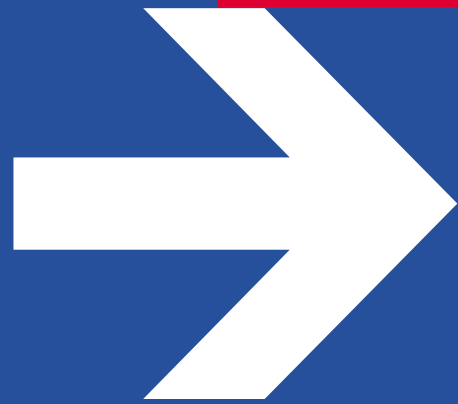


OneACS

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



AUSTRALIAN
COMPUTER
SOCIETY

Advancing ICT Professionals

OneACS – a Vision for the Future

The most significant structural review in the 36 year history of the ACS is currently underway in a project named *OneACS*.

Prompted by a widely-held belief that the ACS must reinvent itself if it is to continue to meet the needs both of current members and those yet to come, *OneACS* is a forward-looking process which seeks to evolve the Society for the next generation of ICT professionals.

The project focuses on investigating a shared services model for the ACS as a way of improving services to members while reducing the associated costs.

The ACS Council initiated the investigation in April 2002 in response to the growing gap between the way the ACS currently operates, its ability to fulfil its mission and the cost of doing so, funded by membership subscriptions.

From this single objective, the *OneACS* project was born as it was quickly realised that there was an opportunity, and indeed a responsibility, to look at both the service delivery to members and the ability of the organisation to sustain itself into the future.

A Professional Approach

In the interests of 'getting it right', the ACS has ensured the project reference group and working party have a wide membership that utilises the extensive intellectual capital of the Society and is consulting widely across the organisation.

In the hands of volunteers, as most reviews have been in the past, there is a tendency to respond to time pressures and make assumptions which are sometimes not tested, which can lead to flawed outputs.

To avoid this, the *OneACS* project, under the championship of ACS Vice President, Brenda Aynsley, has engaged the expertise of consulting firm, Experience Matters. The project team has also conducted interviews or workshops with most key stakeholders over the past 12 months.

Since the start of the *OneACS* initiative a number of 'truths' have become self evident to the working party:

- Change is not only necessary, but inevitable;
- The cost of operating with the present structure is unsustainable in the longer term;

- The range, quality and delivery of member services needs to be relevant to the current and future membership;
- The ACS needs to become more relevant to not only its members but also to the ICT industry, government bodies around Australia and the wider community.

The *OneACS* working party detailed the findings of its Shared Services Review and presented the Shared Services Model to the ACS Council in May this year. It reported that:

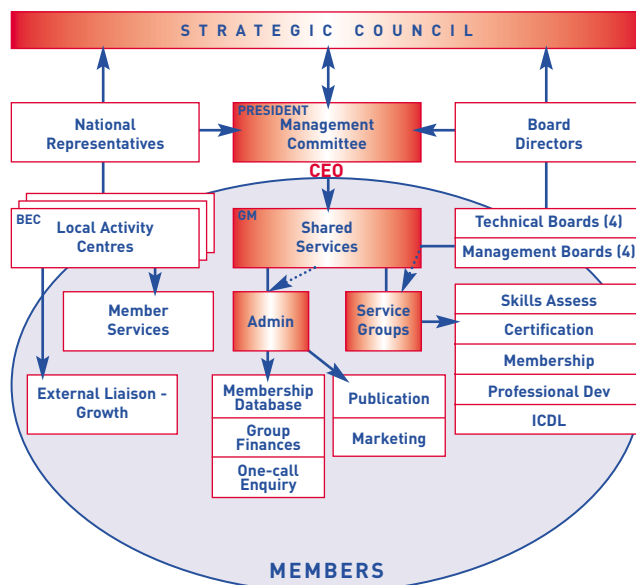
- There was strong support for the ACS to move from a

federated model to a unitary organisational model;

- Administration should become a nationally provided function utilising shared services; and
- Governance issues should be examined as part of the project.

While *OneACS* remains largely conceptual at this stage, the ACS Council has committed to funding Phase 2, the Implications of *OneACS*. As a result, a high level, cost/benefit study has since been completed and a report provided to Council. Other implications will be reported to Council by mid September 2003.

THE SHARED SERVICES CONCEPTUAL MODEL PRESENTED TO THE ACS COUNCIL IN MAY 2003



Benefits of *OneACS*

With *OneACS*:

- Members will enjoy more and better benefits and services
- The collective, strategic, intellectual and financial resources of the ACS will be available to all members, regardless of where they live.

This means:

- ACS services will be delivered more effectively and efficiently to all members;
- There will be greater potential for transfer of knowledge between members;
- Corporate recognition of the value of ACS membership will be improved; and
- An investment in ACS membership will represent greater value for members.

***OneACS* will help achieve this because:**

- Volunteers and staff at branch level will be free to concentrate more on transferring knowledge and delivering services to members rather than being consumed by administrative tasks;

- There will be better liaison between special interest groups, technical and other committees and boards;
- The society will operate under a single nationally agreed Strategic Plan which will deliver value to members within their local contexts. ACS local volunteers and staff will become the lynchpin between national strategy and delivery of services;
- Members will have more say in the development and delivery of the *OneACS* strategy through a closer association with a representative on Council and through their local volunteers and staff. They will also enjoy greater interaction with the Technical Boards; and
- Local ACS staff, volunteers and those involved in providing shared services will find their work more emotionally and professionally satisfying due to:

- access to better methods and practices of providing support to members;
- improved cohesiveness and collaboration through stable job relationships with other staff and managers in the Shared Services Centre;

- opportunities to suggest and participate in local bids to provide specialised services to ACS members throughout the country; and
- greater opportunity to become involved in new areas of interest and develop new skills.

Once implemented, *OneACS* will deliver:

- Improved efficiencies leading to the provision of more and better services to ACS members;
- More people wanting to belong to the ACS to take advantage of the benefits;
- More ACS members retaining their membership for a longer period; and
- The improved membership base and efficiencies will ensure the ACS remains the first choice for ICT professionals.

Possible Concerns about *OneACS*

Over the past 12 months, the working party has become aware of various concerns about the implications of *OneACS*. Some of the key ones are addressed below:

➤ **The fear that the scale of change might be too great for the ACS to handle.**

We believe that as the Society for ICT Professionals we are well able to manage the change that is agreed in this project. Many of our leadership roles are filled by volunteers who hold responsible positions in government and industry and have successfully implemented change in their workplaces. In addition, we are well served by our CEO and his staff around Australia who will be supported in this process. We are financially able to undertake an appropriate change management strategy over several years, if necessary, in order to achieve the agreed outcomes.

➤ **The design of the proposed Shared Services Model might not actually deliver the proposed benefits.**

We are confident that the Implementation Plan to be produced in Phase 3 of the project will address the projected benefits and will incorporate an appropriate

evaluation strategy to enable us to monitor and report on successes and failures. This will allow us to make adjustments on an ongoing basis to achieve the best possible outcomes.

➤ **The implementation plan might be poorly designed or enacted without regard to a change management strategy.**

It has been an undertaking from day one of the project that the change management strategy will be an integral part of the Implementation Plan.

➤ **Once *OneACS* is in place, intended benefits might not actually be realised.**

Without the ability to see the future, we can only rely on our management of the ACS, our knowledge of its members and prospective members, government policies and directions as well as economic conditions prevailing over time in order to predict the likely benefits. We will monitor and report on our progress on a regular basis.

➤ **Volunteers might feel their contribution is no longer sought or appreciated.**

Volunteers will continue to be the mainstay of the ACS. So many

things today would not happen if not for the extremely high level of activity and commitment by members who volunteer their time and talent so generously at both the local and national level. This ethos will not change, although we expect the detail of activity to improve.

➤ **Members might be concerned about changes to the ways of meeting in the future, with greater reliance on virtual means in addition to our regular, face-to-face meetings.**

The ACS faces the same sorts of changes that affect each of us in so many facets of our lives. As a society of ICT professionals, we advocate the use of the same tools and strategies that we recommend to our clients and customers. Those who have limited opportunity to participate and practice with new technologies and media might come to consider this as a member benefit in time.

➤ **Members might wonder whether the shared services model means they can no longer establish a relationship with ACS staff.**

We currently envisage that existing staff will provide many of the services we currently enjoy in administration and enquiry roles,

although the friendly voice you speak to on the phone might be located elsewhere in Australia. But members can still build relationships with staff, particularly the many employees who have been with us for several years.

➤ **Whether 'centralising' is occurring under the guise of shared services.**

The project is committed to centralising administration and support in a logical sense. In reality, we see offices and workstations around the nation continuing, some in existing places, at least initially, and others in new places, depending on demand. For example, CMACS is likely to continue to be administered from Victoria under *OneACS*. Education Across the Nation and national professional development functions recently moved from Queensland Branch Office to the Victorian Branch Office, and *OneACS* is unlikely to change this. What will change for the better is the level of support you can expect for ACS activities, either virtual or in real life.

➤ **Whether there is value in being a member.**

We think the value of ACS membership under *OneACS* will increase as a result of the higher quality and improved delivery of member services.

➤ **Whether the ACS is becoming more bureaucratic and unwelcoming for volunteers and members.**

We think bureaucracy is okay, but that's because some of us have studied the German sociologist,

Max Weber (1864-1920), who called it "the distinctive mark of modern social structures". Bureaucracy is good when it is the administrative arrangement to support a goal-oriented organisation and designed according to rational principles in order to efficiently attain those goals. If you're concerned that the ACS will be distant and out of touch with members, be reassured that the reverse is our goal and the more likely outcome.

➤ **Whether they will continue to enjoy local autonomy of action.**

The question of autonomy does arise in a move to *OneACS* but only in that there will be much more emphasis on centralised planning by the Strategic Council, which represents all members. The ACS Strategic Plan has for too long sat gathering dust on a remote shelf while volunteers waste energy reinventing wheels for their locality. We envisage that active members will be able to spend much less time in planning and much more time in localising the Strategic Plan for implementation within their area of influence and activity. This approach will ensure greater consistency across the ACS, so a member living in the Northern Territory can participate in the same programs available elsewhere in the country.

➤ **Staff are worried that their jobs will disappear or change around them.**

In times of great change, some jobs will change significantly. The Council has agreed that the Change Management Plan which will be

part of the *OneACS* Implementation Plan will include opportunities both for retraining for redesigned jobs or for redundancy arrangements for those who want it. As a volunteer-based organisation that values its people, we prefer that staff be encouraged to undertake the training and remain with the organisation, but we accept this will not happen in all cases.

➤ **The ways in which staff have always worked will change and some staff feel they might not cope well within the new environment.**

Not only might the job focus change, but the work group might also change. For example, staff in the Victorian Branch Office might find themselves part of a workgroup that spans at least one other state. This requires a definite change of mind set and of course will need to be introduced via appropriate training modules and exercises to ensure we include both remote and local workmates.

➤ **Will staff continue to work for their local Branch Executive Committee as they do now, or will they work for the Shared Services Manager?**

Under *OneACS*, staff will ultimately report to the CEO through the General Manager, wherever they might be, but will be tasked by, and accountable to, their line manager. The relationship between staff and volunteer position holders will be negotiated between the managers and the position holder.

The Way Ahead

There are many aspects yet to be decided about the shape and implementation of *OneACS*, including whether we implement it at all. However, one of the strengths of the project design is that our work investigating *OneACS*

can be 're-used' to advantage within the existing framework, even if we choose not to proceed with the full model.

The project is yet to define many of the relationships involved in the Shared Services Model. A Workshop

was held on Friday 1 August 2003 amongst Council members, the working party and relevant staff. Results from this Workshop will feed into the final round of consultations regarding the implications of the ACS adopting any or all of the Shared Services Model.

In Conclusion

OneACS is a term to describe a unitary Society that in many ways already exists. We have one ABN number and one organisational legal entity, one CEO and one President, one Management Committee and one National Council.

However, we also have eight sets of Branch regulations and eight Branch Executive Committees planning eight sets of strategic plans and eight sets of activities broadly described as professional development or networking.

We also have eight sets of MYOB accounts that are consolidated into one monthly account.

When a new member joins the ACS, they don't join the Society; they join a Branch of the Society.

Can you tell the difference between a mutual self-help group like the local computer user group and your professional society? If you can't, then perhaps, at least for you, the ACS is yet to move from the former into the latter.

While the Objects of the ACS remain the same, *OneACS* will significantly change the way the Society gives them presence.

You can also draw strength from the fact that the ACS is acting in concert with similar initiatives by other professional societies around the world. Computer societies in both Canada and the United Kingdom are addressing similar issues of modernisation and re-invention and proposing significant, necessary changes within their own context.

We Want Your Input

At this stage, *OneACS* is still conceptual and we need the views of many members to ensure the project delivers on what you value most about belonging to the Society for ICT Professionals.

The project welcomes the involvement of members via

telephone, email, letter, face to face or an online *OneACS* forum (members.acs.org.au) to help shape the Society for the future. The opinions of key stakeholders outside of the Society are also warmly invited.

To provide feedback, register your interest or advise if you are willing to serve on the *OneACS* reference group or working party, email the Project Team through the Project Champion, Brenda Aynsley, at oneacs@acs.org.au

At the beginning of the project, the working group indulged in a little fantasy about how *OneACS* might change the way we operate. Here are two scenarios different 'members' wanted to share with us.

About half way through my subscription year, I realised I probably was eligible for reclassification to full Member from Associate since I had been in my current business analyst role at EDS for nearly five years.

I went to the ACS website and followed the new easy to use navigation to the "Reclassification of Membership" page, where I read the step by step instructions on what I needed to do. I downloaded the appropriate Application Form and proceeded to fill it out (again following the simple step by step instructions on the re-designed form). I could have done this first part on-line, but as I needed to get referee reports, I decided to complete the paper form.

I went to my chosen referees and asked them to complete the relevant parts of the form regarding their knowledge of me and my career. As I was already an associate on the basis of my degree, I didn't need any academic transcript on this occasion. Again the referee sections were easy to complete and I was able to get them in just a couple of days.

I had a couple of questions about the form so I called the 1800 number to clarify these - the person at the other end answered questions clearly and offered to "walk through" the form with me before I sent it off. This was good because I was able to elaborate on a couple of points in my responses. I was also advised that I could get someone

from the local BEC to vet my form for me if I wished - but the walk through was enough for me.

I sent the form off to the reply paid address - I didn't need to pay anything as I was part way through my subscription year.

A few days later, I received an email from ACS acknowledging receipt of my reclassification application, together with a summary of the process of reclassification and expected dates (the application form provides an opportunity for me to advise ACS of any change in my personal details such as email address, phone, street address etc.).

About a week later, I received an update (again by email), advising the status of my application and apologising for a slight delay due to the unexpected absence of a player in the process.

Early the following week (less than 10 working days since I posted off my form), I received an email advising approval of my application, followed within a few days by a letter from the local Vice President inviting me to an upcoming event to be presented with my certificate.

All up, the process took less than three weeks, including chasing referees and using snail mail to send my form. I could have checked on the progress of my application through the application status query facility on the web site. A colleague also advised that she was also followed up by telephone to query an item on her reference.

I can remember people a couple of years ago complaining about their applications to join and to be reclassified taking months to be processed, and about the deafening silence about what was happening during the process. It looks like the shake up of the Society in 2003 was really worthwhile in delivering improved service to members.

Arthur Dent
MACS (newly reclassified!!) PCP
December 2004

THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2005

Joe Brown, an ACS Member of some four years standing, wants to pay his renewal notice which he received via email this morning. He clicks on the link provided in the email and is taken to his page at the members web site at members.acs.org.au. He doesn't have to log in to access it because his login is encoded in the emailed URL.

His personalised web page contains the "renew your membership" link, along with other items in which Joe has indicated an

interest. He enters his credit card information to renew his membership for another two years, taking advantage of the 10 per cent discount multiple year renewals provide.

While there, he reads the online news snippets which are presented daily for his information as part of an ongoing professional awareness service the ACS provides to professional members. These news snippets are gathered from around Australia, the Asia Pacific Region and the rest of the world according to the preferences Joe provided last year when the service was introduced. Each time he looks at the news page, he has the opportunity to change his preferences.

He also notes that there are new events being flagged for his attention in his location which might be of interest, according to the preferences he indicated at his last renewal. He clicks on the Education Across the Nation seminar scheduled for August 3rd and sees that it's all about Prince II. He was only thinking yesterday he should bone up on this, so he clicks on the registration link to add his name to the list and a confirmatory email is automatically sent to his acslink.net.au address.

Since he's a member, it's a free service but he thinks he should probably bring along his colleague, Bill, who isn't a member, so he clicks on the link to send an email advising Bill of the event and adds his own urgings to encourage Bill to register. A confirmatory email is despatched to Joe when Bill makes his booking for the seminar.

Joe is considering standing for election later this year to the Regional local Executive Committee, since he thinks he has what it takes to be an effective ACS volunteer:

- his company encourages him to be involved in outreach activities,
- he is considered knowledgeable and effective in his field as an analyst/team leader,
- he believes the ACS is a worthwhile organisation,
- he regards his ACS membership as a valuable asset on his CV, and
- he thinks he could spend between an average of three and four hours a week on volunteer professional activities.

Joe recalls that there is a profile of volunteers on the ACS website which will give him a better understanding of what's involved. He logs into the members.acs.org.au website, searches for volunteer profiles and sure enough, locates the 'typical' volunteer roles, which provide a wealth of detail to help him confirm his decision.

For more information please
contact the ACS National
Office on 1800 626 029
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www.acs.org.au