



Functions of the M-PIRO Advisory Board

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Distribution: Public

M-PIRO
Multilingual Personalised Information Objects
IST-1999-10982 Deliverable xx0.1

July 25, 2000

The deliverable identification sheet is to be found on the reverse of this page.

Project ref. no.	IST-1999-10982
Project acronym	M-PIRO
Project full title	Multilingual Personalised Information Objects
Security	Public
Contractual date of delivery	None
Actual date of delivery	July 25, 2000
Deliverable number	xx0.1
Deliverable name	Functions of the M-PIRO Advisory Board
Type	Discussion document
Status & version	final 1.0
Number of pages	2 (excluding front matter)
WP contributing to the deliverable	0
WP/Task responsible	EDIN
Other contributors	
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Keywords	Advisory board role, functions, membership
Abstract	Suggestions are made as to the organization and function of the M-PIRO Advisory Board.

The partners in M-PIRO are:

University of Edinburgh Language Technology Group	EDIN
Istituto Trentino di Cultura	ITC--irst
National Centre for Scientific Research "Demokritos"	NCSR
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	UOATH
Foundation of the Hellenic World	FOHW
System Simulation Ltd	SSL

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Copies of reports and other material can also be accessed via the project's administration homepage,
<http://www.ltg.ed.ac.uk/mpiro/>

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Executive summary

Suggestions are made as to the organization and function of the M-PIRO Advisory Board.

1 Introduction

The Advisory Board (AB) for the M-PIRO Project is intended to provide input to the project about the project's medium- and long-term plans and goals. The board will be asked to comment on deliverables and workplans. A major function of the board then is to ensure external control on the quality of the work delivered by the project. This document gives further details on the AB's role within the project.

From the project's perspective, a key function of the board is to shorten the distance between research and development activities and end-user exploitation. By responding to comments, criticisms and suggestions from the AB, our work will answer better to the user communities' needs. We hope thereby to foster longer-term relationships with end-users of M-PIRO technology.

2 Project Background

In the M-PIRO project, we are investigating systems which deliver computer-generated descriptions of objects in museums and galleries. The main questions we address are:

- issues in using and adapting the content of collections databases to support multilingual generation,
- multilingual (Greek, Italian and English) generation of spoken and written descriptions from a single source,
- the tailoring of information delivery, sensitive both to the history of a visit and to the type of visitor,
- technical issues in improving the quality of synthesized speech and machine-generated text.

3 Membership of the Advisory Board

Members of the AB will be drawn for the most part from the project's target user communities, that is institutions whose mission is to give a public face to a physical or virtual collection and to increase public understanding of its contents. Potential vendors of technology developed by M-PIRO may also participate in the board's activities. There is no charge for joining the board. For members of the board from EU states, expenses incurred through attendance at meetings of the board will be reimbursed. Each institution or company on the board will designate an individual as M-PIRO's main contact.

4 Role of the Advisory Board

The main roles of the board are to:

- comment on workplans and deliverables,
- provide general input on project directions,
- evaluate prototype systems,
- offer external control on the quality of project output.

Here are two examples of the kind of comment and advice we are looking for.

4.1 Authoring of the generation source

Automatically generating contextually relevant messages for different languages and different output modalities puts a heavy burden on how the source material is being authored. In the first instance, we will carefully hand-craft the information we need. In general, though, this is too resource-intensive. So, we will develop tools which will help curators to author these information sources. Also, museums have already invested substantially in the development and maintenance of information about their exhibits in electronic form, a large part of which is stored as unstructured text. We want to investigate ways of facilitating the reuse of this information in the authoring process.

Your input would be valuable in helping us to assess the generality of our proposals, to anticipate problems in the deployment of this technology in the field, and perhaps even to act as a guinea-pig in evaluating the practicality of our designs.

4.2 User modelling

For any object in a collection, we will be able to generate a large number of descriptions. In addition to variation that depends on visit history, we will also be able to control factors such as the overall length of sentences and descriptions, the complexity of grammar used in individual sentences and the particular words in a sentence. In our first prototype, we aim to provide a system which allows us to “tinker” with such factors. Later on, we will provide stereotypes which represent particular combinations of these parameters, and we intend these to be appropriate settings for particular kinds of visitors. Most likely, relatively short and grammatically less complex sentences will be appropriate for spoken output intended for children. While the project consortium has some expertise in delimiting groups of visitors and providing material in an appropriate way, we can also draw on your expertise and experience to adjust and enhance our proposals.

5 Meetings and other activities

We plan to organize meetings, most likely on a regional basis, at appropriate points in the project’s lifetime. The most likely frequency is once or twice per year. That is, project partners in Edinburgh, Athens, Trento and London will present project results, prototypes and plans to AB members in the local area. These meetings may consist of formal presentations to a group of AB members or of one-to-one sessions examining the project from the perspective of a particular institution. We leave open the possibility of a plenary meeting of the board in the Spring of 2002.

In addition to these meetings, AB members will be notified of deliverables as they become available. Comment or advice from the AB to the project is welcome at any time.