed to be the development of an item of software which would be host specific. It appears that this activity is one which is already being undertaken by the University of New England.

Project #12 - Guru - A distributed Text Database

The proposer of this project is not a member of an AVCC institution, and is proposing that the work be performed by a software company, Renaissance Software, and not by the CSIRO or as AVCC institution. Such a contract for the development of software to an outside contractor is probably not within the aims and objectives of this funding program.

Project #13 - X.400 in AARNet

One of the major strengths of the AARNet program has been in providing support to institutions to communicate using those tools, applications and protocols which are in common use in those institutions. As such AARNet has not taken an active role in the promotion of any particular communications technology over any other, but has taken the position of being able to provide protocol transport facilities in response to a stated demand from the membership.

The X.400 area of activity is one which institutions in general have adopted a very cautious attitude, waiting for more developments from the sector before investing local resources. To date there has been no stated requirement from the member institutions of AARNet for an X.400 facility, nor an AARNet gateway to the commercial X.400 mail domain. Until this area develops further it is more properly an area of activity which is in the domain of standards bodies and those who participate in the process of the definition of such standards - it is not an area of stated user requirement within AARNet.