



grains of truth

Harvesting the knowledge of the past is a priority for the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), and the University of Ballarat is helping them to reap the vast research they have sown.



The GRDC is a giant of the world's grain corporations, with a mission to invest in innovation for the greatest benefit of its primary stakeholders – graingrowers – and the Australian Government. Australia's grain industry is worth billions of dollars annually, and the GRDC invests heavily in research, development and extension aimed at delivering improvements in production, profitability and sustainability for Australian agriculturalists, from the Top End to the toe of Tasmania.

With a repository of final reports dating back to the early 1990s, the GRDC identified a pressing need to evaluate, convert and collate them into a consistent and accessible format. "The various research bodies, contractors and individuals undertaking research for the GRDC have, until recently, supplied their findings in very diverse media and styles," explains Helen Thompson, Director of the Centre for eCommerce and Communications (CeCC). "Some pull together a range of 'attachments', others are housed on floppy disc, and so dissemination of the content becomes problematic."

CeCC will utilise a selection of their content management products to create a Final Reports Publishing System (FRPS) for GRDC. Starting from the present and working backward, this workflow system will allow GRDC team

members to evaluate and approve all research to date according to its currency of knowledge, privacy and intellectual property issues, or other possible restrictions. "The system will be a web-based tool with different levels of access," conveys Helen. "It will help provide GRDC with the checks and balances they require to populate their internal and external websites".

"We envision this system will enhance knowledge sharing to the benefit of farmers, with flow-on benefits to researchers and advisors". Says Tom McCue, Manager Extension and Grower Programs with GRDC.

The Publishing System presents myriad benefits. It will be searchable, and browseable via a range of classification systems such as by region, by crop, or by topic, and even has the potential to one day be linked to Geographic Information Systems (GIS). "Once the information is put into this format, lots of things become possible," explains Helen. Incorporating some of the features of CeCC's Docbook Manager, the FRPS will enable the auto-generation of reports in PDF and hard-copy formats, as well as online.



"CeCC have a long-standing relationship with, and commitment to, rural and regional enterprises," asserts Helen. "This project exposes CeCC's excellent capabilities to a national audience."