



## **D 3.2.8 Report on PhD student network activity**

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**Abstract.**

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This report contains the results of our setting up of a Semantic Web PhD student network at the Free University of Berlin. This network is part of the KnowledgeWeb educational area effort to support students doing research in the area of the Semantic Web and is seen as the first step towards a wider co-ordination between Semantic Web doctoral students.

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## Changes

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## **Executive Summary**

As part of the Education area activity of the EU Network of Excellence KnowledgeWeb, PhD students with a primary research focus in the Semantic Web were identified as one of the key communities needing early support.

In response to this, the Free University of Berlin decided to found a “PhD student network” to gather together members of this community from the region of Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany.

This report describes the purpose of the student network, its composition, and our experience arising from the organization of such a student network for the Berlin area 14 months after its initiation.

As a result of these experiences, we outline the benefits that can be gained by PhD students in the Semantic Web area from the existence of such a local network in the vicinity of their university and provide some ideas for beginning such student networks at other establishments. These conclusions were also confirmed by the results of the network self-evaluation, performed by means of a public online survey.

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## 1 Introduction

The Education Area of the EU Network of Excellence KnowledgeWeb, in collaboration with the Industry and Research Areas, has been tasked with supporting the Semantic Web area at the academic and educational level. An initial deliverable (D3.1.1) from the area sought to identify the key scenarios that required support by the network. Among these is a growing number of PhD researchers in institutions across Europe carrying out major research interest in Semantic Web technologies. These PhD researchers could benefit from instruments that aim at bringing them together for the purpose of exchanging and sharing experiences and knowledge.

## 2 Founding the Network

Knowledge Web provides a number of instruments to benefit Semantic Web researchers and their research. Already through the existence of the network researchers across Europe have the opportunity to meet, collaborate and co-ordinate activities. However this is the case only during the duration of the network and for those institutions participating in the network, while we aim to build instruments that will be able to be continued even after Knowledge Web finishes and can be of benefit to all academic institutions participating in Semantic Web research.

As a result, we have developed the idea of a PhD student network. This idea arose out of our experiences with hosting a doctoral workshop for students (in the German speaking community) at the Berlin XML Days conference. This workshop proved to be a welcome opportunity for doctoral students in the Semantic Web field to meet one another in what was actually a very informal setting. However, it was only once a year, which was insufficient to build closer relationships. The participating students expressed an interest in a more regular meeting, as generally in each institution they were few in number and would welcome the opportunity to discuss doctoral research experiences among a wider peer group. However, we also recognised that if it were to be feasible for students to meet at regular intervals then they would have to be drawn from an area of geographical proximity, hence we chose to begin with our student network in the area of Berlin and Brandenburg (the surrounding state).

The first step was to determine if there was sufficient interest locally to begin a network. We contacted the professors we knew in Berlin and Brandenburg who were involved in supporting Semantic Web related research to inform them of our plans and to ask them to encourage their PhD researchers to participate. After collecting a list of potential participants from the professors, we contacted them directly to invite them to attend the Kick Off meeting of the network. Thus we were able to see that there was indeed sufficient interest for a network in Berlin and Brandenburg.



The first invitations to our Kick Off meeting were sent out in early September 2004. We also asked the doctoral students to submit a brief abstract of their thesis (plans) which we were able to collect and disseminate, so that each participant could have access to an overview of the others' research interests, and hence promoting the possibility of future synergies and co-operation. Information about the aims of the network, the first meeting schedule and the list of doctoral students who had confirmed their participation (with links to their thesis abstracts) were placed on a German language web page hosted by the Networked Information Systems (NBI) workgroup at the Free University of Berlin. In this initial, pre-Kick Off stage, we had received confirmations of participation from 16 doctoral students and 14 research abstracts.

Prior to the first invitations being sent out (an English version of these invitation letters is provided in Appendix 1), the organizers<sup>1</sup> had met to discuss their plans for the student network, and to formalize these plans in a brief 'statement of purpose'. We also subsequently agreed to present these plans to the doctoral students at the Kick Off meeting in order to allow them to give us feedback and in order to decide together with the participants on the final form of the student network, as it would be as much their network as it would be ours.

### **3 Statement of Purpose**

The below text is the English translation of the statement of purpose drawn up by the organizers of the PhD student network on 2 June 2004:

- The realization of an informal PhD student network for the Berlin and Brandenburg region will give doctoral students the opportunity to present for discussion among a peer group their ideas and the current status of their dissertation. Primarily it shall consist of face to face meetings organized at regular intervals, in which on one hand topics of general interest can be discussed or on the other hand individual participants can present their results or raise questions within the group. Additionally, a technical infrastructure will be made available which can support co-operative discussion between the participants (mailing list, shared workspace).
- The intention is to give each doctoral researcher the possibility to present his or her research results for debate within a group that shares a common interest and without any time-consuming review process. The presentation of one's own results is an important requisite for a successful dissertation and a helpful exercise for the doctoral defence. Since in German universities normally no concrete doctoral studies are offered (except perhaps in graduate colleges) it is all the more important that the doctoral student can share his or her knowledge as early and as

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<sup>1</sup> Lyndon Nixon, Elena Paslaru and Malgorzata Mochol of the working group Networked Information Systems (NBI) at the Free University of Berlin, also the authors of this deliverable. We also acknowledge the role of our group director, Prof Robert Tolksdorf, who has supported us in the idea of the PhD student network since its conception.

often as possible and obtain other's opinions. A successful doctoral network would also prove useful to the doctoral student at the very beginning of their research and is possibly seeking to make more concrete a suitable research topic. For doctoral students at the end phase of their research the network can provide important feedback about the comprehensibility and completeness of the achieved results.

Potential Participants:

Doctoral students with the Semantic Web as their core research area, in all stages of their dissertation. The relation to the Semantic Web could be either application or theory oriented (Semantic Web as the methodology for a solution to a given problem or the extension of Semantic Web technologies).

Planned Activities:

Make contact with potential partners in the Berlin and Brandenburg region. The leader of the respective working groups should be contacted by mail and return a list of doctoral students willing to commit to participating in the network.

A first Kick Off meeting will be organized at the FU Berlin. Subsequent working meetings can take place at a two monthly interval. In each meeting 4-5\* participants could present their results or questions. Each presentation including discussion could last approximately 45\* minutes. The presentations may be held in German or English. Each presenter shall provide to the organizers a week prior to the meeting a current version of his or her presentation. The working meetings shall be organized in turn by each of the participating institutions, which will be in each case responsible for holding to the relevant deadlines and providing the necessary technical infrastructure.

\* The number of presentations in each meeting will depend upon the total number of participants in the network, with the aim that each doctoral student will have the opportunity to present his or her results roughly every 6 months. The duration of the presentations can be decided together with the participants at the Kick Off meeting.

## 4 Overview of meetings

To date, the doctoral student network for Berlin and Brandenburg has met 7 times, at intervals of roughly every two months (there was a three month interval between the June and September meetings due to many of the participants taking a summer break). This chapter gives a brief description of the activities at each meeting.

### ***4.1 Kick Off Meeting, 22 October 2004***

The goal of the Kick Off meeting was to establish initial F2F contact with potential network members who already agreed to their participation and responded to our letter of invitation. Another aim of the first meeting was to present our ideas regarding the function and the realization of the network and to set up a preliminary structural framework to which the collaboration among the PhD students was expected to take place.

The organizers Lyndon Nixon, Elena Paslaru Bontas and Malgorzata Mochol gave a brief overview of the network's initial concept which was detailed by the participants towards the final format of the event. There was also a brief round of introductions by all participants to enable them to initially get to know one another.

Decisions were made concerning the frequency of the F2F meetings, the form of the talks and the communication infrastructure of the network. The invitation to the participants was also made to be the first to present their research to the network, and three doctoral students offered to make a presentation at the first working meeting. The minutes of the Kick Off meeting containing the consensual decisions made by the network are:

#### Resources:

A shared workspace shall be made available for the private exchange of resources  
A mailing list shall be set up for internal announcements  
A website shall be available online to provide public information about the network

#### Meetings:

Informal meetings shall be held at two monthly intervals on Fridays at 2pm. They shall be prepared in turn by each of the participating organizations.

#### Presentations:

At each meeting 3-4 presentations shall be held each with duration of approx 40 minutes (20 minutes presentation and 20 minutes discussion).

#### Deadlines:

Latest one week in advance of the next meeting the presenters shall provide a title and brief abstract for their presentation to the organizers which will be announced on the website.

Three or four days prior to the upcoming meeting the presenters shall provide their slides to the organizers which will be made available to the network through the shared workspace.

#### **4.2 1<sup>st</sup> Working Meeting**

The first working meeting of the PhD network took place at the Free University of Berlin in November 2004. The meeting included three presentations one each from the Free University of Berlin, the Technical University of Berlin and the Humboldt University respectively:

- Magnus Niemann (Freie Universität Berlin): *Informationsmodellierung mit Topic Maps*
- Ralf Heese (Humboldt Universität Berlin): *Anfragebearbeitung im Semantic Web*
- Elena Paslaru Bontas (Freie Universität Berlin): *Some issues of ontology reuse*

#### **4.3 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Meeting**

The meeting was organized by the Technical University of Berlin in February 2005. Two PhD students from the Fraunhofer Institute FOKUS and one from the Technical University of Berlin agreed to present current results of the PhD work in this meeting:

- Michael C. Jaeger (Technische Universität Berlin): *Matching Web Services with OWL-S*
- Matthias Flügge (Fraunhofer Institut FOKUS): *Semantic Web Services im SATINE-Projekt*
- Bernd Mrohs (Fraunhofer Institut FOKUS): *Entwicklung eines Referenzmodells zum Anbieten neuartiger mobiler Dienste in intelligenten Umgebungen*

#### **4.4 3<sup>rd</sup> Working Meeting**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> working meeting took place in April 2005 at the Fraunhofer Institute FOKUS and included presentations from the Free University of Berlin, as well as a short talk of a guest PhD student from the Peking University (China):

- Karsten Otto (Freie Universität Berlin): *Semantic Web in virtuellen Umgebungen*
- Jing Mei (Freie Universität Berlin, Universität Beijing): *Rule Reasoning for the Semantic Web*

- Malgorzata Mochol, Elena Paslaru Bontas (Freie Universität Berlin): *Kontext-abhängige Matching Plattform*

A preliminary evaluation of the activities of the network was carried out by the organizers in form of a moderated discussion in order to identify new directions of development after 6 months of activity. It resulted in the participants agreeing on the importance of the network and the continuation of its activities in the same manner. At the same time some participants outlined the necessity of inviting external researchers to the meetings of the network in order to present their work or as advisors for the network members' contributions. The organizers agreed on the elaboration of a schedule for this new concept.

#### 4.5 4<sup>th</sup> Working Meeting

In the fourth meeting of the group in June 2005 at the Free University of Berlin three PhD students presented their work:

- Chris Bizer (Freie Universität Berlin): *Information Quality Assessment Policies in the Context of Open Information Systems*
- Arne Handt (Freie Universität Berlin): *Emergente Eigenschaften selbstorganisierender Netzwerke*
- Lyndon J. B. Nixon (Freie Universität Berlin): *SWeMPS - A framework for a Semantic Web-enabled Multimedia Presentation System*

The organizers proposed the organization of the two special meetings of the network, one in form of a working meeting aimed at students in the starting phase of their PhD and the second one would involve invited talks and advisors. The organizers established a list of possible candidates for the latter and agreed on first steps for the realization of this meeting.

#### 4.6 5<sup>th</sup> Working Meeting

The fifth meeting was organized at the Free University of Berlin in September 2005. As agreed in the previous meetings, it was dedicated to network members who were in an incipient phase of the PhD and consequently might not be in the position to present results of their work, but instead would require feedback on the directions their efforts might go in this phase of the PhD.

The first part of the meeting contained a theoretical talk on methods and methodologies for scientific work. The rest of the meeting was conceived as a moderated discussion in which PhD students gave brief, informal presentations on the results achieved so far while the more experienced members provided feedback on future directions, challenges

and suggestions on possible topics. The organizers announced details on the meeting with invited advisors.

#### **4.7 6<sup>th</sup> Working Meeting**

During the previous meetings the participants expressed the wish to invite external guests who would evaluate the students' ongoing PhD dissertations and provide feedback. To satisfy this request the organisers decided to invite to the 2005 year end meeting external experts who were not only involved in various activities of the Semantic Web community but also understand the realities and regulations involved in the writing of dissertations in Germany. They were:

- Prof. Dr. Nicola Henze, University Hannover
- Prof. Dr.- Ing. Robert Tolksdorf, Free University Berlin
- Dr. Alexander Löser, Technical University Berlin
- Dr. Klaus Schild, Free University Berlin

This extraordinary meeting took place at the Free University of Berlin on 12 December 2005.

The first part of the meeting contained six presentations from 3 Berlin's universities: one presentation from the Humboldt University, one from the Technical University and four from the Free University:

- Ralf Heese (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin): *Ein Modell für SPARQL-Anfragen*
- Michael C. Jaeger (Technische Universität Berlin): *Optimising the Quality of Service in Compositions of E-Services*
- Lutz Suhrbier (Freie Universität Berlin): *Perspektiven vertrauenswürdiger Aussagen im Semantic Web*
- Malgorzata Mochol (Freie Universität Berlin): *Metadata-based Ontology Matching Framework*
- Elena Paslaru Bontas (Freie Universität Berlin): *Framework for Context-Enhanced Ontology Reuse*
- Lyndon J. B. Nixon (Freie Universität Berlin): *SWeMPs: Semantic Web-enabled Multimedia Presentation Service*

The talks represented a wide spectrum of subjects and stages of the dissertation work. After each presentation there was a 20 minutes time slot for discussion. The invited experts and other PhD students had the opportunity to comment on the subject matter and slides and provide feedback or ideas with respect to the topic of each dissertation presented.

The second half of the meeting was dedicated to the structural subjects. The organisers presented the results of the evaluation of the network (see section 6) and followed it up by asking the invited experts and PhD students for ideas concerning the network's future activities (see section 7).

## 5 Other activities

Besides the informal meetings, it was agreed at the Kick Off meeting to provide additional instruments to the network participants for communication and knowledge sharing in the interval between the meetings. Besides a public website, participants agreed to a mailing list and a shared workspace.

### 5.1 Website

The website was linked from the main page of the NBI workgroup at the FU Berlin.

German version: <http://nbi.inf.fu-berlin.de/research/KnowledgeWeb/phd/phd.html>

English version: [http://nbi.inf.fu-berlin.de/research/KnowledgeWeb/phd/phd\\_en.html](http://nbi.inf.fu-berlin.de/research/KnowledgeWeb/phd/phd_en.html)

### 5.2 Mailing List

The mailing list was set up at the FU Berlin on 28 October 2004. To date, we have 19 members. Until the final meeting of this period on 12 December 2005 there have been 142 messages sent on the list. Apart from 2 of the organizers, 9 other members have used the list to share some information with network members. The messages sent were related to organizational issues, e.g. announcements of details of the next meeting or were offering further information in response to discussions that had taken place during previous meetings.

### 5.3 Shared Workspace

At the FU Berlin we also have access to a shared workspace (BSCW). A new directory was created for the PhD student network and all network members were sent an invitation to register for access to that directory. To date, we have 27 people registered with access rights to the student network directory. The structure of the directory is given below:

- 📁 Doctoral abstracts (collected 8 abstracts)
- 📁 Resources (collected 4 links and one text file)
- 📁 Meeting 4.2.05 (each meeting folder contains the abstracts and slides from the presentations at the meeting)
- 📁 Meeting 8.4.05
- 📁 Meeting 17.6.05
- 📁 Meeting 26.11.04
- 📁 Meeting 30.9.05
- 🔗 Link to mailing list
- 🔗 Link to web site
- 📄 Kick Off meeting slides

Through the BSCW system it is possible to gain an overview of the member activity in the workspace. The results were:



The Kick Off meeting slides were read 9 times, 6 times subsequent to the meeting  
The abstracts were read between 1 and 6 times (average of 2.75 times each)  
One resource was read 3 times, the other were links that could not be read  
Meeting abstracts and slides were read between 3 and 11 times (average of 5.2 times each)

## ***5.4 Conclusion***

After 14 months of activity in the instruments of the doctoral student network it is possible to assess the usefulness of the mailing list and shared workspace for fulfilling the aim of supporting our incipient community in-between the F2F meetings.

While the mailing list has not been heavy traffic, this was also the intention. It was implemented primarily to provide a simple means to inform all network participants of relevant issues such as the next meeting of the network. We are conscious of the fact that PhD students are already busy and are probably (particularly in the case of computer scientists!) already receiving reasonably high quantities of mail. It is also our experience that when a mailing list starts sending out higher quantities of mail, the individual quality of the mails is usually lower and the probability of recipients beginning to ignore mails due to time and work pressures is higher. However, simply the consistently high attendance figures of the network, given that the mailing list was the primary means used to inform members of up-and-coming meetings, demonstrates that the mailing list did successfully fulfil its aims.

The activity on the shared workspace has been more mixed. More than half of the registered users of the workspace do not appear to have been active on it. The remaining members have made use of the facility however to read abstracts prior to meetings and to review the slides of presentations following meetings. One member who later joined the network registered on the workspace and immediately read all the documents in the directory! However, the usual activity seems to have been based on personal interest, i.e. reading those documents of particular interest to an individual member. The slides from the Kick Off meeting have been read by those members who joined subsequent to that meeting. From the number of views of individual members' research abstracts and presentations at meetings it is clear that some topics (or members) attracted more interest in the network than others. However, it seems for some members at least the workspace did not prove useful, or at least they found no reason to use it, which might be explained by the fact that a shared workspace might not be a typical instrument that they otherwise use (as opposed to e-mail, which can be safely assumed to be used by members in any case very regularly). Another indicator of this is that other functionalities of the shared workspace do not seem to have been used at all, for example only one member added the evaluation option to his presentation abstract and no other member provided any evaluation feedback. In retrospect it seems this instrument could have been better introduced to the members, and a short demonstration at one of the meetings may have

helped to improve usage of the workspace itself as well as the functionalities that it supports.

## 6 Evaluation

To provide us with an overview of the effectiveness of the student network for the PhD candidates themselves, it was determined that the best way was to conduct a questionnaire survey with the network's participants. The content and results of the questionnaire are presented in this chapter together with some general statistics illustrating the network. The original version of the survey (in German) is available at <http://kompass.mi.fu-berlin.de/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=phdnetwork>

### 6.1 Questionnaire

#### A. Questions concerning the F2F meetings

1. Was the frequency of the F2F-meetings adequate?
  - *No, the meetings should take place **more frequently**.*
  - *Yes.*
  - *No, the meeting should take place **less frequently**.*
  
2. Was the duration of the F2F-meetings sufficient?
  - *No, the meetings should take **longer**.*
  - *Yes.*
  - *No, the meeting should be **shorter**.*
  
3. Was the form of the F2F-meetings adequate?
  - *No, I would prefer shorter presentations and extensive discussions.*
  - *Yes.*
  - *No, I would prefer more detailed presentations and shorter discussions.*
  
4. Should the meetings in the future take place in different locations?
  - *No, I prefer the same place.*
  - *Yes.*
  - *It doesn't matter.*

Comments regarding the F2F-meetings.....

#### B. Questions concerning the presentations

1. How do you assess the presentation of your research subject and the results within the context of the PhD network?
  - *The presentation within the context of the PhD network was very helpful to me.*

- *I enjoyed it but did not find it all that helpful.*
- *The presentation in the context of the PhD network did not meet my expectations.*

2. Was the subsequent discussion helpful for you?

- *Yes, I found it very helpful.*
- *I enjoyed it but it was not very helpful.*
- *No, it was not meaningful.*

3. How do you assess the presentations of the research subject and the results of the other participants within the context of the PhD-network?

- *I found them very interesting and useful.*
- *They were very interesting but not relevant for my research.*
- *The presentations did not meet my expectations.*

4. How do you assess the discussion after the presentation of the other participants?

- *I found it very interesting and useful.*
- *It was very interesting but not relevant for my research.*
- *The discussion did not meet my expectations.*

Other comments regarding the presentations .....

### **C. Questions concerning the methods of electronic communication:**

1. Was the mailing list informative?

- *Yes, it was very useful.*
- *Yes, it was rather useful.*
- *No, it was not useful.*

2. Did you use the Web site to access information about the PhD network and the upcoming meetings?

- *Yes, prior to each meeting.*
- *Yes, occasionally.*
- *No, I have never visited the website.*

3. Was the shared workspace (BSCW) useful for you?

- *Yes, it was very useful.*
- *Yes, it was rather useful.*

- *No, it was not useful.*

Comments regarding the methods of communication (e.g. suggestions with respect to other tools) .....

#### **D. Questions concerning the perceived added value of the network**

1. Did you enjoy the participation at the network?  
(on the scale 1-9, regarding from 1-*not at all* to 9-*it changed my life*)
2. Do you think that the participation on the network helped you with your dissertation?  
(on the scale 1-9, regarding from 1-*not at all* to 9-*it changed my life*)
3. Did you collaborate with many people within the PhD-network?
  - *Yes, I did.*
  - *Yes, I strengthened previous contacts.*
  - *No.*
4. Did your research directly take advantages from participating at the PhD-network? (e.g. thorough a collaboration with other participants, the dissemination of new information, the chance to present your new research)
  - *Yes, definitely.*
  - *Yes, to some extent.*
  - *No.*
5. Do you intend to continue to participate at the network next year?
  - *Yes.*
  - *No, I will finish my dissertation next year.*
  - *No, I have no interest. / No, I will not have time.*
6. Would you recommend the network to other PhD students?
  - *Yes, definitely.*
  - *Yes, maybe.*
  - *No.*

Comments regarding the added value of the network.....

## **6.2 Evaluation results**

Twelve network members took part at the evaluation procedure by filling in the questionnaire survey.

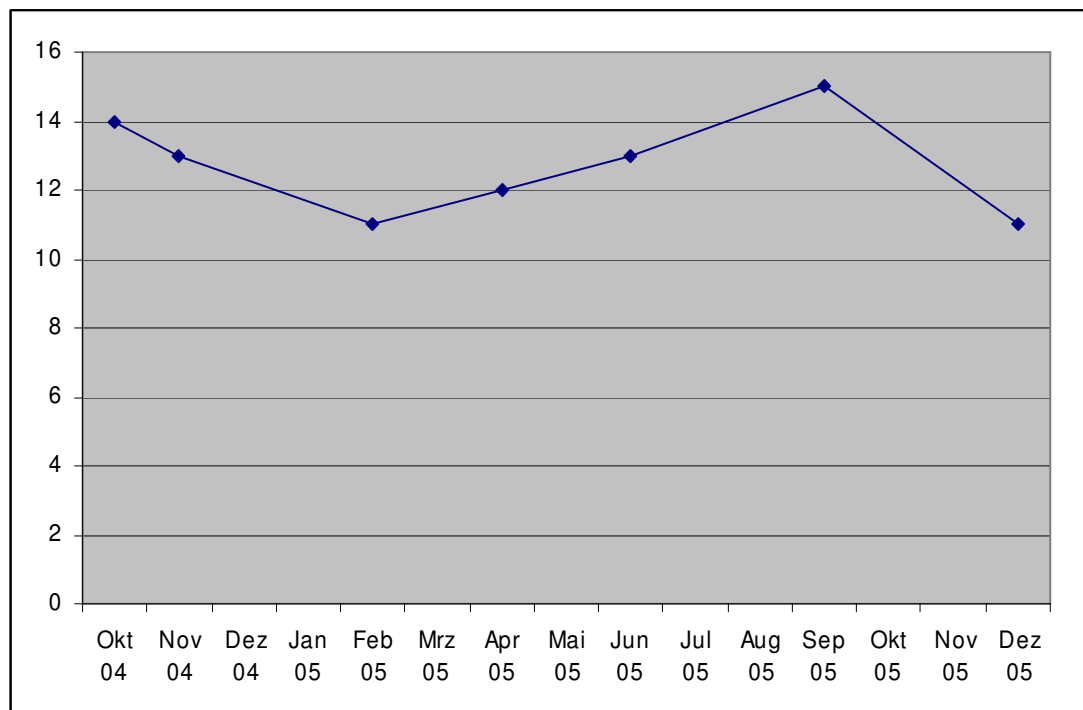
The majority of the respondents agreed with the frequency, length and manner of the F2F meetings. The only critical point of the meetings was related to the length of the presentations. Some participants complained that the speakers failed to stay within the time limit requested. As a result, subsequent presentations were not followed with the same intensity as earlier ones.

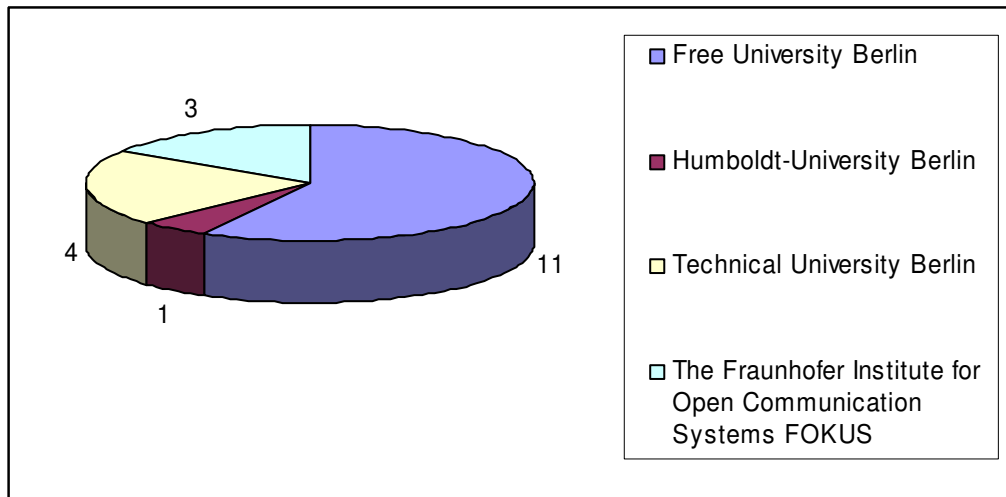
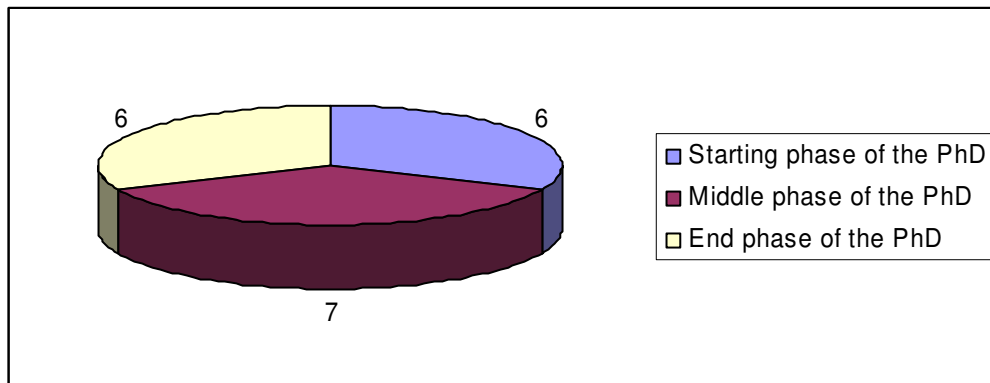
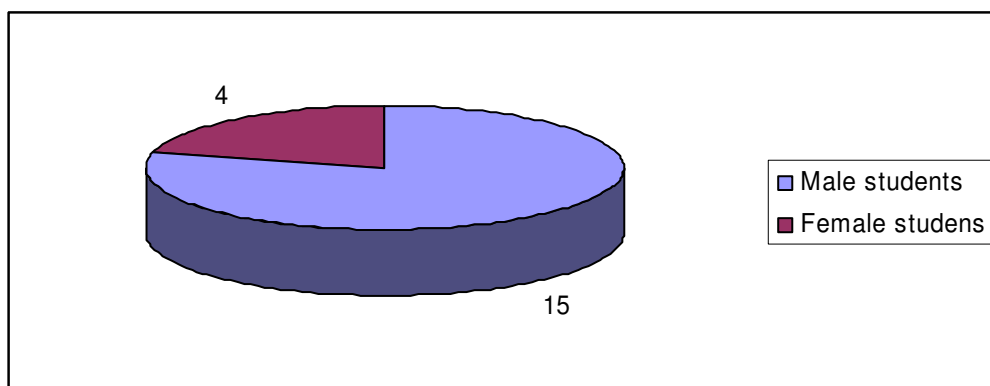
Approximately three-quarter of the participants agreed that while neither their own presentation nor the presentations of other students were found to be particularly helpful, they found the subsequent discussions to be very useful and valuable.

Half of the students estimated the mailing list as a meaningful communication means. The same percentage regularly visited the network's Web site. The shared workspace was estimated to of little use to unnecessary.

On an ascending scale from 1 to 9 over 80% of the students evaluated their participation in the network with ratings between 6 and 8. Over 55% of the participants shared the opinion that the participation in the network had a neutral to positive effect on their research (ratings between 5 and 8). 75% of the students strengthened their social contacts and over 50% appreciated that the network directly contributed to their research. Almost all of the participants confirmed their future participation and support to the network.

### 6.3 Network statistics



**Figure 1 Number of participants per meeting****Figure 2 Participating institutions****Figure 3 Stage the PhD thesis****Figure 4 Male/Female Ratio**





## **7 Future Outlook**

Our experiences in conducting and organizing a thematic network of PhD students in the last 14 months clearly confirmed the significance of such initiatives beyond the regional level. As stated by the results of the evaluation the organizational aspects of the network were estimated favourably by the majority of the participants. The results achieved w.r.t. the thematic dimension definitely require further improvements: while the PhD students evaluated the discussions arisen during the meetings very positively, they also stated that the network did not trigger any direct collaboration between the participants. Two reasons for this situation are the thematic heterogeneity within the network, as well as the focus of the F2F meetings on presenting research results already achieved. A solution for these issues could be a revision of the format of the meetings from individual presentations on achieved results to brainstorming sessions on commonly agreed topics which would explicitly foster the collaboration between different network parties. In order to cope with the relative heterogeneity of the PhD topics discussed we will consider extending the network at inter-regional level or collaborating to similar initiatives in Germany and Europe.

## Acknowledgements

The realization of these activities would not have been possible without the support of Prof. Dr. Robert Tolksdorf and our colleagues from the working group Networked Information Systems at the Free University of Berlin. We further want to thank Prof. Dr. Nicola Henze, Dr. Klaus Schild and Dr. Alexander Löser, for their willingness to participate at our meetings as reviewers and for their helpful feedback to our presentations. Finally, we would like to thank the members of the network for their active participation and support. These are:

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- Arne Handt (Freie Universität Berlin)
- Ralf Heese (Humboldt Universität Berlin)
- Michael C. Jaeger (Technische Universität Berlin)
- Jana Klawitter (Technische Universität Berlin)
- Ekaterina Langer (Freie Universität Berlin)
- Bernd Mrohs (Fraunhofer Institut FOKUS)
- Magnus Niemann (Technische Universität Berlin)
- Radoslaw Oldakowski (Freie Universität Berlin)
- Karsten Otto (Freie Universität Berlin)
- Kay-Uwe Schmidt (Fraunhofer Institut FOKUS)
- Thomas Schwotzer (Technische Universität Berlin)
- Christian Siefkes (Freie Universität Berlin)
- Lutz Suhrbier (Freie Universität Berlin)
- Tania Tudorache (Technische Universität Berlin)

## **Appendix 1: First letter of invitation**

**Freie Universität Berlin**

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## Invitation to join The Semantic Web PhD Network Berlin Brandenburg

Dear Colleague,

Co-located with the Berliner XML Days Conference we have organized since 2002 an annual Doctoral Symposium, in which PhD students working in the areas of XML and Semantic Web technologies have the opportunity to present their newest research achievements to a wide audience.

Complementary to this activity we are planning the initiation of a regional Semantic Web PhD Network. The basic concept of the network is to create a solid yet informal and flexible space in which PhD students affiliated to Berlin and Brandenburg research institutions and with research interests covering the Semantic Web can exchange their ideas and identify and exploit synergies. This initiative is part of our activities in the EU Network of Excellence [KnowledgeWeb](#).

Network members are given the opportunity through bimonthly informal face-to-face meetings to present the latest progress in their doctoral research and open their work up to discussion. The network is intended to help the students make their research intentions more concrete and gain advice on the completeness of their achieved work. Presenting their own work to a peer group also constitutes a good opportunity for them to practise the defence of their dissertation.

In order to concretize the formation of the PhD Network we would appreciate the confirmation of your participation by August 2004. The kick-off meeting of the network is expected to take place by October 2004 at our institute.

Yours respectfully,

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Robert Tolksdorf

## Appendix 2: Second letter of invitation



Freie Universität Berlin

FU Berlin • Inst. f. Informatik • Takustr. 9 • D-14195 Berlin



Freie Universität Berlin

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### Invitation to join The Semantic Web PhD Network Berlin Brandenburg

Dear PhD Student,

As part of our activities in the EU Network of Excellence [KnowledgeWeb](#) we are planning the initiation of a regional Semantic Web PhD Network for October this year. The basic concept of the network is to create a solid yet informal and flexible space in which PhD students affiliated to Berlin and Brandenburg research institutions and with research interests covering the Semantic Web can exchange their ideas and identify and exploit synergies.

Network members are given the opportunity through bimonthly informal face-to-face meetings to present the latest progress in their doctoral research and open their work up to discussion. The network is intended to help the students make their research intentions more concrete and gain advice on the completeness of their achieved work. Presenting their own work to a peer group also constitutes a good opportunity for them to practice the defense of their dissertation.

The kick-off meeting of the network is expected to take place by October 2004 at our institute. In case you or your colleagues are interested in joining this initiative we would kindly ask you to confirm your participation in writing to us by September 2004 and to contact us for any further information.

Kind regards,

Prof. Dr-Ing. Robert Tolksdorf