

ITAC Conference Call

April 21, 2014

Attendance:

Michael Lewis
Terri Moore
Nate Booth

Dane Ohe
Gary Krammes
Bob Kimbrough

Kris Lund
Kim Martz

Agenda:

- Nate's Vision for ITAC
- Next steps
- Membership

Minutes:

Michael opened the meeting with a brief review and noting that Nate is on today's call. Michael asked Nate to share his vision for ITAC with the group.

Vision for ITAC –

Nate shared his thoughts on ITAC. He commented that he would like to see ITAC provide a forum to discuss new and pressing issues and opportunities with information technology. ITAC has the unique and critical role of bringing information to Centers from the Bureau and from the Bureau to Centers. It is important to have a common voice to communicate with the Bureau and DOI where the issues are over-reaching. Acknowledge the commonalities in Water. One example of a success for ITAC is the IT reviews that Terri leads. The reviews provide an opportunity to look at the IT environment in Centers, allow centers to communicate their existing needs, and communicate policies. They also provide an opportunity to make Centers aware of similar issues that exist in other Centers.

Questions –

Michael Lewis – Nate, can you or Terri provide an example of something where ITAC has a role today? Terri responded that we haven't brought common issues back to ITAC. Terri added that a good example may be with the issue of centers not taking care of security vulnerabilities. A success for ITAC was with Quality of Service (QoS). Terri worked with Verizon engineers and our network folks to get QoS set up. Terri commented that we need to reach out to the field and let them know ITAC is here and get them to provide feedback. Michael responded that this was a role that was discussed during the charter revision discussions.

Nate added that ITAC is unique because of its diverse representation with common responsibilities across water.

Nate continued to share his thoughts, commenting that ramping up ITAC will need to involve the membership championing ideas and cross-cutting issues. IT and computing are critical to driving innovation forward. Nate sees ITAC as providing a forum to communicate new topics and utilizing centers of excellence to promote innovation (for example, modelling and high-end computing). It would be good for ITAC to host webinars or workshops in support of IT innovation. To be successful, this will require interest and championing of these ideas to drive interest. There are other committees that do some of these. Are the topics ITAC has addressed in the past cross-cutting enough?

Questions –

Michael commented that he was not at the last face-to-face, but it seems to him that there is a lot of information that can fit into these categories. Why would ITAC not do this? Is the membership prepared to be more actively involved? Nate added that he is trying to challenge the team. There seems to be interest during meetings, but no follow-up activity. Michael asked for thoughts from ITAC.

Terri commented that she would like to hear if members are still interested. We're trying to give a last push for ITAC, but we're not hearing a lot of motivation. If anyone has comments they do not want to share on the call, they can email Michael, Terri, and Nate with their thoughts.

Kris commented that it seems as if the nature is changing. We are floundering to know what the role of ITAC will be and what our individual roles will be. Knowing this would help determine where we go. Nate asked if Kris was referring to computing changes across USGS. Kris responded yes. With DOI involvement, new policies, AQUARIUS, and other issues, it's hard to know what our individual contributions will be. Nate responded that this is good feedback.

Bob Kimbrough commented that he has not looked at the notes, but feels that ITAC had successes during his terms. He noted that communications with the field about field computing issues increased. In order for representatives to lead and champion an issue, it's important that ITAC not bite off more than it can chew. Don't identify a grandiose need that becomes too much to address with day-to-day activities. Keep the issues smaller so they are manageable. Michael commented that field computing is a good example. We need help to address issues. Nate added that ITAC is relevant for field computing. We need to have a good reach back mechanism to our constituents.

Bob added that because ITAC is under OWI, this creates an opportunity to increase communication with the Discipline offices. Nate responded that this is a good point and is important. He would like to see ITAC be of value when promoting cross-cutting issues.

Nate moved on with the discussion. He noted that there is a lot of change underway in Water; for example, NWIS modernization. NWIS in Centers will be very different, and we're not sure how it will look in centers yet. Nate would like ITAC to play a role, to provide a way for Centers to exploit the new system. With NWIS changing, roles will change for some jobs. This is an opportunity. It will be useful to have conversations about this within ITAC as we transition.

Michael asked if Nate feels there will be conflict with what user groups do. Nate responded that he doesn't see conflict, but we need to make sure we're not duplicating efforts. It will be useful for user groups to give presentations on what their part of NWIS will look like. ITAC can bring its constituencies to these presentations. Be careful to not be duplicative.

Dane commented that ITAC was engaged with Vision. He sees ITAC having a major role into the future. Dane added that user groups focus on the functionality of the system. ITAC can help keep constituencies involved. Make sure no one is left out.

Michael asked about the WRET activities. Is there a role for ITAC in this effort? There is a lot of concern across Centers. Terri commented that Michael is putting comments together for the OWLs group, and other folks are providing feedback as well. Terri asked if it would help if someone from WRET (Tim Woods) updated ITAC. Michael responded that would be helpful. Gary Krammes added that he has not heard much. More information would be great. Gary previously sent email to Tim, but he has not responded. Terri commented that ITAC can send something in. If ITAC is interested, Terri can see if Tim will call in, but he may recommend that folks attend the upcoming Town Hall. Terri added that it's important to be on that call if we want to champion this for Centers. Terri suggested that ITAC have their constituents provide feedback – example, with the new CMS (Drupal), how will content managers get training? What will they be able to manage?

Gary noted that he does not hear much from his constituents. How can this be improved? Terri responded that she and Michael talked about this. Maybe it's time to send out an email reminding Centers that ITAC is here. Michael added that this was addressed in the charter updates. Nate added that if we can identify some topics (WRET is good), it generates a great deal of interest. Nate would like to see ITAC fill out a calendar with real topics. He added that Kris' comments resonate. ITAC can play a role with transitions, but we need to be ready to change things up in the process.

Nate commented that there are other forums (DBA lunch group, CDI, Data Chiefs). How much are ITAC members plugged into these groups? Nate added that he has participated on CDI. He likes that it is topic-based. There is less of a representation, but it does have a central organizing body. They also have a pot of money to use. Does this group provide a similar function as ITAC? Should we join forces with them on some issues? Terri suggested that maybe someone from CDI should brief ITAC on their activities. The group agreed. Terri will take the action to contact CDI.

Bob Kimbrough also noted the National Hydrologic Data Committee. It may be good to hear from that group and see if there is anything ITAC can do to help them. Nate likes the idea to engage the new data committee. Terri will talk to John Hoffman. Maybe ITAC needs to take the initiative to see how we can help these committees.

Next Steps –

Michael proposed that ITAC stick with monthly calls to align ourselves with its mission. Action to members is to send Michael groups that ITAC may have the opportunity to communicate with. Nate added that it would be good to identify constituents (many are covered by the existing membership) and reach out to them in an informal setting.

Action: What groups should ITAC reach out to? Start defining issues.

Membership –

Bob Kimbrough and Pete Cinotto will rotate off ITAC. Bob is available to participate on the next call. Michael also added that with David McCulloch's retirement, there is no longer a GIS representative. Does Nate want to fill that role?

Next Call –

A Doodle poll will be set up to determine the best time to have our next call.

Charter –

The charter has been updated, and Nate feels it is ready for distribution.

ACTION – Michael will set up a call with Terri and Nate.