

Company Annual Reports: assuring the distributed national print archive

Request to RSLP for Project Extension

1. Achievements of project

SCoRe database and website created <http://www.score.ac.uk>

SCoRe (Search Company Reports) is a national web resource enabling users to locate company documents in UK libraries and archives. It includes a collection finder and fully searchable union database of reports held in participating collections. Without such a resource, important – and sometimes unique – company research material is extremely difficult to track down. SCoRe is aimed at all higher education users of company reports, including researchers in economics, accounting, finance and business studies.

Database construction: A more complex architecture than originally envisaged was required to support the functionality identified at the project launch event. This functionality has now been implemented and the database hosting partner data is now live. Data importing and editing is ongoing and will be completed by September 30th.

Adoption by higher education institutions and national libraries

Three higher education institutions and the British Library wish to use the SCoRe database to manage all their annual reports holdings. In addition increasing numbers of HEI libraries are joining the project at collection level (6 project partners and 14 other libraries to date).

Wide publicity and international interest

In addition to the SCoRe database itself, there is a project website and a JISCmail list for interested parties. A launch event was held at the British Library in October 2000 and regular newsletters are being sent out. SCoRe has been demonstrated to the British Business Schools' Librarians Group, the Academic Business Libraries Directors conference (top 50 US business schools) and the European Business Schools' Librarians Group. In the US, in particular, there is a focus on preservation of materials and a significant interest in the possible use of the SCoRe architecture for the management of historic company documents collections.

2. Objectives of project extension

Development of SCoRe as an ongoing management tool

London Business School, Manchester Business School, University of Warwick and the British Library now wish to use this database for their historic and current collections, UK and international. Following the RSLP Dissemination Event in June other HE libraries have expressed interest in joining. In addition two US universities, Columbia and Cornell, have already also expressed an interest in using the SCoRe architecture to manage their own company report collections. SCoRe has been created by importing data from Excel spreadsheets into the master database. While appropriate for large volumes of data, this methodology is not suitable for day-to-day use. In order for SCoRe to be useful as an ongoing management tool, and for its use to be extended to other institutions, there is a need to develop a web-based administrative interface through which the library can directly enter and edit data.

Further reconciliation of partner data

Work to date on the project has revealed significant differences in the ways in which partners have handled company records. It is a non-trivial task, extending beyond the scope of Phase 1, to fully reconcile this data.

Extension of SCoRe database to include international coverage of partner collections

Partners now wish to include details of their non UK company holdings in SCoRe. Although international collections tend to be current rather than archival there are still a number of significant collections of international material available for UK researchers. There is the same problem of identifying locations for this material as for UK collections. The expansion of SCoRe to include these collections would increase the breadth of coverage and further exploit what has proved to be a successful approach to publicising the availability of this type of material.

Upgrade to dedicated server for hosting SCoRe database

At present, the SCoRe web site is hosted on a server shared with other business-critical London Business School web applications. Given the acknowledged need to develop and deploy a more complex database architecture, (e.g. SQL server database engine), we wish to bid for funds to purchase a new server dedicated to SCoRe. This server would be scaled to handle the more demanding processing and web serving tasks that will be required, and SCoRe application performance for both data entry and search/retrieval purposes thus enhanced.

3. Importance for HE research: research outcomes

Several major research projects at London Business School rely on data held in company annual reports. These include *Millennium Book 2: 101 years of investment returns*, *Elroy Dimson, Paul Marsh and Mike Staunton* and the development by Professor Chris Higson of a comprehensive long series company accounting database for economic research (comparable to the US Compustat database).

Faculty endorsements include:

“It is great to see the progress being made on the national catalogue of company reports. The website allowing researchers to check for holdings of individual years for company reports is something that previously could only be discovered on the spot (and typically even then with much effort). Hopefully this detailed cataloguing will also encourage libraries to give greater attention to preserving these records (by highlighting those years that may be missing).

It seems an obvious next step to extend the scope to manage current collections whilst using the software developed to handle historic documents. Adding an editing tool for current collections will ensure that the archive information is kept alive and maintained rather than being left to wither away. It also seems natural, since both national and international records can be handled in the present system, to hope that the software could easily be used by US business school libraries as well.”

Dr. Mike Staunton, Research Fellow Institute of Finance and Accounting, London Business School

4. Deliverables

Administrative interface to enable direct data entry

In order to support web functionality incorporating multiple views of the data SCoRe has a complex underlying architecture of interconnected tables. Batch processes have been used to import data from Excel spreadsheets of partner holdings. However, while appropriate for aggregating historic data, this methodology is less suitable for ongoing updating of the collections. For SCoRe to be useful for ongoing collection management and for it to be adapted for use by other institutions there is now the need to develop a web-based administrative interface through which user libraries can directly enter and edit data. It is also necessary to manage access levels so that each institution has editing rights to its own data areas only. Summary of new functionality required

- Data entry and editing screens
- Rights management functionality to enable institutions to edit their own holdings data
- Ownership processes for “shared” areas e.g. company records
- Regular provision of CD updates for backup purposes to partner institutions
- Administrative user guide for user libraries

An additional deliverable will be the provision of training in the administrative functions to user libraries. The Project Officer will carry out this training.

Further reconciliation of data between partner libraries

In the course of the current data import significant differences are being revealed in the ways in which partner libraries have approached record management. Company name changes in particular have been handled differently in each library. Considerable bibliographic effort is required to reconcile differences and present a standardised view of the data.

Extension of SCoRe database to include international coverage of partner collections

Details of some international material have already been incorporated in SCoRe. However, further work is required to enhance the records to the standards used for describing UK material and to identify further material for inclusion.

Upgrade to dedicated server to host SCoRe database

The new server would:

- Facilitate development of the new SQL-based architecture appropriate to the increasingly complex architecture and size of the SCoRe database.
- Provide a more powerful, dedicated and robust service platform for both SCoRe partner libraries' administrative / editing functions and normal 'read-only' use of the application.

5. Dissemination

The SCoRe website and JISCmail list will continue to be used for alerting purposes. Additional dissemination activities will be required to inform those libraries interested in making use of SCoRe for their own collections.

6. Costs - Details not available

7. Project management

The project will continue to be based at London Business School Library under the overall responsibility of Helen Edwards, Head of Information Services. Gill Dwyer, Deputy Head of Library at LBS will continue as manager. The Project Officer, Lindsay Jones, will also continue to work on the project. All partners support the extension bid. The British Library has dedicated its own resources to the project throughout.

8. Timescales

1 October 2001 – 31 March 2002. This extension could follow on immediately from the current project.

9. Key contact

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