211: Advancing the Provincial Consolidated System Information Resources Working Group Minutes, June 23, 2005

Present   Christine Berry (Information Oakville), Ross Cooling (Community Connection,
            Collingwood), Barb McLachlan (Information Windsor), John Allec (Findhelp
            Information Services)
Regrets: Julie Giesbrecht (Information Niagara), Ian Kellogg (Findhelp Information Services)
Guest: Kate Ladniak (CIOC)

1. Minutes of June 7th meeting

- Minutes accepted as distributed.

2. Agency/Service/Site data model

- Barb detailed the results of her trip to Detroit Public Library, and explained the materials she had provided to the team. Unfortunately they do not have the latest version of REFER, but she was able to work with Dick at creating outlines of how some standard types of organizations we list might be structured. There is certainly:
    o a much higher level of complexity in data entry
    o some chronic ambiguity in where certain types of data should be best placed, whether in the agency, service or site data modules. People seem to make case by case decisions.
    o She found several things that were odd or awkward, such as having to identify and drag over those fields that were wanted for data entry.
    o A big factor seems to be that while some duplication of data is eliminated, new types of duplication arise to take their place.
    o She also found the searching fairly convoluted.

- Kate has mixed feelings about the model, and did briefly examine it when current version of CIOC was first developed. An earlier model of CIOC developed by external consultants and based on this model hadn't worked out. Part of the reason the idea wasn't taken further was that at that point CIOC had much fewer member agencies and had to fit into the bigger Ontario picture.

- Since then, of course, the software has been enhanced in many ways (including some ways that echo agency/service/site features), and more can be done along those lines in the future. Kate does think this is the time to take a close look at our data structure, but a large-scale changeover would have to be thoroughly researched and planned, and ideally done all at once and fitted in with other major new developments work such as move to "dot.net", the SQL Server 2005 upgrade (still in beta but to be released this year), and the future Taxonomy implementation.

- Kate's sense has been that the model does not necessarily save editorial effort, and in fact brings in a whole new level of technical and editorial complexity. You can hide some of

that technical complexity from data managers, but inevitably updating – including and especially for updates submitted by the public – can be very confusing. It necessarily involves multiple pages, for one thing, which has the danger of people not completing all the pages they need to.

- Barb asked about export issues; Kate confirmed that additional levels of complexity are involved with this model.

- Kate recommends identifying what the issues and strengths are, and considering how CIOC might be further developed instead of a wholesale change of data structure. Records can now be copied to create a template when another record with similar information (eg site data) should be used as a basis for a new record, for example. The Find & Replace functions (e.g. an organization name change can now be applied globally) can be enhanced and developed further. There is also good potential in finding ways to specify relationships between records (for example partner agencies, member agencies).

3. Next meeting

- Thursday, July 14th, 10:30 am. Call 1-866-613-5220 (toll free) or 416-204-1403; participant code is 1671710 followed by # sign.