Social Networking and the Middle East

Middle East Symposium

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What is Social Networking?

- **Not just FaceBook and MySpace**
- **A social network service focuses on the building of online communities of people with shared interests**
- **Social network services are web-based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact**
  - **Chat**
  - **Messaging**
  - **e-mail**
  - **Video**
  - **Voice chat**
  - **File sharing**
  - **Blogging**
  - **Discussion groups**

- **111 social networking websites listed on Wikipedia**

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Requires Advanced Internet Infrastructure

The critical need is for Internet access to shared resources and information

Increasing:

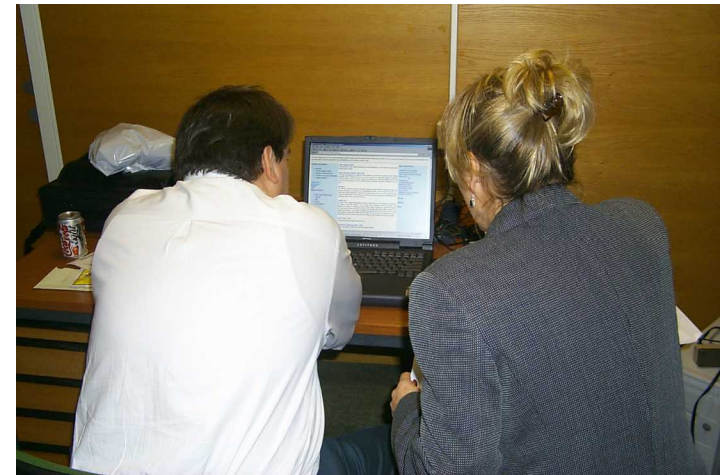- **Growth of international projects**
- **Pace of website construction**
- **Sophistication of functional requirements**

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Typical Use-Case

1. **Engage regional partners**
2. **Develop concepts, tools, and joint solutions**
3. **Encourage sustainable collaboration**
4. **Project infrastructure turned over to partners**

Requires:
- **Non–export controlled technologies**
- **Platform independence**
- **Low cost**

Online Community Participation

Motivations

- **Anticipated Reciprocity**
- **Increased Recognition**
- **Sense of Efficacy**
- **Sense of Community**

Learning Trajectory

- **Peripheral (Lurker)**
- **Inbound (Newbie)**
- **Insider (Regular)**
- **Boundary (Moderator/ Expert)**
- **Outbound (Legacy)**

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Social Networking Frameworks

A social networking framework:

- Increases active participation by our partners
- Dramatically accelerates site deployment—members contribute content

SharePoint

- **Neither platform independent nor low cost but…**
- **Totally integrated with MS Office documents and files**
- **Used in a wide number of internal areas**
- **Now available as an extranet application at Sandia**

T-Wiki and MediaWiki

- **Biological Threat Reduction Wikis**
  - **Risk Assessment wiki**
  - **Countries, Facilities, People wiki**

Plone

- **Open-source**
- **Python-based**
- **Windows-UNIX-Mac**
- **Through-the-web control of content**
  - **Fine-grained security**
  - **Role-based workflow**
- **Out-of-the-box functionality**
- **Highly customizable**
- **Runs behind SNL firewalls, web servers**
  - **Suitable for UCI, OUO, and, with encryption, UCNI**
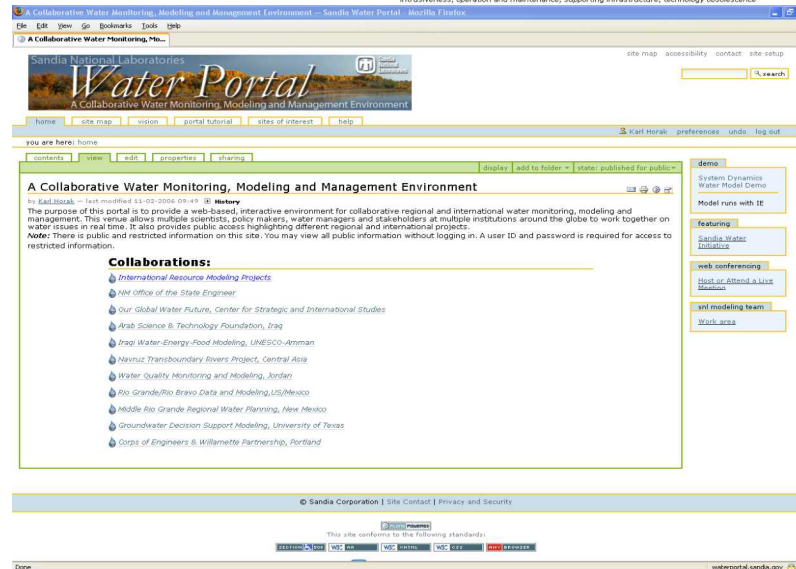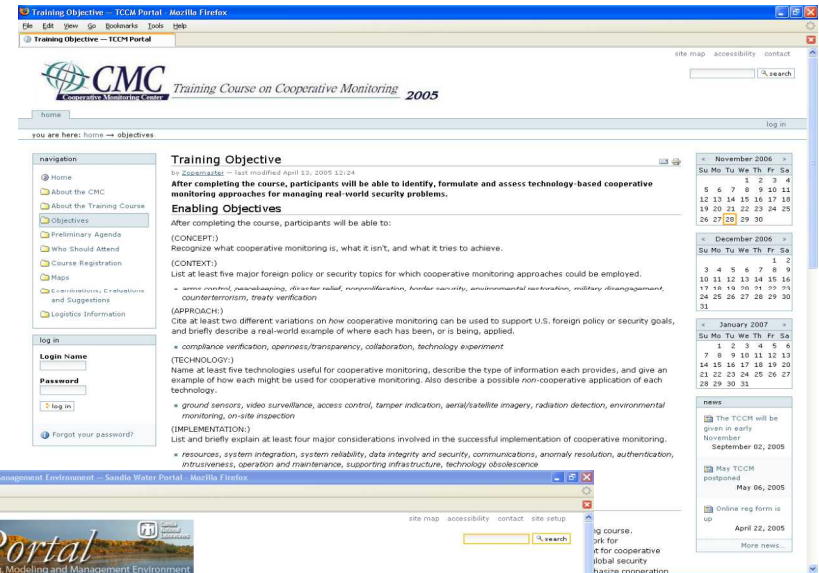
IPB Statistics
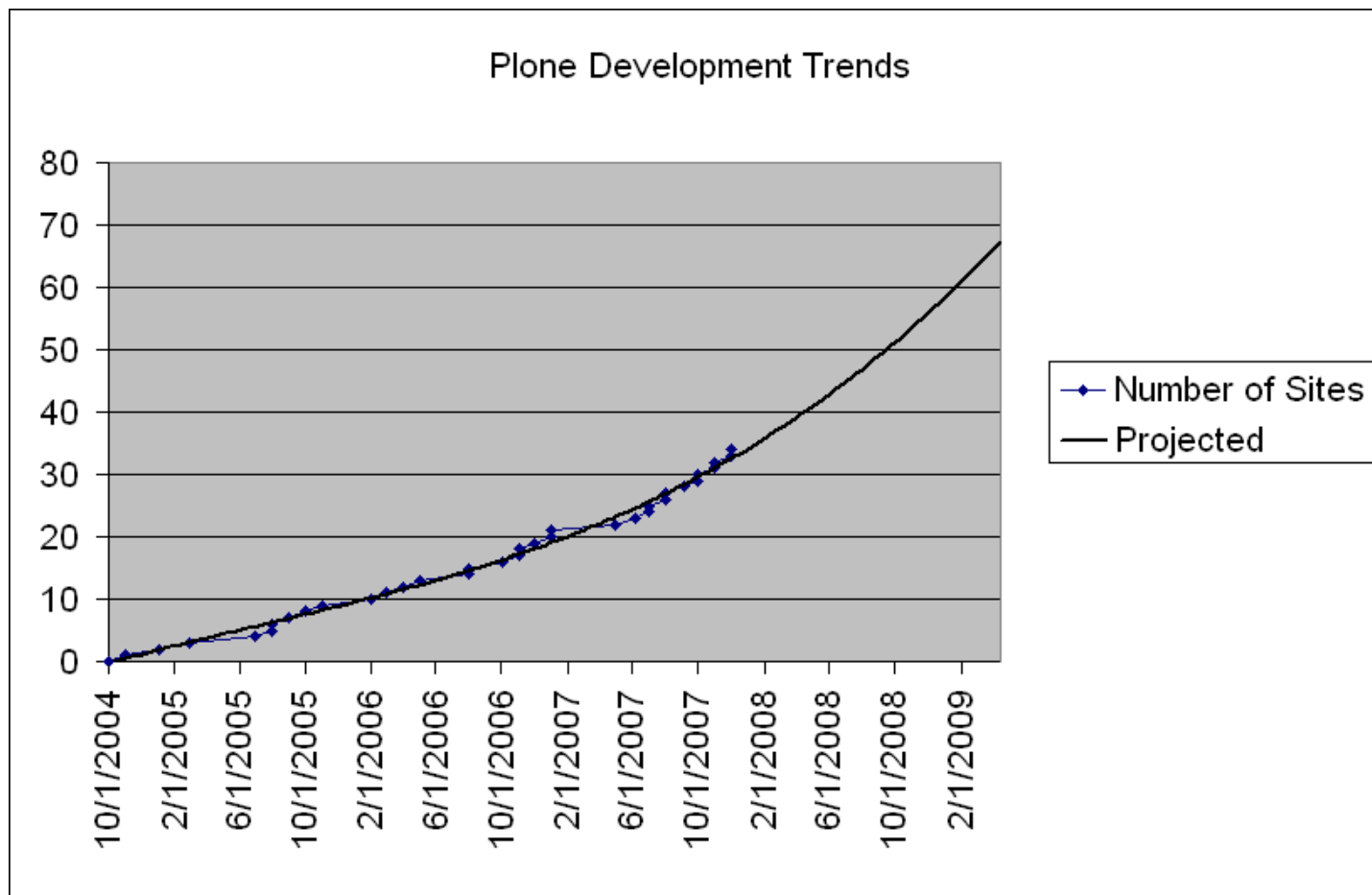
Information Sharing within Groups

- **CMS forms a platform to deliver content**
  - **Integrates information for decision support and policy analysis**
- **Replaces "the tyranny of the webmaster"**
  - **Self-maintaining information owners**
- **Comprises a differentiating capability that augments:**
  - **E-mail**
  - **File sharing systems**
- **Provides content that is:**
  - **User-supplied**
  - **Self-aggregating**
  - **Self-updating**
- **Integrates with and augments conferencing tools like ProCom, WebEx, and Centra**

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Barriers

- **Learning curve**
  - **Training needed for administrators & developers**
  - **Short orientation needed for content owners**
  - **Site visitors usually find the interface intuitive**
- **Some hesitancy in use**
  - **New and different, strange and unfamiliar in some ways**
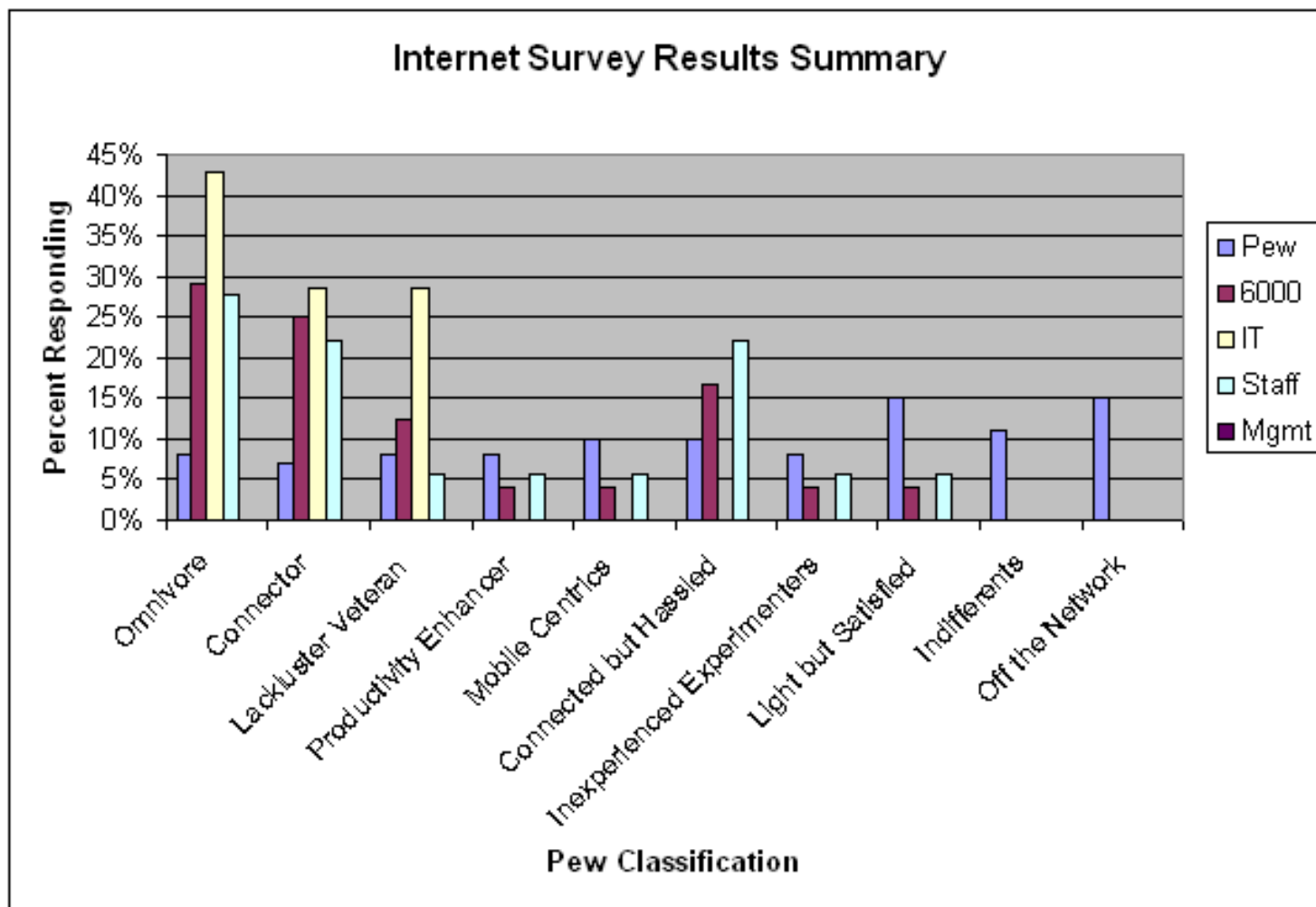 - **Sometimes too much for "Connected but hassled" users[*]**

Successful result is a strong community of shared interest

[*] http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_ICT_Typology.pdf

IPB ICT Survey

Middle East Applications

- **International Water Portal (https://waterportal.sandia.gov)**
- **Web Access for Civil Society Improvements (http://wacsi.unm.edu)**
- **Annual Middle East Symposium intranet (https://ironside.sandia.gov/zope/mesymposium)**
- **Foreign Currency Exchange (https://ironside.sandia.gov/zope/exchange)**
- **MENA Economic Development Portal (proposed)**