

# User Study Report III

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## 1. Overview

This report draws on our interview with user ‘Alice’, our observation at the enactor user meeting on 21 February, and our reflections upon using the myExperiment site.

We have identified four issues relevant to current myExperiment development.

## 2. Improving usability

Can the functionality in MyExperiment be organised to reflect typical sequences of user activities and support them in a more fluid way?

For example, when commenting on a workflow, it is not always possible (because of intervening content) to have the workflow and comment box simultaneously on the screen. This is likely to disturb the flow of users’ activities (browse and then act, etc). Well-integrated components make the action of commenting and annotating workflows as easy as possible. This suggests the need to consider how to integrate better various components on myExperiment, especially where there is evidence of recurrent sub-sequences of actions. (Logs of user actions would be very helpful for identifying these – are they collected?)

## 3. Facilitating human-human interactions

At present, facilities for supporting communication between users are limited. For instance, users cannot send a personal message when requesting memberships or friendships (this is a problem if someone is using an alias). More generally, there might be scope for improving the capacity of workflows to catalyse discussion between, enabling, for example, users to make use of them to initiate as well as instantiate discussion.

Some suggestions:

- Have a free text box allowing users to send personal messages while requesting friendships or memberships.
- Add a widget to allow users to annotate the workflows directly (like a flying message box, users can highlight, right click, type and click ‘send’).

## 4. Domain-dependent and domain specific (bridging domains)

As the membership of myExperiment site continues to grow at such a rapid rate, we need to take into account how to create common languages between users from different disciplinary backgrounds. For instance:

- Do all items under the tag ‘visualisation’ mean the same thing cross disciplines? Or are there any domain specific languages that need to be specified and made clear?
- How do various services on myExperiment bridge the conceptual gap between different user groups’ conceptions? Through creating metadata for different workflows?

## **5. Mechanisms for building workflows collaboratively**

So far we have seen people starting sharing workflows on myExperiment, but we haven't seen how people actually reuse and recycle workflows. Also, we remain very interested in understanding the process of building workflows collaboratively. Hopefully the MSc course will give us more data.