

SWAD-Europe final peer review 23 June 2004

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Project Overview

- Background, historical context, motivations
- What we set out to do
- What we did (and how we did it)
- Unifying themes and connections
- What difference did we make?



Background

- 5 partner collaborative EU project
- Originated within W3C's SW Activity
- Extended SWAD(-MIT) previous development model
- *About and in support of W3C's SW Activity, but managed independently*
- Complements and feeds into 'standards track' work



Project Partners

- W3C / ERCIM (initially INRIA)
- ILRT, University of Bristol (management)
- HP Labs
- Stilo
- CCLRC / RAL (UK W3C office)



The Original Idea

What did we set out to do? From the project objectives, SWAD-Europe...

- Aims to support W3C's Semantic Web initiative in Europe, providing targeted research, demonstrations and outreach.
- Aims to support the development and deployment of W3C Semantic Web specifications through implementation, research and testing activities

*This involves finding and maintaining a balance between "in-house" Open Source **tool development, community building, outreach and evangelism**, combined with more technologically advanced **research and analysis** to support and field-test Semantic Web standards.*



Semantic Web & RDF 1997-2001: Context and Challenges

- Technology perceived as complex, over-ambitious, with poorly formalised specs.
- Software tools immature, with no standard APIs and query languages (hence applications were tightly bound to tools)
- Relationship to XML tools, standards was unclear
- Enthusiasm from early adopters in RDF IG

What we set out to do

- Reviewing and developing tools to access, store, search Semantic Web data
- Case studies and demos, e.g. thesaurus, SW blogging
- Developer discussion on “seed applications”, e.g. image annotation, calendaring
- Technology integration: XML and RDF, schema languages, SVG, query, Web Services
- Basics of Semantic Web as a technology platform



Answering questions...

- How do I combine RDF and XML Schema technology
- What is the state of the art in RDF databases, query languages...
- What practical techniques are there for combining Dublin Core, educational, multimedia, and rights metadata within a single application?
- *Who else is exploring these issues?*

What we did

- Tech coordination (WP2); dissemination (WP3); management WP (WP1)
- *Relationship to Web mainstream*: SW + Web Services (WP4), XML+RDF (WP5/6)
- *Pre-standardisation*: Database, Query and APIs (WP7, WP12.4)
- *digital library, real world classification*: Thesaurus / SKOS (WP8), Annotations (12.2), Images (WP9, 12.3)
- *Platform maturity*: SW scalability, storage (WP10) incl. Redland/Raptor
- *(Practical) blue skies*: Distributed Trust Systems (WP11)
- *Complete demos*: Open Demonstrators WP (WP12.1)



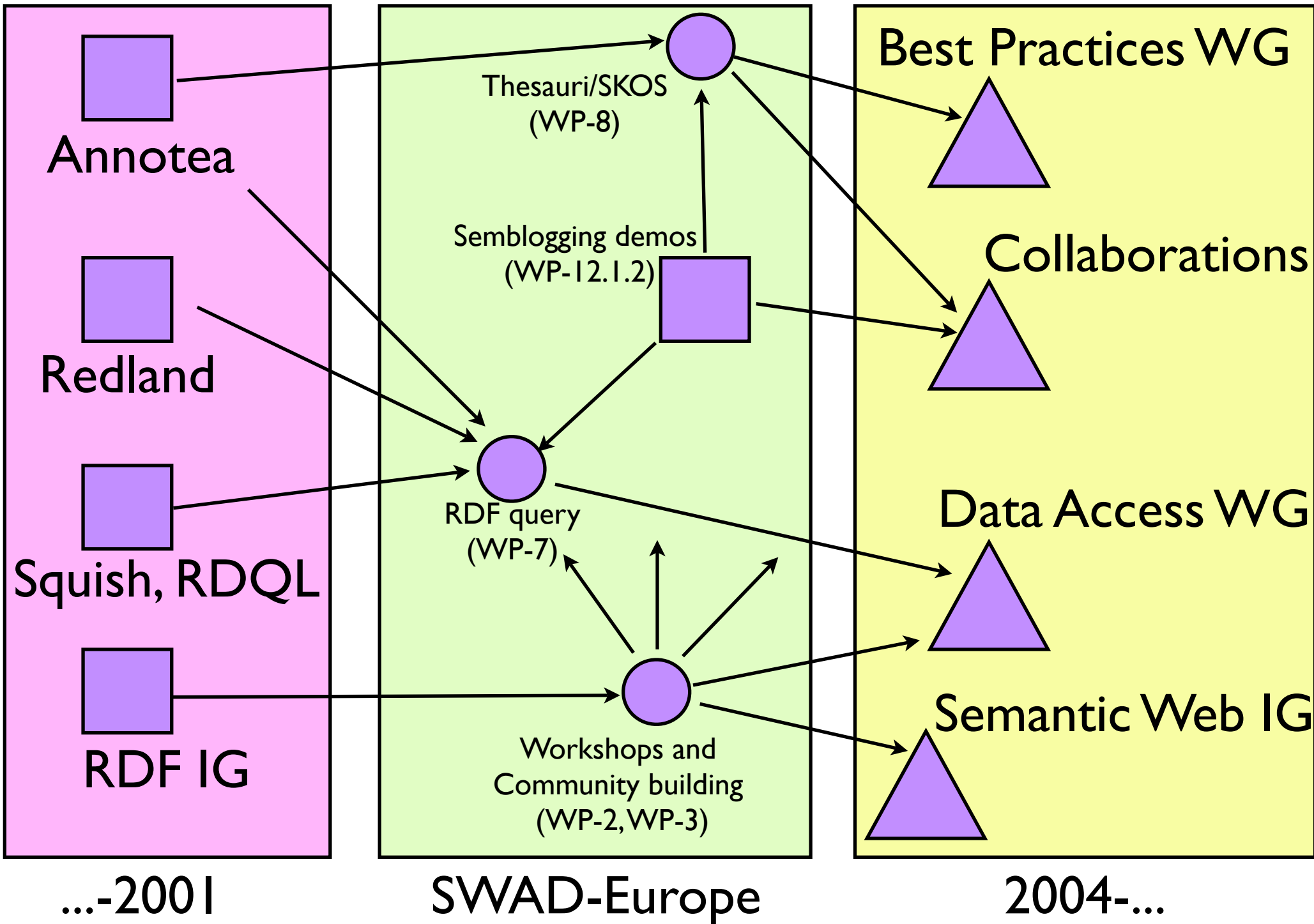
Unifying themes and connections

Project-wide integration in EU projects is traditionally expensive. Easier here as our *working premise* is a common technology stack. Links were natural, collaborative rather than brittle dependencies.

A few examples:

- Query work (WP7) used in tools (Redland/Jena), Annotations (client, server)
- Thesaurus/SKOS work (WP8) picked up for use in Annotations, Open Demos, and by other projects who follow our (public) work...
- Redland library (ILRT) used in Annotea client (W3C)
- Test cases work from WP7 helped motivate W3C's Data Access WG; prototype implementation in Redland
- WP 9 Services use Web Service technology (explored in WP4)
- Community building through SW IG, SWS IG, Test case collaboration, Calendar, Image, FOAF workshops, ...





What difference did we make?

- Re-engaged digital library / thesaurus community (via SKOS)
- Shown that Semantic Web applications can be simple, practical and *easy*
- Contributed to editing and chairing of RDF Core standards, and provided solid opensource C implementation in Redland/Raptor
- Helped establish “Semantic Web phase two” groups: Query/DA WG, Best Practices WG and Semantic Web IG that continue SWAD-Europe themes
- Held workshops, focussed on community building and online presence

What worked well?

- Flexibility, ability to respond to trends
- Benefit of shared SW technology stack
- Diversity of topics lowered risk (some great themes, some OK themes)
- Open, collaborative, practical
- Near term “walk before we run” theme was appreciated both by SW-skeptics and enthusiasts

Objectives revisited?

The overarching aim of the project is to provide, through all appropriate means, a body of answers to questions that have to date gone unanswered, and to foster grassroots communities within which such concerns are addressed.

- Stronger on latter than former (good community, answers still being debated!)
- Weaker on over-arching framework; stronger on demos, examples, practical surveys
- Delivered on research demos, contributed to technology maturation (difficult to measure!)
- Diverse workplan emphasised flexible and general-purpose strengths of Semantic Web technology
- Unique in emphasising the practical and “Web” aspects of Web for Web developer audience



Wrapping up

- Final Workshop on FOAF, Social Networking and the Semantic Web with DERI Galway
- Continuing themes (SKOS/thesauri, blogging, image metadata, Semantic portals, Calendar, query) in other fora
- Finalise reports and restructure Web site
- Reward innovation with T-shirts!



Thank you

Questions?

